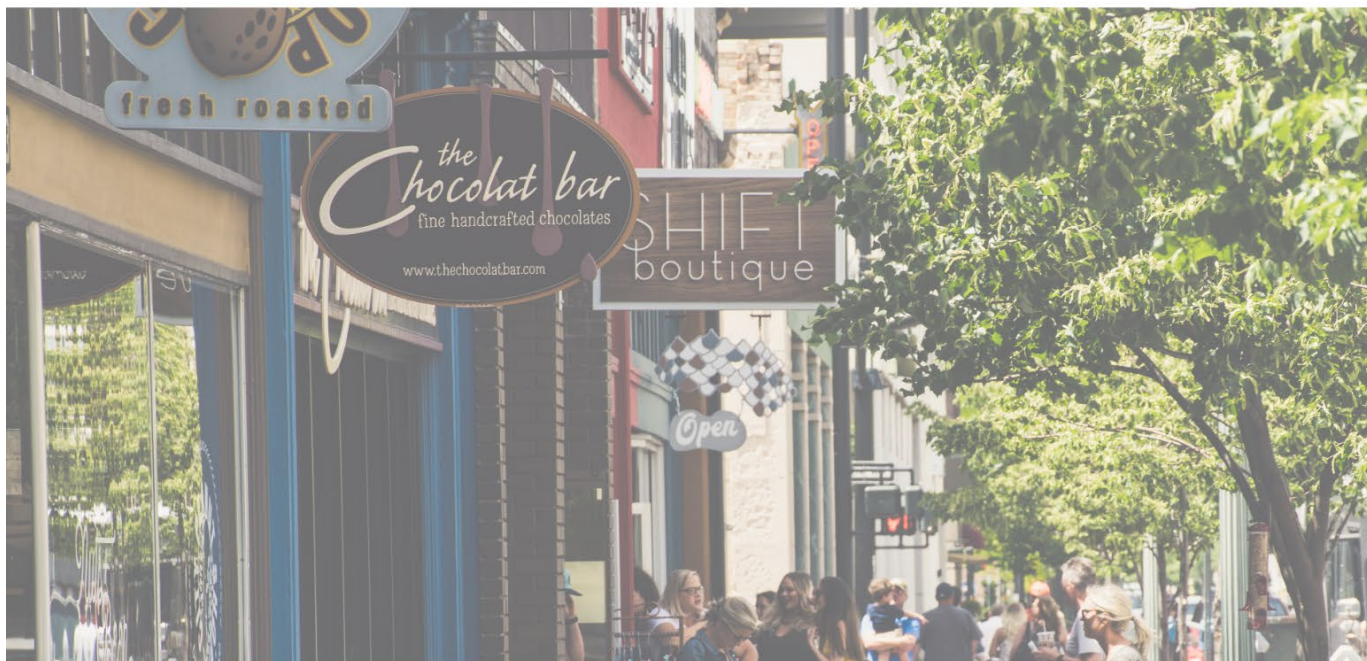




Kern Biz

FACADE IMPROVEMENT GRANT PROGRAM

GUIDELINES & APPLICATION PROCESS



Kern County Administrative Office

1115 Truxtun Avenue, 5th Floor

Bakersfield, CA 93301

Phone: (661) 868-3198

Email: CAOmailbox@kerncounty.com

www.kerncounty.com/economicdevelopment



Contents

Program Overview	3
Program Objectives.....	3
Figure 1. Application Process.....	3
Eligible Applicants.....	4
Eligible Activities.....	5
Ineligible Projects	6
Program Requirements	6
Application Instructions & Submittal.....	7
Application Review & Selection Process	8
Evaluation Criteria	10
Grant Agreement.....	10
Reimbursement Process.....	11
Attachments	12
Attachment A – Kern Biz Application	12
Attachment B – Claim for Payment Reimbursement Form	12

Program Overview

The County of Kern – Economic Development Division has contracted with Project Development Solutions, Inc. to provide grant administration services for the Kern Biz Façade Improvement Grant Program. Kern Biz is designed to support investment for storefront businesses in commercial corridors, enhance security measures, and promote public benefits within Kern’s unincorporated communities by providing grants to small business owners and property owners to improve the exterior and interior of their commercial properties. The program is intended to encourage economic development and reduce blight by enhancing the physical appearance and commercial viability of storefront businesses. The County has allocated \$40,000 per Supervisorial District for the 2025-2026 fiscal year to support this program. This one-time, competitive grant offers flexible funding of up to \$10,000 per project for a wide range of activities. Eligible grant funded improvements or business costs must be completed within (six) 6 months of execution of the grant agreement.

