



Boston City Council Committee on Ways and Means

*Dockets #0588-0596 FY21 Budget
Office of Economic Development/Boston Equity Fund
Working Session: Thursday, April 30, 2020, 11:00 a.m.
Hearing: Tuesday, May 12, 2020, 2:00 p.m.*

The following is a collection of questions that were asked by the Committee regarding the FY21 budget for the Office of Economic Development at the Working Sessions on Thursday, April 30, 2020 at 11:00 a.m. Recording here:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PINN_PfpoPI

The Administration is requested to respond to all questions in one of three ways:

- 1) Verbally at the hearing on Tuesday, May 12th, at 2PM
- 2) For factual questions, through written responses supplied prior to May 12th, including budget book page numbers or other references where appropriate.
- 3) By deferring to a specific scheduled departmental budget hearing

Please annotate and return this information request before May 12th, indicating how each question will be answered.

Office of Economic Development Budget Questions

Councilor Michael Flaherty, asked:

- How has the shutdown impacted economic development in the City of Boston?
 - What measures can be put in place to support businesses once the shutdown is over?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- What is the plan to reopen the economy and small businesses?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- The City piloted a Childcare Entrepreneur Fund last year and the graduates are scheduled to graduate this upcoming weekend (May 2). The pilot fund is a partnership between The Mayor's Office of Women's Advancement, Office of Economic Development (Small Business) and Economic Mobility Lab. What are the initial results of the pilot?
 - Is the City going to continue the pilot program and are they considering providing additional financial support to these types of businesses post COVID-19?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*

Councilor Kim Janey, President, asked:

- OED has in the past given extra attention to the local economy in Nubian Square; have some specific questions about that area.
 - What support is being given to business in Nubian Square, especially now during COVID-19?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
 - Is the City keeping track of which businesses are open, closed, or were planning to relocate?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
 - What is the status overall of businesses that have had to close, including those that were on the essential business list?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
 - There are some restaurants and cafes that have had to close because they were dependent on the employees from the Bruce Bolling Building who are now working from home. What is OED doing to support those businesses so they are able to reopen?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
 - Did any businesses in Nubian Square receive relief from the Small Business Relief Fund? If so, how many and which ones and how much?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- When will the next round of Small Business Relief funding be going out?
 - How will outreach be conducted in our commercial districts, and especially areas like Nubian Square that are in transition?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- Can you provide more information on the additional funding for the Diversity and Recruitment team?
 - How are staffing levels for this team?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- Can you provide an update on the Choice Neighborhood Implementation Grant at Whittier St?
 - Will there be a decrease in funds?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- Can you provide an update on the \$20,000 EDIC Grant for the Summer Series that takes place in Nubian Square?
- Can you provide information on the Small Business Fund as it relates to the cannabis industry?
 - Do cannabis dispensaries qualify for these funds?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
 - If so, how many have applied?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
 - How much have they received?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
 - What can they use that money for?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*

- o If they do not qualify for these funds, because of not being open yet, is the City able to loosen restrictions to encompass cannabis entrepreneurs?
 - o *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- What is the plan to increase diversity in our procurement process?
 - o *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- From what I understand there is suppose to be a 40 percent increase in equity and inclusion funding. How are we going to leverage that to not only deal with the recovery from the pandemic but also deal with the pre-COVID-19 inequities like the quarter-million-dollar wealth gap in the City of Boston?
 - o *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- How do we address the recovery from the pandemic with a focus on equity?
 - o *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- Can you provide information on how different industries have been proportionately affected by this crisis, and also a breakdown of what percentages certain ethnic groups make up of the owners and workers in different industries? I'm interested in the question of whether differences in which industries are affected might deepen racial wealth disparities.
 - o *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*

Councilor Liz Breadon, asked:

- What is the impact COVID-19 has had on our Main Streets districts?
 - o *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- I am concerned about the disappearance of so many small day care providers across the City. What can OED do to bolster that business sector?
 - o *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*

Councilor Julia Mejia, asked:

- In November 2019, Mayor Walsh signed “An Executive Order in Support of Equitable Procurement Policies.” Are LGBTQ owned businesses and contractors included in this Order?
 - o *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- How does OED support underserved businesses including LGBTQ and non-English speaking owned businesses?
 - o Are there plans to expand this work?
 - o *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- The application used by the City for procurement is very difficult to fill out. In what ways can OED make the application and bidding process easier for vendors, particularly for non-English speakers?
 - o *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- When can we expect the results of the Main Streets Convention Study?
 - o *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- Regarding the hiring of a Mobile Enterprise Manager – Can this role be shared between existing staff?
 - Can you provide more details on the recruitment process and outreach

