



PROGRAM OVERVIEW

FIVE businesses in Downtown Decatur will be awarded a **\$1,000 grant** to invest in eligible business marketing products, services and activities designed to grow their businesses.

What would you do with an extra \$1,000 to market your business?



HOW DOES IT WORK?

STEP 1 TELL US YOU'RE IN

by 11.1.24 Contact **Kelly Thomas** with **Decatur Downtown Redevelopment Authority** to let us know you're interested and provide your contact information.

STEP 2 WATCH YOUR INBOX

by 11.8.24 Main Street Alabama will email you instructions on how to prequalify for the grant. Don't forget to check your junk mail/spam filter!

STEP 3 PREQUALIFY

by 11.29.24 Successfully complete a business eligibility checklist and the Illuminate Branding Course to prequalify. Course is less than 30 minutes!

STEP 4 WINNERS SELECTED

by 12.13.24 Decatur Downtown Redevelopment Authority will notify winners.

STEP 5 AGREEMENT WITH MAIN STREET ALABAMA

by 1.24.25 Winners will receive and execute Illuminate Business Marketing Grant Agreements.

STEP 6 \$1K IS ON THE WAY!

by 2.7.25 Main Street Alabama will disburse funds directly to grant awardees.

STEP 7 CELEBRATE

by 2.7.25 Main Street Alabama in coordination with Decatur Downtown Redevelopment Authority will distribute a press release announcing local winners.



Q: WHAT CAN THE \$1,000 GRANT BE USED FOR?

Eligible uses of Illuminate grant funds are limited to business marketing products, services and activities. Examples include:

- Advertising, including print, multi-media, digital, email, social media, video marketing or other visual means
- Marketing materials (e.g. business cards, rack cards, brochures, mailers, table tents, loyalty program cards, branded packaging and shipping materials, etc.)
- Business signage, including company vehicle signage or wraps, window and door signage and graphics, and "A-frame" or similar sidewalk signs, where permitted by local ordinances
- Customer premiums (e.g. branded reusable shopping bags)
- Product samples for customer demonstrations and branded giveaway



ILLUMINATE is powered by **AL★SPARK**, a new Main Street Alabama initiative to energize emerging and growing businesses in Designated Main Street Alabama Districts across the state. Illuminate is supported by funding from the U.S. Small Business Administration.



BUSINESS MARKETING GRANTS

Q: WHICH BUSINESSES ARE ELIGIBLE?

To be eligible for an AL★SPARK Illuminate \$1,000 business marketing grant award from Main Street Alabama the business must:

- Be physically located within a Designated Main Street Alabama District (Downtown Decatur).
- Be a legally formed and for-profit business entity (e.g. sole proprietor, corporation, limited liability corporation, partnership), and have an Employee Identification Number (EIN).
- Notify Decatur Downtown Redevelopment of their interest and provide, at minimum, the business name, and a contact name, email address and phone number by the means and deadline (11/1).
- Complete an online business eligibility questionnaire/checklist and the four-part AL★SPARK Illuminate Branding Course by November 29, 2024.

If selected for a grant award, the business will be required to:

- Execute an Agreement with Main Street Alabama certifying business eligibility and agreeing to spend awarded Illuminate business marketing grant funds on eligible business marketing products, services and activities.
- Submit the signed Agreement, along with a completed Form W-9, to Main Street Alabama by January 24, 2025

Other Details

- The \$1,000 Illuminate business marketing grant award will be disbursed by Main Street Alabama in the form of a check made payable directly to each business awardee. All funds are expected to be disbursed by February 7, 2025.
- Businesses owned in whole or part by employees of Main Street Alabama and the local Designated Main Street Program Organizations, and immediate family members of such employees (parent, child, sibling, spouse), are not eligible.
- Main Street Alabama reserves the right to deny, delay, or withhold funding to any business awardee found, in the sole discretion of Main Street Alabama, to be ineligible or in non-compliance with AL★SPARK Illuminate program criteria, rules or regulations.

To be eligible for a Bright Ideas Local Competition grant award the business must:

- Be physically located within Downtown Decatur.
- Be a legally formed and for-profit business entity (e.g. sole proprietor, corporation, limited liability corporation, partnership), and have an Employee Identification Number (EIN).
- Have been in operation for at least one year as of October 1, 2024. Businesses that are expanding, that were previously located in another community, that are opening a second location in the Designated Main Street District, or similar scenarios are eligible.

If selected by the judges to receive a Bright Ideas Local Competition grant award, the business will be required to:

- Execute an Agreement with Main Street Alabama (MSA) certifying business eligibility and agreeing to spend awarded Bright Ideas grant funds on eligible grant program expenses.
 - Eligible expenses** are limited to inventory, equipment, marketing, computers, and software upgrades.
 - Ineligible expenses** include rent, utilities, remodeling, payroll, and vehicles.
- Submit the signed Agreement, along with a completed Form W-9, to Main Street Alabama by **February 28, 2025**.

Agreements will be distributed by MSA to the selected businesses by February 7, 2025.

Fifty percent (50%) of the total grant awarded to the business awardee will be disbursed upon execution of the Agreement with MSA. The balance of the total grant award will be disbursed as a reimbursement upon the submittal of a completed disbursement request form, along with invoices and proof of payment for allowable expenses, by the business.

All award disbursement or reimbursement requests from Bright Ideas business awardees must be received by Main Street Alabama on or before **June 17, 2025**.

— Late requests will be rejected, and funds previously designated for award will be forfeited by the business.

Other Important Details for Businesses

Businesses owned in whole or part by employees of Main Street Alabama (MSA) and local Main Street organizations, and immediate family members of such employees (parent, child, sibling, spouse), are not eligible.

MSA reserves the right to deny, delay, or withhold funding to any business awardee found, in the sole discretion of MSA, to be ineligible or in non-compliance with Bright Ideas program criteria, rules or regulations.

Businesses awarded grants in the Bright Ideas *state regionals and finals* competitions must provide a ten percent (10%) cash match toward expenditures outlined in their business pitch project budget. For example, a business awarded a \$10,000 Bright Ideas state regionals grant must provide a match of at least \$1,000 to fund a project with a cost totaling \$11,000 or more. The match requirement does not apply to local competition awardees.

All award disbursement or reimbursement requests from state regionals competition awardees must be received by MSA on or before June 17, 2025. State finals competition awardees must submit requests by November 30, 2025. Late requests will be rejected and grant funds forfeited by awardees.



Downtown Decatur Local Pitch Competition: Monday, January 13th

Local winner will advance to regionals where they could win an additional \$10K

Regional winner will advance to State where they could win an additional \$25K