

# **Businesses Reducing Impact on the Environment (BRITE) Program Frequently Asked Questions**

## **Pre-Assessment**

### **Does my business need to undergo an assessment prior to receiving an award from the BRITE Grant?**

- Yes, to receive grants all businesses must undergo an assessment. Upon completion, the specialist will inform business owners of any recommended projects or equipment to reduce environmental impact.

### **How much does the assessment cost?**

- Nothing. The assessment is completely free.

### **What type of assessment will my business undergo?**

- DES will conduct a pollution prevention technical assessment. The assessment may identify things like toxic and pollution reduction, renewable energy, energy and water efficiency and waste reduction practices.

### **Who will conduct my assessment?**

- A representative from DES will conduct your assessment. In some cases, DES will require additional expertise to assess certain business categories. In these cases, the representative will request a specialized environmental consultant to conduct the assessment.

### **How do I prove that my business experienced a negative economic impact due to the COVID-19 pandemic?**

- Examples of negative economic impacts include decreased revenue or gross receipts, financial insecurity, increased costs and inability to afford materials, lost capacity to manage financial hardship, challenges covering payroll, rent or mortgage and other operating costs.

## **Post-Assessment and Grant Application**

### **What are some examples of projects, specific products and equipment upgrades that the BRITE Grant may cover?**

- Industry-specific toxic removal projects, such as replacement of dry cleaning equipment that uses PERC with a wet cleaning machine
- Funding to help pay for waste reduction trainings, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as gloves, goggles, masks, etc., safer cleaning products (i.e., EPA Safer Choice verified)
- Purchasing and installing process equipment that would conserve energy and water
- Purchasing cleaning products that are EPA Safer Choice verified
- Initial funding of commuter benefit incentives for staff

### **Do I have to implement recommendations made by the specialist to reduce my business's environmental impact?**

- No, the business owner can decide whether to follow the recommendations of the specialist.

### **What can the BRITE Grant dollars be used for?**

- Grant dollars awarded from the BRITE Grant must be used to improve business operations and practices to reduce environmental impact. The BRITE Grant will only cover costs of recommendations made during the time of assessment.

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### **Does the County offer any additional support to small businesses?**

- Cook County offers many types of support to small businesses: o Cook County Small Business Source directly connects small business owners with expert guidance and support to take businesses to the next level.
- [Cook County's C-PACE Program](#) helps property owners secure low-cost, long-term financing for energy efficient upgrades.

### **Will the grant be a reimbursement or up-front payment?**

- Either. Businesses can either send receipts to our team to process as a receipt or, by late 2023, our sub-recipient will be able to provide up-front funds to businesses to use that money and purchase any items.
- Businesses may ask for monthly installments or lump sums from the grant award.

### **Do I need to use the money all at once?**

- No. You can use the funds as they best suit you and your business. You can make smaller recommended investments early on and ask for reimbursements for those while planning for larger purchases and ask for direct-pay from our sub-contractor.

### **When do I need to spend all of the Grant money by?**

- You may use the funds through 2026 on any projects identified in the beneficiary agreement.

### **How much money can I receive?**

- The maximum award is \$300,000 per applicant.
- DES will fund the pollution reducing project with the most environmental impact as determined by the BRITE assessment report.
- For all subsequent recommendations, DES will fund up to 50% of purchase value with the applicant covering the remainder of costs (up to a maximum cap of \$300,000).
- All BRITE grant awardees must attend 1 BRITE grant orientation training hosted by the Chicago Urban League (CUL) and two sustainability trainings cohosted by CUL and DES.

### **What is a beneficiary agreement?**

- The beneficiary agreement is to be signed by the business owner with the County to declare that they will use the funds they were allocated appropriately. Businesses may explore vendors and options for any purchase; however, the funds must be used as they were distributed for. There is no requirement to use any granted funding.
- The beneficiary agreement will also require standards like committing the business to stay open for at least one year after the purchase of any equipment from the BRITE grant.
- The beneficiary agreement will also include the requirement to register all applicable equipment with the County for Certificates of Operation (COOs).
- The Business Owner and staff from the County will sit down together and go through the Beneficiary Agreement prior to receiving the grant wherein the Owner can raise any questions or concerns and work with the County to reach an agreement.

Further questions? Please email [BRITE@cookcountyil.gov](mailto:BRITE@cookcountyil.gov).