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Purpose

The **Rio Nuevo Small Business, Big Ideas Impact Grant Fund Program** is dedicated to supporting the vision and growth of small business owners and entrepreneurs within the Rio Nuevo District.

With flexible funding provided by the Rio Nuevo District and managed by Groundswell Capital, this grant program enables local business owners to pursue their unique goals, strengthen operations, and achieve new entrepreneurial milestones.

The grant is open to both established businesses and startups with a physical or committed operational presence in the Rio Nuevo District. Mobile businesses, such as food trucks, are also eligible if at least 75% of customer-facing activities are conducted within the district.

The program’s objectives include providing direct and indirect economic benefits that positively impact the journey of each business and business owner including:

- Increased business revenue
- Reduced operating expenses
- Development of skills and workforce expansion
- Creation and retention of quality jobs
- Support for sustainable practices that benefit both business and community
- Enhanced community awareness of business
- Improved quality of life for small business owner(s)

Application Timeline

Applications open Sunday, December 1, 2024, and will be accepted on a rolling basis throughout the funding period. Award decisions will be made in funding rounds, called tranches, as outlined below.

Funding Tranche 1

December 1, 2024	Tranche 1 Applications Open
January 23, 2025	Tranche 1 Applications Close
February, 2025	Tranche 1 Awardees Notified

Funding Tranche 2

January 24, 2025	Tranche 1 Applications Open
March 6, 2025	Tranche 1 Applications Close
April, 2025	Tranche 1 Awardees Notified

Funding Tranche 3

March 7, 2025	Tranche 1 Applications Open
April 18, 2025	Tranche 1 Applications Close
May, 2025	Tranche 1 Awardees Notified

Applicants with questions are encouraged to attend Open Office Hours at the Tucson Small Business Center, starting January 15, 2025. Office hours are held every Tuesday from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and every Thursday from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. The Tucson Small Business Center is located at 600 South Meyer Avenue in Tucson, AZ, 85701. Assistance is offered in both Spanish and English.

Additionally, online info sessions in both English and Spanish will take place on the following dates:

Info Session, English: Tuesday, December 17, 2024, 12:00pm to 12:45pm
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81008859078>

Info Session, Spanish: Wednesday, December 18, 2024, 12:00pm to 12:45pm
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88629832448>

Info Session, English: Tuesday, January 14, 2025, 12:00pm to 12:45pm
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89195041932>

Info Session, Spanish: Wednesday, January 15, 2025, 12:00pm to 12:45pm
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87268330201>

Info Session, English: Tuesday, February 4, 2025, 12:00pm to 12:45pm
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84492206753>

Info Session, Spanish: Wednesday, February 5, 2025, 12:00pm to 12:45pm
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87572755381>

Info Session, English: Tuesday, March 11, 2025, 12:00pm to 12:45pm
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85666578032>

Info Session, Spanish: Wednesday, March 12, 2025, 12:00pm to 12:45pm
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89622813418>

Info Session, English: Tuesday, April 1, 2025, 12:00pm to 12:45pm
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81024458980>

Info Session, Spanish: Wednesday, April 2, 2025, 12:00pm to 12:45pm

Eligibility

The Rio Nuevo Small Business, Big Ideas Grant Fund Program is designed to welcome and support entrepreneurs and small business owners in all stages of business. Whether you're just starting out, have been operating a couple years, running a longstanding business, or managing a unique mobile venture, this grant program is open to support your vision — no idea is too outside of the box, and no need is too small.

This program values diverse experiences, backgrounds, and industries and is open to innovative concepts and ideas.

