Funding Tier System

P**riority-tier system based on the risk of losing utility service**, with a documented lottery when there isn't enough money to fund everyone in the same tier. The purpose of P.O.W.E.R. is to keep Baltimore City businesses open by addressing the utility debts that most immediately threaten their operations.

Verify eligibility

The published criteria is a pass/fail checklist. Confirm that the applicant operates a qualifying Baltimore City storefront, meets the one-year and employee requirements, is registered with SDAT, and has an eligible commercial energy account in the business's name with **$500 to $25,000 in past-due charges**.

Give applicants with missing or unclear paperwork the same short window to correct it. Make clear on the registration form that **registration reserves an opportunity to apply and does not determine award priority**. Applicants without a shutoff notice can still qualify.

Rank eligible businesses by documented urgency

	Who qualifies	What to verify
1. Service disconnected	**Utility service at the business location has already been shut off.**	**The utility confirms the amount required to restore service.**
2. Shutoff scheduled	**The business has an active notice with a specific shutoff date.**	**Verify the date and the amount required to stop the shutoff. Review these applications by earliest shutoff date.**
3. Past due	**The business has eligible arrears and no verified shutoff date.**	**Verify the past-due balance on the commercial account.**

If funds run short among equally ranked applicants, a documented random drawing is used. For Tier 2, that means a drawing among businesses with the same shutoff date. Use the drawing order as the waitlist order. Keep registration time, the size of the bill, and the applicant's ability to write a persuasive hardship statement out of the ranking.

Set a payment rule that delivers relief

Before applications open, publish the maximum award per business and explain how partial awards work. For Tiers 1 and 2, pay the utility directly for the verified amount needed to restore or preserve service, up to the program cap. If the cap leaves a gap, confirm that the utility will accept the grant alongside a payment arrangement or another confirmed contribution that resolves the immediate shutoff. For Tier 3, apply awards directly to verified arrears, up to the cap.

Set a rolling review schedule for emergency cases, with a portion of funds reserved for later review dates if BDC holds multiple application events. Have a second staff member verify the eligibility decision, priority tier, and payment amount before each award is approved.