

VAN NESS DIRECTED BUSINESS SUPPORT PROGRAM

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

(last updated 12.8.20)

Why is there a Directed Business Support grant program for the Van Ness Improvement project?

The Van Ness Improvement project is a major-impact project which was originally slated to be completed in 2019. It is understood that businesses have been adversely affected by traffic and pedestrian disruptions during this construction project. In January 2019, it was announced that unexpected and significant delays caused for the construction completion date to be extended to the end of 2021. Businesses in the Van Ness impact zone have experienced construction impacts beyond what was expected and planned for in addition to the impacts caused by the COVID-19 pandemic so to assist these businesses the Van Ness Improvement Project - Directed Business Support grant program was created.

What are the benefits of the Van Ness Directed Business Support grant?

Businesses that meet eligibility criteria can qualify to receive a \$5,000 - \$10,000 grant based on level of construction impact at their location within the construction zone. Businesses that are impacted also continue to have access to business support, technical assistance and existing programs offered by the City and County of San Francisco.

When can I apply for the Van Ness Directed Business Support Grant?

Applications will be accepted for the Van Ness Directed Business Support grant program ending on January 31, 2021.

How can I apply for the Van Ness Directed Business Support grant?

Businesses can submit an electronic application for the Van Ness Directed Business Support grant program by following this link: link.oewd.org/vannessapp

Businesses can download an application by visiting oewd.org/vanness and submit their application via email to CMPgrant@sfgov.org.

Businesses can request for a hardcopy application to be mailed to them by sending a request that includes a contact phone number and mailing address to CMPgrant@sfgov.org

What are the eligibility criteria for being awarded a grant award?

Businesses must be within the Van Ness construction impact zone, must be an active storefront, and established with no change in ownership on or after March 3, 2017. Only applications that are complete and meet eligibility requirements will be considered.

What is the eligibility checklist on the Directed Business Support application?

The eligibility checklist is comprised of four statements that must ALL be checked, which confirms a business' willingness to work with IIN to provide necessary documentation to help verify the economic hardship suffered as a result of the construction project which could include tax returns, financial statements or other financial data. IIN will work with businesses to help stabilize their business operations and to ensure proper financial management practices with the goal of increasing sales. Businesses agree to work with staff and/or an assigned business consultant as necessary to create an action plan, which will outline achievable goals and steps to be taken in order to execute the action plan. Businesses agree that awarded grant funds must be used as stated per program guidelines and if an action plan is created. Additionally, businesses agree to document and report economic impact achieved as a result of this program, including but not limited to jobs created, jobs retained, increased sales, and access to capital. ALL eligibility participation boxes must be checked in addition to meeting eligibility requirements of this program in order to be eligible for a grant award.

What is an active storefront?

An active storefront is a ground floor, street facing business currently open for business

What are the levels of construction impact for the Van Ness Improvement Project?

Directly Impacted: Construction that impacts and/or impedes visual or physical access to business including structures and large-scale equipment for a period of six months or longer.

Indirectly Impacted: No physical or visual impediment in front of the storefront, but construction is within a one block radius of construction site that indirectly impacts the business corridor for a period of 12 months or longer.

How are grant award amounts determined?

Once a business has met all eligibility criteria and submitted all necessary supporting documents a grant award amount is determined based on a business' location within the construction impact zone either directly impacted or indirectly impacted. The grant award will be disbursed in two phases in which the business designates the use of funds for both phases on their application.

What is the role of staff from OEWD's Division of Invest in Neighborhoods (IIN) with the Van Ness Improvement Project?

IIN and the San Francisco [Small Business Development Center](#) (SBDC) provide free one-on-one business consulting services and resources to merchants impacted by the Van Ness Improvement construction project to help businesses continue to stay and grow in San Francisco. Resources available to merchants can include business support, technical assistance, access to capital (grants and loans) and access to existing programs offered by the City and County of San Francisco. Additionally, IIN will collect and process the Directed Business Support applications for businesses impacted by the Van Ness Improvement project.

