



Business Plan Grant Program

General Information Packet

PURPOSE

The goal of the Hancock County Economic Development's (HCED) Business Plan Grant Program is to foster business development in Hancock County through new business initiatives as well as business expansions.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Up to a total of \$10,000 in grant funds may be awarded among one or more selected businesses in Hancock County, Illinois, that meet the specified Application criteria and provide adequate documentation to support the grant request.

The Grant Committee will meet periodically to review Applications and determine the eligibility of Applicants. The Grant Committee reserves the right to determine that no Applications satisfy the Application, and in that case, to not award any grants.

Grant funds will be given to the Recipient in the form of reimbursement and will be disbursed only after adequate documentation including, but not limited to, receipts are submitted.

The Recipient of any grant funds for a new or expanded business must open for business within six (6) months after receiving confirmation that applicant has been awarded the grant funds. If the business is not open within six (6) months of such notice, the Recipient shall forfeit the grant funds and hereby waives all claims to such grant funds.

All Applicants must read and review the Terms and Conditions form. To participate, Applicants must agree in writing to the rules, regulations, terms and conditions. In addition, the Recipient must sign the Grant Accountability form.

ELIGIBILITY

1. **Applicants must have their principal place of business located in Hancock County, Illinois at the time grant funds are awarded.** Further, to receive grant funds, the Recipient must agree to maintain their principal place of business in Hancock County, Illinois for at least three (3) years after the date grant funds are awarded.
2. **Applicants should be affiliated with a for-profit business.** The following businesses are generally not considered 'for-profit' businesses: non-profit businesses, businesses operating merely as tax shelters, businesses in the process of relocation, businesses in the process of a buy-out, and real estate syndications. However, the Grant Committee may award grant funds to any business at their discretion, including businesses not generally considered 'for-profit.'
3. **Preference will be given to new businesses in the process of starting-up or otherwise beginning operation.** However, the Applicant must be open for businesses within six (6) months of being awarded grant funds.
4. **Significant expansions of existing businesses will also be considered.** A 'significant expansion' includes, but is not limited to, an expansion that would increase the number of staff members or otherwise create jobs in the community.
5. **No preference will be given based upon the purpose or function of the business.** Applicants may submit businesses in any field, including but not limited to, services, manufacturing, distribution, health care, internet technology, consumer products, retail, and any other fields of commercial endeavor.
6. **Applicants must demonstrate their ability to operate as a business.** Applicants must be able to submit documentation that demonstrates their ability to operate as a business, including, but not limited to, the businesses' ability to obtain additional financing from customary lenders, documentation proving market feasibility, and any other required or requested documentation.
7. **Applicants must fully complete a Business Plan Grant Program Application.**
8. **Applicants must not be affiliated with the Hancock County Economic Development Corporation.** All Hancock County Economic Development Executive Committee members, staff, and their immediate family members are excluded from participating in the Business Plan Grant Program.

RULES OF PARTICIPATION

By signing the Terms and Conditions form, each Applicant acknowledges and agrees to all rules, regulations, terms, and conditions of the Business Plan Grant Program, including, but not limited to, the following terms:

