ThreeStar

Program Guidelines - 2025

***Mission**:*
ThreeStar serves to promote economic and community prosperity, through collaboration, to positively impact every Tennessean.

General Information and Overview:
A community is shaped by the heart of the people, where they spend their time, effort, and resources. The ThreeStar certification program works to assist communities in collaborating with and connecting stakeholders and partners, to empower and strengthen community planning, and design, and to build sustainable practices for long-term positive impacts.

The ThreeStar program, established in 1980, is a county-wide community development certification program. All benefits are open to the county, as well as all incorporated cities and towns within the county, once all documentation is verified. The upcoming round will run from July 1, 2025, to June 30, 2027. Required documentation and activities for 2025-2026 certification take place beginning in January 2025.

ThreeStar community certification is an eligibility requirement for several TNECD, and other Tennessee state grant programs. Benefits also include discounts on match rates, and bonus amounts on certain grant programs.

County Certification Requirements:
These items are due to be submitted to the online ThreeStar system. If you are the designated administrator for the County ThreeStar program, please verify you can enter the portal.

- Asset Inventory – updated in the online form
- ThreeStar Community Development Task Force members, and contact information submitted.

By **June 1, 2025,** the remaining required items are due to be submitted to the online ThreeStar system.

- Joint Economic and Community Development Board (JECDB) meeting minutes for the previous 18 months.
- Three (3) priority long-term goals and three (3) priority short-term goals, written in the SMART standards format.
- Activity Steps and Timeline submitted for each of the six SMART goals.

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ThreeStar Grant Program:

Eligibility: All project applications submitted for scoring must show how they relate back to one of the Counties S.M.A.R.T. goals submitted for the program year at time of application and how you will track the economic and community development impact. Distressed and At-Risk communities could be eligible for ThreeStar High Impact project funds.

Ineligible expenses:

- Salaries, basic or operational costs/expenses, travel expenses, prizes, landscaping, conference fees, and/or food
- Other items as determined by TNECD

Scoring Element		Range
A] Executive Summary provides correct/detailed information, including budget. (Max 20)	Application is complete, with a budget narrative, required financial documents and the project is sustainable.	1-15
B] Public Benefit / Impact and how well does the project impact the identified need? (Max 20)	The degree that the proposed project aligns with the economic and community development outcomes and will lead to completion of submitted goal(s).	1-15
C] Project methods for measuring, tracking, and reporting economic impact (Max 15)	Has a benchmark been identified? Measurement areas have been identified well for metric tracking and reporting.	1-15
D] Partnerships and leveraged resources (Max 10)	Quality of partnerships, state, regional / local partnership and leveraged resources	1-10
E] Timeline is achievable and based on project completion (Max 10)	Timeline must be realistic, and include action steps / timeline details	1-10
F] Budget is complete (Max 10)	Budget includes details on all grant funded costs and information on grant administrator (required if request is more than $75,000)	1-10
G] How does the project assist in improving the county's economic status? (Max 15)	Do the potential outcomes seem accurate and impactful? Are there other things that could potentially be measured?	1-15
Total Possible Points		100

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Eligible Grantees: ThreeStar Certified Counties, as well as all incorporated cities and towns within those counties, are eligible to apply for grants within the ThreeStar program for community development improvement projects that align with registered ThreeStar Priority Goals. Goals are due June 1, 2025, grant application will open on June 1, 2025. Non-profit organizations, registered in the state of Tennessee for a minimum of three years, with verifiable work in the scope area of the proposed small business/entrepreneur grant project, are also eligible to apply for completion of one of the priority goals, after verification of County certification requirements are completed.

Applications are accepted on a rolling basis and will be awarded quarterly, in 2025 in July and October; and 2026 in January and April. If you are considering applying for a grant, please complete the Pre-Grant award form found on the ThreeStar website here.

All grant awards of more than $75,000 must have a qualified professional administrator to assist in managing the project. Awarded projects are eligible for up to 5% of grant funds to use for administration costs.

IMPORTANT:

- Ineligible expenses include, but are not limited to, salaries, food, travel, prizes, conference fees, or direct support for individual businesses.
- Any expenses outside of the contract period are not eligible for reimbursement.
- These grants are not intended to support an individual business, if you are looking for individual business support, visit BERO or Fund Tennessee.
- These are all reimbursement grant programs, you must participate in grant management webinars for pre-application and post award, submit all documentation with project costs, including detailed invoices and proof of payment, along with the supplied invoice template specific to your awarded grant contract.
- Reports are due throughout the grant contract timeline and in most cases, following completion of project as well, for project outcome measures and impact.