

2025 Catalyst Grant Application Text

The Catalyst Grant: Fueling What's Next.

Would \$100,000 catalyze your business' trajectory?

Through the Catalyst Grant, as many as 88 established and growing businesses in select industries will have the opportunity to advance to their next stage of development. Whether it's addressing workforce needs, improving operations or upgrading facilities, this \$100,000 grant empowers businesses to scale up and move forward with confidence.

Application Deadline: Friday, November 14, 2025 at 5:00 pm CST

The Catalyst Grant is funded by Cook County and administered by the Women's Business Development Center and Allies for Community Business.

Please read before beginning the application:

Grant Eligibility

Businesses MUST meet all of the following criteria to be eligible:

1. Business type and location

- For-profit business
- Located in Cook County

2. Business size (in both 2023 and 2024)

- Annual revenue between \$500K and \$10M
- At least 1 full-time employee in addition to the owner

3. Industry

- Operate in one of the following industries: construction, finance and insurance, IT/Tech, manufacturing, professional services, or real estate (see FAQs for list of eligible business activity/NAICS codes)

4. Evidence of business growth

- Increase in net income (profit) from 2023 to 2024;
- Increase in full-time employee count between 2023 and 2024

5. Intended use of funds: investments in equipment, people and/or facilities

Required Documents

Please gather the following documents before starting your application. You cannot save progress or make edits after submitting. Incomplete applications will not be reviewed.

- A valid form of photo identification (must be current and government-issued):
- Examples include a driver's license, REAL ID, State ID, Chicago CityKey, U.S. or non-U.S. passport, permanent resident card (green card), consular ID, military ID, or Native American tribal photo ID
- Filed 2023 and 2024 Federal Tax Return for your business, including required schedules, forms and attachments
- Form 941 for Q4 2023 and Q4 2024
- Illinois Secretary of State Certificate of Good Standing

Application Tips

- Before starting, review the Attestations at the end of the application to confirm your eligibility
- Visit the website (insert link) for FAQs, timeline and other grant-related information, including the "Getting Started Guide."
- Need help applying? Schedule a one-on-one help session with a trusted advisor from the Source. Sessions will be offered throughout Cook County in partnership with our network of Business Support Organizations. [Click here to schedule a help session.](#)

Questions?

Email: granthelp@a4cb.org

Phone: (312) 275-3000

Our Commitment to Protecting Your Information

The Cook County Small Business Source and its grant administrators hold individual data security in the highest regard, as we understand the profound importance of safeguarding the personal and sensitive information provided by applicants. We prioritize security to ensure that each applicant's data remains confidential and protected from unauthorized access, ensuring their trust in our process. By upholding strict data security measures, we aim to not only comply with regulatory requirements but also to demonstrate our commitment to maintaining the privacy and integrity of all applicant information, fostering a secure and trustworthy environment for all involved.

The platform used for this grant program, Smartsheet, is secured via a series of best-in-class protocols including NIST-approved ciphers, proven transport layer security (TLS 1.2), AES 256 at-rest encryption, and Amazon's S3 service to store and serve uploaded files.

Learn more here: <https://www.smartsheet.com/trust/security>

Business and Applicant Information

1. Business Legal Name *

Doing Business As (DBA): *Optional*

2. Business Start Date * *mm/dd/yyyy*

3. Employer Identification Number (EIN). *If you do not have an EIN, select one of the alternative options; Social Security Number (SSN) or Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) **

4. Please re-enter the ID Number to confirm: *

5. North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) 6-digit code from your tax return *

- **For corporations:** You can locate your six-digit NAICS code on your federal tax return Form 1120, Page 4, Schedule K, Line 2a - Business activity code no.
- **For partnerships:** You can locate your six-digit NAICS code on your federal tax return Form 1065, Page 1, Section C - Business Code Number

- **For sole proprietors/single member limited liability companies:** You can locate your six-digit NAICS code on your federal tax return Form 1040, Schedule C, Section B - Enter code from instruction

