



Renaissance Block Grant Program

Grant Guidelines | April 2024



Impact Area: Neighborhoods and Communities

To reinvigorate neighborhoods and main corridors, boost buy-local efforts, and combat blight.

Section I. Introduction & Purpose



About ECGRA

The Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority was incorporated in February 2008 in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania for the purpose of creating and administering a grantmaking process for gaming funds that come from the Pennsylvania Department of Revenue. An impact investor, ECGRA's mission is to elevate Erie County by galvanizing nonprofits and small business toward economic and community development. Since February 2008, ECGRA has invested more than \$75 million in Erie County.

Purpose of the Funding

The **Erie County Renaissance Block Program** is a financial incentive-based program designed to address and reverse housing blight in Erie County and improve the curb appeal of a block, neighborhood, or corridor. The problems with deteriorating and code-deficient residential structures are well-documented and far-reaching. Several recent community planning efforts have recommended reducing blight as an economic development strategy including Emerge 2040, Erie Refocused, the Corry Neighborhood Initiative, A Citizen's Action Guide to Blight, and the Erie County Housing Plan (a component of Erie County's comprehensive plan).

Properties in poor condition can reduce the market value of adjacent homes, in turn, discouraging other owners from making investments themselves thus starting or continuing a cycle of disinvestment. For example, Erie Refocused authors estimate that \$96 million in home improvements and routine maintenance is being withheld annually in the city of Erie alone due to poor market signals.

The goals of the **Erie County Renaissance Block Program** are to:

- Remove housing blight and reverse deterioration in middle market neighborhoods.
- Incentivize and spur private investment
- Make neighborhoods and communities more walkable, safe, and attractive
- Increase market value of homes
- Improve the municipal tax base
- Support local contractors and suppliers

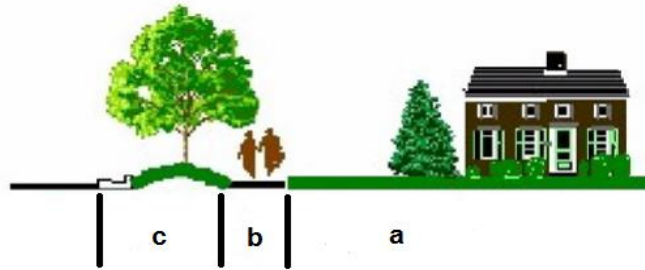
Financials

- A funding bucket of \$400,000 for two years
- A maximum of \$100,000 per application
- A maximum of \$5,000 per property
- The grant requires a 1-1 cash match

Program Structure and Requirements

There are three zones of improvement in every neighborhood:

- a) Private property
- b) Sidewalk
- c) The public right-of-way between the sidewalk and curb



The **Erie County Renaissance Block Grant (RBG)** is a matching grant program that makes funds available to improve the functionality and curb appeal of these three zones. RBG is limited to \$5,000 per property for eligible exterior repairs, permanent improvements, and streetscapes. However, funds can also be used to improve publicly owned property that is targeted to improve the block's visual appearance. The RBG is available throughout Erie County, Pennsylvania.

Eligible Applicant Info

Project sponsors can be 501 (c)(3) non-profit organizations, local governments, or municipal authorities. Preference will be given to entities with experience managing and delivering similar programs. Project applications will be required to match the grant 1-1. First-time applicants should contact ECGRA staff to learn more about how the program should be promoted, administered, and evaluated.

Eligible Improvements for Reimbursement include:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sidewalks, walkways, driveway aprons • Landscaping, trees • Doors and windows* visible from the street; interior and exterior storm windows • Soffits, gutters, & downspouts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exterior lighting (street & on private property) • Porches, stairs, steps • Painting, siding, shutters • Chimney & masonry repair
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***Please note: The Renaissance Block Program is not a window replacement program. Original functioning windows should be repaired. New windows should match the style of the house. The use of unpainted or unstained pressure treated lumber is strongly discouraged.**

Eligible Participants

Eligible participants include Erie County residential and mixed-use commercial property owners who are current in payment of local, county, and school taxes or fees.

FAQs

What is the definition of a renaissance block?

A targeted block(s) or corridor that needs modest improvements. Homes in the program should be valued between 80% and 125% of the median value for their zip code according to the 2020 U.S. Census. Visit the Census website for the most current figures: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045222>

ECGRA has determined that block(s) and corridors should be contiguous and clustered to achieve the desired effect of improving the market dynamic including homebuyer confidence.

What is eligible for match?

RBG requires 1-1 cash match. Match must be documented by the applicant, who acts as a fiduciary agent for the program. Match may include cash expenditures by the applicant and/or improvements by the property owner. Match must be expended to achieve the goals of the challenge.

Who reimburses the property owner?

Applicants act as the fiduciary agent when reimbursing property owners. This means that applicants are legally responsible for ensuring proper use, documentation, and legalities that apply to private property owners. This includes prevailing wage when the project total exceeds \$25,000. See Appendix for the prevailing wage policy.