Program Objectives

1. **Support Local Businesses.** Provide financial assistance to small businesses and property owners to upgrade their storefronts, increasing customer attraction and foot traffic.
2. **Boost Economic Development & Revitalization.** Stimulate local economic activity by increasing property values, attracting new businesses, and encouraging private investment in commercial, industrial, and mixed-use areas.
3. **Promote Public Safety.** Improve lighting, signage, and overall visibility to enhance pedestrian safety and reduce crime in business districts.
4. **Strengthen Community Identity.** Foster a sense of pride and engagement among business owners and residents by revitalizing neighborhood commercial spaces.

Figure 1. Application Process

1. Program Release	Read through the Kern Biz Grant Program Guidelines to understand the program, its requirements, and application/reimbursement processes.
2. Technical Assistance	Contact Project Development Solutions, Inc. at (661) 847-9254 or proposals@pdevsolutions.com for all program and application related questions. Applicants may also schedule an appointment or visit Project Development Solutions, Inc. during office hours for additional support.
3. Applications Due	Submit a complete application with required attachments by August 15, 2025 . Incomplete applications will not be considered for funding.

4. Review & Scoring

Applications will be reviewed for completeness by Project Development Solutions, Inc. and scored for award consideration by the Evaluation Committee. All applicants will receive written notification of their grant selection results.

5. Grant Agreement

A grant agreement will be finalized with the County before project work begins.

6. Start Project

Once the mandatory agreement is finalized, work may begin.

Eligible Applicants

Eligible Applicants include only privately owned businesses located within Kern County's unincorporated communities. Private Businesses must meet the following requirements:

1. A legal business entity, such as a Sole Proprietorship, Partnership, Corporation, or Limited Liability Company.
2. The business' fixed office or distribution point must be in and have a street address within unincorporated Kern County for at least six (6) months prior to the submission of a grant application. Applicants should refer to the [Interactive County Map Tool](#) and the [Is My Address in Unincorporated Kern? | Kern County, CA](#) to determine if their business is located within unincorporated Kern County.
3. The business must credit all sales tax generated from the business to its business location in Kern County.
4. Recipient(s) must be owners or tenants of commercial, industrial, mixed-use property.
5. To help verify business eligibility and ensure project readiness, interested applicants should provide the following supporting documentation:
 - a. Copy of valid government-issued identification for applicant(s)
 - b. Copy of any licenses or permits
 - c. Proof of business location in unincorporated Kern County for a minimum of six months (e.g., lease agreement, utility bill)
 - d. Lease Agreement (if applicant is a tenant)
 - e. Written consent from the property owner (if applicant is a tenant)
 - f. Site photos reflecting current (pre-project) conditions
 - g. Proof of insurance, including General Liability and Workers' Compensation coverage (Preferred at the time of application and required upon award selection)
 - h. Contractor quote(s) detailing the scope and cost of eligible improvements (preferred, but not required)

Eligible Activities

Grant proceeds are to be used for the eligible activities described below. All improvements shall conform to all County Codes, Zoning Ordinance, and applicable Design Guidelines. The project must include exterior improvements that are visible to the public and improve the property.

The grant can fund Façade Improvements (exterior building improvements), Site Enhancements (nonstructural improvements), and Security Site Enhancements.