6. Tax Classification *

7. Business Owner First Name *

8. Business Owner Last Name *

9. Is the person filling out this application the majority owner of the business? *

10. Email Address * *Please provide the best email for application updates.*

11. Confirm Email *

12. Primary Phone Number * *Please provide the best number for application follow up.*

13. Current Business Address * *Street Number, Direction, Street Name, Unit (No P.O. Boxes)*

14. City *

15. State *

16. Zip Code *

17. Business Website *If applicable*

18. Social Media Handle(s) *If applicable*

Please include the platform(s) e.g., Instagram: @cookcountygov

Business Revenue and Employment Growth

2023 Data

19. 2023 Business Gross Revenue *

20. 2023 Net Income (Profit) *

21. Number of Employees who received wages, tips or other compensation between October 1, 2023 and December 31, 2023: Include the business owner in this count *

You can reference Line 1 of your IRS Form 941 for Q4 2023 (Employer's Quarterly Federal Tax Return) to help answer this question

2024 Data

22. 2024 Business Gross Revenue *

23. 2024 Net Income (Profit) *

24. Number of Employees who received wages, tips or other compensation between October 1, 2024 and December 31, 2024: Include the business owner in this count *

You can reference Line 1 of your IRS Form 941 for Q4 2024 (Employer's Quarterly Federal Tax Return) to help answer this question

25. My business had at least 1 full-time employee in 2024, in addition to the owner. *

2026 Projections

26. 2026 Projected Net Income (Profit): * Please estimate

27. Projected Full Time Employee Count as of December 31st, 2026: * Please estimate

Use of Grant Funds

28. Select up to three proposed uses: * Select up to three from the list

- Equipment: Office & Administrative Equipment
- Equipment: Production and Construction Equipment
- Equipment: IT & Technology Infrastructure
- Equipment: Customer Service Equipment
- Facilities: Building Acquisition & Leasehold Improvements
- Facilities: Renovation & Expansion
- Facilities: Energy Efficiency & Sustainability Improvements
- Facilities: Renewable Energy Investments
- Facilities: Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure
- Facilities: Water Use Improvements
- Facilities: Resiliency Improvements
- People: Hiring & Recruitment

29. Brief description (100 words max): Describe how you plan to use the funds and the expected financial or operational benefits *

(e.g., increased revenue, improved cash flow, greater efficiency, customer growth, or expansion).

Attestations

Instructions: Check each box to confirm the statement is true. You must confirm all applicable statements to be eligible.

Applicant Information

- 1. I am the business owner or am completing and submitting this application as an authorized employee of the business referenced above. ***
- 2. I understand that, if selected, the business owner will be required to enter into a grant agreement with Cook County to receive grant funds. ***
- 3. I understand that, if my business is awarded a grant, I will be required to participate in impact evaluation surveys as well as submit documentation to substantiate the use of the grant funds, including certain future years' tax returns. ***
- 4. Neither I nor the business owner (if different) is an employee of Cook County, Illinois, nor is any member of my or the business owner's immediate family or household an employee of Cook County, Illinois. I acknowledge that Cook County, Illinois government employees and members of their immediate family or household are not eligible for this program. "Immediate family or household member" means the spouse, child, parent, brother, sister, grandparent, or grandchild, whether of the whole blood or half blood or by adoption, or a person who shares a common dwelling. ***
- 5. I acknowledge that Catalyst Grants are governed under Illinois law and that if I am awarded a grant, I or the business for which I am applying for a grant, will comply with all applicable state and local orders, laws and regulations governing any activities undertaken using grant funds received through a Catalyst Grant, including but not limited to any compliance with prevailing wage laws, if applicable. ***

Business Eligibility

- 6. The business for which I am applying for a grant remains open and in operation in Cook County as of the date of this application. ***
- 7. The business for which I am applying for a grant has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and/or the ensuing and related economic uncertainties and challenges. ***

8. The business for which I am applying for a grant does not have an IRS tax lien or other liens or judgment(s) against it, and neither the business nor its owners or partners are currently undergoing bankruptcy proceedings. *

Good Job Standards

9. In alignment with the Cook County Bureau of Economic Development (BED), commitment to Good Jobs Standards, the business for which I am applying for a grant will, to the extent possible, hire labor and purchase materials, equipment, and related products from within Cook County. *

