

Information & Requirements

The Business Improvement Grant (BIG), administered by the Office of Economic Development, is available to help fund business improvements that will result in the creation and retention of jobs, increased sales revenue, and increased capital investment in Thornton facilities. BIG is primarily a matching funds program. Once approved, the Planning, Development Engineering, and Building Divisions work with awardees to coordinate permits, inspections, and project requirements.

Eligibility

- Commercially licensed business in Thornton for at least 24 months.
- Located in non-residential zoning designations and not on public property.
- In compliance with all city taxes, licensing, and applicable laws and ordinances.

Exclusions & Emergencies

- Funding cannot be used for non-profits, marijuana businesses, and residential living facilities.
- In emergency circumstances, a waiver to a grant requirement may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Applicant Responsibilities

- Filling out all application documentation COMPLETELY, including a detailed project summary description responding to the program scoring rubric. An incomplete application may result in the dismissal of the application.
- Collecting and compiling invoices, receipts, and photos for one submission in a concise and orderly manner.
- Determining the scope of work for each project.
- Determining the qualifications of the contractors.
 - Using Thornton-based contractors is strongly encouraged. If a Thornton contractor is hired, or purchases are made at a Thornton business, reimbursement will be awarded at 60%. Non-Thornton contractor services will be reimbursed at 50% of the actual cost. A Thornton contractor's bid must be within \$1,000 of the lowest bid received. To view a list of local licensed contractors, go to: <https://www.thorntonco.gov/business-development/city-development>.
- Submitting a summary of the projects and purchases made.
- Paying the difference, if any, between the approved grant amount and total project costs.
- Ensuring that all work is permitted and inspected properly. Some inspections may need to be performed during the actual work, rather than afterward. Contact the Building Inspections Division for more information on permits and inspections at 303-538-7396.
- Ensuring Sales and Use Tax, permit, and design review fees are included in expenses to be included in the BIG funding reimbursement calculation.
- Ensuring approval to make changes from the property owner/manager.
- **Project must be started within 4 months of grant pre-approval.** If the project is not started, funds will be released to the next business on the waitlist.

Application Submittal Process

- Applications are accepted January 2026, through July 31, 2026.
- Applications are reviewed on a first-come, first-served basis. Submit your application early to give yourself the best opportunity for grant approval.
- All qualified applications will be scored according to the Program Scoring Rubric, which can be found at <https://businessinthornton.com/local-business/small-business-support-programs/business-financial-assistance/business-improvement-grant-big-2/>
- The application will be reviewed by the following departments: Office of Economic Development, Building Division, Development Engineering, Planning Division and Sales and Use Tax.
- If funding is used for marketing materials, the grant review committee must approve all marketing samples for grant funding to be reimbursed.
- The Businesses of Thornton Advisory Commission (BTAC) will score applications monthly and make a final decision on all applications to include final award amounts.
- The Office of Economic Development will notify the applicant of grant approval or denial within 2 weeks of application review. If approved, notification of award amount, permits, and regulatory requirements will also be provided.

Reimbursement Checklist

The following must be complete by the project deadline - December 4, 2026. (No extensions allowed.)

- **Ensure ALL required work is permitted, inspected, and approved by the city of Thornton.** (Project must be paid in full including the difference, if any, between the approved grant amount and total project costs.)
- Reimbursement amounts will be based on documentation of expenses received.
- Reimbursement packet should include:
 - o Itemized statement of receipts and paid invoices
 - o Photocopies of receipts and paid invoices.
 - o “After” photographs of completed project.
- For marketing, a copy, picture, or other documentation of the final advertisement must be submitted.

Funding & Eligible Expenses

- BIG funding allows for a maximum of \$20,000 every 3 years.
 - o If business has an unconventional lease such as food truck, shared co-working space or sublease, maximum every 5 years is \$5,000.
 - o If business has received a South Thornton Attraction & Revitalization (STAR) grant, the business is not eligible to receive BIG for 2 years after.
- Signage grants will be reimbursed at a maximum amount of \$10,000.
- Exterior grants do not require matching funds for the first \$3,500 of a project. A 50/50 match is required for the remaining balance (maximum of \$20,000).
- Interior and Equipment grants require a 50/50 match up to a maximum amount of \$20,000.
- Marketing grants require a 50/50 match up to a maximum of \$1,000.
 - o Advertisement must be approved by the reviewing business commissioners.
 - o Homebased businesses are eligible to apply for the marketing grant.
 - o All other grant rules apply.
- Application can include projects from all categories with maximum award of \$20,000 total.
- **Payments made in cash will not be reimbursed.**

Funding & Eligible Expenses, cont'd

Eligible equipment purchases: *This list is not all-inclusive.*

- 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.

