



# Grants for Downtown Business Districts

Nebraska Tourism Conference | October 26 | South Sioux City, NE

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**MAIN STREET  
AMERICA®**

*2022 Coordinating Program*

- Started in 1980 by the National Trust for Historic Preservation
- Comprehensive approach to downtown revitalization within the context of historic preservation
- Became subsidiary of the NTHP in July 2013, moving HQ to Chicago from Washington, D.C.
- Nebraska Main Street established 1994
- Nebraska Main Street Network became a 501c3 in 2013

# We help communities use strategies to...

- Improve the economic health of the community
- Foster stronger partnerships between private and public sectors
- Build local pride and improve the quality of life for everyone
- Capitalize on community history and local assets by following sound design and historic preservation practices
- Cultivate economic opportunity by providing a key element in industrial, commercial & professional recruitment efforts

*“Downtown revitalization is more than just rehabbing an old building for a new business, undertaking a streetscape beautification project, or launching a new marketing campaign. The goal for every community should be to have a sustainable, vibrant business district that can weather the constantly changing trends and consumer behaviors. You can’t do that with these sorts of “surface treatments.”*



# We provide expertise and guide communities in revitalization & downtown business district management



## Capacity Building

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Specialized local training, educational webinars, Meetings on Main, curating and deploying information resources



## Organizational Support

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Visioning , market positioning & strategy development, work planning, downtown and organizational assessments, staff and board support



## Design

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Façade and other design assistance



## Communication & Celebration

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Social media promotion and information sharing, connecting local stories and people to print and television media



## Connecting

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Networking and sharing of best practices, connecting with nationwide network of experts in the field, collaborating with partners

# A Sampling of Funding Sources for Main Street & Downtown Revitalization



# Types of Grants Typically Used for Downtown Revitalization

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- Historic preservation grants & tax incentives
- Small projects
- Small businesses
- Public improvements and infrastructure

# Historic Preservation Projects

## National Trust Community Investment Corporation

- Historic Tax Credit investor and syndicator, assisting individuals seeking tax credit financing for historic rehabilitation by providing ready access to capital for qualified projects.

## Federal Historic Tax Credit Program

- 20% tax credit on certified income producing historic buildings

## Nebraska Valuation Incentive Program (VIP)

- Property tax abatement program

## Rural Nebraska Historic Preservation (RNHP) grant

## Hart Family Fund for Small Towns

- Seed money for preservation projects in small towns (activities that stimulate public discussion, encourage financial participation by the private sector, access TA, and public education) Must be a Forum or Main Street America member.

## Certified Local Government (CLG) Program Grants

- Must be a CLG in order to have access to this grant program.

## Brownfields Grants

- Nebraska Department of Environment & Energy & U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

# Small Projects

## **Main Street America & T-Mobile Hometown Grant**

- Grants of up to \$50,000 for communities under 50,000 population; funding to build, rebuild, or refresh community spaces that help foster local connections in the community.

## **AARP Livable Communities Grants**

- Grants fund quick-action projects that help increase livability for all ages, especially those 50+. Open to 501(c)(3), 501(c)(4) and 501(c)(6) nonprofits and government entities. Grants can range from several hundred dollars for small, short-term activities to tens of thousands for larger projects.

## **Kubota Hometown Proud Grant Program**

- Five communities selected to receive a \$100,000 grant each.



# Small Business Programs

## Entrepreneur Resource Guide From USDA

- *Resources for Rural Entrepreneurs: A Guide to Planning, Adapting and Growing Your Small Business* 40+ USDA rural loan, grant, and technical assistance programs.

## Rural Energy for America Program (REAP)

- Grants and guaranteed loans for renewable energy systems and energy efficiency improvements; ag producers and rural small businesses.

## Main Street America & American Express Inclusive Backing Grant

## Community Development Resources Scholarships

- \$175 scholarships for small business-related workshops and classes at SCC; funds can also be used to pay for the small business coaching services offered by the SCC Focus Suites.

## Small Business Administration Programs

- Grants, loans, business counseling, etc.

## Venturize grant programs

- Many of these programs are for small businesses for minority and underserved populations

# Public Improvement/Infrastructure Programs

## Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)

- Streetscapes and downtown infrastructure, ADA and fire suppression, building redevelopment, public amenities, façade enhancements, etc.

## Game and Parks Grants

- Recreational Trails Program (RTP) and the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) program

## RAISE Grants

- Department of Transportation's RAISE (Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity) The RAISE program – previously known as BUILD, previously known as TIGER – has increased utility for downtown / Complete Streets projects and a minimum project size of \$1 million in rural areas.

# Tips for Making a Strong Grant Application

## 1. Identify the desired project

- What is the project? Why is it needed? Are you doing it to just do it, or will it solve a problem?
- What is your vision for the project? Your goals and objectives? What is the concept and approximate budget? Timeline?

## 2. Review possible grant sources

- How can the funds be used? Is there a timeframe for using the funds?
- Match the project to the grant, not the grant to the project.

## 3. Read and understand the grant criteria; ask questions early

- Read everything thoroughly and ask questions about the things you don't understand. The funder may be able to give honest, open feedback about your potential application, and tips for strengthening it.

## 4. Identify the project's benefits

- Do you have a clear idea of the outcomes/impact that will be produced? Don't just focus on the output.
- Physical (health and recreation, infrastructure, safety)
- Social (community identity, education, multi-generational impact, benefits to underserved groups/minorities)
- Economic (spur additional investment, tourism, support future growth, job creation)
- Environmental (preserving or enhancing natural and cultural resources)

## **5. Find support for the project**

- Is it identified in a community plan, such as a recent Comprehensive Plan?
- Do you have the capacity to administer the funding, or support from another group or agency?
- Gather letters of support – consider local business leaders and politicians, as well as residents.

## **6. Leverage your assets**

- Volunteer groups, in-kind services, donations, other ongoing projects that will benefit or connect to this project – is this the missing link for a larger idea?

## **7. Engage the community**

- Show public feedback and support – open houses, focus groups, an online or offline survey

## **8. Develop a concept**

- Use visuals to represent your project and “show” funders your ideas (photos, plans, illustrations, maps)
- Images are useful to help generate funds from local donors

## **9. Develop cost estimates and/or a project budget**

- Make sure to account for administrative cost, design fees, and construction funds

# Additional Tips

Beware of the “band-aid” fixes; true revitalization of a downtown or a community runs much deeper than what you see at the surface.

It goes without saying....spelling, grammar; especially competitive grant programs. Applications often dismissed or ranked lower

Solid vision and plan for execution of the project or program; outcomes not outputs, and completeness of the application.

Some funding programs require special plans and documentation (especially for historic preservation projects); hire professionals when needed and get good bids or estimates from contractors

# Questions?

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