Breath of Life Nonprofit Support

Nonprofit Space-Use Program

Application Process & Selection Criteria Guide

1. Program Overview

This program makes vacant or underused commercial space on the Lincoln College campus in Lincoln, Illinois available to nonprofit organizations at free or below-market cost, in exchange for delivering measurable public benefit — chiefly jobs and direct community service. The program is intended to seed neighborhood revitalization by filling empty buildings with mission-driven activity rather than leaving them inactive.

The framework below draws on established models for allocating below-market space and public/philanthropic dollars to mission-aligned organizations, including community land trust commercial-tenant programs, municipal "meanwhile use" and storefront-activation programs, and federal/state economic-development scoring systems that tie lease support directly to jobs created and community investment made. Full sources are listed in Section 8.

This program intends to make the most use out of the former Lincoln College space by charging $1 annual leases to nonprofits to allow them to thrive in Lincoln. Additionally, at the end of the lease terms, the intent is to donate the property to the qualifying nonprofit entity.

2. Roles & Governance

- Property Owner / Funder — the philanthropist or the entity holding title to the buildings. Sets program goals, funds the Administrator role, and makes (or delegates) final award decisions.
- Program Administrator — a staff person or contracted organization who manages outreach, intake, eligibility screening, lease/license administration, and ongoing compliance monitoring. This is the day-to-day point of contact for applicants. This is to be administered by Uriah Kilgallin, CEO of Lincoln Economic Advancement & Development (LEAD).
- Review Committee — a small panel (recommend 3-5 people: Administrator, one Owner/Board representative, and subject-matter volunteers) that independently scores applications and interviews finalists.
- Property/Facilities support — whoever handles building condition, maintenance, and insurance coordination during due diligence and occupancy.

3. Eligibility Requirements

To apply, an organization generally must:

- Be a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit, fiscally sponsored project, or equivalent mission-driven entity in good standing.
- Be established and operational for a period of at least one year, with the organization being on a growth trajectory.
- Have appropriate governance (active board, bylaws) and the legal capacity to sign a lease or license.
- Reinvest any surplus revenue into its mission rather than distributing it for private profit.
- Carry or be able to obtain adequate general liability insurance.
- Propose a use that is legally permitted in the space and compatible with the building and surrounding area.

4. Application Process

The process below moves an applicant from initial interest to a signed occupancy agreement and ongoing monitoring.

Stage	What happens	Owner
1. Outreach & Letter of Interest	Program is publicized; interested nonprofits submit a short Letter of Interest describing who they are and what they'd like to do with the space.	Administrator
2. Eligibility Screening	Administrator confirms 501(c)(3)/nonprofit status, good standing, insurability, and that the proposed use is allowed. Pass/fail — no scoring yet.	Administrator
3. Formal Application	Eligible organizations complete the full Application Form (Section 6) with financials, job and community-service projections, references, and required attachments.	Applicant
4. Completeness Review	Administrator checks the application for completeness and requests missing items before it moves to scoring.	Administrator
5. Independent Scoring	Each member of the Review Committee scores the application independently against the scoring matrix in Section 5.	Review Committee
6. Interview / Site Discussion	Shortlisted applicants meet with the Administrator to clarify their plan, budget, and job/service commitments.	Administrator/Review Committee
7. Committee Recommendation	Scores are averaged and a written recommendation (award, waitlist, or decline) is issued to the property owner.	Review Committee
8. Owner/Board Decision	The philanthropist or a designated oversight board makes the final award decision.	Owner / Board
9. Award & Terms Negotiation	Successful applicant negotiates term length, any nominal rent, maintenance responsibilities, and reporting commitments.	Administrator + Applicant
10. Due Diligence & Lease/License Execution	Certificate of insurance, condition survey, and lease or license agreement are completed before move-in.	Administrator
11. Onboarding & Move-In	Keys/access issued; orientation to building rules, safety, and reporting requirements.	Administrator
12. Ongoing Monitoring & Renewal	Tenant submits periodic reports on jobs and community-service metrics vs. their application; Administrator reviews for renewal or reallocation. Expected length of monitoring is two years, if all lease terms are met.	Administrator + Tenant
13. Donation of Building	If qualifying metrics are met and the tenant is in good standing, the building will be donated to the nonprofit to allow for continued operations.	Owner

5. Selection Criteria & Scoring Matrix

Every complete application is scored on a 100-point scale across five weighted criteria. Consistent with the program's priorities, Jobs Created and Community Service together make up 60% of the total score — more than all other criteria combined.

