

VENTURE PORTLAND BENCHMARK GRANT GUIDELINES

Spring/Summer 2019

Venture Portland's Benchmark Grants, distributed twice a year, provide tactical financial support to business districts. After establishing a baseline of activities, business districts define their own benchmarks and the appropriate roadmap to find success and long-term financial and programmatic stability and sustainability. Business districts implement year-over-year accomplishments until the benchmark is achieved. This moves business districts toward self-sustainability. Once a benchmark is achieved, business districts are free to focus on another area for strategic growth. Eligible projects must show quantifiable progress towards benchmark achievement and business district self-sustainability. Download Benchmark Definitions, applications, Benchmarking Success and other resources at ventureportland.org/grants.

Benchmark Grants Frequently Asked Questions:

Q: Which benchmark should my district apply for?

A: Every district has different priorities, but generally districts should focus on the three priority benchmarks first (Strong Membership, Web/Social Media Presence, Self-sustaining Signature Annual Event). The Benchmarking Success tool is useful for determining which benchmark your district should focus on. Download Benchmarking Success at ventureportland.org/technicalassistance

Q: Can I apply for multiple projects under the same benchmark?

A: No. Districts should focus on one project per benchmark with the goal of benchmark achievement.

Q: Can I be working towards multiple benchmarks at the same time?

A: Yes. Districts should focus on the benchmark(s) that is most needed by their district at that time. Venture Portland offers Benchmark Grants twice a year so districts may have different benchmarks in progress during different grant cycles.

Q: How long does it take to achieve a benchmark?

A: It depends on the goals that your district has set and the progress that is made each year. It takes most districts 3-5 years to achieve a benchmark.

Q: Once I achieve a benchmark is my district no longer eligible for funding under that Benchmark?

A: Yes. Benchmark achievement only applies to self-sustaining projects that no longer need grant funding. Consult the Benchmark Definitions for clear measures of success for achieving each benchmark. Benchmarks can always be revisited if significant changes in the district occur (recession, loss of an anchor business, new permitting fees, etc.) so don't be afraid to own your success so you can move on to other priorities!

I. Business District Eligibility

To apply for a Venture Portland grant, business districts must meet the following:

- Venture Portland member
- Up-to-date filings with all non-profit regulating government entities
- Complete all previous Venture Portland grants and submit all required grant paperwork
- Two district representatives participated in the [2018-19 Grant Certification Training](#) on 9/6/18
- Submit a complete grant application by noon (12pm) on Friday, 3/1/19; late or incomplete applications will not be accepted

II. Use of Funds

Applicants may apply* for **\$3,000-\$4,000**** for a project to achieve one of the following benchmarks (priority benchmarks in bold):

- **Strong Membership**
- **Web/Social Media Presence**
- **Self-sustaining Signature Event**
- District Identity/Place Making
- Collateral/Map/Newsletter
- Marketing/Media/PR Campaign

Base project funding is a maximum of \$3,000. Up to three Benchmark Achievement bonuses are available during the Spring/Summer 2019 grant cycle. By submitting completed Benchmark Achievement Forms, business districts may increase their total Benchmark Grant request up to a maximum of \$4,000:

- **\$500: Benchmark Achievement Anticipated (current, maximum of one)** – Will your district achieve its chosen benchmark during the Spring/Summer 2019 grant cycle? If yes, provide narrative detail about how your district anticipates reaching its chosen benchmark during the current grant cycle utilizing lessons learned from previous years of funding for this project.
- **\$250: Benchmark Achieved (past, maximum of two)** – Has your district already achieved this benchmark? If yes, provide narrative detail about how your district reached this benchmark. Note: only Benchmark Achievement Bonuses that have not yet been redeemed are eligible. To find out which Benchmark Achievement Bonuses your district has already redeemed, check your district's latest Benchmark Progress Report or contact Jacob (503.477.9648, jacob@ventureportland.org).

***In this grant cycle, applicants may apply for up to two grants in the following combinations: Benchmark and Catalytic, Economic Development and Catalytic or two Catalytic. Applicants may also apply for only a Benchmark, Economic Development or Catalytic Grant.**

****Please note: the maximum amount that can be awarded each grant cycle varies based on Venture Portland's available funding.**

Grant activities must occur between 4/1/19 and 9/15/19. Because Venture Portland Benchmark grants fund specific, short-term projects to build business district capacity and not ongoing activities, **grant funds may not be used to pay for ongoing staff members.** Applicants may still count in-kind or cash expenses for ongoing staff toward their match.

Grant must be matched at least 1-to-1 with cash or in-kind contributions. This match must be reflected on the application budget page and, if funded, on the grant evaluation. While volunteer hours are critical to the success of projects and should be quantifiably measured and reported, they do not count towards the in-kind match. In general, project budgets with confirmed cash or in-kind contributions in place at the time of application are more competitive.

Cash refers to cash-on-hand and the donations, grants and revenues that are expected or already received for this project.

In-kind refers to the donated space, supplies/materials, goods and professional services donated by individuals or organizations. To qualify as matching resources, these same items must also be listed as expenses in the project budget and invoices/receipts must be provided with the grant evaluation. The dollar value of these in-kind donations should be calculated at their verifiable fair-market value. Be sure to identify the sources on the application budget page. Volunteer hours do not count towards the in-kind match.

