OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

Grant to Promote District of Columbia Voting Rights and Statehood

Release Date: Friday, October 9, 2026
Application Due Date: Friday, November 13, 2026

SECTION 1: FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

Effective October 9, 2026, the Office of the Secretary of State of the District of Columbia, (the Office of the Secretary) pursuant to the City-Wide Grants Manual and Sourcebook (Section 7.2) issues the Request For Applications (RFA) entitled Grant to Promote District of Columbia Voting Rights and Statehood to provide all eligible applicants the opportunity to submit specific program activities that educate Americans about the New Columbia Statehood Commission's initiatives to achieve full voting rights in the United States Congress, and, ultimately, statehood for Washington, DC. This RFA will be open on October 13, 2026, and will close on November 13, 2026, at noon.

Background

The residents of Washington, DC serve in the military and pay federal taxes but continue to lack full democracy and the rights that residents of other states and municipalities enjoy, including autonomy from congressional oversight and obstruction, and voting representation in Congress.

The District of Columbia Home Rule Act of 1973 provided limited "Home Rule" for the District by allowing election of a Mayor and City Council of the District of Columbia. Since the inception of Home Rule, the District's elected officials and various groups have pursued strategies to raise awareness, and to work toward achieving voting representation in the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate, and DC statehood. Yet, democracy for the District has been derailed by the Charter itself, the courts, non-germane proposals restricting the District on must-pass congressional legislation, riders-on appropriations bills, and insufficient support for enactment of various budget autonomy and statehood proposals in the United States Congress.

For over a decade, the District has allocated funds to nonprofit organizations for educating citizens around the nation and pursuing strategies that highlight the absence of full democracy in the nation's capital. In addition, since 1990, District residents have elected a "shadow" delegation to Congress to promote statehood. District residents have voted for, and the Mayor has supported, amending the Charter to allow for budget autonomy. The DC Council established the New Columbia Statehood Commission in 2014, adding to the District's advocacy for full democracy. In November 2016, over 86% of voters in

Washington, DC overwhelmingly approved an advisory referendum, confirming the desire to become the 51st state of the United States. In June 2020, the US House of Representatives held the first vote to establish Washington, DC as a state.

The 117th Congress saw the most progress made on statehood for the residents of the District of Columbia with the introduction of H.R. 51, the Washington, DC Admissions Act, and its companion bill in the Senate, S. 51. On April 22, 2021, the House of Representatives passed the H.R.51 - Washington, DC Admission Act, the DC Statehood bill for the second time in history, with a vote of 216-208. The bill did not receive action in the Senate.

The Office of the Secretary is charged with the responsibility of managing the funds allocated for voting rights and statehood initiatives. The Fiscal Year 2027 Budget authorized $200,000 for the Office of the Secretary to issue competitive grants that promote voting rights and statehood for Washington, DC.

Purpose of the Program

The objective of this grant is to strengthen awareness for statehood for Washington, DC. This effort will require outreach, canvassing, and measurement of support of elected officials and Americans across the country, and visitors to the nation's capital. The goal of this program is that the grantee(s) increase congressional and nationwide support for statehood for Washington, DC.

This program is funded with FY 2027 funds, which must be expended by September 30, 2027, with a full accounting provided to the Office of the Secretary no later than October 31, 2027. The final report in FY 2027 will require a response in a prescribed format.

SECTION II: AWARD INFORMATION

$200,000 in District of Columbia funds will be available on a competitive basis as follows:

1. **Youth Engagement in Civics and Voting Rights:** The grant aims to support organizations that engage young people—high school, college, graduate students, and other young adults—in civic activities, government participation, and voting rights advocacy. Organizations should develop innovative campaigns with strong branding and messaging strategies, reaching youth via social media, digital, print, and other communication platforms. The goal is to raise awareness and inspire civic involvement among young people.
2. **Educating on DC Voting Rights and Statehood:** The grant will also support organizations focused on educating the public about the absence of voting rights and statehood for Washington, DC. Campaigns should aim to raise awareness both within DC and across all 50 states, building broader understanding and support for DC's pursuit of greater self-determination and representation.

The release date of this Request for Applications (RFA) is October 13, 2026. This grant process conforms to the guidelines established in the District's City-Wide Grants Manual and Sourcebook (which is available at http://opgs.dc.gov).

