

City of Cambridge Community Development Department Boosting Business Blocks Grant GUIDELINES & APPLICATION

INTRODUCTION

The Boosting Business Blocks (BBB) grant helps business associations and groups of businesses improve their commercial district or the businesses operating in it. The BBB grant pays for a portion of project costs in the form of a reimbursement check after the project has been completed. BBB funds are a grant, not a loan, and are not considered taxable income.

Past BBB funds have been reimbursed to projects that:

- Brighten a commercial district by installing flowers, murals, or other public art.
- Celebrate the unique character of a commercial district through banners or other signage.
- Encourage visitors to an area by holding special or seasonal events.
- Host a pop-up event or activity in a building or park that has been vacant or underutilized.
- Support the growth of businesses by developing new web sites or digital platforms that make it easy to find products and shop online.
- Offer training to businesses that will help businesses increase sales or work together.

To qualify for BBB, interested business associations or groups of businesses must complete a BBB application, provide quotes and designs from contractors/vendors, and be approved by the BBB manager to enter into a contract with the City of Cambridge.

Approved projects are now eligible for 100% reimbursement, **up to \$7,000 in funds.**

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA, RESTRICTIONS & PREFERENCES

The following criteria must be met for applications to be considered:

1. Applicants must be a Cambridge business association or a group of neighborhood business owners. **Applications from an individual person or a single business will not be accepted.**
2. The area of focus must be a Cambridge business district or street-facing Cambridge businesses. **Applications for projects focused on residential areas will not be accepted.**
3. Tenants must have written approval from property owners to participate in proposals that involve building renovations or changes.
4. Applicants must comply with all State and local laws and regulations pertaining to licensing, permits, building code and zoning requirements.

The BBB will give priority to projects submitted by, or projects that serve, diverse businesses. The following criteria will apply:

1. For applicants applying as a group of businesses, preference will be given to the following:
 - a. An application team comprised entirely of businesses owned by historically excluded persons (women, people of color, veterans, individuals that are disabled, and members of the LGBTQ+ community).
 - b. Application teams comprised of a mix of businesses owned by historically excluded persons and historically included persons will be considered but given lower priority than teams in category “a”.
2. For applicants applying as a business association that serves historically excluded business, preference will be given to the following:
 - a. Business associations with a mission statement that expressly states support, and offers services, for historically excluded businesses.
 - b. Business associations with a mission statement that more generally serves small, or local businesses, will be considered but given lower priority than business associations in category “a”.
3. For projects that support historically excluded businesses, preference will be given to the following:
 - a. Projects with a stated and explicit benefit to businesses owned by historically excluded persons (women, people of color, veterans, individuals that are disabled, and members of the LGBTQ+ community).
 - b. Projects with a benefit to small, or local businesses in general, of which historically excluded businesses in Cambridge would represent a portion, will be considered but given lower priority than projects in category “a”.

The following restrictions apply to all eligible projects, regardless of applicant:

1. City permit or license fees, as well as sales tax, are not eligible for reimbursement.
2. Maintenance costs (such as membership fees or digital platform subscription fees) are not eligible for reimbursement.
3. Staff time costs are eligible for reimbursement but cannot account for the total project cost (maximum allowed is 20% of total proposed costs or \$1,000.00, whichever is less).
4. Printing costs are eligible for reimbursement but cannot account for the total project cost (maximum amount allowed is 20% of total proposed costs).
5. Items already purchased for an existing event are not eligible for reimbursement but items not yet purchased, or upcoming phases of a project, will be considered.
6. Resubmission of past projects are not eligible for reimbursement, but new elements of a past project will be considered. So, an applicant that was awarded funding to perform a website redesign can be awarded funds for a whole new tool, like a web calendar feature or an online shopping tool that links to businesses.
7. Resubmission of past projects for the exact same project type are not eligible for reimbursement unless the resubmission is three (3) years from first submission. So, an applicant that was awarded funding in 2020 for light pole banners can request funding for more light pole banners of the same style and design in 2023.

The City of Cambridge reserves the right to apply additional criteria and restrictions before accepting proposals if program demand exceeds budgeted resources.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Applicants may be awarded up to \$7,000 per fiscal year, meaning that between July 1 and June 30 an applicant can be awarded two grants but both grants combined cannot exceed \$7,000. If an applicant has unused funds from a previous award they will not be considered for additional grants. Reimbursement checks are mailed out and only after projects have been completed with financial documentation reviewed by the BBB Manager. **Any work paid for or conducted prior to a signed contract or “Notice to Proceed with Improvements” will not be considered as eligible for reimbursement.**

Funding through BBB cannot be offered to those projects already funded through some other city funding source (such as ARPA funds) to ensure that no duplication of benefits has occurred.

Funding made available is intended for the purposes expressly stated in the applicant’s grant application and may not be used, in any part, for personal or political purposes. Examples of inappropriate use of BBB funding includes but is not limited to:

- An applicant is awarded grant funding to string up holiday lighting at their business and at a cluster of businesses around them. The lights are taken down in the summer to help reduce unnecessary wear and tear. A business may not use the lighting for their own display purposes inside their store when the lights are not in use outside alongside their business neighbors.
- A business association is awarded funding to develop a new social media platform to help promote their business members and association work. The association agrees to host a regular video series by a campaigning member of Cambridge City Council who is particularly supportive of small businesses. Unless the association is willing to host promotional materials for all City Council candidates as part of a larger election awareness effort, the association may not use the social media platform to distribute political content for a singular candidate.

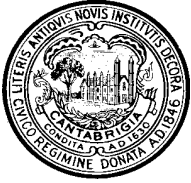
If an applicant is found to be in violation of grant contract funding terms, the applicant may be required to reimburse the City of Cambridge in full. Additionally, the applicant may be restricted from future grant funding opportunities.

