



## CAAL Ignite Grant – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

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## A. About the Grant

### 1. What is the purpose of this grant?

The purpose of this grant is to address the intersection of economic inequality and anti-Asian hate. Funded applications and projects must align with the goals of CAAL Ignite, which include:

- **Building a stronger sense of cultural identity** through history and solidarity across racial and ethnic groups
- **Promoting socio-economic mobility** with greater investments in Asian American leaders
- **Increasing influence and decision-making power** over policies that affect Asian American communities
- **Changing the narrative** to challenge anti-Asian stereotypes and combat hate

### 2. What kinds of projects or activities can I include in my application?

Eligible projects or activities may include:

- **Emerging entrepreneurs and small businesses**
  - Starting, growing, or expanding a business
  - Projects aligned with CAAL's community-defined priorities
- **Nonprofits and community-based organizations**
  - Strengthening day-to-day operations
  - Building organizational capacity
  - Launching new or expanded programs or services
- **Community initiatives**
  - Efforts that create lasting benefits for Minnesota's Asian American community

This list is not exhaustive. We will also consider other projects that align with the goals of CAAL Ignite and demonstrate a positive impact on Minnesota's Asian American community.

### 3. How do I know which grant category I should apply for?

The grant categories this year are:

- ***Emerging Entrepreneurs*** are individuals or very early-stage businesses still developing their idea or just getting started.
- ***Small Businesses*** are more established and generating consistent revenue.



- **Nonprofits** are registered 501(c)(3) organizations or organizations/projects fiscally sponsored by a 501(c)(3).

If you are unsure which category fits best, please contact CAAL for guidance.

#### 4. **What funding amounts are available?**

Emerging entrepreneurs are eligible to receive grants of up to \$5,000, while nonprofits and small businesses are eligible for grants of up to \$15,000. All funds must be spent within the 9-month grant period.

A total of **21 grants** will be awarded as follows:

- **10 grants** for Small Businesses
- **7 grants** for Emerging Entrepreneurs
- **4 grants** for Nonprofits

#### 5. **What benefits and opportunities will CAAL Ignite grantees receive?**

The CAAL Ignite Fund is more than just grant funding—it is a comprehensive program designed to expand grantees’ social and professional networks. Through a series of workshops and training sessions tailored to priorities identified by grantees, participants will gain valuable insights and skills to strengthen and grow their projects.

Grantees will also receive technical assistance from CAAL and participate in cohort-based meetings, creating opportunities to build relationships, share strategies, and learn alongside fellow entrepreneurs, nonprofit leaders, and community changemakers.

In addition, CAAL Ignite offers opportunities to engage in policy advocacy, equipping grantees with the knowledge and tools to influence decisions that impact the Asian Minnesotan community.

Through this combination of financial support, training, technical assistance, outreach, and network development, grantees—especially Asian women entrepreneurs and Asian-owned businesses—can achieve greater stability and long-term growth. This program goes beyond financial investment; it is a strategic effort to address systemic barriers and create pathways for economic empowerment across Minnesota’s Asian American community.



## B. Eligibility

### 6. Who is eligible to apply for this grant?

*General Criteria (for all applicants):*

- Applicants must be of Asian descent and identify as part of the Asian American community.
- Applicants must be Minnesota residents.

***Emerging Entrepreneurs must:***

- Be in the early stages of starting or developing a business.
- Have a business registered with the Minnesota Secretary of State as of December 31, 2025.
- Be majority-owned (51% or more) by a Minnesota resident.
- Generate less than \$500,000 in gross annual revenue (if applicable).
- Provide tax documentation for 2025.

***Nonprofits must:***

- Be registered as a 501(c)(3) or be fiscally sponsored.
- Be registered to do business in Minnesota as of December 31, 2025.
- Have at least two years of financial reports (2024 & 2025).
- Provide IRS 990 or 990EZ forms.
- Have an annual operating budget of less than \$500,000.
- Meet at least 2 of the following:
  - The executive director is Asian American.
  - At least 51% of board members are Asian American.
  - At least 51% of staff are Asian American.

