



DOWNTOWN E-COMMERCE ASSISTANCE GRANT PROGRAM

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The goal of this program is to assist Downtown retailers in establishing e-commerce sales portals to augment their Downtown brick-and mortar storefront locations. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, e-commerce was commanding an increasing percentage of overall global retail sales. Many Downtown retailers were slow to adopt an e-commerce strategy, preferring to focus on experience-based, location-specific retail. While few Downtown retailers embraced e-commerce prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, current social distancing restrictions and business restrictions have made e-commerce a more desirable and much needed avenue to boost Downtown retail sales. Additionally, the possibility of prolonged social distancing measures and the likely changes in consumer behavior indicate that e-commerce as an augmentation of traditional Downtown retail will continue to be a critical factor in the economic recovery.

The program provides a cash grant to assist businesses with the initial set-up costs and first year subscription to an e-commerce provider of their choosing. Funds through the program are available to businesses on a first-come, first-served basis and are subject to availability of funds. This grant program is limited to businesses who have a brick-and-mortar storefront within the defined Downtown boundary as adopted by the New Braunfels Downtown Board in 2017 (Exhibit A).

GRANT DETAILS

Eligible projects for funding include:

- E-Commerce platform set-up and annual subscription fee (shopping carts, online security tools, membership and donation systems, etc.)
- POS system upgrades necessary to integrate with e-commerce platforms

The applicant shall provide a scope of work from the selected vendor that aligns with one or both of the eligible projects above.

GRANT AMOUNTS AND USE

Grants will be made on a first-come, first-served basis with a maximum lifetime grant amount of up to the full amount of the project cost or \$2,000.00, whichever is less. Grant funds are to be used only to cover approved costs as determined by the Economic and Community Development Department and are subject to eligibility requirements (below).

ELIGIBILITY

- Businesses must be for-profit

- Business must have been established and in operation prior to March 15, 2019
- Businesses must be in good standing with the City (no active cases for City Ordinance violations and no outstanding balances due to the City)
- Business must operate at least one brick-and-mortar storefront in Downtown New Braunfels
- Business must not operate more than three brick-and-mortar storefront locations within the City of New Braunfels or more than two brick-and-mortar storefront locations outside of the City of New Braunfels (of the same business name and with shared online presence).
- For business owners that operate multiple Downtown businesses, each business is eligible to apply for the grant.
- For business that operate additional storefronts outside of the City of New Braunfels, the grant amount will be reduced in the following manner:
 - If the business operates one brick-and-mortar storefront location outside of New Braunfels, the grant amount may not exceed 75% of the project cost
 - If the business operates two brick-and-mortar storefront locations outside of the City of New Braunfels, the grant amount may not exceed 50% of the total project cost.

OTHER PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

- Businesses that have an existing website cannot use the funds for redesign or site enhancements WITHOUT also including the above noted e-commerce enhancements.
- Businesses who established e-commerce platforms in response to the Covid-19 pandemic (e-commerce provider contracted after March 15th), may apply for reimbursement for costs associated with setting up the service and to maintain the service for a contract period up to the maximum grant amount.

APPROVAL CRITERIA

- Where the applicant has no presently existing web site, a new website must be established as part of the e-commerce grant before applying for the grant; or
- The applicant's existing website must be enhanced to accept online payments and offer online shopping (catalog or cart) at a minimum. The grant can be used for other clearly identified enhancement to increase traffic and commerce to the business as determined by ECD staff.
- Website development costs will only be reimbursed if the development results in the ability of the consumer to select products (inventory) and make payments (shopping cart/checkout) from the website.

ACCEPTABLE PROVIDERS

The primary physical address of any website designer used must be within the City of New Braunfels if website designer fees are to be reimbursed. Additionally, website design must be one of the designer's primary, full-time business activities.

E-Commerce platform/subscription provider (Shopify, Bento, et cetera) does not have to be a business located in the City of New Braunfels.

If using a website designer not located within the City of New Braunfels, only the e-commerce subscription/provider fees are reimbursable.

APPLICATION PROCESS

1. Applicant accesses the online application form
2. Applicant must get quotes for the proposed project from a minimum of two providers. If applicant's proposed project includes both website design and e-commerce subscription, separate quotes for the website design and e-commerce subscription are required from each provider. The submitted quotes should be specific enough for the City to evaluate whether the proposed services are eligible under program guidelines. If work has already been completed, applicant must provide receipts and description of work performed.
3. Applicant should complete, sign, and submit the grant application (including both quotes and indicating the chosen provider, and a W-9 form for the business via email to amcwhorter@nbtexas.org)
4. City staff will email notification to the applicant acknowledging receipt of their application.
5. Applications will be reviewed on a weekly basis by the Economic and Community Development staff.
6. City staff will send an email to the applicant informing them of the decision. If approved, the email will serve as authority for the applicant to begin work. For previously completed work, please see step 8.
7. Website/e-commerce provider completes the project as quoted.
8. To receive the approved grant, approved applicant business pays the website provider in full and submits an invoice marked paid to the City of New Braunfels. For previously completed work, applicant submits proof of work performed and associated costs (receipts, project descriptions, et cetera).
9. City staff will verify completion of the project as quoted and provide grant payment to the applicant business.

FUNDING AVAILABILITY

The Economic and Community Development department has allocated funds for this program. Should funding for the program be reduced in the future, the City reserves the right to discontinue or modify funding for this program.

GRANTEE RESPONSIBILITIES

Participants must provide grantor sales reports on a quarterly basis during the grant period (one year). Sales figures must show overall retail sales and e-commerce sale amounts.

**DOWNTOWN NEW BRAUNFELS E-COMMERCE ASSISTANCE
GRANT APPLICATION**

Downtown Business Applicant

Business Name: _____

Downtown Storefront Address: _____

Number of Additional Storefronts in City Limits: _____

Number of Additional Storefronts outside of City
Limits: _____

Contact Person: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Tax ID# _____

Selected E-Commerce Provider/Web Designer

Business Name: _____

Contact Person: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Website: _____

Project Summary and Cost Information

Written summary/Scope of work: _____

Two detailed quotes from two providers (including the selected provider) must be submitted with this application for any new projects. If seeking reimbursement for a completed project undertaken in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (project initiated after March 25, 2020), please submit detailed scope of work for completed project.

\$ _____ Project Cost

\$ _____ Grant Funds Requested

Applicant Signature

Date

STAFF USE ONLY

Date Received: _____

Certified Complete: _____

Approved: _____

Amount Approved: _____

Denied: _____

APPLICATION AGREEMENT FORM

I certify that I fully understand the procedures and grant eligibility requirements established by the Economic and Community Development Department, and intend to use this grant for the aforementioned project which forwards the effects of the revitalization of Downtown New Braunfels.

I have read the Grant Application instructions.

I understand that if I am awarded an e-Commerce assistance grant, any deviation from this agreement may result in the withdrawal of the grant.

I understand that the grant will be administered as reimbursements once the project has been completed as agreed upon and receipts are submitted to the City of New Braunfels for work completed.

I understand that in no event will the grant amount exceed \$2,000.00 grant total per business, per business owner, per year.

I understand that grants will be administered on a first-come first-serve basis until funds are depleted. All decisions of the Economic and Community Development department are final.

Signature of Applicant

Date
