

City of Cambridge Community Development Department Boosting Business Blocks Grant - FY25

Guidelines

Are you a local business owner or business association? Do you have an idea for how to improve your block or commercial district? Apply to receive up to \$7,000 reimbursement for your project. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis and while funds are available.

Past Boosting Business Blocks (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 websites or digital platforms that support district marketing.
- Offer training to businesses that will help businesses work together.

Read about the grant process, eligibility, financial assistance, and the review process for Fiscal Year 2025 (July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025).

Grant Process

What does the Boosting Business Blocks (BBB) grant process look like? It typically includes the following steps:

1. Application – Submit your BBB application. The Review Committee reviews it. You will receive a funding decision by email.
2. Contract – If your project is funded, you will get a contract to sign. After you sign it, the City signs it too.
3. Notice to Proceed – After you sign the contract and the City signs the contract, you will receive an email “Notice to Proceed.” **Do not spend any of the funds you plan to submit for reimbursement until you receive this email.**
4. Complete your project – After receiving your Notice to Proceed, you can make approved purchases and complete your project.
5. Measure impact – Measure the impact of your project and share results.
6. Reimbursement – Submit a detailed invoice and include proof of payment.

Eligibility

How do I know if I'm eligible for the Boosting Business Blocks (BBB) grant? The following criteria must be met to be considered for the BBB grant:

1. Applicants must be a Cambridge business association or group of neighboring business owners. **Applications from an individual person or a single business will not be accepted.**
2. The area of focus must be small businesses in a commercial district or a group of street-facing small 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 altering the space in any way.
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 2021 for light pole banners can request funding for more light pole banners of the same style and design in 2024.

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” 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 there is no duplication of benefits.

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.

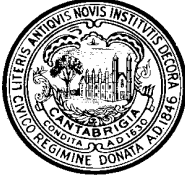
If an applicant is found to be in violation of grant contract funding terms, the applicant may be required to reimburse the City of Cambridge in full. Additionally, the applicant may be restricted from future grant funding opportunities.

Review Process

How will grant awards be determined? The Boosting Business Blocks (BBB) Manager and the BBB Review Committee will review eligible projects 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 - FY25**

Application

A. Applicant Information

1. Applicant Name: _____
2. Business Association or Group of Businesses (list all businesses participating in your proposed project): _____

3. _____

4. Applicant Email Address: _____
5. Applicant Phone Number: _____
6. Is the applicant, co-applicant, or any member of applicant’s organization one or more of the following?
 - a. Involved in a political campaign
 Yes ___ No ___
 - b. A candidate or public official or foreign political official
 Yes ___ No ___
 - c. An immediate family member of a political official
 Yes ___ No ___
 - d. A business entity formed by or for the benefit of any public official
 Yes ___ No ___
 - e. A member of a local committee or board (including advisory boards)
 Yes ___ No ___

If you answered “Yes” to any of the above, provide details (e.g., position title, volunteer or paid, duration of work):

7. List how each member of your group of businesses involved in the proposed project self-identifies (e.g., “Books for All”: Latinx-owned)

8. List all project partners including any nonprofits or resident organizations:

9. Provide a street address, intersection, or commercial district of proposed project:

10. Three signed letters of support from businesses abutting or participating in proposed project. Written permission from property owner(s) of any proposed properties (if making physical improvements).

Business Owner (applying on behalf of group of businesses):

- Copy of Cambridge Business Certificate.
- Three signed letters of support from businesses abutting or participating in proposed project. Written permission from property owner(s) of any proposed properties (if making physical improvements).
- Three quotes for proposed work (must be itemized and on company letterhead)

Business Association:

- Organizing charter and Mission statement.
- Copy of 501c3 status (if applicable).
- Full list of current board members and their affiliations.
- Three signed letters of support from businesses abutting or participating in proposed project. Written permission from property owner(s) of any proposed properties (if making physical improvements).
- Written permission from property owner(s) of any proposed properties (if making physical improvements).
- Three quotes for proposed work (must be itemized and on Association letterhead).

B. Project Narrative Information

On a separate sheet, please address the following:

11. Briefly describe the business association or the group of businesses) behind the application, including mission, staff levels, board/leadership team, and/or recent changes in leadership or strategic direction.
12. In 50 words or less, briefly describe what your project is and what challenges it seeks to address.
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?

C. Project Budget and Evaluation

15. Fill out the budget template provided or attach a budget of equal detail. Itemized costs and itemized sources of anticipated income are required.
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, you will not be reimbursed until evaluation results have been shared with the Community Development Department (CDD). Please let us know if you

need help creating a plan to measure impact.

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

Submit completed application to:

**Sarah Jane Huber, Associate Economic
Development Specialist**

City Hall Annex, 3rd Floor 344
Broadway Cambridge, MA 02139
Telephone: (617) 349-4624
E-mail: shuber@cambridgema.gov

www.cambridgema.gov/CDD/economicopportunityanddevelopment/smallbusinessassistance/boostingbusinessblocks

Boosting Business Blocks Grant Budget Template

Project Expenses

Consultant or Specialist

	kind of work	cost
1		
2		
3		
		Subtotal

Equipment Purchase or Rental

	type/general category	cost
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
		Subtotal

Space Purchase or Rental

	type of space or location	cost
1		
2		
3		
		Subtotal

Marketing & Advertising (including printing costs)

	Type of marketing (e.g. ad, printing)	cost
1		
2		
3		
4		
		Subtotal

Other Expense

	type	cost
1		
2		
3		
4		
		Subtotal

Total Expenses

\$

Balance

Project Income

Budgeted Funds *if funds are anticipated, note date

	Source or type	cost
1		
2		
3		
4		
		Subtotal

Donations or Contributions

	Source or type	cost
1		
2		
3		
4		
		Subtotal

Other Grants or Sponsorships *if funds are anticipated, note date

	Name and type	cost
1		
2		
3		
4		
		Subtotal

Total Income

\$

Total Expenses - Total Income

\$