1. That Hancock County Economic Development (“HCED”) and the Grant Committee have the right to alter, amend, or supplement at any time and from time-to-time, the rules, regulations, terms, and conditions regarding the Business Plan Grant Program.
2. That all decisions regarding the Business Plan Grant Program shall be made in the sole discretion and judgement of the Grant Committee.
3. That each Applicant shall release and hold harmless the Business Plan Grant Program, HCED, the Sponsor, Grant Committee, other Business Plan Grant Program participants, those providing grant funds, products or services for the Business Plan Grant Program, those persons or entities rendering professional advice to the Recipients (such as attorneys, bankers, accountants, advertisers, marketers, and other consultants) who have donated their time and services for the Business Plan Grant Program, together with each of the foregoing’s respective affiliates, employers, employees, directors, officers, representatives, volunteers, members, or agents (collectively, “Business Plan Grant Program Officials”), in each case from and against any and all decisions, claims, liability, or expense related to or arising from Recipient’s entry or participation in the Business Plan Grant Program and the Recipient’s implementing its business plan (as the same may be altered or amended from time to time) submitted for the Business Plan Grant Program.
4. UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES, WHETHER IN CONTRACT, TORT, OR OTHERWISE, SHALL A RELEASED PARTY BE LIABLE FOR LIQUIDATED, SPECIAL, INDIRECT, INCIDENTAL, EXEMPLARY, OR CONSEQUENTIAL DAMAGES, EXPENSES, OR COSTS, INCLUDING, WITHOUT LIMITATION, LOST PROFITS, HOWSOEVER CAUSED AND EVEN IF THE POTENTIAL OF SUCH DAMAGES WAS DISCLOSED AND/OR KNOWN.
5. Each key person associated with an Applicant must include a résumé and a list of references along with their Application.
6. Before an Applicant of the Business Plan Grant Program may receive any grant, monetary or other award, assistance, or incentives, an authorized representative of the Applicant must agree to the terms and conditions for each such grant, award, assistance, or incentive, as specified by the Business Plan Grant Program or organizations providing grants, awards, assistance, or incentives through the Business Plan Grant Program.
7. All Business Plans must be the original work of the entering individual or partnership.

General Rules and Guidelines

1. The Grant Committee may disqualify any Application they believe violates the letter or spirit of the Business Plan Grant Program guidelines in its sole discretion.
2. The Judges will not disclose any proprietary information from the Applicant's business plan without prior consent of the Applicant; except where necessary to properly evaluate the business plan submitted by the Applicant.
3. **Conflict of Interest Policy:** The Committee agrees not to initiate a professional relationship with Applicants who have an active Application in the Business Plan Grant Program. An Application is considered active until the Committee has made a decision about it or until it has been withdrawn by the Applicant. A Committee member will recuse themselves from discussion about and voting on an Applicant to the Business Plan Grant Program if a Committee Member has an existing personal or business relationship with the Applicant.
4. The decision of the Committee is final, including its interpretation of the rules.

JUDGING CRITERIA

THE SELECTION COMMITTEE WILL BASE THE BUSINESS PLAN GRANT APPLICATION ON THE FOLLOWING POINT SYSTEM

Concept & Innovation

20 Points

- Demand for the product (provide market research)
- The innovative nature and technical feasibility of the idea
- Market opportunity (market and economic opportunity)
- Value proposition
- Is the opportunity reasonable and supported by a sound execution strategy
- What is the niche you are trying to fill or to demonstrate as a solution to a strong market demand

Viability

60 Points

- Marketing Plan
 - Ability to reach initial customer
 - Sales strategy
 - Distribution plan (clearly defined and reasonable)
- Competitive Environment
 - Competitors
 - Competitive advantage
 - Competitive pressures
- Management
 - Planning/operations
 - Experience to lead new venture
 - Capability

- Capacity (personal financial statement, résumé and credit report)
- Skills required to execute the plan
- Financials:
 - Pro-forma Statements (justification for projections/assumptions and supporting documentation)
 - Access to capital or appropriate collateral (i.e., loan -- list collateral available; access to additional funding; provide as much support as possible)
 - Consistent financials with the overall plan
 - Realistic assumptions
 - Description of funding/resources required to execute the plan
- Sustainability
- Contingency plan
- Exit strategy

