Port of Cascade Locks

Economic Development Grant Program

Round Three · FY 2026–27

Program Guidelines

Applications open October 1, 2026
Application deadline: 11:59 p.m. Pacific Time, October 31, 2026

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Section 1. Program Guidelines

1.1 Purpose and Approach

The Port of Cascade Locks has established a grant program (the "Program") to foster economic development within the Port district. The Port's mission is to be an engine for economic growth, recreation, and tourism within the Columbia River Gorge through partnerships, care for our community, and preservation of the Bridge of the Gods. The Program supports community partners in achieving the goals and objectives of the Port's 2024–2029 Strategic Business Plan.

The Program is not a vehicle for charitable giving and is not a source of operating support. The Port funds discrete, one-time projects that leave a business, organization, or property permanently better able to generate economic activity and employment after the grant funds are spent.

The Port does not fund the wages of the jobs it hopes to see created. It funds the equipment, the building improvement, the design work, or the capacity that makes those jobs possible, so that the positions are supported by the applicant's own revenue and survive beyond the grant period.

1.2 FY 2026–27 Priorities

Each year, the Commission will establish specific priority focus areas for the Program. For Round Three, the Commission has established two priorities:

- Downtown Revitalization
- Job Creation and Retention

A project need not address both priorities. A project that addresses one priority exceptionally well is preferred to one that touches both superficially.

1.3 Downtown Overlay Zone

For purposes of this Program, the "Downtown Overlay Zone" means the area designated by the City of Cascade Locks in its downtown revitalization overlay zone — generally the corridor bounded by Toll Bridge Road on the west and the intersection of Forest Lane and Wa Na Pa Street on the east. A map is published as an attachment to these guidelines and controls in the event of any inconsistency with this description.

Location within the Zone is a scored factor, not an eligibility requirement. Projects outside the Zone remain fully eligible and can score on downtown impact where they demonstrably support activity within the corridor.

For scoring purposes, commercial space is treated as "vacant or substantially underused" if it has been unoccupied, or occupied at a small fraction of its usable area, for 12 months or more.

1.4 Funding Tracks

For Round Three, the Port will award up to a total of $150,000 across two tracks.

Track	Award Range	Match Minimum	Typical Projects
Small Grants	Up to $10,000	20% — cash or in-kind	Equipment, minor improvements, marketing and events, feasibility and predevelopment work, and other discrete projects.
Large Grants	$10,001–$50,000	20% — cash	Capital construction and improvement, major equipment, seasonal-to-year-round conversion, and property reactivation.

Small Grants may satisfy the match requirement with cash, in-kind contribution of labor, materials, or professional services valued at reasonable local rates, or a combination. Large Grants require cash match.

Predevelopment and feasibility work — conditions assessments, structural and seismic evaluation, hazardous materials surveys, code analysis, schematic design, cost estimating, market study, and pro forma development — is eligible under either track.

Phased projects are permitted. An applicant that completes a funded project and submits an approved final report on time is immediately eligible to apply for further funding, including for a later phase of the same project. A predevelopment award in one round does not preclude a construction award in a subsequent round, and equally does not guarantee one: each application competes on its own merits against the applications received in that round, and no phase of a project carries any expectation of continued Port funding.

The Port does not oppose grant funds being used as committed local match to secure larger outside funding, including Business Oregon programs, USDA Rural Development, Oregon Main Street, and state or federal historic tax credits. However, it is up to the grant recipient to determine if grant funds may actually be used for that purpose. Applications proposing this use should identify the target source, the amount sought, and the application deadline.

1.5 Eligibility

The Port accepts applications from non-profit organizations exempt under section 501(c)(3) or 501(c)(6) of the Internal Revenue Code, for-profit businesses, and government entities operating within the Port district and having a principal place of business within those boundaries.

Owners of real property within the Downtown Overlay Zone are eligible to apply for projects on that property regardless of where the owner's principal place of business is located, provided the owner commits in the Grant Agreement to a lease-up or occupancy timeline for the resulting space.

Applicants proposing any project on real property must demonstrate site control: ownership, a recorded option, an executed purchase and sale agreement, or a lease running at least three years beyond the project completion date. Where the applicant is not the owner, a signed letter from the owner granting permission is also required.

Applicants must have a state and federal tax ID and be in good standing with the Oregon Corporations Division, evidenced by a Certificate of Existence, and must submit at least three letters of support from residents, businesses, non-profit organizations, or government entities located within the Port district.

