



EMPOWER DIGITAL GRANT PROGRAM

Shareable Link to this Document: <https://tinyurl.com/EmpowerDigitalProgramOverview>

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Empower Digital Grant provides funding for the needs of eligible Massachusetts-based small businesses seeking relevant capital expenses, tools, and services to develop their digital capabilities in partnership with a Small Business Technical Assistance (SBTA) provider. MGCC will administer grants for up to \$5,000 for digital services and up to \$5,000 for digital capacity-building capital expenses.

Additional consideration will be given to businesses owned by women, minorities, immigrants, non-native English speakers, U.S. Military Veterans, disabled individuals, LGBTQ+, low-to-moderate income owners, socially and economically disadvantaged individuals, and businesses operating in Gateway Cities.

These funds were appropriated through the Commonwealth's Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2021 (FY21) and will be administered by MGCC. These funds will be made available for eligible businesses until funding is fully disbursed.

APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

Businesses eligible to receive an Empower Digital Grant must meet all the qualifications below:

- Has been nominated by a Technical Assistance Provider through MGCC's Small Business Technical Assistance Program
- Is based and operating within Massachusetts
- Is a business with a legal structure that is a for-profit entity
- Is a business owned by individual(s)
- Is employing 1-20 FTE employees (including 1099s)
- Is the business owners' primary source of income
- Is currently in operation (is not permanently closed, out of business, or filed for bankruptcy)
- Is current on all taxes (if you are on a payment plan and payments are not past due, that is considered current on taxes)
- Has an annual revenue not exceeding \$2,500,000
- Has completed and submitted the Digital Assessment to their SBTA Sponsor for review
- Has been in business for a minimum of one year at the time of application
- Requires 2021 or 2022 Federal Business Tax Returns or Schedule C

- Has all active and valid required business licenses and registrations for business operations
- Is NOT owned by someone employed by the sponsoring SBTA
- Is NOT a business owned in whole or in part by corporations, trusts, LLC's, partnerships, or cooperatives
- Is NOT a nonprofit, not-for-profit, church, religious institution or charitable organization
- Is NOT a government-owned entity or elected official office
- Is NOT currently listed on the federal debarment list
- Is NOT a business supplying digital services to other businesses (e.g. website design/development, SEO, programming)
- Is NOT a franchise with more than 2 locations, including those individually owned-and-operated (Franchises with up to 2 locations will be considered, but MGCC reserves the right to limit grant funding to one location)
- Is NOT a business that holds an ownership interest (percentage) in any other business applying for this grant
- Is NOT a chain (chains are define as businesses not headquartered in Massachusetts with multiple locations)
- Is NOT a real estate rental/sales business
- Is NOT a business primarily engaged in political or lobbying activities
- Is NOT a cannabis-related business
- Will NOT use this grant for any expenses already reimbursed or paid by other aid

Owned by:

- An individual of 18 years or older at the time of application
- A United States citizen or permanent resident

ATTENTION MULTI-BUSINESS OWNERS: When applying, be aware MGCC reserves the right to limit grant funding for one business per owner.

SMALL BUSINESS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE (SBTA) SPONSOR

Prospective applicants will be identified and sponsored by a [Small Business Technical Assistance \(SBTA\) provider from MGCC's network](#).

The SBTA Sponsor will support the applicant in the following ways:

- Review the applicant's Digital Assessment for coherence and completeness before allowing them to begin the application process for this grant
- Assist the applicant to complete the grant application by:
 - Helping applicant review the results of their Digital Assessment,
 - Helping to identify digital development goals,
 - Helping to identify Qualified Professional service providers to achieve digital development goals,
 - Scoping the project for achieving digital development goals,
 - As necessary, implementing the digital development project, and

- Facilitating communication with all parties involved

USE OF FUNDS

These grants are intended to increase the digital capabilities of the applicant by providing funding for professional services, training, digital products, or to purchase equipment/hardware according to the Digital Development Plan detailed in the application. Grant funds are not intended for ongoing business expenses. Please refer to the Empower Digital Development Guide for more information.