***Small Businesses must:***

- Be owned and operated in Minnesota.
- Be majority-owned (51% or more) by a Minnesota resident.
- Be registered with the Minnesota Secretary of State as of December 31, 2025.
- Generate less than \$500,000 in gross annual revenue.



- Provide tax documentation for 2024 and 2025.

**7. Can I use the Emerging Entrepreneur Grant to start a new business?**

Yes. The Emerging Entrepreneur Grant can be used to start a new business. However, the business must be registered with the Minnesota Secretary of State as of **December 31, 2025**.

This grant supports projects and initiatives that help launch, grow, or develop a business in ways that align with CAAL Ignite’s goals and create meaningful impact within the community.

**8. Can I apply if I have received a grant from CAAL in the past?**

**Yes**, if you received a grant from the *SPARK Leadership Fund* or *Stronger Together Fund* and successfully completed your program.

**No**, if you received a CAAL Ignite grant in the most recent round (Year 2026 | Cohort 2).

**9. Can I apply if I have received other grants?**

Yes, you may receive funding from multiple sources for the same project, as long as each grant supports **different expenses**. Using multiple funding sources to cover the same budget item(s) is not allowed.

**10. Do I need to have specific qualifications or experience to apply?**

No specific qualifications or extensive experience are required. As long as you have a clear plan and the capacity to carry out your proposed project, you are welcome to apply.

If you are unsure about your eligibility, we encourage you to reach out, we’re happy to provide guidance.

**11. Who is not eligible to apply for the CAAL Ignite grant?**

Employees of CAAL, Board Members, and their direct family members.

**12. Can I submit an out-of-state ID or a passport for verification?**

No. All applicants must have a valid Minnesota State ID or Driver’s License.

**13. I am a student living in MN and do not have an MN driver’s license. Do I qualify?**

No. You must have a valid Minnesota driver’s license or state ID.



## C. Allowable Uses of Funds

### 14. What expenses are allowed under the Emerging Entrepreneur Grant?

Funds may be used for a wide range of business-related expenses that support growth, including:

- Equipment and supplies
- Marketing and branding
- Product development
- Technology and software
- Other operational costs necessary to grow your business

**Prohibited uses include:**

- Personal expenses (e.g., rent, tuition, or living costs)
- Political or lobbying activities
- Fundraising activities
- Real estate purchases
- Expenses unrelated to the proposed project or business

This list is not exhaustive, and CAAL reserves the right to determine whether proposed expenses are allowable.

### 15. What expenses are allowed under the Small Business Grant?

Funds may be used for business-related expenses that strengthen or expand operations, including:

- Equipment and supplies
- Marketing and branding
- Technology and software
- Staff training and professional development
- Product development
- Operational costs

**Prohibited uses:** See the list in Question 14.

### 16. Does CAAL have the right to audit grant expenditures?

Yes. CAAL reserves the right to review, audit, or request verification of grant expenditures at any time during the grant period and after final reporting.

### 17. What expenses are allowed under the Nonprofit Grant?

Funds may be used for expenses that support the implementation of the proposed project, including:



- Program development
- Staff training and professional development
- Technology and software
- Marketing and outreach
- Operational costs directly tied to the funded project

**Prohibited uses:** See the list in Question 14.

**18. If I am selected as a grantee, can I sell my business?**

No. If a grantee sells their business while still in the grant period, they must return the grant funds to CAAL. Grantees are expected to use funds in alignment with the approved proposal and comply with all grant terms and conditions throughout the grant period.

## **D. Application Process**

**19. I've never applied for a grant before. Can I still apply?**

Yes. This program is designed to be accessible to first-time applicants. We encourage you to apply if you have a clear idea and are committed to your project.

**20. Can I submit more than one application?**

Only one application per entity or organization may be submitted.