Criterion	Weight	What it measures
Jobs Created & Retained	**30 pts**	Number, quality, and permanence of jobs the applicant will create or retain in the space (see 5.1). These jobs are to be “new to Lincoln.”
Community Service & Public Benefit	**30 pts**	Scope, depth, and accessibility of direct services or programming the applicant will provide to the community (see 5.2).
Financial Sustainability	**15 pts**	Applicant's financial health and ability to sustain operations in the space without the space itself becoming a liability (see 5.3).
Community & Neighborhood Need Alignment	**15 pts**	How closely the proposed use matches documented needs and priorities of the surrounding neighborhood (see 5.4).
Commitment to Space & Space Utilization	**10 pts**	Length of commitment and additional investment offered and how fully/actively the applicant will use the space (see 5.5).
Total	**100 pts**	

5.1 Jobs Created & Retained — 30 points

Applicants should project the number of full-time-equivalent (FTE) jobs the proposed use will create or retain, target wages, and whether roles will be prioritized for neighborhood residents.

Points	Job-creation intensity
30	Creates over 15 “new to Lincoln” full-time-equivalent (FTE) jobs within the first year
20-29	Creates 6-15 “new to Lincoln” FTE jobs within the first year
10–19	Creates 3-5 “new to Lincoln” FTE jobs in the first year
1–9	Creates 1-2 “new to Lincoln” jobs, FTE or otherwise, in the first year
0	No credible job creation or retention plan provided

5.2 Community Service & Public Benefit — 30 points

This measures the direct services, programming, or public access the applicant will provide — the core "community good" the space is meant to generate.

Points	Community service & public benefit
25–30	Direct, recurring services or programming open to the general public/neighborhood at no or low cost, serving a large or high-need population, with measurable outcomes tracked
18–24	Regular services/programming with a defined public-benefit population and basic outcome tracking
10–17	Occasional or narrower-scope community programming or public access to the space

Points	Community service & public benefit
1–9	Limited community-facing activity; benefit is mostly internal to the organization
0	No public benefit or community-service component identified

5.3 Financial Sustainability — 15 points

The space should go to organizations that can actually sustain operations there — an unsustainable tenant creates re-vacancy risk and undermines the revitalization goal.

Points	Financial sustainability
12–15	2+ years of clean financials or funding commitments covering operations for the full lease/license term; diversified revenue
7–11	Adequate financials/projections with identified funding sources for at least 1–2 years
1–6	Thin financial documentation or heavy reliance on a single, unconfirmed funding source
0	Required financials not provided or organization is not in good standing

5.4 Community & Neighborhood Need Alignment — 15 points

This rewards proposals that respond to a documented local need rather than a generic program that could go anywhere.

Points	Neighborhood need alignment
12–15	Directly addresses a documented gap or priority in the target area (from a community plan, resident survey, or market/needs study)
7–11	Generally consistent with area priorities but not directly tied to documented need
1–6	Weak or unclear connection to neighborhood priorities
0	No stated connection to community need

5.5 Commitment Length & Space Utilization — 10 points

This rewards applicants who will occupy the space fully and demonstrates an intention to expand operations permanently in Lincoln.

Points	Commitment & utilization
10	Commits to a multi-year term (3+ years) with regular, published operating hours and near-full use of the space. Expresses willingness to permanently use the space.
5-9	Commits to 1–3 years with moderate, consistent use
1-4	Short-term or part-time use only
0	No firm commitment on term or hours of operation

6. Application Form

A standalone Application Form aligned to this scoring matrix is provided on leadlincoln.com/breath-of-life. It collects organizational information, the space and use requested, job-creation and community-service projections, financial documentation, neighborhood-need justification, and references — mirroring the five scoring criteria above so reviewers can score directly from the submission.

7. Award, Terms & Ongoing Compliance

7.1 Occupancy Terms

- Written lease or license agreement even where rent is **nominal rate of $1/year and triple net (NNN)**
- Specify term length, renewal conditions, maintenance/repair responsibilities, insurance requirements, and permitted use.
- Pre-occupancy condition survey and proof of insurance before keys are issued.

7.2 Monitoring & Reporting

- Periodic (e.g., semi-annual) reports comparing actual jobs created and community-service delivery against what was proposed in the application.
- Build renewal and (if necessary) space-reallocation decisions around whether the tenant is meeting its jobs and community-service commitments.
- Provide information for an annual "impact report" the Administrator can share with the philanthropist/board summarizing jobs created, people served, and neighborhood outcomes across all tenants.
- **Establish terms required for property to be donated to organization if investment and job growth metrics are met.**

7.3 Non-Renewal / Reallocation

If a tenant materially underperforms against its committed jobs and community-service metrics without a reasonable cause, the Administrator will have a documented process to issue a corrective-action notice, and — if unresolved — decline renewal so the space can be reallocated to another mission-aligned applicant. This process will be outlined in the lease agreement with the tenants.