

Entrepreneurship Support Program - Emergency Assistance

Application Instructions & Guidelines

(Updated April 2020)

Community Development Department

Economic Development Division

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Emergency Assistance

On March 16 2020, the City of Evanston, along with the State of Illinois and surrounding communities, declared a state of emergency due to the coronavirus pandemic, which forced the partial shutdown of restaurants and total shutdown of non-essential services (i.e. retail, fitness, beauty businesses, etc.) as defined by the State of Illinois. In light of the economic shock this situation is creating in the Evanston community, the following emergency guidelines will apply when considering Entrepreneurship Support Program applications, for the remainder of FY 2020 (as long as funding is available). The emergency guidelines address:

- Expanded covered categories
- Simplified eligibility criteria
 - Removed entrepreneurship training certificate requirement
 - Removed business plan requirement

Program purpose & overview

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 sustainable small businesses. To that end, this program aims to provide key supports during startup and initial growth stages to local entrepreneurs with viable business models.

Funding Source:

Projects will be funded through the Entrepreneurship Support account under the Economic Development annual budget. Program expenses must be budgeted by the City each year, and will not carryover from year to year. In addition to required applicant eligibility qualifications, assistance under this Program depends upon availability of funds.

Eligibility Criteria

- 1) Any business with a physical location in Evanston is eligible for assistance through this program. Home-based businesses qualify if the business owner is an Evanston resident. 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.

- 2) Business must have been in business for at least 12 months on or before March 16, 2020.
- 3) 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.
- 4) Applicants must have no outstanding parking tickets and be current on all fees, taxes, utility bills and debts owed to the City of Evanston.

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
- Applicants who have received Entrepreneurship Support Program funding from the City of Evanston within the past five years
- 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

Eligible Services

Eligible applicants may:

- 1) Request up to \$1,000 in assistance with City permitting and licensing needs, including food establishment licenses, general business licenses, building and sign permits, or inspections; and/or
- 2) Request up to \$2,500 of small business support grant funding for expenses or services in the following categories:
 - **Professional Services** (Accounting, tax, insurance, legal)
 - **Tools and Equipment** (software, hardware, process-specific tools or equipment)
 - **Licenses and Certifications**
 - **Production and Work Space**
 - **Continued research and development** of initial MVPs (minimum viable products)
 - **Continuing Education and Key Personnel Development** (Classes, workshops, training programs)
 - **Professional and Market Networks**
 - **Rent or mortgage payment**

- **Utility bills**
- **Payroll**

Program Administration & Application Process

Step 1: Submit online application (first Monday of the month). All grant applications must be completed and submitted online:

<https://cityofevanston.wufoo.com/forms/emergency-assistance-entrepreneurship-grant/>

Applications are considered on a rolling basis throughout the year and must be reviewed by the Economic Development Committee, which meets on the fourth Wednesday of each month. In order to ensure your place on the committee agenda, completed applications must be turned in no later than the second Monday of the month in which review is requested.

Complete applications must include:

- Business plan
- Three estimates for each service or purchase to be funded, including one estimate from an Evanston provider whenever possible
- Proof of residency or business location in Evanston

Step 2: Staff application review process (10 business days). Staff will review applications for compliance with eligibility guidelines and scope of work to be funded.

Step 3: Public Review & Approval Process (fourth Wednesday of the month). Staff will submit the completed Entrepreneurship Support Program applications and bids to the Economic Development Committee and City Council for approval. Applicants are encouraged to attend all public meetings during which their applications are being considered.

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