

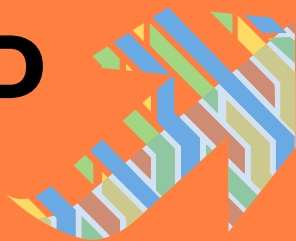


**BEYOND
OPEN**

SMALL BUSINESS GRANTS

FOUNDATION FOR
THE CAROLINAS

SUPPORTED BY WELLS FARGO'S
OPEN FOR BUSINESS FUND



ROUND 2

**Application
Guide**

beyondopenclt.com



Beyond Open is shaped by the voices, needs and aspirations of diverse small business owners in our Charlotte-Mecklenburg community.

Ideas and inputs gathered from one-on-one discussions, small groups, and surveys to all Round 1 applicants have guided core decisions on features for Round 2.

Round 2 features include:

a) Clear focus on diverse small businesses inside the six Corridors of Opportunity to maximize impacts where people, neighborhoods, communities, and diverse small businesses have been historically underserved. These communities are also where opportunities and needs are greatest.

b) Expanded applicant supports, including:

- creation of this Round 2 Application Guide.
- previews and guidance for Round 2 application questions.
- clear instructions on required documents and financial information.

c) A longer preparation period before applications are accepted on August 1 – 31.

This Application Guide can help diverse small business owners create the strongest application possible. There are no guarantees that applying for a Beyond Open grant will result in a grant award.

Preparing an application for Beyond Open can also help empower you to apply to many other small business grant and loan programs because these programs often require or ask for the same or very similar information, documents and responses to questions.



Beyond Open Small Business Grant Program (Beyond Open) is administered by FFTC Partners For Empowering Communities, a supporting organization of Foundation For The Carolinas, to help build economic mobility among diverse (minority, woman, veteran, LGBTQ+, persons with disabilities) small business owners in Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The program is made possible by support from the Wells Fargo Open for Business Fund.

Welcome to the Beyond Open Round 2 Application Guide

This guide provides an overview of the Round 2 application, guidance on responding to key questions, and other information to help Round 2 applicants prepare the strongest application possible. The information in this document is also included on the Beyond Open website at beyondopenclt.com.

Before beginning the Round 2 application, please carefully review the information provided in this guide, on the website and within Application Information Sessions to prepare the strongest application possible.

This Application Guide, beyondopenclt.com, and Beyond Open materials are the official source of accurate information about the Beyond Open grant program. Make sure any information you receive is supported by these official sources.

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Important to Know Before You Begin

Beyond Open is a very competitive small business grant program that will provide approximately \$5M of direct grants to diverse small businesses in three rounds for a total of \$15M.

More than 150 grants in amounts from \$10k to \$150k will be awarded in Round 2.

Over 3,200 applications were received for Round 1 with grant requests ranging from \$5k – \$250k.

Round 2 applicants should begin preparations as soon as possible prior to the application open period from August 1 – 31.

Applying for a Beyond Open grant does not guarantee an award.

Due to the high number of applications received, Beyond Open is unable to provide 1:1 feedback on individual applications received.

Round 2 Timeline



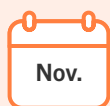
Learn more and prepare



Applications open



Applications close



Applicants notified

Beyond Open

Round 2 Overview

STEP 1 LEARN

- Beyond Open is a competitive grant program that can help diverse (minority, woman, veteran, LGBTQ+, persons with disabilities) small business owners invest in capital assets.
- Beyond Open grants do not need to be repaid.
- Beyond Open grants may be taxable events according to the US Internal Revenue Service. Business owners should consult their tax expert for guidance on the possible impacts of receiving a Beyond Open grant in 2023.
- Round 1 Grant Facts
 - # grant applications received: 3,200
 - # grants awarded: 178
 - \$ grants awarded: \$5.9M
 - \$ individual grant amounts: \$5k – \$250k
- Round 2 Grant Facts
 - # grant applications anticipated: 1k – 3k
 - # grants to be awarded: approximately 175
 - \$ all grants to be awarded: approx. \$5M
 - \$ individual grant amounts: \$10k – \$150k
- Beyond Open grants CAN be used to acquire equipment, technology, real estate or inventory (see examples on page 6).
- Beyond Open grants CANNOT be used for operating expenses including: payroll; advertising/marketing; legal, accounting or other professional services; maintenance costs; insurance; utilities; debt repayment; investment properties or expenses related to investment properties.
- Being eligible for, and applying for, a Beyond Open grant does not guarantee a grant award.
- Round 3 will open in 2024.