**Exception:** A nonprofit serving as a fiscal sponsor may submit more than one application — one for itself and one on behalf of a sponsored organization.

**21. What is a fiscal sponsor and how does it affect eligibility?**

A fiscal sponsor is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit that applies on behalf of a project or organization that is **not** incorporated. Both the fiscal sponsor and sponsored project may submit applications, but they must be clearly distinct.

**22. Can I submit multiple projects under one application?**

No. Each application must represent one primary project or initiative. Applicants should not bundle unrelated projects into a single submission.

**23. Are there any matching fund requirements?**

No.

**24. What is the application deadline?**

July 13, 2026, at 4:00 PM CST.

**25. What happens if I miss the application deadline?**

Late applications **will not** be accepted.



**26. What happens if my application is incomplete?**

Incomplete applications will not move forward to review.

**27. How do I apply for the grant?**

Visit <https://caalmn.org/caal-ignite/>, review the guidelines, prepare your materials, and submit your application through the online portal.

**28. What documents or materials do I need to submit with my application?**

**Emerging Entrepreneurs**

- Minnesota ID
- Secretary of State registration
- Business plan (CAAL template required)
- 2025 tax filing

**Small Businesses**

- Minnesota ID
- Secretary of State registration
- 2024 and 2025 tax filings

**Nonprofits**

- Secretary of State registration
- IRS determination (tax-exempt) letter
- 2024 and 2025 Form 990 or 990-EZ

**29. What are the submission options for the CAAL Ignite grant application?**

- Online application portal
- Video recording (self-produced)
- Voice recording (self-produced)

**Important:** Regardless of your chosen format, the online application must still be completed and submitted through the portal to track applicant, business, or nonprofit information.

Video or audio files must be submitted as supplementary attachments.

**30. Will CAAL accept application submissions by email?**

No.



**31. Can I modify my application after submission?**

Yes, you may make changes until **July 13, 2026, at 4:00 PM CST.**

**32. What should I do if I have technical issues with the application system?**

Please contact:

Meng Moua

[meng@caalmn.org](mailto:meng@caalmn.org)

612.208.7148

**33. My business or nonprofit has not yet filed its 2024 taxes. Can I use 2023 and 2022 federal tax filings for the application?**

No. You must submit tax filings for 2024 and 2025.

**34. I've filed for a tax extension. Can I submit proof of the extension in place of my tax documents?**

No. Tax extension documents will not be accepted in place of required tax filings.

**35. Do I need to submit a detailed budget?**

Yes. Applicants are expected to provide a clear and reasonable budget that shows how grant funds will be used. Budgets should align with the proposed project and demonstrate feasibility.

**36. Where can I find the Business Plan template for the Emerging Entrepreneur application?**

The business plan template is available on the CAAL Ignite application portal under the **Attachment** tab, in the *Business Plan Attachments* Hint box. You may also access it directly here: [CAAL Ignite Business Plan Template](#)

**37. Can I submit my own Business Plan?**

No. You must use the CAAL Ignite Emerging Entrepreneur Business Plan template. Applications that do not use the required format will be considered incomplete.

**38. Can I use AI for my grant Application?**

Yes. AI tools may be used to help generate ideas and support the development of your application. However, applicants may not copy and paste AI-generated content directly into their submission.

Your final application must reflect your own voice, experience, and work. Responses should be authentic and accurately represent the applicant or organization. Applications that appear to be fully AI-generated without the applicant's voice or context will be considered incomplete.



## E. Review & Selection

### 39. What factors are considered when reviewing grant applications?

Applications will be evaluated based on:

- Alignment with CAAL Ignite Goals
- Overall strength and potential impact of the project
- Feasibility and viability of the proposed plan
- Reasonableness of the proposed timeline

### 40. What is the Application and Selection Timeline?

- **Application Opens:** June 8, 2026 @9:00 AM
- **Application Closes:** July 13, 2026 @ 4:00 PM CST
- **Review Period:** July - August 2026
- **Award Notifications:** August - September 2026

### 41. Who will review the applications?

Applications will be reviewed by a panel of diverse community leaders and trusted partners.

