

Introduction

While many of the City's neighborhood development programs focus on housing and social services, the New York City Department of Small Business Services' Avenue NYC program targets the economic base of the neighborhood – the local commercial corridor. Avenue NYC provides funding for nonprofit economic development organizations (local development corporations, merchants associations, and other organizations) throughout the five boroughs to carry out commercial revitalization activities in the districts that they serve. The goal of the program is to create the conditions under which businesses can thrive and residents can enjoy access to a vibrant mix of goods and services.

In Fiscal Year 2013, SBS will fund nonprofit economic development organizations to carry out one or more initiatives under six project categories:

- Business Attraction
- Façade Improvement Management Program
- Merchant Organizing
- Placemaking
- Capacity-Building Initiatives
- Website Development

Please review the details of each of these programs below for information on eligible activities and funding levels. Applications for Avenue NYC are available online at <http://www.nyc.gov/avenuenyc>.

As part of the Avenue NYC Program, organizations funded in Fiscal Year 2013 will also have the opportunity to participate in technical assistance and capacity building initiatives with other organizations carrying out similar projects.



Requirements

ORGANIZATIONAL CRITERIA

Applicants must be:

- Nonprofit economic development organizations operating in low- and moderate-income neighborhoods in any of the five boroughs of New York City (see Income Eligibility Criteria below);
- Incorporated as a nonprofit in New York State;
- Compliant with annual State and Federal filing requirements that are pertinent to their type of organization, including New York State Charities Bureau filings.

PROJECT SCOPE CRITERIA

Proposed commercial revitalization projects must:

- Operate within defined geographic boundaries;
- Target commercial corridors as a whole. Projects cannot provide individual business assistance, such as one-on-one business plan development assistance;
- Consider the needs of small- and medium-sized businesses operating in the geographic area.

INCOME ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Organizations applying for Avenue NYC funding **must** target areas that are designated by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as low- or moderate-income neighborhoods. This designation prescribes that at least 51% of the residents in the census tracts included in the commercial area must be low- and moderate-income persons living in households with incomes below 80% of the median household income (\$47,100 for a 4-person household in 2000).

Note: for fiscal year 2013, the Avenue NYC program will use 2000 census tract data to determine target areas' CDBG eligibility. If Department of City Planning releases tract data from the 2010 census prior to the final funding determination for the fiscal year 2013 Avenue NYC program, any target areas that are newly CDBG-eligible under the revised tract data will be considered by SBS as meeting income eligibility criteria for fiscal year 2013.

If an organization's target area is CDBG-eligible under the 2000 census tract data and no longer meets income eligibility criteria upon release of the 2010 data, SBS will still consider the affected target area as meeting CDBG eligibility requirements for the fiscal year 2013 Avenue NYC program.

To determine your census tract, visit the New York City Census FactFinder:
<http://qis.nyc.gov/dcp/pa/address.jsp>

To learn more about Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) eligibility and to view the city's census tracts that are CDBG-eligible, visit the Department of City Planning's (DCP) online Census Report: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/resource/censustractreport.shtml>.

If your organization has not contracted with Avenue NYC in the past two fiscal years, please contact SBS to determine your target area's CDBG eligibility.

CONTRACTING & COMPLIANCE

Organizations applying for Avenue NYC projects other than Website Development must be prepared to enter into a registered contract with the City of New York. The contract term will begin on July 1, 2012 and end on June 30, 2013. The length of time required from the start of the contracting process to contract registration varies and is contingent upon the timeliness and completeness of contracting materials submitted by organizations.

Applicants are encouraged to ensure that their organization is current and compliant with all contracting requirements as soon as possible. To review the required contracting materials and contracting steps, please visit www.nyc.gov/avenuenyccontracts.

Additionally, organizations that are awarded Avenue NYC projects will be required to complete SBS-designed quarterly reports on their activities and progress. All Avenue NYC-funded organizations will be evaluated based on their performance at the end of each quarter.

TIMELINE	2012											2013					
	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June	July
Application Process																	
Awards Announced																	
Contracting Process*																	
Quarterly Reports Due																	
Contract Term																	

*This timeline is for estimation purposes only. The actual length of time required for the contracting process may differ from this plan.

