



## REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

# **Spring 2024 Grant Opportunity:** *Urban Gig Economy- Tools and Resources for Assisting Gig Entrepreneurs with their Small Businesses*

## **PROGRAM GUIDELINES**

Notification Date: March 1, 2024

Application Due: March 27, 2024 at 5pm PST

Washington State Microenterprise Association

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*For language translation support, please contact [jena@wamicrobiz.org](mailto:jena@wamicrobiz.org)*

# 1. Purpose of Request and Program Overview

## A. Overview

The Washington State Microenterprise Association (WSMA) is dedicated to strengthening business technical assistance providers as they engage with economic development partners to support the smallest businesses to grow sustainably, equitably and financially throughout Washington state.

Thanks to support from the Washington State Department of Commerce, WSMA is opening this statewide grant opportunity to fund nonprofit organizations in **urban** settings that provide business training, technical assistance and access to financing for the smallest businesses in Washington state, with particular focus on those operating in the gig economy.

These partners include nonprofit Entrepreneur Support Organizations (ESOs) also known as Microenterprise Development Organizations (MDOs), Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs), Small Business Resiliency Partners (SBRN) and other organizations that serve Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC), veterans, people with disabilities, returning citizens, LGBTQ+ and other very small businesses.

WSMA will be building on prior efforts involving workers/entrepreneurs in the gig economy for the focus of this grant initiative. This grant cycle invites organizations that are eager to showcase their tools, programs and resources that strengthen business services tailored for gig workers/entrepreneurs throughout the state. The gig economy is activity where people earn income providing on-demand work, services or goods. Often, it's through a digital platform like an app or website. Examples of gig workers include freelancers, independent contractors, project-based workers and temporary or part-time hires.

Gig business workers/business owners have often been misunderstood, underserved and isolated from traditional business services. WSMA wants to develop better ways to support gig workers. This labor market is generally composed of people with a side hustle or those who provide freelance work to generate income on their own schedule. These roles offer flexibility and enable folks to supplement their income or simply work when they want. Unfortunately, there aren't many protections for these entrepreneurs. We want to better understand how to reach and serve these businesses with meaningful, timely and practical business resources.

This quick deployment of very small, focused grants (Total of \$80,000 is available for all grants in this round) is targeted toward nonprofits working in urban communities that have experience working with gig entrepreneurs and are familiar with the conditions in which they are operating. We want to continue to map out their unique business needs and opportunities, their pain points, the networks that reach and serve them effectively. The goal is to develop and share tools that will help all of our ESOs partners more effectively provide business training, technical assistance, and financing to support gig business workers/business owners.

Grants approved under this contract may be used to pay project related expenses, including but not limited to technical assistance, training outreach and education materials, translation and interpretive services and efforts to help keep businesses in operation. However, funds may **not** be used for equipment (tangible property including but not limited to copiers, vehicles, furniture, software and technology infrastructure) nor delivered directly to gig workers or gig businesses. This includes but is not limited to stipends, grants, transportation support, or other funds of any kind provided to businesses and/or business owners. Further restrictions will be highlighted in the contract for services once grants are awarded.

The application period is short with a deadline of **Wednesday, March 27, 2024 at 5:00pm**, so we encourage you to review these Grant Guidelines as soon as possible.

## B. Definitions

- *Gig Worker*: This labor market is generally composed of people with a side hustle or those who provide freelance work to generate income on their own schedule. The gig economy is activity where people earn income providing on-demand work, services or goods. Often, it's through a digital platform like an app or website.
- *Urban* communities include businesses in incorporated communities within/immediately adjacent to the metropolitan core of the following urban counties or in these urban counties and having a population of more than 20,000 people: Benton, Clark, King, Kitsap, Pierce, Snohomish, Spokane, Thurston, and Whatcom.
- *Entrepreneur Support Organizations (ESOs) also known as Microenterprise Development Organization (MDO)*: Organizations, including CDFIs, that predominantly provide business training, technical assistance and/or microloans. MDOs primarily focus on companies, especially those with 5 or fewer employees with an emphasis on serving limited income and historically marginalized communities. MDOs are the business technical assistance providers for solo-preneurs.

