



CITY OF LA CROSSE COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT GRANT APPLICATION

Please note that previous funding amounts are not a guarantee for continued support and any funding amount may be based on a number of factors including, but not limited to, performance, available City funds, and collaborating efforts by your organization with similar organizations.

Contact Information

Organization

Downtown Mainstreet, Inc.

Address

422 Main Street La Crosse, WI 54601

Phone

608-784-0440

E-mail

mary@lacrossedowntown.com

Name of contact person

Mary Larson

Proposal Summary

Project Name

2025 Membership Request

Total amount of City funds your agency is requesting

\$35,000.00

Will any new jobs be created as a result of the project?

☐ Yes ☒ No

If so, how many?

We would like to hire a part time administrative person in 25 or 26

What benefit has your organization provided to the La Crosse community, and specifically to the City, in 2024?

Downtown Mainstreet is a Nationally Accredited Main Street Program, advocating for initiative within Economic Vitality, Design, Promotions and Organization. We work with members, volunteers and the community to enhance, revitalize, and re-develop La Crosse's original central business district. Your sponsorship allows us to continue our work with the Imagine 2040 Plan, beautification efforts and being a central location for downtown business resources. We look forward to continuing and improving on collaborations that support the needs of The City of La Crosse and as it relates to downtown.

-We continue to facilitate two programs with ARPA grant funding, Open Rewards and GROW Grant. Updates on these programs are given to Julie Emslie on a quarterly basis.

-We operate a successful downtown gift certificate program that is eligible at over 100 businesses and sold nearly \$70,000 in 2024

-We operate a success social media and digital presence that benefits members, residents and visitors

-We execute multiple downtown specific events during the year including a wine walk, highlighting restaurants and retail, a tour of upper living and a holiday open house

-New Individual membership to encourage downtown visitors

-In the past five years, DMI has welcomed to downtown; 36 net new businesses, 117 net new jobs, 4 new housing units, \$234.6 million in private investment (improving 106 properties), \$14.5 million in public investment, and an average of 1,654 annual volunteer hours (hours were up to 650 per year in the past two years, but still a decrease from pre-pandemic levels).

What does your organization have planned for the remainder of 2024 (that is of benefit to La Crosse, and specifically the City)?

N/A

What does your organization plan to accomplish with the help of City funding in 2025?

By funding our Main Street America organization, the City is making an investment in the long-term economic and cultural health of the community. Our active programs collectively position downtown for growth, resilience, and a higher quality of life for residents and visitors. One of the greatest sources we have as a community is our economic vitality. It is what drives our community. If our business community is strong, our workforce is strong, our families are strong and those in need have stronger resources to help to raise them up.

Organization Details

Legal status of organization

Private, Non-Profit

Federal Tax Identification Number

39-1339123

What was your organization's total operating budget for the past year?

\$166,500.00

Has your organization received City funds in the past?

☒ Yes ☐ No

If yes, how much has your organization received and how many years has your organization participated in the program?

Membership 2024 was \$27,500

ARPA Funding for grant and open rewards - \$50,000 in 2024

Membership 2014-2024 from \$14,000 to \$27,500

Page 2

Organization Structure

Attach the following documents (check off as you upload each file below)

- ☒ Concise organization chart showing your agency's major administrative structure
- ☒ Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws
- ☒ List of Board of Directors
- ☒ Current agency budget
- ☒ Current project activity budget if currently funded
- ☒ Other financial forms: Form 990, Income Statement, Balance Sheet, et al.

File Upload

What is your agency's primary funding source(s)?

Membership from businesses

What percent of your anticipated total project budget does this City request represent?

15%

What other source(s) of funds could your organization pursue? Does your organization receive similar funding from other municipalities?

We do not request funding from other municipalities. As a 501(c)(6) organization, we are limited to what funds we are eligible for and are active in seeking out and applying for grants in which we are eligible with assistance from WEDC.

