



City of Mission Viejo

Thrives Grant Program

Community Development Department
200 Civic Center, Mission Viejo, CA 92691
cd@cityofmissionviejo.org

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

The City of Mission Viejo Thrives Grant Program supports small businesses by funding physical improvements that will increase customer engagement, enhance customer experience, and generate social media exposure. Selected businesses can receive up to \$3,500 in grant funding.

ELIGIBILITY:

Eligible businesses must:

- Be a for-profit brick-and-mortar commercial business, physically located in Mission Viejo;
- Submit the application and all required supporting documentation.
- Have or obtain a City of Mission Viejo Certificate of Occupancy.
- As of January 1, 2026, must have at least a minimum of two (2) employees – which may also include the owner - and no more than twenty-five (25) full-time equivalent employees (two part-time employees equal one full-time employee).
- Be in compliance with any City permit or license requirements applicable to the Business and have no active code violations.
- The grant must result in physical improvements to the interior or exterior of the business. These improvements shall be visible to the patrons of the business. Exterior improvements shall comply with City codes. Contact City staff for inquiries regarding code compliance.
- To be eligible to receive grant funds, applicants must attend a three-week (1 hour per week) virtual business workshop program and complete a minimum of one (1) one-on-one consulting session with a Small Business Development Center (SBDC) consultant focused on small business best practices.
- Must install a permanent, visible City of Mission Viejo plaque or decal commemorating the physical improvement.
- Must have or develop a social media account for the business prior to grant issuance.

The following businesses are not eligible:

- Residential or real estate projects, home based businesses, and short-term rentals.
- Cannabis-related businesses, gambling facilities, adult entertainment, and largely cash-based businesses.
- City employees, elected, and appointed officials.

SCORING CRITERIA:

Applications that propose physical improvements to the business (interior and/or exterior) that are intentionally designed to increase customer engagement, enhance customer experience, and generate social media exposure will receive higher scores. Preference will be given to projects that demonstrate a clear connection between physical improvement and a strategy to increase online visibility, customer-generated content, or digital marketing effectiveness. Physical improvements should be intentionally designed to enhance customer experience and encourage social media engagement, photography, or online promotion.

Examples of highly competitive projects include, but are not limited to:

- Artistic murals, public art, or other visually appealing features that encourage customer photos and social media sharing.
- Attractive interior or exterior building improvements, including façade enhancements and architectural features.
- Decorative storefronts or unique interior spaces that create memorable customer experiences.
- Branded photo opportunities or interactive displays that support digital marketing.
- Outdoor seating or gathering areas.
- Enhanced lighting and landscape improvements.
- New or upgraded business signage.
- Feature walls, distinctive design elements, or unique customer seating areas that enhance the business's visual appeal.

Applicants should explain how the proposed physical improvements will be incorporated into their marketing strategy to generate online engagement, increase customer-generated content, and strengthen the business's digital presence.

APPLICATION:

The following application materials are required for a complete application:

1. **Application Form:** Complete the attached PDF application (Page 4).
2. **Project Description:** Provide a detailed letter about the specific physical improvements planned. Conceptual images, illustrations, or plans of the proposed improvements are encouraged.
3. **Photos:** Provide current "before" pictures of the project area.

Applicants must apply online at <https://ociesmallbusiness.org/city-of-mission-viejo-thrives-grant-program/> and submit a fully completed application. The application period runs from **10/19/2026 at 8:00 AM to 11/15/2026 at 11:59 PM**. Upon submission, the Orange County/Inland Empire Small Business Development Center (OCIE SBDC) and the City of Mission Viejo will review the applications for eligibility. Selected applications will be contacted by **11/23/2026**.

GRANT AWARD:

Applications that are selected will receive a grant of up to \$3,500. Selected awardees will be required to provide a signed copy of the Mission Viejo Thrives Grant Program and completed W-9 Form. Consult a tax professional regarding any tax implications of receiving a City grant. Grant funds will be provided via direct deposit once all necessary forms and required training are complete.

Awardees must attend the required Small Business Development Center (SBDC) virtual workshops **scheduled on Zoom for Tuesdays 12/01/26, 12/08/26 and 12/15/26 from 2:00 PM to 3:30 PM** and complete a minimum of one (1) one-on-one consulting session with a SBDC consultant focused on small business best practices. Refer to the attached “Mission Viejo Thrives - Business Refresh: Inside & Out” document for details.

The applicant shall provide photo documentation of physical improvements to the City within six (6) months of receiving grant funds.

CITY RESERVED RIGHTS:

The City reserves the unqualified right, in its sole and absolute discretion at any time: (1) to amend or terminate this program with no recourse for any proposing applicant; (2) to choose or reject any or all applications received in response to this program; (3) to modify the application deadlines; (4) to request additional information of the applicants as deemed necessary and appropriate by the City; (5) to conduct further due diligence with applicants or any third party; (6) to modify the City's objectives or the scope of the program; (7) to modify program requirements, general terms and conditions, or eligible activities; and/or (8) to disqualify any proposing applicant on the basis of any real or perceived conflict of interest that is disclosed or revealed by materials submitted or by any data available to the City.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY POLICY:

The City of Mission Viejo shall not discriminate upon the basis of sex, age, race, creed, color, religion, national origin, marital status, ancestry or physical handicap in accepting applications and processing program applications.