- o *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- How is OED looking at new ways to engage and work with young people and young entrepreneurs in this time?
 - o *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- Heard from many people that the Relief Fund was difficult to navigate; how is that being improved for the next round?
 - o *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- What is OED doing to support nail salons, barber shops, and other small local businesses, which can't do take-out etc.?
 - Once they are able to reopen, what type of technical assistance will they receive?
 - o *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- How are current staffing levels in OED?
 - Is there enough staff capacity to address all these issues? Where are the gaps?
 - o *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- How can OED adjust the relief fund to make it easier for non-English speaking individuals? What lessons have you learned from COVID-19 about outreach and language access?
 - o *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- What role does the OED play in figuring out ways to be more collaborative across different City departments? For example, could OED be working with Arts to display the work of local artists in local restaurants (once they reopen)?
 - o *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- Is it possible to work with more local restaurants to serve culturally appropriate food in BPS, as opposed to one large contract with Revolution Foods?
 - Can we break this up into smaller food contracts?
 - o *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
 - What are the barriers to making this happen?
 - o *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- What opportunities exist to support small businesses and entrepreneurs (many on 1099s) right now by hiring them to provide services for the City of Boston or BPS?
 - o *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- Can you provide a report card on how effective OED is at supporting small businesses, or some kind of dashboard about the scope of work, so we can see where you need more support in filling gaps?
 - o *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- Who is at the table determining OED's thinking about the needs of small businesses? How are community voices and the public involved?
 - o *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*

Councilor Annissa Essaibi-George, asked:

- What are the plans to redouble our efforts to support area small businesses?
 - What is the plan to provide substantial financial and technical support for small businesses?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- What is OED doing to support women-owned businesses?
 - What is the number of businesses that are considered women-owned?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
 - Can you provide information on the WMBE application process?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
 - How many businesses are in the pipeline to become certified?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
 - Can you provide a breakdown on what kind of businesses these are?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- How will OED support small businesses that were in the process of getting licenses, zoning, and certifications but were stalled due to the pandemic?
 - Would there be a possibility to fast track these businesses through the process?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- There has been a lot of discussion about supporting food-related businesses and restaurants. How do we ensure that other businesses are receiving equal support and attention?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- How has the pandemic impacted Boston’s tourism industry?
 - How does this affect receipts and sales tax revenue?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- How has the lack of students and graduations impacted the local economy?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- How can we equitably rebuild our economy and tourism industry across the City and not just Downtown and other tourist hotspots?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- What has the initial response been to restaurants that are permitted to sell grocery items?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- What is the plan to reopen the City’s businesses?
 - Has a taskforce been created?
 - What planning efforts are being made?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*

Councilor Ricardo Arroyo, asked:

- Why is funding for the Office of Economic Development decreasing by 13 percent?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- Why is funding for personnel services decreasing by 12 percent?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- Why are non-personnel services decreasing by 23 percent?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- Which trades, if any, have consistently fallen below the required percentage of hours required by women, minorities, and Boston residents?
 - What is OED doing to address those issues?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- Why is the Small and Local Business program budget decreased by almost 32 percent?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- Many of the performance indicators for the Small Business program have decreased from every year. Is there an explanation why that trend exists and how the FY21 budget will address it?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- One of the performance indicators for the Small and Local Business program is the amount of City of Boston money spent on minority or women business contracts.
 - What does TDR mean and why there is no numerical quantity for that?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- What plans has OED made to address the impact of COVID-19 on WMBE businesses and potential contractors?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- Could you provide the amount of money spent on non-MWBE contracts, vs. MWBE?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- OED launched a study to review city contracting and to identify challenges for MWBEs doing business with the City.
 - What was the outcome of that study and how are the practices changing for FY21?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- Will the Small Business Relief Fund initiative last beyond COVID-19?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- What impact has the pandemic had on planning at OED?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- Does OED have any data on who is receiving relief funds, in terms of MBEs, WBEs, & SLBEs, to make sure it's being dispersed equitably?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- Of 81 OED contracts, only 3 are M/W/SLBEs – what is OED doing to improve representation of minority or women-owned contracts, especially given that the majority of OED's current contracts end June 30th and September 25 of this year?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*

Councilor Ed Flynn, asked:

