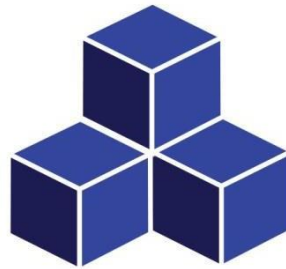




ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



**INNOVA**

**BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT GRANT PROGRAM**

**2024**

**GRANT APPLICATION AND PROGRAM GUIDELINES**

## INNOVA is Latin for 'Renew'

Thank you for your interest in the INNOVA Business Improvement Grant Program. INNOVA seeks to provide financial assistance to any Center business located in Downtown, a commercial or industrial zone. The program will reimburse the applicant 50% of qualifying improvements up to a certain dollar amount. Qualifying improvements fall into three broad categories: Facades, Structures, and Landscaping. Specifically, the Program will reimburse for:

- New awnings
- Windows
- Paint/Murals
- Reconstructed/repainted brick
- Roof repair
- Electrical, Plumbing, Structural repairs
- ADA compliance
- Selected Site Improvements – e.g. driveways, culverts, sidewalks (not parking lot)
- Selected landscaping – e.g. irrigation system, planting beds, selected plant species

Applicants must complete the attached application and understand the Program Guidelines.

Applications are returned to the Center City Hall and processed for completeness. The Center Economic Development Corporation Board votes on each application.

**Applications must be approved by the EDC Board prior to any work beginning if the applicant expects to receive reimbursement.**

Once all work is satisfactorily done, the applicant must provide proof of paid invoices. The Center EDC will then issue a reimbursement check.

# INNOVA PROGRAM

## BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT GRANT APPLICATION

Applicant Name

Business Name

Business Location

Applicant Contact  Phone  Cell

Property Owner

Address

Phone  Cell

### PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS

Which type of assistance are you requesting?

Façade       Landscaping       Building       Site Work

Briefly describe the proposed scope of work. Please reference the Program Guidelines for more information on what the INNOVA program will and will not fund. If possible, please provide renderings or drawing of the proposed improvements. Also please provide pictures of the area you are proposing to improve. Use additional pages if necessary.

### PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

Priority is given to first-time applicants. Is this a first-time application?    Yes     No

Please list all other INNOVA grants this property has received. Use additional pages if necessary.

**PROPERTY INFORMATION AND OWNERSHIP**

Is the Applicant the property owner?      Yes  No

If no, please provide a copy of the most current lease.

Provide a letter from the property owner stating they understand and agree to the proposed improvements.

If Applicant owns the property, provide proof of ownership – such as property deed or appraisal card showing ownership.

Current City Zoning Designation

Downtown       C1       C2       Industrial

**Outstanding Code or Compliance Issues**

**Is the property current on City property taxes?**      Yes       No

By completing, signing and returning this application, I acknowledge that I have received and reviewed the INNOVA Business Improvement Program Guidelines. I further agree to abide by the INNOVA Business Improvement Program Guidelines and other applicable City of Center rules and regulations. Failure to comply with applicable rules will be deemed a breach of contract and the Applicant will be liable to repay funds. I further agree to participate in all future INNOVA promotional activities.

Applicant Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Property Owner Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Received by City Staff**

**Application Checklist**

- |                                         |                          |                          |                          |
|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Completed Application                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | Confirmation of zoning   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Improvement description                 | <input type="checkbox"/> | Building pre-inspection  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Pictures                                | <input type="checkbox"/> | Proof of paid receipts   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Property lease                          | <input type="checkbox"/> | Check issued             | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Letter from property owner, if required | <input type="checkbox"/> | Post-project pictures    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Proof of property ownership             | <input type="checkbox"/> | Project closeout         | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Center EDC Board Approval               | <input type="checkbox"/> | Approved amount \$ _____ |                          |

## **GUIDELINES AND CRITERIA FOR THE INNOVA BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT GRANT PROGRAM CENTER ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**

### **SECTION 1. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this program is to promote the development and expansion of new and existing businesses within the City of Center, Texas (the 'City'), and enhance the economic welfare of the citizens of the City, by securing and retaining business enterprises and maintaining a higher level of employment, economic activity, and stability.

