



FY16 Southwest Economic Development Grant Program Guidelines

Program Objective: The purpose of the Commission's Economic Development Grant Program is to promote economic growth and development in tobacco-dependent communities in an equitable manner throughout the Southside and Southwest regions of the Commonwealth in order to assist such communities in reducing their dependency on tobacco and tobacco-related business.

Funding Priorities: Applications submitted to this program should fall into one of the categories the Commission has focused upon as critical for the economic renewal of Southside and Southwest Virginia. Additional information about the Commission's funding priorities can be found in the [Strategic Plan](#) on the Commission's website. Applicants are strongly encouraged to review the [Funding Policies for Grant Awards: Information for Grantees and Applicants](#) (Revised June 2015) document also available on the website.

- Building and utility infrastructure creation or improvements for economic development sites, including acquisition and/or development of land and physical improvements.
- Programs and facilities to provide workforce training.
- Support of traditional economies, and new opportunities for economic diversification, such as new industry and employment clusters, and entrepreneurial development.
- Enhancements to regional tourism infrastructure that demonstrate ability to attract measurable visitor revenues from outside the tobacco region.
- Broadband deployment and other technology projects (previously funded under the Commission's Technology grant program) that demonstrate ability to provide affordable, open access high-speed/volume connectivity to businesses and institutions in underserved communities.

Low Priorities: The Commission's General Funding Policies state that requests for projects involving non-basic economic development, including but not limited to the following, are low priorities:

- Community Centers
- Hospital/Wellness Centers
- Childcare Facilities
- Retail Development
- Art/Cultural/Historic Preservation
- Studies
- 4-H centers
- Airports

Applications for projects such as these will be accepted and processed with a Staff recommendation of no award. For additional clarification on Low Priorities please contact the Commission's Staff.

Outcome Measures: Applicants are expected to describe and be prepared to measure the anticipated ROI (e.g. private sector capital investment, employment and wage outcomes, tax benefits) in relation to proposed Commission investments.

Required Budget Documents for Funding Request: Depending on the proposed use of grant funds different supporting documents with line-item details on the use of grant funds are required. Requests for the acquisition, construction or equipping of long-lived physical assets must provide written cost estimates from independent qualified professional sources. Requests for start-up operating costs must provide a line item detail with a clear breakdown on the proposed use of funds.

- **Construction Budget** – If the project involves any building construction and/or renovation, land improvements, or physical infrastructure construction, a detailed, itemized construction budget is required. Cost estimates must be provided from a licensed architecture and/or engineering firm or from a licensed contractor.
- **Equipment List** – If Commission funds will be used to purchase equipment, an itemized equipment list is required. Quotes from product vendors must be provided for purchases of all long-lived assets.
- **Detailed Line Item Budget for Grant Funds** – Requests for operating funds should include a line-item detailed budget showing specifically how funds from the Commission and required Matching funds will be used.

Other Program Guidelines/Requirements: Depending on the project type, additional information in the form of attachments is required to provide details critical to the evaluation of the application. Failure to submit all required information may result in a recommendation of no award.

- **Operating budget** – *Required for Workforce Development Centers, Tourism, and Other Projects* – Applications for these project types are required to submit an operating budget to demonstrate how operating costs will be supported and how the project will be sustained beyond a start-up period of no more than 3-years (the maximum time period typically allowed for support from Commission funds).
- **Marketing Plan** – *Required for Tourism Projects* – A marketing plan to describe the project's target market and the plan to capture that market must be described in the application.
- **Cash Flow Analysis** – *Required for Water/ Sewer and Technology Infrastructure Projects* – For projects that will generate revenues, applicants must provide a detailed cash flow analysis that shows the effect of this project on revenues and expenditures. The analysis should include a baseline of your current operations and demonstrate how the TICRC funded infrastructure will impact revenues and expenditures.
- **Rate Structure** – *Required for Water/ Sewer and Technology Infrastructure Projects* – For revenue generating projects a current rate structure for existing customers must be provided. Proposed or planned changes to the utility rate structure that will result from and/or is necessary to support the project requested for support from the Commission should be identified either in the Cash Flow Analysis or with the information on the Rate Structure.
- **Construction Documents** - Additional supporting documents including Preliminary Engineering Reports, other A&E Documents, Building Plans, etc. should also be submitted with the application.

