



## **COVID-19 Recovery Business Grants Program Guidelines**

### **Section 1: General Provisions**

#### **A. Introduction**

In January of 2022, the City of Winooski allocated \$100,000 from the municipal funds received through the American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) for the purpose of establishing a small business COVID-recovery grant program.

#### **B. Purpose**

The purpose of the Winooski COVID-Recovery Business Grant program is to assist Winooski businesses in recovering from sustained pandemic-related revenue losses by providing:

1. Assistance for making business commercial lease payments;
2. Assistance for competitive pay and/or bonuses to employees working in restaurants, retail and other front-line customer service work that puts them at higher risk of exposure to COVID; and
3. Technical support and assistance to modernize businesses' online presence, sales, social media marketing, etc.
4. Physical improvements that reduce or eliminate building or health code violations, with a priority on improvements that improve safety or working conditions.

The intention is to promote the long-term viability of Winooski-based businesses, which in turn will:

1. stabilize employment opportunities;
2. prevent or reduce commercial vacancy rates in the City; and
3. continue to provide necessary goods and services for our residents;
4. contribute to the economic vitality of the City.

#### **C. Funding Amount**

The maximum grant per business from this program is \$10,000.

### **Section 2: Eligibility Considerations**

#### **A. Geographic Area**

The area served by the program is the geographical limits of the City of Winooski, Vermont.

#### **B. Eligible Applicants**

The Winooski COVID-Recovery Business Grant program is intended to assist businesses located in Winooski which have suffered sustained revenue losses due to the pandemic. Businesses must demonstrate sustained revenue losses from 2019 to 2021 in order to be eligible for grant assistance. Businesses **must have applied or be in process of applying for** assistance from the State of Vermont Economic Recovery Bridge program: <https://accd.vermont.gov/covid-19/economic-recovery-bridge-program>

### C. Eligible Activities

1. Making business commercial lease payments
2. Competitive pay and/or bonuses to employees working in restaurants, retail and other front-line customer service work that puts them at higher risk of exposure to COVID
3. Technical support and assistance to modernize businesses' online presence, sales, social media marketing, etc.
4. Improvement of building or physical facilities/equipment to address code violations, especially those that improve health and safety conditions.

### D. Ineligible Activities

1. The acquisition of land, buildings and fixed equipment
2. Site preparation, façade improvement, installation of fixed equipment, construction, reconstruction or rehabilitation of buildings not related to code violations.
3. Clearance, demolition, or the removal of structures or signage.
4. Acquisition of equipment, machinery or inventory that does not address a code violation.
5. Startup costs
6. Refinancing or consolidating existing debt
7. Reimbursement for expenditures prior to grant approval
8. Other activities as identified by the Grant Review Committee during administration of the program

### Section 3: Evaluation Criteria

Criteria	Score**
Business can demonstrate positive balance sheet pre-COVID (2019 year end)	
Retains jobs in Winooski	
Business employs Winooski residents	
Revenue loss percentage aligns with median pandemic losses in Winooski for business type (+/- 5%)	
Retains business types currently under-represented or lacking in the City and desired/needed by the community	
Certified MBE or WBE (Minority Owned Business or Women Owned Business) or Certified LGBTQIA+	
<b>Total Score</b>	

\*\* Scoring:

0 – Does not meet criteria

1 – Meets minimum level of criteria

2 – Meets high level of criteria



#### **Section 4: Terms And Conditions**

The Winooski COVID-Recovery Business Grant program terms will follow the federal guidance for use of municipal ARPA funds.

- A. Maximum Grant:** \$10,000 per eligible business
- B. Mandatory Reporting Requirements:** Businesses will be required to document that grant funds were spent on the purpose designated in their application. Other documentation than listed below may be accepted upon agreement by the City.
  - a. Making business commercial lease payments
    - Copy of lease agreement showing payment amount due and receipts showing payments made including amount and date and/or cancelled checks to the lessor.
  - b. Competitive pay and/or bonuses to employees working in restaurants, retail and other front-line customer service work that puts them at higher risk of exposure to COVID
    - Competitive Pay – payroll reports from before competitive pay implemented and those including competitive pay increases.
    - Bonuses – payroll reports including bonuses paid to staff
  - c. Technical support and assistance to modernize businesses' online presence, sales, social media marketing, etc.
    - Copy of signed contract for technical services and/or software and copies of paid invoices and cancelled checks.
  - d. Improvement of building or physical facilities/equipment to address code violations, especially those that improve health and safety conditions.
    - Copy of bid/quote and copies of paid invoices and cancelled checks.
- C. Authorization for Release of Information:** Application documents will require authorization from applicants to allow release of application information to the Winooski COVID-Recovery Business Grant Evaluation Committee.
- D. Return of Grant Funds:** Grant funds should be expended within 12 months after payment is issued. At the end of this period any unexpended grant funds must be returned to the City of Winooski unless a written request for an extension of time and/or expansion of uses of the funds has been approved by the Winooski City Council. Grant Funds will be returned if the City determines that the Grantee has not performed in accordance with the terms of the award or met the conditions described in the grant eligibility criteria.