All funds will be disbursed upon award of the grant, with a report and budget accounting required to be filed by September 30, 2027, and a final report due no later than October 31, 2027. All proposals must include a detailed description of how the funds will be spent, as well as a project plan, timeline, and metrics associated with tasks outlined in the proposal. Creative proposals should include fresh ideas that specifically address the requirements for the award to ensure a successful application. Proposals that do not contain all requested information will not be considered complete.

SECTION III: ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

Eligibility for this grant is restricted to:

A. Nonprofits (with or without a 501(c) (3) certification) and community-based organizations with a current District of Columbia business license, a "Clean Hands" certification that indicates the organization does not owe money to the District or Federal governments, and no outstanding or overdue final reports for previous grants received from the District government for similar purposes.

B. Organizations with a history of advocating for democracy and self-determination for the District of Columbia include, but are not limited to, District voting rights and statehood.

C. Organizations with a financial track record and which are not reliant on another organization under a fiscal agent arrangement.

D. If the organization is a past grantee, the organization must meet all past reporting and accounting requirements set by the Secretary of the District of Columbia.

SECTION IV: APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

This Request for Applications is posted at http://os.dc.gov and http://opgs.dc.gov.
Requests for copies of the RFA and related inquiries may be submitted to: Office of the Secretary of State of the District of Columbia, 1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite 419, Washington, DC 20004 or SecretaryofDC@dc.gov, or 202-727-6306.

Application Forms and Content
All applications will be judged against the following requirements:

1. All proposals must be written in clear, concise and grammatically correct language. Narratives shall not exceed 2,500 words and must include responses to all the requirements specified in the RFA.
2. There is no prescribed form or format for applications. However, applicants should ensure that their submissions are clear, concise, and sufficiently detailed to facilitate proper consideration.
3. The grant applicant shall focus efforts on education and outreach to residents of the 50 States, as well as Members of Congress. Funds shall not be used to lobby directly or through grassroots advocacy, for or against legislation.
4. Grant applicants' efforts should not significantly consist of paid media advertisements.
5. No more than 25% of the funds awarded can go to pay for salaries.
6. Proposal must be specific as to how funds will be expended, including:
    a. Names and resumes of all staff and consultants proposed to work on the program.
    b. Justification of the need for grant funds.
    c. Specific activities for which funds will be used.
    d. Proposed line-item budget.
    e. Agreement to submit all deliverables listed in section VI.
    f. Specific performance metrics and evaluation plans.
    g. Thorough timelines and benchmarks.
7. All certifications listed in the Application Process section **must** be included or the application will be disqualified.

Application Process & Requirements
Responses to the Request for Application shall be submitted via email to SecretaryofDC@dc.gov or a hard copy delivered to the Office of the Secretary of State, 1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite 419, Washington, DC 20004. Applications delivered to the Office of the Secretary must be date-stamped no later than noon on November 13, 2026.

The following criteria for all applications must be met. Applications that do not meet the requirements specified below will be disqualified from consideration:

1. All proposals shall consist solely of written narratives and shall not include any supplemental materials or additional submissions, including, without limitation, DVDs, videos, or other audiovisual content.

2. All files submitted shall be in any of the following formats: MS Word, PDF, MS Excel, MS Publisher or any format compatible with those mentioned.

3. The following is required, but are not included in the 2,500-word narrative:

a. The EIN, also called the Federal Tax ID number of the organization.
b. The website and main contact information for the organization.
c. A list of the current Board of Directors, including affiliation and current contact information.
d. Biography or resume of all proposed project staff; and
e. A copy of the organization's most recent Form 990 submission to the Internal Revenue Service.

4. Copy of the most recent and complete set of audited financial statements available for the organization. If audited financial statements have never been prepared due to the size of an organization or how recently it was established, the applicant must provide an organizational budget, an income statement (or profit and loss statement), and a balance sheet certified by an authorized representative of the organization, and any letters, filings, etc. submitted to the IRS within the three (3) years before the date of the grant application.

5. If the applicant is a 501(c)(3), evidence of 501(c)(3) status, a current business license, and copies of any correspondence received from the IRS within the three (3) years preceding the grant application that relates to the organization's tax status (*e.g.,* suspension, revocation, recertification, etc.) must be provided.

