

Applicant Information**Applicant Local Government**

Hall County

Joint Applicant**Address**

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Type of Applicant (City/County/Regional)

County

Grant Writer/Contact Person Info

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Basic Project Information**Project Title**

Hall County Community Wealth Building Center – an Entrepreneurship & Economic Mobility Center, creating pathways from home-based talents to business ownership

Description of Program (can attach document – up to 4 pages)

Hall County, in collaboration with the Gainesville Housing Authority, proposes to develop the Hall County Community Wealth Building & Entrepreneurship Center, an innovative public facility that will serve as the cornerstone of a broader community wealth building initiative focused on expanding economic opportunities for low- and moderate-income residents. The proposed project includes strategic acquisition of property, demolition of deteriorated and underutilized structures, site preparation, and construction of a multi-purpose entrepreneurship center designed to remove barriers to business ownership by providing affordable access to commercial space, specialized equipment, workforce development, business education, and entrepreneurial support services. Located within Gainesville's historic Athens Street Corridor, the Center will serve as the economic catalyst for the corridor's ongoing revitalization by providing low- and moderate-income residents with an affordable pathway to transform home-based talents, marketable skills, and small-scale enterprises into sustainable businesses that generate household income and build generational wealth.

The proposed Center builds upon nearly a decade of coordinated public investment already underway in the Athens Street Corridor. During that time, the Gainesville Housing Authority has transformed the former Harrison Square public housing community into Harrison Village, a

modern affordable housing community serving low-income families. At the same time, Hall County and the City of Gainesville are each investing approximately \$2 million in corridor improvements, including sidewalks, a multi-use trail, stormwater infrastructure, streetscape enhancements, and improved neighborhood connectivity immediately adjacent to the proposed project site. These investments have substantially improved the physical environment, but lasting neighborhood revitalization also requires investment in people. The proposed Center represents the next logical phase of this long-term revitalization effort by creating the economic infrastructure necessary for residents to build businesses, increase household income, and participate more fully in the community's future prosperity.

The proposed project addresses a critical gap in Hall County's economic development system. Many residents possess valuable entrepreneurial talent—preparing family recipes, baking, sewing, quilting, woodworking, landscaping, repairing equipment, producing specialty food products, or creating handmade goods—but lack access to affordable commercial space, specialized equipment, business education, technical assistance, financing, and professional networks needed to transform those skills into viable businesses. While these talents often generate supplemental household income, they rarely develop into sustainable enterprises because the resources required to make that transition remain out of reach for many low- and moderate-income residents.

The Community Wealth Building & Entrepreneurship Center is designed to remove those barriers by providing a single destination where aspiring entrepreneurs can access the facilities, equipment, education, and technical assistance necessary to launch and grow neighborhood-scale businesses. Participants will have access to entrepreneurial training, business coaching, financial literacy education, marketing and branding assistance, bookkeeping, licensing and permitting guidance, procurement readiness, e-commerce training, mentorship, and connections to financing resources. Rather than functioning as a traditional business incubator, the Center will provide the practical infrastructure that allows residents to move from an idea or home-based enterprise to business ownership through a structured continuum of learning, production, product development, retail experience, and ongoing technical assistance.

A signature component of the Center will be the Teaching Kitchen & Culinary Entrepreneurship Collective, an innovative multi-use culinary hub combining shared commercial kitchens, private production suites, food truck commissary, restaurant incubation space, retail marketplace, studio teaching kitchen, business classrooms, and entrepreneurial support services. The Center will also include flexible maker spaces, artisan studios, co-working space, classrooms, meeting rooms, storefront retail opportunities, and a community garden supporting food production, nutrition education, and agricultural entrepreneurship. Together, these spaces will create an accessible public destination where entrepreneurs can develop products, test business concepts, collaborate with other small businesses, engage customers, and expand operations as their businesses mature.