PAYMENTS

Organizations awarded Avenue NYC projects will be able to request payments of their contract funds once the contract has been registered with the New York City Comptroller's Office.

Organizations receiving funding are expected to move forward on their projects in advance of receipt of funding.

Project Categories

Local nonprofit organizations may apply for funding in one or more of the following Avenue NYC project categories. Avenue NYC funding is project-based, meaning that funded organizations are expected to set measurable goals and to deliver completed projects at the end of the contract term.

Awards will be competitive and based on the strength of the proposal and, if applicable, the quality of the work performed under previous contracts with SBS. While funding is generally awarded at \$25,000 per project, SBS may award grants in an amount of up to \$50,000 per project based on the availability of funding, the strength of the overall application, and the quality of the project design.

Please note that the Avenue NYC program is anticipating a budget reduction in the amount of funds available for grants. Applicants should bear in mind that SBS may be making fewer awards in fiscal year 2013 than had been awarded in the past or that individual groups' award amounts may be lower than those received under previous years' levels of funding.

BUSINESS ATTRACTION

Selected groups will create a baseline census of businesses and commercial real estate in their commercial district and will maintain accurate and up-to-date information on commercial property available for development, sale, or lease. Groups will use this information to engage in business attraction efforts and to liaise with real estate brokers, property owners, and managers to facilitate sales and leasing of available ground- and upper-floor space. Groups will be expected to fill vacancies over the term of the contract, to reduce the area's vacancy rate, and/or to impact the retail mix of the street in a measurable way.

Business Attraction activities include:

- Creation of commercial databases of properties for sale or lease, property owners, and other relevant information to assist with the sale, leasing, or development of property;
- Organization of community planning sessions to determine local shopping and retail preferences;
- Analysis of the retail mix and business growth opportunities based on current and changing conditions and demographics;
- Coordinating events with the real estate community and property owners to showcase vacancies;
- Outreach to prospective businesses that meet the area's retail preferences and establishment of an ongoing rapport with the business community.

Project Categories (continued)

FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Avenue NYC's Façade Improvement Management Program is open exclusively to groups that have or will have dedicated funding for capital costs ("hard" construction costs) of façade improvement activities from sources other than SBS. Funding through Avenue NYC will only cover costs related to design, program administration, or marketing of the program ("soft" costs).

As part of the Façade Improvement Management Program, SBS requires funded groups to use the services of a design consultant and to produce "model" storefronts that exhibit a combination of the following four elements:

- Open mesh security gates where gates are used;
- Retractable or "faux" retractable awnings where awnings are used;
- High quality storefront signs that meet New York City Building Code regulations;
- An exterior finish (paint or other material) that is appropriate and sensitive to the overall building and neighboring structures.

MERCHANT ORGANIZING

Selected groups will lead the planning, outreach, and organizing efforts for the creation of a new merchant association or the revitalization of an existing organization in their area. Groups will be expected to develop a plan for organizing merchants and to accomplish concrete organizing milestones within the contract year.

Merchant Organizing activities may include:

- Recruiting members and keeping business owners engaged;
- Hosting regular meetings with business owners to develop short- and long-term goals, determine organization structure, and plan projects;
- Creating committees, designating roles to business owners, and/or establishing membership dues;
- Leading the association's incorporation;
- Publicizing the group to local businesses, residents, and other stakeholders.

Organizations receiving funding for this project will be expected to plan and execute at least one initiative that may be related to sales, promotions, or other types of district development projects.

Project Categories (continued)

PLACEMAKING

Selected groups will design a comprehensive program that focuses on creating or enhancing a sense of place that captures or reinforces the unique character of the commercial corridor. Placemaking is not narrowly district marketing (i.e. restaurant guide distribution or promotional events), but, rather, a more inclusive approach to promoting a lively and vibrant commercial district or solidifying an area's reputation as a commercial destination.

Groups will be expected to design a program that capitalizes on the unique social, retail, and physical attributes of the commercial corridor while incorporating the needs and concerns of community stakeholders, including but not limited to: business owners; property owners; consumers; residents; tourists; and, if applicable, community organizations.

The Placemaking project entails:

- Developing a new or solidifying a current placemaking strategy that identifies unique attributes of the targeted commercial district;
- Planning and executing projects that take advantage of or capitalize upon unique or distinct characteristics of the area.