6. Application narratives shall be accompanied by a "Statement of Certification," the truth of which is attested to by the Executive Director or the Chair of the Board of Directors of the applicant organization, which states:
    a. The individuals, by name, title, address, email, and phone number who are authorized to negotiate with the Office of the Secretary on behalf of the organization.
    b. That the applicant can maintain adequate files, records, and can meet all reporting requirements.
    c. That all fiscal records are kept in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) and account for all funds, tangible assets, revenue, and expenditures; that all fiscal records are accurate, complete and current at all times; and that these records will be made available for audit and inspection, as required.
    d. That the applicant is current on payment of all federal and District taxes, including Unemployment Insurance taxes and Workers' Compensation premiums. This statement of certification shall be accompanied by a certificate from the District of Columbia Office of Tax and Revenue (OTR) stating that the entity has complied with the filing requirements of District of Columbia tax laws and has paid taxes due to the District of Columbia or is in compliance with any payment agreement with OTR.
    e. That the applicant has demonstrated administrative and financial capability to provide and manage the proposed services and ensure an adequate administrative, performance, and audit trail.
    f. That the applicant is not proposed for debarment or presently debarred, suspended, or declared ineligible, as required by Executive Order 12549,

"Debarment and Suspension," and implemented by 2 CFR 180, for prospective participants in primary covered transactions and is not proposed debarment or presently debarred because of any actions by the District of Columbia Contract Appeals Board, the Office of Contracting and Procurement, or any other District contract regulating Agency.

g. That the applicant has the necessary organization, experience, accounting operational controls, and technical skills to implement the program, or the ability to obtain them.
h. That the applicant can comply with the required performance schedule, taking into consideration all existing and reasonably expected commercial and governmental business commitments.
i. That the applicant has a satisfactory record performing similar activities as detailed in the award.
j. That the applicant has a satisfactory record of integrity and business ethics (Clean Hands Certificate).
k. That the applicant is in compliance with the applicable District licensing and tax laws and regulations (Clean Hands Certificate).
l. That, if the applicant has previously won a similar award from the District of Columbia government, it has submitted all reports due and owed.
m. That the applicant complies with provisions of the Drug-Free Workplace Act.
n. That the applicant meets all other qualifications and eligibility criteria necessary to receive an award under applicable laws and regulations.
o. The applicant agrees to indemnify, defend, and hold harmless the Government of the District of Columbia and its authorized officers, employees, agents, and volunteers from any and all claims, actions, losses, damages, and/or liability arising out of this grant from any cause whatsoever, including the acts, errors, or omissions of any person and for any costs or expenses incurred by the District on account of any claim therefore, except where such indemnification is prohibited by law; and
p. If any of the organization's officers, partners, principals, members, associates or key employees, within the last three (3) years prior to the date of the application, has:

    i. Been indicted or had charges brought against them (if still pending) and/or been convicted of (a) any crime or offense arising directly or indirectly from the conduct of the applicant's organization or (b) any crime or offense involving financial misconduct or fraud, or

    ii. Been the subject of legal proceedings arising directly from the provision of services by the organization. If the response is in the affirmative, the applicant shall fully describe any such indictments, charges, convictions, or legal proceedings (and the status and disposition thereof) and surrounding circumstances in writing and provide documentation of the circumstances.

Timeline
All applications shall be submitted by email to SecretaryofDC@dc.gov or delivered to the Office of the Secretary of State, 1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite 419, Washington, DC 20004 no later than noon on Friday, November 13, 2026. The Office of the Secretary is not responsible for misdirected email or late deliveries.

Terms and Conditions

1. Funding for this award is contingent upon the continued funding from the grantor, including possible funding restrictions pursuant to the federal Anti-Deficiency Act, 31 U.S.C. §§ 1341,1342,1349-51, and 1511-1519 (2004); the District Anti-Deficiency Act, D.C. Official Code §§ 1-206.03(e), 47-105, and 47-355.01-355.08 (2001); and Section 446 of the District of Columbia Home Rule Act, D.C. Official Code § 1-204.46 (2014 Repl.). Nothing in this Request for Applications shall create an obligation of the District in anticipation of an appropriation by Congress and/or the Council of the District of Columbia (the "Council") for such purpose as described herein. The District's legal liability for any payment pursuant to this RFA shall not arise or obtain in advance of the lawful availability of appropriated funds for the applicable fiscal year as approved by Congress and/or the Council and shall become null and void upon the lawful unavailability of such funds under these or other applicable statutes and regulations.