The following eligibility criteria are required to apply for the Rio Nuevo Small Business, Big Ideas Grant Fund Program:

- The business must operate or commit to operating within the Rio Nuevo designated geographic area. Either a physical presence is required (e.g., storefront, office, or workshop), or a registered business address within the target area.
- Mobile businesses, such as food trucks, must commit to conducting at least 75% of customer-facing operations within the Rio Nuevo District.
- Must be a legally registered entity in the State of Arizona (e.g., LLC, Corporation, Sole Proprietorship, Partnership) and in “Good Standing”.
- Employees, Board Members, or close relatives of the granting organization are not eligible to apply.
- The business must demonstrate in application materials viability, impact, and sustainability of proposed funding requests.

Application Requirements

- **Comprehensive Project Plan:** The plan should include a business narrative, project plan, use of funds, anticipated impact, and a project budget. Examples for each of these are **provided in a [fictitious example application linked here](#)**.
- **Clear Path to Sustainability:** Plans should outline a **clear path to sustainability in the Rio Nuevo district and profitability**, supported by this grant.
- **Owner Eligibility:** Business owners must be **at least 18 years old**.
- **Disclosure of Additional Funding:** Applicants must disclose **any other grants, loans, or financial assistance received within the past year**.
- **Disclosure of Prior Rio Nuevo Funding:** Applicants **must disclose any past funds provided by Rio Nuevo district**. Applicants who have not previously been funded by Rio Nuevo will be prioritized.

Rules & Guidelines

- Businesses may apply for **\$1,000 up to \$25,000 in funding**.
- Businesses must agree to **comply with all federal, state, and local laws and regulations**.
- Funding cannot be used for **ineligible uses** (listed in a section below).
- Your business must be based in the **Rio Nuevo Tax District (see eligibility)**.

If your company is selected, you will be required to adhere to additional requirements such as:

- Submit a copy of IRS Form Tax Form W 9. You may receive a 1099 at the end of the year reporting.
- Submit a valid Tax ID (IRS EIN #, ITIN #, or SS #).
- Submit a valid government ID (eg passport or driver's license).
- Grant awardees must have a business bank account set up before loan capital is disbursed. Funding cannot be disbursed to a personal bank account.
- When applicable, and at the discretion of grant administrators, funds will be disbursed directly to vendors in place of awardees.
- Grantees must agree to complete all surveys and data forms associated with the reporting for this funding.
- Each finalist may be required to attend an in-person final interview prior to award disbursement as well as an in-person grant kick-off session.
- Awardees agree to participate in collaborative marketing and communications campaigns.

Ineligible Uses of Funds:

- Costs incurred prior to grant window (before time of application).
- Payment of non-business expenses (e.g., personal credit cards, family car, home repairs).
- Costs previously covered by alternate federal, state, or local grant funding.

Reporting:

Report templates will be provided. Grantees will be required to submit:

- Progress Report & Receipt Submission: May 30th, 2025
- Storytelling Site Visit: Scheduled by Groundswell Capital
- Final Report & Final Receipt Submission: 12 Months Post Funding

How to Submit

The **Rio Nuevo Small Business, Big Ideas Impact Grant** application is to be completed online, via an online form available at www.groundswellcapital.org/rionuevo

Consider your grant application as a project proposal, demonstrating to the Grant Committee a compelling business story, viable use of funds, and notable impact if received. It is important to note that this grant program is competitive, and it is anticipated that there will be more applications received than funds available.

The submission deadlines for each application window are as follows:

- January 23, 2025 at 11:59 p.m.
- March 6, 2025 at 11:59 p.m.
- April 18, 2025 at 11:59 p.m.

Your application, to be considered complete, must be submitted in full with the following documents by the deadline. Incomplete or past due applications will not be considered.

A Complete Application Includes:

1. Company Overview Survey: This asks for general information about your company.

Please be prepared to enter information such as:

- Name of business
- Your name
- Contact information
- Business Location
- Ownership structure
- Number of employees
- A brief (2-5 sentence) description of your business
- A brief (2-5 sentence) description of your project (use of funds)
- Estimated annual revenue
- Estimated annual expenses
- Grant amount you are applying for (\$1,000 to \$25,000)
- How long you have had paying customers
- Financial assistance history
- Optional demographic information

2. Attached Documents

- a. Project Description
- b. Optional: Appendix Package (if there are additional documents you would like the Grant Selection Committee to see, please submit them as an Appendix)

A) Project Description

Your Project Description is an opportunity to share your vision and demonstrate how this grant will bring your business goals to life. An application sample with answer examples is provided for you here. Each section features a character limit, or maximum amount of characters (letters and spaces) allowed. Your story can be powerful at any length, a longer application does not necessarily equate to a better application.