## C. Timeline

March 1, 2024	Notice of RFP
March 6, 2024	Grant Portal Opens
March 6, 2024	Information Session & Grant Portal Walkthrough Webinar
March 27, 2024	Proposals due by 5:00pm
April 19, 2024	Applicants will be notified of funding decision(s) on or before this date
June 21, 2024	Project Completion and Report Due

## 2. Eligible Applicants

WSMA is committed to ensuring that equal opportunity is provided to Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), veterans, woman-owned enterprises, entrepreneurs with disabilities, justice involved entrepreneurs and others historically shut out from funding, training programs, financing and other opportunities. Unfortunately, academic institutions are not eligible for funding at this time.

Eligible applicants are:

Existing, Embedded, or Emerging non-profit Entrepreneur Support Organizations (ESOs), Microenterprise Development Organizations (MDO) or other non-profit organizations located in urban communities of Washington State that support and provide business development services to microenterprises, especially in historically marginalized and under-resourced communities in Washington state.

They must have:

1. IRS 501c3 nonprofit status documented. If you do not currently have a 501c3 filed with the IRS, you must have a fiscal agency with a 501c3 to serve as your fiscal sponsor. Nonprofit or quasi governmental applicants with different formal IRS designations will also be considered. Documentation of this relationship will be required as part of the application process.
2. Organizational ability to provide business training, technical assistance, microlending or referrals to financial services to the gig workers in Washington state.
3. Track record of collaboration with relevant and diverse community stakeholders in planning, implementation, and evaluation of the work.

## 3. Required Use of Funds

***This is a short project period and funds must be expended by June 21, 2024.*** Activities can begin on the date of contract signing. Initial grant funds will be available to grantees within 20 business days of contract signature with final disbursement of funds upon the submission of the final report.

All applicants will be required to upload a 2024 WSMA Funding Request Form to the grant portal. See Section 10, tab 3 of the Program Guidelines for the format required. Please note, funds can not go directly to gig businesses or gig workers.

Priority areas of focus include Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC), veterans, people with disabilities, returning citizens, LGBTQ+ and other historically marginalized microbusinesses in Washington State.

## 4. Budget Request

Because of the specific focus of this short cycle of urban grant funding, there will be a limited number of grants awarded in the amounts of either \$10,000 or \$20,000 based on the applicant's proposed deliverables and other selection criteria as noted in Item 6.

Application requests should be for **\$20,000 or \$10,000**. Applicants will use the 2024 WSMA Fund Request Form in Section 10. A written budget justification for each line item is required.

Grants approved under this contract may be used to pay project related expenses, including but not limited to technical assistance, training, outreach and education materials, translation and interpretive services. However, funds may not be used for equipment (tangible property including but not limited to copiers, vehicles, furniture, software and technology infrastructure). **In addition, funds may not be delivered directly to businesses or gig entrepreneurs.** Further restrictions will be highlighted in the contract for services once grants are awarded.

