

## **VOLGA BUSINESS NETWORK (VBN) – CUSTOMER ATTRACTION & BEAUTIFICATION GRANT (CAB GRANT)**

### **PURPOSE**

Help local, customer-facing businesses attract more foot traffic and sales by improving curb appeal and executing targeted customer marketing.



### **PROGRAM GOALS**

- Increase customer visits and dwell time in Volga.
- Improve storefront and streetscape quality (safety, accessibility, aesthetics).
- Support small business brand growth through professional marketing.
- Encourage investment that complements City design standards and ordinances.
- Advance inclusive economic vitality with equitable access to funds.

### **WHO CAN APPLY**

#### Eligible Applicants

- For-profit, customer-facing small businesses ( $\leq 50$  FTE) located within the City of Volga.
- Members of the Brookings Area Chamber of Commerce
- Property owners with at least one ground floor, customer-facing tenant (with tenant sign-off) or the tenant with owner's consent.
- New or existing businesses with an active Volga business license.

#### Ineligible Applicants

- Home-based businesses without a public-facing entrance.
- Nonprofits (unless operating a customer-facing retail storefront).
- National chains with more than 10 locations (unless locally franchised and locally owned).
- Entities with outstanding code violations, unpaid taxes/assessments, or in bankruptcy.

## **ELIGIBLE PROJECTS & EXPENSES**

### Beautification (Exterior & Customer Entry)

- Facade improvements (paint, repair, masonry cleaning, cladding removal where appropriate).
- Signage & lettering (primary, blade, window), awnings/canopies, exterior lighting.
- Window enhancements (restoration, transparency improvements, displays), door upgrades.
- Accessibility upgrades to customer entries (ramps, handrails, automatic door openers).\*
- Streetside elements: planters, movable seating, bike racks, trash receptacles, parklets.\*\*
- Murals or public art (with written approvals and maintenance agreements).
- Exterior power/utility screening; grease management enclosures for customer areas.

### Customer Marketing (Owned, Earned, Paid)

- Photography/videography for products, storefront, staff, and customer experience.
- Website landing pages, menu/lookbook pages, and conversion-focused updates.
- Paid media: digital ads, geofenced offers, print placements, radio spots.
- Social media content production, short-form video, and campaign copywriting.
- In-store activation collateral: window clings, sandwich boards, posters, rack cards.

### Notes

\* Accessibility items must comply with ADA/local codes; consult City Building Services.

\*\* Parklets/outdoor dining require separate right-of-way approval, insurance & barrier standards.

## **INELIGIBLE COSTS**

- Routine maintenance (gutter cleaning, snow removal), ordinary repairs.
- Inventory, payroll, rent/mortgage, utilities, taxes, debt service, gift cards.
- Vehicles, large equipment not permanently affixed, or off-site storage.
- Political, religious, or discriminatory messaging; alcohol-only promotions.

- Work started or purchased before grant agreement is executed.

## **FUNDING & MATCH**

Total program funding is contingent on annual appropriations/sponsorships. A business may receive one award per cycle.

- Grant Range: \$100 – \$2,500

- Match Requirement: No match required by business owners but is encouraged. Preference given to applications with owner match.

Disbursement: Fund disbursement will happen upon completion of grant agreement.

## **APPLICATION & TIMELINE**

- Application Due: Friday, September 26th by 5:00 p.m. CT
- Awards Announced: Monday, October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2025
- Project Completion Deadline: By June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2026.
- Final Report Due: within 30 days of completion

How to Apply

- 1) Complete the application form.
- 2) Upload required materials:
  - Before photos (street and entry views), if applicable
  - Concept sketches/renderings or vendor mockups, if applicable
  - Marketing plan (2 pages max; template in Appendix A), if applicable
  - Itemized budget & quotes (template in Appendix B)

## **REVIEW & SELECTION**

Applications are reviewed by the VBN committee. Conflicts of interest will be disclosed; members with conflicts abstain.

Scoring Rubric (100 points)

- Customer Attraction Potential (25): clear path to increased visits/dwell/conversion.
- Design Quality & Fit (20): aligns with district character and best practices.
- Readiness & Feasibility (15): permits, quotes, realistic schedule.