## **Section 5: Application Procedures**

### **A. Application Format**

Applicants shall submit a grant application package consisting of the following information:

1. A completed Winooski COVID-Recovery Business Grant Application.
2. Signed and dated copies of your 2019/2020 business tax returns.
3. A Year-to-Date Profit & Loss Statement (no older than 3 months) and Current Balance Sheet for the business. Please sign and date all pages.
4. Documentation of application to the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development Economic Bridge Program.
5. A detailed description of how you will use the money. Please attach copies of lease agreements, quotes, or invoices.
6. A written narrative that describes your business needs, financial performance pre-pandemic and during the pandemic, and COVID impacts to your business and your industry. Describe why the business is requesting the grant and how the funds will be used. The narrative should also contain a brief history of the business, any changes to your business model due to the pandemic and other information that will help us to better understand your business.

### **B. Application Submittal**

The completed application and all required attachments shall be submitted to: City Manager, Winooski City Hall, 27 W. Allen Street, Winooski, VT 05404 or to [grants@winooskivt.gov](mailto:grants@winooskivt.gov). Acceptance of applications shall be subject to the availability of Winooski COVID-Recovery Business Grant Program funds.

### **C. Application Deadline**

Completed applications for the approved \$100,000 allocation must be received by April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2022 at 5:00 pm. Should further funds be allocated in the future, additional competitive funding round deadlines will be established.

### **D. Confidentiality**

Each page or section of the application that contains confidential and proprietary material under 1 VSA, Chapter 5 shall be clearly marked by the applicant. Discussion of confidential materials that are deemed exempt under 1 VSA, Chapter 5 shall be discussed in executive session to maintain applicant's confidentiality.

## **Section 6: Review Process**

### **A. Competitive Process**

The funds allocated for the Winooski COVID-Recovery Business Grant Program are limited, thus the application process will be a competitive process. Grant applicants will be asked to submit applications by a set date, and the applicants will receive funding awards based highest score rankings on the evaluation criteria. Should further funds be allocated in the future, additional rounds of competitive evaluation will be established.



# City of Winooski

Vermont's Opportunity City

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## **B. Downtown Winooski Board as COVID-Recovery Business Grant Program Evaluation Committee to Review Applications and Make Recommendations**

The City of Winooski has established the Downtown Winooski Board of Directors as the COVID-Recovery Business Grant Evaluation Committee for the Program. Upon completion of OCU's Loan Risk Tier Identification, all Program applications shall be reviewed by the COVID-Recovery Business Grant Program Evaluation Committee on a competitive basis.

1. The Committee shall meet as needed to review and act on grant applications. A quorum shall consist of a majority of the members.
2. During its review, the Committee may recommend adjustments to the grant amount being requested by the applicant and it shall clearly communicate the recommended terms to City Council.
3. The Committee will consider availability of funds and evaluation criteria score (Section 3) in making determinations.
4. Information that may identify the applicant will be redacted by City staff to the furthest extent possible prior to sharing the applications with the Evaluation Committee.
5. Committee members shall recuse themselves from deliberations in the case of conflict of interest per the Winooski City Council Conflict of Interest Policy adopted March 19, 2018.
6. For each grant application, the Evaluation Committee will make one of the following recommendations to City Council:
  - a. Approve grant
  - b. Approve reduced grant amount
  - c. Deny grant
  - d. Table grant: pending further information from the applicant, or pending further program funds becoming available.
7. Upon completion of its review, the Committee shall vote whether or not to approve the grant request or to table the grant pending further information or availability of funds. If the Committee votes to recommend approval or denial of the grant, the recommendation will be submitted to City Council for its action. If the grant is tabled, no recommendation will be forwarded to City Council.
8. In accordance with 1 V.S.A. § 313 review of loan applications by the Committee will be conducted in executive session.

## **C. Winooski City Council Decision**

1. A Committee recommendation regarding Winooski COVID-Recovery Business Grant Program applications shall be considered at the next City Council meeting following the receipt of the Evaluation Committee's recommendation, subject to the discretion of Council.
2. In accordance with 1 V.S.A. § 313 review of financial details of grant applications by City Council will be conducted in executive session.
3. The Committee's role is that of an advisory body thus it has no authority to give permission on behalf of the City for outside action. Its vote is a recommendation only. The final disposition of any grant application will be decided by City Council.
4. All Winooski COVID-Recovery Business Grant Program award decisions made by City Council shall be final.