1. Exterior Façade Improvements

The project must include exterior improvements that are visible to the public and improve the property. All exterior improvements, made possible by the receipt of grant funds, shall remain with the property on which the improvements were initially constructed. The grantee may request permission from the Economic Development Division team to remove or relocate the exterior improvements. Eligible façade improvements include:

- Exterior Painting
- Signs
- Siding
- Windows
- Exterior Walls
- Doors
- Accessibility Improvement
- Exterior Shutters/Awnings
- Exterior Stairs, Porches, Railings and Exit Facilities
- Lighting
- Roofing

2. Site Enhancements

The project includes site enhancements to improve aspects of a property unrelated to the structure that adds curb appeal and value to the property. All site improvements, made possible by the receipt of grant funds, shall remain with the property on which the improvements were initially constructed. Eligible site improvements include:

- Construction of Outdoor Dining or Gathering Spaces
- Parking Lot Reconstruction
- Landscaping
- Shade Structures
- Outdoor Furniture
- Walkways (sidewalks, pavers, plazas, or other improvements for pedestrian use)
- Fencing
- Development Fees (transportation, building permit, water and sewer connection, and planning)
- Demolition of Blighted or Chronic Nuisance Property

3. Site Security Improvements

The project includes financial assistance for specific security improvements. The maximum funding available for an applicant with qualified improvements is \$5,000. Eligible site security improvements include:

- Alarm Systems (install only; grant does not fund long-term monitoring)
- Security Cameras (including purchase, installation, and related electrical work)
- Lighting (including purchase, installation, and related electrical work)
- Smashed window repairs (attach copy of filed police report)

Ineligible Projects

It is not the purpose of the program to finance ongoing improvements which could be considered part of a building's routine maintenance and upkeep; each eligible improvement shall be funded only once by the program. The Assistant County Administrative Officer reserves the right not to authorize funding for any project(s) that they assess does not support the objectives of the Program.

Other ineligible expenses include:

- Improvements that were completed prior to execution of a grant agreement
- Administrative, accounting, and legal costs
- Extermination of insects, rodents, vermin, and other pests
- Title reports and escrow fees (not related to property acquisition)
- Refinancing existing debt
- Working capital for businesses
- Environmental assessments
- Operational costs
- Nonvisible mechanical equipment (including HVAC, etc.) and related screening
- Temporary, portable, or non-permanent improvements
- Routine maintenance and repair
- Purchase of tools/equipment
- Political/religious signage
- Security improvements that include equipment providers/manufacturers/service providers or any subsidiaries or affiliates of such entities (per H.R. 3919, the Secure Equipment Act of 2021 to include, but not limited to, Huawei Technologies Company, ZTE Corporation, Hytera Communications, Hangzhou Hikvision Digital Technology Company, Dahua Technology Company)
- New construction projects and buildings occupied by the following types of businesses are ineligible for funding: gun stores, pawn shops, check cashing businesses, liquor stores, adult businesses, cigarette stores, video game and gambling establishments.

Program Requirements

1. **Compliance with Laws.** Grant recipients are required to, at their sole cost, promptly comply with all applicable federal, state and local laws, rules, and regulations. Improvements shall conform to

all County of Kern Codes, Ordinances, Permits, Site Plan Review, and applicable Design Guidelines. It is recommended to consult with the County's Planning and Natural Resources Department, and Public Works Departments before completing the application.

2. **Insurance.** At a minimum, grant recipients are required to maintain general liability insurance in the amount of \$1,000,000 and worker's compensation and employer's liability insurance.
3. **Licensed Contractor.** It is the grant recipient's sole responsibility for choosing and hiring the contractor, and the acceptance of the materials used, the work performed, and quality of workmanship of the property improvements. All Contractors funded with grant funds must have an appropriate and valid California Contractor's license.
 - a. Contractors must comply with the California Labor Code, including but not limited to requirements regarding hours of labor, nondiscrimination, payroll records, apprentices, worker's compensation, and prevailing wages, when required.
4. **Project Completion.** Eligible grant funded improvements or business costs must be completed within (six) 6 months of execution of the grant agreement.
5. **Prevailing Wages.** Activities under this grant may be subject to California prevailing wages. Generally, any public works project involving construction, alteration, demolition, installation maintenance, or repair work done under contract and paid for in whole or in part with public funds (i.e. local tax revenue), is subject to prevailing wage. However, public works projects for new construction, alteration, installation, demolition or repair projects, prevailing wages are not required to be paid for projects of \$25,000 or less, or \$15,000 or less when the project is for maintenance work.
6. **Landlord Consent.** Business owners who are tenants of a building (minimum three-year lease) must provide written consent from the building owner for all proposed improvements. In addition, the grant application must be signed by the property owner.
7. **Administrative, Financing/Accounting and Legal Costs:** Administrative, financing/accounting and legal costs may not be included in the total project cost. Grant recipients are responsible for all administrative, financing/accounting, and legal costs.
8. **Future Physical Maintenance and Operation:** Future physical maintenance and operational costs may not be included in the total project cost. Grant recipients are responsible for all future physical maintenance and operational costs.