APPROVED

- Fees for Qualified Professional Services/Consultants, as specified in their Digital Development Plan, including but not limited to:
 - Designers (Graphic/Motion)
 - Digital Marketing Strategists
 - Social Media Strategists
 - Website/Content Developers
 - POS Implementation Specialists
 - Photographers
 - Writers
- Software, as specified in their Digital Development Plan, including but not limited to software for:
 - Graphic Design
 - Financial/Bookkeeping
 - POS/CRM
 - Productivity/ Team Collaboration
 - Social Media/SEO/Marketing
 - Cybersecurity
 - WiFi Upgrade/Internet packages
- Capital Expenses for the improvement of Digital Capabilities
 - Laptops, computers, tablets, POS systems, etc.
- Other use of funds for the development of digital capabilities not specified by a Qualified Professional service/consultant must be justified clearly

NON-APPROVED

- Non-digital capacity-building capital expenses
- Grant funds are not intended for ongoing business expenses.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION

- Latest Federal Business Tax Return: A complete copy (all schedules) of your filed 2021 or 2022 Federal Business Tax Return as submitted to the IRS. If you file Schedule C income, please upload that document in place of a Business Tax Return.
 - Social Security Numbers and EIN Numbers must be fully visible on documents

- Please be advised: If you received tax returns from a CPA, documents may be password protected. Include the document password for reviewer access. If you do not provide document passwords, your application will be considered incomplete
- Latest Federal Personal Tax Returns: A complete copy (all schedules) of your filed 2021 or 2022 Federal Personal Tax Returns as submitted to the IRS for each business owner with 20% or greater ownership.
 - Social Security Number and EIN Numbers must be fully visible on documents
 - Please be advised: If you received tax returns from a CPA, documents may be password protected. Include the document password for reviewer access. If you do not provide document passwords, you application will be considered incomplete
- IRS W-9 Form: Completed and signed IRS W-9 Form for your business.
 - You must fill out a new W-9 Form for MGCC, click here: [Form W-9 \(irs.gov\)](https://www.irs.gov/forms-pubs/getting-started-with-w-9)
 - Must provide information for boxes 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, Part I and Part II of W-9 Form
 - If you have an Employer Identification Number (EIN), provide that in Part I of W-9 Form. Otherwise, provide your Social Security Number (SSN). Number provided should match your Federal Business Tax Return, Schedule C, or Federal Personal Tax Return.
- Certificate of Good Standing – Massachusetts Secretary of State’s Office: A copy of your unexpired Certificate of Good Standing issued from the Massachusetts Secretary of State.

[EXAMPLE CERTIFICATE](#)

 - Required if your business is a LLC, Partnership (except General Partnerships) or Corporation
 - All entities organized in other states that operate in Massachusetts must be registered and in good standing in Massachusetts
 - Your Certificate must have been issued within the past 12 months
 - If you need to request a Certificate of Good Standing, please do so immediately as it may take up to 2+ weeks to receive, click below. Note: Uploaded receipts will not meet application completion requirements.
<https://corp.sec.state.ma.us/CorpWeb/Certificates/CertificateOrderForm.aspx>
- Business Certificate: A copy of your unexpired Business Certificate from the city/town in which your business operates.
 - Required if your business is a Sole Proprietorship or General Partnership
 - If you need to request a Business Certificate, visit your town/city hall website.
- Photo ID: A copy of the business owner's photo identification (ID).
 - Accepted ID’s include State-issued driver's license/ID card or U.S. Passport book/card
 - ID must be valid and not expired
 - ID match the business owner who is an authorized signer for the business that signs this application
 - If it is a State-issued driver’s license, please submit a copy of the front of the ID only

- Digital Development Plan: A copy of the plan to utilize the proposed digital development purchases/services including a draft of the proposed work with all qualified professionals including all deliverables, all project costs, project timeline, and clear success metrics and deadlines to benchmark progress towards the digital development of their business. For a template, please feel free to refer to the last page of the Empower Digital Development Guide.
- Proposals/Quotes/Receipts/Invoices/Screenshots: A copy of all proposal(s); quote(s); receipt(s); screenshot(s) from all involved vendors referenced in the Digital Development Plan, including the vendor's name, vendor's business address, all associated costs, and project timelines (if applicable).

ELIGIBILITY FORM

Grant Program Opened: June 15, 2021

Grant Program Closes: When funds are fully disbursed with the latest possible deadline of June 30, 2023

APPROVAL PROCESS

This will be a rolling application. Applicants can expect to hear back within 2-6 weeks of the completed submission of their grant application, including all necessary supplementary documents and correct information.