



# Montana Main Street Grant Application and Guidelines

## **Montana Main Street Program**

Due Oct. 15, 2026

**Montana Department of Commerce**  
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Helena, MT 59620-0523  
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[commerce.mt.gov](http://commerce.mt.gov)  
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# Application Guidelines

## Overview

The Montana Main Street Program is dedicated to bettering the economic, historic and cultural vitality of Montana downtowns through community development, revitalization and historic preservation. MMS will foster grassroots efforts through coordination and technical assistance, focused on a comprehensive approach to restoring healthy community commercial districts and preserving the historic structures that contribute to Montana's unique sense of place.

MMS Grant Program applications, grant application guidelines and other relevant information and resources are available on the Montana Department of Commerce's website at: [commerce.mt.gov](https://commerce.mt.gov).

All grants are dependent upon the availability of funding. The deadline for submitting grant applications is **Oct. 15, 2026**.

## Award Amounts and Match Requirements

Applicants must clearly document the need for funding. Maximum awards are dependent on available funding and can change from year to year.

A minimum local match of 1-to-5, or \$1 of local match for every \$5 committed by the State, is required. While applicants are not required to document a secured match at the time of application, grantees must demonstrate firm commitment of funds from all other funding sources prior to contracting with Commerce. Up to 20% of the applicant's match may be in the form of in-kind services or labor with appropriate documentation of value. In-kind labor contributions are considered an eligible match at a rate of \$20 per hour.

## Application Submission

Grant applications are due to Commerce no later than **11:59 p.m. on Oct. 15, 2026**. To apply for MMS Grant funds, eligible applicants must complete the application and submit the supplemental materials via the Montana Grants and Loan Portal. To submit your application through the Montana Grants and Loans Portal, go to [montana.servicenowservices.com/mtgl](https://montana.servicenowservices.com/mtgl).

Alternative accessible formats of the application will be provided upon request. Commerce does not discriminate based on disability in admission to, access to or operation of its programs, services or activities. Therefore, individuals who need the application in an alternative format, or need to submit the application by other means, should contact Commerce's Community MT Division at 406-841-2770. Please provide as much advance notice as possible for these requests.

## Eligible Applicants

It is recommended that applicants reference Appendix A — Application Eligibility Screening Checklist before applying for the grant. Please connect with Commerce staff to discuss potential projects by emailing [doccdd@mt.gov](mailto:doccdd@mt.gov) or calling 406-841-2770.

Each member community may submit one application. Eligible applicants will meet the following criteria:

- Applicant is an official member of the MMS Program. The official member list can be found at [commerce.mt.gov](https://commerce.mt.gov).
- The annual recertification letter is attached.
- The 2027 Member and Participation Agreement is submitted no later than Dec. 1, 2026.
- The member community **will not** have an active grant with the MMS Program.

- Communities may not apply for funding while maintaining an active MMS Grant-funded project unless the active grant is in the closeout process.
- The applicant is up to date with quarterly reporting. Please note that if the Q3 report is not submitted by Oct. 15, applicants that do not submit it by Oct. 31 will be deemed ineligible.
- The application must be certified by the applicable local government chief executive, mayor or city manager.

### Select the Project Type (Check Only One)

Eligible communities may apply for either an Implementation or a Planning grant. Communities that select both options will be deemed ineligible.

- Implementation project — continue to Section A.
- Planning project — continue to Section B.

### Section A. — Application Guidelines for an Implementation Projects

Implementation projects are intended to support MMS communities' funding needs for projects that activate spaces for downtown revitalization. Emphasis will be placed on large and impactful projects, but funding may be awarded to a wide variety of community-prioritized projects. Preference will be given to projects linked to overall community revitalization efforts prioritized through planning or revitalization goals. Applicants should focus on projects involving real and immediate benefits and demonstrate a need for assistance.

#### 1. Eligible Projects

Funds must be used for implementation projects in a Main Street community. Except for some administrative activities, funds may only reimburse eligible expenses incurred after the Governor's Award Letter.

The following are examples of project activities:

- Wayfinding signage in accordance with a previously completed wayfinding plan
- Creation of a pocket park or pedestrian gathering space
- Placemaking improvements in the downtown area
- Facade improvements to buildings
- Streetscape implementation
- Aesthetic and safety improvements such as historic street or alleyway lighting
- Parklets, pedlets and other installations to activate additional spaces

## 2. Ineligible Expenses

- Advertising for specific businesses
- Entertainment and events
- Travel, lodging, food and drink
- Ongoing operations or general maintenance costs such as rent, utilities, personnel costs and personal expenditures
- Activities that do not deliver on the objectives of the program or are not related to the submitted proposal
- Documents including reports, studies and plans
- Any otherwise eligible project costs incurred prior to the date of announcement of the Governor's Award Letter

## Section B. — Application Guidelines for Planning Projects

Planning grants are intended to support MMS communities' needs for studies and plans. Emphasis will be placed on large and impactful projects, but funding may be awarded to a wide variety of community-prioritized projects. Preference will be given to projects linked to overall community revitalization efforts through planning or revitalization goals.

