



Request for Proposals
BOLD Funding Program FY27 Cycle
Request for Proposal Issuance Date: July 13, 2026
Proposal Submission Deadline: August 13, 2026
Performance Period: January 4, 2027-January 3, 2028

I) Introduction

The City of Birmingham's Department of Innovation and Economic Opportunity (IEO) is soliciting proposals to provide public funds to any firm, corporation, or other business entity, public or private, for the purpose of promoting economic development in Birmingham. IEO is requesting creative, evidence-based proposals for programming and services that advance economic resilience and mobility in Birmingham under the Building Opportunities for Lasting Development (BOLD) funding program. IEO is working to fuel an ecosystem that allows innovation and opportunity to thrive by providing resources to nurture talent; by establishing infrastructure that supports the growth of women-, minority-, and disadvantaged businesses; and by focusing on developing our small businesses. Now in its ninth year, the BOLD funding program seeks to develop partnerships with community organizations that share IEO's vision of making Birmingham the model of an inclusive and resilient economy.

Consideration of BOLD proposals is weighted upon measurable community impact in one or more of the following objectives and in one or more of the following geographic priority areas.

BOLD Objectives

- Small businesses: provide resources to Birmingham entrepreneurs and small business owners who have been in operation in Birmingham for over two years, generating revenue of less than \$400,000, to sustain or scale their businesses.
- Workforce development: implement a strategy for Birmingham residents to access good jobs through training, education and job-readiness interventions that are directly connected to employer demand with a focus on dismantling barriers that limit labor force participation.
- Eliminating barriers: address barriers to economic prosperity for minority, women, and disadvantaged residents and/or business enterprises (MWDBEs) within the City of Birmingham (e.g. access to training, scholarships, transportation, healthcare, childcare, food access, housing, etc)
- Creative placemaking: advance economic resilience, mobility, and inclusive growth in Birmingham's neighborhoods
- High-Growth Industries: use data-driven and innovative approaches to invest in Birmingham's high-growth, high-demand industries (e.g. clean energy, construction, medical, technology, advanced manufacturing, etc)

Geographic Priority Areas

- East Lake
- Ensley
- Five Points West
- Fourth Avenue Business District / Civil Rights District
- North Birmingham
- Smithfield/Elyton
- Titusville
- Woodlawn

This funding is authorized under Mayor Woodfin's FY 2027-2028 budget, which allocates up to \$1,500,000 to IEO for this funding program, as amended. Upon receiving notice of an award, organizations will work with the Office of City Attorney to finalize an agreement, including a budget with clearly defined performance metrics and data sharing agreements. The City may structure agreements as loans at the City's discretion, in which case performance metrics will be used to determine the requirement for repayment. Agreement terms and performance metrics shall be negotiated with BOLD finalists and shall be subject to City Council approval.

Agreements related to inclusive economic or industrial development as a result of this RFP will be awarded as professional service contracts pursuant to Amendment No. 772 to the Constitution of Alabama (1901) (Section 94.01(a)(3) of the Recompiled Constitution of Alabama) which authorizes the City to lend its credit to or grant public funds and things of value in aid of or to any corporation or other business entity for the purpose of promoting the economic or industrial development of the City.

THE FOLLOWING SCOPES OF SERVICES FOR THE BOLD PROGRAM SHOULD BE TREATED AS A GUIDELINE IN PREPARING A PROPOSAL RESPONSE, AND MAY BE SUBJECT TO NEGOTIATIONS RESULTING IN A FINAL AGREEMENT. THE APPLICANT SHOULD PROVIDE A PROPOSAL WHICH MEETS THE APPLICABLE SCOPE REQUIREMENTS SET FORTH BELOW.

II) Eligibility & Criteria

A. Eligibility:

Funding will be awarded on a competitive basis through a Request for Proposals (RFP) process. Applications are encouraged from Alabama non-profit organizations (IRC Section 501(c)(3) entities preferred), post-secondary education institutions, and relevant for-profit enterprises, particularly those with a social impact focus. Partnerships are encouraged, and groups of organizations may apply as a consortium of partners with a unified application. The funding amount of most BOLD awards ranges from \$50,000 to \$150,000, though compelling proposals of other funding amounts will be considered. All project funding must go toward serving only residents of the City of Birmingham and/or businesses with valid City of Birmingham business licenses. Funding will be awarded to organizations with missions that align with the City of Birmingham's and IEO's priorities.

Organizations that currently receive other City of Birmingham funding are eligible to apply for BOLD. However, BOLD is intended to encourage new ideas, ensure wide impact across Birmingham's diverse organizations, and foster investment in organizations for which a small amount of funding can allow organizations to scale and create a larger impact. Therefore, organizations that do not currently receive funding from other City of Birmingham sources may be considered more competitive in the application process. Additionally, the specific project that is proposed for BOLD funding cannot be supported by other City funding sources (i.e. the budget narrative for the proposal should not include other City of Birmingham funding sources).

Applicants that have previously received BOLD funding are eligible to apply. However, BOLD is intended to encourage new ideas and foster investment in organizations for which a small amount of funding can allow organizations to scale and create a larger impact. Therefore, new BOLD awardees may be considered more competitive in the application process.