## 5. RFP Process

- This RFP provides a practical online application to reduce waste, improve accessibility and provide a simple platform that supports communication, documentation and reporting.
- Language translation services and support are available. Guidelines can be translated on WSMA's website. Contact WSMA at [jena@wamicrobiz.org](mailto:jena@wamicrobiz.org) for more information
- All proposals will be electronically submitted utilizing the WSMA grants portal located at <https://www.wamicrobiz.org/microenterprise-grant-opportunities>.
- In line with WSMA's commitment to conduct an equitable and accessible application process, technical assistance will be offered to support organizations with determining their eligibility and in completing their application.
  - Eligibility, programmatic, translation and project assistance will be provided between March 7 to March 27, 2024. Contact [jena@wamicrobiz.org](mailto:jena@wamicrobiz.org).
  - One-on-one technical assistance will also be available for the organizations who need additional support with their applications.
- Submittal is required by **WEDNESDAY, MARCH 27, 2024 at 5:00pm PST**, to facilitate the review and selection process.
- The application document is three pages long. Applicants are encouraged to write simple and clear descriptions of the work to be done in addressing the questions in Section 10, Tab 2.
- Proposals must provide all of the information in this RFP. Incomplete proposals will not be accepted and incomplete proposals will not be reviewed.
- Submitted proposals require an electronic signature in the WSMA portal.

- In extenuating circumstances, an official signed hard copy original with proper attachments will be accepted by mail up to March 27, 2024 at Washington State Microenterprise Association P.O. Box 1914, Olympia, WA 98507, providing notification is sent to WSMA at [jena@wamicrobiz.org](mailto:jena@wamicrobiz.org) ahead of the deadline. WSMA assumes no responsibility for delays caused by any delivery method.
- Questions can be directed to Grant & Project Specialist, Jena Yang at [jena@wamicrobiz.org](mailto:jena@wamicrobiz.org).

## 6. Selection Criteria

Funding will be awarded based on the quality of the strategies, demonstrated relevance to the needs of these gig entrepreneurs, and the capacity of the organization to accomplish the goals of the initiative within the timeline of the grant.

A demonstration of services, resources, tools, etc. being provided by the grantee for small gig based businesses **must occur** within this grant period.

WSMA is seeking and will prioritize applicants:

- That offer tested training and/or technical assistance services that specifically support the unique challenges gig entrepreneurs face with formalizing and operating their businesses;
- That explore and provide specific research-based tools, strategies, and initiatives to support gig workers with their business;
- That have significant experience with business owners who derive at least 25-40% of their income from gig ventures and have developed best practices in serving these businesses;
- That have demonstrated experience assisting businesses in the gig economy with their taxes, operations, business systems, support networks, and other resources;
- That can provide education, tools and resources for other providers who are working with gig workers with their businesses;
- That have existing relationships with networks of gig workers who are open to sharing their experience and needs with surveys, focus groups or other methods
- With a demonstrated track record for raising awareness among these workers about their business status and helping them address their tax, legal or other business requirements.

Applicants may apply for funds to strengthen businesses the organization serves. Funded programs will provide best practice tools, resources, education, training and other supports specifically designed to support gig entrepreneurs in every sector. Programs can include webinars, workshops, or training programs, technical assistance or other innovative strategies to build the capacity of gig entrepreneurs to stabilize their businesses, attract new customers, manage their finances, fine tune their operations or access financing.

Each proposal will be independently evaluated. WSMA is dedicated to ensuring that funds are distributed throughout the state to achieve geographic and demographic equity.

Successful applications will demonstrate an ability to understand gig business workers/business

owners, an ability to reach gig business workers/business owners, demonstrate expertise working with gig workers and owners, able to assess their needs, provide tools that have been effective in supporting gig workers and gig business owners, and an ability to document strategies that have been beneficial to gig workers and entrepreneurs.

WSMA encourages applications that inspire innovation, ensure social inclusion and the use of circular economy principles in key sectors of our economy. These sectors include, but are not limited to agriculture/food, childcare, clean materials/clean tech, creative economy/arts, energy/efficiency, home building/construction, life sciences, maritime trades, small scale manufacturing and tourism. Cross-sector collaboration and innovation within and among these sectors will also be prioritized.

In the past, WSMA has received requests in excess of our available grant funds and we may not be able to fund all applicants. This grant cycle seeks to explore the landscape of the gig economy and while we hope to continue to support this work, funding is not guaranteed to continue in future years.

