



Bilingual Small Business Liaison Job Description

If you have economic empowerment experience serving minority-owned and independently-owned local businesses and a passion for mission-driven work, this position presents an exciting opportunity to join a small team with a big agenda.

Somerville is a petri-dish for changes engulfing America's coastal cities. Dubbed Slummerville by some as recently as thirty years ago, the city is undergoing a breakneck transformation, grappling with pitfalls that run parallel with economic and cultural opportunities. Nowhere is Somerville's change more concentrated than in Union Square.

Historically a highly diverse working-class immigrant community, a streetcar suburb providing a workforce for local industries such as meat-packing and, later, automobile construction, and laborers for Harvard and MIT campuses, Union Square offered affordable housing and a home for family-operated immigrant businesses.

With the growing attractiveness of urban living, Somerville by the late nineties became sought after rather than shunned. Rents went up; demographics shifted. In Union Square, a former manufacturing complex became home to a brewery and a rock climbing gym. Families moved out; singles moved in. Rents increased. Retail small businesses collapsed while restaurants and bars proliferated; displacement anecdotes were the perennial topic among long-term residents. Meanwhile, new entrepreneurial businesses developed, reflecting or responding to the new population and a shifting economy - incubator spaces, workshare spaces, a cafe/brewpub culture, makerspaces.

Already a bus hub, Union Square's Green Line Extension station opened in 2022. As a transit-oriented mixed use urban center, the district is adjusting to the reality of millions of square feet of new development that offers the potential of new customers and new opportunities but also threatens to overwhelm the very culture that helped attract investment in the first place.

The small, often immigrant-owned businesses of Union Square are the critical and most visible component of a unique urban culture that has celebrated difference, racial and economic diversity, and cultural complexity. The Square has prioritized innovation, creativity, and independence over standardization, homogenized national chains, and pandering to dominant cultural norms. The community has a strong commitment to creating and preserving a business environment that resists inequality.

[Union Square Main Streets \(USMS\)](#) is an established nonprofit, supported by public funding, donations, and community events such as the Farmers Market and the Fluff Festival that works to strengthen the dynamic neighborhood of businesses and people in Union Square by:

- promoting and celebrating the Square's unique and spirited character

- advocating for and assisting local businesses
- working to create welcoming public spaces, and
- fostering connection and collaboration among diverse stakeholders and partners.

Since 2005, USMS has served the small businesses that make up the dynamic neighborhood of Union Square. These ethnic restaurants and grocery stores, entrepreneurial start-ups, and shops offering a spectrum of services are a big part of the glue that holds Union Square together. Many of these are owned or staffed by recent or longer-term immigrants.

This is a particularly meaningful time to work with USMS. Working with the City of Somerville, USMS is partnering with residents, businesses, developers, and other property owners to shape the Square's future in a way that will preserve its unique character while taking advantage of new and emerging industries, increasing demand for housing, and the Green Line's arrival.

The USMS Bilingual Small Business Liaison plays an integral and multi-faceted role in USMS' work and is charged with working closely with the USMS Executive Director, staff, committees, partners, property owners, and businesses throughout the Square to confront these challenges:

- Preserving and nurturing Union Square's unique small business composition by providing support for permitting and licenses processes, business plan development, lease negotiations, and other technical assistance designed to strengthen individual businesses
- Supporting businesses as they adapt to multiple years of disruptive City infrastructure improvements and 20+ years of major development construction ahead, including developing plans to mitigate temporary or permanent displacement
- Developing creative strategies to incorporate small locally-owned business and entrepreneurial activity in new development
- Collaborating with development stakeholders (e.g., US2, DJL Real Estate Partners, Rafi Properties) to identify ways new development can strengthen the district and support the goals of USMS
- Helping businesses explore the benefits of achieving High Road Employer status with the American Sustainable Business Council
- Responding to emerging realities in businesses whether they be specific to recovering from COVID-19 impacts or more broad in terms the general evolution of retail and federal policy
- Increasing economic opportunity for minority-owned businesses that for far too long have not had equitable access to entrepreneurial resources

This position provides an exciting opportunity to build experience and networks while expanding knowledge and gaining skills related to place-based economic empowerment. The position is built on:

- USMS' 21 years of serving Union Square's diverse business district
- Priorities determined by USMS' most recent community-driven strategic plan, and
- A clear commitment to increasing economic opportunity for minority-owned and independent businesses.

