

## **ECONOMIC GARDENING 2.0 Cohort #4 Application Guidelines and Qualifications**

“Economic Gardening 2.0” is an economic development program designed to provide sophisticated market research, and tailor-made small business technical assistance to qualifying local companies poised for growth. The City partners with the National Center for Economic Gardening (NCEG <https://economicgardening.org/>), Sacramento State University’s Career Center fellowship program, and Berkeley Strategy Advisors to implement this program.

Participants in the Economic Gardening 2.0 program receive high-level research, strategy consulting, workforce assistance, and implementation support including a matching cash reimbursement grant of up to \$50,000 to support each company’s growth.

### **Program Outline**

Following orientation, companies receive 40 hours of services from the NCEG's team of specialists. The specialist team consists of seasoned researchers that leverage sophisticated corporate databases, GIS systems, SEO and web marketing tools that provide the CEO with data and conclusions about key issues for each individual company.

Upon completion of NCEG consulting services, participants will work with the program administrator to determine activities to implement NCEG recommendations with matching grant funds from the City of Sacramento.

The following activities represent the types of projects the City is encouraging through this program:

1. Enhancing online presence – website, social media, blogs, search engine optimization, etc.
2. Hiring additional staff
3. Expansion or securing a new location or facility within city limits<sup>1</sup>
4. Equipment purchases for increased capacity
5. Development of business or marketing plans
6. Business/strategic planning & financial planning
7. New product or service development
8. Professional advisory or support services
9. Professional development for staff
10. Marketing activities such as conference attendance

### **Expectations**

To get the most out of this program, the company CEO or President is required to be available to participate in orientation and the discovery meeting with NCEG specialists. It is also highly

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<sup>1</sup> Note: any projects that involve construction, alteration, demolition, installation, or repair work done under contract and paid in whole or in part out of public funds will be subject to paying contractors a prevailing wage. To learn more about prevailing wage requirements, visit: <https://www.dir.ca.gov/public-works/prevailing-wage.html>

recommended that a staff member empowered to make decisions for the company is present as well in case they need to serve as back-up for further NCEG meetings.

We anticipate the following timeline for Economic Gardening engagement. The exact timeline will depend on the complexity of the research questions undertaken by NCEG specialists and the projects grantees implement with grant funds:

- Orientation (3 hours) and welcome mixer – February 2025
- Discovery Call with NCEG specialists (1.5 hours) – February or March 2025 depending on company availability
- NCEG specialists research on companies' behalf and communicate via email on finalizing research questions – February or March 2025
- Company officers meet with NCEG specialists 4-6 times for research debriefs (1 hour each) – March 2025 to July 2025 (depending on company availability and complexity of research question)
- Companies work with program administrator to finalize grant proposal – July 2025
- Contracting begins with City of Sacramento – August 2025

Grant funding is reimbursement-based and cannot be incurred before the contract with the City is executed. For the purposes of this program, companies will not receive reimbursement for purchases made and work done before the contract is executed. If a company is unable to execute a contract with the City before the beginning of the next cohort, the company forfeits their right to grant funds.

Grantees will have 12 months to expend funds once the contract is executed. Participants will be required to submit quarterly progress reports and spending reports until grant funds and matching funds are spent. For three years following the full expense of grant and matching contract funds, participants will submit annual progress reports.

### **Eligibility Criteria**

Applicants must meet the following eligibility criteria to have its application scored:

- Be a for-profit, privately held company headquartered and operating in the city of Sacramento
- Have between \$1 million and \$50 million in annual revenue
- 50% of revenue must be generated from the export or sale of goods and services from markets outside the county of Sacramento
- Employ at least 5 but no more than 99 employees (including the owner) at the Sacramento headquarters
- Demonstrate growth in employment or revenue for at least 2 of the past 5 years

### **Submission Process and Timeline**

Please note, applicants must respond to all required questions to submit the application online. Application questions can be reviewed in Appendix A. The City will only review and score applications submitted on Submittable at [cityofsacramentooid.submittable.com/submit/313229/economic-gardening-2025](https://cityofsacramentooid.submittable.com/submit/313229/economic-gardening-2025). An email will be returned from Submittable to verify the receipt of your application.

This schedule may be altered at any time at the sole discretion of the City of Sacramento:

- Application open: December 9, 2024
- Questions accepted until: December 18, 2024
- Question answers posted: December 23, 2024
- Application close: January 17th, 2025
- Awardees notified: Month of February 2025
- Orientation and NCEG Engagement begins: First quarter of 2025

All questions regarding this grant solicitation are to be directed in writing via Google form at: <https://forms.gle/5Q9tMbSX87CLXtHQ6>. An addendum addressing questions submitted by the deadline will be posted on Submittable.

To ensure your experience with Submittable goes smoothly, see the following tips:

- Submittable works best on Google Chrome, Firefox, and Safari. Internet Explorer is not supported. Please make sure you are using a supported browser.
- Particularly for questions requiring lengthy responses, compose your written responses in a Word document then copy and paste into Submittable.
- Save your draft application frequently using the “Save” button at the top of the screen.
- When saving your draft to return to at a future time, log out of the Submittable portal and relog-in each session.
- Be sure to “allow” list notification emails from Submittable and check the email you used to sign up for your Submittable account regularly.

