Virginia Main Street Downtown Investment Grant Application Manual

FY2022

Virginia Main Street Downtown Investment Grant

The Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development's (DHCD) [Virginia Main Street Program](#) (VMS) is a community economic development program that follows the Main Street Approach of the National Main Street Center. Each year local Main Street organizations work to attract the necessary public and private investment to their historic commercial districts in order to: (1) breathe new life into blighted and vacant buildings; (2) establish and expand independent businesses that make downtowns fun and unique consumer destinations; and (3) create mixed-use downtowns where people once again live above bustling commercial establishments and property owners maximize the productive use of every floor of downtown buildings.

The cumulative success of the Main Street Approach and local programs has earned Main Street the reputation as a powerful economic revitalization tool. In 2019 alone, VMS designated communities reported:

- $115 million in privately funded improvements to downtown historic buildings;
- $44 million in public improvements to help encourage private investment in downtowns;
- more than 190 unique businesses created, expanded or retained in historic commercial districts, and;
- more than 730 jobs created or retained for local community members seeking employment.

Downtown Investment Grants (DIGs) allow Main Street organizations to take on unique, one-time projects that measurably, creatively, and sustainably advance the organization's goals and strategies. DIGs involve multiple downtown partners and require active leadership and participation by the organization's board, committees, and volunteers. DIGs may not be used for marketing, printing, continuing operations, program administration, payroll, debts, or any other operational expenses.

Grant Eligibility

Grants are available only to designated Advancing Virginia Main Street communities and must be administered through the local Main Street organization. Special exceptions may be made

for high performing Exploring Main Street communities (formerly DHCD Commercial District Affiliates). Applicants must be current on all VMS reports. Priority is given to Main Street America Nationally Accredited Communities.

All applicants must comply with DHCD's financial auditing requirements by uploading a copy of the organization's W-9 and a copy of the organization's most recent audit or financial statements, as applicable, to CAMS by the grant's application deadline (March 16, 2021). See https://www.dhcd.virginia.gov/sites/default/files/Docx/audit-policy/dhcd-audit-policy.pdf for more information on the policy.

Funding Priorities

A strong application will clearly explain how the proposed project will result in measurable economic improvement in the Main Street district. The project will support the community's vision for encouraging the private investment necessary for the economic revitalization of the Main Street district, will clearly align with the mission of the Main Street organization, and will address one or more of the board's Transformation Strategies or strategic planning goals for the Main Street district. The implementation of the proposed project will empower board and committee volunteers as leaders and will help develop and capitalize on the expertise and financial support of the organization's stakeholders and community partners.

Communities are encouraged to utilize Consultant Services (see pp. 9-12 in 2020 VMS Program Guidelines) to develop design projects, as well as the planning and organizational support components for economic vitality projects. DIG funds can be used to: fund complete projects; provide seed funding for new projects; or provide gap financing that allows a project to become fully funded. Other categories contributing to economic vitality will be considered.

The DIG funds will not be awarded for continuing operations, program administration, payroll, debts, or any other operational expenses. Funds will not be awarded for predictable organizational expenses for which the board could have reasonably planned (ex. general marketing materials, website updates, financial management expenses, etc.). Funds may not be simply "passed through" the Main Street organization to third parties.

Award Amounts

Up to $25,000 each.

Grant Payment

If the application is selected for funding, grant funds will be paid upon completion of agreed upon project milestones, which will be negotiated and included in a memorandum of understanding that will be signed by both DHCD and the grantee prior to the start of the project. Projects must be completed no later than May 31, 2022. Before any funds are disbursed, the organization must be in compliance with DHCD's audit policy.

Leverage Requirement

All projects require a 2:1 match. For every $2 of grant funding applied for, there must be $1 in match funding committed. In-kind services provided by local government, consultants, and other Main Street stakeholders and partners may be included. Time contributed solely to the implementation of the project by volunteers from the Main Street organization or the organization's partners may be included. Volunteer hours are calculated at $27.20 per hour (https://www.independentsector.org/volunteer_time).

Project Implementation Period

July 1, 2021 – May 31, 2022 (final report due); all disbursements must be completed by May 31, 2022. Quarterly reporting through CAMS is required. All projects must be underway no later than October 1, 2021.

Grant Selection

Grant proposals are scored on a 0-100 point scale. Grant funds are limited and only those proposals exceeding the minimum 70-point threshold will be considered for funding. The project scoring methodology is as follows:

Scoring Criteria	Points
Relation to organizational mission and vision	10
Relation to organizational strategies/goals	30
Project impact/outcomes	30
Organizational capacity/readiness	20
Realistic project work plan and budget	10
Total	100

Instructions for Application Submission

Please note that applications must be submitted electronically through the Agency's Centralized Application and Management System (CAMS). To access CAMS, visit the website at www.dhcd.virginia.gov and click on the CAMS icon in the upper-right hand corner.