Can I still apply for the Van Ness Directed Business Support grant program if my business was located in the Van Ness impact zone but my business has closed or relocated?

Businesses that were located on Van Ness in the impact zone on or prior to March 3, 2017 and permanently closed or moved to another location in San Francisco **on or after January 1, 2019** and meet

the other eligibility criteria can apply for this grant. Only applications that are complete and meet eligibility requirements will be considered.

When did construction officially start for the Van Ness Improvement Project?

Ground broke on March 3, 2017 for the Van Ness Improvement Project.

When will the Van Ness Improvement Project be complete?

The Van Ness Improvement Project is scheduled to be complete by end of 2021.

What is a Business Action Plan?

A Business Action Plan is a working document that identifies attainable objectives, specific business goals, resources, and steps that can be taken to further develop business skills and resiliency. Small Business Development Center consultants are available to help business owners develop and work through the objectives and goals to support the business's long-term sustainability and success.

What is the Phase 1 disbursement use of funds?

The Phase 1 disbursement is 75% of the grant award to be used for rent, utilities, or wages in order to help stabilize business operations. The business designates the use of funds on their application.

What is the Phase 2 disbursement use of funds?

The Phase 2 disbursement is the remaining 25% of the grant award. The business designates the use of funds on their application. The purpose of these funds is to help support the long-term sustainability of the business. In response to impacts due to the COVID-19 pandemic, use of funds have been expanded to include reimbursement for rent, utilities, wages or COVID-19 eligible purchases made on or after March 1, 2020.

COVID-19 eligible expenses include related storefront renovations, interior/layout improvements for compliance, furniture/fixture purchases, purchases related to health and safety compliance including signage for wayfinding and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as hand sanitizers, masks, face shields, gloves etc.

Businesses can choose to use their funds to create a Business Action Plan to be developed with the help of a Small Business Development Center consultant in which the business will select low-cost/high-Return on Invest (ROI) tools that can be utilized to help increase revenue. A proposal with the intended use of funds will need to be submitted with the application. Purchases must be made after the Business Action Plan is developed and receipts will need to be submitted prior to a grant award disbursement for this option.

Why should I answer the optional questions?

Optional questions are completely voluntary and will not affect a person's eligibility or the determination for a grant award. The information provided is only to help the City & County of San Francisco understand who is accessing its services. The answers to these questions will not factor in reviewing your documentation.

What if I have a question about the Van Ness Directed Business Support grant program or application?

All inquiries related to the Van Ness Directed Business Support grant program and/or application can be sent to CMPgrant@sfgov.org.

What if I have a question about the Van Ness Improvement Project?

Businesses can sign up for project updates and stay in the know as to what's happening and when by visiting sfmta.com/van-ness or contact SFMTA Van Ness project staff directly via email at VanNessBRT@SFMTA.com or phone at **415-646-2310**.

What is the Small Business Development Center (SBDC)?

The Small Business Development Center (SBDC) is a program located under the Office of Economic and Workforce Development (OEWD). SBDC provides trainings and one-on-one consulting in areas such as business strategy, marketing, financial management, capital sourcing, lease negotiation, etc. For more information visit www.sfsbdc.org or call **415-937-7232**.

Why do I need to answer questions about my family income?

Information provided in response to questions about family is used to show income status and economic hardship suffered as a result of the construction project to merchants in the impact zone. Supporting documentation includes a copy of 2019 tax returns, sales tax data or POS data. This documentation is to paint an overall picture of the impact and or loss that a business has experienced due to the Van Ness Improvement project. It is another way for OEWD to advocate on behalf of the small businesses impacted. Information provided is kept confidential and doesn't factor into the review of the application or the award of a grant.

Will Invest in Neighborhoods (IIN) disclose my information provided on the application?

As part of this grant application, IIN will collect information to meet specific federal, state, and local reporting requirements and to improve program quality and service delivery. IIN protects all clients' personally identifiable information from unauthorized disclosure.