## 7. Expectations

WSMA Grantees will:

- Execute a contract with WSMA to carry out proposed activities within the timeline established.
- Accomplish work outlined in the approved Scope of Work.
- Submit a completed and signed W-9 or one from the fiscal sponsor, if applicable.
- If the organization is a new WSMA grantee, paperwork for electronic distribution of funds will be provided by WSMA and required of the grantee.
- If new to WSMA grants, meet with staff to review payment processing, reporting requirements and more.
- Enroll as a Resource Partner on Evergreen BizLink. This robust online business search engine connects entrepreneurs with trusted referrals that provide technical assistance, business training and funding in Washington state. This hub links networks to entrepreneurs and to each other building a cohesive community to support new and existing business growth.
- Participate in a WSMA-sponsored webinar highlighting their projects.
- Provide evidence of liability, auto and other existing insurance coverage upon request.
- Contact WSMA staff if problems occur that will inhibit work.

## 8. Reporting Requirements

All awarded grantees will be required to submit a Final Report on or before June 21, 2024. WSMA will provide a template for reports and all grantees will be required to use the WSMA Grant Portal for report submission. Please contact the Grant & Project Specialist, Jena Yang at [jena@wamicrobiz.org](mailto:jena@wamicrobiz.org) for additional details.



## 9. Information Sessions and Applicant Questions

- Questions regarding this RFP should be addressed to the Grant & Project Specialist, Jena Yang at [jena@wamicrobiz.org](mailto:jena@wamicrobiz.org)
- Information Session & Application Portal Walkthrough Webinar: March 6, 2024 at 1pm. Pre-registration is required [HERE](#). This session will be recorded and made available on the WSMA YouTube Channel. FAQs will be posted on the WSMA website after the Information Session.
- Grant Writing Resources can be found on the [Nonprofit Association of Washington](#) website.

## 10. Application Template (in the WSMA Grant Portal)

### Tab 1: Contact Information

1. Organization Information (if an account is not already set up)
  - Organization Name
  - Organization Address - Official
  - Organization City, State, Zip
  - Organization Phone
  - Contact Name
  - Contact Address
  - Contact Phone
  - Contact Email
  - Organization UBI (Unique Business Identifier)
2. Organization's Washington State Legislative and Congressional District

### Tab 2: Project Information

Each proposal will be independently evaluated. WSMA is dedicated to ensuring that funds are distributed to nonprofit organizations serving urban businesses throughout the state to achieve geographic and demographic equity.

Please upload a Word or PDF document **up to three (3) pages long** addressing the following questions:

1. Describe your organization's ability to reach and serve gig workers/business owners in your urban area. Provide details of your connections with these workers and how you know you are on track with what they need. Provide examples of how your organization has supported the business needs of gig workers and owners.
2. What research, partners or other information have you used to gather data or understand the needs and gaps in support noted by gig workers?

3. Regarding your outreach, engagement and services for BIPOC-owned businesses in your service area, identify the communities you serve below. Indicate all that apply:
  - American Indian or Alaskan Native
  - Asian
  - Black or African American
  - Hispanic or Latino
  - Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
  - White
  - Other/Mixed Race
4. Does the executive director of your organization identify as BIPOC?
5. Identify the communities below for which you currently provide dedicated services and/or seek to provide with this grant funding (indicate all that apply).
  - Veteran Owned Businesses
  - Women Owned Businesses
  - Minority Owned Businesses
  - LGBTQ+ Owned Businesses
  - Entrepreneurs with disabilities
  - Returning Citizens (People exiting the justice system)
6. List the primary deliverables your organization will provide with these grant funds. How do you intend to use WSMA grant funds? What tools and resources will you provide to gig workers/business owners for their small enterprises?
  - Here are some possible examples:
    - Virtual or in-person workshops for gig workers/businesses owners on documenting income, bookkeeping resources, completing taxes, etc.
    - Information about protections for gig workers
    - Programs about Paid and Sick Leave information
    - Orientations on workers' compensation coverage for rideshare drivers
    - Workshop template(s) for gig workers (network, mentor training, social media campaign, inspiration/mindset)
    - Business services tool kit for supporting gig workers
    - Train the trainers for nonprofit organizations serving gig workers/entrepreneurs
    - Federal and state tax training businesses in the gig economy