All Placemaking proposals must clearly describe the overall strategy for creating a sense of place in the commercial district and ensure that any discrete marketing initiatives are directly related to that strategy. If your proposal includes a promotional event or an event that is open to the community and the public, you must demonstrate specifically how this event will benefit businesses in your district (e.g.; specifying how many businesses will be involved and in what capacity, or describing a quantifiable way that you will measure how the promotion benefits businesses in the commercial district).

CAPACITY-BUILDING INITIATIVES

Selected groups will carry out initiatives that will build the capacity of other nonprofit economic development corporations including Business Improvement Districts, Local Development Corporations and merchant associations. Capacity building initiatives may be carried out in more than one CDBG-eligible neighborhood. Initiatives shall be specific to the needs of each individual organization, shall draw on the strengths and distinctiveness of each distinct commercial district and shall produce a measurable improvement in the commercial life of the community.

Capacity-Building Initiatives are projects that do not duplicate services available elsewhere, i.e.; that are also provided by other organizations or city agencies. Capacity-Building Initiatives must be designed to work with existing or emerging organizations in the target area, and cannot entail the funded group providing technical or other assistance directly to individual businesses.

Possible initiatives might include joint projects with multiple organizations, growing new or emerging organizations through capacity building and/or unique technical assistance programs, or any other creative commercial revitalization venture that supports building strong nonprofit economic development organizations working to support commercial corridors.

WEBSITE DEVELOPMENT

Selected groups will receive a professionally-designed website for their merchant association, local development corporation, or Business Improvement District. These groups will receive website design and development services and a series of trainings on how to manage and update a website. The following are examples of previous websites created with SBS assistance: www.churchavenue.org, www.centralastoria.org, www.licpartnership.org.

Groups selected to receive a website will be required to:

- Complete all written content by specified deadlines — Although SBS will provide direction and examples of successful websites, it will be the responsibility of each group to develop the written content for their website in a timely manner;
- Obtain high-quality photographs for the website — Eye-catching photographs are one of the most important features of a website. As a part of the project, organizations are required to obtain high-quality photos;
- Attend all trainings related to the website — While SBS has ensured that a user-friendly website management system is being used for each website, it is essential that every organization attend all of the trainings provided during the program; and
- Maintain the website — All organizations applying for the project should have the resources and staff capacity needed to maintain a website on an ongoing basis.

The project funds the creation of a website. No funding will be provided directly to the group. After the website is created, groups will be responsible for the annual costs of hosting the website (hosting costs average \$360/year).

INELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

The following activities are not eligible for funding under the Avenue NYC program:

- Installation of capital improvements (streetscape or others) that have a lifespan beyond the one-year contract term
- Installation of banners and/or holiday lights along commercial corridors
- Provision of direct one-on-one business assistance to individuals
- Graffiti removal and/or neighborhood beautification campaigns
- Job training or workforce development initiatives

Proposals that include ineligible activities will not be considered for fiscal year 2013 funding. Applicants are encouraged to contact SBS well in advance of the application deadline with any questions on the eligibility of their proposed projects. For questions, please contact Jessica Taylor by email at avenuenyc@sbs.nyc.gov.

Application Process

Organizations interested in applying for Avenue NYC must submit an application to SBS.

Complete applications must be received BY EMAIL to avenuenyc@sbs.nyc.gov no later than 5:00pm, Friday, April 13, 2012. Fax or post mail submissions will not be accepted. All applications will be subject to a completeness review and organizations will be sent confirmation of receipt of their proposals as soon as the application has been processed.

Applicants are encouraged to contact SBS well in advance of the deadline with any questions. For questions, please contact Jessica Taylor by email at avenuenyc@sbs.nyc.gov.

APPLICATION REVIEW & RANKING SYSTEM

Applications will be reviewed by committees comprised of representatives from SBS. The committees will judge each application on a competitive basis by project area. For instance, applicants for the Business Attraction category will be judged against other applicants for the Business Attraction project area only.

