

# Duke Energy Storefront Revitalization Grant

## FAQ

**Program Goal:** Helping businesses rebuild and pivot toward opportunities that will sustain operations through the coming months and years.

It is DRA's intention to be as inclusive as possible with this program. In addition to reading the following FAQs, we encourage you to re-read the program overview found [here](#).

### **How do I know if I am eligible to apply?**

This grant is meant to be open and accessible to as many businesses as possible, within the goal stated previously. As described [here](#), there are some specific qualifications; however, some qualifications are more flexible than others. Here are some notes to help you as you complete your application.

***Your business must be a storefront or consumer-facing business [with a physical location] in Downtown Raleigh.*** A business is eligible to apply if it is inside the downtown element boundary OR inside any of the district boundaries as depicted in this map. Retailers, restaurants, and personal services not located on the ground floor are still eligible to apply. If you are unsure if your business is within the eligible grant boundary, email us for determination.

***The business must have been open and operating as of December 31, 2020.***

The goal of this program is to revitalize and rebuild downtown. Businesses must be open and operating as of December 31, 2020 to qualify.

***What if my business is closed due to state and federal mandates?***

If your business is closed due to state and/or federal mandates, you are welcome to complete an application. In the content of your responses, make the case for how your proposed activity supports the goals above and, hence, should be excepted from these qualifications.

***The business must currently have 50 employees or fewer and businesses must be locally owned and independently operated.***

The intention of this requirement is to focus support on small, locally owned, and independent businesses.

### ***Franchises***

Franchises are eligible to apply if **all conditions are met**: the franchise is owned in majority by an area resident (an area resident is defined as living within a 50-mile radius of downtown Raleigh), the owner has full decision-making functions, and the franchise has no more than 10 outlets.

If you answer 'No' to any of the three conditions, the application is disqualified from proceeding.

## **How do I know if my application is competitive?**

Pivot proposals that indicate a clear pivot or change in normal operations as a result of COVID-19 and support the revitalization of downtown will have the greatest chance of being granted.

To submit a competitive pivot proposal, please (1) clearly define your pivot, (2) explain the why/the need to pivot as a result of COVID-19, and (3) list the associated costs to execute the pivot proposal.

## **What are examples of successful pivots?**

We welcome creative proposals! To offer some inspiration, pivot proposals that were granted funding in Round 1 include:

- Outdoor expansion
  - Expanding outdoor seating with furniture, décor, and heating
  - Installing take-out windows
  - Building parklets or pedlets
- Technology and/or online upgrades (only applies if these upgrades did not exist prior to COVID-19)
  - Building an online shopping portal for retailers or an online ordering portal for food and beverage service
  - Adding portable and touchless POS systems
  - Offering delivery services
- Safety and sanitation improvements
  - Installing sneeze guards and/or space dividers
  - Upgrading air filtration systems
  - Modifying space to accommodate and promote social distancing
- Visibility
  - Installing new signage

## **What does the grant deadline mean?**

The grant deadline is on Sunday, February 28, 2021. The deadline means that your pivot proposal must be completed, and all expenses related to your pivot proposal submitted for approval on or before February 28, 2021.

The likelihood of completing your pivot proposal by the February 28<sup>th</sup> deadline will be taken into consideration during the application review process.

## **What is the process for reviewing and scoring the applications?**

Efficiency, independence, and expedited fund dispersal to businesses are the top priorities of DRA with relation to this grant. DRA will conduct several rounds of

application review, with both DRA staff and an independent committee, to ensure grants are awarded to proposals that are within the spirit of the grant.

DRA also reserves the right to look at total funds requested vs. funds available and make determinations regarding awards amounts.

## **How is the total award calculated?**

The entire pool of funds set aside for this program is \$90,000. Maximum awarded grant amounts are \$5,000 for “pivot” requests per application.

Awards will be granted based on (1) the proposed budget submitted in the application, and (2) the availability of funds.

DRA reserves the right to make partial offers to some or all applicants in order to best achieve the goal of the program.

The total amount granted will be capped at \$5,000 per business Tax ID.

For owners who have multiple businesses, the total amount granted will be capped at \$10,000. This includes businesses that received the grant in the first round of funding. For owners with partial or full ownerships of several businesses in the downtown area, you are welcome to submit more applications but are required to fully disclose your ownership of other businesses on each application, along with your top priorities for funding because no more than two will be awarded.