STEP 2 PREPARE

- Sign up for updates at beyondopenclt.com.
- Start preparing now.
- Review all available information in this guide and on the Beyond Open website.
- Carefully review Round 2 Eligibility and Required Documentation on pages 8 and 9.
- Participate in at least one Application Information Session. Full schedule of virtual, in-person and recorded sessions on the website.
- Reach out early to one of the Beyond Open Community Partner Organizations on page 10 for support and assistance, especially if you need to create a business plan, set up financial reporting and assemble or create financial documents.
- Confirm that a Beyond Open grant CAN be used for the capital asset you wish to acquire (see examples on page 6).
- Carefully review and be prepared to respond to all of the application questions shared on page 11.

STEP 3 APPLY

- The Round 2 application will be open from August 1 – 31 at beyondopenclt.com.
- Do not wait until the last minute to start and complete your application.
- Due to the high number of applications received, Beyond Open is unable to provide 1:1 feedback on individual applications received.

Beyond Open

Round 2 Overview

Grants CAN be used for:

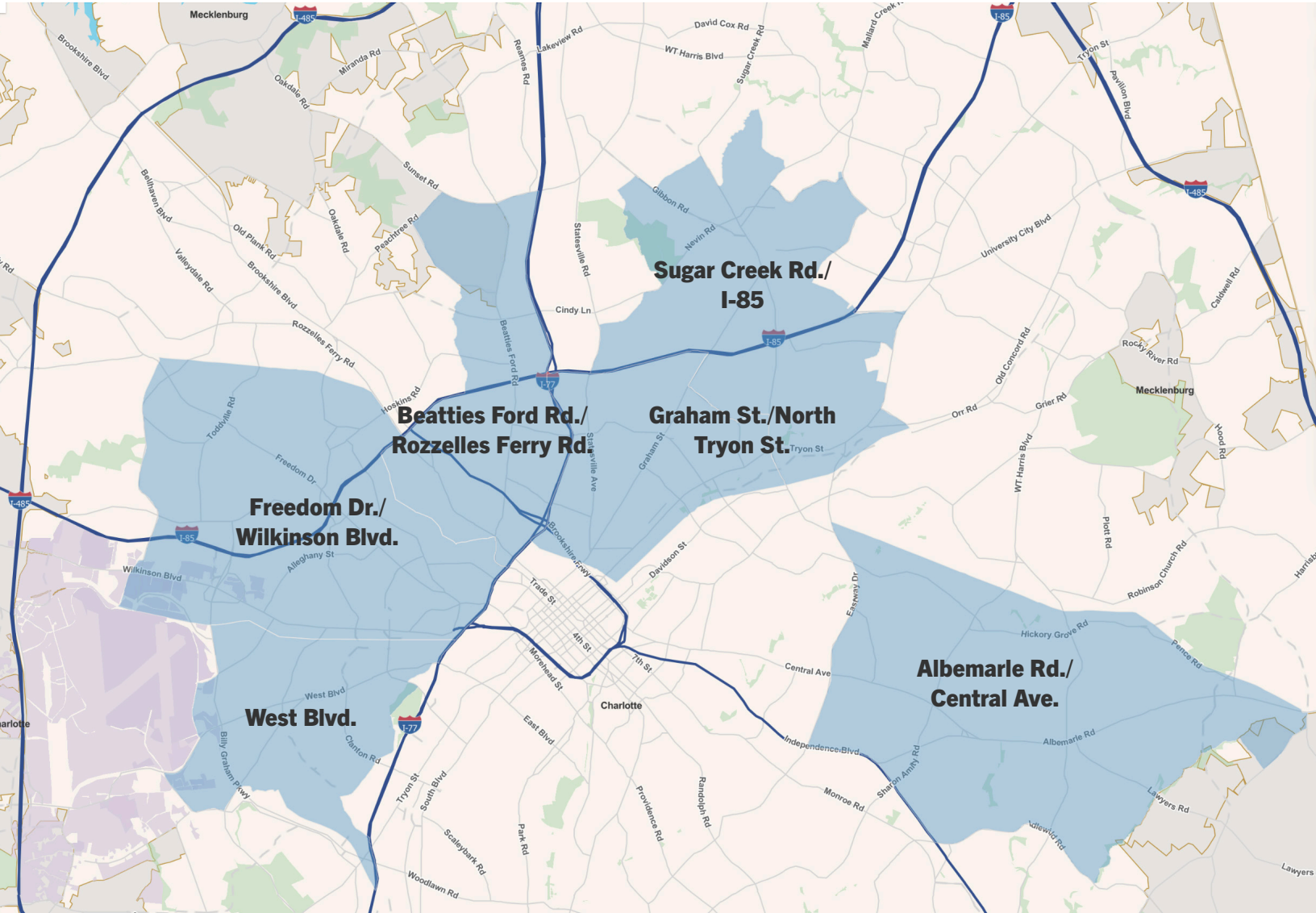
Capital assets eligible for Beyond Open grants are significant pieces of property that can be owned. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Computers, printers and other small office equipment
- Cell phones and other communications equipment
- Software licenses (up to one year)
- Build-out of a company website, an e-commerce website, sales system or digital commerce platform
- Hand tools or small appliances
- Minor store or space renovations or improvements
- Small office furnishings, display or showroom equipment
- Storefront beautification or new signage
- Store fixtures (display racks, built-in seating and counters, lighting)
