



NOTICE OF FUNDING AVAILABILITY (NOFA) WHITE BOX GRANT PROGRAM

Issue Date: April 3, 2023

Due Date: May 3, 2023

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Applications should be submitted online at:

<https://www.zoomgrants.com/zgf/whitebox>

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A. GENERAL OVERVIEW

The City of Toledo, Department of Economic Development (DED) hereby announces the availability of \$300,000 (Three Hundred Thousand Dollars) in funding for the White Box Grant Program. The program is designed to incentivize property owners to bring vacant commercial first-floor spaces up to current codes to create a functional "white box" space ready for customization and occupancy by a business.

The White Box Grant Program is part of the City's Vibrancy Initiative, which is designed to enhance the city's vitality by supporting revitalization efforts that will create jobs, reduce blight, and preserve and improve structures in our community. The Vibrancy Initiative also includes the Facade Improvement Grant Program. A Notice of Funding Availability for the Facade Improvement Grant can be found [here](#). Eligible applicants may apply for both programs.

The White Box Grant reimburses 70% of the eligible interior renovation expenses required to meet current state and local building code, fire safety code, and accessibility requirements, as demonstrated by stamped architectural or engineering drawings. The minimum reimbursement is \$25,000 and the maximum is \$75,000.

Eligible projects comprehensively address code deficiencies and result in a certificate of occupancy. Projects must be complete, with final invoices submitted and certificate of occupancy received, by December 1, 2023. Building owners are required to occupy the space as a business owner or actively market the space for lease.

The program is subject to a two-year period of compliance and reporting. The grant is collateralized by a restrictive covenant that prevents the sale of the property without approval from the City of Toledo prior to December 31, 2025.

The White Box Grant Program application is open from April 3, 2023, to May 3, 2023. Applications will be reviewed and scored by the City's Incentive Advisory Committee (IAC), using the Evaluation Criteria contained in this notice. The IAC consists of eight independent citizens that provide oversight of the City's incentive programs. Upon completion of review, the IAC will recommend the top-scoring applications to the Mayor for funding until all funds have been awarded. The Mayor shall have the sole and absolute discretion to award funds.

B. SCHEDULE

Milestone	Date
Public Notice Notice of Funding Availability issued through a City media advisory and published in The Blade, The Sojourner’s Truth, and La Prensa.	Monday, April 3, 2023
Webinar A Zoom webinar will be held to educate potential applicants about the guidelines and application process. The webinar will be recorded and posted to the City of Toledo website. https://toledo-oh-gov.zoom.us/j/87570487319	Thursday, April 6, 2023 at 4:00 PM EST
Application Submission Deadline Completed applications are due in ZoomGrants .	Wednesday, May 3, 2023 at 11:59 PM EST
Awarded Projects Announced Applicants will be informed of the decision on their application.	Wednesday, May 31, 2023
Predevelopment Meeting Awarded applicants are required to meet with City officials at the project site to review proposed work.	Monday, June 5, 2023 to Friday, June 9, 2023
Grant Agreement Deadline Grant agreements must be signed, or the award will be forfeited and the next highest scoring application will be awarded funding.	Friday, June 16, 2023
Project Construction Phase Construction commencement occurs once the grant agreement is executed and proper permits have been received.	Monday, June 17, 2023 to Thursday, November 30, 2023
Project Completion Deadline Projects must be complete, with final paid invoices and a copy of the certificate of occupancy submitted to DED.	Friday, December 1, 2023

C. ELIGIBILITY

Eligible projects shall:

- Comprehensively address all necessary code upgrades
- Result in a certificate of occupancy
- Be complete by December 1, 2023

To qualify for White Box Grant funding, all proposed work must be completed by December 1, 2023. Completed units must have a tenant identified, be occupied by the building owner, or be actively marketed for commercial or industrial use.

Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants, whether an individual or organization, must meet the following criteria:

- Applicant is in good standing with applicable governmental entities (i.e. current on federal, state and local income tax, property tax, utilities, code violations, fees);
- Applicant owns the building for which they are applying.*

*If the applicant does not own the building for which they are applying but does have the building under contract, the applicant is eligible to apply for the grant. However, grants will not be awarded until the applicant owns the building for which they are applying.