- Marketing Plan Strength (15): target audience, channels, budget, timeline, KPIs.
- Community Benefit & Inclusion (10): accessibility, safety, inclusive imagery/languages, small/minority/women/veteran-owned priority.
- Leverage & Maintenance (10): applicant match, maintenance plan  $\geq 2$  years.
- Local Vendor Use (5): preference for Brookings/Volga-area vendors where practicable.

Award Allocation: Ties may be resolved by geographic distribution or readiness to proceed.

### **AWARD CONDITIONS**

- Execute a Grant Agreement before work starts.
- Secure and maintain all required permits/approvals/encroachments.
- Maintain physical improvements in good condition for at least 36 months; removal or neglect may require prorated repayment.
- Submit Final Report and allow up to 30 days for reimbursement processing after acceptance.

### **REPORTING & OUTCOMES**

At Completion (required)

- Photo documentation (before/after, storefront at street level).
- Copies of invoices and proof of payment.
- Marketing deliverables (creative files, links, screenshots) and media schedule.
- Short narrative ( $\leq 500$  words) on outcomes.

90-Day Follow-Up (required): provide at least two metrics

- Foot traffic counts, door clicker data, or POS transaction counts (compare to baseline).
- Social/media metrics: reach, CTR, followers, impressions for grant-funded efforts.
- Sales tax remittance trend, gift card redemptions, or event RSVPs.
- Hours of operation expanded, jobs added (if applicable).

## **COMPLIANCE & LEGAL**

- Grantee is responsible for compliance with city codes, ADA, and design standards.
- Murals/public art require property owner consent and, if applicable, historic review.
- Chamber/VBN reserve the right to deny or reduce awards based on available funds, alignment, or incomplete applications.
- Hold Harmless & Insurance: Grantee shall indemnify program partners; proof of general liability coverage may be required.

## **APPENDIX A – 2-PAGE MARKETING PLAN TEMPLATE**

- 1) Goal (e.g., +15% weekday lunch traffic by Nov 30)
- 2) Audience (primary and secondary; where they spend time)
- 3) Message/Offer (value prop, seasonal hook, CTA)
- 4) Channels & Tactics (e.g., Meta/Google ads, radio, influencer, window/sidewalk, email)
- 5) Budget (line items; match vs. grant)
- 6) Timeline (creative, launch, flighting)
- 7) KPIs (impressions, CTR, store visits, redemptions, POS comps)
- 8) Creative Samples/Mockups (attach)

**APPENDIX B - BUDGET TEMPLATE (SAMPLE)**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Vendor</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Grant Funds</b>	<b>Applicant Match</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Signage	New blade sign & permit	Acme Signs	\$2,400	\$1,200	\$1,200	2 quotes attached
Lighting	LED downlights	BrightCo	\$1,800	\$900	\$900	
Planters	2 large planters + soil	GreenWorks	\$600	\$600	\$0	Spark Tier
Marketing	Photo/video shoot (half day)	Lens Studio	\$1,200	\$600	\$600	
Marketing	Digital ad flight (6 weeks)	AdPlace	\$1,500	\$750	\$750	geofence campus
<b>Totals</b>			<b>\$7,500</b>	<b>\$4,050</b>	<b>\$3,450</b>	

## APPENDIX C - DETAILED SCORING RUBRIC

Criterion	Excellent (5)	Good (3)	Needs Work (1)
Customer Attraction	Quantified traffic lift with strong evidence (baseline + forecast)	Clear rationale with partial data	Vague or unsubstantiated
Design Quality	Professional design, materials fit district; enhances safety/access	Adequate improvements, minor concerns	Poorly conceived, conflicts with code
Readiness	Permits/quotes secured; realistic 90–120 day schedule	Some steps pending	Many unknowns; >9 months timeline
Marketing Plan	Sharp targeting, compelling offer, multi-channel with KPIs	Decent plan, limited channels	Generic, lacks audience/KPIs
Inclusion/Benefit	Improves accessibility; inclusive language/imagery; small/diverse-owned	Some inclusive elements	No consideration
Leverage/Maintenance	≥1:1 match and 36+ month maintenance plan	Meets minimum	Minimal match; weak maintenance
Local Vendors	Multiple local vendors	One local vendor	None local

## PROGRAM CONTACT

Brookings Area Chamber of Commerce – Volga Business Network (VBN) Committee

Casey Stickland, Outreach Coordinator | [casey@brookingschamber.org](mailto:casey@brookingschamber.org) | (605) 692-8922