DEADLINES & REVIEW PROCESS

Applications are accepted on a rolling basis and while funds are available.

Grant awards are determined by the BBB Manager and the BBB Review Committee according to the following: 1) total project cost 2) potential impact in community or given area 3) lasting impact and sustainability of project 4) feasibility of project and soundness of proposal 5) ability of project to be replicated.

Projects, regardless of when funding was awarded, need to be completed and paid for by June 1.



**City of Cambridge
Community Development Department
Boosting Business Blocks Grant
APPLICATION FORM**

APPLICANT INFORMATION

1. Applicant Name: _____

2. Business Association or Business Group (list all businesses in group): _____

3. E-mail address and phone number of Applicant: _____

4. Is the applicant, co-applicant, or any member of applicant's organization one or more of the following:

Y/N Involved in a political campaign

Y/N A candidate or public official or foreign political official

Y/N An immediate family member of a political official

Y/N A business entity formed by or for the benefit of any public official

Y/N A member of a local committee or board (including advisory boards)

If YES to any of the above, provide details (e.g., position title, volunteer or paid, duration of work):

5. Self-Identification Status (for Groups of Businesses only):

List how each member of your Business Group self-identifies (e.g., "Books for All": Latinx-owned)

6. List all project partners including any non-profits or resident organizations:

7. Provide a street address, intersection, block, or business district of proposed project:

8. List **all** grants, city funding, or organizations contributing money to this project:

9. Required **supporting documents at time of application:**

- Business Owner (applying on behalf of group of businesses):
 - 1) Copy of Cambridge Business Certificate
 - 2) Three signed letters of support from businesses abutting proposed project (not required for trainings, website upgrades, or any digital projects)
 - 3) Written permission from building owner(s) of any proposed properties (if making building improvements)
 - 4) Three quotes for proposed work (must be itemized and on company letterhead)

- Business Association:
 - 1) Organizing charter and Mission statement
 - 2) Copy of 501c3 status (if applicable)
 - 3) Full list of current board members and their affiliations
 - 4) Three signed letters of support from businesses abutting proposed project (not required for trainings, website upgrades, or any digital projects)
 - 5) Written permission from building owner(s) of any proposed properties (if making building improvements)
 - 6) Three quotes for proposed work (must be itemized and on company letterhead)

PROJECT NARRATIVE INFORMATION

On a separate sheet, please address the following:

10. Briefly describe the organization(s) behind the application, including mission, staff levels, board/leadership team, and/or recent changes in leadership or strategic direction.

11. In 50 words or less, briefly describe what your project is and what challenges it seeks to address.

12. Other than funding, what obstacles have prevented you from launching a project like this in

the past? For example, lack of consensus within leadership, short-staffed, competing priorities, needed additional buy-in from certain stakeholders, etc.

13. In addition to funding, what resources are available to ensure project success? For example, please note any recently added capacity like paid staff, recently completed strategic plans or visioning meetings, partnerships with area organizations, etc.

14. Please explain how your project is not temporary and how your project feeds into any larger organization or group efforts. For example, will banners or promotional materials be re-used in some way, will equipment or materials be durable for a few years, will workshops or training be captured in some way for future use?

PROJECT BUDGET & EVALUATION INFORMATION

15. Fill out the budget template provided or attach a budget of equal detail. Itemized costs and itemized sources of anticipated income are required.

- I used the template provided.
- I've attached my own budget.

16. How much grant funding are you requesting in total (cannot exceed \$7,000)? _____

17. How will you measure the impact of your project? Check one and expand upon below or attach separately.

- Post-project survey to members, customer base, or similar group with an interest in your project.
- Quantitative measurements like increase in new business association members or board members, increase in number of return customers, increase in average ticket sales or event attendees. Please note, applicants must be prepared to share data collected prior to project launch to ensure accurate pre- and post-project comparisons.
- Other: _____

Please note, projects will not be reimbursed until evaluation results have been shared with the Community Development Department (CDD). In the absence of a plan, staff in the CDD Economic Opportunity & Development Division will assist applicants in crafting one.

CERTIFICATION

The undersigned hereby represents and certifies to the best of his/her knowledge and belief that the information contained on this statement and any exhibits or attachments hereto are true and complete and accurately describe the proposed project, and the undersigned agrees to promptly inform the City of Cambridge Community Development Department of any changes in the proposed project which may occur.

Print Name

Tax ID #

Signature

Date

RETURN COMPLETED APPLICATION

Christina DiLisio, Economic Development Specialist

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Telephone: (617) 349-4601

344 Broadway, Cambridge, MA 02139
E-mail: cdilisio@cambridgema.gov

Boosting Business Blocks Grant Budget Template

Project Expenses			Project Income		
Consultant or Specialist			Budgeted Funds *if funds are anticipated, note date		
	kind of work	cost		Source or type	cost
1			1		
2			2		
3			3		
		Subtotal	4		
				Subtotal	
Equipment Purchase or Rental			Donations or Contributions		
	type/general category	cost		Source or type	cost
1			1		
2			2		
3			3		
4			4		
5				Subtotal	
		Subtotal			
Space Purchase or Rental			Other Grants or Sponsorships *if funds are anticipated, note date		
	type of space or location	cost		Name and type	cost
1			1		
2			2		
3			3		
		Subtotal	4		
				Subtotal	
Marketing & Advertising (including printing costs)			Total Income		
	Type of marketing (e.g. ad, printing)	cost			\$
1			<hr/>		
2			<hr/>		
3					
4					
		Subtotal			
Other Expense					
	type	cost			
1					
2					
3					
4					
		Subtotal			
Total Expenses		\$			
Balance					
			Total Expenses - Total Income		\$
					<hr/>