

Outdoor Spaces Grant Program

Terms & Conditions Effective June 27, 2025

Program Overview

The Baltimore Development Corporation (BDC) offers an Outdoor Spaces Grant to assist business owners with the cost of installing outdoor seating, parklets, landscaping, and other features that enhance a business’s use of outdoor space.

Outdoor spaces help meet the demand for public space along retail corridors, encourage community interactions, and foster a vibrant street life in Baltimore neighborhoods.

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1. Grant Amount

BDC will award up to \$5,000 in matching funds reimbursement for qualified expenses.

Applicants for these grants must contract for, complete, and pay for improvements for the entire project. Grant funds will be reimbursed to the Applicant following proof of completion and payment.

2. Applicant Eligibility

Eligible Applicants

- Businesses and non-profits with signed leases and commercial property owners in Baltimore City.

- Community groups and non-profits without commercial leases may apply, but must include a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), signed by the property owners where the improvements will be implemented, with their application. For more details about the MOU requirement, please refer to the Other Terms & Conditions section.
- Owners of vacant property may apply for this program, with the understanding that no reimbursement will be issued by BDC until:
 - A signed lease for the property has been submitted
 - A Use & Occupancy permit is issued
 - The property is occupied
- **Applicants must be in compliance with all local, state, and federal regulations, including being in Good Standing with the State of Maryland.**
 - A BDC staff person can assist with determining the standing of your business at the time of application, and applicants can check their standing with the state of Maryland at any time using this link:
<https://egov.maryland.gov/BusinessExpress/EntitySearch>

Ineligible Applicants

The FIG program is only available to businesses and commercial property owners. The following projects are NOT eligible for this program:

- Residential Properties
- New Construction (defined as a building erected within the last three years)
- Any application on behalf of a property owner whose building is actively listed for sale
- Any property that has received an OSG in the prior 12-month period
- Any applicant who has received an OSG but has not maintained the improvements in good repair, as required

NOTE: *The OSG program cannot be used for properties or improvements that are not in compliance with applicable zoning laws and urban renewal plans, unless the project brings the property into compliance with these laws and plans.*

3. Eligible Locations

- Public Right of Way:
 - Sidewalk space immediately adjacent to a business
 - Parking space(s) immediately adjacent to a business

- Outdoor seating areas/courtyards located on private property
- Community spaces – located on public or private property – for the use of the general public

4. Use of Funds

Eligible Uses of Grant Funds

- Café tables and chairs, benches, and other structures that support seating
- Curbside facilities (parklets, patios, etc.)
- Shade structures (inc. sails, pergolas, umbrellas, etc.)
- Outdoor lighting (inc. string lights, lighted trees, etc.)
- Pots, planters, planter boxes, trellises.
- Plants and landscaping
 - **NOTE:** *Cost of plants and landscaping is limited to 25% of the total amount of the grant.*
- Mobile vending structures for the outdoor presentation and sale of goods
- No furniture or any other proposed outdoor space elements may be tied or otherwise secured to trees, lamp posts, street signs, or hydrants.

5. Ineligible Uses of Grant Funds

The following improvements will not be reimbursed with grant funds, and the purchase of these items will not count towards meeting the matching funds requirement under this program.

- Outdoor heaters
- Tents of any kind or Individual dining enclosures (inc. igloos, bubbles, greenhouses, etc.)
- Water-filled traffic (jersey) barriers or metal pedestrian barricades
- Sidewalk and/or street painting or murals
- Signage affixed to new/existing parklets
- Speakers, televisions, or other devices that amplify sound
- Roof deck construction
- Industrial cable spools
- Permit fees

6. Project Requirements & Compliance

Estimates

- The purchase of any readily available retail products (tables, chairs, planters, etc.) only requires one (1) quote, as it is understood that retail products are already sold at a publicly known “market” price.
- Each aspect of the project that requires professional services, such as a contractor, landscaper, mason, etc., must have two separate quotes from licensed professionals that are in good standing with the State of Maryland and not affiliated with the applicant. For example, if a project were to include concrete work and landscaping, applicants must procure:
 - Two (2) estimates from two general contractors capable of handling all of the work

OR

- Two (2) estimates for concrete work and two (2) estimates for landscaping
- The final grant reimbursement amount will be based on the lowest bids for each component of the project, combined with the total cost of the retail items.
- Applicants who are licensed contractors are allowed to bid on and perform the work, but two additional quotes from licensed contractors that are not affiliated with the Applicant are still required.
- All Contractors, Sign Fabricators, or capable construction tradespeople must also hold the proper construction licensure per their businesses and or trade for their bid to be considered.
- **TIP:** *It is strongly recommended that applicants request itemized estimates from contractors as they are soliciting bids.*

Renderings

- Applicants must include a visual representation of the proposed improvements sufficient to illustrate the planned changes and the placement of those improvements.
- Acceptable materials may include hand-drawn sketches, annotated photographs, or other visual tools that demonstrate the proposed improvements. Renderings do not need to be professionally created; however, they must clearly convey the scope, design intent, and location of the proposed work so that BDC can accurately assess the project.

- Applicants with questions about what is required or how to prepare suitable renderings should consult their assigned BDC representative prior to submission.

Applications must include a sketch, rendering, or other imagery that provides BDC with a clear understanding of the expected outcome of the installation.