### **Application Review Process**

1. Staff and the consulting team will review applications for minimum eligibility.
2. The Review Panel consisting of outside experts and staff will score the applications and make recommendations to staff for selection.
3. Selected companies will be notified of final decisions in the first quarter of 2025.

### **Scoring Criteria**

The following criteria will be used to evaluate and score applications:

- **Leadership and preparedness to participate (20 points)**
  - Excellent (20 points) – Applicant has identified key team members including President or CEO to engage with the program who have skills and experience to work with NCEG

specialists to identify solutions for business challenges. Applicant demonstrates understanding of program requirements and outcomes in relation to their business.

- Good (15) – Applicant has identified key team members with mostly relevant qualifications and authority to implement program recommendations. Applicant is aware of program requirements and outcomes.
- Fair (10) – Applicant has identified key team members who are empowered to make decisions but qualifications and readiness to participate in the program unclear. Applicant has some idea of program requirements and outcomes.
- Poor (5) – Key team member(s) identified are not empowered to make changes within the business or do not have skills or experience to implement changes. Applicant may miss the purpose of the program and what is being asked of them.
- Inadequate (0 points) – Relevant team members not identified and qualifications missing. Applicant does not demonstrate an understanding of program and requirements.
- **Business plan and strategy (20 points)**
  - Excellent (20 points) - Detailed and realistic business plan that outlines the vision and goals of the organization in the short and long-term. Financial projections are clear and feasible. Business plan shows how the applicant differentiates themselves from the competition and addresses industry challenges.
  - Good (15) – Applicant has outlined business plan to achieve goals of the organization identified, but missing some details for clarity. Financial projections are not entirely clear or some feasibility is lacking. Business plan gives some indication of how they differentiate themselves from the competition and address industry challenges.
  - Fair (10) - Applicant has an outlined business plan to achieve goals of the organization identified, but missing key details for clarity. Financial projections are unclear, but not unreasonable. Applicant's business plan shows some consideration for their unique value proposition and industry challenges but doesn't fully articulate what sets them apart.
  - Poor (5) – Applicant has some elements of a business plan outlined, but not completely. Financial projections unfounded. Applicant's business plan shows some knowledge of industry challenges, but not how their business is uniquely qualified to address them over their competition.

- Inadequate (0 points) – Applicant is missing many key details of their business plan. Financial projections are unfounded or missing. Applicant’s unique value proposition is missing or entirely unclear.
  
- **Diversity and Inclusivity (20 points)**
  - Excellent (20 points) – Applicant clearly demonstrates practices that promote a diverse and inclusive workplace in their company including supplier diversity. Applicant regularly engages with the local community outside of regular business activities.
  - Good (15) - Applicant incorporates some practices that promote a diverse and inclusive workplace in their company including supplier diversity. Applicant occasionally engages with the local community outside of regular business activities.
  - Fair (10) - Applicant has made some cursory efforts to implement practices to encourage a diverse and inclusive workplace in their company including supplier diversity. Applicant irregularly engages with the local community outside of regular business activities irregularly.
  - Poor(5) - Applicant may have some practices that promote a diverse and inclusive workplace in their company including supplier diversity, but it is unclear. Applicant rarely engages with the local community outside of regular business activities.
  - Inadequate (0 points) – Applicant has given no consideration to practices that promote a diverse and inclusive workplace in their company. Applicant does not engage with the local community outside of regular business activities.
  
- **Innovation and program impact (40 points)**
  - Excellent (40 points) – Clear demonstration of innovation through new or improved products, services or processes that have led to positive and measurable business outcomes in three of the past five years. Applicant has identified clear areas where marketing and business strategy coaching will impact their business and there is strong, clear evidence that applicant can benefit from services of Economic Gardening 2.0 program. Business operates in or targets a growth industry.
  - Good (30) – Some demonstration of innovation through new or improved products, services or processes that have led to positive and business outcomes. Applicant has identified mostly clear areas where marketing and business strategy coaching will impact their business and there is clear evidence that applicant can benefit from services of Economic Gardening 2.0 program. Business operates in or targets a growth industry.

- Fair (20) – Some demonstration of innovation through new or improved products, services or processes that either is not tied to positive business outcomes or is not clearly tied to positive business outcomes. Applicant has vaguely identified areas where marketing and business strategy consulting will impact their business and there is some evidence that applicant can benefit from services of Economic Gardening 2.0 program. Business operates in or targets a growth industry.
- Poor (10) – Very little demonstration of innovation through new or improved products, services or processes. Applicant hasn't clearly identified areas where marketing and business strategy consulting will impact their business and there is little evidence that applicant can benefit from services of Economic Gardening 2.0 program. Business does not operate in or target a growth industry.
- Inadequate (0 points) – No demonstration of innovation through new or improved products, services or processes. Applicant has not identified areas where marketing and business strategy consulting will impact their business and there is little evidence that applicant can benefit from services of Economic Gardening 2.0 program. Business does not operate in or target a growth industry.

