



"Clayton is open for business."

Development Authority of Clayton County
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InvestClayton.com

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

Clayton County Small Business Growth & Sustainability Grant
Issued by the **Development Authority of Clayton County (DACC)**

I. Purpose

The Development Authority of Clayton County ("DACC") invites proposals from qualified small businesses located in Clayton County, Georgia to apply for **grant funding of up to \$20,000 per business**. This initiative is part of a **\$500,000** capital investment designed to support the **growth, innovation, and sustainability** of local businesses that serve as the backbone of the County's economy. Grants are intended to catalyze near-term business expansion, strengthen operations, and create or retain quality jobs for Clayton County residents.

Program Objectives - Accelerate revenue growth and competitiveness of Clayton County small businesses.

- Spur capital investment in equipment, technology, and facilities.
- Support workforce development, job creation/retention, and upskilling.
- Promote equitable access to resources for historically under-served entrepreneurs.
- Increase the resiliency and sustainability of local businesses.

II. Funding Availability

- **Total funds available:** \$325,000 (current round)
- **Number of anticipated awards:** up to 20
- **Maximum award per recipient:** up to \$20,000
- **Instrument:** Direct capital grant; **non-repayable**
- **Grant Period of Performance:** Up to **12 months** from the date of award agreement execution

Disbursement Model

Funds may be disbursed either (a) **lump-sum** at award execution or (b) **milestone-based** (e.g., 60% at execution; 40% upon proof of purchase/installation or hiring). DACC will determine the model based on proposed use of funds and risk.

III. Eligibility Requirements

Applicants must meet **all** of the following at time of application:

1. Be a **legally registered** business **operating in Clayton County, Georgia** with a physical address and active operations.
2. Be in **good standing** with state and federal licensing, permitting, and tax obligations.
3. Demonstrate **at least 12 months** of operations **OR** provide clear evidence of established operations and revenue activity (e.g., Point of Sale (POS) records, invoices, executed contracts).
4. Employ **no more than 50 full-time employees (FTE)** at the time of application.
5. Show **capacity to utilize funds** for growth, sustainability, or innovation **within 12 months** of award.
6. Not be debarred, suspended, or otherwise ineligible to receive public funds.

Ineligible Applicants

- Hobby businesses without revenue activity
- Real estate investment entities primarily engaged in passive rental income
- Adult entertainment, gambling, firearms/ammunition sales, or businesses engaged in illegal activities

IV. Eligible & Ineligible Uses of Funds

Eligible Uses (including but not limited to): - Expansion of operations or facilities (e.g., leasehold improvements compliant with code)

- **Equipment or technology acquisition** (machinery, POS, cybersecurity, e-commerce)
- **Workforce development and job creation** (recruitment, training, apprenticeships)
- **Marketing & business development** (branding, CRM, market research, export readiness)
- **Working capital** tied to growth/sustainability (inventory for expansion, supplier deposits)

Ineligible Uses

- Personal expenses or owner draws unrelated to business operations
- Repayment of existing debt, penalties, or late fees
- Taxes due, fines, or legal settlements
- Political or lobbying activities

- Expenses incurred **prior** to the award date (unless expressly authorized by DACC)

Environmental & Code Compliance

All funded activities must comply with applicable building codes, zoning, health/safety, and environmental regulations.

V. Application Requirements

Upload the document containing the items below. Incomplete applications may be deemed non-responsive and will not be considered.

1. **Application:** Business name, EIN, NAICS, primary contact, email/phone, physical address in Clayton County, and year established.
2. **Business Narrative** (max **3 pages**): history, ownership/management, products/services, target market, competitive positioning, key challenges, and opportunities.
3. **Use of Funds Plan & Budget** (Template – Appendix A): itemized line-item budget, vendor/quote references where applicable, and **implementation timeline** with milestones (Gantt or table preferred).
4. **Impact Statement** (max **2 pages**): expected outcomes such as **jobs created/retained**, revenue growth, productivity gains, cost savings, entry into new markets, and community benefits (e.g., local procurement, youth employment, apprenticeships). Include your **metrics plan** (see Appendix B).
5. **Financial & Compliance Documents:**
 - Current **business license** (Clayton County or City within Clayton)
 - **Articles of Incorporation/Organization** (or sole proprietorship documentation)
 - **Most recent business tax return** (or **YTD Profit & Loss** + Balance Sheet if return unavailable)
 - **Good standing** verification (state registration)
 - **W-9** (signed)
6. **Optional:** Letters of commitment from training providers, buyers, or lenders; supplier quotes; brief capability statement (1 page).

VI. Evaluation & Scoring

Applications will be evaluated by a review committee using the rubric below. DACC may request clarifications or conduct site visits.

