



Business Improvement Grant Program Guidelines and Criteria

Section 1. Purpose

The purpose of this program is to promote the development and expansion of new and existing business enterprises within the City limits of Freeport, Texas and enhance the economic welfare of the citizens of the City by securing and retaining business enterprises and maintaining a higher level of employment, economic activity, and stability.

Section 2. Type and amount of grants

A. Façade Improvement:

Exterior front façade enhancements. Improvements may be considered if located on a corner or paralleling an internal public space such as a park, parking lot, pedestrian way, or visible from a public right-of-way.

Improvements to store facade including, but not limited to:

Exterior painting that incorporates a major visual change (Maintenance painting does not apply.);

Significant masonry cleaning and/or restoration;

Addition of awnings (business logo & letters on awnings are acceptable);

Enhanced exterior building lighting that creates a noticeably enhanced appearance (Replacement of current lighting that is simply repair does not enhance the appearance of the building, such as replacement of inoperable fixtures and is not included.);

Store front entry systems and individual windows and door replacement or modification (if part of an overall design restoration; general building maintenance repairs are not included);

New or restored façade elements, such as cornices, soffits, canopies, and other detail elements.

The grant amount may be up to 50% of the cost of such improvement, up to a maximum of \$10,000

B. SignImprovement:

New signs and/or major renovations or removal of existing signs. Typically LED Signs are not approved but may be reviewed on a case-by-case basis if integrated into an overall sign.

The grant amount may be up to \$3,500 for an existing business and \$1,000 for a new business.

C. PropertyImprovement:

Items such as, but not limited to, parking lot resurfacing, striping, driveway improvement, lighting, decorative fencing, pedestrian oriented/streetscape amenities, including street furniture, new curb and sidewalk, and related amenities, demolition and/or removal of a dilapidated structure

The grant amount may be up to 50% of the cost of such improvement, up to a maximum of \$10,000.

D. LandscapingImprovement:

Material such as, but not limited to, grass, ground covers, shrubs, vines, hedges, trees or palms, landscape lighting and non-living durable materials that are commonly used in landscaping such as, but not limited to, rocks, pebbles, sand, but excluding paving. (All living materials will be reviewed at 25% of the cost if irrigation is not present or will be applied)

The grant amount may be up to 50% of the cost of such improvement, up to a maximum of \$10,000.

E. MEGAGrant:

Can be a combination of Grant Type A, C, or D or can stand alone as either. This grant will be reserved for those business that are within the defined Downtown boundaries as laid out by our Strategic Community Plan January 2019 on page 67 or at the discretion of the FEDC Board of Directors. Must provide 1 additional Job with this grant. This grant will be awarded to one (1) applicant per a fiscal year (October 1st - September 30th). Grant applications will be accepted starting October 1st and will close February 28th. Review will be held in March and notification of grant recipient will be announced by May 15th.

The grant amount may be up to 50% of the cost of such improvement up to a maximum of \$30,000.

Section 3. Eligibility

- A. All business buildings and facilities located within the City at the time of adoption of these guidelines shall be eligible for this program.
- B. Any new business planning to locate within the City, or any business currently located within the city limits, shall be eligible for this program.
- C. A *business* is defined as an occupation, profession, or trade in the purchase or sale of goods or services in an attempt to make a profit.
- D. The proposed project must comply with applicable regulations, city- approved planning studies, comprehensive plan designations, City Ordinances, Building Codes, and Americans with Disabilities Act Guidelines.
- E. All applicants must be current and provide FEDC with documentation providing they are current with all Ad Valorem Taxes.
- F. Grants may not be used for refinancing existing loans, working capital, inventory, permits, inspections, security fencing or gates, home occupations, roof repair or replacement, interior remodeling, new construction, and routine maintenance of landscaping and signage (with the exception of letters/logos on new awnings).

