

Ashford Business Grant Program Overview

The Ashford Business Grant Program was established by the Board of Selectman (BOS) to provide limited, one-time direct financial assistance to eligible Ashford small businesses and nonprofits that employ 25 or fewer employees and that have been adversely impacted by the COVID pandemic. The Program is funded through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, and administered by the Town of Ashford's Economic Development Commission with final approval of the BOS. The Program is intended to help small businesses and nonprofits recover from the public health emergency and become stronger in the current marketplace.

Who is eligible to apply?

For purposes of this program, a small business will be defined as employing not more than 25 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees and must have operations in Ashford. (Examples: a trade name on file with the State of Connecticut Secretary of State or appearance on the Town's Grand List.) Sole proprietors and locally-owned franchises are eligible to apply. A nonprofit entity is defined as an entity with an Ashford address organized and operated for a collective, public or social benefit (nonprofit status may be demonstrated by supplying the organizations CT-990 form or 501(c) incorporation documents.). Residential or real estate projects including short-term rental operators are not eligible. Town employees and elected and appointed officials are not eligible to participate in this program.

Application requirements:

- The business or nonprofit must currently be located in Ashford and have been in operation as of January 1, 2019.
- As of November 1, 2021, the business has a maximum of twenty-five (25) full or fulltime equivalent employees (FTE). One FTE totals 40 hours per week. This can be one employee or any combination of part-time employees whose weekly hours total 40.
- The applicant must be in good standing with the Connecticut Secretary of the State in terms of business/nonprofit filings.
- The applicant should be in good standing and current on its federal, state and local tax obligations and have no outstanding liens or judgments. If COVID 19 impacted the business' ability to pay local taxes then that should be indicated in the application.
- Documentation should be supplied supporting the number of employees before the pandemic and at the time of the application.

- Listing of all federal or state assistance applied for and/or received (i.e., Payroll Protection Program loans, Restaurant Revitalization Fund, CT CARES Grant, etc.)
- If applicable, dates of closure due to the pandemic need to be provided.
- The applicant must provide a written statement that will clearly identify the negative financial impacts of the COVID-19 public health emergency to the organization or business and must identify how the grant request addresses the identified need or negative impact.
- Applicants will need to sign a certification that the information in the application is true, that the business or nonprofit sustained a negative financial impact as a result of the pandemic, and that grant funds will be utilized to offset operational costs of their Ashford business location.
- The Town would like to track the impact of this initiative. Recipients must agree to assist the Town through follow-up surveys and/or interviews with a goal of highlighting program successes.

How much can I apply for?

Eligible businesses and nonprofits may apply for grants of up to \$5,000. Funding is limited and it is anticipated that requests for assistance will be greater than funding on hand. Not all businesses or nonprofits approved for participation will receive the maximum amount. If awarded, the amount will be based upon the documented need of the business or nonprofit. Businesses and nonprofits must demonstrate economic hardship and demonstrate that the operating funds are necessary to sustain the business.

How can I demonstrate economic hardship as a result of the public health emergency?

Businesses and nonprofits can demonstrate negative impacts from the COVID-19 health emergency through these and other examples:

- Loss of revenue during government required shutdowns
- Rent & utilities and other carrying costs paid during periods of closure
- Supply chain issues – lack of or delay in supplies which drove up costs are impacted contracts
- Increased costs of products (like food, lumber)
- Extra cleaning expenses and costs of PPE (personal protective equipment)
- Physical improvement requirements – barriers and other social distancing measures
- Extra advertising, e-commerce costs, job training expenses
- Costs of other mitigation tactics (provision of outside dining areas, etc.) Applicants must be able to demonstrate either a decrease in revenue AND/OR an increase in COVID-19 related expenses up to the amount of your request not to exceed \$5,000. In the application narrative,

applicants should be as specific as possible in demonstrating the financial impacted by including cost estimates or information from actual receipts.

If awarded a grant, for what purposes can I utilize the grant funding?

Eligible use of the grant funds include, but are not limited to:

- Payroll costs
- Mortgage
- Rent
- Utilities
- Operational expenses
- Worker protection expenditures
- Costs associated with the compliance of public health measures
- Specific investment to enhance the viability of the business
- Construction of an outdoor dining area
- Innovative business or business community marketing program
- Workforce training or recruitment program

Application Period

Applications must be postmarked no later than December 8, 2023 and will also be accepted until 2:30 PM on December 8, 2023 in the **First Selectman's Office, Town Hall, 5 Town Hall Road, Ashford, CT 06278**, at which time the applications period will promptly close.

Application Information Session

The Economic Development Commission will be available to answer any questions applicants may have on Wednesday, November 15, 2023 from 6:30 PM until 7:30 PM in the lower meeting room at Town Hall.

What is the approval process?

All applications will be reviewed for compliance with program requirements. The Town may seek additional information or backup if there are gaps in the information provided or there are questions about your application. \$50,000 of the grant pool will be reserved for small businesses and nonprofits that have not previously received any federal or state recovery funds. If the number of applications that have not previously received federal or state funding is less than \$50,000 then those businesses will be approved for a grant up to their request. If the

number of applications that have not previously received federal or state funding exceeds \$50,000 then the Town will implement a lottery system for those applicants.

Approved Grants

All businesses or nonprofits selected and found to meet program requirements are required to enter into a grant award agreement. The agreement requires that funds be used for eligible expenses. Any business or nonprofit found in violation of the grant award agreement will be required to repay the funds. Selected businesses will need to complete and submit the following documents prior to grants dispersal:

- W-9;
- Check Request Form(Format to be provided by the Town of Ashford);
- A signed Small Business and Nonprofit Recovery Grant Agreement, which includes business impact statement and self-certification.

Equal Opportunity Policy

The Town of Ashford shall not discriminate upon the basis of sex, age, race, creed, color, religion, national origin, marital status, ancestry or physical handicap in accepting applications and processing program applications.

Contact Information

For additional information regarding the Ashford Grant Program and the application process please contact the Ashford First Selectman's Office.