- **Final Total: 100 Maximum points**

The City reserves the right to amend any part of this solicitation by issuing an addendum up to the due date/time for submittal. If necessary due to the revisions or amendments, the due date for applications may be postponed.

**Public Records**

All applications and application materials are public records. All information received from an applicant, whether received in connection with a grant application or in connection with any grant funded activities performed, will be disclosed upon receipt of a request for disclosure pursuant to the California Public Records Act. Application scores may also be disclosed.

## Appendix A – Application Questions

### Basic Information

1. Company Name (As filed with Secretary of State)
2. Business Address
3. Postal Code (Zip Code)
4. City
5. Business Phone Number
6. Is your business publicly owned or privately owned?
7. What language do you prefer to communicate in?

### Contact information

For the Economic Gardening program, we ask for one primary contact who can be available for all (or most) key activities and is empowered to make decisions. Please provide that individual's contact information below

8. Primary Company Officer Name
9. Primary Company Officer Title
10. Primary Company Officer Email Address
11. Work Phone Number
12. Cell Phone Number

### Business Information

13. In 50 words or less, please describe your business.
14. How many years has your business been in operation?
15. Is your business owned or co-owned by one or more women, minorities, veterans, or persons with a disability?(Multi-select)
16. What is your annual revenue in each of the past 4 years (2020, 2021, 2022, 2023)?
17. Provide financial statements for 2023 to confirm.
18. Are you on track to reach over \$1M in annual revenue for 2024?
19. What percentage of your revenue comes from outside Sacramento county? Please specify the geographic distribution of your sales.
20. Which industry does your business operate in? If known, what is your primary NAICS code?
21. How many full-time employees does your business currently have?
22. How many part-time employees does your business currently have?
23. Please upload documentation that verifies your current employee count.
24. How many of your current employees work from your Sacramento headquarters?
25. What is your current work structure? (i.e. hybrid, in-person, fully remote)

## Leadership Team Questions

26. Please provide the qualifications and experience of the team members that will engage with the Economic Gardening 2.0 process or upload resume(s).
27. Has your business or team previously worked with external advisors or consultants? If so, please provide specific examples of how they helped your business.
28. How does your leadership team stay up to date on industry trends and business best practices?
29. What is the leadership team's vision for the business? How do they plan to lead the company through future growth or expansion?
30. Provide examples of how your leadership team has successfully managed crises or major challenges in the past. What lessons were learned?

## Business Model Questions

31. Do you have a current business plan? (Yes/No)
32. [If answer is yes] Please upload a copy of your business plan that includes goals, operations, and financial projections.
33. [If answer is no] Would you like to upload a business model canvas or answer the following questions to give us an idea of your business model?
  1. You can down the file here: <https://www.strategyzer.com/library/the-business-model-canvas>
34. [If upload is selected] Please upload the file here.
35. [If answer questions is selected] (Customer Segments) Who are your customers and what are their needs?
  1. (Value Proposition) How does your business meet your customers' needs and why do they prefer your business and its products or services to the current alternatives?
  2. (Channels) How are your services and/or products communicated and delivered to your customers? Is that working?
  3. (Customer Relationships) What touchpoints do you have with your customers through the sales process?
  4. (Revenue Streams) How does your business earn revenue? Ideally, there is a connection between your customer needs and your value proposition.
  5. (Key Activities) What key activities help your business meet your customers' needs and separate you from your competition?
  6. (Key Partnerships) What resources does your business have that help you deliver your unique business strategy?
  7. (Cost Structures) What are your business' major costs? How are they linked to revenue?
36. If not included in your business plan, what is your current strategy for scaling your business over the next three to five years? How do you plan to achieve these goals?
37. In what ways does your business plan provide unique solutions or barriers to competition in your market? Provide examples of how your approach stands out.
38. How does innovation play a role in your business plan? Please explain how you've incorporated innovative technologies, processes, or business models that have led to measurable growth.
39. How do you measure progress toward achieving your business goals and the success of your business plan?

## Community Engagement

40. What are your current practices to encourage diversity and equity in your recruitment and hiring processes?
41. Do you have policies or programs in place to promote an inclusive culture within your business? If so, please describe.
42. How does your business promote inclusivity in selecting suppliers, consultants, partners, etc.
43. Do you use local suppliers and vendors?
44. How does your business engage with the local community?

## Market Advantage

45. What potential do you see for growth within your industry? How is your business positioned to take advantage of these opportunities?
46. What upcoming industry trends are you preparing for and how do they influence your business strategy?
47. Who are your main competitors and how do you differentiate your business from theirs?
48. What are the most significant industry challenges your business faces and what strategies are you using to address them?
49. What significant technology or equipment investments have you made? How have these contributed to new or improved product or service offerings?

## Program Impact

50. Please list the top three business challenges that you hope this program can help you address.
51. How do you believe your participation in the Economic Gardening 2.0 program will contribute to your overall business growth?