Scoring Rubric (100 points) –

- **Strength of Business Plan & Demonstrated Need (30 pts)** – market clarity, feasibility, readiness, and documentation of need/barriers addressed by grant.
- **Capacity to Execute & Use Funds Effectively (25 pts)** – realistic timeline, quotes/partners in place, management team capability, risk mitigation.
- **Job Creation/Measurable Growth Potential (25 pts)** – specificity of job outcomes, wage quality, upskilling, revenue, and productivity projections.
- **Community & Economic Impact (20 pts)** – local supply chain, neighborhood revitalization, equity/inclusion, environmental sustainability.

VII. Anticipated Timeline

- **RFP Release:** November 17th, 2025
- **Applicant Information Session (virtual):** November 20th, 2025 @ 10:00 AM
registration link to be posted on DACC website
- **Question Period:** From release through November 24th, 2025, at 5:00 PM ET
- **Responses to Questions Posted:** November 26th, 2025
- **Application Deadline:** November 21, 2025, at 5:00 PM ET (electronic submission only)
- **Review & Selection Window:** December 15 – December 19th, 2025
- **Award Notifications:** December 22nd, 2025
- **Grant Agreement Execution & Disbursement:** Within 30 days from the first training session.
- **Period of Performance:** 12 months from agreement execution

DACC reserves the right to modify dates and will publish changes on the DACC website.

VIII. Submission Instructions

Submission & Application

To apply for this RFP, please visit www.investclayton.com. Click the banner link “Apply here for the Clayton County Small Business Growth & Sustainability Grant.” This is the link to complete your application and upload all required supporting documents.

Questions

Submit questions via email to **Economic.Development@claytoncountyga.gov** with the subject line: Question – Clayton County Small Business Grant. Questions received by the Q&A close date will be answered in a compiled FAQ posted on the DACC website by the Response Posting Date.

IX. Award Administration & Compliance

Grant Agreement

Selected applicants must execute a **Grant Agreement** with DACC specifying approved uses, reporting obligations, disbursement schedule, branding/acknowledgment, and audit rights.

Reporting

Awardees will submit **quarterly progress reports** for one (1) year after receipt of funds using the template in **Appendix C**, including:

- Expenditure report vs. approved budget
- Progress toward milestones
- Jobs created/retained (FTE/part-time), wage levels, and training completed
- Narrative on outcomes, challenges, and next steps
- Supporting documentation (invoices, receipts, payroll summaries)

Monitoring & Records

DACC may conduct site visits and review records to verify expenditures and outcomes. Awardees must maintain records for **three (3) years** and make them available upon request.

Amendments & Reallocations

Any material change to budget or scope requires prior **written approval** from DACC.

Non-Compliance & Remedies

Failure to comply with the Grant Agreement (e.g., misuse of funds, non-reporting) may result in remedies up to and including **suspension, termination, and repayment (claw-back)** of funds.

Publicity

Awardees agree to participate in reasonable publicity (press releases, case studies) and to acknowledge DACC support in marketing materials produced with grant funds.

Certification Track: Small Business Growth & Sustainability Program

To enhance the long-term success of participating businesses, awardees and applicants will be required to complete the **Clayton County Small Business Certification Track** — a professional development pathway designed to strengthen business capacity, financial acumen, and strategic growth.

This track ensures that businesses not only receive capital support but also build the knowledge and systems necessary for sustainable operations.

Track Overview

The Certification Track consists of six structured learning modules, delivered in partnership with business development experts, local colleges, and workforce development partners. Upon successful completion of all modules, participants will earn a **Clayton County Small Business Certification** recognized by the Development Authority of Clayton County (DACC) and Clayton State University (CSU).

1. Business Plan Development

- Learn to craft a comprehensive business plan that articulates your mission, market position, operational strategy, and growth trajectory.
- Topics include market research, SWOT analysis, competitive advantage, and implementation milestones.
- Deliverable: A finalized, funder-ready business plan.

2. Marketing & Branding Essentials

- Explore effective marketing strategies to increase visibility and customer engagement.
- Topics include brand identity, digital marketing, social media management, and customer relationship building.
- Deliverable: A 12-month marketing action plan and brand toolkit.

3. Website Development & Digital Presence

- Hands-on guidance for establishing or improving a professional website.
- Topics include web design best practices, SEO, e-commerce integration, and analytics.
- Deliverable: A live, functional website or upgraded digital platform aligned with your brand.

4. Business Foundations

- Reinforce the operational fundamentals every business owner must master.
- Topics include legal structures, business licensing, insurance, HR basics, and compliance with state/local regulations.
- Deliverable: Updated compliance checklist and operational improvement plan.

5. Growing Your Business

- Strategies to scale operations, attract talent, and expand into new markets.
- Topics include business expansion planning, workforce development, procurement readiness, and partnership building.
- Deliverable: Growth plan with short- and long-term expansion goals.

