



Niagara County Façade Program **Application Package**

Dear Applicant:

Thank you for your interest in the Niagara County Façade Program. Before you submit your application (by mailing it or dropping it off in hard copy), please ensure it contains the following required documents:

- Application
- Letter from local elected official
- Letter from building owner (if applicant is not the owner)
- Lease agreement from January 2020 (if applicant is not the building owner)
- Minimum of two bids / proposals for project work
- Proof of matching funds

Application materials should be addressed to:

Niagara County Department of Economic Development
Attention: Façade Program
6311 Inducon Corporate Drive, Suite One
Sanborn, New York 14132

If you have any questions, please call us at (716) 278-8750.

Thank you.



Niagara County Façade Program

Overview

I. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

During the COVID-19 pandemic, our economy dramatically shifted into a period of uncertainty. Recovery has been slow and many consequences are still unfolding. In the immediate response, our federal government worked to ease the obvious financial burden, but longer-term issues remain.

Throughout the pandemic, most businesses were challenged with the ever-changing guidelines, meeting payroll and just staying open. The routine maintenance was mostly pushed aside and now we are seeing the effects of that. “Main Streets” across the county are falling into disrepair, some businesses are shuttered and most are just getting back to where they were prior to the pandemic.

In response to this, Niagara County has created a strategic plan to improve our business districts and bring vibrancy back to our downtowns. The Niagara County Façade Program (NCFP) will collaboratively bring residents, governments, businesses and property owners together to implement strategic projects that will have measurable improvements. **The NCFP will provide matching grants up to \$50,000, matching applicant’s investment dollar-for-dollar.**

A coordinated application and administrative approach will encourage reinvestment in mixed-use (commercial-civic-residential) “main street” buildings or neighborhoods to:

- “Jump start” improvements of traditional downtowns; creating a fresh and vibrant atmosphere
- Support the expansion of small businesses, thereby fostering development and opportunities
- Address issues of code enforcement, energy efficiency, and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance, to bring vacant commercial space into code compliance, so that it can be utilized by new businesses
- Facilitate an effective planning process that ensures the capital investment of public funds to enhance the aesthetics and economics of the commercial districts throughout Niagara County
- Preserve significant or historic buildings and provide an environment that attracts new investment to enable the adaptive reuse of these buildings for new Main street enterprises

II. PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY

a. Eligible Applicants

- For-profit businesses that have been in business since or before January 2020
- Property owners (landlords) that have owned the property before January 2020
- Lessees of space within buildings located in a qualified property (Lessee must have occupied the space since before January 2020)

b. Eligible Target Areas

- Applicants need to identify their project location and describe its position within a concentrated part of a well-defined business district
- Explain how the project and its location help achieve vibrancy in the “Main Street” area
- Detail if the project location is identified as part of a community plan or is located in a targeted corridor or area of focused redevelopment

c. Eligible Expenses

Projects should mainly include permanent improvements to the business and/or façade. An example of this activity includes signage, siding, exterior paint, roofing, windows and doors, stairs and ramps, walkways, decking, awnings, exterior lighting, etc. Eligibility will, in part, be based on the project delivering a sustainable outcome that lends to a more visually appealing corridor. Temporary, seasonal or removable improvements such as landscaping, flowers, holiday decorations, etc. are not an eligible expense, unless it is coordinated as part of a district wide improvement that will span the entire “Main Street”.

d. Ineligible Expenses

Activities excluded from funding include plans, studies, routine professional services (e.g. accounting services, legal fees, consultant fees, etc.), and “in-kind” expenses incurred by employees or owners or lessees of the business or project site. Funds cannot be used for renovations to a municipally owned and operated building. If a building is owned by a municipality and has a formal agreement, structure, or lease with a business for use of the building, the lessee may apply.

III. PROGRAM REVIEW

a. Application Overview

The Niagara County Center for Economic Development will host an orientation session, announcing the opening of the program and answering any questions potential applicants may have. The application period will be a month long period, wherein applicants will prepare their project requests, gather supporting materials and submit their completed application for review.