- What are OED's short and long term plans to address economic development?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- Are we able to create an inventory of small businesses and determine how they have been impacted by the pandemic?
 - Would we be able to do an inventory of businesses involved in the Main Streets program to determine the challenges they are facing?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
 - What kind of outreach effort are we doing to identify the challenges our small businesses are facing?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- How are we supporting MWBE and Veteran-owned businesses?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- What are we doing to help neighborhoods to apply to the Main Streets program?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- What incentives is the City providing to help business remain in the City of Boston?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- What are we doing to support hotel operators and staff?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- Do you have an update on the BCEC?
 - How has the pandemic affected the booking of our convention centers?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- What is the status of the potential sale of the Hynes Convention Center?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- How has the seafood industry been impacted by the pandemic?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*

Councilor Matt O'Malley, asked:

- How are we providing support for restaurants and other small businesses that were impacted by the pandemic?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*

Councilor Kenzie Bok, Chair, asked:

- Can you provide more information on OED's oversight of casinos and what resources are dedicated to that?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- Boston will be hosting the Main Streets Convention in 2021. What can Boston do to be a leader and model in revitalizing our Main Streets after the pandemic?
 - Is there a way to reframe the RFP to reflect the effects of Covid-19 and the recovery of our local businesses?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- Due to the pandemic there has been a sharp increase in unemployment, resulting in many talented people looking for work. Would it be possible to take advantage of this and hire talented personnel and technical support for OED roles like the Mobile Enterprise Manager?

- *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- Can you provide more information on our existing technical assistance programs for small businesses, and talk about how we could really scale these up in FY21?
 - For example, won't we need mobile enterprise support more than ever
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- Do we have plans to increase opportunities for businesses – both food businesses and other types of businesses – to get licenses to operate in a mobile outdoor format, given that this is likely to be safer for the foreseeable future?
 - Could we have barbershops and nail salons outside?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
 - Could we permit more restaurants to take over outdoor streets for seating purposes?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
 - Could we permit more locations for food trucks?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
 - Could we support an expansion of our pushcart program to include some local brick-and-mortar shops?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- Due to the current state of the economy and this need to rapidly innovate, OED should be increasing personnel to support our small businesses.
 - Are you looking to make adjustments to increase staffing levels?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- What OED programs or initiatives do you believe have the greatest impact and effect on economic development?
 - What are the programs that really move the needle in terms of small business success?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
 - How do you quantitatively measure your impact?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- How can we dramatically diversify the contracting pool to ensure an equitable recovery, especially as city capital money will likely become one of the main resources available?
 - What is the strategy for rapidly accelerating changes we might have hoped to make over a longer timeframe?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
 - What kinds of needed capital projects would provide the best prospects of employing a diverse local workforce?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- Are we looking into hotels as potential isolation locations for people who find out that they are COVID-19 positive? This has been done elsewhere, is urgently needed by those who live in dense family housing, and would be a great opportunity for us to support our hotel industry and staff.
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*

Boston Equity Fund

Councilor Michael Flaherty, asked:

- How has the shutdown affected the Boston Equity Fund?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- What is the plan to support cannabis businesses in the City of Boston that were impacted by COVID-19?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*

Councilor Kim Janey, President, asked:

- Given that this fund won't grow at the pace we had hoped it could pre-COVID – how can we still pursue the purposes of the fund?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- How will the money in the Boston Equity Fund be administered and what can it be used for?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- How are we ensuring that it is going to equity applicants?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- Around Pure Oasis, were any funds going into the Equity Fund while it was open?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- Given that it is unlikely for many more cannabis dispensaries to open up this year, how much money can we anticipate collecting in 2020 for the Fund? Anything to report re: first-quarter sales?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*

Councilor Liz Breadon, asked:

- Can you provide an update on the Boston Equity Fund?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*
- How has COVID-19 impacted dispensaries already in the pipeline?
 - What are we doing to support these businesses?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*

Councilor Julia Mejia, asked:

- What kind of outreach is being done in the community to make sure that we are getting the information out about the Boston Equity Fund?
 - Is this information available in other languages?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*

Councilor Ed Flynn, asked:

- What economic assistants can we provide to companies in the cannabis industry that are close to get a license but are now financially struggling due to the pandemic?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*

Councilor Ricardo Arroyo, asked:

- Why hasn't the Boston Cannabis Board met remotely during the Covid-19 crisis?
The delay is very hard for entrepreneurs still paying rent.
 - Are there any plans to meet soon?
 - *We will respond verbally at our hearing on May 12th at 2:00pm.*