10. In alignment with Cook County Bureau of Economic Development (BED)'s commitment to Good Jobs Standards, if the business for which I am applying for a grant uses grant funds to purchase new equipment, the business will provide the training employees need to successfully operate the new equipment. *

11. In alignment with Cook County Bureau of Economic Development (BED)'s commitment to Good Jobs Standards, if the business for which I am applying for a grant uses grant funds to modify existing equipment, the business will ensure employees receive the training necessary to operate the modified equipment or any new equipment introduced. *

Permission for Use of Data

12. I understand that application data may be used in the aggregate for research and program evaluation. No personally identifiable information will be shared publicly without my consent. *

Certification of Accuracy

To the best of my knowledge, all information provided in this application is true and accurate. I understand that any materially false or fraudulent statement made in connection with this application may render the applicant business ineligible for the program, may require the return of any and all grant funds received, and may subject the individual making the false statement to criminal charges. *

Signature (typed): *

Business Owner Demographics (Optional)

This section is optional.

Your responses will be used for research and evaluation purposes only and will not affect your eligibility for a grant or the outcome of your 2025 Catalyst Grant application.

1. Business Owner Race *Select all that apply*

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- White
- Other Race
- Unknown / Prefer not to answer

2. Business Owner Ethnicity

3. Is this business at least 51% minority-owned, operated and controlled?

4. Is this business majority-owned (51% or greater) by a person who identifies as a woman or persons who identify as women?

5. Is this business majority-owned (51% or greater) by a veteran?

6. Is this business majority-owned (51% or greater) by a person with a disability?

7. Is this business majority-owned (51% or greater) by a member of the LGBTQ+ community?

Document Upload

File Upload *

All documents listed below are required. Please ensure that uploads are clear, complete and legible, including visible EIN, SSN, or ITIN numbers where applicable.

If the full number is not legible, please upload a supporting document (e.g., IRS EIN Confirmation Letter) to validate the information.

Upload Guidelines

- Upload only the documents described below - no more than 10 total
- All files must be in PDF format
- Do not submit ZIP files, images or alternate file types

File Naming Conventions

Use the following naming convention for each upload:

[BusinessName]_[DocumentType]_[Year].pdf

(Use underscores instead of spaces in the business name. If not applicable, omit the year.)

Required Documents & Examples

- **Owner Photo Identification**
 - Accepted forms: Driver's license, State ID, Chicago CityKey, passport, permanent resident card or consular ID with expiration date after October 1, 2025
 - Example: SunriseBakery_OwnerID.pdf
- **2023 Federal Tax Return**
 - Accepted forms: IRS form 1040, 1120, 1120S or 1065 with all required schedules and attachments.
 - Example: SunriseBakery_TaxReturn_2023.pdf
- **2024 Federal Tax Return**
 - Accepted forms: IRS form 1040, 1120, 1120S, or 1065 with all required schedules and attachments.
 - Example: SunriseBakery_TaxReturn_2024.pdf
- **IRS form 941 for Q4 2023**
 - Example: SunriseBakery_Form941_Q4_2023.pdf
- **IRS form 941 for Q4 2024**

- Example: SunriseBakery_Form941_Q4_2024.pdf
 - **Illinois Certificate of Good Standing**
 - Accepted proof: official certificate or screenshot from the IL Secretary of State website
 - Example Naming Format: SunriseBakery_IllinoisGoodStanding.pdf
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Applicant Experience

Applicant Experience

*Your responses to these questions are **optional** and will not affect your eligibility or the outcome of your 2025 Catalyst Grant application.*

1. How did you hear about this opportunity?

2. How would you rate your experience in applying for this grant?

Answer 1 if you found it very difficult and answer 5 if you found it very easy

3. How can we improve our grant application process? Optional. 50 words maximum

Submission Confirmation

Once you've successfully submitted your application, you will be redirected to a confirmation page with a blue background and a white box that says "Success! We've received your submission!"

If you are not taken to the confirmation page, your application was not submitted. This may be due to a missing required field or an error in one of your responses. Please review your application carefully and correct any issues before attempting to submit again.

Thank you for submitting your Catalyst Grant application. We appreciate your time and interest in growing your business in Cook County.

 Please check the box below to have a copy of your responses emailed to you.

- Send me a copy of my responses