



Central UP Small Business Support Hub Direct Grant Guidelines

Grant Overview

The Central Upper Peninsula Small Business Support Hub (The HUB) was established by the Lake Superior Community Partnership (LSCP) and 6 (six) strategic partners via the Michigan Economic Development Corporation's (MEDC) Small Business Support Hubs Program (SBSH). The mission of The Hub is to connect small businesses within a seven-county area to the right resources at the right time to maximize their resiliency, sustainability, and growth potential.

\$426,315 of The Hub's SBSH funding is allocated to supply Direct Grants to The HUB's small business participants, ***provided the funding drives stabilization or increases revenue and fills a need that cannot otherwise be met through a HUB program or service.***

Eligible HUB Participants

To be eligible to receive support and services from the HUB, the following statements about the business must all be true.

The business:

- is located within the HUB's 7-County coverage area: Alger, Baraga, Delta, Dickinson, Marquette, Menominee, or Schoolcraft Counties (for a start-up, the business owner's primary residence is located within one of the listed counties).
- is independently owned and operated.
- employs less than 500 people.
- is NOT dominant in its field of operation (i.e., it does not have a monopoly maintained through exclusionary or predatory practices, rather than through superior products or business acumen).
- is NOT a non-profit organization.
- is NOT in the cannabis or casino gaming industry.

Eligible Direct Grant Applicants

To be eligible to apply for one of the HUB's Direct Grants, a business must be eligible to participate in the HUB as outlined above AND have:

- completed and submitted The HUB’s online [Client Intake Form](#) requesting to become a HUB Program participant;

AND

- met with a HUB Small Business Resource Navigator at least once **before** the grant application window opens;

AND EITHER

- attended** either a HUB sponsored event, program, or training, OR a HUB Navigator recommended small business event, program, or training (completion of which must be verifiable and be communicated back to the HUB Navigator).

OR

- actively engaged*** in 1:1 Business Coaching and Consulting or Support Services provided by either a HUB Small Business Resource Navigator or a comparable local or regional business development specialist.

**Active engagement requires both an initial consultation meeting with a HUB Small Business Resource Navigator AND follow through communications with the HUB Navigator regarding actions taken and progress made toward the objectives and goals the business established with either the HUB Navigator or a comparable local or regional small business development specialist.*

Direct Grant Timeline

Direct Grant Traunch	Application Window	Available Funds	Available Funds by County	Notification Tentatively by
1	9/18/2024 -10/17/2024	\$105,000	\$15,000	11/27/2024
2	1/17/2025 – 2/14/2025	\$105,000	N/A	3/31/2025
3	5/30/2025 - 6/27/2025	TBD	TBD	8/11/2025
4	10/10/2025 - 11/07/2025	TBD	TBD	12/22/2025

Eligible Costs, Expenditures, Activities

- equipment, inventory, software, and hardware purchases; **the cost of any single unit of which CANNOT exceed \$4,999.** Note: inventory not correlated to IMPACT (defined below) will be considered an ineligible general overhead cost.

- highly specialized consulting services or other services the HUB either cannot provide or cannot contract for.
- payment of **initial** certification or **initial** licensing fees - must result in the business's receipt of the corresponding certification or license by 9/30/2026.
- any other HUB-approved cost (that is not an Ineligible Cost) related to supporting the business' operations or growth needs.

Ineligible Costs, Expenditures, Activities

- **general overhead:** such as rent, lease payments, utilities, professional membership dues; personnel costs (salary, wages, fringe benefits), and certification, license, software, and subscription service **renewals** (e.g., online accounting programs/services, platforms, website hosting, etc.).
- **general infrastructure projects** and **building-based construction or renovation** (essentially ANYTHING that would disturb structures or the ground.)
- costs that have been reimbursed or will be reimbursed by the Michigan Strategic Fund (MSF), MEDC, or any other local, regional, state or federally funded program.
- projects contrary to efforts to stop COVID-19.
- **costs incurred before** a Direct Grant is awarded.