Eligible Buildings

A building may be eligible for more than one grant if the building contains multiple vacant commercial spaces, each to be occupied by separate businesses. Eligible buildings must:

- Have no code violation citations;
- Contain a first-floor commercial vacant space.

Eligible building uses include:

- Commercial use (non-residential);
- Industrial use;
- Mixed-use (integrated first-floor commercial and upper floor residential uses).

Ineligible Buildings

Buildings with an exclusively single-family residential, multi-family residential, or storage use, or which contain the following businesses are ineligible:

- Payday loan businesses
- Liquor and tobacco stores
- Pawn shops
- Firearm or other weapons dealers
- Adult entertainment
- Franchise and chain businesses

Eligible Expenses

The White Box Grant program provides funding to bring vacant commercial spaces up to code with the goal of receiving a certificate of occupancy. Eligible expenses address deficiencies in complying with building code, fire code, or accessibility requirements, as outlined below.

Eligible Building Code Improvements:

Interior improvements needed to meet the requirements of the Ohio Building Code (OBC) for the intended use, or at a minimum a Business (B) or Mercantile (M) use, including:

- Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) replacement or upgrades to meet the requirements of the OBC and the Ohio Mechanical Code for the intended use.
- Plumbing rough-in, to meet the requirements of the OBC and the Ohio Plumbing Code.
- Electrical services upgrades or modifications to meet the requirements of the OBC and the National Electrical Code, including, but not limited to NEC 230 Services.
- Lighting rough-in, including required exit and egress lighting fixtures, but excluding other fixtures.
- Repair or replacement of drywall, plaster or masonry walls, excluding finishes.

Eligible Accessibility Improvements:

Interior improvements needed to meet the accessibility requirements of Chapter 11 of the Ohio Building Code, including:

- Restrooms, excluding fixtures and finishes, except OBC required accessible toilet and sink.
- Accessible Route compliance.

Eligible Fire Code Improvements:

Fire and smoke protection systems and features needed to meet the requirements of the Ohio Building Code for the intended use, or at a minimum a Business (B) or Mercantile (M) use, including:

- Sprinkler System
- Fire Rated Walls
- Stairway Enclosure
- Fire Alarm System

All upgrades must comply with zoning and building codes. Any expense incurred prior to the execution of the White Box Grant agreement, or work performed without required permits, is ineligible. When system improvements benefit the entire building, any reimbursement will be for the prorated share of the first-floor vacant commercial space identified in the application, based on its percentage of the total building square footage.

D. GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

Applications must be submitted online via the [Zoom Grants platform](#). No paper or emailed applications will be accepted. Required documentation upon submission includes:

- Applicant's W-9 (form provided)
- Business Tax Registration Form (form provided)
- Vendor Registration Form (form provided)
- Copy of Commercial Building Insurance Policy
- Funding Sources, which may be demonstrated by commitment letters from lenders or proof of funds from a financial institution
- Current interior and exterior photos of the subject vacant commercial first floor space
- Entity Operating Agreement (if applicable)
- Entity board resolution authorizing authority to enter into agreements (if applicable)
- Architectural and engineering drawings, renderings, elevations (if available)

- Occupancy plan, which must be one of the following:
 - A marketing plan that demonstrates the intention to actively market the renovated space for commercial or industrial use and the proposed rental rate.
 - A letter of intent from a business to occupy the space that identifies the agreed upon rental rate and term.
 - A statement of self-occupancy by the building owner, including the name of the business. Occupying businesses must be registered with the City of Toledo.
- A minimum of two quotes is required for all work included in the project.
 - Eligible expenses must be clearly identified and highlighted on the quotes provided. Quotes must conform to [prevailing wage](#), be on contractor letterhead, and clearly identify the cost and full scope of work, with each activity itemized. Contractors shall have required licensing, bond, and insurance, and all work shall be performed according to applicable codes (i.e. Ohio Revised Code and Toledo Municipal Code). If the individual or any member of the entity owning the property self performs a portion of the work, reimbursement will be for materials only. All self-performed work should be clearly identified on quotes.