Venture Portland must be properly recognized as a sponsor on any grant-funded materials and/or activities. Failure to do so will impact future grant funding. Venture Portland logo usage must be approved by staff before going to print.

Unspent and/or unmatched grant funds (including unverifiable in-kind or cash expenses) must be returned to Venture Portland with the grant evaluation.

Past Performance

Although each eligible grant application is evaluated according to its own merit, the Grants Committee receives grant evaluation information from each applicant's recent grant evaluation(s) including variance information, whether or not the district met its goals and timeline and sponsorship acknowledgement requirements to help assess if the business district has the ability to effectively implement the project.

Americans with Disabilities Act Certification/Statement of Non-Discrimination

By submitting an application, the applicant agrees to comply in every way with all applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, 42 USC Sec. 12101, et seq. and agrees not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, (creed), gender, gender identity, gender expression, age, national or ethnic origin (ancestry), disability, marital status, sexual orientation, military or veteran status, genetic information, income, political affiliation, or any other status protected by federal, state, or local law in any of its activities or operations.

Statement of Equity

Venture Portland's Capacity Building Grants Program funds the smart, strategic growth of Portland's unique neighborhood business districts and helps business districts city wide best meet the needs of their diverse communities. Our corporate values, including transparency, accountability, equity and collaboration define all of our programs. By offering an accessible and extensive funding portfolio, Venture Portland grant funds support every stage of a business district's lifecycle and help business districts succeed at every level and skill set. Our long-term, innovative, relationship-driven approach as a funder provides support as business districts emerge, incorporate and evolve. By consistently bringing new perspectives to our decision-making table, forming new relationships and alliances, and finding new ways to support creativity, Venture Portland is a strong, equitable and relevant organization.

III. Grant Checklist

Incomplete or late applications will not be accepted. The following items must be submitted:

- Grant checklist
- Cover letter introducing and briefly explaining purpose of the grant request
- Grant application – four sections including signatures, Benchmark Achievement Form(s) (if applicable), narrative and project budget
- Supporting Documents* (if applicable)

*Business districts that provide an Annual Budget and current Balance Sheet are more competitive.

IV. Training, Office Hours and Technical Assistance

Training: Participation by two business district representatives was mandatory at the [2018-19 Grant Certification Training](#) on 9/6/18 to apply for a Spring/Summer 2019 grant. The training addressed: generating great ideas/project planning, application writing, budgeting, evaluation and any changes to the Grants Program. Participating business districts received a one-year grant writing ‘certification’ upon completion of the training, making them eligible for Fall/Winter 2018-2019 and Spring/Summer 2019 grants.

Office Hours: Venture Portland staff is available for appointments and drop-ins at Venture Portland’s office during the dates and times listed below to assess business district readiness and to provide support and assistance during the early stages of your grant application. Staff is available the week grants are due to review final drafts (applications not yet in final draft form will not be reviewed after 2/25/19). **Venture Portland strongly recommends taking advantage of Grants Office Hours and Final Draft Review. To schedule an appointment, ask a question or send a draft, email Jacob@ventureportland.org or call 503.477.9648.**

Technical Assistance: Staff is available to provide significant technical assistance during planning, application writing, budgeting and, if funded, implementation and evaluation. Venture Portland staff is available for year-round technical assistance during each stage of the project.

Due Date: Applications received by noon (12pm) on 3/1/19 will be reviewed to ensure completion, and if complete, accepted by staff. Applications may be submitted electronically via email or fax or in-person. Incomplete or late applications will not be accepted. Staff will not offer any assistance beyond accepting complete applications on 3/1/19. No application will be accepted after noon (12pm) on 3/1/19. This policy has been reaffirmed by the Grants Committee nine times since 2010.

V. Spring/Summer 2019 Benchmark Grant Timeline

2/1/19 – Application Released/Info Session (9:30am-5pm)

2/7 – Grants Office Hours (9:30am-5pm)

2/14 – Grants Office Hours (9:30am-5pm)

2/19 – Grants Office Hours (9:30am-5pm)

2/26-2/28 – Grants Office Hours: Final Draft Review (9:30am-5pm)

3/1 – **Grant Applications Due at Noon (12pm)**

4/1 – Grant Awards Announced

4/1-9/15 – Spring/Summer Benchmark Grant Activities

Grant Evaluations due no later than 15 days after project completion

***Early submission is encouraged.** While staff make every effort to offer assistance, each applicant has the final responsibility of submitting a complete application on time to Venture Portland. Applications, including signatures, may be submitted in-person, by fax or by email (jacob@ventureportland.org) with a Venture Portland receipt time of no later than noon (12pm) on 3/1/19. Contact Venture Portland if you need assistance with email submission.

Location for Office Hours, Final Draft Review and Application Submission:

Venture Portland
1125 SE Madison St, Suite 112
Portland, OR 97214

Fax: 503.477.9641

Email: jacob@ventureportland.org

Questions? Contact Jacob at 503.477.9648 or jacob@ventureportland.org. Download Benchmark Achievement Forms, Definitions and grant applications at ventureportland.org/grants.