

Critical Corridors

Commercial Corridor Initiative

2023 Program Guidelines

Purpose

Ramsey County's Commercial Corridor Initiative program, funded through the Housing Redevelopment Authority levy, strengthens suburban small business districts by investing in pathways to entrepreneurship for racially and ethnically diverse communities and supporting thriving main streets.

Eligible Applicants

Suburban Ramsey County entities including cities, associated development authorities, business coalitions, and chambers of commerce.

Eligible Activities

- Business recruitment activities.
- Establishment of small-business incubators.
- District-wide planning and design.
- District-wide marketing, branding, and promotion initiatives.
- Design and implementation of wayfinding, signage, street furniture or other public realm enhancements.
- Building facade improvements.
- Technical assistance related to business activities, including:
 - o Special service district or business-association establishment.
 - o Financial, legal, or tax-related services.
 - o Merchandising, marketing and social media assistance.

Ineligible Activities

- Parking lot improvements.
- Activities for sites without public frontage.
- Activities that benefit a single business.
- Administration, overhead, and business operations support.
- Events.



Funding

- Total funding available: approximately \$100,000 (subject to change).
- Maximum anticipated award: \$50,000 per project.
- Activities funded by this program must be completed by July 1, 2024.
- Funds are available on a reimbursement basis.
- Activities completed prior to award are not eligible for reimbursement.
- Match is not required but may be considered during evaluation.

Strategic and Selection Priorities

- Alignment with Ramsey County Economic Competitiveness & Inclusion Plan.
- Improvement of conditions for job creation and entrepreneurship.
- Improvement of coordination among businesses.
- Placemaking and improved pedestrian and bicycle access.
- Demonstrated need for financial assistance.
- Project readiness and organizational capacity.
- Support from businesses and property owners.
- Alignment with city priorities and plans.

Application Details

Program webpage: ramseycounty.us/CriticalCorridors.

Pre-application: A pre-application meeting with staff is optional, but highly recommended, to ensure project eligibility and program fit. Please email ella.mitchell@ramseycounty.us to schedule a call prior to March 7, 2023.

Webinar: A Zoom webinar is scheduled for March 1, 2023 at 10 a.m. Applicants are encouraged to attend to learn more about funding availability and program application requirements. The webinar link and recording is available on the program webpage.

Frequently Asked Questions: Questions may be submitted anonymously through a webform on the program webpage until March 17, 2023. Responses will be posted the week of March 20, 2023.

Applications will be accepted via ZoomGrants. Application attachments include:

- Application form.
- Map of proposed project area.
- Letters of support from city and affected business owners.

A full list of required application materials will be available on ZoomGrants.

Application opens: Tuesday, March 7, 2023.

Application closes: Tuesday, April 4, 2023.

Award decisions: May 2023.

Application Evaluation

When determining funding awards, reviewers will prioritize proposals that further County goals and align with local plans and priorities. Applications will be reviewed by a committee consisting of Ramsey County staff and other outside reviewers as deemed necessary. Ramsey County seeks to address racial and ethnic-based disparities so that all residents can experience fair outcomes including the highest level of health, wellbeing, and opportunities for advancement and growth. Please review the Ramsey County Economic Competitiveness & Inclusion Plan, the Equitable Development Framework, and the Ramsey County Strategic Plan for the County's goals and priorities.

Contracting and Reporting

Ramsey County will contract directly with grantees for the portion of work covered by the program award. All grantees are required to submit a final report summarizing the project process, outcomes and impacts of completed work. Award of funds through this program does not guarantee future funding.

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