All organizations applying for the Avenue NYC program will be evaluated on three criteria and rated on the corresponding point scale:

Evaluation Criteria	Total Possible Points
Existing Organizational Capacity of the Group	40 points
Strength of the Avenue NYC Project Proposal	50 points
Viability of the Proposed Avenue NYC Budget	10 points

Existing Organizational Capacity | 40 points

Organizations will be evaluated on their ability to meet contractual obligations, their experience delivering high-quality projects, and the sustainability of commercial revitalization activities. Evaluation of organizational capacity will be based on dedication of human resources to the project, the composition and structure of the Board of Directors, the organization's experience in related commercial revitalization activities, and the organization's past experience in executing contracts with the City of New York.

Strength of the Avenue NYC Project Proposal | 50 points

Proposals will be rated on the overall strength of the project. Strong proposals are those that demonstrate in-depth planning and a comprehensive overall design. Evaluators will assess the extent to which proposals effectively and logically articulate the organization's specific approach. Proposals should set clear targets and define objectives. SBS will favor proposals that are innovative and/or build upon previous initiatives. SBS will also consider the care with which an organization completes the application.

Viability of the Proposed Avenue NYC Budget | 10 points

Proposed budgets will be rated against the activities laid out in the project proposal and will be assessed for the alignment of resources to activities and the practicality of resource allocations. Evaluators will consider additional sources of revenue listed for the project as well as how the proposed project budget contributes proportionally to the organization's overall operating budget, taking into account distribution of expenses, reliability of other income, and diversification of revenue.

Please refer to the Budget Page Instruction Sheet for additional information.

APPLICATION INFORMATION SESSIONS

Groups interested in applying for the Avenue NYC program are strongly encouraged to attend one of three information sessions:

- Monday, March 14th from 2:00PM to 2:00PM
- Thursday, March 22nd from 3:00PM to 5:00PM
- Tuesday, March 27th from 10:00AM to 12:00PM

During this session, SBS staff will provide a comprehensive overview of the program and will walk applicants through the application process. All sessions will be held at the offices of the New York City Economic Development Corporation, located on the 4th Floor of 110 William Street in Lower Manhattan.

Please RSVP for the information session by emailing avenuenyc@sbs.nyc.gov.

SUBMISSION PROCESS

All completed applications (including Budget Page and all other required attachments) must be submitted in electronic form via email to the New York City Department of Small Business Services at avenuenyc@sbs.nyc.gov. Organizations with questions on completing the application should direct their inquiries to SBS via email at avenuenyc@sbs.nyc.gov. Questions will be answered within one business day.

Applications must be received via email by **Friday, April 13, 2012, at 5:00PM** in order to be considered for fiscal year 2013 funding.

In your submission email, include the following documents as attachments. Each document should be labeled/named (saved as) **exactly as specified in the table below**:

Attach the following documents to your submission email:	Label/Name of Document:
<input type="checkbox"/> Avenue NYC Application Organizational Capacity Section	FY2013_Organizational_Capacity
<input type="checkbox"/> Relevant Avenue NYC Project Proposal Section(s)*	
<input type="checkbox"/> Avenue NYC Business Attraction Proposal	FY2013_Business_Attraction
<input type="checkbox"/> Avenue NYC Façade Improvement Management Proposal	FY2013_Façade_Improvement
<input type="checkbox"/> Avenue NYC Merchant Organizing Proposal	FY2013_Merchant_Organizing
<input type="checkbox"/> Avenue NYC Placemaking Proposal	FY2013_Placemaking
<input type="checkbox"/> Avenue NYC Capacity-Building Initiatives Proposal	FY2013_Capacity_Building_Initiatives
<input type="checkbox"/> Avenue NYC Website Development Proposal	FY2013_Website_Development
<input type="checkbox"/> Completed Avenue NYC application budget page	FY2013_Application_Budget
<input type="checkbox"/> Completed Staff/Volunteer/Board List	FY2013_Personnel_List
<input type="checkbox"/> FY2011 actual operating budget	FY2011_Operating_Budget
<input type="checkbox"/> FY2012 current operating budget	FY2012_Operating_Budget
<i>For organizations applying for the Façade Improvement Management Program, include photos of completed façades and/or potential façades for inclusion in the program (as well as letters of support from business/property owners who are interested in participating in the program, if applicable).</i>	<i>Indicate whether each photo was taken before the façade was improved, after the façade was improved, or is a rendering of how the improvement will look upon completion.</i>

* Only include the proposal section(s) for which you are seeking fiscal year 2013 Avenue NYC funding