

APPLICATION GUIDE

King County Community Reinvestment Business Grants

Guidance is provided for each category on what is being evaluated and how it will be scored.

You do not need to have applied for a grant before or be familiar with business or workforce terms to do well. Aim for clear, honest, and specific answers.

This grant opportunity is specifically designed for businesses at different stages. There is no single standard — reviewers are trained to score applications based on what is realistic for your business's size and how far along you are.

What Is Being Evaluated — 100 Points Total

Evaluation Category	What is being evaluated	Points
1. Eligibility & Tier Fit	The application meets grant requirements and the tier selected matches the business's current situation.	10
2. Use of Funds & Plan	The plan for how grant money will be spent is clear, specific, and connected to workforce goals.	15
3. Workforce Goals & Expected Impact	The goals set are realistic and make sense for the business's size, stage, and tier.	15
4. Business Sustainability	The application clearly explains how the funds will support the long-term sustainability and success of their business.	10
5. Priority Population Alignment	The business is owned by priority population communities or the individual starting a business is from these communities.	15
6. EcSA Alignment	The business employs EcSA (Economic Security for All) participants, commits to prioritizing them for hiring and training opportunities, or the individual starting a business is an EcSA participant.	15
7. Grant Readiness	The application is internally consistent — the timeline, goals, budget, and narrative responses align with each other and with the business situation described, reflecting the organization and awareness that grant management requires.	10
8. Budget	The budget is clear, realistic, and makes sense for the activities described.	10
Total Points		100

The Three Grant Tiers

Tier	Who it is for	What a strong application looks like
Tier 1 <i>Start Up</i>	An entrepreneur looking to start a business, a business owner who is just starting out or working toward their first hire.	Plans to grow toward hiring someone; wants to increase their own income; has a clear, focused use of funds. Goals are small but realistic.
Tier 2 <i>Recovery</i>	A business that has employees and has faced challenges. The goal is to stabilize, keep staff, and improve working conditions.	Focused on keeping the team together, improving job quality, and getting the business on steadier ground. Not necessarily about adding jobs.
Tier 3 <i>Growth</i>	An established business that is ready to expand. May want to hire more people, increase wages, or create training and advancement opportunities.	Plans to hire, raise wages, create pathways for advancement, or build a training program. Goals match the business's size and capacity.

Choose the tier that honestly reflects where your business is right now, not where you hope to be. Reviewers are looking for a good fit between the tier you selected and the situation you describe.

Category 1: Eligibility & Tier Fit | 10 Points

Choose the tier that honestly reflects your business's current situation — where you are now, not where you hope to be.

Note: Applications that do not meet the basic eligibility requirements will not move forward to scoring. If you are unsure whether you qualify or about which tier to select, contact us before submitting.

Scoring Guide

Score	What this looks like
9–10	Meets all eligibility requirements. The tier selected clearly and accurately reflects the business's current stage and situation.
5–8	Meets basic eligibility. The tier is a reasonable choice but may not be the clearest fit.
0–4	The applicant is eligible, but the tier selected does not match the business stage or situation.

Category 2: Use of Funds & Plan | 15 Points

Two narrative questions in the application feed into this category. The first asks you to explain your grant request in more detail — describe what you plan to fund and how each activity connects to your business and workforce goals. Think of this as your chance to help reviewers understand the items you requested and why they matter. Be specific: what will you fund, what will you do with it, and how does it connect to hiring, retaining staff, training, wages, or job quality?

The second question asks for your planned or anticipated timeline for using the funds and accomplishing your goals. Reviewers are looking for a realistic sense of what you will do and when — not a formal project plan, just a clear and honest picture of how you expect things to unfold during the grant period. There is no minimum timeline, but planned timelines should not exceed 12 months.

Scoring Guide

Score	What this looks like
13–15	The grant request is well explained and easy to follow. Each activity connects clearly to a workforce goal. The timeline is realistic and makes sense for the business's size, tier, and goals.
7–12	The plan and timeline are present and generally reasonable. The connection between activities and workforce goals exists but could be clearer. The timeline gives some sense of sequence but may be vague.
0–6	The plan is vague or does not clearly explain how funds will be used. Workforce connections are missing or hard to follow. The timeline is absent, unrealistic, or does not align with the described plan.

Category 3: Workforce Goals & Expected Impact | 15 Points

The goals and numbers you enter in the impact metrics section help reviewers understand what you expect to achieve. There are no right or wrong target numbers. Be honest about where you are now and realistic about where you could be in 6–12 months with this support.

Reviewers will score based on what is filled out as some fields will be intentionally left blank, have a '0' as the goal number, or entered as 'N/A' or 'Not Applicable' if they do not apply to your goals or planned use of funds—this is expected and will not negatively impact your score.

Scoring Guide

Score	What this looks like
13–15	Goals are specific, realistic, and clearly connected to how the funds will be used. They make sense for the business's size, stage, and tier.
7–12	Goals are present and generally reasonable. Some targets may be vague or not fully connected to the proposed activities.
0–6	Goals are vague, do not make sense for the tier or funding request, or no goal targets are entered.