Section 4. Guidelines

- A. Proof of the applicant's ownership of the subject facility or facilities, or proof that the owner of such facility has approved the application for such grant funds, shall be required.
- B. The owner of a business to be operated within a leased facility, and the owner of such lease facility, must apply jointly for the program. Copies of a lease agreement and proof of ownership of the leased facility shall be required.
- C. A business or property owner may apply for one (1) or more of the four (4) types of grants per physical location (address) set forth herein within any fiscal year (October 1 to September 30). A business that receives grant funding during a fiscal year shall not be precluded from making subsequent applications for funding in following years.
- D. The maximum amount of funding available to any one applicant, business establishment, or property owner at one physical location (address) shall be \$30,000.00 per fiscal year unless applying for the mega grant.
- E. All grants are reimbursement grants and will only be funded after completion of the project in accordance with drawings and specifications approved by the Freeport

Economic Development Corporation Board of Directors and after the applicant submits to the FEDC proof of paid receipts for all applicable labor and materials. Digital photographs of the completed work shall also be required.

- F. Reimbursement grants are a cash payment of up to the approved percentage of funds expended by the applicant on the improvements and are not to exceed the limits set forth in Section 2(A), (B), and (C) hereof. In-kind contributions to the improvements by the applicant will not be considered as an expenditure by the applicant. Only cash expenditures by the applicant may be used in calculating the cost of improvements.
- G. The applicant shall be obligated to make the improvements in accordance with the application submitted to and approved by the FEDC Board of Directors. Thereafter, any modifications must first receive written approval by either the FEDC Board or the FEDC Executive Director. Failure to obtain such written approval prior to making any such modifications shall render the applicant ineligible to receive grant funding.
- H. The applicant shall be responsible for obtaining all applicable permits related to the improvement project, and failure to do so will render the applicant ineligible to receive grant funding.
- I. The improvements, as presented in the application, must be completed in their entirety. Failure to complete all of the stated improvements shall render the applicant ineligible to receive grant funding.
- J. Upon approval of a grant application, and during the construction of the improvements, a representative or representatives of the FEDC shall have the right, at all reasonable times, to have access to and inspect the work in progress.
- K. The applicant shall not begin any improvements prior to receiving written approval of grant funding from the FEDC.
- L. The applicant must complete the improvement project within six (6) months of receiving written approval therefore from the FEDC. Failure to complete the improvements within the required time period shall result in the loss of the grant funds allocated for the project. Time extensions may be granted at the discretion of the FEDC Board of Directors.
- M. Approval of all applications shall be with the understanding and agreement that, in the event the business (applicant) fails to remain open, or the business or property is sold or transferred and subsequently closes, within twelve (12) months after the funding of the grant, the applicant shall be considered in default of its obligations under the grant, and shall be required to reimburse the FEDC the grant money received.
- N. The applicant must agree that, in the event of default of its obligations, the applicant shall repay to the FEDC the amount of grant funds it has received, with interest, at the rate of 10% per annum, within thirty (30) days after the FEDC

notifies the applicant of the default. The form of such payment shall be a cashier's check or money order, made payable to the Freeport Economic Development Corporation.

- O. The applicant must certify that the applicant does not employ nor will it employ any undocumented workers (an individual who, at the time of employment, is not lawfully admitted for permanent residence to the United States or authorized under law to be employed in that manner in the United States). The applicant must agree that if, after receiving grant funds, it is convicted of a violation under 8 U.S.C. Section 1324a(f), the applicant shall repay the amount of the grant funds received by the applicant, with interest, at the rate of 10% per annum, within thirty (30) days after the FEDC notifies the applicant of the violation.
- P. The FEDC shall have the authority to bring a civil action to recover any amounts that the applicant must repay to the FEDC under paragraphs M, N, and O of this Section, and in such action may recover court costs and reasonable attorney's fees.

Section 5. Application and Approval

- A. Applications must be made on a form provided by the FEDC, which form shall be made available at the FEDC offices located at 200 West Second Street, Freeport, TX 77535 and on the FEDC website at www.freeport.tx.us.
- B. The grant application must include:
 - Request Letter describing proposed project and the need for grant funds
 - Establishment of business entity name (Copy of Article of Incorporation, dba, etc.)
 - Copy of Lease Agreement (if facility is leased)
 - Legal description of subject property
 - Vicinity map of subject property
 - Estimates of proposed improvements. This quote shall be utilized only for the purpose of determining the amount of grant needed for the project and any costs incurred in obtaining the quote shall be the responsibility of the applicant, not the FEDC.
 - Itemized work estimates which include details and information such as color samples of paint, fabric, sign material
 - Digital Picture of Property and the area to be improved

