

Downtown Chambersburg Inc.

Business Improvement Microgrant

November 2024

DOWNTOWN CHAMBERSBURG INC.

100 LINCOLN WAY EAST, CHAMBERSBURG, PA 17201

PHONE: 717-264-7101

Introduction

The purpose of the Downtown Chambersburg Inc. (DCI) Business Improvement Microgrant is to stimulate private business investment and better enable business attraction, retention, and expansion in the defined target area of historic downtown Chambersburg. Small businesses are the backbone of Chambersburg's economy, and their health and growth is directly tied to the health and growth of our Main Street, and our Main Street's ripple effect on the regional and statewide tourism and economic landscape. Businesses and properties in this core area have been described as the "front door of our community." How we support and care for the front door in downtown Chambersburg will have a powerful impact on how we view ourselves and how others view our community.

By granting property owners and businesses within this core district financial support, we will:

- Ensure diverse, small, women-, minority-, and veteran-owned businesses in and around our core district share in the benefits of revitalization efforts in our downtown
- Stimulate private investment in downtown properties and businesses
- Poise the core district as an inviting and cohesive tourism destination
- Preserve the architectural heritage of downtown properties
- Provide for a safe downtown
- Support the preservation and growth of businesses in our core neighborhoods
- Create positive community enhancements and a robust job market in Franklin County's most diverse and underserved neighbors, those in and around our downtown.

The Business Improvement Program is separate from other grants and loans offered by DCI, the Borough of Chambersburg, the Greater Chambersburg Chamber of Commerce, or other organizations.

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Microgrants

Business Improvement Microgrants (Microgrants) of up to \$5,000 are available. Microgrants are funded through the Main Street Matters Program, an initiative of Pennsylvania's Department of Economic Development and administered through DCI. Microgrants are limited to existing commercial properties and small businesses within the geographic boundaries described in these guidelines. Residential buildings are not eligible, however, commercial buildings with mixed business and residential may be eligible.

Either a property owner or an owner of a business may apply for and receive grant funding through the Microgrant program, though applications involving physical alterations to the building require approval from the property owner.

Eligible applicants:

Microgrants of up to \$5,000 are available to existing businesses that are:

- Located within the geographic bounds outlined in these guidelines
- Do not have overdue loans with DCI
- Businesses that contribute to DCI's mission of positively affecting the look, feel, and experience of downtown Chambersburg

Priority may be given to businesses that contribute to DCI's stated vision of downtown Chambersburg as a crossroad where art and diversity unite, local food and diverse international cuisine combine, new ideas and traditional values converge, and vibrant and healthy lifestyles abound.

Eligible expenses:

- Capital purchases
- Structural or interior improvements
- Hardware, software, and connectivity upgrades
- Professional marketing and promotions activity

Ineligible expenses:

- Salaries/benefits
- Operation costs including rent/mortgage and utilities
- Inventory
- Consumable supplies
- Fees to secure other funding
- Labor provided by the owner of property or proprietor of business

Microgrants require a dollar-for-dollar match.

Microgrants are reimbursed after project expenses are incurred.

Application Fee

There is a one-time non-refundable application fee of \$100 payable to DCI upon application submission.

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Application Steps

The following is a step-by-step guide for application. It is recommended that a potential applicant review the process with a DCI representative prior to initiating a project.

- 1) Review the Microgrant guidelines and application.
- 2) Identify that the building is within the eligible geographic boundary, and that the applicant and expenses are eligible under the Microgrant program.
- 3) As applicable to your project, review the Design Guidelines, US Department of the Interior's "Standards for Treatment of Historic Properties," available at the DCI office.
- 4) Consider the potential for the project to be covered under the Pennsylvania Prevailing Wage Act.
- 5) Complete the application form, including signature from property owner if applicable. Attach estimates and description and include a \$100 check made out to DCI for the application fee.
- 6) Arrange a pre-project visit by a DCI representative.
- 7) Upon approval, a contract will be executed between applicant and DCI, acknowledging the grant commitment and the associated requirements for grant reimbursement.
- 8) Complete project within 120 days from contract approval, unless stated otherwise in the contract.
- 9) After completion, contact DCI for a project review.
- 10) Reimbursement will be issued following review and approval by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Microgrants reimburse half the cost of each project, up to \$5,000. Total eligible activities may be more than \$10,000, however the microgrant only reimburses a maximum of \$5,000 per project. Maintain building as a commercial entity for a minimum of one (1) year following completion of the funded activities.