***Each Eligible Small Business may receive only ONE MEDC Small Business Support Hubs Program Direct Grant from one of the 27 small business support hubs.*

***Direct Grants must be obligated by February 1, 2026; meaning a Direct Grant Award Agreement between the small business (the Grantee) and The HUB (the Grantor) must be signed into effect before February 1, 2026. For a Direct Grant Award Agreement to be in effect, it must have been signed by an authorized representative of the business, The HUB's Program Manager, and Lake Superior Community Partnership's CEO.*

Grant Guidelines and Criteria

The grant award process is a competitive process. Applications will be reviewed and thoroughly evaluated based on these guidelines and the following criteria:

- **Limit \$10,000** - The maximum limit on grant fund requests for the HUB's **second** Direct Grant application window has been set at \$10,000.
- **Online Application** - Applicants must use the online application form, and all sections of the application must be completed for the applicant to be considered for a Direct Grant.
- **State and Federal Legal Compliance** - All Grantees must be in compliance and remain in compliance with applicable state and federal laws throughout the Grant Award period.
- **Good Standing with LARA and Local Governance** - Throughout the Grant Award period, Grantee must be in and remain in good standing with the State of Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA), and laws governing the

Sovereign Tribal Nation or local municipality in which the business operates.

- **Current on State and Federal Tax Obligations** - The grantee must be current and remain current on State and Federal tax obligations or be on a repayment plan with the Treasury or IRS throughout the Grant Award period.
- **Sufficiently Detailed Budget** - Applicants must include a sufficiently detailed budget in their application. (Budgets should be in whole dollar amounts rounded to the nearest \$100.)
- **Match not Required** - A match is not required *but is encouraged*. For example, if requesting a \$10,000 grant for a \$20,000 project and supplying \$10,000 in earned revenue yourself, the earned revenue supplied would be a 50% percent match of the total project cost.
- **Match Type** - A match can be cash or in-kind contributions or a combination thereof. The project costs, requested grant amount, and match amounts committed by the applicant and any other source must be identified in the Project Budget included in the application.
- **IMPACT** – Application narrative and supporting documents must clearly explain how the overall impact of the project will drive stabilization of the business or increase its revenue. (e.g., impact the business’s ability to leverage sales, grow their customer base, or better sustain the business in some way. Examples: expansion - adding a product line or a new location or transitioning from retail to wholesale, diversification – of products or services offered, and technological upgrades – to increase efficiency or production.
- **Eligible Costs** – Project proposal, budget, and supporting documents supplied via the online Direct Grant Application must be detailed enough to sufficiently demonstrate that all costs for the proposed project are eligible as specified by the Grant’s funding source and in these guidelines. Recommended supporting documentation includes quotes or estimates for services (e.g., web design and hosting, highly specialized consulting services, installation, training, etc.) and either photos or screenshots of products, items, or equipment that also contain detailed pricing information.
- **Goals, Timeline, and Benchmarks** – Applicant’s Project Proposal must clearly define their focused goals for the project and include timelines and benchmarks towards a final completion date. All Direct Grant projects must be completed and all funds expended before September 30, 2026, per the Grant’s funding source.
- **Cost Reimbursement-based** - The HUB’s Direct Grants are cost-reimbursement based. The Grantee shall be responsible for all project costs through to completion of the project and until The HUB approves their final report submission and the accompanying proofs of eligible costs for reimbursement.
- **Record Retention and Submission** - The grantee is responsible for keeping detailed records to document compliance with grant requirements and for submission of

suitable supporting documents with all requests to be reimbursed for such cost(s). The grantee must use The HUB’s online Direct Grant Expense Reimbursement form to submit their reimbursement request and upload supporting documents.

- **Suitable Proofs** - To be reimbursed, the grantee must submit suitable proof that the expenses were incurred for ***eligible project costs and activities contracted and paid for within the timeframe specified*** by the Grantee’s Direct Grant Award Agreement. *Costs incurred before a Direct Grant has been awarded CANNOT be reimbursed with the HUB’s Direct Grant funding.*
- **Single Payment Reimbursement** - The grantee will receive their approved Direct Grant reimbursement in the form of a single check or a single Direct Deposit to the bank account they authorize.

