



## 2019 Williamston Main Street Challenge Grant Program Application Guidance

The Town of Williamston, through its economic development partner, Envision Williamston, and in partnership with Innovate Anderson is pleased to announce the launch of the **2019 Main Street Challenge Grant Program**. The Main Street Challenge is an entrepreneurial start-up competition for the purpose of generating additional retail occupancy in downtown Williamston. The Main Street Challenge offers an incentive package in excess of \$10,000 to each of the winning entrepreneurs who will open a retail business or restaurant in downtown Williamston no later than October 2019.

### Overview of Williamston

The 2019 Main Street Challenge Grant Program is designed to foster the development of new business enterprises in the Historic Town of Williamston, SC. The Town is seeking to revitalize its downtown historic corridor. To launch this process, the community has hosted a variety of events and festivals throughout the year. Two local community-wide contests have generated participation by more than 1,000 people. In April 2016, the Town adopted the *Envision Williamston Community Master Plan* that incorporates community place making strategies and economic development initiatives for the future. Several grants were awarded for landscaping and beautification in 2017-18. While the Town has achieved some initial success in attracting businesses since the plan's adoption, the continued growth of retail, light industry and residential development will be key to the Town's ongoing revitalization.

Last year we welcomed 15 new businesses such as a Dollar Tree store, a 24-hour fitness center, two pet groomers, a beauty salon, a mobile phone store, and an insurance company to name a few. The town also added in 3 welcome signs, 4 colorful murals, 16 community benches with planters, 42 decorative banners, and improved over 20 properties to help beautify the downtown area and create a welcoming ambiance.

Looking ahead, there are many opportunities for new businesses to become a part of this growing and dynamic bedroom community. The Town is strategically situated near I-85 and with Highway 20 segmenting the town, and current traffic-flow patterns offer prospective business owners access to thousands of potential customers each day. In addition, the Town has an outstanding educational system, and one of the best technical schools in the state. The tight-knit business community offers opportunities for close collaboration with other business owners, and local government leaders stand ready to assist local businesses who are positioned to prosper. Community pride and support through events and festivals further underscore the advantages for business owners to be a part of a regional market that enjoys the benefits of the Town's high quality of life and small-town charm.

### Program Overview

The Williamston Main Street Challenge is an entrepreneurial start-up competition which takes place over a period of approximately 6 months. The purpose is to foster economic development by encouraging

additional retail occupancy in downtown Williamston. At the same time, it provides a means by which local area or regional merchants can advance their desire to expand or open a new business in the area.

Business concepts can be:

- New start-up business
- Franchises
- An expansion or relocation of an existing business from another community
- A significant expansion of a local business that would branch into another business concept.

## **Goals**

The Williamston Main Street Challenge has several goals. They include:

- Innovatively recruit new businesses that will diversify the mix of offerings in Williamston.
- Showcase and market existing available properties in the downtown area.
- Provide entrepreneurial businesses with financial assistance to launch their concepts.
- Create a positive buzz about Downtown Williamston.
- Drive consumer traffic to Williamston's Downtown Historic Corridor.
- Create opportunities for new long-term property leases in Downtown Williamston.
- Generate ideas, leads, and insights to aid our efforts to support job creation and revenue growth.

## **Incentive Package**

Collectively, the Town, Envision Williamston and Innovate Anderson will award up to two individual awards. Each winner will receive up to \$10,000 in financial assistance over a twelve-month period. These grants are designed to help defray the start-up costs of opening a business in the Town.

Additional in-kind professional services will be made available by local businesses which may include, but are limited to, accounting, advertising, architectural, banking, legal, signage, social media and search engine training, telephone/internet, and website design services.

## **Winners' Obligation**

Winners who are leasing properties from participating property owners will be obligated to execute a minimum three-year lease for a street level retail/service/office location in downtown Williamston. The business must be open to the general public no later than September 2019, and thereafter, for the duration of the lease.

## **Eligibility**

The contest is open to all legal U.S. residents, 18 years of age or older at the time of submittal of contest entry application.

The proposed business may be independent or part of a franchise.

