Energizing main streets
Business District Initiative (BDI)

Business District Initiative
2019 call for proposals
Deadline: February 28, 2019

Contact:
Nate Hood
Hennepin County
Community Works
nathaniel.hood@hennepin.us
612-596-9876
2019 Business District Initiative Guidelines

Hennepin County has funding available to support municipal initiatives to strengthen priority small business districts and main streets. Thriving commercial main streets and small business districts provide important goods and services, create a sense of place, and help make communities desirable and productive. Small businesses produce considerable tax revenue, provide jobs, and serve as hubs of activity in suburban communities. Successful business districts also provide opportunities to foster entrepreneurship and help support the region’s innovation economy. Suburban municipalities have a clear sense of the priorities and needs of key main streets and business districts in their community, and are in the best position to design and implement strategies that support their community’s priority business districts. The Business District Initiative provides funding assistance for multi-jurisdictional projects with suburban municipalities for the implementation of strategies that enhance the economic vitality of these priority business districts.

Eligible Applicants
- Suburban municipalities, housing and redevelopment authorities, economic development authorities, or port authorities

Eligible Locations
- Suburban Hennepin County business districts with concentrations of neighborhood-serving retail, office, restaurant and/or entertainment uses that offer a variety of goods and services in a walkable environment, or districts that aim to become walkable.

Funding Availability
- Up to $200,000 is available; maximum award amount is $50,000.
- Awards will be provided in the form of a grant to the applicant. Disbursement of funds will be tied to specific eligible uses of funds, specific agreed upon outcomes, and other terms outlined in a grant agreement.
- Applicant may contract out the management of the award.

Eligible Uses of Funds
- Business recruitment
- District-wide marketing, branding, and/or promotion initiatives
- District-wide planning, design, and implementation of wayfinding
- Technical assistance for business districts or individual businesses (including but not limited to special service district or business-association establishment; financial, legal, or tax-related services; merchandising, marketing, and social media assistance)
- Small business incubators
- Design and/or implementation of street furniture or other enhancements
- Building facade improvements
Capital costs are an acceptable use of funds but applicant must include a maintenance plan including identification of sources of funds to be used for long term maintenance.

Ineligible Uses of Funds
- Land use planning or zoning studies
- Business organization operational support
- Internal administrative and overhead costs

Evaluation of Applications
The proposed strategy and supporting rationale will be competitively evaluated on the extent to which they generate measurable, positive impacts commensurate with the proposed level of investment. Specific criteria include:
- Expected outcomes, impacts for businesses, and proposed metrics for tracking outcomes
- Significance of the business district to the community
- Need for financial assistance
- Leverage of funds, including matching sources of funds for the proposed activities and additional investments in the business district
- Organizational capacity and plan for accomplishing the objectives
- Support from business and property owners
- Completeness and appropriateness of the implementation plan (For facade improvement initiatives, the completeness and appropriateness of how the initiative would be administered, such as the process and criteria for sub-awarding funds for facade improvements, the timing of grant disbursement to the sub-recipient, leverage requirements, proof of landlord approval and is current on property taxes, etc.)

Applications should address how the proposed activities are part of a holistic community development strategy, rather than a stand-alone initiative.

Contract Term
Typical contract terms will be between 12 and 24 months.

Application Process
Applicants must submit the signed and scanned Application Form and Excel Budget Form to nathaniel.hood@hennepin.us by February 28, 2019. Applicants will receive a courtesy email response indicating receipt by the deadline. Direct any questions and submit applications to:

Nate Hood, Senior Planner
Community Works | Hennepin County Public Works
701 Fourth Avenue South, Suite 400 | Minneapolis, MN 55415
612-596-9876  email – nathaniel.hood@hennepin.us
Potential applicants are strongly encouraged to review projects with Mr. Hood prior to application submittal. County staff will be available to provide technical assistance to applicants prior to submitting their applications.

Applications will be reviewed by a committee consisting of Hennepin County Community Works staff and additional reviewers as deemed necessary to thoroughly evaluate applications. Staff anticipates presenting funding recommendations to the Hennepin County Board in May or June 2019. Funds are anticipated to be available for eligible expenditures incurred after final contracts are executed, after County Board approval.

Hennepin County is obligated to follow the Minnesota Data Practices Act, which means that applications will likely be public data after the evaluation and selection process. A statement identifying data as copyrighted or otherwise protected does not prevent public access to the data contained in the response if such data does not qualify as trade secret data.

Hennepin County is not obligated to pay any costs incurred in the preparation of an application. Hennepin County reserves the right to accept or reject any or all applications received, to accept or reject any late applications, to request additional information as deemed necessary to review any application, to negotiate with all qualified proposers, to use any or all proposer ideas and/or approaches presented, or to cancel this application process, if it is in the best interest of Hennepin County to do so. Hennepin County may require the entities selected to participate in negotiations to submit any fiscal, technical, or other revisions of their applications that may result from negotiations.