Project Criteria and Application Review

Direct Grant Applications that meet the above guidelines and criteria shall be reviewed and scored on a 65-point scale based on how well the following criteria are demonstrated within the application:

Direct Grant Scoring Rubric	
Category	Possible Points
Clearly defined and focused project goals, timelines, and benchmarks.	15
The overall impact of the project drives stabilization or increases revenue. (impacts the business’s ability to leverage sales, grow their customer base, or better sustains the business in some way).	30
The proposed project is sound, sufficiently detailed, and realistically achievable before September 30, 2026.	Up to 10 pts for sound and sufficiently detailed project and up to 10 pts for achievable by 9/30/2026. Up to 20 pts total.
The business has adapted or attempted to adapt to adverse economic impacts/circumstances; OR the requested project is a way to adapt. (e.g. introduce new products and/or services, adapt existing product or service offerings, automate business processes, or improve efficiency of staffing or processes to maintain or increase revenue.	If no attempt to adapt, 0 pts. Up to 10 pts total if has adapted, or if project is a way to adapt.
Total Rubric Points Score:	___/65

Bonus Points

Bonus points will be awarded to SEDI-owned businesses that have certified as such in their HUB Client Intake Form and or Direct Grant Application.

Bonus Points	
Category	Possible Points

Is the business SEDI-owned? Owner self-certifies access to credit on reasonable terms is diminished as compared to others in similar economic circumstances, due to their: (1) membership in a group that has been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudice or cultural bias within American society; (2) gender; (3) veteran status; (4) limited English proficiency; (5) physical handicap; (6) long-term residence in an environment isolated from the mainstream of American society; (7) membership of a federally or state-recognized Indian Tribe.	If yes, 1 point for each of the 7 listed circumstances that apply.
Total Bonus Points:	___/7

Total Overall Score

Rubric Points Score + Bonus Points (Total Points Possible)	___/72
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Review Process

The Hub reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to reject an application if it:

- Does not meet the program requirements; including scope, eligibility, and allowable grant dollar use.
- Is received after the deadline.
- Is incomplete or missing any of the required forms, narrative, and budget.
- Does not follow the outlined application requirements.

For more information on the program, please go to www.centralupsmallbizhub.org

Accepted applications will be independently reviewed and scored with the Rubric by two HUB Navigators and The HUB’s Program Manager. The final score of each application will be the average of the three reviewer’s scores. The Applications with the top 20 final scores will be forwarded to The Hub Advisory Council for their review and determination. The Advisory Council is comprised of the Hub’s Program Manager and a senior leader from each of the Hub’s Strategic Partners; Lake Superior Community Partnership, Michigan Small Business Development Center – Upper Peninsula Region, Accelerate UP, Innovate Marquette SmartZone, Northern Michigan University’s School of Business, Keweenaw Bay Indian Community, and Sault Tribe Thrive. When reviewing applications, the HUB Advisory Council may adjust scores and are tasked with recommending final award determinations. Applicants will be notified of determinations regarding their application within 45-60 days of the Direct Grant Application window’s closing.

During the review process, the HUB may request additional information or clarification from applicants regarding their proposed projects. The HUB may also elect to award a Direct Grant of a lesser amount than requested in the grant application. All communications and inquiries concerning applications should be sent via e-mail to: erica@centralupsmallbizhub.org

Equal Opportunity

The State of Michigan, Michigan Economic Development Corporation, and Lake Superior Community Partnership prohibit discrimination on the basis of religion, race, color, national origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, height, weight, marital status, partisan considerations, disability, or genetic information that is unrelated to the person's ability to perform the duties of a particular job or position.

To file a complaint of discrimination, please contact the Michigan Department of Civil Rights at: Phone: 313-456-3700 Fax: 313-456-3701 Toll-Free: 800-482-3604 TTY: 877-878-8464 Email:

MDCRServiceCenter@michigan.gov

Need Additional Information?

Visit centralupsmallbizhub.org for more information.

Questions?

Email questions to erica@centralupsmallbizhub.org. FAQ responses will be posted to centralupsmallbizhub.org



This project is supported by federal award number [SLFRP0127] awarded to Lake Superior Community Partnership by the U.S. Department of the Treasury.