The City of Birmingham, as a matter of public policy, encourages participation of minority-, women-, and disadvantaged business enterprises (MWDBEs) to the maximum extent possible. Therefore, the City is committed to awarding contracts to firms that identify as MWDBE, that are dedicated to diversity, and that provide high-quality services. The City strongly encourages firms that are certified as MWBEs by the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA) to submit responses to this RFP.

B. Scoring Criteria:

Funding will be awarded to applicants whose programs demonstrate:

- A mission-oriented focus on building and growing a more inclusive economy in Birmingham
- Alignment with one or more BOLD objectives with a track record of working on the proposed objective(s)
- A focus on one or more of the BOLD geographic priority areas with a track record in the communities the applicants propose to serve
- Intimate understanding of the city's economic landscape, including a data-defined problem and solution with measurable standards for success
- A compelling project plan to meet the proposal's objectives, including work plan, budget narrative, and leveraged resources to complement any funding that could be awarded
- Apparent fiscal sustainability and capacity to execute on the scope of objectives outlined in the project narrative and project work plan

III) BOLD Application & Program Timeline

The City reserves the right to modify this schedule at its discretion. Notification of changes in connection with this RFP will be posted and made available to all interested parties via the City's BOLD webpage at:

ico.birminghamal.gov/bold

Calendar of Applications Phases & Milestones

Event		Date
Phase 0	Issuance of RFP	July 13, 2026
	RFP Information Session	July 16, 2026
	Proposal Workshop #1	July 23, 2026
	Proposal Workshop #2	July 30, 2026
	Proposal Workshop #3	August 6, 2026
	Application Deadline	August 13, 2026
Phase 1	Review of Written Applications	August 17 - 28, 2026
	Finalist Presentations (In-person)	September 15, 2026
	Grantee Selections & Negotiations	September 21 - 25, 2026
Phase 2	Review by Council Subcommittees	October 2026
	Review by Full Council	November 2026
	Awardee Announcement	December 2026
Phase 3	Performance Period	January 4, 2027 – January 3, 2028

Selections will not be final until approved by the City Council. Selected projects will be reviewed by both the Economic Development Committee and Budget and Finance Committee of the City Council for approval, followed by approval by the full City Council.

IV) Contents of Proposal

- A. Completed application consisting of a series of short response questions
- B. Budget narrative
- C. Organizational status documentation
- D. Fiscal sustainability evidence
- E. Partner Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs), if applicable
- F. Supplemental application materials

A. Application Questions

To apply, each applicant must submit a form consisting of a series of short response questions. This form can be accessed via the BOLD website: ieo.birminghamal.gov/bold.

B. Budget Narrative

Applicants must download and complete the Budget Narrative Template as part of their application. The template can be found on the BOLD website: ieo.birminghamal.gov/bold. Completed Budget Narratives can be submitted through the application form.

i. Leverage

Proposals should detail a cost matching plan in their budget narratives, with matching funds secured at a rate of 20% of the total project budget (not 20% of the amount of funds requested from BOLD). For example, if an application has a total project budget of \$250,000, the proposal may request up to \$200,000 from BOLD and provide the other \$50,000 toward the project as leveraged funding. Proposals that do not meet the 20% leveraged funding requirement of the entire project budget will not be eligible for consideration.

Leveraged resources can be achieved by a commitment from the applicant or through various partnerships, public or private. However, leveraged funds cannot be sourced from other City of Birmingham funding. Eligible leveraged funding can be in the form of cash, in-kind, or donated materials. Construction costs can count toward the overall leveraged costs. IEO will accept technical platforms as a leveraged resource. Existing staff salaries can count toward leveraged funding if a portion of their work is allocated to the proposed BOLD project and if the organization pays the employee with funds that are specifically used to run the proposed program. All personnel salaries associated with the project must meet or exceed a livable wage, which can be referenced through [MIT's living wage calculator](#). The City of Birmingham will also accept the quantified value of volunteer hours to the project. However, all leveraged funding for a proposal cannot be exclusively through personnel costs, overhead costs, and/or volunteer hours. Additionally, qualifying leveraged funding must go toward serving only residents of the City of Birmingham and/or businesses with valid City of Birmingham business licenses.

ii. Funding Restrictions

The BOLD funding program is intended to support programs, projects, and services that advance one or more BOLD objectives in Birmingham communities and support Birmingham residents as directly as possible. All project funding must go toward serving only residents of the City of Birmingham and/or businesses with valid City of Birmingham business licenses. It is also intended to support programs that are sustainable beyond the

BOLD performance period. Therefore, proposals that utilize the majority (60% or more) of the funding request to support programming and direct services to Birmingham residents, rather than staff and operational costs, may be considered more competitive. If funding for personnel costs is included in project budget, either as a request for BOLD funding or as leveraged funding, it must meet or exceed a livable wage, which can be referenced through [MIT's living wage calculator](#).