The Review Committee

The members of the Microgrant Review Committee are appointed by the Executive Committee of DCI. The Committee will consist of a minimum of three members. One member will be designated as the chair and responsible for conducting the application review process, documenting results, and making formal approval recommendation to the DCI Board of Directors for final approval.

Focus on Business Marketing, Not Events

DCI funding must be directed toward professionally marketing your business rather than specific events you may host, organize, or co-sponsor. Our grants are designed to build sustainable marketing infrastructure for downtown businesses.

Key Guidelines on Marketing projects

- **DCI is not a co-branding partner.** Grantees may not imply that DCI has created, endorsed, or approved any marketing content funded through this grant.

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- **Funds support marketing infrastructure, not messaging.** Marketing dollars are intended for platforms and professional services (design, ad placement, scheduling) rather than specific messaging or creative content.
- **Marketing strategy required.** All applicants must submit a clear marketing strategy outlining how funds will be used, ensuring transparency while recognizing that DCI will not review actual content.
- **Content responsibility rests with grantees.** DCI maintains no input, control, or approval over specific messages, campaigns, or visuals produced with grant funding.

These guidelines protect DCI's mission while empowering businesses to enhance their visibility. Our goal is supporting effective, professional marketing that strengthens the downtown district without placing DCI in a position of editorial oversight.

New Business Requirement:

Applicants who are:

- Opening a new business, or
- Operating a business for less than 18 months
- **Must submit:**
 - A business plan, and
 - Either proof of PA Small Business Development Center (SBDC) graduation or projected financials.

Profit & Loss statements are required from businesses operating after 18 months.

Scoring System for Review Committee:

A 5-point per category evaluation system will be used and the following categories are what the applicants will be judged on:

- **Business Longevity** (business plan, SBDC graduation, P&L, financial projections)
- **Value Alignment** (alignment with DCI's Mission, Vision, Core Beliefs, and National Historic Property Standards)
- **Community Reinvestment** (project investment total, amount reinvested into Downtown Chambersburg)

Landlord Verification for Renters:

- If the applicant is a renter, the building owner/landlord must verify:
 - The applicant is current with rent.
 - Lease term duration.

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Applicants can only have one application per application round.

Design Standards

DCI, respecting its place as a designated Historic District, has adopted the U.S Department of Interior's "Standards for Treatment of Historic Properties." Please refer to the published copy of these guidelines (a copy of which can be found at DCI's office). While the Review Committee expects applicants to develop their project in good faith with the advice given in the "Standards for Treatment of Historic Properties," we also recognize that each project has unique aspects which require a degree of flexibility.

Prevailing Wage Requirements

Prevailing Wage requirements are generally applicable to grants for construction, demolition, reconstruction, alteration, repair work, renovations, build-out and installation of machinery and equipment with a project cost in excess of \$25,000. Any questions as to final prevailing wage obligations should be directed to the Bureau of Law Compliance at 1(800) 932-0665.

The Pennsylvania Prevailing Wage Act (43 P.S. & 165-1 et seq.; 34 Pa. Code & 9.101 et seq.) may be applicable to this Project. If applicable, the Grant Recipient is responsible for including prevailing wage rates in all bid documents, specifications, and construction contracts pertaining to the project. The Department of Labor and Industry (L&I) has final authority to make all prevailing wage requirements.

Direct questions to Samuel J. Thrush, President, Downtown Chambersburg Inc., 100 Lincoln Way East, Chambersburg, PA 17201. (717) 264-7101, ext. 204. sthrush@chambersburg.org.