Once businesses are notified of grant award amounts, it will be up to the individual awardees to accept or decline the offer of a grant. It will also be the awardees' responsibility to comply with the requirements for receiving reimbursement. Businesses may not spend awarded funds on things that were not part of your proposal OR on things that were deemed ineligible during the review process.

## **What if my pivot proposal costs more than \$5,000 to execute?**

Applying for a pivot proposal that exceeds the maximum award amount is acceptable and encouraged. If your pivot proposal costs more than \$5,000 to execute, please indicate the funding request to partially cover the cost of a project on your application.

## **When do I receive the grant money?**

This is a reimbursement grant. If your application is accepted, **you will be responsible for paying for all expenses up front**, documenting the expenses, and submitting receipts for approval prior to being reimbursed. Instructions to do so will be provided.

Funds will be disbursed based on original grant award amounts.

All receipts and expenses must be submitted simultaneously.

Once expenses are approved, grant funds will be distributed in the form of a reimbursement check within two weeks.

## What is considered an ineligible expense?

- Payment to the business owner(s) or employees (directly or indirectly) for services rendered
- Loss of revenue
- Building maintenance
- Payroll
- Rent
- Utilities
- Advertising
- Day-to-day operations
- Replacing damaged inventory
- Materials and labor to board up
- Personal property used in connection with the business
- Expenses unrelated to the pivot proposal

## Can I request support for....?

If a compelling case is made for how the funds requested will achieve the goal of this grant program, it will be considered. Creativity is encouraged and reviewers will be looking for a direct connection between the grant funding and your ability to increase commerce for your business while helping to revitalize downtown and a clear indication of vision and pivot strategy.

**General Guidelines:** We are open to considering any reasonable request that achieves the goals of this program. Reviewers will be judging applications based on potential impact, so please provide enough detail in your application to provide a clear picture of your pivot needs and vision.

**Personnel/Contractor Services:** While these expenses are not excluded, they must be well-justified and documented. General payroll expenses do not qualify, nor do any payments (directly or indirectly) to the business owner(s) or employees. For example, a business is allowed to request funding to pay a professional to install an online commerce module in your POS system, but a business is not allowed to pay their employees for their time learning the system. As with all requests, itemized receipts (with details of services delivered, dates delivered, etc.) and clear documentation will be required for reimbursement of such costs.

**Software and Hardware:** For many businesses, infrastructure upgrades may be a great pivot strategy. If you choose to request support for enhanced software (to allow online selling, for example), reviewers will be looking for a clear connection to the goals and a measurable impact. You may request coverage for monthly software upgrade

subscriptions for the period between September 1, 2020 and the closing date of February 28, 2020.

**Costs that exceed the grant:** Partial funding requests are encouraged. Reporting and receipts will be required, per the program guidelines.

**Repairs & support for non-retail businesses:** If you believe your organization or business can make a compelling and clear case for inclusion in this grant cycle, we encourage you to apply.

**Parklets & other items requiring permits:** We encourage you to review the DRA blog on outdoor dining options [here](#). DRA staff are available to help with permitting for PUPS (private use of public space) on sidewalks and in parking spaces. Inquiries may be directed as follows if you have specific questions prior to submitting your application.

- Will Gaskins is your resource for parklet and extended dining permitting questions.
- Email: [WillGaskins@downtownraleigh.org](mailto:WillGaskins@downtownraleigh.org)
- Phone: (919) 821-6988

## **How does other funding I've received impact my proposal?**

If you were partially awarded the Duke Energy Storefront Revitalization Grant during Round 1, you may apply for funding in Round 2, not to exceed a combined total of \$5,000 in funding between Round 1 and Round 2.

Assuming your business complies with the other guidelines above, your other sources of funding do not disqualify you from this program nor should discourage you from applying.

## **Still have questions?**

If you are still unsure after reading all of the FAQ and program details, we encourage you to reach out directly with questions. We are here to help you think through your proposal and application. We will take the entirety of your application into consideration during the grant review process.

Contact:

- Roxanne Lundy
- Email: [RoxanneLundy@downtownraleigh.org](mailto:RoxanneLundy@downtownraleigh.org)
- Phone: (919) 821-6977