- Business site improvements, HVAC equipment, windows, roofing replacement
- Safety, security and surveillance equipment
- Parking lot resurfacing
- Leading-edge technology
- Purchase of a warehouse or other commercial property (up to 20% of purchase price)
- Lease of a new commercial property (up to one year)
- Large inventory purchases
- Major equipment
- New vehicles (car, truck, van, food service, delivery) or vehicle upfits
- Specialty or industrial equipment
- Renewable energy sources via equipment or technology
- Other significant capital investments

Grants CANNOT be used for:

- Operating expenses
- Payroll
- Utilities
- Advertising/marketing
- Consulting
- Debt repayment
- Investment properties and investment property expenses
- Training, classes, certifications
- Insurance
- Consulting and professional services (legal, accounting, medical, marketing/advertising)
- Existing leases

Corridors of Opportunity Confirm Your Business Location



Before beginning your application, visit beyondopenclt.com to verify your physical business location by exact street address using the City of Charlotte on-line locator tool.

**Visit beyondopenclt.com
to verify your business location.**

Corridors of Opportunity*:

- Albemarle Rd./Central Ave.
- Beatties Ford Rd./Rozzelles Ferry Rd.
- Freedom Dr./Wilkinson Blvd.
- Graham St./North Tryon St.
- Sugar Creek Rd./I-85
- West Blvd.

** Refer to map and locator tool on website for exact location confirmations*

Eligibility Requirements and Documentation

Before you begin an application for Round 2, make sure that your business meets **ALL** of the Round 2 eligibility requirements below. Applications from businesses that do not meet all of the requirements below will not be considered for a Round 2 grant.

The focus of the Beyond Open program is on diverse-owned small businesses, with majority (at least 51% ownership) minority, woman, veteran, LGBTQ+, or persons with disabilities ownership.

