



---

## **Boston City Council Committee on Ways and Means**

*Dockets #0524-0531 FY22 Budget*

*Office of Economic Development*

*Docket #0546, Boston Equity Fund*

***Working Session: Friday, May 7, 2021, 10:00 a.m.***

***Hearing: Thursday, May 20, 2021, 10:00 a.m.***

---

The following is a collection of questions that were asked by the Committee regarding the FY22 budget for the Office of Economic Development at the Working Session on Friday, May 7, 2021 at 10:00 a.m. Recording here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GavZAZTbqCk>

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

- 1) Verbally at the hearing on Thursday, May 20<sup>th</sup> at 10AM.
- 2) For factual questions, through written responses supplied prior to May 20<sup>th</sup>, 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 20<sup>th</sup>, indicating how each question will be answered.

### **Office of Economic Development Budget Questions**

#### **Councilor Kenzie Bok, Chair, asked:**

- Please explain why “Emergency Employees” are generally hired.
- Please discuss the \$1,100,794 increase in contracted services.
- Please discuss the Small Business Relief Fund, the Certified Business Relief Fund, the High Road Kitchens Restaurant Relief Fund, and the Commercial Rental Relief Fund
  - What distinguished the types of businesses that each of these served?
  - For each fund, please provide data (to date) on the average amount received by each business, average business size (# of employees and annual revenue), number in each neighborhood, and number of M/W/SLBEs
  - Please also provide aggregate data on those who applied to each fund and were rejected, including average business size (# of employees and annual revenue), number in each neighborhood, and number of M/W/SLBEs
- Specifically in regard to the Commercial Rent Relief Fund, my office got calls about a difficult process for securing this relief, and a perceived lack of transparency about who got it and didn’t, so it would be helpful to understand the process for applying and criteria for receiving it.

- o Please share data on the winter 2021 application funnel for the Commercial Rent Relief Fund -- how many businesses applied, what was the size of the average request, how many businesses were eliminated at each stage of the process (i.e. because the landlord didn't cooperate, or they didn't qualify, or papers came in too late, etc.)
- As you think about the different categories of businesses served by the City's relief funds over the past year, which of these categories of business stand most in need of further assistance as the economy begins to reopen in FY22? Or is there another category that seems in greatest need? Where is the City able to make the most difference (given the much larger sums of money available from various federal funds), as we think about how to focus our ARP grants?
- How are we thinking about measurable outcomes from the All Inclusive Boston campaign?
- What is the update on the Main Streets program reassessment?
- Specifically, how are we thinking about supporting businesses in areas without a Main Streets District? I saw firsthand how much of a difference it made to have one during the pandemic.
- What options, if any, has the department considered for incentivizing filling commercial vacancies with local businesses?
- There is \$1 million budgeted for training workers in hard hit industries. What are these industries, what type of training will be available, and how are we evaluating what workers need? How do we tell the difference between when workers just need their jobs in a hard-hit industry back, vs. retraining?
- What if any support is OED providing to get local businesses to access central federal relief funds?
- Overall, how is OED examining the places we should be targeting for economic relief both in terms of need and impact?

**Councilor Ricardo Arroyo asked:**

- Can OED talk a bit about some of its external funds like the Boston Cannabis Equity Fund and the Small Business Relief fund? Where does funding for the external grants come from and how are they supplemented by the operating budget, if at all? How have these funds been disbursed or spent in the past?
- Can OED talk about the EDIC grant? The budget book says the City is awarded \$500,000 each year over 3 years, but OED is projecting a \$365,248 decrease from FY21: How will OED supplement the \$365,248 planned decrease this year? Will OED draw from the operating budget to support the functions this grant would have otherwise covered?
- Why is the Equity & Inclusion program of OED set to decrease by 19%? Is this amount being transferred to a different department? If so, what parts of the program are moving?
- The BRJP is funded through the Equity and Inclusion program of OED: will the decrease in personnel funding affect OED's ability to ensure compliance with the policy?

**Councilor Ed Flynn asked:**

- There is a \$1 million investment in job training for hard hit industries as part of post COVID-19 recovery, can we talk more about which industries are targeted, and what sort of programs will be offered?
- Many of the small businesses in my district are impacted by COVID-19, what sort of resources and funding are available for these small businesses who might be reopening, or had to modify their businesses to adjust to COVID?
- Are there any specific resources targeting women entrepreneurs? How about immigrant business owners?