### **SECTION 2. TYPE AND AMOUNT OF GRANTS**

- A. Façade Improvement: Improvements to building façade including, but not limited to painting, reconstruction, addition of awnings and/or remodeling. The grant amount shall be equal to 50% of the cost of such improvements, up to a maximum of \$7,500.
- B. Property Improvement: Improvements to currently underutilized or uninhabitable structures to bring them up to code including, plumbing and electrical improvements. The grant amount shall be equal to 50% of the cost of such improvements, up to a maximum of \$7,500.
- C. Landscaping Improvement: Landscaping improvements to the exterior of buildings and sites meant to enhance the aesthetic appeal and value of the property. The grant amount shall be 50% of landscaping maintenance features (e.g. sprinklers, plants, beds, etc.) up to a maximum of \$2,500.
- D. Site Improvement: Replacement, alteration of deteriorated or compromised facilities restricting or compromising access to or productive use of the property. The grant amount shall be equal to 50% of qualifying site improvements, up to a maximum of \$10,000.

### **SECTION 3. ELIGIBILITY**

Any new business planning to locate within the City, or any business currently located within the City limits, shall be eligible for this program.

All buildings and facilities located in a commercial or industrial zone shall be eligible for this program.

Payment of City property taxes must be current for a property to be eligible.

Any proposed structural improvements will require a City pre-inspection to identify code issues.

Any applicant must resolve identified structural code issues before receiving a façade or landscaping award.

### **SECTION 4. GUIDELINES**

- A. Proof of applicant's ownership of the subject facility or facilities, or proof that the owner of such facility has approved the application for such grant funds, shall be required.
- B. The owner of a business to be operated within a leased facility and the owner of such lease facility must apply jointly for the program. Copies of a lease agreement and proof of facility ownership shall be required.
- C. A business or property owner may apply for one (1) or more of the types of grants per physical location (address) set forth herein within any fiscal year (October 1 through September 30). A business that receives grant funding during a fiscal year shall not be eligible to receive another grant within 36 months of completion. If in the event of shortage of funds or conflict, new applicants will receive priority.

- D. The maximum amount of funding available to any one applicant, business establishment, or property owner at one physical location (address) shall be \$27,500 per fiscal year. Such \$27,500 maximum shall only apply if all grant types are requested and approved. Three (3) estimates will be required for the application of the proposed improvements.
- E. All grants are reimbursement grants, and will only be funded after the completion of the project in accordance with drawings and specifications approved by the Center Economic Development Corporation and after the applicant submits to the CEDC proof of paid receipts (cancelled checks, etc.) for all applicable labor, materials, and related project expenses.
- F. Reimbursement grants are a cash match for funds disbursed by the applicant. In-kind contributions may not be used as any part of the applicant's match. Only cash expenditures by the applicant may be used in calculating the cost of improvements.
- G. The applicant shall be obligated to make the improvements in accordance with the application submitted to and approved by the CEDC. The applicant shall submit drawings, renderings, and/or plans for proposed improvements. Projects located in the Historic Downtown Square shall conform with architectural features and designs as outlined in the Downtown Streetscape Master Plan. Any modifications must first receive written approval of the CEDC. Failure to obtain such written approval prior to making any such modification shall render the applicant ineligible to receive grant funding.
- H. The applicant shall be responsible for obtaining all applicable permits relating to the improvement project, and failure to do so will render the applicant ineligible to receive grant funding.
- I. The improvements, as presented in the application, must be completed in their entirety. Failure to complete all of the stated improvements shall render the applicant ineligible to receive grant funding.
- J. For landscaping projects, the applicant will be responsible for installing proper landscaping maintenance and protection features (e.g., sprinkler system, planters, bump-outs, etc.) prior to receiving grant funding. Failure to complete all of the stated improvements shall render the applicant ineligible to receive grant funding.
- K. Upon approval of a grant application, and during the construction of improvements, a representative or representatives of the CEDC shall have the right to access and inspect the work in progress.
- L. The applicant SHALL NOT BEGIN IMPROVEMENTS RELATED TO THE APPLICATION prior to receiving written approval of grant funding from the CEDC.
- M. For vacant structures, the applicant must complete the improvement project and agree that a business establishment will be open for business and in operation within six (6) months from grant approval by the CEDC board. Failure to complete the improvements and open the business establishment within the required time shall be considered a default and result in the loss of grant funds and possible reimbursement to the Center Economic Development Corporation.
- N. The applicant must agree to remain in business and to not sell or assign such business to another person or entity for a period of twelve (12) months from the date of his/her application.
- O. Approval of all applications shall be with the understanding and agreement that, in the event the business (applicant) fails to remain open, or the business or property is sold or transferred, within twelve (12) months after the funding of the grant, the applicant shall be considered in default of its obligations under the grant and shall be required to reimburse the CEDC the grant money received, in accordance with the requirements hereof.
- P. The applicant must agree that, in the default of its obligations, the CEDC has the right to reimbursement for all attorney's fees and costs, which may be incurred as a result of any legal action required to seek reimbursement of all applicable grant funding received by applicant.