REQUIREMENT

1

Physically located within one of the six Corridors of Opportunity as identified by the City of Charlotte. Use the Corridor Locator tool on the Beyond Open website at beyondopenclt.com. Businesses outside the Corridors of Opportunity are not eligible to apply in Round 2. You will be asked to provide proof of physical business address within one of the six Corridors of Opportunity by uploading **two** documents from the list below:

- a) North Carolina Secretary of State registration with matching address
- b) Copy of current lease agreement
- c) Utility bill under business name
- d) Recorded deed from Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds
- e) NC Sales & Use tax registration or exemption certificate
- f) Business zoning receipt
- g) Bank Statement
- h) Tax Return

Note: A P.O. Box or virtual address cannot be used as proof of eligibility or for business location confirmation.

REQUIREMENT

2

At least one full year of operation beginning on or before August 1, 2022. You will be asked to provide proof with **one** of the following documents showing both the business name and a date on or before August 1, 2022:

- a) North Carolina Secretary of State registration
- b) Copy lease agreement / mortgage statement
- c) Utility bill under business name
- d) Recorded deed from Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds
- e) NC Sales & Use tax registration or exemption certificate
- f) Business zoning receipt
- g) Bank Statement

REQUIREMENT **For-profit organization.** Nonprofit 501(c)(3)s are not eligible to apply in Round 2.

3

REQUIREMENT **Minimum annual revenue of \$30k and a maximum annual revenue of \$5M.**
(Note: revenue to be verified by tax return information.)

4

REQUIREMENT **Fewer than 200 full and/or part-time employees.**
(Note: owners should count themselves as an employee for this grant program.)

5

REQUIREMENT **If a franchise, must be independent and locally owned.**

6

REQUIREMENT **Required documents and information.** The information and documentation below will be required based on the amount you are requesting for a Round 2 grant.

7

Required Company/Financial Documents	\$10k–\$20k	\$20k+–\$100k	\$100k+–\$150k
Proof of Business Location/Address	●	●	●
Proof of Business Start Date	●	●	●
Registration with NC Secretary of State (must be incorporated)		●	●
Most recent bank statement		●	●
Cost Estimates (only for individual assets over \$20k)		●	●
Business tax returns for the previous year	●	●	●
Profit and Loss Statement for 2022 tax year		●	●
Balance Sheet for 2022 tax year		●	●
Statement of Cash Flows for 2022 tax year			●
Profit and Loss Statement for year-to-date 2023		●	●
Balance Sheet for year-to-date 2023		●	●
Statement of Cash Flows for year-to-date 2023			●
Three-year business plan			●
<i>For Real Estate Leases only</i>			
Copy of executed lease agreement	●	●	●
Brochure with details on commercial space	●	●	●
<i>For Real Estate Purchases only</i>			
Copy of executed purchase agreement or contract	●	●	●
Brochure with details on commercial space	●	●	●
Lender pre-approval letter	●	●	●
Purchase Budget/proof of funds	●	●	●

● Mandatory

Support Community Partner Organizations

Reach out to Beyond Open Community Partner Organizations for answers, support and guidance – go to the Prepare page at beyondopenclt.com.

ASPIRE Community Capital is committed to radically transforming lives through upward mobility and helping entrepreneurs in under-resourced neighborhoods start and grow successful small businesses in the Greater Charlotte area.

Call: 980-219-7577

Email: application@aspirecommunitycapital.org

Prospera is an economic development, nonprofit organization specializing in providing bilingual assistance to Hispanic entrepreneurs trying to establish or expand their businesses in the Charlotte area.

Call: 980-729-8273

Email: alanzas@prosperausa.org or dgutierrez@prosperausa.org

The Women's Business Center of Charlotte (WBCC) empowers women-owned and BIPOC businesses to start and grow by offering tools and support to establish their businesses, generate sustainable profits, and strategize for future growth.

Call: 704-509-5884 English / Spanish

Email: Wbc-Charlotte@theinstitutenc.org

Community Partner Organizations can help you create a business plan, set up financial reports, and other vital business needs. It is important to reach out early to be prepared to apply.