If the applicant is a current downtown business owner, application must be with the intent to introduce, open and operate a concept which will offer a new element not promoted in the existing location, or expand upon and highlight an element that would be removed from the existing location.

The applicant must be willing and able to demonstrate the financial ability to commit to a minimum three-year lease or otherwise long-term business occupancy in downtown Williamston, in a property pre-qualified and selected for this competition, or one within the designated boundaries.

The Williamston Main Street Challenge Grant Program is also open to applicants seeking to purchase a street level retail/service/office location in downtown Williamston. Winners who purchase a downtown space must purchase for the purpose of operating a local business in that space. An applicant will be considered ineligible if the space will serve as a primary living space, storage unit, or real estate investment.

### **Priority Business Applications**

In 2017, Envision Williamston received an Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) grant to implement the Williamston Downtown Acceleration Program (WDAP). Under this grant EW developed a streetscaping initiative, a façade program, three murals, banners and aspirational business decals. The decals feature possible businesses. They will serve as the priorities for this grant. Priority business types include:

- Grocery store or fresh market
- Fine dining restaurant
- Coffee shop
- Bakery or Ice cream parlor
- Gift shop
- Day spa
- Jewelry store
- Design studio
- Activity center (e.g. a bowling alley, miniature golf, roller skating, and/or bounce house)

Additional points will be awarded to:

- 1) Applicants that propose one of the business types listed above.
- 2) Applicants that are opening a 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> location (or more) of an existing business proven successful in another location.
- 3) Applicants who have a physical location selected.

### **Official Rules and Regulations**

- Prizes are not transferable and may not be redeemed for cash.
- Prize winners may not request substitutions.
- Printed business concept proposals submitted for consideration to the contest Selection Committee may not be returned.

The Selection Committee will judge all business concept plans, business plans, and other supporting documents submitted by any/all applicants. Decisions, judgments, and selections of the committee are at the discretion of the committee and are final.

By participating in the contest, each applicant agrees to these Official Rules and to all decisions of the Selection Committee which are final and binding.

The Town of Williamston reserves the right to use all participants' names, likenesses, pictures, portraits, voice, biographical information, written submissions, and written or oral statements, for advertising and promotional purposes without additional compensation to participants unless required by law.

By submitting an application and entering the contest, each applicant advancing to the final phase of the program authorizes the Town to conduct a credit check and background/reference check.

The Town of Williamston seeks to consider support to any viable business entering the competition whether or not that business wins the Williamston Main Street Challenge. All entrants with feasible business plans can be contacted with information about available property in Downtown Williamston.

### **Application and Selection Process**

1. Fill out and submit the Williamston Main Street Challenge Grant Application Form. Describe your business concept and why it would enhance the economic welfare of Downtown Williamston.
2. Application must be submitted and received by no later than the end of the business day specified. Applications and attachments received past the deadline will not be considered for the Challenge.
3. The Selection Committee can choose up to five (5) applicants as semi-finalists for additional consideration. All other applicants will be informed of their removal from the competition.
4. The semi-finalists can obtain business plan writing assistance from independent third parties including the Clemson University Small Business Development Center and SCORE (Service Core of Retired Executives), both partners of the U.S. Small Business Administration.
5. The semi-finalists must submit business plans and supporting documents to Envision Williamston no later than the end of the business day specified. Necessary documents and attachments received past this deadline will not be considered for continuation in the competition.
6. The Selection Committee can choose up to three (3) applicants as finalists for consideration.
7. Finalists will appear before the Selection Committee at a date to be determined to present their respective business concepts and plans. During this time, finalists will make a 5-10-minute presentation on their business concept. Applicants may also demonstrate via product or electronic media how the business might be fixture, displayed, or marketed. Finalists must also be prepared to answer questions from the panelists and to demonstrate product and business acumen as well as discuss financial planning for the purpose of sustaining a minimum 3-year commitment to lease/own.
8. Following the above interviews/demonstrations and presentations, Envision Williamston will conduct reference checks of the prospective winner. Upon concurrence of credentials, validity of concept, and applicability of the business to downtown Williamston, 1-2 finalists can be selected by the Selection Committee as the recommended Grand Prize Winners.