An applicant with an unresolved bankruptcy, financial obligation default, or judgment is not eligible. An applicant with a resolved matter within the past five years may request a waiver by submitting a written explanation and evidence of resolution; waivers are granted at the discretion of the Executive Director and reported to the Commission.

Joint applications are permitted. Two or more eligible entities may apply together, or one eligible entity may apply on behalf of a group of businesses, provided a single applicant is designated as the responsible party to the Grant Agreement.

Entities in existence and operating for less than two years may apply for Small Grants. Such entities may also apply for a Large Grant for a project that returns vacant or substantially underused space within the Downtown Overlay Zone to active use, subject to the additional documentation listed in Section 4.

Non-qualifying applicants include individual schools, community sports teams, and political committees. Grant funds may not be used for political activities or the athletic activities of individual schools and community sports teams.

1.6 Eligible and Ineligible Costs

Eligible

- Predevelopment and planning: feasibility studies, conditions and structural assessments, hazardous materials surveys, code analysis, design and engineering, cost estimating, market analysis, permitting costs, and pro forma development.
- Capital construction and improvement, including renovation, remodel, facade improvement, seismic and accessibility upgrades, and new construction.
- Equipment and fixed assets that expand productive or service capacity.
- Seasonal-to-year-round conversion: winterization, heating and enclosure, kitchen or production equipment enabling extended hours or shoulder-season operation, and comparable improvements that lengthen the operating year.
- Recreation and tourism infrastructure, amenities, and services improvements.
- Marketing and special events production and promotion, where tied to a defined project rather than to ongoing operations.
- Committed local match for a larger identified outside funding source.

Ineligible

- Salaries and wages associated with the applicant's ongoing operations.
- Regular operating expenses and overhead, including rent, utilities, and insurance.
- Debt service and refinancing.
- Political activities and the athletic activities of individual schools and community sports teams.

Please note that contracted, project-specific professional and construction labor — architects, engineers, contractors, subcontractors, equipment installers, event producers — is a one-time project cost and is eligible. The ineligibility of salaries refers to the applicant's ongoing payroll, not to project labor procured for the funded work.

1.7 Timelines, Grace Period, and Notice to Proceed

Non-construction projects, including predevelopment, must be complete within 12 months of the date of award. Construction projects must be complete within 18 months of the Notice to Proceed milestone described below. Because Notice to Proceed follows a grace period of up to 90 days from award, the outer limit for a construction project is approximately 21 months from the date of award.

Construction projects receive a start-date grace period of 90 days from award. During the grace period the applicant obtains permits, secures updated contractor quotes, and finalizes match. No funds are disbursed during the grace period.

The grace period ends at a Notice to Proceed milestone. To reach it, the recipient submits: all required permits, in hand or submitted and pending, with a schedule; contractor quotes issued or validated within the preceding 90 days for each line item involving contract labor; an executed contractor agreement or letter of intent; documentation of committed match; and current evidence of site control.

The 90-day quote requirement therefore applies at Notice to Proceed rather than at application. At application, construction budgets may be built from contractor estimates, recent comparable project costs, or documented cost-per-square-foot benchmarks, with the basis of each estimate stated on the Budget Sheet.

The Executive Director may grant one extension of up to 90 days for good cause. If a recipient has not reached Notice to Proceed by the end of the grace period as extended, the award is subject to recapture and may be reallocated or returned to the following cycle.

Budgets may include a contingency line of up to 15 percent of construction cost. The award amount is fixed at the time of award; cost increases after award are the responsibility of the recipient. Material changes to scope require written Port approval.

1.8 Disbursement

Track	Disbursement
Small Grants	50 percent at notification of award; the balance reimbursed as approved expenditures occur, on submitted requests, at the Port's share of total project cost, up to the award amount.
Large Grants — non-construction	Reimbursement of approved expenditures as they occur, on submitted requests, at the Port's share of total project cost — that is, 100 percent less the applicant's committed match percentage. Reimbursement is capped at the award amount, and the final 10 percent of the award is retained until MCEDD confirms that the final report is complete.
Large Grants — construction	No disbursement before Notice to Proceed. At Notice to Proceed, a mobilization advance of up to 15 percent of the award is available on request. Thereafter, reimbursement of approved expenditures as they occur, at the same rate. The advance is recovered by withholding from subsequent reimbursements until it is retired. The final 10 percent of the award is retained until MCEDD confirms that the final report is complete.

