

**CITY OF LA CROSSE, WISCONSIN
SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM
MINORITY OWNED BUSINESS ASSISTANCE GRANT
GUIDELINES**

AUTHORITY

The Small Business Development Program is initiated under Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Regulations (24 CFR, Part 570) which are governed by Title I of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, as amended. Amendments to the Act authorize the City of La Crosse to use Community Development Block Grant Funds for activities which are necessary or appropriate to carry out economic development projects.

PURPOSE

The program seeks to bolster the growth of new or fledgling very small businesses in order to help alleviate underrepresentation of these enterprises within the community. By assisting current and prospective business owners, this program will help to create a more inclusive business community.

ADMINISTRATION

The Economic Development Commission (EDC) is the policy-making and grant-approval body for the Minority Owned Business Assistance Grant Program. The EDC (consisting of the Mayor, two Council Members and four citizens, see [Article IX Sec. 2-403](#) of City Ordinances for more information) is responsible for revising guidelines and approving grant applications. The City of La Crosse Planning Department will be responsible for day-to-day administration, working with applicants on proposed projects, collecting data, application analysis, and after grant approval, staff is responsible for preparing documents and monitoring project progress. All grant recipients agree to engage with the Wisconsin Women's Business Initiative Corporation (WWBIC) for business technical assistance.

ELIGIBLE RECIPIENTS

The Minority Owned Business Assistance Grant Program is designed to provide necessary tools, services and equipment for starting or expanding small businesses. For-profit businesses with less than 5 projected or existing employees in La Crosse are eligible to apply for funds (excludes non-profit enterprises, lending, or investment enterprises and financing real property held for investment). Business must be located or operated within the City of La Crosse.

ELIGIBLE GRANT ACTIVITIES

Funds may be used for inventory, technology development, patent, copyright or trademark filing fees, and purchase of equipment in connection with the start or expansion of a business. Land and buildings must be privately owned, taxable property, and proposed for manufacturing and/or commercial activity or mixed business/residential use. Funds may not be used in association with the major rehabilitation of a building or new construction. They are for economic development activities associated with non-construction costs only.

INELIGIBLE GRANT ACTIVITIES

Grants may not be used for refinancing existing indebtedness, business valuation or appraisal fees, design costs not related to technology development, marketing and advertising, or fees for lobbying or contributions to elected official.

FEDERAL FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

Since federal funds are being passed from the City of La Crosse to eligible recipients, some federal requirements also accompany approved federal funds. The following requirements must be met:

1. Environmental Review Procedures (24 CFR, Part 58) provide for assessing the relationship between proposed development projects and their effect on the environment.
2. Federal Equal Employment Opportunity Regulations require non-discrimination and equal employment opportunity in connection with federally-assisted projects.

APPLICATION PROCESS

The City of La Crosse shall process and administer each grant application in a manner which is usual and customary with regard to other grants under similar circumstances. The basic steps for securing a grant are as follows:

1. Applicant meets with City of La Crosse Planning Department staff to discuss proposed project and program guidelines. Preliminary information needed includes:
 - a. Description of the Company and how long it has been in business;
 - b. The proposed project and timeline;
 - c. Amount of funding needed and what the funds will be used for.
2. If project meets program objectives and other eligibility items, then Applicant submits a completed application.
3. Application packaging will be completed by City staff as a recommendation to the City of La Crosse EDC who review the application(s) and take appropriate action. If the application receives approval, all necessary documents in connection with the grant will be prepared and shall be executed by City staff.

TIMETABLE

Applications will be processed as quickly as possible, but assume 45 days processing.