6. Financial Management & Sustainability

- Strengthen your financial literacy and planning capabilities.
- Topics include budgeting, financial analysis, cash flow management, and understanding key performance indicators (KPIs).
- Deliverable: A customized 12-month financial plan and cash flow projection model.

Certification Completion

Participants who successfully complete all six modules and submit their final capstone (an integrated business growth portfolio) will receive a **Certificate of Completion** from DACC and CSU, acknowledging their achievement and readiness for continued business expansion opportunities.

X. Legal & Policy Requirements

- **Nondiscrimination:** Recipients shall not discriminate based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, or any other protected status in any program or activity.
- **Georgia Open Records Act:** Submitted materials may be subject to disclosure under **O.C.G.A. § 50-18-70 et seq.** Proprietary information should be clearly labeled

as **CONFIDENTIAL/TRADE SECRET** with a justification; DACC will evaluate such designations consistent with law.

- **Business Compliance:** Applicants must comply with all applicable local, state, and federal laws and regulations, including occupational licensing, tax, and employment requirements.
- **Debarment:** Applicants must certify they are not presently debarred, suspended, or declared ineligible to receive public funds.
- **Immigration & Employment Compliance:** Recipients must comply with applicable employment eligibility verification laws.
- **Insurance:** For projects involving construction or public-facing installations, DACC may require proof of general liability and worker's compensation insurance.

XI. Review Committee & Conflicts of Interest

Applications will be reviewed by a committee appointed by DACC leadership. Reviewers will certify absence of conflicts of interest. Any reviewer with a conflict will recuse from deliberations for that applicant.

XII. Post-Award Technical Assistance (Optional)

DACC may offer advisory support to awardees, including connections to workforce partners, SBDC counseling, procurement readiness, and lender introductions. Participation is encouraged and may be reflected in reporting.

XIII. Checklist

- ☐ Application
- ☐ Business Narrative (≤ 3 pages)
- ☐ Use of Funds Plan & Budget (Appendix A) with timeline
- ☐ Impact Statement (≤ 2 pages) with metrics plan (Appendix B)
- ☐ Business license & formation documents

- ☐ Most recent tax return or financial statements
- ☐ W-9 and good-standing evidence
- ☐ Optional letters/quotes/capability statement

XIV. Appendices

Appendix A – Use of Funds Plan & Budget (Template)

Project Summary (1 paragraph):

Objectives:

- Objective 1:
- Objective 2:

Implementation Timeline (milestones):

Milestone Description Start Finish Responsible

M1

M2

Itemized Budget

Line Item Vendor/Quote Ref Qty Unit Cost Total Funding Source (Grant/Match)

TOTAL \$

Procurement Notes (if any):

Risk Mitigation Plan: key risks and contingency steps.

Appendix B – Impact Metrics & Definitions

- **Jobs Created/Retained (FTE):** 40 hours/week equivalent; provide start date and wage range.
- **Wage Quality:** median wage for new hires vs. industry benchmark.
- **Revenue Growth:** baseline prior 12 months vs. projected 12 months post-award.

- **Productivity/Capacity Gains:** units/hour, turnaround times, defect rates.
- **Market Expansion:** new products, geographies, contracts signed.
- **Community Impact:** local vendor spend %, youth/apprentice opportunities, environmental benefits.

Appendix C – Quarterly Report (Template)

Reporting Period: Q1/Q2/Q3/Q4 (Dates)

Expenditures vs. Budget: (attach ledger/receipts)

Milestone Progress: achievements, delays, adjustments

Jobs: created/retained (FTE/PT), wages, training completed

Outcomes: revenue growth, contracts, customers served

Challenges & Technical Assistance Needs:

Certification: I certify the information is true and accurate.

Signature / Date / Title

Certifications & Assurances

By signing and submitting via website, the applicant certifies that:

1. All information provided is true and complete;
2. Funds will be used solely for approved purposes and documented accordingly;
3. The business complies with all applicable laws and is not debarred or suspended;
4. Records will be retained for three years and made available upon request;
5. DACC may publicize award and non-proprietary outcomes;
6. Applicant understands open records laws may apply and has marked trade secrets accordingly.

XV. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Q1: Can I apply if I opened less than a year ago?

A: Yes, if you provide **clear evidence of established operations and revenue activity** (e.g., sales records, executed contracts).

Q2: Are home-based businesses eligible?

A: Yes, if properly licensed and compliant with zoning and HOA rules.

Q3: What documentation demonstrates “good standing”?

A: Active state registration and current business license; no outstanding tax liens; current on payroll taxes.

Q4: How quickly must funds be spent?

A: Within **12 months** of agreement execution unless DACC approves an extension.

Q5: Are franchisees eligible?

A: Yes, provided the location is in Clayton County and the applicant controls local operations and hiring.

Q6: What makes a proposal competitive?

A: Clear growth logic, quotes in hand, realistic timeline, measurable jobs/outcomes, and strong management readiness.

Contact:

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