What if one person owns multiple properties on the same block?






RBG guidelines limit the applicant to \$5,000 reimbursement per property, not per person.

Can landlords receive reimbursement?





Yes. RBG funds are not limited to primary residences.

Section II. Sponsor Eligibility







Eligibility Criteria

-  Applicant is an IRS-designated 501(c)(3), a municipal authority, or a municipality
-  Applicant's headquarters is located in Erie County
-  Applicant is in good standing with the IRS and state and local taxing bodies
-  Applicant is in good standing with ECGRA's reporting requirements to date
-  Applicant is making sole request on behalf of organization






Ineligible Organizations

-  An airport or transportation facility
-  A public safety organization or facility, including volunteer fire departments
-  An institution that predominantly provides primary or secondary education/training
-  Any organization that was part of the settlement agreement with ECGRA, entered 12/13/10

Eligible Uses of Program Funds






-  Administration, marketing, promotion, advertising (up to 15% of the grant)
-  Insurance, legal fees
-  Evaluation, outcomes measurement, and impact tracking
-  Contracted services such as architectural, engineering, and construction inspection
-  Equipment and supplies
-  Contracted construction with licensed contractors – **see Appendix for policy on prevailing wage**

Ineligible Uses of Funds






-  Advocacy
-  Conference attendance
-  Debt service
-  Memberships/subscriptions
-  Reimbursement of property owner labor

Section III. Budget Form & Cash Match








Each application shall be complete in its entirety to be eligible. It will also demonstrate the following in the form of a budget:

-  Requested amount from ECGRA (**a maximum of \$100,000**)
-  Your agency contribution in the form of cash or anticipated owner contribution (do not list in-kind)
-  Other agency or funder contribution – include source; cash only
-  Total project, programming, or event cost – cash only
-  A 1:1 cash match. Existence of an endowment does not count toward match. Fundraising for a previous year's project, programming, or event does not count toward match.

The following are generally considered cash-match contributions:

-  Cash contributed by your organization
-  Equipment or supplies to be purchased by your organization for project, program, or event activities
-  Paying for an event brochure and/or its dissemination
-  Grants from other government agencies or foundations (not gaming funds)
-  Qualified homeowner repairs

The following are generally considered in-kind contributions:

-  Personnel time given to the project
-  Person on loan from another organization
-  Use of existing equipment or supplies
-  Use of existing laboratory equipment or facilities
-  Waived or unrecovered indirect cost amount
-  Office space
-  Donated materials, supplies, or labor

Section IV. Approval Process & Terms

Application Assistance

Application for ECGRA grants must be completed online at <https://www.grantinterface.com/Home/Logon?urlkey=ecgra>

Program inquiries should be directed to:

Tom Maggio, AICP
ECGRA Grants Manager
(814) 897-2694
tmaggio@ecgra.org

Grant Application Process

Receipt: Upon submission of the application and required supporting material, ECGRA staff, working with the ECGRA board of directors' review committee, will determine eligibility.

Review: The review committee will evaluate the application and determine if it meets the required parameters outlined by the board.






Approval: ECGRA's board of directors will receive funding recommendations from the review committee.

Notification: ECGRA will notify all applicants via email.

Contracting Process

Following approval by the ECGRA board of directors, the executive director will issue a letter of agreement to the grantee, which must be signed by an officer of the organization and returned within 30 days of the date of said letter. The agreement may detail additional requirements with which the grantee must comply, including but not limited to project audit, financial grant closeout report, maintenance of records, public relations, and any other information the board or staff deem relevant.




The grant contract agreement and any subsequent amendments will not be executed until all of the following have been resolved to the satisfaction of the executive director:

-  The grantee must be in compliance with ECGRA's policies on audits relative to the submission of closeout reports on any previous contracts with ECGRA, regardless of the program or funding source.
-  The grantee must provide all supplemental documentation requested by ECGRA.
-  The grantee must be in compliance with IRS reporting standards.
-  The grantee must be current in payment of all federal, state, and local taxes unless it has entered into an agreement satisfactory to the respective taxing authority and is fully in compliance with the terms thereof.
-  The grantee must not discriminate against any employee or against any applicant for employment because of race, religion, color, handicap, national origin, age, or sex.






After the grant agreement has been fully executed and the proper documentation provided to ECGRA, the payment to the grantee will be made by an electronic funds transfer or by check.

ECGRA will monitor the activities of the applicant and the grant contract agreement to ensure that the grantee fulfills the conditions of the grant. This may include a site visit or random audit of income and expenses. Upon request and as required by the agreement, the grantee must furnish ECGRA with all data, reports, contracts, documents, and other information relevant to the activities of the applicant.

