

# **Rural Idaho Economic Development Professional Grant Program**

## **Application Guide**



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### **2024-2025**

The intent of the Rural Idaho Economic Development Professional Grant Program is to build economic development capacity in rural Idaho. To accomplish this, state funds are appropriated to help rural areas employ paid Economic Development Professionals who, with a board of directors, manage locally directed economic development programs.

The ED Professional will work on business attraction, retention, expansion, and diversification projects in partnership with the Department to achieve the economic development goals of both the rural area and the Department. The Department recognizes that a minimum wage and benefit package in the range of \$60,000 to \$80,000 is necessary to hire and retain qualified ED professionals.

#### **IMPORTANT DATES AND DEADLINES**

Application Webinar: 10 AM (Mountain Time) May 7, 2024. Here is a [link](#) to the webinar. (Registration required)

2 PM (Mountain Time) May 8, 2024. This is a makeup webinar for those unable to participate on May 7, 2024. Here is a [link](#) to the webinar. (Registration required)

Draft Application Review: 4PM (Mountain Time) May 22, 2024. By request Commerce Staff will review an applicant's draft. Applicants will need to contact Commerce staff to request feedback.

Application Due Date: 4:00 p.m. (Mountain Time) May 31, 2024.

Award Period: July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025, subject to the terms, conditions and satisfactory performance as stipulated in the Memorandum of Understanding.

#### **Definitions**

*Department* – Idaho Department of Commerce

*Economic Development Organization (EDO)* – The county committee, governmental joint powers committee, or non-profit corporation incorporated in the State of Idaho, designated by the Eligible Applicant to manage the ED Professional and activities funded through the auspices of the Program.

*Economic Development Project* – Any project that develops new or expands existing businesses, helps a business enhance its productivity, creates new jobs, saves existing jobs, adds value to the state and local tax base, or positions a community to create any of the above.

*ED Professional or Professional* – The person hired with Program funds to facilitate Economic Development Projects and to carry out core economic development activities e.g., business attraction, business retention and expansion, business startups etc.

*Eligible Applicant* – The Idaho county or a group of Idaho counties, cities and/or tribes joining together to submit a single application with populations meeting the grant guidelines.

*Fiscal Agent* – The city, county, or entity designated by the Eligible Applicant to be responsible for requesting, disbursing, tracking and assuring compliance with all Program requirements.

*Full-time* – Full-time is defined as at least 32 hours/week, including the option of job sharing, provided the minimum number of hours have been met.

*Part Time* – Part time is defined as 20 hours per week.

*Private Sector Representative* – A person who does not hold elective office but owns, manages, or is employed by a business that is not under the direct day to day supervision of a governmental entity.

*Program* – The Rural Idaho Economic Development Professional Program

*Interim Economic Development Professional* – A person that the Economic Development Organization (EDO) has designated to temporarily fill their vacant Economic Development Professional position during the term of the grant. The Department must be notified in advance of this arrangement and approve this arrangement. The hire must work enough hours on economic development to meet the definition of “full-time for programs receiving \$15,001 or greater and part-time those applicants awarded \$15,000 or less.

*Vacant Position* – For scoring a “Vacant Position refers to any applicant funded through this program in the previous 12 months, whose grant funded position was unfilled for 46 consecutive days or longer. Programs operating with interim economic development professionals will be considered vacant unless the applicant can document that the hire worked full time on economic development activities during their tenure of service.

*Special Conditions* – Language added to a fully executed grant agreement addressing performance and compliance concerns. These must be agreed to in order to receive funding.

Please read the rural Idaho Economic Development Professionals (RIEDP) Frequently Asked questions FY2025 found on Commerce’s [grant resources page](#). for more clarity.

### **Submission**

All applications must be submitted through the Department’s online [portal](#). Applications need to be submitted with a login and password belonging to the Eligible Applicant. To obtain a login and password or to check to see if your existing login and password will work for this application, please contact the Department’s grants team [grants@commerce.idaho.gov](mailto:grants@commerce.idaho.gov).