Application Instructions & Submittal

Applicants should consult Project Development Solutions, Inc. about project eligibility and verification that they have complete application prior to submission. Contact Project Development Solutions, Inc. at (661)-847-9254 or proposals@pdevsolutions.com with all program- and application-related questions. Applicants may also schedule an appointment or visit Project Development Solutions, Inc. during office hours for additional support.

The Kern Biz Application Form is publicly available on <https://www.kerncounty.com/econdev>. The Application Form must be completed in its entirety, printed, originally signed, and submitted with additional and required attachments to:

Project Development Solutions, Inc.
1601 New Stine Rd. Suite 222, Bakersfield, CA 93309

Please be advised, application for the 2025/2026 fiscal year are due AUGUST 15, 2025 .

Application Review & Selection Process

The Kern Biz Grant Program is a one-time competitive grant funding process. Applications will be reviewed by Project Development Solutions, Inc. for completeness and compliance with all program guidelines and scored for award consideration by the Evaluation Committee. All applicants will receive written notification of their grant selection results. Grants will be awarded only in amounts appropriate to the scope of eligible project activities.

Award Notification Timeline

All submitted applications will be reviewed **after the application deadline of August 15**, allowing for a fair and comprehensive evaluation of all proposals at the same time. Applicants should not expect to receive any notification until the review process is complete.

Applicants can expect to be notified of award decisions approximately 6–8 weeks after the application deadline. This timeline may be adjusted depending on the volume of applications received.

Please note: Incomplete applications or missing documentation may delay the review and award notification process.

There is a limitation of one application per business owner and a total request not to exceed \$10,000.

Following notification of project selection, a grant agreement (“Agreement”) is prepared for applicant review and signature. Grant award is not final until the agreement is approved by the County. The Agreement is the legal document which outlines the legal requirements of the grant and includes amount of Grant funds; a detailed project description outlining the scope of work to be completed; project budget and schedule; and the terms and conditions associated with the grant funding. **To be eligible for reimbursement, a Grant Agreement must be executed before work commences.**

The application selection process consists of (1) a threshold review and (2) project rating and selection.

1. **Application Review:** Project Development Solutions, Inc. will screen all applications for completeness and compliance with all program guidelines without awarding points. An application must meet all guideline requirements to qualify for the second stage of the selection process. Applications that do not meet all the guideline review requirements will be notified in writing of ineligibility.
2. **Application Selection:** The project rating and selection process will be conducted by a review team, the Kern Biz Evaluation Committee (“Evaluation Committee”). The Evaluation Committee is

comprised of two representatives from the County Administrative Office, one representative from Project Development Solutions, Inc., a representative from County of Kern- Planning Department, and one representative from the County of Kern- Public Works. The Review Committee will use the Evaluation Criteria described in the next section.

Evaluation Criteria

The Kern Biz Program is a one-time competitive process. Each project application will be evaluated on merit and impact to the community. Applications that meet more of the following program objectives will be given the highest scores:

Evaluation Criteria	Highest Score Possible
Project Description, Plan & Readiness. Project is coherent and feasible to implement within a specified timeframe.	30
Community Benefits. Project offers a community benefit by enhancing or revitalizing the commercial district. Location of the proposed project is a contributing factor.	25
Project Budget. Budget is coherent and clearly details the scope and cost of eligible activities. Applicant offers additional “match” funding or in-kind resources to enhance the scope of the project	25
Small Business Growth. Supports the growth and development of a local small business with less than 25 employees.	10
Administrative Capacity. Ability to comply with the Kern Biz Program Guidelines & Grant Agreement	10
Total	100

Grant Agreement

Once the Evaluation Committee completes its evaluation of all applications, awardees will be notified in rank order per Supervisorial District. The Evaluation Committee will make funding recommendations, within the parameters defined above, to the Assistant County Administrative Officer who will make final award decisions based upon their judgment of the overall quality of proposed projects and their consistency with the Kern Biz Façade Improvement Grant Program. The Assistant County Administrative Officer reserves the right to some flexibility in making specific funding decisions, if those decisions, best serve the interest of the program and the program recipients.

