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Eligibility Requirements

The governing body of any city, town, or downtown organization that meets the following requirements is eligible to apply for participation in the *New Hampshire Main Street Program*.

A. POPULATION ELIGIBILITY

All cities and towns in the State of New Hampshire are eligible to apply for the *New Hampshire Main Street Center Program*. In larger metropolitan areas, applications may be for distinct neighborhood commercial districts rather than for the central business district.

B. ATTEND APPLICATION WORKSHOP

Communities that wish to submit an application for the *New Hampshire Main Street Program* must attend the application workshop to learn more about the Main Street Program, services offered, and the application process.

Local Commitment to the Main Street Program

Communities selected to participate in the New Hampshire Main Street Program must agree to:

Guarantee employment of a Program Manager/Executive Director

Experience has demonstrated the need for a local program manager for the downtown – someone who can market the downtown, plan and carry out promotional and development projects, administer the local downtown organization and help implement its objectives. In small-sized communities (populations of less than 5,000), national experience shows that a program manager can work part-time (a minimum of 25 hours per week) while larger communities need a full-time manager (minimum of 40 hours per week). Eligible communities must commit to hire a paid program manager according to these guidelines.

Guarantee that an adequate ongoing sustainable program operating budget will be funded for a minimum of three years

Besides funds to pay a program manager's salary, downtown revitalization organizations must provide an adequate operating budget to cover expenditures for travel, training, promotions, specialist services, office rent, printing, postage, clerical assistance and other miscellaneous expenses for running a Main Street program. The amount of the budget will vary from community-to-community depending on size, needs, and the area's cost of living. Municipalities that fund a portion of the Main Street program should see this as an investment. After the initial three years, if the program has shown measurable results, it is logical that the community would continue funding a successful program. The more successful the program, the more reason to increase the organization's responsibility and funding. Applicants must develop adequate growth oriented budgets for a minimum of the program's first three years.

Guarantee that an adequate amount of clerical support staff will be available

It is unfair to the organization and to the program manager if he/she is hired for

their expertise in revitalization, but then is bogged down in the daily routine of typing letters, filing, answering phone calls, etc. Each community is encouraged to generate in-kind assistance to provide clerical support from the local municipality, some private concern, or through a volunteer-type organization. This is considered very important for the success of a program.

Have an existing revitalization organization or commit to organize one

A lasting downtown revitalization effort will only succeed in communities having well structured and ongoing, incorporated active downtown development organizations. Such groups assume responsibility for certain needed tasks such as downtown promotions, facilitation of private sector building improvements and other cooperative projects. The downtown organization is responsible for establishing the overall direction of the local revitalization program, the program budget and staff. This organization should ultimately become a contact for the local community government on all matters affecting the downtown. This entails building a certain amount of trust and understanding of each one's roles.

Commit to Using the Four-Point Main Street Approach an Eight Principles

Successful downtown organizations and their staff work systematically through a workplan stating goals and objectives based on the four-point, eight-principle Main Street approach to downtown revitalization – concentrating attention on issues related to design, organization, promotion and economic restructuring. While the approach is tailored to each community, all technical assistance is geared to this successful model.

Complete the Application Process

Enter into a Letter Agreement wit the New Hampshire Main Street Center

The *New Hampshire Main Street Center's ability* to assist a community to revitalize its downtown is dependent upon the level of local capacity commitment and involvement. For this reason, the Center asks the selected downtown organization to sign a Letter of Agreement with the Center that clearly specifies the responsibilities downtown organization and those of the *New Hampshire Main Street Center*. The municipality is expected to pass a resolution that endorses the local Main Street program.

The Selection Process

Applicant communities are required to submit a Letter of Intent to apply for the program and a formal written application. After the application deadline, the Main Street Center's Program Planning Committee and Center staff will review all applications. The Program Planning Committee may ask for more information to clarify an application. The Program Planning Committee may schedule public presentations for the finalists. Typically the New Hampshire Main Street Center Board of Directors announces the selection of up to three new communities at the annual Downtown Revitalization Awards program in May. The New Hampshire Main Street Center does not intend to select any new communities into the program in 2003. The next application round should begin in the fall of 2003 with the application workshop. Please call the Center, at 603.223.9942 if you have any questions.

For more information, contact the NHMSC, 603-223-9942 or email klaplante@nhcdfa.org

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