Application Preview

Round 2 Key Questions

Below are general instructions and key questions that will appear on the Round 2 application. Use this information to prepare your responses in advance, gather needed documentation, and assemble information in advance.

Additional guidance available at beyondopenclt.com on the Prepare page.

ELIGIBILITY AND PREPARATION

You will be asked to review and confirm eligibility and other information.

BUSINESS OWNER INFORMATION

- Owner name (first, last)
- Percentage (%) of ownership
- Demographic information (race, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, veteran)

BUSINESS INFORMATION

- Business legal name
- Business description
- Legal form of business (Sole proprietorship, Partnership, C or S Corp., LLC, LLP)
- Certifications
- Business physical location and contact information (location must be within a Corridor of Opportunity)

KEY QUESTION: BUSINESS GOALS

In no more than 400 words, what goals do you wish for your business to achieve in the next 3–5 years, especially those related to revenue and/or number of employees?

KEY QUESTION: GRANT REQUEST AMOUNT

What is the total grant amount you are applying for in Round 2 of the Beyond Open program?

KEY QUESTION: ASSET INFORMATION

Describe the asset you wish to acquire. You will also be asked to include cost estimates for each asset that costs more than \$20k.

KEY QUESTION: IMPACTS

How will this asset contribute to help reach your near- or long-term business goals, solve a problem your business faces, or make the most of an opportunity for your business?

Describe clear, strong, and direct connections between the Business Goals you described and exactly **how** the asset you wish to acquire will help your business reach those goals. Be as clear, direct and exact as possible, specifically on how the asset will help you reach employee number and revenue goals.

KEY QUESTION: MULTIPLE ASSETS

You may be applying for a Beyond Open grant for multiple individual assets that are very closely related as parts of a clear project or a very focused business outcome. Examples of projects might be: a) updating your retail business lobby area to improve customer experiences; b) upfitting a new working space to boost productivity; c) replacing outdated kitchen equipment to ensure health and safety. In the lobby project example above, assets you need may include new flooring, reception desk, seating, lighting and a qualified contractor. To apply for a Beyond Open grant to fund multiple assets in a project, you will be asked provide:

- Project description and how each asset is vital to the overall project.
- Itemized list of all individual assets and details for each asset, including:
 - specific brands and models.
 - a reasonable unit cost for each individual asset under \$20k in cost.
 - two (2) cost estimates / quotes for each asset over \$20k in cost.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

Business plan, financial statements and other. See chart on page 9.

Review Process

Understanding What's Next

The Beyond Open review process provides thorough consideration of every application received and unbiased grant award decisions. Due to the high number of applications received, Beyond Open is unable to provide 1:1 feedback on individual applications received.

REVIEW STEPS

- A minimum of two independent reviewers are assigned to each application.
- Applications are reviewed to confirm eligibility requirements have been met, all documentation required has been provided, and that the information provided is accurate. Applications that do not meet these review standards do not move forward in the review process.
- Each application is evaluated and scored according to the criteria below.

REVIEW CRITERIA

- **Eligibility requirements met.**
- **All required documentation provided, complete and accurate.** Required documentation and accurate information including financial statements (profit and loss, cash flow), two cost estimates for each asset over \$20k, a business plan, tax documents and other information and documents as requested and required according to the grant amount requested (see pages 8 and 9 – Eligibility and Required Documentation).
- **Clear focus and connection between asset and business impacts.** Clear, strong, and direct connections within the application and information provided between the asset(s) the applicant wishes to acquire, near-term and future business vitality, and plans for achieving business growth, especially as measured by revenue and numbers of employees.

REVIEW TEAM ROLE AND MEMBERSHIP

The review team is an independent, diverse group whose role is to review, score and make recommendations for grant awards in each round to Foundation For The Carolinas (FFTC). The review team does not include members of the Beyond Open Advisory Council. No member of the Advisory Council participates in the grant review or decision-making process.