Following notification of project selection, a grant agreement (“Agreement”) is prepared for each funded project. **Notification of project selection does not imply approval of all activities, specific costs proposed, or proposed timelines.** During the Agreement negotiation period, proposed activities, additional resources, administrative costs, and other aspects of the project which were identified during the rating process will be discussed and resolved. The Agreement, once negotiated, is the legal document which governs the administration of the grant and includes:

1. The amount of Kern Biz Grant funds awarded, and source of other funds committed to the project.
2. A detailed project description outlining the scope of work to be completed.
3. A detailed budget for implementation of project activities.
4. The schedule for implementation of project activities.

5. The general and special terms and conditions associated with the grant.

Kern Biz Grant Program funds will not be released until the Agreement has been fully executed, and other contingencies which may be outlined are resolved. The agreement may be canceled, or a breach may be found to exist if the applicant does not comply with the provisions of the grant agreement, with all Kern County provisions, or with the other applicable rules and regulations. The County will withhold payment until compliance is obtained. In the event of a cancellation, the County shall not be responsible for any reimbursement or payment to Applicant, Contractor, or Sub-Contractor.

The County reserves the right to cancel or modify this Program at any time prior to grant approval, without notice. Continuation of the Program is subject to sufficient funding as appropriated by the Board of Supervisors.

Reimbursement Process

After the Grant Agreement has been executed and all necessary permits have been issued, work may proceed. Grants are distributed to awarded applicants on a reimbursement basis after the project is complete and submission of the Reimbursement Request Form (Attachment "B") to Project Development Solutions, Inc. Any changes to the activities funded by the grant must be approved by Project Development Solutions, Inc. in writing.

County Staff will inspect the work for compliance with County Codes and conformance with the design plans approved for the project. Reimbursement requires a receipt or proof that each eligible cost was paid. The Consultant is responsible for verifying that adequate documentation is provided to demonstrate payment, including but not limited to receipts, estimates, invoices, and supporting financial records such as copies of cleared checks, bank statements, or accounting ledgers. All sensitive information, such as account numbers, must be redacted. Project Development Solutions, Inc., serves only to review and verify documentation for approval; the County will issue reimbursement directly to the applicant upon approval.

Upon receipt of evidence documenting actual project costs, Project Development Solutions, Inc. shall have thirty (30) days to review. After all requirements set forth above are met, the County shall issue a check for reimbursement of costs incurred, of the amount awarded as outlined in the Grant Agreement.

Applicants do not have to be in complete code compliance at the time of application for the program, but must be compliant on the building, site or public improvements before reimbursement can be made to the business. An applicant may not be eligible for have a delinquent bill or outstanding lien issued by the County.

Project Development Solutions, Inc. will ensure project compliance with the Public Works and Planning & Natural Resources Departments to conform with all County of Kern Codes, Ordinances, Permits, Site Plan Review, and applicable Design Guidelines. There will be a delay in reimbursement if any work was done out of compliance with County Code.

Eligible grant funded improvements or business costs must be completed within (six) 6 months of execution of the grant agreement. If the applicant intends to ask for a grant extension, please submit a request in

writing at least thirty (30) days prior to expiration of the grant. An extension may be granted or denied at the discretion of the Assistant County Administrative Officer.

Attachments

Attachment A – Kern Biz Application

Attachment B – Claim for Payment Reimbursement Form

Kern Biz Grant Program Application

Interested applicants should first refer to the Kern Biz Grant Program Guidelines publicly available on <https://www.kerncounty.com/econdev>.

Please complete the application in full and submit it along with all required attachments. You may either:

1. Email the completed and electronically signed application to:

proposals@pdevsolutions.com

(Electronic signatures are accepted)

***Please include: Kern Biz Application-Business name-Applicant Name in the Subject line**

OR

2. Print, originally sign, and mail the application with attachments to:

Project Development Solutions, Inc.

1601 New Stine Rd., Suite 245

Bakersfield, CA 93309

For questions, please contact Project Development Solutions, Inc. at **(661) 847-9254** or proposals@pdevsolutions.com.

