



Entrepreneurship Support Program

Application Instructions & Guidelines
(Updated January 2024)

City Manager's Office
Economic Development Division
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Purpose

The purpose of the entrepreneurship support grant program is to assist in the growth of jobs in Evanston through entrepreneurship, helping residents and local business owners to create jobs by starting and retaining sustainable small businesses.

Eligibility Criteria

1) Businesses in operation two years or less: Must have a physical location in Evanston which is also properly registered and/or licensed with the City of Evanston. Non-residents are eligible only if operating a business at a physical location in Evanston, and must provide documentation of the business address through ownership or lease documentation which identifies the applicant specifically, and proper registration and/or license with the City of Evanston.

2) Home-based businesses: Home-based businesses qualify if the business owner is an Evanston resident, and if properly registered and/or licensed with the City of Evanston.

3) Pop-up businesses: Pop-up businesses qualify if the business has a physical location in Evanston, and if properly registered and/or licensed with the City of Evanston.

4) Completed applications must include three quotes for each service or expense for which funding assistance is requested, including at least one quote from an Evanston-based provider whenever possible.

5) Applicants must have no outstanding parking tickets and be current on all fees, taxes, utility bills and debts owed to the City of Evanston.

6) In the event applications exceed available funding, priority will be given to women and minority-owned businesses.

Ineligible applicants include:

- Applicants with one or more outstanding parking tickets or who are not current on fines, fees, taxes, or utility bills due to the City of Evanston.
- Businesses that are part of a franchise operation with more than 10 locations within or outside of Evanston.
- Churches or other religious organizations.
- Government offices or agencies.
- Nonprofit organizations.

Award Categories

- 1) Tier 1: Brick and mortar businesses who have been operating for two years or less are eligible to receive up to \$5,000 to cover eligible services/expenses outlined in the following section.
- 2) Tier 2: Home-based businesses located in Evanston are eligible to receive up to \$2,500 to cover eligible services/expenses outlined in the following section.
- 3) Tier 3: Pop-up businesses are eligible to receive up to \$2,500 to cover eligible services/expenses outlined in the following section

Eligible Services

Eligible applicants may request any of the following services:

- Professional Services (accounting, tax, insurance, legal)
- Tools and Equipment (software, hardware, process-specific tools or equipment)
- Licenses and Certifications
- Continued research and development of initial MVPs (minimum viable products)
- Continuing Education and Key Personnel Development (classes, workshops, training programs)
- Professional and Market Networks
- Commercial electric leaf blowers and accessory battery packs (up to \$3,000 per applicant)

Program Administration & Application Process

Step 1: Submit an online application. All grant applications must be completed online: https://arts.formstack.com/forms/entrepreneurship_support_program_grant.

Applications are considered on a rolling basis throughout the year and must be reviewed by the Economic Development staff.

Complete applications must include:

- Proof of residency or business location in Evanston.
- Copy of your Evanston business registration or license, or provide your registration/license number.
- Three estimates for each service or purchase to be funded, including one estimate from an Evanston provider whenever possible (is applicable).

Step 2: Administrative Review & Approval Process (10 business days). Staff will review applications for compliance with eligibility guidelines and scope of work to be funded.

Step 4: Execute a program agreement. Following approval, successful applicants must sign a program agreement acknowledging the terms and obligations of their participation.