

2024 BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT GRANT (BIG) Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

How are grant applications reviewed and approved? Applications are reviewed and approved by the city's Businesses of Thornton Advisory Commission on the second Wednesday of every month. All applications are reviewed and scored according to the Business Improvement Grant program Scoring Rubric. The average wait time for a grant approval is about one month (unless a meeting is cancelled).

How does the city define what is a Thornton licensed business? You must have a valid business license which you attained through the City of Thornton. The term "licensed business" follows the company name and operation. If you have owned and operated the same or similarly licensed business in the City of Thornton for the last 12 months, and your business is in good standing with the city, you are eligible to apply for all segments of the grant. You must have a commercial lease agreement or own commercial property in Thornton to be eligible. For those businesses operating from a non-conventional commercial operation such as a food truck or co-working space, businesses must have a lease agreement with a minimum of a 1-year commitment to be eligible.

How does the city determine if a business is in good standing? A business must be in compliance with all city departments including Sales and Use Tax, Building and Permits, and Zoning and Code Enforcement. Staff will check with each department to ensure your business is compliant. An exception may be made for property owners if the funds will be used to bring the facility into compliance. Landlords and property managers may not use the funds for building maintenance code violations.

What if I don't have all the required paperwork to apply? Can I still submit my application? Your application will not be reviewed until all information is received. If you are running into obstacles that may prevent you from meeting all application requirements, please call the Alliance Business Assistance Center at 720.674.3547

Why do I need to submit a W-9? The city is required by federal tax law to report to the IRS any grant money awarded to a business above \$600 as income.

Why do I need to submit a copy of my lease? We will review the lease agreement to ensure your business is invested in our community and that you intend to remain in the city of Thornton for the near future. The intention of this grant is to invest in the city of Thornton and its local business community. For non-conventional leases such as shared workspace, subleases, food trucks or similar, the maximum award amount is \$5,000.

Why do I need to submit an approval letter from my property owner/manager for tenant improvements, building improvements or equipment? We want to ensure the property owner is aware of and ok with the changes you are making to their property.

How often can I receive the grant? A qualified Thornton business may receive the grant every 5 years. Regardless of the amount you receive, a business may only apply and receive BIG funds every 5 calendar years.

What are the rules for the Marketing grant? Marketing is an allowable use of the grant funds. Businesses can apply for up to \$1,000 to support their marketing efforts. The grant allows for a 50/50 match between the city of Thornton and the business (60/40 match if a Thornton business is used).

- Advertisement must be approved by the reviewing business commissioners.
- Homebased businesses are eligible to apply for the marketing grant.
- All other grant rules apply.

What if I own more than one business in the city, can I apply more than once? Business or property owners with multiple Thornton sites or establishments may apply but are only eligible to receive grant funding for **one location per year**. Additionally, each location is then ineligible for 5 calendar years after obtaining the BIG Grant.

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Am I eligible to apply for the grant if I am expanding my home-based business to a commercial building? Yes. This grant supports expansion and retention of our existing Thornton licensed businesses if they are locating into a commercial building. A Certificate of Occupancy is required before reimbursement will occur.

I plan to expand my business to a second location this year; can I apply for the grant in January to ensure the funds are held for me once I find my 2nd location? No. Your new lease agreement must be in place before you can apply for the grant.

Who should I contact to find out if my project meets the City codes and regulations requirements? You must contact City Development with technical questions regarding your project. 303.538.7295.

I am a business tenant, and the building owner is out of compliance with the city. Will that affect my business when applying? No. The city sees the building owner and business tenant as two separate entities with separate responsibilities.

What if I have a code violation on my property? Can I use the funds to help cover the cost to bring my building into compliance? Yes. If you own your property and occupy the building to run your business, you can apply to receive assistance with the cost of bringing the building into compliance. Property managers and landlords are excluded from utilizing the grant to fix building maintenance code violations. If you are a property manager or landlord and received notice from the city that you are in violation of the building maintenance code, those projects are not eligible for reimbursement by the grant. Be proactive and maintain your building prior to receiving a violation.

If the building owner or another tenant has already applied for grant funds this year, can my business apply for the grant too? Yes. If the other entity has a separate business license, operation, address or unit number, and responsibilities, both the building owner and business owner can apply for the grant in the same year.

Can a group of eligible business tenants be allowed to apply for a group grant to fix a joint problem if the maximum amount granted is still \$20,000? No. Problems that impact the building tenants as a whole are the responsibility of the building owner to fix.

How much money can I receive from the grant? A business owner is eligible to apply for up to \$20,000 in total grant funds in any given year. All funds received for marketing, interior and equipment purchases require a 50/50 match by the business and city. Exterior improvements allow for a no-match grant for the first \$3,500 of exterior improvements and a 50/50 match for the remaining amount of the project (not to exceed \$20,000). For non-conventional leases such as shared workspace, subleases, food trucks or similar, the maximum award amount is \$5,000.