Step 1. Business Owner Information

Full name:

Date:

Address:

Phone:

Street address

Apt/Unit #

Email:

City

State

Zip Code

Please list the names and phone numbers of all other business owners, as applicable.

Name (1)

Phone:

Name (2)

Phone:

Step 2. Business Description & Eligibility

Business Name:

Tax ID:

Business Address:

Date Established:

Street address

Unit #

Industry:

City

State

Zip Code

Assessors' Parcel Number(s):

How long have you been doing business at this location?

Business Entity:

☒ Sole Proprietorship

☐ Partnership

☐ Corporation

☐ Limited Liability Company

Please provide a general description of your business and the products sold, or services provided.

Are you the property owner or tenant?

☐ Property Owner ☐ Tenant

If tenant, provide a copy of the lease agreement and fill in the Property Owner information below:

Full name:

Phone:

Address:

Email:

Street address

Apt/Unit #

City

State

Zip Code

Step 3. Grant Request & Project Information

Complete description below in its entirety, attach additional pages/supporting documentation as necessary.

Select one type of eligible activity for grant funding consideration.

☐ Exterior Façade Improvement

☒ Site Enhancement

☐ Site Security Improvement

Exterior Painting

Construction of Outdoor D

Select Type from Dropdown

Is there an active code enforcement case on the property?

☐ No

☐ Yes

If "Yes," will the proposed project address the code violation?

☐ No

☐ Yes

☐ N/A

Project Description, Plan, and Readiness (30 POINTS). Provide a detailed project description. Explain your project plan, readiness, and ability to complete the project within a six (6) month timeframe. Explain how you will obtain the necessary permits to complete the project and corresponding agencies. Explain your ability to proceed with the project upon notification of award.

Project Description/Community Benefit (25 POINTS). Describe how the proposed project offers a community benefit by enhancing or revitalizing the commercial district.

Project Budget (25 POINTS). Describe each eligible activity and associated costs ONLY for the Kern Biz Grant Program expenses and Budget Narrative below.

Grant Funded Activities

Eligible Activity	Cost (\$)
TOTAL GRANT AMOUNT REQUEST:	\$

Please Be Advised: Project maximum award is \$10,000.

ANTICIPATED START DATE:

PROJECT COMPLETION DATE:

Budget Narrative. Explain the eligible activities and associated costs above. Please explain if the applicant will offer a Cash Match or any in-kind resources/funding to enhance the scope of the project. Will the applicant contribute any funding to enhance the scope of the project?

Total Cost of Project:

\$

Small Business Growth (10 POINTS). Describe how participating in this Program will help support your business growth.

Please list the number of employees your business directly employs:

Full-time:

Seasonal Full-time:

Part-time:

Seasonal Part-time:

Administrative Capacity (15 POINTS). Explain the applicant's ability to comply with the Kern Biz Program Guidelines and Grant Agreement. Describe the applicant's ability to manage Kern Biz grant funds if awarded.

Step 4. Certification

I, the undersigned, certify that to the best of my knowledge and belief, the information provided in this application is true and correct. I agree to comply with all applicable local, state, and federal laws and regulations in implementing the proposed project if selected for funding. I have read, understand, and accept the Kern Biz Grant Program Guidelines.

I acknowledge that I am responsible for ensuring all contractors engaged will be properly licensed and that all required permits will be obtained. I certify that I am qualified to carry out the proposed project and will use Kern Biz program funds as outlined in this application, in accordance with the Kern Biz Grant Program Guidelines and any reasonable conditions imposed by the County of Kern.

By signing below, I also certify that I am authorized to submit this application for an EOA program grant and verify that I have included the supporting documentation as described in the eligibility guidelines.

Business Owner(s):

Print Name:

Date:

Signature:

Print Name:

Date:

Signature:

If the Business Owner is a Tenant, the Property owner must complete Property Owner Certification below.

I, the undersigned, Owner of the property located at _____, have reviewed and approve the proposed improvement project requested for funding in this application. As the legal owner of the above property, I hereby grant authorization to complete the improvements/rehabilitation indicated on this application.

Property Owner(s):

Print Name:

Date:

Signature:

Print Name:

Date:

Signature:

Clear Form

STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Clear Form