



City of Panama City Community Redevelopment Agency

Guidelines & Procedures for Commercial Rent Reimbursement Grant Program Revised August 2021

Purpose:

The Commercial Rent Reimbursement Grant Program is designed to help facilitate the establishment of new businesses within the Panama City CRA Districts. The program is designed to provide financial assistance to new businesses in the form of rent reimbursement intended to help businesses during the critical first year of operation.

Businesses that are eligible for reimbursement may receive payments equaling **up to half (50%) of the business's base monthly rent, or \$1,250 per month, whichever is less (maximum amount of the grant is \$15,000 annually)**. Reimbursement will be paid in 4 equal quarterly payments, within 12 consecutive months. Funds are appropriated annually in the CRA Budget for each district and are available on a first come-first served basis. The program is subject to the availability of allocated funds in that district's CRA Budget.

Applicants are reminded that grant awards are discretionary and should not be considered an entitlement. All grant criteria contained herein are guidelines, not guarantees for awards and successful Applicants may receive any amount up to the maximum award. Should an Applicant meet all grant criteria, a grant may or may not be awarded due to funding limitations, competing applications, and/or competing priorities.

Program Rules:

The following rules are intended to inform a potential grant applicant of the extent and scope of the program. The desired result will stimulate economic growth, stabilize property values, and facilitate and encourage redevelopment activity in the CRA districts.

1. This program is open to new businesses opening within a CRA district, or existing business relocating from outside a CRA boundary.

NOTE: Click the below link to see if desired address is located within a CRA boundary:
(enter web link here)

2. For purposes of this application, the term “new business” means a newly formed company seeking initial startup or in operation of less than six (6) months within a Panama City CRA District. A “existing business” is a company currently in operation outside of any Panama City CRA District looking to move or expand their business to a location within a CRA District.
3. Non-Profit and residentially zones properties are NOT eligible.
4. Applicant must be the business entity (or d/b/a) named and the principal owners named on the corporation documents and must be the landlord or business owner of the company occupying the property named in the lease.
5. Applicant must have an executed multi-year lease with at least two (2) years remaining on the lease. Proposed leases must be executed within thirty (30) days of CRA approval or the grant award is terminated.
6. The commercial lease must define the landlord-tenant relationship and at minimum provide the following information:
 - A description of the space being rented, including square footage and a drawing of the space.
 - Description of utilities that are the tenant’s responsibility.
 - Rental rate and deposits along with terms of lease and methodology for future rent increases.
 - Responsible party for interior and exterior repairs and/or improvements
 - Insurance requirements
 - Ability to terminate
 - Consequences of default on the lease.
7. Rent reimbursements will not be paid for any months business is not open for operation. Businesses in operation for at least 15 days of a month may be eligible for a partial reimbursement at a pro-rated amount.
8. Reimbursements will not begin until all construction has ended, permits are closed out, City and County licenses are obtained, and the business is open for operation under a Temporary Certificate of Occupancy (TPO) or a Certificate of Occupancy (CO). For businesses that do not require any construction work, rent reimbursements will not be paid until City licenses are obtained and the business is open for operation.
9. The CRA reserves the right to approve or deny any Commercial Rent Reimbursement payment at any time if, in its sole and absolute discretion, it determines that the business will not advance the goals and objectives established for redevelopment of the CRA District. The receipt of past payments is not a guarantee of future payments.
10. The responsibility for all rental payments is between the parties to the lease as such the tenant and the landlord. As grantor, the CRA neither bears nor accepts any responsibility for

payment of rent at any time, nor penalties incurred for the late arrival of payments by any party.

11. The Commercial Rent Reimbursement Grant Program may only be used one time by any one specific business entity or business owner. Acceptance of applications for additional new business by a business owner previously awarded the Rent Reimbursement Grant is at the sole discretion of the CRA. Commercial Rent Reimbursement is available to business owners that have not received previous grant funding through this program in the last three (3) years.
12. Grant recipients shall allow the CRA the rights and use of photos and project application materials.
13. Site Visits – CRA staff may conduct site visits (announced or unannounced) periodically in order to ensure compliance with the terms of the grant agreement.

Application Process:

1. An applicant seeking a Commercial Improvement Grant may secure an application from the City of Panama City Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) located at 501 Harrison Ave, Room 206, Panama City, FL 32401, phone (850) 872-7230 or download the application from www.pcgov.org
2. Applications will be accepted no sooner than October 1, and no later than July 1 of each fiscal year.
3. A checklist of required documents and forms can be found with the grant application. The fully completed application and supporting documentation should be submitted in person to the CRA office, or via email at CRAs@pcgov.org
4. The CRA Grants Coordinator undertakes the initial review of the application and determines if the application is complete. If the application is found incomplete, the applicant will be granted time to complete and resubmit the application. Once complete, application will be date-stamped as received. **Acceptance of completed application packet is not a guarantee of funding.**
5. Applicant may not have any outstanding City of Panama City liens. Subject property must be free of any code violations with the City of Panama City CRA grants will not be awarded until the complete satisfaction of any City of Panama City liens or violations.
6. Within two (2) weeks, or 10 business days, of receipt of the completed application, the CRA Grants Coordinator will conduct a full review to ensure compliance with the CRA Grant Program Criteria. The CRA Grants Coordinator will forward a recommendation to the CRA Program Manager, CRA Director and City Manager for final approval.
7. An official notification from the CRA Grants Coordinator will be delivered to the Applicant within two (2) weeks, or 10 business days, of recommendation, informing them of the

approval or denial of the application and may include approval **with conditions**. Failure to comply to conditions in a timely manner may result in the revocation of grant approval.

8. All Grant funding decisions provided by CRA staff and Director are final. Applicants that are formally denied a CRA grant may appeal staff decisions in writing to CRA Director for review by City Manager and/or, finally the CRA Board if applicable.
9. Applicant must return the signed award letter, indicating acceptance or refusal of the grant award, to the CRA office in person or via email to CRAs@pcgov.org within two (2) weeks of notification of approval.
10. By accepting the CRA grant award, applicant understands and agrees to:
 - a. Maintain occupancy and operation of business without relocation or extended closure, for the extent of the lease (at least 2 years from application date).
 - b. Not to sublet the property.
 - c. Operate within the terms of the lease, preventing eviction.

***Failure to comply may result in repayment of all CRA funds received by applicant for rent reimbursement.**

Reimbursement Process:

1. A maximum of 12 consecutive monthly rent payments are eligible to be reimbursed to the approved applicant. Reimbursement will occur on a quarterly basis. Quarterly rent reimbursement payments will be provided to the grant recipient beginning the first month the business is open for operation subsequent to CRA approval.
2. Following the initial reimbursement request, each reimbursement request shall be made within thirty (30) days of the start of the next quarter beginning on January 1st, April 1st, July 1st and October 1st.

Months Eligible for Reimbursement

- October, November, December
- January, February, March
- April, May, June
- July, August, September

Deadline to Submit for Reimbursement

- January 30th
- April 30th
- July 30th
- October 30th

3. In order to receive quarterly rent reimbursement, the grant applicant must submit the following:
 - a. Request for Reimbursement Form
 - b. Proof of rent payments for quarter requested (i.e. proof of direct deposit or copy of cancelled check, front and back).
4. If applicant does not submit its quarterly reimbursement request within thirty (30) days following the end of the quarter in which applicant is requesting reimbursement, applicant forfeits that quarter's reimbursement.

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