



Associate Development Organization Grant Writer Grant Program

February 6, 2024

The Associate Development Organization (ADO) Grant Writer Grant Program, administered by the Washington State Department of Commerce, aims to assist ADOs by providing grants to recruit, hire and retain professional grant writers to identify, apply for and secure grant funds for economic development purposes.

Purpose and General Information

The Washington State Legislature passed legislation and provided funding to the Washington State Department of Commerce (Commerce) to create a grant program for county-designated Associate Development Organizations (ADOs) to support the recruitment, hiring and retention of grant writers. The ADO Grant Writer Program will assist ADOs in accessing economic development assistance from government and philanthropic sources with preference given to applicants serving distressed areas. Funds will be awarded on an annual basis. Multiple ADOs may jointly apply if a shared grant writer would be preferred or grants are sought for projects crossing multiple ADO boundaries. A total of \$580,000 in funding will be awarded in Fiscal Year 2024 and \$500,000 for Fiscal Year 2025.

Solicitation of grant applications will be ongoing in FY 2024 until all funds have been allocated. Grant awards must be spent by July 1st of each fiscal year.*

Associate Development Organization Grant Program for Grant Writers is codified in [RCW 43.330.088](#)

County-designated ADOs are defined in [RCW 43.330.080](#)

Distressed areas are defined in [RCW 43.168.020](#)

*Commerce has the discretion to negotiate dollar amounts of approved awards.

Eligible Applicants

County-designated Associate Development Organizations. Multiple ADOs may jointly apply if a shared grant writer would be preferred or grants are sought for projects crossing multiple ADO boundaries.

Eligible Use of Grant Funds

Grant funds are to be used for costs associated with recruiting, hiring and retaining grant writers, payment of contracted grant writers and administrative costs associated with these activities:

- Solicit employment applications from professional grant writers.
- Wages for grant writers hired on staff. Wage costs are limited to the period of performance outlined in the Commerce grant award contract.
- Free-lance grant writer costs.
- Grant research and application may be performed on behalf of partner organizations served by the ADO including but not limited to local governments, workforce development councils, port districts, community and technical colleges and higher education institutions, export assistance providers, innovation partnership zones and other programs and partners that benefit community and economic interests.
- Commerce may approve other usages of funds. Awardees must have written approval from Commerce for usages of funds outside the above.

Period of Performance

The period of performance of grant awards resulting from FY 24 grant process will commence on the date a Commerce grant award contract is signed and will end June 30, 2024. Grants awarded for FY 25 will commence on the date a Commerce grant award contract is signed and end June 30, 2025.

FY 24 request for grant applications shall commence February 6, 2024. Grant applications shall be accepted continuously and reviewed as received. The application period will close once all funding for FY 24 has been awarded.

FY 25 request for grant application are expected to commence early summer 2024. Applications for FY 25 grants will remain open until all funds awarded but no later than June 30, 2025.*

*Commerce reserves the right to amend application request, application review and period of performance dates.

Reporting Requirements: Each contractor shall submit a monthly report to the Contract Manager on the outcomes achieved. Commerce will provide the reporting template. You will be asked to report on the following:

- Description of recruitment and hiring or contracting efforts.
- Funding opportunities applied for:
 - Entity applying for grant
 - Type of grant and funding source
 - Include details on the amount of funding applied for
 - Details on the purpose of the funding, i.e. what the funding would be used for if awarded
- Grants awarded
 - Grant match amount and source of match
- Jobs created and/or retained
- Regions served. Contractors will provide an analysis of the potential benefits securing the grants will have on regions they serve.

Reports must be submitted monthly based on the following deadlines.

<u>Performance Period</u>	<u>Reports Due</u>
Feb 7 – Feb 28, 2024	March 15
March 1 – March 31, 2024	April 15
April 1 – April 30, 2024	May 15
May 1 – May 31, 2024	June 15
June 1 – June 30, 2024	July 7

Application Process

Required Application Elements

Plan of Action

Due to the short time frame for utilizing grant funds, applicants must submit a 60-90 day Plan of Action to assess readiness to pursue grant funding. A Plan of Action must be uploaded as an attachment to the grant application.

Proposed Budget

A proposed budget must identify the costs that will be invoiced to the Washington State Department of Commerce for reimbursement. A proposed budget and any supporting materials that may help explain the planned use of funds must be uploaded as an attached to the grant application. **Maximum requested grant amount must not exceed \$50,000.**

Questionnaire

A series of questions must be answered to help determine how Grant Writer grant funds will be used including applicant’s readiness to apply for grants using a grant writer, proposed projects or services for which funding is sought and the community and economic benefits funds will provide .

Applications will be reviewed upon submission and on an ongoing basis until all funding has been allocated.

Applications and required documentation are to be submitted online. Online applications can be accessed at <https://bit.ly/ado-grant-writer>.

Please contact Terri Drexler, Program Contract Manager if you have questions: Terri.Drexler@commerce.wa.gov; (564) 201-0242

Submission of an application does not guarantee that applicants will receive funds.

Commerce plans to award multiple contracts from this application process.

Commerce reserves the right to negotiate partnership contracts with high scoring applications with similar projects.

Applicants must apply each year. Grants are for one year only and do not automatically carry over to the next fiscal year.

Application Evaluation and Selection

The following evaluation criteria will be used to assess the likelihood of requested funding to be accepted and contracting to begin.

The Application & Contract Project Manager will assess all applications to ensure they meet minimum criteria to be considered for funding. Applications will be forwarded to a review committee who will score applications based upon evaluation methodology outlined below.

Applications will be reviewed and ranked based upon the quality of answers to the written questionnaire portion of the application and the Action Plan submitted. Review Committee will be reviewing answers on proposed use of funds, how funds address need, project readiness/management and the overall budget and give scores of low (1-2), medium (3-4) and high (5-6). Applications from Distressed Counties will be given preference.

Applicants with the most "High" rankings will be prioritized and put forth to The Senior Managing Director for Rural & Marketing Services to determine who will be selected.

Unsuccessful Applicant Notification: Unsuccessful Applicants will be notified by e-mail.

Debriefing of Unsuccessful Applicants

A debriefing conference may be requested from an unsuccessful Applicant. The request must be received by the Grant Program Manager within three business days after receiving email notification. Discussion will be limited to a critique of the requesting Applicant's application. Comparison evaluation of the other proposals will not be discussed. A debriefing conference may be conducted in person or on the telephone and will be scheduled for a maximum of thirty (30) minutes.

An unsuccessful application in one grant year does not prevent an applicant from applying for subsequent grant rounds in another fiscal year.