

PREPPING FOR THE OREGON MAIN STREET REVITALIZATION GRANT

It's never too early to begin thinking about projects that are a good match for the grant!

Background

The ***Oregon Main Street Revitalization Grant (OMSRG)*** was created by the Oregon State Legislature in 2016 to support downtown revitalization efforts in communities participating in the Oregon Main Street Network. Funding is for building improvement projects that create opportunities to retain an existing business, help attract a new business, or create upper floor residential units. The next round of applications will open in January 2022 with funds available in the spring. There will be a second round opening in January 2023. Each round will have \$5 million in available funds and will fund up to \$200,000 in allowable project costs.

Your Oregon Main Street Network Member Organization is the applicant on behalf of the business or property owner who will be tackling the project. You have a critical role in identifying the best match for the grant, applying for the grant, and managing the grant.

Projects submitted for consideration for the OMRG must meet both the following purposes of the program:

- *Acquire, rehabilitate and construct* buildings on properties in designated downtown areas statewide.
- Facilitate community revitalization that will lead to *private investment, job creation* or retention, establishing or expanding viable businesses, and creating a *stronger tax base*.

Preparing to Apply for the Grant

- Make an intentional board decision to apply for the grant. Applying for and managing the grants takes a lot of organizational capacity. It includes financial tracking and reporting requirements (even when the project is complete). It is multi-year effort and may be in place through board and staff transitions. Review the guidelines and decide if you have the capacity to take on this grant as a part of your organization's work. This includes allocation of both staff and volunteer time. This should be a board decision and documented in your board minutes.
- Update or develop your downtown vision and plan or goals. Be sure to include the community in this work as the strongest applications include community engagement in establishing priorities for your main street effort.
- Select a committee to work on this project. It should include at least:
 - 1 board member
 - 1 Design committee member – This is all about the buildings!
 - 1 Outreach/Organization committee member – You need be able to manage the grant well.
 - 1 local partner
 - City staff – Especially if they have local funding available like urban renewal, but also for zoning and building permit work.
 - Local bank representative – So helpful to make sure the dollars pencil out!
 - 1 Economic Vitality committee member – If you have capacity, this would be good, since you'll want to think about the best benefit for businesses.
- Review and understand the purpose and goals of the grant. Not all projects that happen in your district will address both goals. The project you select to submit for consideration for the OMSRG must meet both goals.
- Review and understand the [Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation of Historic Properties](#). Projects must be consistent with these standards whether for existing properties or for new in-fill buildings in historic districts. For example, removing original materials and replacing with new materials like vinyl is not allowed under these standards.
- Set goals for the use of the grant toward your work. The grant committee should set these goals based on the overall main street plan/goals and the grant purpose. This is another opportunity to engage the public in the selection process. For example,

- Façade work – If you want a big visual impact you might aim for a façade project that includes several properties in one project.
- Sealing the building envelope from the weather – If you want to protect the downtown properties you might aim to combine roof work and window repair for several properties in one project.
- Save a critical anchor or significant building – You may have a building that is key in the downtown, so you focus all the work on that one building.
- Under-used upper floors – You might provide an elevator that serves two buildings, or one building that has multiple floors. Or you might fund adaptation of those floors for another use.
- Filling vacant buildings – you might focus on the ever-empty building and give that owner the boost that drives them to fill it.
- Supporting a targeted business demographic such as long-term, at risk, new, women-owned, or BIPOC-owned businesses. Again, the targeted sector(s) should be based on the overall main street plan/goals.
- Develop your project selection process. The most successful applications are ones with projects that address the goals. Here are some approaches we have seen.
 - The Main Street organization just picks a project based on the goals and owner interest. This works fine since it is based on the main street goals. And it is critical to have a committed owner.
 - The Main Street organizations has an application and selection process. This works well if you know you have property owner interest. Communities using this type of process publicize their criteria for selection based on the goals and the purpose of the grant.
 - Main Street organizations accept applications and submit all applications without any selection. This generally does not work well. These applications do not make the case well for meeting the local goals nor for meeting the economic impact purpose of the grant program.
- Establish your grant and project management processes.
 - Select lead staff or board member.
 - Decide who will write and submit the application and reports. These can be collaborative, but the final submission must be a representative of the Main Street organization and not the property owner.
 - Clarify the responsibilities of the Main Street organization and the property owner and have a written agreement in place before the grant agreement is signed. The agreement should include things like:
 - The grant requirements – that it is a reimbursement grant, reporting and reimbursement request requirements, following the [Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation of Historic Properties](#), etc.
 - The roles for the Main Street organization and the property owner – Who will manage the project, coordinate contractors, how reimbursement will be handled, what documentation is required for reporting and who will collect it, etc.
 - Reporting and check-in timelines to committees and board.
- Select the project.
 - Make sure the project falls with the approved boundary of the map on file with Oregon Main Street.
- Start preparing for the application.
 - Review the application questions in the guidelines.
 - Start thinking about building the case for the economic need of the community and downtown. Gather documentation.
 - Think carefully about supporting documents for the project. Look for the strong case building documents. Your main street plan/goals, documentation of community engagement, documentation of need, meaningful letters of support, other evidence of local support (surveys results, fundraising efforts, other organizations’ commitment, etc.)

OREGON MAIN STREET REVITALIZATION GRANT PROJECT SELECTION WORKSHEET

Your Oregon Main Street Network Member Organization is the applicant on behalf of the business or property owner who will be tackling the project. You have a critical role in identifying the best match for the grant, applying for the grant, and managing the grant. This worksheet is to help you start brainstorming projects that would be good candidates and help to narrow your selection.

List the top five buildings that need rehabilitation. What type of use would these buildings fit? For example: *second floor housing, retail, service, professional, or restaurant space?*

Building Name or Address	Types of Uses

What type of technical assistance would be required to help rehabilitate these buildings?

Which of the projects are “ready to go” (e.g., already have design or partial funding)? Is the property owner willing to adapt the project to meet the Secretary of Interior Standards?

What are your organization’s vision and goals for downtown? For example: *is your downtown a mecca of bustling historic arts, music and food?*

Which of the projects best meet this vision?

Identify potential funding partners to match the grant money: