

City of St. Louis
Office on the Disabled
Accessible Businesses Lead Everywhere (ABLE)
Grant Requirements

Administration of the ABLE Grant Program

The Office on the Disabled for the City of St. Louis administers the ABLE Grant Program. Please contact the Office on the Disabled at Telephone: (314) 622-3686, TTY: (314) 622-3686, Fax: (314) 622-4019, or City Hall, 1200 Market Street, Room 30, St. Louis, Missouri 63103.

Background for the ABLE Grant Program

The mission of the Office on the Disabled is to assist the City's being in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. The mission is also to assist the Mayor in making the City one that welcomes people of all disabilities as full and equal participants in the community.

The ABLE program fosters that mission by making grants available to assist small businesses become accessible for people with disabilities. This program is operated by the Office on the Disabled for the City of St. Louis and is funded through a grant from the Community Development Agency.

The City currently requires business construction to comply with 2003 International Building Code, which includes Chapter 11- Accessibility. The accessibility standards in that code were those adopted in 1998 and known as ICC/ANSI A117-1998 *Accessible and Useable Buildings and Facilities*.

Subject to certain exceptions, both these codes require full accessibility for all new construction, renovation or alteration of a building or changing the occupancy of a building from one use group to another. In the case of new construction, all features must be accessible. Where there are renovations or alterations of existing space, the renovations or alterations must be fully accessible and the pathway to them from the parking lot or curb into the building to the renovated/altered space and the restrooms, drinking fountains, pay telephones must be made accessible. Accessibility is accomplished through complying with a series of architectural standards and certain signs required by the building code and by standards that have been adopted for compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

When altering or renovating a building, the most common and costly items necessary to provide access are ramping for entrances that are above or below grade and making restrooms accessible. Ramps need to be of concrete or steel with handrails and foot curbs or rails on both sides. Restrooms may require new plumbing fixtures and changing the configuration of the room itself. The average cost for an accessible entrance and an accessible restroom in an existing building is commonly in excess of \$8,000.

The adoption of the building code has provided expanded opportunities to improve access for people with disabilities in the City of St. Louis. Buildings that would never have been made accessible are now usable by people with disabilities. Shops, restaurants and businesses with significant architectural barriers that prevented people with disabilities from being customers are systematically being removed.

But, not every business has to become fully accessible as soon as it opens. Some people have the misunderstanding that there is a “grandfather clause” in the ADA that allows businesses to ignore ever making their facilities accessible. That is not so.

Instead, even businesses that are not doing renovations are required by the ADA to do what is “readily achievable,” year by year until the business is fully accessible. The original idea was that the ADA would lead businesses to make themselves ever more accessible year by year, without having to spend inordinate amounts in any given year. Some businesses have done nothing since the ADA became effective in 1992. As such they are now exposed to complaint and to the expectation that they spend now what they might have over all those years.

Even if the business is remodeling, the Americans with Disabilities Act assumes that the business will not spend more than 20 percent of what it is spending on the remodeling to make the pathway to the remodeled space accessible.

Hence, providing a financial incentive to small businesses to help defer the cost of making their businesses accessible is an important assistance for making our businesses in our City ever more accessible.

These considerations have led to continued funding of the ABLE. This program pays one-half of the cost, up to \$2,500, towards the construction of an accessible entrance and/or accessible restroom(s) as an incentive to assist small businesses make their facilities accessible.

This program serves small businesses to enhance their ability to service people with disabilities and people with disabilities who are enabled to patronize more small businesses.

Eligibility for the ABLE Program

This program serves small businesses to enhance their ability to service people with disabilities and enables people with disabilities to patronize more small businesses.

Grantees must be small business owners or property owners who lease to small business operators or other public or private agencies. The property must be located in the City of St. Louis. **Non-profit organizations and residential properties are not eligible for this program.**

Grantees must have whatever valid business licenses are required by the City and must be current on their City taxes.

The accessible entrance, unisex restroom, and/or men's and women's restrooms for which the Grantee seeks support from the ABLE program must be designed in compliance with the accessibility standards set by the 2003 International Building Code and the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines. The City has adopted some "typical" design standards for ramps and restrooms that are available from the Office on the Disabled and/or the Building Division. These typical design standards are in a memorandum entitled "People Interested in Designing Accessible Restrooms and Ramps." While these design standards are acceptable under the ABLE Grant program, the Office on the Disabled welcomes alternative code compliant designs.

Requirements for Receiving Funding under the ABLE Program

1. The applicant must submit the ABLE Program Application.
2. The applicant must submit one set of construction documents, prepared, sealed and signed by a licensed design professional, showing the proposed accessible ramp and/or restroom(s). The construction documents must include a site plan, floor plans, and elevations.
3. The Office on the Disabled must receive evidence that the applicant has all required City licenses and is current in payment of City taxes. (The Office on the Disabled will itself seek assurance on the relevant licenses and taxes from the Collector of Revenue.)
4. The applicant must receive approval from the Office on the Disabled as a grantee under the ABLE Program before commencing any construction work on the project. **This is an incentive program and funding will not be provided for work that has been or is being done before the applicant is approved for an ABLE grant.**
5. The applicant must secure and provide to the Office on the Disabled copies of three bids for the work to be done under the grant. **Applicants are solely responsible for obtaining three bids for the ABLE Program work. Applicants will have the sole discretion to determine which bidder to select for the work. The Office on the Disabled will have no role in the bid selection process.**
6. The applicant must secure a Building, Encroachment, and/or Occupancy Permit as required under the circumstances.
7. The applicant must supply the Office on the Disabled with copies of invoices for the work done under the program and cancelled checks or other credible evidence showing payment for that work.

8. The applicant or its tenant must have the ABLE work completed and not have any other issue regarding accessibility outstanding that causes it not to be lawfully occupying the space.
9. The applicant must agree to properly maintain the accessible ramp and/or restroom(s) as long as the applicant or its tenant remains in business at the site.
10. **The applicant must complete the work to be done under the ABLE Program, meet all the conditions and provide all the documentation listed above within six months of the date of approval for participating in the ABLE Program or by December 1, 2009, whichever is sooner.**

Permit Process

Encroachment Permit for a Ramp in the Public Right of Way

An encroachment permit is required for all ramps that encroach on a public sidewalk. An application for an encroachment permit in the public right of way will be made to the Board of Public Service. The licensed design professional working for the ABLE Grant applicant will be responsible for filing the encroachment permit application along with the documentation required by the Board of Public Service. Please contact the Office of the Secretary, Board of Public Service at (314) 622-4650, City Hall, 1200 Market Street, Room 300, St. Louis, Missouri 63103. Applicants will be notified by mail with an approval or denial. If approved, the permit will be issued by the Secretary, Board of Public Service after acceptance of duly executed conditions.

Building Permit

All ABLE Program work that is not exclusively in a public right of way requires a building permit. An application for building permit will be made to the Building Division-Permit Section. The licensed design professional working for the ABLE Grant applicant will be responsible for filing the building permit application along with the documentation required by the Permit Section. Please contact the One-Stop-Shop for Permits, Building Division at (314) 622-4671, City Hall, 1200 Market Street, Room 425, St. Louis, Missouri 63103. Applicants will be notified by mail with an approval or denial. If approved, the permit will be issued by Building Division after acceptance of duly executed conditions required by the Permits Section.

Permit fees for ABLE Grant projects shall be paid by the applicant for the ABLE Grant. There is no fee for the ABLE Grant application.

For further information about –

ABLE Grant related issues, call the Commissioner on the Disabled at 622-3686.

Building Permits, call One-Stop-Shop for Permits at 622-4671.

Encroachment Permits, call the Secretary of the Board of Public Service at 622-4650.

Implementation

Property/business owners will receive a letter indicating that they have been approved as an ABLÉ Program project. **Property/business owners should not expend funds for an ABLÉ Program project without this written authorization.** Payment of the ABLÉ Program grant will be paid directly to the property/business owner after providing the work has been completed and cancelled checks or other evidence of payment and a final inspection report is completed.

Interested property or business owners may obtain applications for this program by printing the form on this website or from contacting the Office on the Disabled, City Hall Room 30, St. Louis, Missouri 63103. Telephone number: 314-622-3686, fax number 314-622-4019. Email Office On the Disabled
<http://stlcin.missouri.org/index/contactelect.cfm?ID=52>

Completed applications will be submitted to the Office on the Disabled for review of the application and construction documents. The Office on the Disabled will inform the applicant whether the grant has been approved. The maximum amount of funds for any project is 50 percent of what is actually spent on the project up to a maximum of \$2,500.00. The grantee will submit a bill to the Office on the Disabled for the grant payment.

Other information about the Office on the Disabled is available on our website
<http://stlouis.missouri.org/citygov/dhs/index.html#ootd>