### **Request Amounts**

Applicants operating a full-time program may request up to \$35,000. **Applicants with a special condition in their FY24 grant agreement may not receive an amount more than \$30,000.** To be eligible for full time funding, an applicant’s service area must include two or more incorporated communities. Applicants wanting to fund a part time position are limited to a request up to \$15,000. Commerce may award amounts below an applicant’s request for any reason.

### **Questions**

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A frequently asked questions document may be found on Idaho Commerce’s [grants resources page](#).

### **Match Requirements**

Cash participation is needed to maximize the effectiveness of state funds and to develop a financially sustainable program. ***A cash match equal to 55% of the amount requested is required.*** Cash reserves may not be used to meet the match requirement. In the long term, as economic gain is achieved, it is expected that additional local funds will reduce the reliance on state funds. Grantees will enter into a grant agreement with Commerce committing to a locally funded cash match. Local matching funds shall be used to provide for the remainder of the ED Professional’s salary and benefit package, training, professional development, office space, telephone, computer, internet access, necessary office equipment, clerical support, travel for marketing opportunities, and for the development of marketing materials. Matching fund commitments, up to the minimum required, must be documented by the contributor in writing at the time of application. **Applicants who fail to document the minimum amount of required match within their application will not be considered for funding.**

### **Eligible Applicants**

An applicant must be an Idaho county or a group of Idaho counties, cities and/or tribes joining together to submit a single application. Idaho counties with populations of more than 50,000 may apply, provided that the population of the areas being served does not include any cities with a population exceeding 10,000. Under the auspices of a joint powers' arrangement with an eligible County, a city may serve as the lead applicant.

**Note: Commerce will award only one grant per county. We will not award funds to programs serving a single city.**

### **Program Specifications**

Eligible Applicants are required to form an Economic Development Organization (EDO) to manage the activities of the ED Professional funded through the auspices of the Program. The EDO may be a standalone not for profit corporation registered with the State of Idaho or a committee organized under the auspices of a County Commission or multi government joint powers agreement. A representative from the Department shall be provided with advanced notice of all EDO meetings, electronic copies of all meeting minutes and reports and provided with non-voting board or committee member ex-officio status. Applicants are encouraged to have strong private sector representation on their boards or committees. The board or committee shall meet at least six (6) times per year and develop a specific plan of work for the ED Professional along with a plan for oversight and evaluation. A Department representative shall be invited to participate in any activities related to the hiring and performance evaluation of the ED Professional.

### **Application Evaluation**

Applications will be assessed on the following criteria:

**Applicant Overview:** In this section the applicant will discuss their community and economic development needs. The ideal answer will identify inherent barriers facing their communities, identify recent losses of key businesses or industry that have occurred in the last two to three years and explain why their communities cannot self-fund an economic development program. Higher scores will be awarded to applicants who incorporate data into their answer. It is highly recommended that the applicant distinguishes their communities from others competing for this grant. This section will constitute 20% of the application scoring.

**Work Plan:** In this section reviewers will be evaluating the applicant's approach to economic development. This section will constitute a total of 60% of the application score. Specifically, we are interested in the following...

**A. Target Industries** – Applicants will need to identify three to five industries they will be targeting for expansion and or attraction over the twelve-month grant period. For each industry we want to know why that industry is a target and how

you plan to approach that industry e.g., engage industry groups, attend trade shows etc. This answer will be worth up to fifteen (15%) percent of an applicant's score.

**B. Business Outreach** - The applicant will need to spell out their approach for connecting with specific businesses in the industries identified in their "Target Industries" answer. The applicant's answer should include incentives that might be of use to assist those businesses, the tools they will use to connect with those businesses and the frequency of their contacts. Evaluators also want to know about the other partners you will be using in these outreach efforts. This answer will be worth up to fifteen (15%) percent of an applicant's score.