### 42. When is eligibility determined?

Eligibility is determined at the time of application submission and again prior to final award decisions.

### 43. How does CAAL manage conflicts of interest in the review process?

Reviewers with personal, financial, or professional relationships with an applicant are required to recuse themselves from the review process.

## F. After Receiving the Grant

### 44. What happens if I am awarded the grant?

You will receive an official award notification from the CAAL Ignite Grant Manager outlining the terms and conditions. Grantees must sign a grant agreement that includes reporting requirements, timelines, and guidelines for the use of funds.

### 45. What are the reporting and accountability requirements?

Grantees are required to submit both interim and final reports, including financial and narrative updates.



**46. How will I be notified about the outcome of my application?**

Applicants will be notified via email sent to the primary contact listed in the application.

**47. What are the commitments of a CAAL Ignite grantee?**

Grantees are expected to:

- Attend four in-person sessions (Kickoff, two workshops, and a celebration event)
- Participate in quarterly networking events
- Submit interim and final reports
- Join quarterly check-ins with the grant manager

**48. What is the duration of the CAAL Ignite grant?**

The grant period is 9 months, from **September 2026 through May 2027**.

**49. How much time should I expect to commit if selected?**

Grantees should expect to participate in multiple in-person sessions, quarterly events, and reporting activities over the 9-month period. On average, participants should plan for consistent engagement throughout the grant cycle.

**50. What happens if I can't attend required sessions?**

Participation is a core part of the program. Failure to attend required sessions or meet program expectations may affect grant disbursements or continued participation.

**51. Will CAAL share my story publicly if I receive funding?**

Yes. As part of the CAAL Ignite program, grantees may be featured in communications materials, storytelling efforts, and public reports. Participation helps elevate community impact and visibility.

**52. How will grant funds be distributed?**

Funds will be distributed in the following installments:

- **40%** after the CAAL Ignite Kickoff (September 2026)
- **40%** after the submission of the interim report
- **20%** after submission of the final report

**53. Can grant disbursements be delayed or withheld?**

Yes. Payments may be delayed or withheld if required reports, agreements, or compliance conditions are not met.



**54. Are CAAL Ignite grants taxable?**

CAAL does not provide tax advice. Please consult a qualified tax professional regarding your specific situation.

**55. Will I need to track or document how I use grant funds?**

Yes. Grantees must maintain accurate records of expenses and may be required to provide documentation upon request.

**56. Can I change my budget after receiving the grant?**

Any significant changes to the approved budget or use of funds must be approved by CAAL in advance.

**57. Will CAAL Ignite provide language or accessibility support?**

Yes. Interpretation and accessibility accommodation may be available. Please contact CAAL early to request support.

**58. Will applicants receive feedback if not selected?**

Applicants may request general feedback; however, detailed scoring or reviewer comments will not be provided.

**59. Can I appeal a decision if my application is not selected?**

No. All funding decisions are final. However, applicants may request general feedback to strengthen future applications.

**60. If I apply with a fiscal sponsor, who will receive the funds?**

Grant funds will be distributed to the fiscal sponsor, who is legally responsible for managing the funds and ensuring compliance with grant requirements.

**61. Who is responsible for reporting under fiscal sponsorship?**

The fiscal sponsor is ultimately responsible for reporting and compliance. However, both the sponsor and the project lead are expected to collaborate on reporting and participation requirements.

## **G. Disclaimer**

**62. Can CAAL change or update the FAQs and grant policies?**

Yes. The Coalition of Asian American Leaders (CAAL) reserves the right to update, revise, or amend these Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), grant guidelines, and related policies at any time.

## **H. Contact Information**

**63. Who can I talk to if I have questions about the application?**

Please contact:



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[meng@caalmn.org](mailto:meng@caalmn.org)  
612.208.7148