Architectural/Design Services

- Architectural and design services are considered a valid expense, but their total must not exceed 25% of the total project cost.
- ***Only one estimate for architectural/design services will be required.***
- ***If the OSG application is approved, architectural and design costs incurred before the date of approval may still be reimbursed. These are the only reimbursable costs that can be incurred prior to grant approval.***

Timeframe

- **DO NOT BEGIN WORK PRIOR TO APPROVAL.** Work completed prior to the grant award is not eligible for reimbursement.
- Construction must be completed within 120 days of the award letter, unless otherwise approved in writing.

Extension Requests

BDC must receive all extension requests in writing (e-mail is acceptable). Approval of extension requests will be emailed.

Change in Project Proposal

- BDC must approve all changes to an approved scope of work PRIOR to those changes being undertaken.
- Changes that reduce the project scope and cost will reduce the grant amount.
- Changes that expand the scope of work may increase the grant amount, subject to BDC's review and approval of the expanded scope.
- If changes to the scope of work are performed without BDC approval, BDC reserves the right to terminate the grant in its entirety.

Maintenance of Improvements

As part of the grant acceptance process, the applicant agrees to maintain all improvements made in accordance with the approved plans in their finished state for a period of three (3) years.

Any plants that do not survive must be replaced by the applicant during the three-year maintenance period at the applicant's sole cost and expense.

Permitting & Code Requirements

- For businesses utilizing the public right of way, possession of a **valid Curbside Commercial Permit** and/or related **Minor Privilege Permits** is required.
- Contractors must secure required building permits and minor privilege permits (if necessary) and complete the project in accordance with all applicable codes, ordinances, and standard engineering practices.
- Contractors must be properly registered, licensed, insured, and pass a debarment check as required by law.

Private Property Installations

Installations on private property must be for the use of the general public and not limited to members, tenants, etc.

Memorandum of Understandings (MOU)

For community-led placemaking installations located in the public right-of-way or on private property, applicants must enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Department of Transportation (DOT) or the property owner, respectively.

The MOU establishes the roles and responsibilities of each party and ensures long-term maintenance of the improvement. It must outline:

- The entity(s) responsible for installation, upkeep, and repairs
- The length of the maintenance commitment (minimum of three years)
- A plan for routine cleaning and replacement of damaged or dead materials
- Contact information for the individual or organization responsible for ongoing maintenance

A signed copy of the MOU must be included with the grant application. Your BDC representative can assist you in preparing this document upon request or connect you with the appropriate point of contact at DOT.

Self-Performance of Work

Applicants who choose to self-perform any work under this grant are not eligible to count the cost/value of their time and labor as an eligible or reimbursable expense for the purposes of this grant.

Reimbursement

- To qualify for reimbursement, grantees must submit the following to their BDC Representative:
 - A completed Reimbursement Request Form, provided by the BDC Representative
 - Two (2) photos of the completed work that show the entire improvement,
 - Copies of ALL payments to contractors and vendors. These proofs of payment can include the following, and should include the names of the applicant and the vendor name, as well as the date of payment:
 - Cashed checks obtained from the applicant's bank. The payee should match the estimates included with the application, or be accompanied by associated invoices
 - Invoices marked paid. Invoices should indicate what work was completed.
 - Receipts that include the products purchased, itemized costs
- **NOTE:** If the final project cost is lower than the project costs provided to BDC at the time of application and approval, BDC will reduce the grant amount to maintain the required matching ratio (1:1).

Aesthetic Considerations

All BDC Façade Improvement Grants programs are discretionary in nature and awards are not guaranteed. Applications are reviewed by an internal review committee and may require significant revisions to gain approval.

If a building's surrounding area is pedestrian-friendly, proposed project designs should be in harmony with the area's character. If the surrounding district is not pedestrian-friendly, proposals should prioritize improvements designed to appeal to pedestrians, aiming to transform the area.

7. Application

To begin the process, request an application through the BDC's website and it will be email to you. The application request form can be found here:

<https://www.baltimoredevelopment.com/doing-business/facade-improvement-grant>.

Please note that you will have to meet with a BDC representative at the project site prior to submitting an application, and that work completed prior to an application's approval is NOT eligible for reimbursement.

Application Submission Checklist (For Applicant Use)

Use this checklist to confirm that your application package is complete before submitting:

- All Fields of Application Complete (including signature of applicant and, if applicable, landlord)
- W-9 of Applicant
- Two pictures of project location in its current state
- Conceptual drawings, renderings, or plans of proposed work
- Two (2) Contractor estimates for any/all work to be performed
- One (1) estimate per retail item (tables, chairs, planters, etc.), if applicable
- Signed lease, letter of intent, or other proof of commercial occupancy of the property (if applicable)
- Copy of signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) (if applicable)

8. Closeout

If your project is awarded an OSG, you will need to submit the following items during the closeout process. Keep these requirements in mind as you complete your project:

- At least 2 after photos that show the entire completed scope of work and the business signage
- Copies of ALL payments to Contractors for eligible work completed and all receipts/invoices for retail purchases (see the reimbursement section above)
 - Proof of contractor payments should add up to the “Final Total Project Cost” amount, above.
- A completed and signed Reimbursement Request Form. You can request this form from your BDC representative at any time.