The application (attached) will not be considered complete unless it includes written support from a local elected legislative or council member (attachment A). Ensuring the support of the local community is essential for the approval of County funding. If you are not the building owner, you will also need to submit a letter from the building owner, supporting the proposed project (attachment B).

The project budget will need supporting documentation including a minimum of two itemized bids or proposals for all proposed work and the purchase of all project related materials. **The County reserves the right to determine in its sole discretion what is an acceptable bid or proposal for projects consideration.** A clear written scope of the project as outlined in the application must be the basis for the bids or proposals and the lowest responsible bidder should be listed with the project budget. Should the project applicant wish to work with a bid other than the lowest, there should be a clearly written explanation for why this decision should be supported.

NOTE: A contractor cannot receive funding for work done on a building he or she owns. Any possible conflict of interest should be disclosed during the application process and prior to the commencement of the project.

The project application should also include a proposed timeline, work schedule, and proof of matching funds. The project must be completed within 12 months of the executed date of the grant agreement. An extension may be granted upon written request explaining the reason(s) the project is delayed.

This program is a competitive, deadline-based grant program; once the application deadline is past, no additional applications will be accepted. **The deadline for applications is May 6, 2022.**

b. Project Selection

A project review committee will evaluate all applications using the grading rubric below. Once all of the projects have been graded, those projects receiving the highest grade will be funded first, projects receiving subsequent grades will be funded next, and so forth until program funding has been exhausted. The County may for any reason, which does not need to be disclosed, deny the project and the County's decision is final.

c. Funding Parameters

Niagara County Façade Program is funded by the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund (CSLFRF), a part of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), and in keeping with those guidelines, applicants must exhibit how their project has been impacted by the COVID- 19 pandemic. Recognizing that not all projects will be able to exhibit a direct impact but the overall impact of the pandemic may have caused circumstances supporting the need for funding and that should be explained within the narrative of the application.

Ex. Pandemic related expenses needed to be prioritized; therefore, regular maintenance was postponed. This project will assist in the recovery of the business improvements/modernization that was delayed due to pandemic.

IV. PROJECT ADMINISTRATION

a. Grant Agreement (Exhibits/Schedules)

An NCFP grant agreement between Niagara County and the grant recipient must be executed prior to incurring any costs or commencement of any work. The agreement will include the following supporting materials:

- Proof of property ownership. NOTE: Lessees will also need to provide a copy of their current lease and a letter from the property owner authorizing all improvements (attachment B).
- NCFP Property Maintenance Declaration (attachment D)
- Property Release Form (attachment E)

b. Awarded Budget and Projected Schedule

The contract shall include a project summary, schedule, and budget that was included with the project application. Any changes to these items will require committee approval.

c. Disbursement Process

The NCFP operates as a fully reimbursable program and payment will be made only upon satisfactory completion of building projects. Requests for progress payments will be based on demonstrated need. For progress payments, a written request must be submitted with the application, outlining the proposed payment schedule, which must be approved prior to any disbursement request. To substantiate work costs, copies of work write-ups, invoices, cancelled checks, lien releases, waivers of liens, and any other documents deemed necessary must be provided along with a signed and notarized Certificate of Expense (attachment H).

d. Final Inspection

A final inspection report is required and a final inspection may be conducted before satisfaction of the grant agreement has been met. The awardee and other relevant contractors must verify that the work was completed properly and is consistent with the contracted scope of work. A final report and certification (attachment G) must be submitted with the request for final payment for the file. If building permits are required, proof of final inspection from the local building inspector or code enforcement officer must be submitted showing the work has been approved.

e. Project Funding Sign

Within one week from commencement of work at the project site, and throughout the project construction period, the project sponsor shall post a project funding sign. The project sign must be installed in accordance with all laws and codes having jurisdiction

while still in a prominent location secure from vandalism. A professionally printed color sign (approximately 24”H x 36”W), with a 12” Niagara County seal and the message: “This project financed by the Niagara County Façade Program”, will be provided to each grant recipient. If a sign cannot be reasonably installed this requirement may be waived upon written request.