Appendix B Direct Grant Application Scoring Rubric

Direct Grant Scoring Rubric	
Category	Possible Points
Clearly defined and focused project goals, timelines, and benchmarks.	15
The overall impact of the project drives stabilization or increases revenue. (impacts the business's ability to leverage sales, grow their customer base, or better sustains the business in some way).	30
The proposed project is sound, sufficiently detailed, and realistically achievable before September 30, 2026.	Up to 10 pts for sound and sufficiently detailed project and up to 10 pts for achievable by 9/30/2026. Up to 20 pts total.
The business has adapted or attempted to adapt to adverse economic impacts/circumstances; OR the requested project is a way to adapt. (e.g. introduce new products and/or services, adapt existing product or service offerings, automate business processes, or improve efficiency of staffing or processes to maintain or increase revenue.	If no attempt to adapt, 0 pts Up to 10 pts total if has adapted, or if project is a way to adapt.
Total Rubric Points Score:	___/65
Bonus Points	
Category	Possible Points
Is the business SEDI-owned? Owner self-certifies access to credit on reasonable terms is diminished as compared to others in similar economic circumstances, due to their: (1) membership in a group that has been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudice or cultural bias within American society; (2) gender; (3) veteran status; (4) limited English proficiency; (5) physical handicap; (6) long-term residence in an environment isolated from the mainstream of American society; (7) membership of a federally or state-recognized Indian Tribe.	If yes, 1 point for each of the 7 listed economic circumstances.
Total Bonus Points:	___/7
Rubric Points Score + Bonus Points (Total Points Possible)	___/72

Appendix C Direct Grant Project Proposal Template

Project Title: [Your Project Title]

Objective: Briefly describe the main goal of your project. For example, “To enhance our online presence and increase customer engagement through a revamped website and targeted digital marketing.”

Project Details

1. Project Description:

- **Overview:** Provide a detailed description of your project. Explain what you plan to do and why it is important for your business.
- **Needs:** List everything required for the project, such as services, products, or equipment.
- **Costs:** Provide a detailed budget, including quotes or estimates for each item or service needed.

2. Funding Sources:

- **Direct Grant:** Specify the amount you are requesting from the Direct Grant.
- **Other Sources:** Mention any additional funding sources, such as personal investment, loans, or other grants.

3. Timeline:

- **Start Date:** When you plan to begin the project.
- **End Date:** Estimated completion date.
- **Milestones:** Key milestones and their expected dates.

4. Goals and Impact:

- **Short-Term Goals:** What you hope to achieve in the immediate future (e.g., increased website traffic, higher sales).
- **Long-Term Goals:** Long-term benefits for your business (e.g., sustained revenue growth, market expansion).
- **Impact:** How the project will promote growth, increase revenue, or maintain stability for your business.

5. Funding and Reimbursement:

- **Funding Plan:** How you will finance the project until completion.
- **Reimbursement:** Plan for requesting reimbursement upon project completion.

Supporting Documentation

- **Quotes/Estimates:** Attach quotes or estimates for services and products.
- **Screenshots/Photos:** Include images of products, items, or equipment with listed prices/fees.

(The following page is a narrative example of a project proposal created with this template.)

Example Narrative

Project Title: Digital Transformation for Enhanced Customer Engagement

Objective: To revamp our website and implement a comprehensive digital marketing strategy to increase customer engagement and drive sales.

Project Description: We plan to redesign our website to improve user experience and integrate e-commerce capabilities. Additionally, we will launch a targeted digital marketing campaign to attract new customers and retain existing ones.

Needs and Costs:

- Website redesign: \$5,000 (Quote from XYZ Web Design)
- Digital marketing services: \$3,000 (Quote from ABC Marketing)
- E-commerce platform integration: \$2,000 (Quote from E-Shop Solutions)

Funding Sources:

- Direct Grant: \$7,000
- Personal Investment: \$3,000

Timeline:

- Start Date: March 1, 2025
- End Date: June 30, 2025
- Milestones: Website launch (April 30, 2025), Marketing campaign launch (May 15, 2025)

Goals and Impact:

- Short-Term Goals: Increase website traffic by 50%, boost online sales by 30%.
- Long-Term Goals: Achieve sustained revenue growth, expand market reach.
- Impact: The project will enhance our online presence, attract more customers, and increase revenue, ensuring the stability and growth of our business.

Funding and Reimbursement: We will use personal investment to cover initial costs and request reimbursement from the Direct Grant upon project completion.

Supporting Documentation

- Attached quotes from XYZ Web Design, ABC Marketing, and E-Shop Solutions.
- Screenshots of proposed website design and marketing materials.

Feel free to customize this template to fit your specific project. Good luck with your application!