The DED, in its sole discretion, reserves the right to modify the above dates; suspend, amend, or modify the provisions of this NOFA, to waive selected requirements or limitations herein, to reject all proposals, to negotiate modifications of proposal, or to award less than the full amount of the funding available; all in its sole and absolute discretion.

E. SELECTION PROCESS & EVALUATION CRITERIA

Upon closure of the White Box Grant Program application, DED will conduct an initial screening of applications to determine if all submission requirements are met. Any incomplete applications will be rejected. Members of the IAC will review, evaluate, and score each eligible application using the evaluation criteria below. The IAC will then recommend the top-scoring applications to the Mayor who may fund the award in his sole and absolute discretion.

City of Toledo Department of Economic Development
 Notice of Funding Availability – White Box Grant
 Application Open: April 3 - May 3, 2023

EVALUATION CRITERIA	SCORING	WEIGHT	MAX SCORE
Project Impact The proposed improvements to the space will have a positive impact on the economic strength and vibrancy of the surrounding area. A score of one (1) will represent the lowest impact and a score of (5) represents the highest impact.	1-5	X3	15
Improved Building Safety or Accessibility The proposed improvements will improve the fire safety or accessibility of the building. Projects will be scored as follows: Zero (0): no Improvements; Two (2): fire or accessibility are moderately improved; Three (3): fire or accessibility are significantly improved; Four (4): fire and accessibility are moderately improved; Five (5): fire safety and accessibility are both significantly improved.	0-5	x2	10
Tenant Commitment Tenant is secured or property owner will self- occupy. A score of five (5) will be awarded to applications that include a signed letter of intent.	0/5	x1	5
Project Readiness Likelihood to complete project by December 1, 2023. A score of one (1) will be awarded to applications that lack a clear plan to complete the proposed work by that date. A score of five (5) will be awarded to applications that clearly identify how the proposed work will be completed by the deadline.	1-5	x2	10
Historic Preservation The subject property is a building constructed prior to 1970 or has historical or design significance. Projects will be scored as follows: Zero (0): building was built post 1971; One (1): building was built prior to 1970; Two (2): building was built prior to 1950; Three (3): building was built prior to 1930; Four (4): building was built prior to 1910, Five (5): building was built prior to 1900.	0-5	x3	15
Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area (NRSA) A score of five (5) will be awarded to projects located in a City designated NRSA. NRSA Maps are included with this NOFA for reference.	0/5	X1	5
Diverse Property Ownership A score of five (5) will be awarded to projects in which the majority property ownership is held by a certified MBE/WBE/DBE/VBE/EDGE.	0/5	x1	5
Diverse Tenant A score of five (5) will be awarded to projects in which the majority tenant ownership is held by a certified MBE/WMBE/DBE/VBE/EDGE.	0/5	x1	5
MAXIMUM POSSIBLE SCORE:			70

F. POST AWARD PROCESS

Awarded applicants will enter into a White Box Grant Agreement with the City of Toledo to establish the terms and conditions by which eligible work can be reimbursed. In addition to the White Box Grant Agreement, the applicant will be required to execute a restrictive covenant on the subject property, which will be recorded. The restrictive covenant will restrict the property owner from selling the property without approval from the City of Toledo until December 1, 2025.