Scoring Matrix	Comments	Score (1-10)
Project helps respond to the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic		
Explain how this project is related to COVID-19		
Visually prominent on a main street		
Reduce blight and restore vibrancy		
Supports or promotes business expansion		
Has a historic value that will be preserved		
Promotes energy efficiency		
Consistent with community plans or other planning documents		
Part of concentrated area of redevelopment		
Application was complete and project will likely be completed within 12 months		
Applicant has shown the ability to secure the necessary matching funds		
Addresses issues of code or ADA compliance		



Niagara County Façade Program **Application**

1. Applicant Name: _____
Applicant Name: _____
2. Property Address: _____
Building Age: _____
3. Name of Business: _____
4. Type of Business: _____
5. Phone Number: Work _____ Cell _____
6. Email Address: _____
7. Section, block, and lot number of property: _____
8. Are you the property owner: Yes _____ No _____
9. Have you owned or occupied the building (project location) since January 2020? Yes ____ No ____

If you are not the property owner, please ensure Attachment B is completed and submitted with your application, otherwise, it will not be considered a complete submission.

10. Property Information:
 - a) Is there a mortgage? _____ If yes, are payments current? _____
Who holds the mortgage? Name: _____
Address: _____

b) Are there any other liens on the property? _____

If yes, please describe: _____

11. Taxes and County/City/Town services:

a) Are property taxes paid to date? _____

b) Are all other municipal fees paid to date? _____

The County will verify that all taxes and sewer/water charges are current on properties in Niagara County owned wholly or in part by the Applicant(s) before the construction contract is signed.

12. Proposed improvements and financing:

a) Please describe your project, clearly identify its impact on the “Main Street” and illustrate why this project would improve the overall business corridor. (Attach an additional page if necessary)

b) Please describe how the project was affected/delayed/changed by the COVID-19 pandemic and explain how funding this project contributes to the economic recovery from COVID-19. (Attached additional pages if necessary)

c) Please review the scoring matrix within the program overview and clearly explain how your project meets the scoring criteria.

d) Please list your project budget below:

<i>Use of Funds</i>	<i>Estimated Project Total</i>	<i>Owner Equity</i>	<i>Other Sources</i>	<i>Grant Request</i>
Construction				
Fixtures				
Equipment				
Other				

e) Please outline your project timeline, be sure to include any commitments you may already have and any other details that would support your ability to complete the project within the 12-month timeframe of the program.

13 Please attach the following to your application:

- Letter of support signed by local elected official (Attachment A)
- Letter of support from landlord if applicant is not the property owner (Attachment B)
- Proof of ownership or occupancy of the building (project location) since January 2020
- Bids or proposals itemizing the work to be completed (minimum of two)
- Proof of matching funds

Applications must be postmarked or delivered by 4:00 p.m. on May 6th, 2022 to:

**Niagara County Center for Economic Development
6311 Inducon Corporate Drive, Suite One
Sanborn, NY 14132
Attn: Niagara County Façade Program**

I CERTIFY that the individual submitting this application to the County of Niagara and its counsel will rely on the representations made in the application, summary report, reimbursement request, and all other related documents submitted to for the Niagara County Façade Program (NCFP), hereby represents that the statement made herein do not contain any untrue statement of material fact and do not omit to state a material fact necessary to make the statements contained herein not misleading.

ALL PROPERTY APPLICANTS MUST SIGN BELOW.

Signature

Signature

Printed Name

Printed Name

Date

Date

ATTACHMENT A
Project Support Letter

TO: Niagara County Façade Program Committee

FROM:

DATE:

RE: NIAGARA COUNTY FAÇADE PROGRAM

Please consider this letter as a sign of support for the proposed project located at

I have been provided an overview of this project and believe it aligns well with the Niagara County Façade Program. The property is located within a vibrant corridor and the proposed improvements will help support the overall revitalization of the area.

Sincerely,

If you are not the building owner, please include a copy of your lease agreement indicating occupancy of the project location since January 2020 with your application.

You are required to include a minimum of two (2) bids/proposals for the project work at the time of application submission

You are required to submit proof of matching funds with you application. Proof of matching funds can include a bank statement (redact personal account information), credit card statement, loan document, personal financial statement, etc.