

Philadelphia Small Business Grant Applications Historical Data Analysis

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Description

I propose a research and a data analysis project in the field of small business development and entrepreneurship. I propose that I will collect and analyze historical and present small business grants application data submitted to the Merchants Fund of Philadelphia in order to study and understand the barriers, needs, and conditions of Philadelphia small businesses and entrepreneurs. This proposed research project aligns with my teaching subject and academic research interest, and will provide crucially needed insight into the small business and entrepreneurial economy in the Philadelphia region.

The Merchants Fund of Philadelphia (TMF) is a Philadelphia Charity established in 1854 to provide charitable gifts to business persons facing financial hardship.¹ Their Mission is to provide financial assistance to current and past merchants in Philadelphia. I am currently a member of TMF's Board of Managers.

Each year, TMF receives hundreds of grant applications from small businesses and entrepreneurs from all corners of Philadelphia through various grant programs offered by TMF.² These grants focus on stabilizing small businesses, restore and reopen from damages sustained from the recent civil unrest, and COVID-19 relief efforts currently.

I propose that I collect and analyze the historical and current grant application data from the various TMF grant programs in order to learn more about the businesses that apply for those grants.

Goals and Objectives

By studying the grant application data, I hope to gain some needed insights into the Philadelphia small business and entrepreneur community. Crucially, since TMF's grant programs are focused on supporting and stabilizing small businesses in need of financial support, I hope to learn more about the barriers and hardships faced by small businesses in Philadelphia. Additionally, by studying the same metrics and measures over time through analyzing historical data, I can gain insights on and identify patterns in the small business and entrepreneur economy in Philadelphia.

There is a lack of academic and economic research in this area. SBA provides broad overviews of loan and assistance data through SBA lending programs, but those overviews do not provide a detailed and close look on distressed businesses, as SBA loans are frequently made to growing and financially viable or successful businesses. Further, because TMF is a Philadelphia organization, the result from this proposed research will be focused on Philadelphia and result in data and insights not otherwise available from other sources.

¹ <https://merchantsfund.org/>

² See TMF Grantmaking page. <https://merchantsfund.org/grants/>

Timeframe

I have received permission from TMF to start data collection in May, 2021, and I anticipate the bulk of the research will take place over the summer. The following is a projected schedule:

May 1: start of data collection

June 1: start of data analysis

July 1: completion of data analysis

August 1: completion of written report, and submission to journals for publication

Successful Outcome

The proposed research project will result in a report identifying both current and historical trends of the barriers, needs, and conditions of Philadelphia small business and entrepreneur community. The report should be a publishable article by quality academic journals. The proposed project will also result in a practitioner report which may help influence economic and entrepreneurial support policies.

Sharing of Outcome

Aside from submitting the resulting report for publication, I will report my findings to the Lincoln University community during the fall 2021 semester. I will also incorporate data and insight learned through the project into future Entrepreneurship curriculum I teach.

Budget

Item	Amount	Notes
Salary Supplements	\$7,000	June and July, 2021
Cost of supplies and software	\$1,500	Data analysis software (i.e. SPSS); Geospatial analysis software (i.e. ArcGIS), and other analytics tools

Thank you for your consideration!

Sincerely,

Dafan Zhang