



ATHENS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION BUSINESS ASSISTANCE GRANT PROGRAM

Section 1. Purpose

The purpose of this Program is to enhance the economic vitality of the City of Athens by encouraging visually appealing physical improvements to new or existing business within the Athens City Limits. Properties that are within areas highlighted on the beautification area map included in this packet will receive priority consideration. Please note that rehabilitation to properties located within the City of Athens downtown district, which possess historic significance, must meet the city's requirement of preserving those portions or features which convey its historical, cultural or architectural values. All grants require a 75% match and are capped at \$12,500 per applicant.

Section 2. Grant Type

- A. **FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT:** Improvements to storefronts, including, but not limited to painting, signage, reconstruction, and remodeling.
- B. **PROPERTY IMPROVEMENT:** Exterior or interior improvements that will enable expansion of the business. Authorized exterior projects include lighting, sidewalk, driveway, and parking lot improvements.
- C. **DEMOLITION IMPROVEMENT:** Demolition of dilapidated signs or structures.

Section 3. Application & Approval

Applications must be made on the form provided by AEDC and may be obtained at the Athens Partnership Center, 201 W. Corsicana Street, Suite 3, Athens, Texas 75751 or on the AEDC website at www.athenstexasedc.com or by emailing vfanklin@athenstx.gov.

- A. **OWNERSHIP:** Proof of ownership of the property will be required of applicants or an applicant operating in a leased facility must apply jointly with the property owner. Copies of a lease agreement, proof of ownership, and written permission for the improvements will be required.
- B. **QUALIFIED CONTRACTORS AND BIDS:** All applications must contain cost estimates (bid) from a minimum of two (2) qualified contractors or suppliers.
- C. **DOCUMENTATION OF NEED:** Application should include photos of the existing condition to be improved and a rendition of improvements to be made.

- D. **GRANT REQUIREMENTS:** AEDC may approve an application grant with provisions, conditions, or other requirements as it deems appropriate. All business assistance grants require a 75% match.

Section 4: Restrictions

- A. Labor provided by the applicant or his/her employees (in-kind) may not be included in the cost estimate of the project and is not reimbursable through this grant program.
- B. The grant is a reimbursement based on documented expenditures. All grant terms will be governed by the Performance Agreement entered into by AEDC and the grantee.
- C. Grant funding will be limited to one (1) grant to an applicant or joint applicant during a calendar year.
- D. Home-based businesses are not eligible.
- E. Applicants, business and/or properties which have outstanding financial obligations to AEDC or the City of Athens, such as liens, court fines, city utility bills, or delinquent property taxes are not eligible.
- F. A valid Certificate of Occupancy must be issued to the Business.
- G. Improvements must be made in accordance with project drawings, specifications, and information provided in the application, and as approved by AEDC.
- H. Applicant must obtain all applicable permits related to the improvement project.
- I. Applicant may not knowingly employ an undocumented worker as defined by law.
- J. Improvements may not commence prior to the execution of a grant agreement with AEDC Board.
- K. The applicant shall fully comply with all local, state federal laws.

Section 5. Evaluation of Applications

- A. AEDC reserves the right to approve or deny any and all grant applications with or without justification.
- B. AEDC reserves the right to utilize outside resources it deems necessary for assistance in its decision-making process.
- C. AEDC reserves the right to waive any requirement(s) herein contained, and/or add any requirements it deems appropriate in making its determination of approval or disapproval of a grant application.

Section 6. Funding

- A. Applicant shall provide AEDC with written notification of project completion by letter stating that all improvements have been completed in accordance with the application, approval and grant agreement, and that full payments have been made for all labor and materials with attached paid receipts for materials and labor, the issuance of a CO by the City of Athens, inspection reports, a Release of Mechanic's Lien waiver for each contractor that worked on the project, and project photographs.
- B. Upon receipt of a notification of completion, an on-site inspection may be made by a representative of the AEDC. Such inspection shall not be considered in any way as a reflection of AEDC's approval as to the quality, safety, or reliability of the improvements, such being the sole responsibility of Applicant.
- C. Following on-site inspection, AEDC will review the findings and request additional information if needed and notify the Applicant of compliance or items of non-compliance. Failure to correct the items of non-compliance within thirty (30) days of notice thereof shall be cause for default on the grant agreement.
- D. Once the AEDC Board of Directors finds the project is complete and the Chief Financial Officer of the City of Athens is satisfied that all required documentation has been submitted, payment of the grant funds will be made.