**C. Main Street and Entrepreneurship** – Applicants will need to identify tools, activities, and strategies to create, grow and strengthen main street businesses (retail, hospitality, and professional services) and or promote entrepreneurship. Answers that specially address proactive measures for helping residents create new businesses will receive higher scores. This answer will be worth up to fifteen (15%) percent of an applicant's score.

**D. Place Making** – Applicants should describe projects and activities to make their communities more attractive to businesses and the workforce. Some of the items discussed in this section might include utilities enhancements, infrastructure projects and affordable housing to name a few. This answer will be worth up to fifteen (15%) percent of an applicant's score.

**Potentials & Opportunities** – In this section applicants should address projects, activities and opportunities not covered in the previous section. This section will account for 20% of the scoring.

**Bonus Points** – Bonus points will be awarded to applicants based on the following criteria. For applicants serving more than one county this section will be evaluated on a weighted basis.

- Applicants whose annual unemployment in 2023 was higher than the state rate will receive one (1) bonus point.
- Applicants whose 2023 median household income is below state median household income will receive one (1) bonus point.
- Applicants whose 2023 poverty rate is above the state poverty rate will receive one (1) bonus point.
- Applicants whose 2023 assessed valuation is below the median assessed valuation for all applicants will receive one (1) bonus point.

- Applicants will receive bonus points based on their per capita grant request. This is based on population served. See Frequently Asked Questions regarding how population is calculated.
  - If the grant award per capita is:
    - \$0 to \$1.50, then 15 bonus points will be awarded.
    - \$1.51 to \$3.00, then 10 bonus points will be awarded.
    - \$3.01 to \$4.50, then 5 bonus points will be awarded.
    - There are no bonus points awarded if the per capita grant request is \$4.51 or more.

**Risk Ratings – Points may be subtracted from applications based on the following...**

- Applicants who within a twelve-month period coinciding with deadline date of this application, will lose one (1) point for each instance a monthly report was submitted five (5) days or later without a Commerce approved extension.
- Applicants who failed to submit six-month financial statements by the deadlines stipulated in item eleven (11) sub section c of the fiscal year 2024 Rural Idaho Economic Development Professional Grant Agreement will lose five (5) points.
- Applicants who fail to document a formal operating structure will lose one (1) point.
- Applicants who fail document that their bylaws have been reviewed in the last two years will lose one (1) point.
- Applicants that failed to fulfill any special conditions from their 2023-2024 Memorandum of Understanding will lose 15 points.
- Vacant Position – Returning programs with a grant supported vacant position for more than 59 consecutive days during the program period from July 1, 2021, through June 30, 2022, will have the following points deducted from their application score.
  - 60 -89 days – 5points
  - 90-119 days -10 points
  - 120 – days plus – 15 points

**Incomplete Applications – Any applicant submitting an incomplete application will not be considered for funding.**

**Award Criteria**

Award amounts will be determined by application scores and additional factors including a return on investment to the State of Idaho, alignment with the Department’s strategic priorities, and the overall availability of grant funds. Award caps will be subject to the following:

- Applicants failing to achieve fifty (50) points or higher risk being denied funding.
- Applicants with scores between fifty (50) and sixty (60) points will be limited to an award amount not to exceed \$15,000.
- Applicants seeking funding for a part time program must achieve fifty (50) points or higher and will be limited to an award amount not to exceed \$15,000.
- Applicants seeking consideration for an award of more than \$30,000 must achieve a score of 90 points or higher and have not had any special conditions added to their FY 24 grant agreement.
- All other applicants, proposing a full-time program, will be eligible to receive a grant award up to their request but not to exceed \$30,000.

Applicants may not receive the amount requested or be awarded based on previous awards. Commerce will award only one grant per county. We will not award funds to programs serving a single community. A city or county may not be served by more than one Grantee.