2. The Office of the Secretary reserves the right to accept or deny any or all applications if the Secretary determines it is in the best interest of the government to do so. The Secretary shall notify the applicant if it rejects an applicant's proposal. The Secretary may suspend or terminate an outstanding RFA pursuant to the policies set forth in the City-Wide Grants Manual and Sourcebook.

3. The Office of the Secretary reserves the right to issue addenda and/or amendments subsequent to the issuance of the RFA, or to rescind the RFA.

4. The Office of the Secretary shall not be liable for any costs incurred in the preparation of applications in response to the RFA. Applicant agrees that all costs incurred in developing the application are the applicant's sole responsibility.

5. The Office of the Secretary may conduct pre-award on-site visits to verify information submitted in the application and to determine whether the applicant's facilities are appropriate for the services intended.

6. The Office of the Secretary may enter negotiations with an applicant and adopt a firm funding amount or other revision of the applicant's proposal that may result from negotiations.

7. To receive an award, the selected grantee shall provide in writing, the name of all of its insurance carriers and the type of insurance provided (e.g., its general liability insurance carrier and automobile insurance carrier, workers' compensation insurance carrier, fidelity bond holder (if applicable), and, before execution of the

award, a copy of the binder or cover sheet of their current policy for any policy that covers activities that might be undertaken in connection with performance of the grant, showing the limits of coverage and endorsements. All policies (except the workers' compensation, errors and omissions, and professional liability policies) that cover activities that might be undertaken in connection with the performance of the grant, shall contain additional endorsements naming the Government of the District of Columbia and its officers, employees, agents and volunteers as additional named insured with respect to liability abilities arising out of the performance of services under the award. The grantee shall require their insurance carrier of the required coverage to waive all rights of subrogation against the District, its officers, employees, agents, volunteers, contractors, and subcontractors.

8. To receive an award, the selected grantee must submit a completed IRS Form W-9 and a banking ACH form from the District of Columbia with the signed Notice of Grant Agreement (NOGA).

9. If there are any conflicts between the terms and conditions of the RFA and any applicable federal or local law or regulation, or any ambiguity related thereto, then the provisions of the applicable law or regulation shall control, and it shall be the responsibility of the applicant to ensure compliance.

SECTION V: APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

All proposals will be reviewed by a panel selected by the Secretary of the District of Columbia and may include reviewers from the Executive Office of the Mayor as well as outside reviewers. The ratings awarded to each applicant shall be public information and shall be made based on the following criteria:

1. Demonstrated ability to make progress toward increasing nationwide awareness of the absence of voting rights and statehood for Washington, DC during the grant period: 50%.
2. Specificity and feasibility of proposed activities: 25%.
3. History of effectively supporting democracy and statehood efforts: 10%; and
4. Specificity of performance measures: 15%.

SECTION VI: AWARD ADMINISTATION INFORMATION

Grant award(s) will be announced on the Office of the Secretary website no later than December 11, 2026. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified by email at the address from which the application was sent (unless otherwise specified) prior to the announcement of the winners. Disbursement of grant funds will occur as soon as practicable following the announcement of the selection of the awardee(s).

Deliverables
Project requirements that must be submitted on or before due dates include:

1. A project plan with detailed expense projections for the amount requested. (Due within 15 calendar days of grant award.)
2. Progress report detailing expenditures to date and summary of work completed shall be included, with the final report due October 31, 2027. Final Reports will have a prescribed format in FY 2027.
3. Expenditure of grant funds before September 30, 2027.
4. A final report provided by the grant recipient(s) no later than October 31, 2027. The close out or final report shall include detailed accounting of all expenditures for each project and summary of work completed under the grant.

SECTION VII: AGENCY CONTACT

All inquiries regarding this Request for Applications should be directed to:

Office of the Secretary of State of the District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite 419
Washington, DC 20004
SecretaryofDC@dc.gov 202-727-6306