IDA FOUNDATION
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Backing International Small Restaurants FAQs

Program Overview

1. What is the deadline for restaurant owners/operators to apply?
The program will launch at 10:00 a.m. Eastern Time ("ET") on October 1, 2026.

The deadline for applications is 23:59 p.m. ET on **November 16, 2026**.

Location	Launch	Deadline
Mexico City	Oct 1, 2026, 8:00 a.m. CST	Nov 16, 2026, 22:59 p.m. CST
Toronto & Montreal	Oct 1, 2026, 10:00 a.m. ET	Nov 16, 2026, 23:59 p.m. ET
London & Manchester	Oct 1, 2026, 15:00 p.m. BST	Nov 17, 2026, 4:59 a.m. BST
Barcelona, Paris & Milan	Oct 1, 2026, 16:00 p.m. CEST	Nov 17, 2026, 5:59 a.m. CET
Tokyo, Osaka, Fukuoka & Sapporo	Oct 1, 2026, 23:00 p.m. JST	Nov 17, 2026, 13:59 p.m. JST
Melbourne & Sydney	Oct 1, 2026, 12:00 a.m. AEST	Nov 17, 2026, 15:59 p.m. AEDT
Auckland	Oct 2, 2026, 2:00 a.m. NZST	Nov 17, 2026, 17:59 p.m. NZDT

2. How do you apply?
Applicants apply using the form on the IDA Foundation website. Applicants who do not already have an account with submittable.com will be required to create one in order to submit an application. Creating an account is free, and all applicable Submittable terms apply.

3. What is the selection process?
The IDA Foundation will evaluate applicants based upon the criteria described below. After an initial evaluation, applicants may be contacted to submit additional materials, including expanded narratives and detailed grant budgets.

4. What is the awarded grant amount?
Grants are available for the following funding amounts in the following cities:

- Auckland – 5 grants of NZD 25,000
- Barcelona – 10 grants of EUR 12,500
- London and Manchester – 20 grants* of GBP 10,500

- Melbourne and Sydney – 15 grants* of AUD 20,000
- Mexico City – 10 grants of MXN equivalent of USD 10,000
- Milan – 5 grants of EUR 12,500
- Montreal and Toronto – 20 grants* of CAD 20,000
- Osaka, Fukuoka, Sapporo, and Tokyo – 10 grants* of JPY 2,300,000
- Paris – 5 grants of EUR 12,500

* Represents the total number of grants available for listed cities.

The selected restaurants will enter into a grant agreement with the IDA Foundation outlining the terms and conditions of the grant.

5. What are the eligibility criteria for evaluating applicants?
Grant Eligibility Criteria for Eligible Small Restaurants:

- Restaurant must be located within one of the following program cities
    - Australia – Melbourne (Greater Melbourne boundaries) and Sydney (Greater Sydney boundaries)
    - Canada – Montreal and Toronto
    - France – Greater Paris Metropolitan area (Métropole du Grand Paris)
    - Italy – Metropolitan City of Milan
    - Japan – Fukuoka, Osaka, Sapporo, and Tokyo
    - Mexico – Mexico City
    - New Zealand – Auckland Region
    - Spain – Barcelona (Metropolitan Area of Barcelona)
    - UK – London (Greater London Authority boundaries) and Manchester (Greater Manchester boundaries)

- Be currently open for business, in operation prior to September 1, 2025
- Be a registered for-profit business entity in good standing (or equivalent) in the jurisdiction in which it was formed and the city in which it does business (e.g., not an unincorporated contractor or self-employed individual)
- Be a brick and mortar restaurant, café, bar or pub with food offering, and not part of a franchise with more than 5 locations
- Have an annual revenue in 2025 of less than:
    - Australia – AUD 2 million in Melbourne and Sydney
    - Canada – CAD 1.5 million in Montreal and Toronto
    - France – EUR 2 million in Paris
    - Italy – EUR 2 million in Milan
    - Japan – JPY 250 million in Osaka, Fukuoka, Sapporo and Tokyo
    - Mexico – MXN 20 million in Mexico City
    - New Zealand – NZD 2 million in Auckland
    - Spain – EUR 2 million in Barcelona
    - UK – GBP 1 million in London and Manchester

Restaurants that meet the above criteria will then be evaluated on the following. Preference will be given to restaurants that best demonstrate:

- Clear use of grant funds and its impact on the restaurant.
- Ability to deploy grant funds quickly in a 5-month timeframe
- Demonstrate historic, cultural, or community significance
- Invest in projects that help restaurants grow, recover, and support their local communities

Acceptance of American Express is not a requirement to be considered for the grant.