9. These recommended GPWs will be invited to present to the Envision Williamston Board of Directors and/or the General Public. A final vote will be taken.
10. Each GPW must negotiate with the selected property owner and execute a working lease agreement.
11. In the event a winner cannot execute an agreement within a period of 30 calendar days, that winner will be eliminated from the program. An alternate may be selected. In addition, if the GPW does not achieve a grand opening on or before September 2019, the incentive package is forfeited.
12. By accepting the Grand Prize incentive package, each winner releases and discharges the Town of Williamston, participating sponsors, information providers, content providers, advertisers, advertising agencies, promotional and marketing agencies, and any other legal entity involved with or otherwise providing services related to this competition and all their respective employees, officers, directors, representatives and agents from any liability or damage due in whole or in part to the award, acceptance, possession, use or misuse of the Grand Prize or from participation in this competition.

#### **Public Release**

Information regarding the GPWs will be posted on [www.envisionwilliamston.com](http://www.envisionwilliamston.com) and will be released to the public through media alerts and other written and oral venues.

#### **Tax Disclosure**

In accordance with IRS Code regarding prizes and awards, a Form 1099-MISC might be issued by the Town of Williamston to the GPWs. Each Grand Prize recipient should consult with his/her tax advisor.

#### **Sample Timeline**

April 19, 2019: Applications are due. **Extended until May 24, 2019.**

May 3, 2019: Semi-finalists are selected by the Selection Committee. **Extended until May 31, 2019.**

June 5, 2019: Semi-finalists business plans are due. **Extended until June 20, 2019.**

June 17, 2019: Finalists provide their presentations and are interviewed by the Selection Committee. **Extended until June 28, 2019.**

June 20, 2019: The Main Event public pitch to the Selection Committee, EW Board and Studio Audience. **Extended until July 15, 2019.**

June 28, 2019: Winner(s) publicly announced. **Extended until July 19, 2019.**

September 2019: Businesses open (or before). **Extended until October, 2019.**

For more information, contact:  
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Note: This program is based on the successful implementation of Main Street Challenges in the cities of Anderson, Spartanburg, Pickens and Easley, South Carolina. We wish to extend a special thanks to the directors and coordinators of these programs who assisted in the design of this program.

**WILLIAMSTON MAIN STREET CHALLENGE  
APPLICATION FORM**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Applicant's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Mailing Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Telephone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Cell Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Other:** \_\_\_\_\_

(Please provide similar information for others who might participate in your business concept or function as co-owners, partners, etc. You may attach their information on a separate page.)

**Check one:**

**Sole proprietor:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Partnership:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Corporation:** \_\_\_\_\_ **LLC:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Describe Business Concept (Use creativity in the description and include the following information):**

- What are the products or services that would be delivered or sold?
- Define and describe the market for this business.
- How will your business enhance Main Street and Downtown Williamston as a whole?
- What resources and assets do you have and what resources would be needed to develop this concept (e.g., personnel, financing, inventory, and/or equipment)?
- What are your qualifications to develop/expand this business?
- Are there any similar businesses existing in the market and if so, how will you distinguish yours from those?
- What is unique about your concept, product, service, name, or niche that would "sell" the selection committee on your concept?

Please answer each of the above questions in the narrative section below.

**Narrative Section:**

**By participating in the Williamston Main Street Challenge, I agree to abide by the Official Rules and to all decisions of the Selection Committee, which are final and binding in all respects. I also acknowledge and consent to allow the Town of Williamston and its designee the right to use my name, likeness, pictures, portraits, voice, biographical information, written submissions, and written or oral statements for advertising and promotional purposes without consideration for compensation to me unless required by law. Should my participation in this competition progress so that I am one of the finalists, I consent to the Town of Williamston conducting a credit check and a background reference check on me. I represent that I am a legal resident of the U.S. and am 18 years of age or older as of the date and time of this submittal.**

**I have read the Participant Overview outlining the competition rules and eligibility requirements and I attest that all information included in this application and business concept description are true and accurate.**

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**Signature(s)**

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**Date**