Google Chrome is the recommended browser for CAMS. Remember to SAVE often.

Submission Requirements

All grant applications and supporting documentation must be submitted on CAMS by 11:59 PM on March 16, 2021. Applications not submitted accordingly may be disqualified. Please note: Technical support with CAMS is available weekdays between 8:30 am and 4:30 pm.

Applicants must submit completed responses to all appropriate questions and include all required attachments.

Application Instructions

The application on CAMS will require the organization to complete each tab:

1. **Project Information:** Include the primary point of contact, primary location of the project and service area.

2. **Project Budget:** Complete budget information, including DIG requested funding and other match funding. Within the budget narrative space, describe how the budget was derived and sources of other funding.

3. **Narrative Information:** Answer narrative questions related to the project, timeline, budget and outcomes (see the questions below.)

4. **Attachments:** Upload multiple supporting documents as attachments (see required and optional attachments below).

5. **Additional Information:** This is not necessary to complete, but if you have additional information to describe or share that was not asked in the application, please include it here.

Project Description

Enter the following information into the relevant text box within the Narrative Information tab on CAMS. Please limit responses to no more than 500 words per text box (about one written page).

1. Provide a detailed description of the proposed project. What activities are you proposing to do with this funding? Where will this project take place – within the entire district or a specific location? Include as an attachment any design renderings, façade program guidelines or other supporting documents to demonstrate the scope of your project.

2. How and when will the proposed project be accomplished? Include a fully completed work plan with detailed timeline. Use the template in the attachment section.

3. Who will be working on this project? List any/all organizational or municipal staff, committee members and/or volunteers that will be working to implement this project. What role(s) will they play and how will they contribute?

4. Describe how the proposed project furthers the community's vision for the Main Street district, aligns with the mission of the Main Street organization and addresses one or more of the board's Transformation Strategies/goals for the Main Street district. Explain why this is an effective strategy that will attract private investment to the Main Street district and will result in new and stronger businesses, building renovation or construction, and/or increase retail and residential opportunities.

5. Describe outcomes that are expected from this project, both quantitative and qualitative. Examples of outcomes might be: percentage increase in foot traffic, percentage increase in shopper spending, number of new jobs created, number of new businesses created or supported, amount of increased community engagement, and such. Describe how these outcomes will be tracked and reported.

Attachments - Required Supporting Documents

1. **Mission/Vision:** Include the community's vision statement for the Main Street district and mission statement for the Main Street organization.

2. **Board/Committees:** Include a current list of the organization's board and committee/project team members. For the board, include when they joined the board and when their term expires.

3. **Strategic Plan/Transformation Strategies:** Include the organization's strategic plan or work plan that lists the board's transformation/focused strategies/goals for the Main Street district.

4. **Project Work Plan:** Provide an effective and appropriate work plan for the project that includes tasks, responsible individuals, timeline, and budget. Please use a format similar to the one included in Appendix A. (Note**:** A strong score in this area will be based on appropriate board involvement in the project.)

5. **Budget/Cost Estimates/Match Documentation:**

   a. Project Budget – Provide a project budget that includes all project related line items for expenditures and all project related line items for funding sources.
   b. Explanation of Cost Estimates – Provide detailed information on the source of the cost estimates and the date the estimates were received.
   c. Leverage Verification – Provide verification of leverage funds including contracts, memorandums of understanding/agreements, award letters, and other documentation that confirms the commitment of other resources for the project. Include documentation and calculations for in-kind contributions and volunteer hours.

Attachments - Optional Supporting Documents (based on project type)

Optional: Design Projects – Include a map of the downtown with the location of the project identified on the map along with current photos of the proposed project area. Also, include design renderings of the project, if available.

Optional: Program Designs/Programs – Include draft documents of proposed façade program, loan pools, or other plans and documentsas appropriate.

Optional: Plans/Studies – Upload any recent economic development plans or studies the organization or locality has completed that includes the downtown area. Include any plan or study that supports the proposed project.

Main Street Work Plan

Committee _____   Page ___

Related Board Transformation Strategy/Goal(s):

_____

Project Description: _____   Event date or Project Completion date: _____

Anticipated Results/Measure of Success:

_____

Chair/Person Responsible: _____   Phone: _____   E-mail: _____

Project Team Members: _____

_____

Tasks	Person Responsible	Start and End Date	Cost	Revenue Generated	Volunteer Hours Needed	Staff Hours Needed	Progress/Completion/Comments

TOTAL: $_____ $_____