

Finish Line Grant Program

Description and Process

August 13, 2024

Introduction

The Finish Line Grant Program (“FLG Program”) is designed to support local businesses throughout the City of Aurora (“City”) by providing property owners and tenants with financial assistance for labor, materials and equipment for new or existing commercial or mixed-use properties (“Project”). The goal of the FLG Program is to foster economic growth, boost the local economy, and improve the community.

FLG Program applications are accepted on a rolling basis, subject to the availability of funds.

Qualifications for Applicants

Applicants must meet the following conditions:

1. Applicant must control the property via:
 - a. Ownership of the property;
 - b. A contract to purchase the property with the written approval of the property owner; or
 - c. A lease with a minimum of 3-years remaining, with the written approval of the property owner.
2. Applicant must be a “small business”, defined as a business with fewer than 50 employees.
3. Applicant must not be in violation any codes, laws or regulations of the City, county, state or other governmental entity.
4. Applicant must not owe any outstanding fees, fines, or payments of any kind to the City, county, state or other governmental entity.

Qualifications for Project

To be eligible under the FLG Program, the applicant’s Project must meet the following criteria:

1. Projects must be a build-out or rehabilitation of a commercial or mixed-use property.
2. Reimbursement for Project must be for Eligible Expenses as defined herein.
3. Applications for the grant should be submitted before the Project begins. However, Projects started prior to the submission of a grant application will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
4. The total Project costs must exceed \$10,000.
5. All labor for the Project must be performed paying Prevailing Wage for said labor as defined by the Illinois/Federal Department of Labor.

Grant Funds

The maximum grant amount is \$50,000; however, for restaurant projects, the maximum grant amount is \$75,000.

Reimbursement for Eligible Expenses shall be based upon the following percentages:

1. 20% of Eligible Expenses for materials and equipment costs.
2. 30% of Eligible Expenses for labor costs (Prevailing Wage must be paid for all labor).

Only Eligible Expenses will be considered for grant funding. Grant funds will be provided on a reimbursement basis upon completion of the Project, with appropriate certifications submitted as required herein.

Eligible Expenses

Eligible Expenses include, but are not limited to:

- Build-out or rehab costs for the Project resulting in fixed capital improvements, including, but not limited to:
 - Building materials
 - Labor Costs (contractors must pay Prevailing Wage for this Project)
 - Interior or exterior lighting fixtures
 - Utility service upgrades
 - HVAC, electrical and plumbing upgrades
 - Repair/Rehabilitation of building exterior
- Building code improvements
- External Signage
- Tenant improvements required to meet the occupancy requirements of the International Code Council, (ICC), National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), the Illinois Accessibility Code, Illinois Energy Conservation Code, or the Illinois Plumbing Code.
- Equipment including, but not limited to: shelving, racks, commercial seating, commercial kitchen equipment (equipment must be specified in the application).

Ineligible expenses include, but are not limited to:

- Point of sale systems, computer equipment, TVs, AV equipment
- Payroll
- Rent
- Inventory or product/merchandise.
- Payroll and Operational costs (utility bills, refuse pick-up, etc.)

- Moving expenses
- Working Capital
- Refinancing of debt
- Incorporation and Organization Expenses, Financing or Legal Fees (i.e. loan packaging fees, application fees)
- Building/Site acquisition
- Vehicles/Trailers

Program Application Requirements

Applications must include all of the following documentation.

1. Completed and signed program application form.
2. Written estimates of all work to be completed by a licensed and registered contractor(s) paying Prevailing Wage for this Project. All estimates will be analyzed for accuracy and reasonableness. Invest Aurora reserves the right to request competitive bids if deemed necessary.
3. Evidence of ownership or owner's permission:
 - a. **Building owner:** deed, title insurance policy, trust documents, etc.
 - b. **Contract purchaser:** sales contract and letter from the owner giving permission to undertake the Project.
 - c. **Tenant:** Copy of current fully executed lease with at least 3 years remaining in the term and a letter from the owner giving permission to undertake the Project.
4. Copy of most recent paid annual property tax bill, sales tax filing, and other such proofs of payment, as applicable.
5. Scaled drawings of the proposed Project.
6. Businesses must register on the City's website (at no cost) at <https://www.aurora-il.org/2217/Business-Registration> to be eligible.
7. Copies of the following organization documents:
 - a. Articles of Incorporation
 - b. By-laws/Management Agreement
 - c. Certificate of Good Standing from the State of Illinois
8. List of all persons/entities with a 5% or greater ownership interest in the applying business.

Administration

Applications for grants will be accepted on a rolling basis until the funds allocated for the FLG Program have been exhausted. Applications received after funds have been exhausted will be placed on a waitlist and will be considered upon availability of additional funds.

Applications previously submitted will be asked to supplement their application as needed.

Invest Aurora staff and the Invest Aurora Loan Committee will review each application for accuracy and will determine if it meets the requirements for funding and make recommendations for approval to the Invest Aurora Board of Directors for final approval. Invest Aurora reserves the right to prioritize the review and/or approval of certain applications at its discretion.

Payout of Grant Funds

The grant will reimburse for approved Eligible Expenses upon completion of the Project. Partial grant payments may be made prior to the Project's completion upon special approval. Prior to a payout of grant funds, the grant recipient must:

- Show proof of waiver of all liens on the property with respect to the Project.
- Show proof of payment for the Project.
- Deliver all applicable payroll certifications evidencing the payment of Prevailing Wage with respect to the Project.
- Deliver evidence of final inspection(s) by the City's Building and Permit Division and any other appropriate governmental entity having jurisdiction over the Project.
- Provide a copy of the Certificate of Occupancy (or equivalent) from the City.
- Submit an owner's sworn statement detailing all payments made to contractors and subcontractors, work performed, contract prices, project costs, remaining balances if any.
- Submit partial and/or full lien waivers and cancelled checks or paid invoices to show proof of payment.

Post Award Obligations

For a minimum of three (3) years commencing upon issuance of the Certificate of Occupancy, the property owner and/or applicant (if other than the owner) must agree in writing they will:

- Maintain ownership and/or operation of the property.
- Maintain a commitment to operate their business a minimum of 40 hours a week.
- Not allow any of the uses outlined below to operate on the property without prior written approval by Invest Aurora:
 - rooming and boarding/single room occupancy
 - used clothing stores
 - pawn shop
 - flea market
 - payday loans and currency exchange uses
 - laundromat
 - barber shops, hairdresser or tattoo parlor uses
 - adult entertainment
 - packaged liquor stores

- o vapor or electronic cigarette shops
- o massage parlors
- o gun clubs and shooting ranges
- o drug paraphernalia/head shops

In the event that one of the above-mentioned uses exist within the building prior to rehabilitation, such uses will be allowed to continue as a viable use within the building.

Default

Failure by the applicant to abide by all of the requirements of the FLG Program, including the Post-Award Obligations set forth above, shall constitute a default. Upon a default, applicant will be required to pay back to Invest Aurora all grant funds less any amounts that have been forgiven as provided for herein. For each month following the final disbursement of the grant funds to the applicant up to the date of applicant's default, one-thirty-sixth (1/36) of the total grant amount will be considered forgiven. After three (3) years, the entire grant will be forgiven.

Additional Conditions

In addition to requirements herein contained, Invest Aurora may place certain other conditions, restrictions or stipulations upon each Project if the Invest Aurora Board of Directors determines such conditions to be necessary in order to further the intentions of the FLG Program.