Please note: Employees, independent contractors, and seconded contractors of the IDA Foundation or American Express, and their respective spouses, children, and immediate family members, are not eligible to participate. Prior grant recipients of the Backing International Small Restaurant grant program are also not eligible for consideration.

6. Are there specific eligible uses of grant funds?

The grant funds must be used to help the restaurant grow, recover, and support their local communities. Potential uses could include critical improvements needed to sustain the business' operations such as enhancing digital capabilities, building outdoor dining spaces, purchasing new equipment, and making other physical improvements. Utility costs are a potential use but must not exceed 15% of the grant. Applicants are required to provide an outline of their planned use of funds in their application.

Applicants are encouraged to secure any required city permits, such as those for outdoor dining space, before the grant implementation period to avoid delays and ensure work can be completed within five months. Any improvements requiring landlord involvement, including electrical or structural changes, must also be approved by the landlord in advance.

Rent, salaries, loan repayments, food supplies, alcohol, and permits for liquor licenses are not eligible grant fund uses.

7. If I own more than one restaurant, can I apply for a grant for multiple restaurants?

A restaurant owner that owns more than one restaurant may apply for a grant for up to five restaurants owned by the restaurant owner; however, a restaurant owner can only receive one grant. Each restaurant must meet the eligibility criteria described above.

8. What is the program timeline?

- October 1, 2026: Applications Open at 10:00 am ET
- November 16, 2026: Application period closes at 23:59 pm ET
- November 2026: Outreach to Finalists Begins – Additional Documentation Request
- January 2027: Notification to Awarded Restaurants
- February 2027: Restaurants Publicly Announced
- February – August 2027: Grant Implementation
- August 2027: Project Completion

9. What is the notification process for successful grant recipients?
Grant recipients will be contacted via email and/or telephone in January. All applicants will receive correspondence of their status by February 2027.

10. How will the funds be disbursed?
Grant funds will be awarded directly to the restaurant owner upon receipt of signed grant agreement.

11. What reporting requirements must the grant recipients satisfy?
Grant recipients must work with the local partner and IDA Foundation to provide baseline data at the time the grant payment is provided (e.g. data on revenues, employees, etc.). By no later than July 31, 2027, grant recipients will be required to share how the grant has helped their business and share data to show any changes that were enabled by the receipt of the grant.

12. What is the role of the local partner for Backing International Small Restaurants?
IDA Foundation's local partners for the grant program conduct marketing and outreach to raise awareness of the grant program, advise on the selection process, and support grant recipients and collect information on the application of grant funds once grants are issued. Local partners include:

- **Australia** – Mainstreet Australia
- **Canada** – IDA Canada
- **France** – Centre-ville en Mouvement
- **Italy** – Confesercenti Milano
- **Japan** – Japan Area Management Network
- **Mexico** – Fundación Placemaking Mexico
- **New Zealand** – Mainstreet Australia
- **Spain** – Fundació Barcelona Comerç
- **UK** – Association of Town and City Management

13. Who is the International Downtown Association (IDA) Foundation?
The IDA Foundation is the non-profit arm of the International Downtown Association, a Washington D.C.-based organization empowering place management leaders with knowledge, research, and public policies for creating prosperous city centers, commercial neighborhoods and livable urban places for all. For more information, please visit https://downtown.org/foundation.

For any other questions, please contact Nataly Cruz-Castillo, IDA Foundation, at **nataly@downtown.org**, or call or message IDA Foundation via Whatsapp at +1 (202) 656-5541.