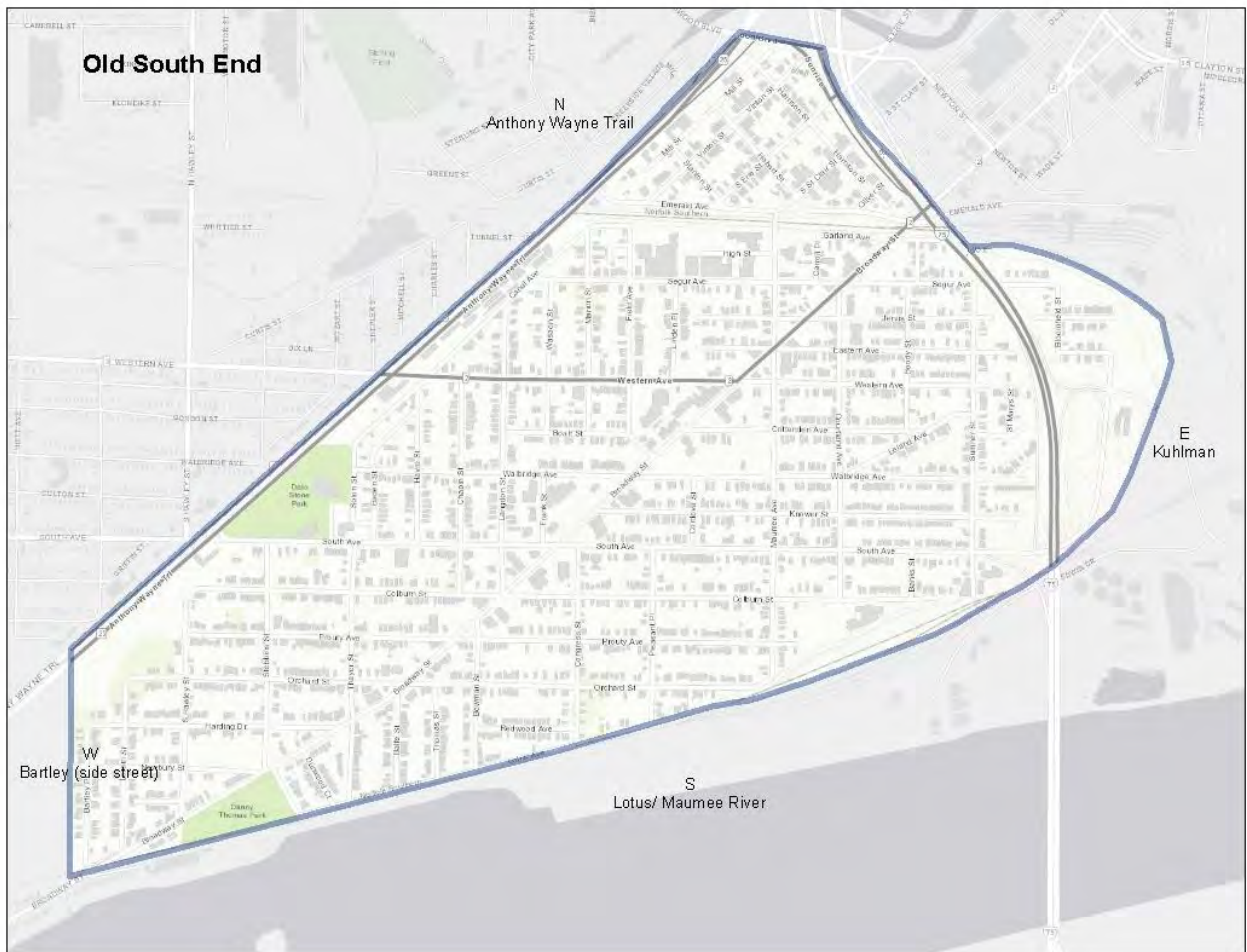
All White Box Grant Agreements must be signed by Friday, June 16, 2023, or the award will be forfeited and the next highest scoring application will be awarded funding. Any work performed prior to the execution of the White Box Grant agreement is ineligible for reimbursement.

G. PROJECT COMPLETION AND REIMBURSEMENT

An applicant's project includes all work outlined within an application, including non-eligible expenses and expenses that will not be reimbursed by the White Box Grant. To qualify for reimbursement, the entire project must be completed and receive a certificate of occupancy by December 1, 2023.

When requesting reimbursement, the applicant must submit copies of all invoices, matching proof of payment by a canceled check or bank statement, photos of completed work, and a copy of the completed space's certificate of occupancy. The Department will review the information for accuracy and completeness and process the reimbursement payment.

Map #1 Old South End



Map #2 ENGLEWOOD