Bilingual Small Business Liaison responsibilities and tasks may include, but are not limited to:

- Working in tandem with the Executive Director to establish and nurture meaningful, supportive, and authentic relationships with local business leaders, property owners, city staff, nonprofit partners, and mission-aligned groups throughout the greater Boston region
- Providing hands-on technical assistance to support Union Square businesses as they:
 - Navigate Somerville's permitting and licensing processes
 - Develop business plans
 - Negotiate leases
 - Access capital
 - Implement low cost marketing strategies
 - Plan fraud and scam prevention tactics
- Connecting businesses to resources such as skill building workshops, webinars, City led programs, grant opportunities, etc.
- Regularly walking the district to stay connected to what's happening on the ground, check in with businesses, build trust, and maintain visibility in the community Contributing to USMS small business and economic empowerment advocacy action
- Working with the Executive Director to develop strategies with developers to preserve and support USMS goals
- Maintaining an inventory of available small business commercial space within the district
- Orchestrating the monthly Union Square Business Meeting by proposing agenda topics, recruiting speakers, and leading logistical elements with the goal of deepening engagement
- Serving as lead staff liaison to the USMS Economic Vitality Working Group by contributing to agenda creation, taking notes, organizing files, and supporting the Chair as needed
- Recruiting business leaders to participate in and/or host Business Meetings and participate in events like the Holiday Stroll, Good Food For All, and Fluff Festival
- Supporting business leader recruitment to join USMS committees in order to position the business to contribute to activities in the Square, network with other business leaders, and provide pathways to leadership opportunities, such as Board service
- Leading and/or contributing to planning, organizing, and executing programs and events based upon USMS priorities and contract requirements that serve local businesses
- Contributing to the development of fundraising proposals and reports
- Data collection, documentation, and invoicing for funders
- A majority of the Small Business Liaison's work is conducted within the district inside businesses, at meetings, at partner locations, at City Hall, at ISD, public events, etc.
- Occasional evening or weekend responsibilities for events, Board, and City meetings

Qualifications:

- Belief in, and a solid understanding of, economic empowerment goals and strategies
- A minimum of 2 years experience providing small business technical assistance, mentoring, and/or improved access to resources
- Ability to communicate effectively in more than one language, with a strong preference for English, Spanish, and/or Portuguese

- Proficiency in reading and writing in a second language in order to translate documents
- Experience with equity-focused entrepreneurial ecosystems
- Appetite for connecting with people on a human level across cultural backgrounds
- Knowledgeable about the use of varied digital platforms and mechanisms to support knowledge sharing and communication among individuals with varying degrees of digital literacy
- A keen interest in researching and analyzing data and best practices related to communities and economic empowerment
- Bachelor's degree preferred
- Excellent organizational skills, ability to problem solve, prioritize, and meet deadlines
- Strong written and interpersonal communication skills
- Detail oriented and able to work both independently and as part of a team
- Strong computer skills, including Google Drive
- A high degree of personal and professional integrity
- Passion for community-driven work and working with a small team with a big agenda
- Sense of humor

This nonexempt position will be compensated with a salary between \$70,000-\$80,000 based on experience and an unexpectedly generous benefits package.

How to Apply: Letters or videos of interest and resumes sent to usms@unionsquaremain.org will be accepted through 11:59pm on July 13, 2025. USMS is eager to grow its team and impact. Interviews will be conducted with qualified candidates on a rolling basis with a goal of welcoming our newest team member in August.