Notarized Seal on Application

Acknowledge that a sign will be placed at your property stating FEDC – Business Improvement Grant Recipient

- C. All applications must be approved by the FEDC Board of Directors
- D. An applicant shall be notified, in writing or email, within (10) ten business days of the FEDC Board's decision to approve or disapprove its application.
- E. The FEDC may award grant funds to an applicant, with certain provisions, conditions, or other requirements that the FEDC deems necessary or appropriate.
- F. The FEDC Board of Directors shall have sole discretion to accept or reject application. Application are submit on a competitive basis and will be graded on out not limited to:
 - 1. Those applicants that best match our Community Comprehensive Plans
 - 2. Needs of the City of Freeport and FEDC
 - 3. Best match for our Downtown Specific Plan
 - 4. Those that will be beneficial for the growth of our Freeport's Economic Development
- G. During the FEDC meeting to take action on the grant request by the APPLICANT, the board will conduct a Public Hearing which is followed by a 60-day public comment period. No reimbursements will be dispersed until the 60-day public comment period has passed. If public comments are received, the board will review and take any appropriate action.

Section 6. Funding

- A. Upon notification to the FEDC by the applicant that a project has been completed, an inspection by a FEDC representative or representatives shall be made to confirm that such project has been completed in accordance with the application or any approved modifications thereto. Such notification shall include, but not be limited to, documentation of paid receipts for materials, labor, permits, inspection reports, an affidavit stating that all contractors and subcontractors providing work and/or materials in the construction of the project improvements have been paid and any and all liens and claims regarding such work have been released, or any other item that the FEDC may reasonably deem necessary for determining the project's completion.

- B. The FEDC agrees to distribute such funds to the applicant within thirty (30) days following the inspection required in paragraph (A) hereof, and confirmation of completion of the project in accordance with the application or any approved modifications thereto. The Executive Director of the FEDC shall issue a letter to the FEDC Board of Directors notifying them of the funding action to be taken. A copy of such letter shall also be provided to the applicant.
- C. Within ten (10) business days following an inspection and the presentation of the receipts as provided in Section 6(A) above, and after a determination is made by the FEDC's representative that the project has not been completed in accordance with the application, or any approved modifications thereof, the Executive Director shall issue a letter to the applicant indicating any and all areas of non-compliance. The applicant shall then have sixty (60) days, from the date of such letter, to make the modifications necessary to bring the project into compliance. Failure to complete such modifications within said sixty-day period shall be deemed a default of applicant's obligations under the grant, and the applicant shall be ineligible to receive grant funding.
- D. Available funding: The FEDC has budgeted \$50,000 per the current fiscal year (October 1 to September 30) to fund improvement grants & \$17,500 for sign grant programs. Grant applications received after the available funding has been exhausted may be accepted and held until the following fiscal year. The FEDC retains sole discretion to accept or reject applications received after the available funding has been exhausted.

Section 7. Miscellaneous

- A. THE FREEPORT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION SHALL DELIVER A COPY OF THESE GUIDELINES TO ANY APPLICANT FOR HIS/HER REVIEW AND THE DELIVERY HEREOF DOES NOT CONSTITUTE AN OFFER OF A BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT GRANT TO THE APPLICANT.
- B. THE LAWS OF THE STATE OF TEXAS SHALL GOVERN THE INTERPRETATION, VALIDITY, PERFORMANCE, AND ENFORCEMENT OF THIS BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT GRANT PROGRAM. IF ANY PROVISION OF THIS BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT GRANT PROGRAM IS HELD TO BE INVALID OR UNENFORCEABLE, THE VALIDITY AND ENFORCEABILITY OF THE REMAINING PROVISIONS SHALL NOT BE AFFECTED THERE.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF RECEIPT OF AND AGREE TO COMPLY WITH THE GUIDELINES AND CRITERIA FOR BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT GRANT PROGRAM BY THE FREEPORT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Applicant: _____

Address: _____

Phone No.: _____

Signature: _____

Property Owner/Landlord: _____

Address: _____

Phone No.: _____

Signature: _____

This acknowledgement page must be signed and returned to the Executive Director of Freeport Economic Development Corporation. Please retain the Guidelines and Criteria for your records.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to shop locally for products and services.