Applicants should focus on projects involving real and immediate benefits and demonstrate a need for assistance.

## 1. Eligible Projects

Funds must be used for planning projects in a Main Street community. Planning projects must better the economic, historic and cultural vitality of local downtowns through community development, revitalization and/or historic preservation. Funds may only reimburse eligible expenses incurred after the Governor's Award Letter.

The following are examples of project activities:

- Long-range planning:
  - Growth policy development or update
  - Downtown master plan or update
  - Capital improvements plan
  - Strategic organizational planning
  - Board development training
  - Tax Increment Financing District creation
- Assessment studies:
  - Preliminary architectural reports
  - Architectural renderings
  - Tourism assessment
  - Business recruitment and/or retention plan
  - Business plan development
  - Historic preservation assessment and inventory
  - Wayfinding study and plan
  - Market research
  - Feasibility study
- Infrastructure and brick and mortar:

- Public signage — e.g., historic district welcome sign/designation plan
- Streetscape or public improvements plan — e.g., transportation plan, lighting district plan
- Creation of a facade improvement program
- Promotion:
  - Website development
  - Branding

## 2. Ineligible Expenses

- Advertising for specific businesses
- Entertainment and events
- Travel, lodging, food and drink
- Ongoing operations or general maintenance costs such as rent, utilities, personnel costs and personal expenditures
- Activities that do not deliver on the program objectives or are not related to the submitted proposal
- Non-project related salaries or administrative costs excluding postage, in-state mileage costs and copy and printing costs associated with the administration of eligible planning grant activities
- Any otherwise eligible project costs incurred prior to the date of announcement of Governor's Award Letter

# Application

<b>Name of city, town or county</b>	
<b>Mailing address</b>	
<b>Applicant name (chief elected official — mayor, manager, administrator)</b>	
<b>Title</b>	
<b>Wet signature</b>	
<b>Phone</b>	
<b>Email</b>	

<b>Name of local Main Street coordinating organization, if not the same as above</b>	
<b>Mailing address</b>	
<b>Name of contact</b>	
<b>Title of contact</b>	
<b>Email of contact</b>	
<b>Phone number of contact</b>	





## Section C. — Proposed Project Timeline

Table C.1 provides a timeline and award process. Consider it when filling out a proposed project timeline for your application.

Table C.1

<b>Application Due</b>	<b>Oct. 15, 2026, at 11:59 p.m.</b>
<b>Review and Rank</b>	November-December 2026
<b>Award Letter</b>	Approx. end of January 2027 Effective date grantees can start to incur costs
<b>Startup</b>	Documentation to complete startup <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• W9 and EFT</li> <li>• Budget</li> <li>• Project schedule</li> <li>• Proof of insurance (workers' compensation, liability and property)</li> <li>• Management plan</li> <li>• Signer information</li> </ul>
<b>Contract</b>	Execute a contract with Commerce once startup documentation is complete.
<b>*Procurement</b>	Procurement services (architect/contractor) must be followed according to state law. Once procurement has been completed, select the firm and execute a contract. Send all documentation including rank and review to project manager.  Types of procurement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sole source</li> <li>• Small purchase</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited solicitation</li> <li>• Formal solicitation</li> </ul>
<b>Construction</b>	<p>Begin construction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Receive invoices</li> <li>• State prevailing wage rates may apply</li> </ul>
<b>Request for Funds</b>	<p>Once the contract is signed by all parties, the grantee can begin to submit request(s) for reimbursement.</p> <p>Submit all applicable forms and documentation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Request for Funds Form</li> <li>• Progress and/or completion report</li> <li>• Uniform tracking sheet</li> <li>• Applicable invoices</li> </ul> <p>Commerce will send funds within 7-10 business days</p>
<b>Project Closeout</b>	<p>Receive certificate of substantial completion.</p> <p>Project manager from Commerce will send a Notice of Project Completion letter.</p> <p>Grantees must retain project records for five years from closeout date.</p>

### Applicant Proposed Timeline

<b>Task</b>	<b>Date — indicate the quarter and year</b>
Application deadline	Q4 — 2026
Award announcement	Q1 — 2027
Project startup	
Contract with Commerce	
Selection of contractor	
Project implementation and draws	
Project closeout	

## Section D. — Criteria Questions

MMS grant applications are reviewed and ranked by Commerce Community and Economic Vitality Program staff along with representatives from other Commerce programs including the Office of Tourism, the Destination MT Division and planning.