## **SECTION 5. APPLICATION AND APPROVAL**

- A. Applications filed with the CEDC shall be considered at the most expedient possible CEDC Board meeting.
- B. Applications must be made on the application form as supplied by the CEDC.
- C. Applications must be approved by the CEDC Board of Directors
- D. All applicants shall be notified, in writing, of the CEDC's decision to approve or disapprove an application.
- E. The CEDC may award grant funds to an applicant, with certain provisions, conditions, or other requirements the CEDC deems necessary and appropriate.

## **SECTION 6. FUNDING**

- A. Upon notification to the CEDC by the applicant that a project has been completed, an inspection shall be made to confirm that such project has been completed in accordance with the application, or any approved modification thereto. Such notification shall include, but not limited to, documentation of paid receipts for materials, labor, permits, inspection reports, or any other items that the CEDC may reasonably deem necessary for determining the project's completion.
- B. Within thirty (30) days following the inspection required in Paragraph A above, and confirmation of completion of the project in accordance with the application, or any approved modifications thereto, the CEDC may authorize release of grant funds. Upon authorization, 50% of the total grant amount awarded shall be paid to the applicant. An additional 50% of grant funds will be released 30 days after the first payment for an existing business. For a new business, the remaining 50% will be released once the business has been open for 30 days.
- C. If the CEDC makes a determination that the project has not been completed in accordance with the application or any approved modifications, the CEDC shall issue a deficiency letter, informing the applicant of all areas of non-compliance. The applicant shall then have sixty (60) days from the date of the notification to bring the project into compliance. Failure to complete such modifications within the 60-day period shall be deemed a default of the applicant's obligations under the grant. Any costs associated with bringing the project into compliance are non-reimbursable under this program.
- D. If the applicant business is closed, sold, or transferred within a six-month period after funding approval is received, the applicant shall be required to reimburse the CEDC for 100% of the grant amount received.
- E. Payments due pursuant to paragraph D must be paid in full within thirty (30) days after the date of written notification by the CEDC that the applicant/owner is in default of any of the funding requirements set forth herein. The form of payment shall be a cashier's check or money order, made payable to the Center Economic Development Corporation.

## **SECTION 7. NOTICE**

- A. The Center Economic Development Corporation shall deliver a copy of these guidelines to any applicant for his/her review and the delivery hereof does not constitute an offer of Business Improvement Grant funds.
- B. The laws of the State of Texas shall govern the interpretation, validity, performance, and enforcement of the Business Improvement Grant program. If any provision of the Business Improvement Grant program is held to be invalid or unenforceable, the validity and enforceability of the remaining provisions shall not be affected thereby.