Review team members are drawn from the Charlotte-Mecklenburg community and are representative of the racial, ethnic, gender and socio-economic diversity of the community, as well as the diverse small business owners at the center of the program's focus. Review team members are highly qualified to review and assess applications via professional backgrounds, training and expertise. Members are selected to contribute a blend of professional and lived experiences, talents and skills, including:

- a) a background in one or more of the following - small business ownership, advising/ technical assistance, finance and capital access;
- b) community engagement, outreach and awareness;
- c) knowledge of on-the-ground realities and awareness of the challenges faced by small business owners on access to capital funding;
- d) belief in the core goals of the program and commitment to helping small business owners succeed.

FAQ's

Round 2

The Frequently Asked Questions and responses below provide guidance based on common questions received from Round 1 applicants and community members. Additional FAQ's may be added to the website as inquiries are received.



WHAT ARE THE MOST COMMON MISTAKES TO AVOID IN MY APPLICATION?

- **Not eligible or uses not allowed**
 - Applicant business not located inside one of the six Corridors of Opportunity.
 - Request includes unallowed uses (see page 6 CAN and CANNOT lists).
- **Missing, incomplete or inaccurate documentation and information**
 - Required documents missing, incomplete or outdated.
 - Two cost estimates for asset not provided (required for assets over \$20k).
 - Required financial documents (such as profit and loss statements, cash flow reports) missing, incomplete or do not show credible or consistent information.
 - Mismatch between amount of request and cost of asset to be acquired as documented by cost estimates.
 - Description of business services or products vague and unsupported by related documentation and information.
 - Requested or required business goals and business plan lack clarity, are not well defined or described, or do not credibly illustrate clear planning and/or measurable outcomes.
- **Connection(s) between grant request and business goals is weak or lacking in detail**
 - Application lacks strong or very clear connections between the asset to be acquired and how the asset would create clear, specific business impacts and help achieve business goals.
 - Extensive list of unrelated assets or a “laundry list” of many or all business needs as opposed to a single asset, or very closely related assets, that will help to achieve clear business outcomes.
 - Asset to be acquired not clearly described or without specific model, type or other detailed information.
 - Grant request is for purchase or lease of unspecified property yet to be located.





**FAQ
2**

GIVEN HOW COMPETITIVE BEYOND OPEN IS, IS IT WORTH MY TIME TO PARTICIPATE AND APPLY?

The program can add value for all Beyond Open applicants and help equip diverse small business owners to succeed, even if you do not receive a grant in this competitive process. Beyond Open will award approximately \$15M in grants to diverse small business owners in Charlotte-Mecklenburg over the course of three years. Preparing an application for Beyond Open can also help empower you to apply to many other small business grant and loan programs because these programs often require or ask for the same or very similar information, documents and responses to questions.



**FAQ
3**

HOW DOES BEYOND OPEN WORK TO HELP MAKE THE PROGRAM ACCESSIBLE?

Awareness efforts for Beyond Open include: corridor canvassing and appearances at community events; in-person and online information sessions; information and applications in English, Spanish and Vietnamese; a dedicated website and collateral materials; social media; paid media and earned media placements in diverse-owned and local media outlets. Outreach, technical assistance and support through three community partner organizations – ASPIRE Community Capital, Prospera, and Women’s Business Center of Charlotte, and through other Beyond Open Advisory Council organizations including the Carolinas Asian-American Chamber of Commerce, Carolinas LGBT+ Chamber of Commerce, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Black Chamber of Commerce, City StartUp Labs, Historic West End Partners, Latin-American Chamber of Commerce, North End Community Coalition and Veterans Bridge Home.



**FAQ
4**

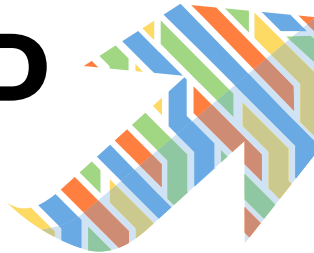
IS BEYOND OPEN A "FIRST COME, FIRST SERVED" GRANT PROGRAM?

Beyond Open is not a “first come, first served” grant program. Grant award decisions are made after all received applications are reviewed and scored.



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