Funding for construction will not be provided. However, construction costs can count toward the overall leveraged costs total. Any equipment over \$5,000 will require prior approval from the IEO. All sub-contracts associated with the project must be submitted to IEO in the quarter in which they are executed. Lead partners are responsible for auditing the performance of subcontractors and guaranteeing compliance with reporting criteria.

C. Organizational Status Documentation

Applicants – or lead applicants for partnerships – will be asked to upload documentation to the application form that verifies their type of organization by providing a certificate of compliance from the state of domicile. In the event that applicants are not in possession of a certificate, a screenshot PDF of the applicant's business entity record with the state of domicile will be accepted. For example, business entity records in Alabama can be accessed [here](#).

D. Organizational Fiscal Sustainability

Applicants—or lead applicants for partnerships—will be asked to upload financial information to the application form to validate organizational capacity and fiscal sustainability. All applicants will be required to submit the following:

- Profit and Loss Statement

And:

- If a tax-exempt entity, IRS Form 990 or 990-N for previous fiscal year
- If a for-profit entity, a recent audit report (within the last two fiscal years)

E. Partner Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) (if applicable)

If applicants include partner organizations in their proposals, lead applicants must provide MOUs that indicate the partner's commitment and role in the proposal. Applicants can find the Partner MOU template on the BOLD website: ieo.birminghamal.gov/bold. Completed Partner MOUs can be submitted through the application form.

F. Supplemental Application Materials

Additionally, applicants may feel the need to attach reasonably appropriate additional material relevant to the partnership or the application (i.e. letters of recommendation, organizational charts, organizational budgets, resumes of key staff, etc). These can be submitted through the application form.

V) Reservation of Rights

The City reserves the right to award agreements resulting from this RFP, which will be given to the highest rated proposal or proposals, based on the evaluation criteria set forth in this RFP.

Nothing contained herein shall obligate the City to award an agreement on the basis of this RFP. Any agreement awarded is subject to compliance with all provisions of Federal, State, and Local Laws.

The City of Birmingham reserves the right to award all or any part of this funding, to accept or reject any or all proposals, and to waive any informalities or technical irregularities or omissions in the proposal. The City of Birmingham may award contracts in whole or in part, or cancel this RFP and solicit new proposals if, in the City's sole judgment, the best interests and needs of the City of Birmingham will be served.

All costs incurred by an Applicant to respond to this RFP will be wholly the responsibility of the Applicant. Proposals submitted in response to this RFP, except copyrighted material, shall become the property of the City of Birmingham for administrative purposes only. Response to this RFP does not constitute an agreement between the Applicant and the City of Birmingham.

The City of Birmingham is committed to a policy of equal opportunity and does not discriminate against vendors on the basis of age, sex, sexual orientation, race, color, creed, religion, ethnicity, national origin, disability, marital status, familial status, veteran status or any other basis protected under federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and ordinances.

It is each Applicant's responsibility to carefully review all the requirements of this RFP, including the scope of work, specifications and terms and conditions. Further, it is the Applicant's responsibility to ask questions, request clarification, or otherwise advise the City if any language, specifications or requirements of this RFP appear to be ambiguous, contradictory, restrictive or if they limit Applicants that could meet the requirements of this RFP to a single source.

VI) Award Notices

It is unlikely that projects will receive the total amount requested. Applicants who are awarded, but not at the full amount requested, will be contacted to amend and revise their scope of services to develop project agreements as needed. This outreach will happen in mid-September 2026.

Subject to approval of the Birmingham City Council, when required by law, upon the execution of an agreement to include a defined scope of services, project work plan, budget, and performance metrics, all funding will be disbursed in two installments. Funding amount will vary by project scope and purpose. All awarded projects must have the capacity to execute an agreement, approved by the City Attorney's Office, on or by January 4, 2027. These agreements will primarily be derived from awarded scopes of services and mutually agreed upon outcome metrics.

VII) Administrative Policy Requirements

As an attachment to each project agreement, awardees will be required to provide quarterly performance reports to IEO. Each project agreement will have clearly defined performance metrics that are derived from proposals and project negotiation, and progress toward performance metrics will be indicated through quarterly reporting. If funding recipients are unable to deliver satisfactory progress or fail to report outcomes throughout the performance period, this may result in the loss of BOLD funding and projects. If

agreements are structured as loans, the requirement for repayment will be subject to satisfactory reporting of performance metrics. The City of Birmingham also reserves the right to perform an audit of projects throughout the performance period. In order to ensure impact of the BOLD program, the City may request non-personally identifiable demographic information of participants and/or businesses served from BOLD awardees.

VIII) Performance Period

The performance period for funding recipients is between January 4, 2027 and January 3, 2028, and proposals should contain quarterly targets for the relevant progress metrics. Funding recipients will receive funds in two installments: 50 percent of funds at the beginning of the performance period and 50 percent upon delivery of **satisfactory progress toward goal(s) by July 14, 2027.**

In alignment with the City of Birmingham's core values of **C**ustomer Service, **E**fficiency, **E**ffectiveness, **T**ransparency, and **A**ccountability (CEETA), funding recipients will be required to present their mid-point progress to the City Council in July 2027. IEO will work with City Council staff to coordinate the presentations (approx. 5 minutes each).