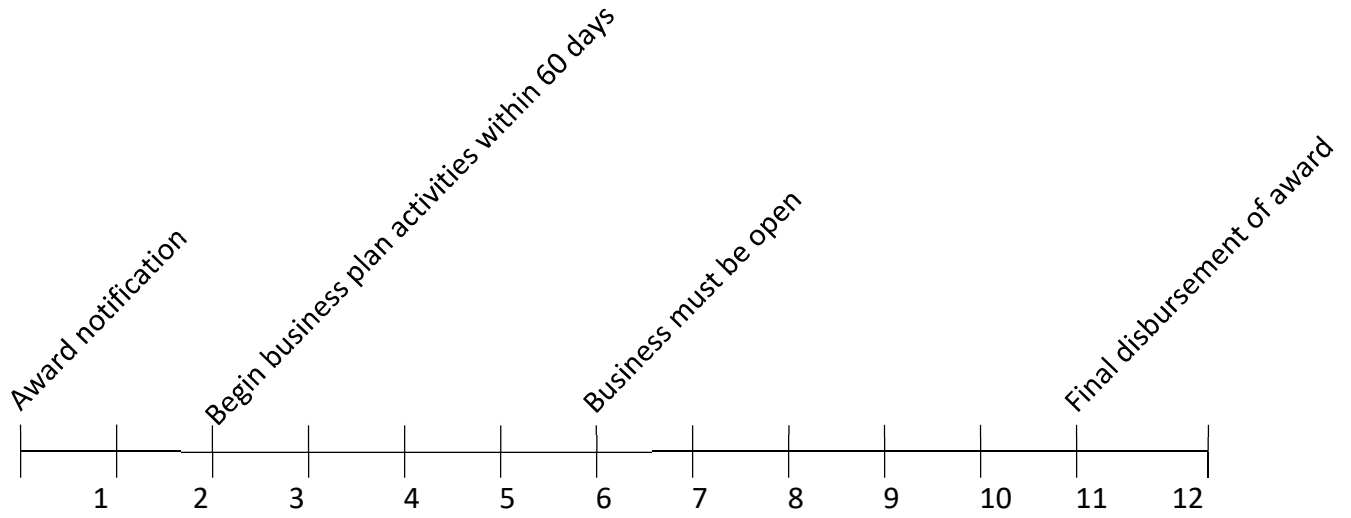
Economic Impact

20 Points

- Profitability to the region
- Job growth

*** The final step includes the Committee meeting with the Applicant to review the business plan.**

Hancock Economic Development Corporation Business Plan Grant Timeline



Onset = Award Notification

Award will be given as receipts for bills are received. Bills must be dated after notification of award.

Month 2 = Business activities include license, permits, marketing and promotional materials, purchasing equipment, and/or selling product.

Month 6 = New business or expansion must be open and running.

Month 11 = Award final disbursement. If business or expansion opens before six months, timeline moves ahead accordingly.

Hancock County Economic Development Business Plan Grant Program Recipient's Agreement

I hereby acknowledge that I have been awarded a grant in the amount of \$10,000 from the Hancock County Economic Development ("HCED") Business Plan Grant Program. By initialing below, I indicate my understanding and agreement to the following conditions:

- ___ To have or keep my business located in Hancock County
- ___ The award must be used for launching or expanding my stated business substantially as outlined in the business plan and presented to the Business Plan Grant Program. I agree to begin implementing my Business Plan within 60 days, and I agree to open/expand my business within six months of the date of this award. If I decide not to launch or expand my business, I understand that I will not be entitled to receive any grant funds offered by this competition.
- ___ To gain access to the awarded funds, I will do the following:
 - ___ Submit receipts or invoices (dated after the date of this award) to HCED for reimbursement for verification of business plan implementation
- Please submit all receipts or invoices to:
Terry Pope, Executive Director
Hancock County Economic Development
PO Box 248
Carthage, IL 62321
hancockctyed@gmail.com
- All expenditures must be submitted to HCED office by 11 months after award date. At that time any remaining grant funds will be forfeited.

*I agree, if available, to participate in ceremonies, presentations, or other HCED venues for the Business Plan Grant Program. In addition, I agree to provide the HCED with quotes, updates, and/or pictures that we can use in the promotion of the Business Plan Grant Program for future use.