Please complete the following sections in the application form.:

- **Your Business Story (12,500 max characters)** : This is your opportunity to showcase your Rio Nuevo business. You can share your story, your journey, your ‘why.’ We are eager to learn more about your business and you, the business owner. What inspired your business, when did it start, and how have you pursued your entrepreneurial dreams?
- **Project Overview & Use of Funds (12,500 max characters)**: Describe your proposed project and how it aligns with the purpose of the Rio Nuevo Big Ideas, Small Business grant. Outline the amount you are applying for, how you will use the funds if awarded, and your timeline for using the funds and completing the project, showcasing a clear strategy and any preliminary research (such as quotes or inventory pricing) that supports your plan. Specify how the grant funds will be applied to achieve your project goals. Ensure that your proposed expenses align with your budget. If you plan to combine the grant with other funding sources (e.g., revenue, loans, or other grants), include those as well.
- **Anticipated Impact (5,000 max characters)**: Describe the positive impact you expect from this funding. Where possible, estimate any potential economic benefits, such as increased revenue, operational efficiency, job creation, or other meaningful business outcomes, and how they will enhance your life.
- **Program Budget (3,000 max characters)**: Provide an itemized list of the amount of funding you are requested. This should equal to the total amount of grant during you are requesting. Be detailed - for instance instead of “Oven - \$4,389” write, “*MoTak MCO-1-DBL Double Full Size Convertible Gas Convection Oven - 108,000 BTU - \$4398 at www.katom.com*” or instead of “part-time employee,” write “*part-time cashier at \$17 p/hour, 15 hours per week, for 52 weeks - \$13,260*” Whenever possible, include links to items and/or support by uploading/attaching vendor quotes in the appendix.

B) Appendix

If you have any additional documents to share, please submit them as practically named Appendix items in the upload section of the Application form.

Grant Period, Selection & Timeline

Applications open on December 1, 2024, and will be reviewed and awarded as outlined in the timeline above, subject to any necessary adjustments. Applications not selected in one tranche will automatically roll over for consideration in the next tranche, if applicable.

Awardees can expect to receive funds within four weeks of award notification. Whenever possible, funds will be paid directly to vendors or suppliers to cover project costs. If funds are issued directly to awardees, recipients will be required to promptly submit receipts. Awardees are also responsible for completing brief progress reports and final survey data as outlined in the post-award section of the timeline.

Groundswell Capital, as the Program Administrator on behalf of the Rio Nuevo District, will review applications for eligibility. Award recipients will be selected by an independent committee of community members with demonstrated experience, commitment, or advocacy for small businesses. Groundswell Capital and its employees will facilitate but not participate in the selection process to ensure impartiality.

Important Notes

No person or business will be excluded from participation in, denied the benefit of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity funded in whole or in part with the City's funds on the basis of race, color, religion, sex including pregnancy (childbirth, and related medical conditions), sex stereotyping, transgender status and gender identity, national origin (including limited English proficiency), age, disability, or political affiliation or belief.

Grant awards may be considered taxable income. Recipients may receive a 1099-G for the funds received. Businesses should consult with a tax professional to determine whether the grant award is considered taxable income. Recipients found to have expended grant funds on expenses previously covered by another federal, state, or local program or on ineligible expenses will be required to repay all grant funding awarded by this program.

Website URLs: <https://www.groundswellcapital.org/riounuevo>

Program Administrator Questions: info@groundswellcapital.org