

## Small Business and Minority Grants

Here are the top small and minority business grant programs available to start a new business or enhance an existing one. Others can be used for innovation research.

**#1 – The FedEx Small Business Grant Contest** is a nationwide competition that will award \$50,000 in total to six deserving U.S.-based entrepreneurs and business owners.

The top winner will receive a \$25,000 grant and the remaining five winners will receive grants of \$5,000 each. Small businesses, defined as having fewer than 100 employees, will compete for the grants by registering their business online.

Once their application is approved and the voting period begins, they can vote for their own business once a day - and get their friends, customers, and colleagues to vote also every day.

The number of votes received will boost their company's visibility in the contest, and will be a major factor that FedEx will consider when selecting the top 100 finalists and the winners. They will review every submission to identify the most compelling business stories.

**Award Amount:**

Up to \$25,000

**Deadline:** Usually  
in February

**Website:** <http://smallbusinessgrant.fedex.com>

**Learn more at:** [www.businessgrants.org/opportunities/fedex\\_small\\_business\\_grant\\_contest.html](http://www.businessgrants.org/opportunities/fedex_small_business_grant_contest.html)

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**#2 – The National Association for the Self Employed (NASE) Growth Grants Program** allows business owners to apply for a grant useful for financing a particular small business need. Past recipients used their grant for computers, farm equipment, to hire part-time help, marketing materials and more.

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The NASE Growth Grants® program offers access to capital for micro-business owners who have a specific business need, but lack the finances to carry out that goal. The program was designed after an online NASE Member poll found that a majority of micro-business owners (57 percent) initially fund their businesses using personal savings, and many (40 percent) continue to use personal savings for ongoing financing.

Through the program, members can apply for up to \$5,000 to meet a specific business need such as the purchase of new equipment or software, or the funding of advertising, marketing materials or training.

Since the program began in 2006, the association has awarded more than \$650,000 to member businesses.

The National Association for the Self-Employed (NASE), a non-profit organization, is the nation's leading resource for the self-employed and micro-businesses, bringing a broad range of benefits to help entrepreneurs succeed and to drive the continued growth of this vital segment of the American economy.

**Award Amount:** Up to \$5,000.00

**Deadline:**  
Ongoing

**Website:** [www.nase.org/Membership/GrantsandScholarships/BusinessDevelopmentGrants.aspx](http://www.nase.org/Membership/GrantsandScholarships/BusinessDevelopmentGrants.aspx)

**Learn more at:**

[www.businessgrants.org/opportunities/national\\_association\\_self\\_employed\\_nase\\_business\\_grants.htm](http://www.businessgrants.org/opportunities/national_association_self_employed_nase_business_grants.html)  
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**#3 – The Dare to Dream Grant Program** encourages students to move through the business creation process by offering business development seminars and up to \$10,000 in funding.

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Within the program, students meet deadlines to produce deliverables that guide them through the business development path from a nascent idea to formulating and assessing potential businesses to planning and launching these businesses.

The program has three different stages:

- 1)** The Venture Shaping grant is geared toward students with an idea that they believe holds commercial promise.
- 2)** The Assessment grant is geared toward students with a proposed business;
- 3)** The Integration grant is for teams that have a complete feasibility study that concludes the proposed business is viable.

Students may enter their business into the program at any stage though, once entered, the business cannot re-apply for the same stage nor a stage before it. Applications are accepted each September and January.

**Award Amount:** \$500  
- \$10,000

**Deadline:**  
Every September and January

**Website:** [www.zli.bus.umich.edu/events\\_programs/dream\\_grant.asp](http://www.zli.bus.umich.edu/events_programs/dream_grant.asp)

**Learn more at:** [www.businessgrants.org/opportunities/dare\\_to\\_dream\\_grant\\_program.html](http://www.businessgrants.org/opportunities/dare_to_dream_grant_program.html)

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**#4 – The Miller Lite Tap the Future Business Plan Competition** (formally known as the MillerCoors Urban Entrepreneur Series) is an annual competition for minority business owners sponsored by MillerCoors. Designed to economically empower minority businesses, the program continues to invest in entrepreneurial dreams to empower urban communities.

Launched in 1999 to encourage entrepreneurship in urban areas, the competition has just celebrated 10 years of giving away business grants to applicants who submit the best business plans. The Urban League is a huge partner in this initiative.

MillerCoors has invested in the dreams of aspiring entrepreneurs, and each year they bring new categories and greater opportunities. Applicants can enter their business plan for a chance to vie for a \$50,000 business grant and potentially become a MillerCoors supplier. Designed to economically empower minority businesses, the program continues to invest in entrepreneurial dreams to empower urban communities.

Applicants must have ownership of a business, must be at least 21 years of age at time of submission of Business Plan, must be legal U.S. residents, residing in the United States, and must have not previously been awarded a business grant from the program.

- Sole proprietor must be between 21-35 years   
Not a franchise or non-profit
- Business must be located in the U.S.

**Award Amount:**  
\$25,000 - Grand prize - \$200,000.00

**Deadline:** Usually  
in April

**Website:**  
[www.MLtapthefuture.com](http://www.MLtapthefuture.com)

**Learn more at:**

[www.businessgrants.org/opportunities/miller\\_lite\\_tap\\_the\\_future\\_millercoors\\_urban\\_entrepreneur\\_series.html](http://www.businessgrants.org/opportunities/miller_lite_tap_the_future_millercoors_urban_entrepreneur_series.html)

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**#5 – The Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA)** organizes various angel investors with the primary objective of supporting minority businesses with mezzanine and second round financing.

The Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) was originally established as the Office of Minority Business Enterprise by President Richard M. Nixon on March 5, 1969. He recognized the impact of minority businesses on the nation's economy and on the general welfare of the country, and wanted to protect them.

Today, the agency does just that via many grant funding programs that are designed to help keep minority businesses afloat. In 2011, the agency supported the creation of 5,787 new jobs by assisting minorityowned businesses in obtaining nearly \$4 billion in contracts and capital. Even more, MBDA's return on taxpayer investment (ROI) reached the highest level in the 43-year history of the Agency.

That same year, MBDA also successfully launched a newly redesigned MBDA Business Center program that combines the traditional Minority Business Enterprise Center (MBEC) and Minority Business Opportunity Center (MBOC) programs into one program. Via these center, grant funding is distributed every year with applications usually being accepted in the spring or summer.

**Award Amount:**

Varies

**Deadline:** Varies

**Website:** [www.MBDA.gov/main/grantcompetitions](http://www.MBDA.gov/main/grantcompetitions)

**Learn more at:**

[www.businessgrants.org/opportunities/minority\\_business\\_development\\_agency\\_mbda\\_business\\_grants.html](http://www.businessgrants.org/opportunities/minority_business_development_agency_mbda_business_grants.html)

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**#6 – The Rural Business Enterprise Grants (RBEG) Program** provides grants to finance the development of small and emerging businesses in rural areas. The funds can be used for land acquisition, construction, renovation, technical assistance, project planning, and more.

The program is a broad based program that reaches to the core of rural development in a number of ways. Eligible entities include: cities, communities, state agencies, and authorities), Indian tribes and rural

private non-profit corporations are eligible to apply for funding. At least 51 percent of the outstanding interest in any project must have membership or be owned by U.S. citizens or resident aliens.

Examples of eligible fund use include: Acquisition or development of land, easements, or rights of way; construction, conversion, renovation of buildings, plants, machinery, equipment, access streets and roads, parking areas, utilities; pollution control and abatement; capitalization of revolving loan funds including funds that will make loans for start-ups and working capital; training and technical assistance; distance adult learning for job training and advancement; rural transportation improvement; and project planning.

Any project funded under the RBEG program should benefit small and emerging private businesses in rural areas. Small and emerging private businesses are those that will employ 50 or fewer new employees and have less than \$1 million in projected gross revenues.

**Award Amount:** \$10,000  
- \$500,000

**Deadline:** Varies

**Website:** [www.rurdev.usda.gov/BCP\\_rbeg.html](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/BCP_rbeg.html)

**Learn more at:**

[www.businessgrants.org/opportunities/rural\\_business\\_enterprise\\_grants\\_rbeg\\_program.html](http://www.businessgrants.org/opportunities/rural_business_enterprise_grants_rbeg_program.html)

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**#7 – The Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program** provides grant funding to small businesses to engage in biomedical or behavioral research/ development that leads to a potential for commercialization. Innovative technologies to improve health. Create life saving technologies and stimulate economic growth.

The SBIR Program includes the following objectives: using small businesses to stimulate technological innovation, strengthening the role of small business in meeting Federal R/R&D needs, increasing private sector commercialization of innovations developed through Federal SBIR R&D, increasing small business participation in Federal R/R&D, and fostering and encouraging participation by socially and economically disadvantaged small business concerns and women-owned business concerns in the SBIR program.

The STTR (Small Business Technology Transfer) and SBIR programs are similar in that both programs seek to increase the participation of small businesses in Federal R&D and to increase private sector commercialization of technology developed through Federal R&D. The unique feature of the STTR program is the requirement for the small business concern applicant organization to formally collaborate with a research institution in Phase I and Phase II.

The program is managed by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and they welcome SBIR and STTR applications from small businesses in any biomedical or behavioral research area that falls within their mission, which is to improve human health.

**Award Amount:**

Varies

**Deadline:** Varies

**Website:** [http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/sbirsttr\\_programs.htm](http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/sbirsttr_programs.htm)  
[BusinessDevelopmentGrants.aspx](http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/sbirsttr_programs.htm)

**Learn more at:**

[www.businessgrants.org/opportunities/sbir\\_small\\_business\\_research\\_innovation\\_grants.html](http://www.businessgrants.org/opportunities/sbir_small_business_research_innovation_grants.html)

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**Grants**

The federal government does NOT provide grants for starting and expanding a business.

Government grants are funded by your tax dollars and therefore require very stringent compliance and reporting measures to ensure the money is well spent. As you can imagine, grants are not given away indiscriminately.

Grants from the federal government are only available to non-commercial organizations, such as nonprofits and educational institutions in areas such as, medicine, education, scientific research and technology development. The federal government also provides grants to state and local governments to assist them with economic development.

Some business grants are available through state and local programs, non-profit organizations and other groups. For example, some states provide grants for expanding child care centers; creating energy efficient technology; and developing marketing campaigns for tourism. These grants are not necessarily free money, and usually require the recipient to match funds or combine the grant with other forms of financing such as a loan. The amount of the grant money available varies with each business and each grantor.

If you are not one of these specialized businesses, both federal and state government agencies provide financial assistance programs that helps small business owners obtain [low-interest loans](#) and [venture capital financing](#) from commercial lenders.

For other information on grants visit the Small Business Administration (SBA) at:  
<https://www.sba.gov/content/grants-0>