All questions are required. **If questions are skipped, the application may be deemed ineligible.**

If the project includes historic building rehabilitation or a facade improvement, the applicant is strongly encouraged to contact the [State Historic Preservation Office](#) for guidance on maintaining the historic integrity of the structure.

If you require more space for narrative responses, please attach a Word document. You may also choose to use a Word document to answer all of the following questions. If you choose this option, be sure to write in the question boxes below, “See attached.” Do not leave any boxes blank, as doing so may cause your project to be deemed ineligible.

The total possible points are 115. Projects that score within 81-115 are considered “Complete” and will be prioritized for funding. Projects that score within 41-80 are considered “Adequate” and will also be considered for funding. Projects that score within 0-40 are considered “Incomplete and/or Inadequate” and will not be recommended for funding.

## Question 1

Provide an overview of the proposed project in 500 words or fewer. We may not be familiar with your town or project, so help us understand it by addressing the following:

- Provide facts, figures and photos to support the summary.
- Describe the target population.
- What will happen if the project is not completed?


15 points

## Question 2

What is the need and location for the proposed project in your Main Street District?  
What is the significance of the project/problem? Please include a map indicating where in the district the project is located, if applicable.

Ideally this project is located downtown or in your Main Street District. If the project is not in the downtown district, help us understand how it directly or indirectly benefits the Main Street District.

15 points



### Question 3

How does this project qualify as a Main Street project? Refer to the relevant components of the [Four-Point Approach](#) in your response.

10 points

## Question 4

How does this project fit into a larger community plan, vision or revitalization goal?

Strong applications will identify the process by which this project was selected/prioritized and will reference the relevant plans.

For example, “In Section 2.3 of the 2024 Downtown Master Plan...” Be sure to attach relevant page(s) of the sections cited. You do not need to attach full plans.

10 points

### Question 5

What are the anticipated outcomes of the proposed project, both immediate and long-term? Describe how the project promotes or enhances your downtown district now and in the future. Strong applications will also demonstrate how the proposed project will benefit the community more broadly.

10 points

## Question 6

Please describe the local effort and support for the project. This question should summarize Section A.

10 points

### Question 7

Describe how the applicant will complete the project. This narrative should reflect Section C.

15 points

## Question 8

Describe the project management and administration. Include information about the people who will be working with Commerce as the staff/project liaisons and their experience managing similar projects. Strong applications will also include success stories of completed grant projects.

10 points

### Question 9

Describe the project costs and overall budget. This narrative should include how you determined the estimated project costs. Strong applications will provide two to three quotes/estimates and/or explain how the project costs were determined.

10 points

### Question 10

How will the project meet the 1-to-5 match requirement? What other funding sources (grants, loans, etc.) will support the proposed funding stack, and what is the status of these funds?

This is reflective of Section B and Appendix B. Funding sources may include other Commerce grants such as Community Development Block Grants, Community Technical Assistance Program Grants, Montana Coal Endowment Program Grants, destination/tourism grants and/or Coal Board grants; donations; and/or community/foundation grants. If no other funding sources have been awarded or are anticipated to be awarded, please indicate that in the narrative response.

10 points

# Appendix A

## Application Eligibility Screening Checklist

Please fill out this checklist and submit it with the application.

Question	Yes	No
1. Are you an MMS community member? If not, you are not an eligible applicant.		
2. Does your community currently have an active MMS Grant? If you select yes, you are not eligible unless the grant is in the closeout process.		
3. Has your community previously received MMS Grants? If no, continue to question 4.		
Please describe the year and previous grants awarded by MMS in the box below.		
4. Has your application been certified by the applicable local government, chief executive, mayor or city manager?		
5. Is your community current with quarterly updates? If not, the application is ineligible.		

 **COMMERCE**

6. Are you the registered local coordinating program? If you select no, you must have a letter of support from the coordinating program.		
7. Did you attach your annual recertification letter approving annual membership?		
8. Appendix B has been completed.		

If you have questions or need help preparing this form, contact Commerce at [doccdd@mt.gov](mailto:doccdd@mt.gov) or 406-841-2770.

## Appendix B

### Status of Funds

For the proposed project, use this form to indicate any previously or currently awarded funds used for it. If no additional funding has been associated with the proposed project, please indicate this by checking the box.

I attest that this project has not received any other type of funding.

Name of Fund (e.g., Community Development Block Grant)	Type of Fund (grant, loan, etc.)	Dollar Amount	Status (awarded, pending, etc.)