

THE COALITION

November 2026

A City of YES

Recommendations for **Small Business Support** in Washington, DC

PROPOSAL TO:
THE MAYORAL ADMINISTRATION OF
JANEESE LEWIS GEORGE

PREPARED BY:
THE COALITION

Recommendation One

SMALL BUSINESS

Demonstrate administrative leadership by removing barriers that make it harder for businesses to start, open, and grow by creating a more coordinated, predictable, and accessible business environment.



Why it Matters

The District has no shortage of programs, agencies, and resources intended to support small businesses. The challenge is often navigating them.

Business owners described a system in which launching and opening a business can require moving through multiple agencies, sequential approvals, inconsistent guidance, and long periods of waiting. For businesses already paying rent, financing buildout, or carrying other startup costs, every additional delay has a financial consequence. Once businesses are operating, another set of barriers can limit growth. Public procurement opportunities may arrive too late, be packaged at a scale smaller firms cannot realistically deliver, or leave businesses waiting too long for payment.

The Coalition is advocating for a business environment that ***works as a system***.



Recommendation One

Key Components

1A | Create one coordinated path from launch to open.

Create a coordinated launch-to-open system with a clearly identified point of accountability.

Fiscal + Implementation Lens | Streamlining

A coordinated system can reduce duplicative handoffs, improve visibility across agencies, and make it easier to identify and resolve bottlenecks.

1B | Give businesses a navigator through the process.

Extend BOSS, the Business One Stop Solution, to include Department of Buildings and Department of Health intake, with an assigned navigator for each business. Begin with restaurants and engage businesses before they sign a lease.

Fiscal + Implementation Lens | Streamlining + Potential Implementation Savings

Before creating a separate new system, determine whether existing BOSS infrastructure can be expanded to provide the needed functionality. Building on an existing platform could reduce duplicative technology and implementation costs. An assigned navigator would require sufficient staffing capacity and should primarily be viewed as an accountability and service improvement.





1C | Move approvals in parallel.

Pilot parallel approvals, including a "virtual Certificate of Occupancy," using risk-based reinspection while maintaining required safety inspections before opening.

Fiscal + Implementation Lens | Reduced Business Costs
Moving appropriate approvals simultaneously rather than sequentially can shorten the time businesses spend waiting to open and reduce rent, financing, and other carrying costs.

1D | Make public contracting a viable path to growth.

Create contracting opportunities that small businesses can realistically win and successfully deliver. Provide earlier notice of upcoming procurements, break appropriate large contracts into smaller scopes, and hold agencies accountable for timely payment.

Fiscal + Implementation Lens | Economic Impact
This recommendation is primarily about access, competition, timely payment, and creating opportunities for local businesses to grow. Any direct fiscal impact from procurement changes would require additional analysis.

Implementation

How The Coalition and its members can help move this forward.



The Coalition and its members can help translate the recommendation into a workable model.

01 **Map the launch-to-open journey**
Document how representative businesses move through relevant District agencies from pre-lease through opening, identifying required steps, handoffs, dependencies, typical delays, and opportunities for parallel processing.

02 **Bring businesses and agencies together to design the solution**
Convene small business owners, business-support organizations, and relevant agencies to validate the process and help define what a coordinated system, navigator function, and clear point of accountability should look like in practice.

03 **Identify opportunities to test the approach**

Help identify business types or cohorts, beginning with restaurants where appropriate, that could serve as a practical starting point for testing improved intake, navigation, and parallel approvals.

04 **Bring real-world evidence to** procurement reform

Gather member experiences with procurement timelines, contract sizing, payment delays, and other barriers to help identify concrete opportunities to make public contracting more accessible to small businesses.



THANKS

Connect with us to get started.

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