The Center is intentionally designed to complement—not duplicate—the entrepreneurial resources already available within Hall County. Existing organizations, including the UGA Small Business Development Center and the Brenau University Business Incubator, provide valuable consulting, mentoring, and business development services for entrepreneurs who have already established a business concept or are positioned for growth. The proposed Center fills a different but equally important role by addressing the infrastructure and accessibility barriers that prevent many low-

and moderate-income residents from entering the entrepreneurial pipeline. By providing affordable production space, shared equipment, retail opportunities, and hands-on business development support, the Center will prepare participants to fully utilize existing community resources as their businesses expand.

The project will be developed on property owned by the Gainesville Housing Authority and implemented through a collaborative partnership between Hall County and the Housing Authority pursuant to an Intergovernmental Agreement and CDBG subrecipient agreement. The Housing Authority will oversee development and long-term operation of the facility while coordinating programming through partnerships with organizations such as WorkSource Georgia Mountains, the Black Business Forum, educational institutions, financial organizations, nonprofit organizations, business assistance providers, and other public and private partners. Collectively, these partnerships will provide participants with coordinated access to workforce training, occupational certifications, career coaching, business mentorship, procurement assistance, lending opportunities, and employment services.

The Hall County Community Wealth Building & Entrepreneurship Center represents more than the construction of a new public facility. It establishes the permanent community infrastructure needed to connect neighborhood revitalization with economic mobility by investing directly in the talents, skills, and entrepreneurial potential of local residents. By lowering barriers to business ownership, supporting locally owned enterprises, and creating new pathways for wealth creation, the Center will help residents build income, create jobs, accumulate assets, and strengthen the long-term economic vitality of the Athens Street Corridor and Hall County.

What National Objective(s) is the proposed project intended to meet?

Benefit to Low- to Moderate- Income Persons

☐ **Elimination of “Slum and Blight”**

☒ **Area Benefit**

☐ **Limited Clientele**

☐ **Meeting an Urgent Need**

☐ **Housing**

☐ **Jobs**

What CDBG eligible activities are proposed?

The proposed project combines eligible CDBG public facility activities with special economic development activities by constructing an innovative entrepreneurship and workforce development center that provides affordable business infrastructure, shared production facilities, entrepreneurial education, workforce development programming, and business support services designed to create jobs, increase household income, and expand economic opportunities for low- and moderate-income residents.

More specifically, the proposed project includes acquisition of real property; clearance and demolition of deteriorated structures; site preparation; construction of a public facility; public improvements; architectural and engineering services; and special economic development activities supporting entrepreneurship, workforce development, microenterprise development, and small business creation through the Hall County Community Wealth Building & Entrepreneurship Center.

Program Duration in Months	Proposed Start Date	Proposed End Date
36 months, starting July 2027 (or upon execution of Grant Agreement) and ending June 2030		

Where will the project take place? Provide street address or nearest intersection.

Harrison Lakeside Village in the Athens Street community at the intersection of Athens Street, Old Athens Road, and Harrison Drive

Address any anticipated Service Delivery Strategy changes and provide timeline for completion.

No amendments to the Hall County Service Delivery Strategy are currently anticipated. The proposed Community Wealth Building & Entrepreneurship Center does not alter existing governmental service delivery responsibilities among Hall County and its municipalities or transfer responsibility for an existing governmental service. Rather, the project establishes a collaborative facility that will be implemented through an Intergovernmental Agreement, CDBG Subrecipient Agreement, Ground Lease, and Operating Agreement between Hall County and the Gainesville Housing Authority.

Detail any sub-recipients (such as development authority, nonprofit, etc.) if applicable

Hall County anticipates entering a CDBG Subrecipient Agreement with the Gainesville Housing Authority (GHA), which will serve as the project's primary implementation partner. GHA is a public housing authority with extensive experience in community development, affordable housing, neighborhood revitalization, and federal grant administration. As subrecipient, GHA is expected to oversee project implementation, including facility development, coordination of programming, and long-term operation of the Hall County Community Wealth Building & Entrepreneurship Center. Hall County will remain the CDBG grantee and will retain responsibility for grant administration and compliance.

Innovation:

Narrative: (attached additional document – up to 4 pages)

The proposed Hall County Community Wealth Building & Entrepreneurship Center represents a transformative investment in Hall County's economic mobility infrastructure. Through the strategic acquisition and redevelopment of underutilized property within Gainesville's historic Athens Street Corridor, the project will establish a community facility designed to expand economic opportunities for low- and moderate-income (LMI) residents through entrepreneurship, workforce development, business education, and small business creation.

The Center will be designed to address a critical gap in Hall County's economic development ecosystem by providing low-barrier access to commercial space, shared production facilities, specialized equipment, technical assistance, and market opportunities for residents with entrepreneurial talent but limited access to the resources needed to transform home-based or informal enterprises into sustainable businesses. By integrating the *Teaching Kitchen & Culinary Entrepreneurship Collective*, maker spaces, business resource services, workforce development programming, retail opportunities, a community garden, and strategic partnerships within a single

public facility, the Center will create a practical pathway for residents to develop skills, launch businesses, increase household income, create jobs, and build generational wealth.

The project advances the goals of the Georgia DCA CDBG Innovative Grant Program by moving beyond a traditional capital investment to establish a new model for community wealth building and economic mobility. The Center will complement existing entrepreneurial resources by serving LMI residents at the front end of the business development pipeline who lack access to the infrastructure, facilities, training, and support systems needed to launch and grow a business. Through the coordinated efforts of Hall County, the Gainesville Housing Authority, and workforce, education, business, nonprofit, and private-sector partners, the project will create a sustainable community asset that strengthens locally owned businesses, supports the continued revitalization of the historic Athens Street Corridor, and expands pathways to economic opportunity and long-term financial stability.

Transformational Impact:

The proposed Hall County Community Wealth Building & Entrepreneurship Center represents a transformational investment in Hall County's economic mobility infrastructure by creating a permanent community facility that expands economic opportunity for low- and moderate-income (LMI) residents through entrepreneurship, workforce development, business education, and small business creation. As an anchor project of a broader community wealth building initiative, the Center will connect place-based revitalization with people-based economic opportunity by pairing redevelopment of underutilized properties within Gainesville's historic Athens Street Corridor with long-term investments in entrepreneurship, workforce development, and wealth creation.

Hall County, the City of Gainesville, and the Gainesville Housing Authority have invested significantly in revitalizing the Athens Street Corridor through affordable housing redevelopment and over \$5 million in recreational amenities, pedestrian connectivity, streetscaping, and stormwater infrastructure improvements. The proposed Center represents the next transformational investment – one that invests in residents themselves by creating pathways from talent to entrepreneurship, income growth, and generational wealth.

The project's transformational impact is rooted in its ability to address a critical gap in Hall County's entrepreneurial ecosystem. Existing organizations provide valuable business counseling, mentoring, and technical assistance, but many aspiring entrepreneurs – particularly LMI residents – lack access to the affordable production space, specialized equipment, market access, and practical support needed to transform home-based or informal enterprises into sustainable businesses. Rather than duplicating existing services, the Center will provide the missing infrastructure that prepares emerging LMI entrepreneurs to access and benefit from traditional business development resources as their businesses grow.

The Center will create an affordable, low-barrier pathway from "something I make at home" to "a business that supports my family." By combining shared commercial space, specialized equipment, maker facilities, workforce development, business education, technical assistance, retail opportunities, and strategic partnerships within a single public facility, residents will be able to develop skills, test products, launch businesses, increase household income, create jobs, accumulate assets, and build generational wealth.

A signature component of the Center will be the Teaching Kitchen & Culinary Entrepreneurship Collective, an innovative food entrepreneurship hub integrating shared commercial kitchens, private production suites, food truck commissary facilities, restaurant incubation space, retail opportunities, a professionally equipped teaching kitchen, classrooms, and business resource offices. Complementing these facilities will be maker spaces, artisan studios, co-working space, meeting rooms, retail space, and a community garden supporting food production, nutrition education, agricultural entrepreneurship, and neighborhood engagement. Together, these components create an integrated entrepreneurship ecosystem that would support LMI residents from initial business concept through business growth.

The Center is transformational because it creates more than a building – it establishes a permanent system of opportunity. By integrating entrepreneurship, workforce development, production space, retail access, and community partnerships in one location, the project creates a missing link in Hall County's business development continuum while advancing broader community goals related to upward mobility, poverty reduction, and long-term economic prosperity. The result is a sustainable community asset that strengthens the Athens Street Corridor while establishing a model that could be replicated in other communities in Georgia.

Capacity and Experience:

Hall County and the Gainesville Housing Authority possess the administrative, financial, technical, and organizational capacity necessary to successfully implement, manage, and sustain the proposed project.

Hall County will serve as the CDBG grantee and will be responsible for grant administration, financial oversight, compliance monitoring, reporting, procurement, and coordination of project implementation. Hall County has extensive experience successfully administering federal and state grant programs, including community development, housing, infrastructure, and economic development programs. Hall County's grant administration team has successfully managed numerous federal and state grant programs, coordinating compliance requirements, overseeing grant deliverables, and ensuring successful implementation of publicly funded projects.

Gainesville Housing Authority (GHA) will serve as the primary implementation partner and anticipated CDBG subrecipient. GHA brings substantial experience in community development, affordable housing development, asset management, and neighborhood revitalization. Under the leadership of Beth Brown, Chief Executive Officer, GHA has demonstrated the ability to manage complex development initiatives, coordinate public-private partnerships, and oversee long-term stewardship of community assets.

The Center will also leverage strategic partnerships with workforce development organizations, educational institutions, financial institutions, nonprofit organizations, business support organizations, and private-sector partners to provide programming and services. Potential partners may include organizations such as WorkSource Georgia Mountains, the Black Business Forum, educational institutions, financial organizations, and other entities whose missions align with workforce development, entrepreneurship, and economic mobility.

Demonstrated Need:

The proposed project addresses an unmet need within Hall County by creating the facilities, infrastructure, and support systems needed for residents with entrepreneurial talent to successfully launch and grow businesses. While many residents possess marketable skills and viable business ideas, they often lack access to affordable commercial space, specialized equipment, business resources, and market opportunities necessary to move beyond informal or home-based enterprises.

Home-based entrepreneurs frequently encounter barriers associated with the cost of commercial kitchens, production equipment, licensing, business education, marketing, storefront space, and professional support. As a result, many individuals with viable products and services remain limited to supplemental income rather than developing sustainable businesses capable of supporting their families.

The Athens Street Corridor has experienced disinvestment and limited access to economic opportunities. Residents have consistently identified the need for workforce development, adult education, youth programming, community gathering space, and neighborhood-based economic development opportunities. Locating these resources within the corridor will reduce barriers associated with transportation, childcare, and access to services while creating a centralized location where residents can connect with opportunities that support upward mobility, entrepreneurship, and long-term economic stability.

Although Hall County benefits from a strong entrepreneurial support network, a significant gap remains between business education and business launch for many low- and moderate-income entrepreneurs. Organizations such as the UGA Small Business Development Center and the Brenau University Business Incubator provide valuable consulting, mentoring, and business guidance. These resources are important components of the local entrepreneurial ecosystem; however, many residents with marketable skills – including culinary entrepreneurs, artisans, makers, and other home-based entrepreneurs – lack access to the physical infrastructure necessary to produce, test, market, and sell their products. For many aspiring entrepreneurs, the primary barrier is not a lack of ideas or business knowledge, but the absence of affordable production space, specialized equipment, market access, and a practical, low-risk pathway to business ownership. The proposed Center addresses this gap by providing affordable access to shared facilities, specialized equipment, entrepreneurial education, workforce development, production space, retail opportunities, and coordinated business support services. The project is particularly important for low- and moderate-income residents who often lack the financial resources, professional networks, and access to capital needed to participate in traditional entrepreneurial pathways.

Feasibility:

The proposed project is feasible due to the strong partnership Hall County and the Gainesville Housing Authority, established organizational capacity, site control, and a shared long-term commitment to revitalizing the Athens Street corridor.

The proposed Center is not a standalone investment but part of an ongoing public commitment to the Athens Street Corridor. Recent investments by Hall County, the City of Gainesville, and the Gainesville Housing Authority in affordable housing, recreational amenities, infrastructure

improvements, and neighborhood revitalization demonstrate strong governmental alignment and provide a solid foundation for successful implementation. The Center builds upon these investments by adding the entrepreneurship and workforce development infrastructure needed to create lasting economic opportunity for area residents.

Implementation will follow a structured development process that includes property acquisition, environmental review, demolition and site preparation, architectural and engineering design, permitting, procurement, construction, and facility opening. Hall County's experience administering complex federal and state grants, combined with GHA's expertise in development, construction, and long-term asset management, provides the administrative and technical capacity necessary to successfully complete the project.

Long-term viability will be supported through a diversified operating model that combines public investment, strategic partnerships, facility-generated revenues, and coordinated programming. Potential revenue sources may include rental of shared commercial kitchen space, production suites, retail space, classroom space, and event or meeting space, supplemented by partnerships and future funding opportunities. As businesses mature, the Center will coordinate referrals to organizations such as financial institutions and other business support providers, ensuring participants have continued access to resources as they grow.

The Center is designed as a sustainable community asset that will continue serving residents beyond the initial grant period. By creating a permanent facility dedicated to entrepreneurship, workforce development, and economic mobility, the project will provide lasting benefits to Hall County residents and establish a replicable model for community wealth building and upward economic mobility.

Professional Services

Has procurement for professional services (grant-writing, engineering, or architectural) taken place?

No. Procurement for professional services, including architectural, engineering, and other project-related consulting services, has not occurred by either Hall County or the Gainesville Housing Authority. Neither entity has entered into contracts for professional services related to the proposed project prior to grant award.

If awarded funding, professional services will be procured following execution of the CDBG Innovative Grant Agreement in accordance with applicable CDBG procurement requirements, Hall County procurement procedures, and all applicable federal and state requirements. Procurement activities will include the selection of qualified architectural and engineering professionals necessary to advance project design, permitting, environmental review coordination, construction documents, and other required pre-construction activities.

If not, what is the timeline for completion?

Procurement for professional services is anticipated to begin immediately following execution of the grant agreement and completion of any required preliminary steps. The anticipated timeline is

approximately 3 to 6 months following grant execution for procurement, contract execution, and initiation of professional services.

Are any preliminary engineering or architectural plans available for the project?

No. Preliminary engineering or architectural plans have not been prepared. Conceptual ideas and preliminary visioning exercises have been developed to define the overall project concept and desired program elements; however, these concepts have not been advanced into formal architectural or engineering documents.

If not, what is the estimated timeline for the drafting of plans?

Development of preliminary architectural and engineering plans will be included as a required deliverable of the professional services to be procured following grant award. Following completion of procurement and execution of professional service contracts, preliminary plans are anticipated to be developed within approximately 6 to 9 months, subject to completion of required environmental reviews, site evaluations, surveys, permitting requirements, and other preliminary project activities.

Budget Summary

Total CDBG Innovative Grant Funds Proposed: \$5,000,000

Total Match Anticipated (estimate): \$750,000 cash + in-kind match of GHA garden (value TBD)

Total Project Cost (estimate): \$5,750,000

Budget Summary

Budget Summary				
Activity	Innovative Grant	Other Funds	Local Match	Total
Property Acquisition	\$1,000,000	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$1,000,000
Environmental Review, Surveys & Due Diligence	\$ 100,000	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$100,000
Architectural & Engineering Design (Pre-Development)	\$ 500,000	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$500,000
Site Clearance, Demolition & Site Preparation	\$ 600,000	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 600,000
Construction & Equipping Community Wealth Building & Entrepreneurship Center	\$2,500,000	\$ 0	\$ 750,000	\$3,250,000
Administration	\$ 300,000	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 300,000
Total Costs	\$5,000,000	\$ 0	\$ 750,000	\$5,750,000

At what stage(s) is Innovative Grant financing necessary?

Innovative Grant financing is necessary throughout the entire project lifecycle, beginning with acquisition and continuing through design, site preparation, construction, and completion of the facility. The requested CDBG funds are essential to making the project feasible because they provide the catalytic investment needed to transform underutilized property into a permanent public asset serving low- and moderate-income residents.