### Tab 3: Funding Request Form

1. Amount requested: Requests need to be **\$20,000 or \$10,000**. Applicants should only apply for the amount they can practically deploy in the short window of the grant period.
2. Funding Request Form: Please use the format below *Tools and Resources for Assisting Gig Entrepreneurs with their Small Businesses* **Fund Request Form**.

- You can either copy it to a new document (Word preferred) and save to your computer or download the Word or PDF version from our website.
- Once you fill in your **REQUIRED** written budget justification AND amounts, you will upload the completed document to the portal (see instructions under Section 11: Q&A Tips for Grant Application Portal Success below)

<p align="center"><b>WSMA Spring 2024 Grant Opportunity:</b>  <i>Tools and Resources for Assisting Gig Entrepreneurs with their Small Businesses</i>  <b>FUNDING REQUEST FORM</b></p>	
<p><b>Applicant Organization Name:</b> _____</p>	
<p><b>REQUIRED Written Budget Justification:</b>  <i>Funds cannot go directly to businesses, gig workers, entrepreneurs or employees. No WSMA grant funds can be paid (on behalf of a business owner by a grantee) for fees, permits or other public costs associated with their business expenses.</i></p>	
<b>Description of Project Related Expenses</b>	<b>Funds Requested from WSMA</b>
<p><b><i>Personnel: Staff Wages Only</i></b></p> <p>Staff Title: Total hours dedicated to this project, hourly rate</p>	\$
<p><b><i>Materials</i></b></p> <p>List of items: Workshop materials, supplies, etc.</p>	\$
<p><b><i>Facilities</i></b></p> <p>Rental space pricing rate (per day/per hour)</p>	\$
<p><b><i>Travel</i></b></p> <p>Mileage and travel expenses for staff only</p>	\$
<p><b><i>Consultant(s)</i></b></p> <p>Consultant/Companies names: List of duties, total hours dedicated to this project, hourly rate or one-time payment cost</p>	\$
<p><b><i>Other</i></b></p>	\$
<b>TOTAL</b>	\$

## Tab 4: Anticipated Outcomes

Outcomes are vital for understanding the **impact of these funds**. Identify the projected unduplicated outcomes (people being served, surveyed or supported or work being paid for specifically with these funds) of your proposal. Intensive support for a smaller number of businesses is sometimes as valuable as reaching many companies with limited programming. Gauge your impact carefully. Put a zero (0) if this category does not apply to you.

### **Jobs & Businesses**

Jobs created:

Jobs Saved:

Businesses Started:

Businesses Expanded:

Total **UNDUPLICATED** Business served:

### **Business Training Series** (*Group based, multiple related sessions with an end date*)

Sessions to be provided:

Businesses (existing and start-up) served:

Total hours of instruction:

### **Business Workshops/Webinars** (*a single event*)

Sessions provided:

Businesses (existing and start-up) served:

Total hours of instruction:

### **Technical Assistance** (*1:1 and small group*)

Sessions provided:

Businesses (existing and start-up) served:

Total hours of technical instruction:

### **Access to Financing** (*Loans/Grants*)

Businesses (existing and start-up) served:

Referrals to local/regional lenders as a result of the project:

Loans/grants applied for:

Loans/grants funded:

Total amount funded/received:

### **Demographics of those to be served**

Veteran owned businesses:

BIPOC (Black, Indigenous & People of Color) Businesses Served:

Women Served (who identify as such):

Entrepreneurs with disabilities served:

Businesses owned by people exiting the justice system:

LGBTQ+ Served (who identify as such):