Eligible exterior projects or improvements: *This list is not all-inclusive.*

- Facades, gutters, downspouts
- Exterior lighting
- Awnings, canopies
- Painting and masonry cleaning
- Landscaping and fencing (including functional irrigation system)
- Parking lots and sidewalks
- Permanent bike racks
- Signage (maximum grant \$10,000)
- Doors, roofs, and windows
- Improvements to accommodate disabled patrons and employees
- Security equipment and crime prevention
- Energy efficiency, water efficiency, recycling, etc.

Eligible 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.*

- Painting
- Carpeting and flooring
- Lighting upgrades
- Furniture and fixtures necessary for the business to operate
- Interior signage
- Tenant improvements, including build-out of offices/cubicles
- Mechanical, electrical and plumbing repairs and improvements
- Accommodations for disabled patrons and employees
- Permit and design review fees
- Security equipment and crime prevention
- Energy efficiency, water efficiency, recycling, etc.

Eligible marketing projects: *Marketing projects must market your Thornton licensed business. Home based businesses are eligible to apply for the marketing grant. This list is not all-inclusive.*

- Mailers
- Business cards
- Coupons
- Ads (print or electronic)
- Television or radio ads
- Banners, flags, or yard signs may be included in signage or marketing grant
- Social media or other online marketing fees
- Website
- Booth rent at trade show or similar

Applications may be:

- **Submitted online** <https://businessinthornton.com/local-business/small-business-support-programs/business-financial-assistance/business-improvement-grant-big-2/>
- **Emailed to** carla.courter@thorntonco.gov

For questions, call 303.538.7665.



Frequently Asked Questions

- 1. How are grant applications reviewed and approved?** Complete application packets 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 scoring rubric. The average wait time for a grant application approval is about two months.
- 2. 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 24 months, and your business is in good standing with the city, you are eligible to apply for all segments of the grant.
- 3. How does the city determine if a business is in good standing?** A business must be compliant 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 are used to bring the facility into compliance. Landlords and property managers may not use the funds for building maintenance code violations.
- 4. 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 Office of Economic Development at 303.538.7665.
- 5. 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.
- 6. 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, businesses must have a lease agreement with a minimum of a 1-year commitment to be eligible for the maximum award amount of \$5,000.
- 7. 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.
- 8. 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 3 calendar years after obtaining the grant.

- 9. 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.
- 10. 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.
- 11. 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.
- 12. 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.
- 13. 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.
- 14. 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.
- 15. 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.
- 16. 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.
- 17. 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 Office of Economic Development at 303.538.7665 for more information.

- 18. 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.
- 19. 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.
- 20. How will my application be reviewed if it is an emergency circumstance?** BTAC reviews all grant applications according to a scoring rubric. 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.
- 21. I would like to lease some new equipment. Is that covered by the grant?** Maybe. Equipment purchased on a lease-to-own basis may be eligible for principal amount-only reimbursement. Equipment on a lease-only basis is not eligible for inclusion on your grant application.
- 22. I started a new business recently. Are those expenses covered by the grant?** No. Business start-up costs are not eligible for reimbursement. Additionally, you must have owned and operated your business in the City of Thornton for the last 24 months.
- 23. What does the City consider start-up costs?** Startup costs are the initial expenses a new business incurs to get up and running before it starts generating revenue. These costs can include rent, legal and administrative fees, equipment, market research, licensing, insurance, marketing, tenant improvements to the building, and initial inventory and supplies, etc.
- 24. I want to move my home-based business to a commercial location. Can the grant help me with expenses?** Maybe. Businesses who have been in a commercial location and are licensed as such for 2 years or more are eligible to apply for the grant provided that expenses are related to the expansion of the business and not the start-up.