Proposal Details

Provide an overview of the program (this pertains only to the activity for which you are seeking funds).

Funding from The City of La Crosse directly impacts our Operational Stability for Long-Term Success. Operating funds ensure that Downtown Mainstreet can maintain essential staff, programs, and resources, enabling them to focus on their mission rather than constantly seeking funding. It allows for dedicated staff to deliver professional-grade planning, marketing, and programming that directly benefit the downtown area. Lastly, reliable funding allows for the continuity of impactful initiatives, such as events, streetscaping, and business assistance.

Specifically state how the requested funds will be used.

The funds from The City of La Crosse will go directly toward employee wages.

State the specific local needs and problems that your proposal intends to address.

Cities that fund downtown nonprofits often see increased private investment in the area, creating a multiplier effect for every public dollar spent. We assist in creating and maintaining attractive, safe, and engaging public spaces that foster civic pride and community engagement as well as events and activities that draw residents and visitors, enriching the city's cultural life.

Identify the project target population your proposed program or activity will serve. Include unique characteristics such as: ethnicity/race, age, disability, income level.

Residents, visitors, employers and employees keep downtown La Crosse bustling. All people benefit when we have a downtown that welcoming, inclusive and accessible.

Describe methods used to measure success in achieving objectives and specifically meeting needs of the target population.

We measure through Main Street America's 4 -point approach in the areas of Economic Vitality, Design, Promotions, and Organization. This includes increased downtown foot traffic, Growth in business openings and retention, Rising property values and tax revenues and Community satisfaction and engagement levels.

1. Economic Vitality

We focus on strengthening the downtown economy by attracting investment, supporting businesses, and fostering entrepreneurship.

Business Recruitment & Retention: Work to attract new businesses that complement existing ones and support current businesses to ensure sustainability.

Market Analysis: Use data to identify market gaps and opportunities to guide business development strategies.

Incentives & Grants: Partner with municipalities to provide incentives for entrepreneurs and property owners to invest in the downtown area.

Diverse Revenue Streams: Promote a mix of retail, residential, office, and entertainment uses to ensure economic resilience.

2. Design

The design component focuses on the physical environment, creating an attractive and functional downtown that reflects the community's identity such as:

Historic Preservation: Restore and maintain historic buildings to honor local heritage while repurposing them for modern use.

Public Space Improvements: Enhance streetscapes with elements like landscaping, lighting, benches, and public art to make the downtown inviting and walkable.

Wayfinding and Branding: Install signage and visual elements that help visitors navigate and connect with the downtown area's identity.

Facade Improvement Programs: Offer grants or technical assistance to improve building exteriors, enhancing the overall aesthetic.

3. Promotion

Main Street organizations use marketing and events to drive foot traffic and boost the downtown's reputation as a destination.

Events and Festivals: Organize activities that bring the community together and draw visitors, such as farmers' markets, parades, and cultural events.

Collaborative Marketing: Work with local businesses to promote special deals, shopping nights, or themed campaigns.

Social Media and Digital Tools: Use modern marketing techniques to reach broader audiences and showcase the unique offerings of downtown.

Storytelling: Highlight the history and character of the downtown area to strengthen emotional connections and pride.

4. Organization

Strong leadership and partnerships are key to achieving the Main Street organization's goals

Community Engagement: Involve residents, businesses, and stakeholders in decision-making and volunteer opportunities.

Partnerships: Collaborate with municipalities, chambers of commerce, economic development agencies, and civic groups.

Fundraising: Secure diverse funding sources, including municipal support, grants, sponsorships, and donations.

Volunteer Management: Recruit and train volunteers to support programs and events.

If more than one agency within the La Crosse area deals with similar problems or clients that you have identified, describe how your agency coordinates tasks and responsibility with these other agencies and how duplication of services will be avoided.

Downtown Mainstreet, Inc. is under a managed services contract with The Chamber of La Crosse. This agreement allows us to collaborate through employee benefits, event planning, information sharing and employee retention.