Category 4: Business Sustainability | 10 Points

Two narrative questions in the application feed into this category. The first asks how this grant — and what you accomplish with it — would support the long-term sustainability and success of your business. Think beyond the immediate purchase or activity. Explain what becomes possible because of this investment and why that matters for your business's future. How does it help you stay open, grow stronger, serve more people, or build toward something lasting? You do not need to use formal business language — write as if you are explaining to someone who wants your business to succeed and is asking: why does this matter for your future?

The second question asks whether you will use or leverage other funding or resources alongside this grant — such as other grants, loans or lines of credit, personal or owner funds, in-kind support, workforce or training subsidies, or other resources. Include estimated amounts for anything you list. There is no wrong answer — you will not be penalized if you are not combining this with other funding. But if you are, sharing it demonstrates planning, commitment, and that you have thought through what it will take to succeed.

Scoring Guide

Score	What this looks like
9–10	The applicant clearly connects the grant to the long-term sustainability and success of their business — explaining what becomes possible and why it matters for their future. If other resources are leveraged, they are named with estimated amounts and strengthen the case for feasibility.
5–8	The applicant addresses long-term sustainability but stays closer to the immediate activity than the longer-term outcome. Other resources may or may not be mentioned — if they are, estimated amounts may be missing or the connection to the plan is not fully explained.
0–4	The sustainability narrative is missing or describes only what will be purchased without explaining longer-term value or impact. The application does not give reviewers a clear sense of why this investment matters for the business's future.

Category 5: Priority Population Alignment | 15 Points

This funding prioritizes investment in CRP priority populations as stated in the [Community Reinvestment Project](#) and [Washington State Community Reinvestment Fund Program Policy](#). If you employ and/or your business primarily serves people from these communities, share that information in your application as well.

Scoring Guide

Score	What this looks like
13–15	The individual applicant is from a CRP priority population (Black, Latine, Native American, Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander) or the majority of business ownership is from these communities.
7–12	The applicant is from another underserved community, and/or the business employs a significant number of priority population workers, and/or the business primarily serves CRP priority population communities.
0–6	No clear connection to CRP priority populations is described — neither through ownership, workforce, nor the community the business serves.

Category 6: EcSA Alignment | 15 Points

This funding prioritizes a strong demonstration of benefit for [Economic Security for All](#) (EcSA) participants as stated in the [Washington State Community Reinvestment Fund Program Policy](#).

If you are an EcSA participant yourself, if you currently employ EcSA participants, or if you will prioritize EcSA participants for hiring or training opportunities created by the grant, indicate that in your application. If you engage with EcSA participants through your business's services, describe that as well. If you are not sure whether you have an EcSA connection, describe the communities your business serves, supports and employs.

Scoring Guide

Score	What this looks like
13–15	The applicant is an EcSA participant, currently employs EcSA participants, and/or has committed in the application to prioritizing EcSA participants for hiring or training opportunities created by this grant.

Score	What this looks like
7–12	The applicant demonstrates meaningful engagement with EcSA participants or the communities EcSA serves in other ways — for example, through narrative responses describing services, partnerships, or community connections relevant to EcSA populations.
0–6	No connection or commitment to EcSA participants is described. The application does not demonstrate engagement with EcSA or the populations EcSA serves.

Category 7: Grant Readiness | 10 Points

Reviewers look across your full application to see whether the different sections are consistent with each other. Does your timeline reflect what you said you would do? Do your goals and target values match the business situation you described? Do your narrative responses tell the same story as your budget? A well-organized, internally consistent application is itself a sign of readiness — not because you need prior grant experience, but because it shows you have thought through your plan from multiple angles. The more your application holds together as a whole, the stronger this score will be.

Scoring Guide

Score	What this looks like
9–10	The application is internally consistent. The timeline, goals, budget, and narrative responses align with each other and with the business situation described. The different sections reinforce rather than contradict each other, reflecting organization and self-awareness.
5–8	The application is mostly consistent but has some gaps or minor contradictions between sections — for example, goals or target values that feel slightly disconnected from the business situation described, or a timeline that does not fully align with the described activities. Generally on track but leaves some open questions.
0–4	There are notable inconsistencies across sections. The timeline, goals, budget, or narrative responses contradict or do not align with each other or with the business situation described. The application does not hold together as a whole in a way that gives reviewers confidence the applicant can follow through.

Category 8: Budget | 10 Points

Your budget, entered in the Grant Request Table, should show what you plan to spend the grant money on and how much each thing costs. You do not need exact quotes for everything, but your costs should be realistic and make sense for what you are entering in the table and describing in the narrative on how you plan to use the funds. Every item in your budget should be supported by what you describe in your plan. Basically, the budget and your plan should tell the same story.

Scoring Guide

Score	What this looks like
9–10	Budget is clear and specific. Each item is explained and supported in the narrative/plan. Costs are realistic and seem accurate to support what is described.
5–8	Budget is mostly clear with minor gaps. Most items connect to the plan. Minor questions but overall reasonable.
0–4	Budget is vague, incomplete, or does not match the described plan. Costs are unexplained or out of proportion with the proposed activities.