CDBG funds will support acquisition of the project site, professional architectural and engineering services, environmental and pre-development activities, clearance and demolition of deteriorated structures, site preparation, and construction of the Hall County Community Wealth Building & Entrepreneurship Center. The Gainesville Housing Authority's \$750,000 local investment will leverage the CDBG award by contributing toward construction completion and the furniture, fixtures, and specialized equipment necessary to make the facility operational.

The project requires CDBG Innovative Grant financing from beginning to end because the proposed Center represents a significant public infrastructure investment designed to provide affordable access to entrepreneurial resources, workforce development opportunities, commercial production space, and business support services for residents who otherwise face barriers to economic mobility. The CDBG investment will serve as the catalyst that allows Hall County and the Gainesville Housing Authority to create a transformational community asset that would not be feasible through traditional funding sources alone.

Public Benefit Standards**Total Proposed Persons Served:****Estimated 500 annually (unduplicated participants)**

The Hall County Community Wealth Building & Entrepreneurship Center is anticipated to serve approximately 500 unduplicated individuals annually through a variety of entrepreneurship, workforce development, educational, and community programming activities. Participants will include aspiring entrepreneurs, home-based business owners, small business owners, workforce participants, youth participants, residents participating in nutrition and healthy cooking education, and community members utilizing the Center's shared facilities and programming.

Programming will include entrepreneurship training, business education, technical assistance, shared commercial kitchen access, maker space utilization, retail and market opportunities, youth culinary camps, cooking demonstrations, nutrition education, and community-based classes. The Center will coordinate programming through partnerships with organizations such as the Gainesville Housing Authority, Boys & Girls Club of Lanier, Hall County District 2 Public Health and Hall County Health Department, Hall County Family Connection, city and county schools, Northeast Georgia Physicians Group, workforce development organizations, educational institutions, and other community partners.

Because the Center will serve as a community resource, some programming participants, such as youth attending summer cooking camps, residents participating in nutrition education, and individuals attending community classes or demonstrations, may not qualify as low- and moderate-

income under CDBG requirements. However, these activities will support the Center's broader mission of improving health, skills development, entrepreneurship, and economic mobility.

Total Proposed LMI Persons Served:

Estimated 350 annually (approximately 70% of the total)

Most individuals served by the Hall County Community Wealth Building & Entrepreneurship Center are anticipated to be low- and moderate-income (LMI) residents based on the Center's strategic location within an LMI area, proximity to affordable housing communities, and the targeted nature of the programs and services offered.

The surrounding service area includes several historically underserved neighborhoods and affordable housing communities, including Harrison Village, a 220-unit LIHTC development with units targeted to households at an average at or below 60% of Area Median Income (AMI), as well as Fair Street, Newtown, Myrtle Street, Landmark Place, Gaines Mill Road, Wild Fern, Morning Side Hills, Rainbow Village, and the Black and Cooley Drive area of Gainesville.

LMI beneficiaries are expected to include entrepreneurs and aspiring business owners utilizing shared commercial kitchen space, maker spaces, retail opportunities, business education, and technical assistance; residents participating in workforce development and economic mobility programs; and individuals accessing other Center-based services designed to increase income and financial stability. Although the Center will provide certain community-wide educational and enrichment opportunities that support neighborhood vitality and community engagement, the primary purpose and programming focus of the facility is to expand economic opportunities for low- and moderate-income residents through entrepreneurship, workforce development, and wealth-building activities.

The Center will also offer community-based programming, including youth culinary camps, nutrition education, and healthy cooking demonstrations, through partnerships with organizations such as the Boys & Girls Club of Lanier, Hall County Public Health, Hall County Family Connection, and Northeast Georgia Physicians Group. While some participants in these activities may not qualify as LMI, these programs complement the Center's primary mission of expanding opportunity and improving economic mobility for LMI residents.

Participant eligibility and LMI status will be documented through appropriate intake procedures consistent with CDBG National Objective requirements.