Reimbursement tracks the ratio the applicant committed to at award, so that Port funds and match funds are drawn down together over the life of the project. An applicant pledging the 20 percent minimum match is reimbursed at 80 percent of each approved expenditure; an applicant pledging a 35 percent match is reimbursed at 65 percent, and so on. The rate is fixed at award and stated in the Grant Agreement. For Small Grants, the 50 percent paid at notification of award is an advance against the same total, and reimbursement of the balance stops when the award amount is reached.

The final 10 percent of a Large Grant award is retained and released once MCEDD staff confirm that the final report is complete. Release is not contingent on presentation of the project results to the Commission; that presentation remains a separate requirement of the Grant Agreement under Section 1.9. Where a mobilization advance was made, it must be fully recovered before the holdback is released.

Any awarded funds unexpended at the completion deadline must be returned to the Port within 30 days.

1.9 Reporting

All recipients enter into a Grant Agreement and maintain current budget and project records, available on request, for its duration.

- All recipients: a final report within 30 days of project completion, including a full accounting of expenditures and the outcome metrics below.
- Large Grant recipients only: a progress report six months after award; a one-page follow-up 12 months after completion updating the same metrics; and presentation of the final report to the Commission at an open public meeting.

Outcome metrics

Recipients report only those metrics applicable to their project:

- Square footage returned to active use, and the duration of the preceding vacancy.
- Permanent positions created and retained, in full-time equivalents, identified as year-round or seasonal, with wage bands.
- Construction-period positions: number of workers, duration, and the location of contractors and subcontractors engaged.
- Operating months per year and hours per week, before and after.
- Capacity measure appropriate to the business — seats, production units, rentable square feet, room nights, or similar — before and after.
- Total match and outside funding leveraged, by source.

One full-time equivalent means 2,080 hours of annual employment. A position is "year-round" if it is available in at least ten months of the year.

Port staff, working with the MCEDD Program administrators, will present an annual summary to the Commission covering awards made, funds disbursed, match and outside funding leveraged, positions created and retained, and square footage returned to active use.

1.10 Conflict of Interest

Applicants must disclose whether any current Port employee or Commissioner is an officer, director, employee, owner, or member of the applicant organization, or is otherwise involved in the proposed project.

Disclosure is not by itself disqualifying. Where a relationship exists, the affected Commissioner declares the conflict on the record and recuses from discussion and from the vote on that application, consistent with Oregon government ethics law and the Port's governance policies. Port staff with a disclosed relationship take no part in review or scoring. All disclosures and recusals are recorded in the minutes.

1.11 Review, Scoring, and Award

The Port has contracted with the Mid-Columbia Economic Development District (MCEDD) to administer the Program. MCEDD staff review applications for completeness and eligibility and score each eligible proposal against the criteria adopted by the Commission.

Each application is scored independently by at least two reviewers and the scores averaged. Where two reviewers' totals differ by more than 15 percent, a third reviewer scores the application and the outlying score is set aside.

All applications are scored on the same 37-point scale. An application must earn at least 26 points — approximately 70 percent — to be recommended for funding. Where two applications are tied, preference goes first to the project located within the Downtown Overlay Zone, then to the project offering greater leverage.

MCEDD provides award recommendations to the Commission. Final approval of each award is made at a regularly scheduled public meeting.

1.12 Application Timeline

Milestone	Date
Application window opens	October 1, 2026
Application deadline	11:59 p.m. Pacific Time, October 31, 2026
Review and scoring by MCEDD	November 2026
Award announcement	December 2026
Notice to Proceed due — construction projects	Within 90 days of award
Progress report due — Large Grants	Six months after award
Completion deadline — non-construction projects	12 months from award
Completion deadline — construction projects	18 months from Notice to Proceed
Final report due — all recipients	Within 30 days of project completion
Presentation of results to the Commission — Large Grants	At a regularly scheduled meeting following the final report
Follow-up report due — Large Grants	12 months after project completion

Applications must be received in full by the deadline. Late and incomplete applications are not accepted. Applicants are encouraged to submit in advance of the closing date. Applications are submitted online at https://bit.ly/POCLRound3. A save-and-return option lets you complete the application over more than one sitting.

Questions about the Program or the application may be directed to Genevieve Scholl, Deputy Executive Director, at 541-374-2401 or gscholl@portofcascadelocks.gov.