



## Advance Greater Birmingham – Economic Development Grant *Grant Program Guidelines*

### About the RPCGB:

The Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham (RPCGB) was created through state legislation to serve as a “service arm” to local governments in the Greater Birmingham region. The RPCGB serves six counties – Blount, Chilton, Jefferson, Shelby, St. Clair, and Walker – and the municipalities in those counties with a variety of technical assistance programs and initiatives.

### Economic Development Grant (EDG) Overview:

The EDG opportunity is an initiative of the RPCGB to support local communities with their projects. The goal of this program is to contribute funding to projects and initiatives within the RPCGB six-county service area to bolster local capacity. Information regarding eligible applicants, projects, and application documents are outlined below:

*Applicant Eligibility:* To be eligible to apply for EDG funds, the applicant must be 1) a local unit of government and 2) an active dues paying member of the RPCGB.

*Funding Priorities:* The funding priorities for this program correlate with the goals identified in the Advance Greater Birmingham – Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for 2023 – 2028. In the application, the applicant must identify which of the four funding priorities the project will support, as described below:

1. **Workforce Development & Retention:** Enhance the region’s ability to attract, retain, and continually develop a highly skilled workforce that meets the needs of current industry and can calculate future workforce changes to be adaptable to an ever-changing business environment.
2. **Business Climate & Entrepreneurship:** Support the region’s capacity to provide business support and assistance, especially regarding start-up firms and entrepreneurs.
3. **Infrastructure:** Improve and modernize infrastructure to meet the demands of expanding industries and a growing population.
4. **Economic Resilience:** Bolster market diversification, multi-jurisdictional collaboration, and strategic planning for economic growth and development.

*Eligible Projects:* The EDG initiative was developed to be a flexible program to support local projects. As such, the grants awarded through this fund can contribute to an array of programs. Applicants are required to identify the following project type in the application: 1) construction; 2) grant match funding; 3) planning; or 4) community enhancement. It is expected that multiple types may be applicable in some instances, based on the project. Examples of each of the aforementioned activities are outlined below:

1. **Construction:** Activities related to critical infrastructure projects (road improvements, water/sewer system extensions, broadband investments), as well as projects related to outdoor recreation (trails, park improvements).
2. **Grant Match Funding:** This category should be selected if the applicant has applied (or is actively applying) to a state or federal grant in which matching funds are required, and the local community needs additional support with meeting the match requirement. If this option is selected, the applicant must identify the grant funding source, the total project costs, and provide additional information as requested by RPCGB Economic Development staff during the application review process.



3. **Planning:** Activities related to the local government’s planning efforts, including comprehensive plans, trail/alternative transportation plans, feasibility studies, and economic development strategic plans.
4. **Community Enhancement:** For this application, community enhancement involves an array of potential project activities and can include any project determined to increase the quality of life of local residents or improve the conditions of the local government. Example activities include beautification efforts, façade improvements, marketing/branding initiatives, website development, and equipment updates.

*Funding Availability & Restrictions:* Applicants can request up to \$10,000 in grant funding through this program; however, requests for the full \$10,000 must be able to demonstrate substantial impact to the local economy or the community’s quality-of-life. RPCGB will work directly with applicants to negotiate award terms and support on an as needed basis.

EDG funding will not be used to fund the following: Operations of established programs; direct payments to individuals; religious organizations for religious purposes; reimbursed expenses (funding was previously spent on the project). RPCGB reserves the right to determine future ineligibility for funding not outlined in the guidelines.

*Grant Cycle & Due Dates:* The EDG program will have two grant cycles per year, as outlined below. Eligible applicants are encouraged to apply in either cycle; however, applicants can only be funded once a year.

| EDG: Cycle 1                     |                   |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| Grant Cycle 1 Opens              | October 1, 2023   |
| Grant Cycle 1 Closes             | November 30, 2023 |
| Expected Award Dates for Cycle 1 | January 8, 2024   |
| EDG: Cycle 2                     |                   |
| Grant Cycle 2 Opens              | March 1, 2024     |
| Grant Cycle 2 Closes             | April 30, 2024    |
| Expected Award Dates for Cycle 2 | June 3, 2024      |

*Application Information:* Applicants will apply via the application form. Each question in the form is limited to a specific number of words, and each application should be no longer than 10 pages, including attachments. Applicants may submit any relevant attachments that are applicable, but each application is **required to provide a source for project costs** (such as a cost estimate) as an attachment. Examples of what qualifies as a cost estimate, as well as a template for the budget narrative section, are included in the grant guidelines addendum.

**Please submit completed applications via email to Jesslan Wilson, Director of Economic Development, at [jwilson@rpcgb.org](mailto:jwilson@rpcgb.org)**

*Program Contact Information:* For additional questions regarding EDG guidelines or applicant eligibility, please contact Jesslan Wilson, Director of Economic Development, at [jwilson@rpcgb.org](mailto:jwilson@rpcgb.org) or 256-899-3865.





**Advance Greater Birmingham – Economic Development Grant**  
*Grant Guidelines Addendum*

The following information is provided as an explanation of cost estimates and a template for the project budget narrative sections. For more information or assistance, please contact Jesslan Wilson at [jwilson@rpcgb.org](mailto:jwilson@rpcgb.org) or 256-899-3865.

*Cost Estimates:*

For the purposes of this grant application, a cost estimate is a verification of the probable costs of a project activity or purchase, of which grant funds will be spent. This can be based on estimations from sources such as screenshots from product websites or quotes, but sources must be attached to the grant application.

*Budget Narrative Template:*

For the budget narrative, a simple breakdown of the project activities and their related costs will be sufficient. The activities should be reflected in the application’s attached cost estimate, and an example of a budget narrative is listed below:

This project will provide funding support for <insert project> through the following activities:

|  |                |
|--|----------------|
| Activity 1: <u>&lt;Description&gt;</u> | \$1,000        |
| Activity 2: <u>&lt;Description&gt;</u> | \$1,500        |
| Activity 3: <u>&lt;Description&gt;</u> | \$500          |
| <b>Total Project Costs:</b>            | <b>\$3,000</b> |