Backing Small Businesses Grant Program Frequently Asked Questions

General Program Questions

When is the application open? How can I apply?

Applications will be accepted beginning on March 20, 2023 through 11:59 PM CT April 7, 2023. You can find a link to the online application here.

Who should be filling out this application?

This application is designed to be completed by the business owner. If someone is assisting the business owner in the physical completion of the application form, please be sure to include their name and email address in the application when asked. This will ensure this person also receives updates and information pertaining to this program and your application.

Eligibility Questions

What businesses are eligible?

This competitive grant program will provide grants to businesses owned by small business owners who identify as one or more of the following:

- Veterans
- People with Disabilities
- Women
- LGBTQIA+
- Immigrants, Refugees, and/or Forcibly Displaced
- Asian American and/or Pacific Islander
- Black and/or African American
- Hispanic and/or Latinx
- Middle Eastern and/or North African
- Native and/or Indigenous

I identify as one of more of the above community groups, but I own the business with my partner who does not. Can I still apply for the 2023 Backing Small Businesses Grant Program?

If a business has more than one owner, the majority of the business – 51% or more – must be owned by a business partner OR multiple business partners who identify with one or more of the program’s targeted community groups.

My business is not owned or owned in part by small business owners who identify as part of one or more of the above community groups. Can I still apply for the 2023 Backing Small Businesses Grant Program?
No. We encourage you to look into the other small business resources provided by Main Street America, which can be found on our Supporting Entrepreneurs page here, Main Street Online tool here, Funding Opportunities page here, and Resource Center here. If you are looking for additional resources to help support your business within your community, we encourage you to contact your local Main Street director or your state-level Main Street Coordinator. For their contact information, we encourage you to look at the interactive map on our homepage here.

**My business is in a residence, shopping mall, office park, or coworking space. Is my business eligible?**

No. Your business must operate in a “brick-and-mortar” location in an older or historic main street, downtown or commercial district in the United States or U.S. territories. We define this as a contiguous commercial district with businesses and mixed-use buildings along a commercial corridor. Home-based businesses and businesses located within a coworking or similar shared commercial space, even those in historic neighborhoods, are not eligible. Brick-and-mortar businesses located outside of historic downtowns and commercial corridors, including, but not limited to, office parks and shopping malls are also not eligible.

**My business is outside of the United States or U.S. territories. Can I still apply?**

No, businesses must be in the United States or U.S. territories.

**I own multiple businesses. Can I apply for more than one?**

Please only apply for one business.

**Are nonprofits eligible?**

No, nonprofits are not eligible.

**Are franchises eligible?**

No, franchises are not eligible.

**Are sole proprietors eligible for the grant?**

Yes, sole proprietors or business owners with no employees are eligible to apply.

**I applied to the Backing Small Businesses Grant Program in 2022 but did not receive a grant. May I reapply this year in 2023?**

If you meet the eligibility criteria for 2023, you may apply again for an Inclusive Backing grant.
I received a grant through this program last year. Am I eligible to receive another grant through the Backing Small Businesses Grant Program this year?

No. In order to provide support to as many small business owners as possible, 2022 grant recipients will not be eligible to receive another grant for this program in 2023.

I have a business that started prior to January 1, 2022, but we opened our brick-and-mortar location after January 1, 2022. Am I still eligible for the grant?

Your business must be able to provide financial information about sales since at least January 1, 2022. If your business has been open and operating since January 1, 2022, and you can provide financial information dating to that time, you are eligible to apply.

Do I have to be a member of Main Street America to apply?

No, you do not have to be a member to apply.

My business employs a mixture of full-time and part-time employees. How does the requirement that the business employ 20 or fewer full-time employees, including the owner, apply to me?

If you employ a mixture of full-time and part-time employees, calculate the Full Time Equivalent (FTE) hours for all of your employees. FTE hours are an employee’s scheduled hours divided by the employer’s hours for a full-time workweek. If the FTE hours for all your employees is fewer than the equivalent of 20 full-time employees, your business is eligible.

Application Questions

Which documents do I need to upload in my application?

In the application, you will be asked to upload the following documents:

1. A photo of your business’s exterior storefront
2. A certificate of good standing OR an active business license (You only need to provide one of these documents – not both. Applicants may choose between submitting an active business license or an up-to-date certificate of good standing. Only one of these documents is required, and you may choose which of these two types of documents you wish to upload in your application)
What is a Certificate of Good Standing?

A certificate of good standing is a document from the state. In many states it’s from the Secretary of State’s office or a similar agency. Some states refer to them as “certificates of existence,” “status certificates,” or “certificates of status.” This document demonstrates that your business is licensed and are in good standing with the state in which your business was formed and is doing business. Check with your state’s Secretary of State website or the office to request a certificate of good standing/existence.

Can I save a draft of my application?

Your application will auto-save as you move through the form on our application platform, Submittable. You can save a draft within the application submission platform, but we strongly encourage you to also save your application in a separate document as back-up.

I can’t log into my application, or I’m having other technical issues.

Please contact Submittable (the company that hosts our application) for help logging into your account or if you have any other technical issues. You can find answers to frequently asked questions about using Submittable here. You can contact Submittable customer support here.

How will I know if my application has been submitted?

Once you hit “submit,” you will receive an email notification from Submittable notifying you that your application has been received. Automatic emails from Submittable occasionally get caught in spam filters, so please check your junk folder.

Can I change my application once it has been submitted?

No, you cannot make any changes to your application once it has been submitted.

When will I be notified about the status of our application?

We will notify all applicants about the status of their submission in June 2023, via the email provided in your application. Be sure to check your email regularly, including your junk folders. Email updates to all applicants will come from Submittable at notifications@email.submittable.com. If someone assisted you in the physical completion of the application form, please be sure to include their email address when asked. This will ensure they are able to receive a copy of the status email as well.

Grant recipients will receive next steps from SmallBizGrant@savingplaces.org. Failure to reply promptly to next steps may result in disqualification from the grant program.

Do grant funds need to be repaid?

No, grant funds do not need to be repaid. However, all taxes associated with the acceptance and/or uses of cash awarded are the sole responsibility of the individual grantee. Cash awarded will be reported
by Main Street America to the IRS as Main Street America deems necessary according to applicable law. It is further the policy of Main Street America that all grantees be advised to consult with their own tax professionals and/or legal counsel to ascertain the tax impact of the cash awards.

Have additional questions?

For other questions, email SmallBizGrant@savingplaces.org or call 312.610.5613 to leave a voice message. Please allow up to 2 business days for a response.