Can the grant pay my contractors directly, or can I receive the money when my bill to the contractor is due? No. All obligations must be paid in full by the grant recipient before the city will issue a reimbursement check in the name of the Thornton business. One check is written for all portions of a project. Some exceptions may be considered for large purchases requiring financing.

I don't have the funds to cover the upfront project cost. Can the city help with the cost?

The city has established partnerships with local lenders for our grant reimbursement programs. Our lending partners may be willing to accommodate more flexible lending terms and qualification requirements than traditional lenders. This partnership allows for expedited service and approvals from our partners when applying for the loan. You must be approved through the city's grant application process, as well as through the bank's application and eligibility process to receive the funds in partnership with the grant.

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Can I use the grant to pay for a project I already started or equipment that I recently purchased?

Maybe. Equipment purchased or projects started prior to the issuing of a grant award letter may be reimbursable by a grant award if the expenditures were made in accordance with grant eligibility rules. Please call the Alliance Business Assistance Center at 720.674.3547 for more information.

Can I use the grant for Marketing, Exterior, Interior and Equipment improvements in the same year? Yes.

Applicants may apply for a combination of the grants. However, total funding cannot exceed \$20,000.

My business operates out of a non-conventional shared workspace. Am I eligible to apply for the grant?

Yes. If you operate a business in a shared workspace or non-conventional commercial operation such as a food truck co-working space, or sublease and have a minimum lease agreement of 1 year or longer, you may apply for up to a maximum of \$5,000. You must meet all requirements of the grant and must have a designated or private workspace. All applications and grant requests are reviewed on a case-by-case basis, and BTAC has the right to deny any application that does not meet all requirements of the grant.

What does the city consider an emergency circumstance? The city would consider an emergency circumstance as a situation that brings a reasonable threat or hardship to the overall health, safety, or daily operation of your business due to no fault of your own. For example, if you own a restaurant and your freezer stops working, you may not be able to wait for the next grant review to purchase a new freezer due to the loss of product. You could submit your application with the receipt requesting that they approve a waiver for purchasing prior to grant approval. There is no guarantee your waiver request will be approved or that you will be reimbursed until BTAC has officially approved or denied the application.

How will my application be reviewed if it is an emergency circumstance? BTAC reviews all grant applications according to a Rubric Scorecard. If your emergency circumstances require a waiver to one of the grant requirements, you should state your emergency circumstance in the project description along with the requirement(s) you would like BTAC to waive. Your application will be reviewed through the same process as all other grants, but BTAC will have an opportunity to consider your application with an exception to the rule. There is no guarantee your waiver request will be approved or that you will be reimbursed until BTAC has officially approved or denied the application.

What is considered a qualified equipment purchase? Equipment used in the manufacturing or production of a business' core product or service. Equipment providing additional security or crime prevention measures for your business. Equipment related to reducing your carbon footprint and efforts toward "greening your business" such as energy efficiency, water efficiency, and recycling.

What does the city consider qualified exterior projects or improvements? This list is not all-inclusive. Please speak with staff to discuss additional options.

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| a. Facades, gutters, downspouts | g. Permanent bike racks |
| b. Exterior lighting | h. Signage (maximum grant \$10,000) |
| c. Awnings, canopies | i. Doors, roofs, and windows |
| d. Painting and masonry cleaning | j. Improvements to accommodate disabled patrons and employees |
| e. Landscaping and fencing (including functional irrigation system) | k. Security equipment and crime prevention |
| f. Parking lots and sidewalks | l. "Greening Your Business" energy efficiency, water efficiency, recycling, etc. |

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What are considered qualified interior projects? Improvements must be for interior improvements to the facility utilized in the core function of the business. This list is not all-inclusive. Please speak with Staff to discuss eligibility of additional options.

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| a. Painting | g. Mechanical, electrical and plumbing repairs and improvements |
| b. Carpeting and flooring | h. Accommodations for disabled patrons and employees |
| c. Lighting upgrades | i. Permit and design review fees |
| d. Furniture and fixtures necessary for the business to operate | j. Security equipment and crime prevention |
| e. Interior signage | k. "Greening Your Business" Energy efficiency, Water efficiency, Recycling, etc. |
| f. Tenant improvements, including build-out of offices/cubicles | |

What are considered qualified Marketing projects? Marketing projects must market your Thornton licensed business. Maximum reimbursement is \$1,000. Each business can submit an application once every 5 years. Each application will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Home based businesses are eligible to apply for the \$1,000 marketing grant. Eligible marketing projects may include:

- a. Mailers
- b. Business cards
- c. Coupons
- d. Ads (print or electronic)
- e. Television or radio ads
- f. Banners, flags, or yard signs may be included in signage or marketing grant
- g. Social media or other online marketing fees
- h. Website
- i. Booth rent at trade show or similar