OMWBE certified businesses:

## Tab 5: Attachments to Upload

1. Organizational Budget (not the project budget) for 2024
2. Organizational Profit & Loss (P&L) or Income Statement for the most recent 12-month period. This document shows how much your organization has spent and earned over a 12-month period.
3. Organization (or fiscal sponsor) IRS 501c3 Letter of Determination. The IRS determination letter notifies a nonprofit organization that its application for federal tax exemption under Section 501(c)(3) has been approved. If you do not currently have a 501c3 filed with the IRS, you must have a fiscal agency with a 501c3 to serve as your fiscal sponsor with documentation defining the relationship. Some nonprofit and quasi-governmental applicants with different IRS designations will also be considered. Unfortunately, academic institutions are not eligible for funding at this time.

## Tab 6: Certifications & Attestation

1. I certify this nonprofit does not discriminate with regard to employees, volunteers, delivery of programs or services, or clients served based on age, sex, religion/creed, race, color, national or ethnic origin, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disability, marital status, military or veteran's status, pregnancy or genetic information.
2. I certify that my non-profit is active and does not have any compliance or regulatory issues with state or federal agencies, as of the date of signature.
3. I certify that I am authorized to submit this proposal to WSMA on behalf of the organization.

Please Note: By entering your name, title, and date into the WSMA Grant Portal, you are:

1. Representing that you are an officer or other agent duly authorized to enter into legally binding agreements.
2. Agreeing to submit this WSMA grant application in an electronic form which shall be bound by its contents as an electronic transaction.
3. Agreeing that your insertion of this data constitutes an electronic signature.

## 11. Q & A and Tips For Grant Application Portal Success:

### *Can you walk me through the application portal?*

An application walk through on the WSMA grant portal will be part of the Information Sessions & Grant Portal Walkthrough Webinar on March 6, 2024. You can register [HERE](#). The video will also be posted on the [WSMA YouTube Channel](#).

*Can we save our application in sections in your online grant application?*

Yes, the WSMA grant portal also allows applicants to save their work in draft form to come back to before submitting the final version.

*If we submit our proposal before the deadline, can we go back into the portal and make changes?*

Unfortunately, once an applicant submits their application, you can NOT make changes. However, If you accidentally submit before completion of the application, please contact the Grant & Project Specialist, Jena Yang at [jena@wamicrobiz.org](mailto:jena@wamicrobiz.org).

*Who needs to certify our application?*

The person ultimately responsible for this project should certify the application. This could be an executive director, board president, chief financial officer, etc.

*How will I know if my application was received?*

You will receive a confirmation email to the address you provided from [noreply@smartsimple.com](mailto:noreply@smartsimple.com), which will also include a PDF of your application for your records. You will also receive email communications as your application moves through the review process and if our reviewers require additional information.

*How will I know if my application was awarded or declined?*

You will receive a confirmation email from WSMA staff on or before April 19, 2024 to the address you provided.

*On the WSMA grant portal (Project Information tab), how do I access the upload button for my 3-page document?*

You must first click *Save Draft*. Once this is done, reopen the *Project Information* tab and an upload graphic (file with an up arrow) will appear and you will use this to upload your document.

*What do we upload our funding request to the grant portal?*

Please use the format above (**2024 WSMA Grants Funding Request Form**) by copying it to a new document (Word preferred) and saving to your computer. You can also download the Word version on our website. Once you fill in your budget justification AND amounts, you can then save this document on your computer. You will then upload this document to the portal using the upload graphic that appears after you click *Save Draft* (see below).

*On the WSMA grant portal (Finance tab), how do I access the upload button for the **2024 WSMA Grants Funding Request Form**?*

You must first enter the amount requested from WSMA only, not the total of your project (if it is different) and then click *Save Draft*. Once this is done, reopen the *Funding Request* tab and an upload graphic (file with an up arrow) will appear and you will use this to upload your form.