- **Real estate acquisitions** – if real estate is to be acquired with Commission funds or proposed as matching funds, the applicant must provide an independent appraisal completed within the previous year.
- **Letters of Support** – Applicants are asked to provide letters from project partners, beneficiaries and others that demonstrate the commitment of resources to the project or document the project's need.
- **Multiple & Multi-faceted proposals** – Multiple proposal submissions and proposals that involve multiple projects should provide a priority ranking of the initiatives so that the Commission may focus its primary consideration on the applicant's stated #1 priority.
- **Million dollar-plus projects** - All projects that will involve current and future requests to the Commission that in aggregate will be for more than \$1 million should provide evidence of the commitment of at least 50% of the funds needed to construct the anticipated multi-million dollar facility, and a projected timeline for construction.
- **Additional Requirements for Applicants** (*Utility Infrastructure, Regional Partnerships, Use of Funds by For-Profit Entities, etc.*) – All applicants should review Section III of the [Funding Policies for Grant Awards: Information for Grantees and Applicants](#) for details concerning other specific information that may be required.

Value of Awards: The Commission has budgeted \$2.5 million to be available for the Southwest Economic Development Program in FY16. While there is no stated minimum or maximum grant amount, grant awards in recent years have ranged from \$20,000 to as much as \$3 million. The average grant award amount is approximately \$250,000. The number of awards and grant award amounts are subject to the quality and quantity of proposals received and other applicable considerations. *Requests which exceed the Program's available balance will not receive a staff recommendation.*

Cost Sharing Requirement: Language adopted in Code of Virginia in 2015 now requires dollar-for-dollar matching funds for all grants (i.e. at least 50% of the Total Project Costs to be provided from non-TICR funds), unless otherwise approved by a two-thirds majority of Commissioners. No more than 25% of the required matching funds can be provided from in-kind project contributions. Staff will not recommend funding for any project that does not propose dollar-for-dollar match, and/or proposes more than 25% in-kind match.

Application Deadline: On-line applications must be submitted by the **July 24, 2015** application deadline.

Start Date: It is anticipated that the Commission will make final funding decisions at its meeting on **September 24, 2015**. Proposals should therefore plan for projects to start no earlier than that date.

**Southside/Southwest Economic Development Grant Programs
Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission**

Evaluation Criteria

All projects competing for funding must fall within one of the categories recognized by the Commission *and* meet the criteria for approval as detailed in the grant program guidelines. Funding recommendations will be based, in part, upon the following criteria used to evaluate proposals.

Technical Merit:

- The significance and strategic fit of the project to the community, as demonstrated by assessment of needs or opportunities, and evidence of community support
- Evidence of the project's readiness for immediate implementation
- The feasibility of the project reaching a successful conclusion; qualified and committed leadership of the project
- The soundness of the proposal's budget; leveraging of the Commission's funds with other appropriate sources of funds
- The ability of the proposal to serve as a model for other applicants or regions
- Sustainability of the program beyond the term of the grant funding
- The ability to clearly demonstrate or evaluate the proposal's effectiveness

Economic Development Potential:

- Number of potential jobs created by the project.
- Salaries of potential jobs.
- Project's ability to increase income and revenues in the region (vs. outmigration of local dollars)
- Long-term nature of the projects' employment abilities
- Activities that improve the economic competitiveness of a community or region
- Moves region toward recruitment of targeted economic opportunity
- Project activities increase skills of region's workforce
- Needs assessment of such a project in the community; in the case of industrial parks, a full accounting of how many other parks exist in the region and at what capacity they are operating.

Significance to Commission's Mission:

- Activities include one or more of the categories outlined in the Instructions.
- Strategic fit with the Commission's [Strategic Plan](#) and the Program's objective.
- Regional cooperation and/or financial collaboration for this project (multiple localities).