

Kent County Economic Development – Small Business Marketing Grant Guidelines

What is the Small Business Marketing Grant program?

This program offers marketing assistance to small businesses located in Kent County. The objective of the program is first to educate small businesses on effective marketing (open to any small business in Kent County), and second to directly provide expert marketing services to selected small businesses. Some of the educational resources provided by this program include:

- a. Three webinars on small business marketing, available to all Kent County businesses.

The expert marketing services given to selected small business applicants will include:

- b. Two one-on-one coaching calls
- c. Assistance in identifying marketing gaps, opportunities, and direction
- d. Assistance with the creation of a 90-day marketing plan for their business
- e. A business-specific messaging kit (including language suggestions, hashtags, SEO advice, keywords)
- f. Business-specific templates of social media posts (Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook) and a press release template, including some social graphic elements designed by Octavo Designs
- g. A halfway point check in meeting to assess the efficacy of the 90-day marketing plan

Kent County Economic Development is partnering with the Upper Shore Regional Council and the Upper Shore SCORE Chapter. The marketing expertise will be provided by Platinum PR.

Who can apply for the expert marketing services grant?

Eligible applicants must meet all of the following requirements:

- Applicants must be a **small business** (50 or fewer employees)
- Applicants must **located/ have a physical address within Kent County**
- Business must be in **good standing** with the State of Maryland
- Applicants must be a **for-profit business** (at this time, the program will not be accepting applications from nonprofits).

Ineligible Applicants:

At this time, this program cannot provide assistance to any of the following businesses:

Adult bookstore, adult video shop, or other adult entertainment facility; Airbnbs, or vacation rental properties; check cashing facility; college or university; community hall; direct selling associations (DSAs), multi-level marketing (MLMs) industries; gambling facility; gun shop; hospital; liquor store; massage parlor; nursing home, assisted living facility; pawn shop; real estate agency, relators, or commercial/ residential development companies; tanning salon; or tattoo parlor.

Applicants will be asked to demonstrate how they would be able to sustain their marketing efforts after the grant period has ended. Applicants will additionally be required to demonstrate need for these marketing services.

How are applicants selected to participate in the program?

The educational portion of this program is open to any small business located within Kent County. The Small Business Marketing Grant awardees will be selected by a review committee. This committee is committed to awarding this grant to many different types of businesses who meet the eligibility requirements. Applications will be evaluated using a scoring rubric.

The evaluative criteria and their anticipated, respective weights are as follows:

- ⇒ Impact (50%) – The overall impact marketing services will have on a business to perform, recover from COVID-19, and compete in the industry sector. How important is marketing to this business? What kind of impact would marketing assistance have on the business?
- ⇒ Sustainability/ Permanence (25%) – The ability of a business to implement and sustain the marketing practices and expertise given through this grant program. Can the business sustain these new marketing efforts?
- ⇒ Financial Need (25%) – The financial capacity of a business to acquire these marketing services independently of the grant program. Would this business be able to afford marketing services without this grant?

The applicants who score the highest will be awarded the grant.

How does the application process work?

The application for the Small Business Marketing grant will be open for 15 business days, from June 22nd, 2020 at 10AM to July 10th, 2020 at 5 PM. All applications submitted within this window will be considered equally.

The application must be completed in full. Any application submitted that is incomplete will not be considered. Once an application has been submitted, the application may not be altered or changed in any way. Small businesses may only apply once for this grant cycle (i.e. multiple applications will not be considered).

Applicants will be notified in writing of their approval/ denial within 15 business days of the end of the application closing date, July 10th, 2020.

What happens after my business is granted the Small Business Marketing Grant?

Once the selected businesses have been notified of their award, businesses will be sent a grant agreement to finalize their participation in this program. Immediately following the submission of the grant agreement, businesses will be contacted by Platinum PR to begin the marketing services. Businesses may not postpone or reschedule the start of the marketing services. These marketing services will be available to selected businesses for 3.5 months.

NOTE: Kent County Economic Development reserves the right to make changes in the conditions of the Small Business Marketing Grant program as warranted.