Contract Terms


-  Grant contracts for Renaissance Block Grants funding shall be for a period of twenty-four (24) months.
-  One (1) option to extend the terms of the contract for a period of six (6) months may be granted by ECGRA. Detailed, written justification for the contract extension shall be submitted to ECGRA for review and consideration.
-  If the funds allocated to the applicant are not expended on or before the expiration of the grant contract, including the extension period, the unused portion of funds shall be returned to ECGRA.

Closeout Requirements

-  All recipients of funds are required to submit an online closeout report at <https://www.grantinterface.com/Home/Logon?urlkey=ecgra> quantifying the progress toward accomplishing approved deliverables.
-  Closeout reports are due no later than 30 days after the contract end date.
-  All grant recipients will be required to submit financial documentation as part of the online closeout report.
-  **Non-compliance** with these requirements may prevent the grantee from obtaining funding or payment from any ECGRA grant program and/or funding from ECGRA's programmatic partners.
-  If it is determined that the grantee provided any material misrepresentations or that funds were used for activities not permitted under the terms of the grant contract agreement, the grant contract agreement will be considered in default and immediate repayment will be demanded. In addition, the matter may be referred to the appropriate authorities for investigation.

Section V. 2024 Grant Schedule

 **April 5, 2024** – ECGRA releases the **Erie County Renaissance Block Program** Grant Application and Guidelines.

 **May 30, 2024** – Applications due.

 **June 20, 2024** – ECGRA's board of directors will make the final review and approve funding recommendations. *

**Subject to change without notice.*

Appendix

Summary of Applicable Provisions of the

PREVAILING WAGE ACT

43 P.S. §§ 165-1 et seq

34 Pa. Code §§ 9.101 et seq

The Prevailing Wage Act (the “Act”), 43 P.S. §§ 165-1 et seq., and the various laws and regulations governing the Act apply to Public Works projects funded by the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority (“ECGRA”). A Public Work is defined as including construction, reconstruction, demolition, alteration and/or repair work other than maintenance work, done under contract and paid for in whole or in part out of the funds of a public body where the estimated costs of the entire project exceed \$25,000.

ECGRA fund recipients shall require their contractor, if any, and contractors shall agree to require their subcontractors, to comply with the Act and the associated laws and regulations issued pursuant thereto.

Wage rates paid workmen employed in the Work shall not be less than the rates determined in the applicable wage rate determination by the Secretary of Labor and Industry for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and no workmen may be employed in the Work except in accordance with the classifications in Secretary’s determination.

The recipient of ECGRA funds shall be required to obtain the aforementioned public wage minimum rate determination prior to drafting project specifications or engaging in a contract with a contractor on a Public Work project.

Workmen employed or working in the Work shall be paid unconditionally, regardless of whether a contractual relationship exists or the nature of the contractual relationship. Payments shall be at least once a week and be the full amounts due at the time of payment, computed at the rates applicable to the time worked in the appropriate classification, without deduction or rebate, on any account, either directly or indirectly, except authorized deductions.

The contractor and each subcontractor shall post, for the entire period of construction, the wage determination decisions of the Secretary, including the effective date of changes thereof, in a prominent and easily accessible place or places at the site of the Work and at the places used by them to pay workmen their wages. The posted notice of wage rates shall comply with the requirements of the Pennsylvania Code, Title 34.

The contractor and subcontractor shall keep an accurate record showing the name, craft or classification, number of hours worked per day and the actual hourly rate of wage paid, including employee benefits, to each workman employed by him in connection with the Public Work. The record shall include deductions from each workman. The record shall be preserved for two (2) years from the date of payment and shall be open at reasonable hours to the inspection of ECGRA and to the Secretary of the Department of Labor and Industry or his authorized representatives.

Apprentices shall be limited to the numbers in accordance with a bona fide apprenticeship program registered with and approved by The Pennsylvania Apprenticeship and Training Council and only apprentices whose training and employment are in full compliance with the Apprenticeship and Training Act (43 P.S. §§ 90.1 – 90.10), as approved July 14, 1961, and the regulations issued thereto, shall be employed on the Public Work project. A workman using the tools of a craft who does not qualify as an apprentice shall be paid the rate predetermined for journeymen in that particular craft or classification.

Payment of compensation to workmen for work performed on a Public Work in a lump sum basis, or a piece work system, or a price certain for the completion of a certain amount of work, or the production of a certain result shall be deemed a violation of the Act and associated regulations, regardless of the resulting average hourly wage.

Each contractor and subcontractor shall file a statement each week and a final statement at the conclusion of the work with the recipient of ECGRA funds, under oath and in a form satisfactory to the Secretary of the Department of Labor and Industry, certifying that workmen have been paid wages pursuant to the contract and the Act, or if wages remain unpaid, to set forth the amount of wages due and owing to each workman respectively.

The provisions of the Act, and its associated regulations shall be incorporated by reference in each contract.

This document is provided solely for informational purposes only and is not for the purpose of providing legal advice. You should contact your attorney to obtain advice with respect to compliance with the Prevailing Wage Act. Use of this document does not create an attorney-client relationship between the user and legal counsel to ECGRA.

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