**Washington County Small Business COVID-19 Relief Fund Guidelines**

In response to Federal and State Governments pronouncing a State of Emergency due to the fast moving COVID-19 pandemic, Minnesota Governor Tim Walz signed Executive Order 20-04 to order temporary closure of Minnesota restaurants and bars to dine – in customers. Executive Order 20-08 further ordered the closing of other places of public accommodation. In addition, Executive Order 20-20 ordered all persons currently living within the State of Minnesota to Stay at Home.

The goals and objectives of this program are:

* To provide emergency financial assistance for businesses that are experiencing financial hardships due to the COVID-19 related restrictions.
* Allocate Federal CARES Act resources to this program from the State of Minnesota and local governmental units that have received direct funding.
* Ensure that this assistance will be beneficial to the business and in compliance with the Federal rules, regulations and appropriation.
* Facilitate business survival, especially for small businesses during this pandemic.
* Enhance, to the greatest extent possible the retention of jobs throughout the County.

To provide emergency business assistance grants to small local businesses in Washington County adversely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Washington County Small Business Relief Fund will provide grants of up to $15,000 to small businesses most in need of support. Providing this support is intended to increase the capacity of small businesses with a physical location in Washington County to survive the current pandemic crisis and may help prevent business closures, job losses and potential future blight scenarios.

We understand there is a cost to reopening your business safely. These grant funds can be used to ensure your business can afford to operate while maintaining the social distancing guidelines for the safety of your employees and customers.

The Relief Fund will be administered by the Metropolitan Consortium of Community Developers’ (MCCD), Open to Business Program, which currently provides technical assistance and access to capital for businesses throughout Washington County.

**Terms**

* Up to $15,000 grant based on economic injury from COVID-19 and eligible expenses.
* Funds can only be used for Federal CARES Act eligible COVID-19 related or incurred public health emergency business operating expenses, including rent payments, mortgage payments, payments to suppliers, payments to private utility companies or other critical non-payroll business expenses (including expenses related to reopening) as approved by MCCD and the CDA. If any other COVID-19 related business assistance grant funds were received from the SBA Paycheck Protection Program, Economic Injury Disaster Loan, Pandemic Unemployment Assistance, local city or township grants and/or State of Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, Washington County funds may NOT be used for the same expenses that were paid with other sources of funds. By Federal CARES Act regulations, funds may not be used for government utility (i.e. water and sewer) expenses or for the payment of federal, state, local tax obligations which includes property and sales tax.

**Eligible Businesses**

* Must be a locally owned and operated for-profit business with a physical address documenting business establishment in Washington County. Multiple individual businesses located in Washington County that are owned by one owner are eligible to apply.
* For up to the maximum $15,000 funding limit, businesses must have at least one FTE (full time equivalent) employee in addition to the owner as of March 1, 2020 and not more than 50 employees, and generate under $3.5 million in annual revenues.
* Must have been operating for at least 6 months prior to March 1, 2020.
* If required by the state or local government, businesses must be licensed and in good standing. Property taxes must have been current prior to March 1, 2020.
* Business must demonstrate a significant loss in revenue since March 15 (no credit score or collateral requirements apply).
* Home-based businesses are eligible; however, priority will be given to employer businesses with separate non-residential property addresses. Separate funding level (up to $7,500 maximum) for home-based businesses or for self-employed entrepreneurs that have no employees that have a physical location for their business in Washington County other than their personal residence. All other terms and conditions of these policies apply to any home-based or self-employed businesses.

**Certain businesses are ineligible, including:**

* Non-profit, religious, or membership-based organizations.
* Corporate owned chains are ineligible to receive funding; however, locally owned franchise businesses are eligible.
* Businesses in default conditions prior to February 29, 2020.
* Businesses that primarily derive income from: gambling, adult entertainment, pawned merchandise, guns, passive investments, real estate transactions, property rentals or property management, billboards, or lobbying.

**Application Process**

**All businesses must complete, sign and certify the grant application. The business must provide all required information verifying their eligibility. All businesses must provide and document evidence of COVID-19 eligible expenses incurred.**

* Application Forms will be accepted beginning August 10, 2020 through August 24, 2020 at 4:30 pm. Applications will be prioritized and funded to the businesses that best meet program goals and priority will be given to those business types previously identified as stated above of this policy. The program administrator and/or the CDA reserve any and all rights to deny any application that is not in compliance with program guidelines or these stated policies.
* Completed Application Forms can be emailed to WCCOVIDRelief@mccdmn.org.
* If applications exceed the funding available, the fund administrator Metropolitan Consortium of Community Developers (MCCD) will select grant recipients using a priority-based selection process based on criteria determined by Washington County. The program administrator, MCCD, will begin to notify approved applicants by email on or before August 31, 2020.
* Upon notice of an approved application, applicants will be required to submit the following within 10 business days:
	+ 2019 Federal Business Tax Return or appropriate Business Tax Schedule- based on entity type. Businesses that have not yet completed a 2019 Federal Return are eligible to apply and substitute other documentation of revenue.
	+ Evidence of revenue loss related to the COVID-19 pandemic emergency. Applicants should submit documentation that best demonstrates the impact and is deemed acceptable to Program Administrator. Some examples of acceptable documentation include: Landlord letters, Sales Tax Reporting, Period Statements from 3rd -party Sales Platforms, Merchant Services Statements, and Point of Sale or Register reports.
	+ Evidence of employment prior to March 1st, 2020. Acceptable documentation may include period reporting from a 3rd -party payroll processor, applicant’s Federal Form 941/Employer’s Quarterly Federal Tax Return, or other State or Federal payroll-related filing.
	+ Any additional documentation or information deemed necessary by the fund administrator to determine eligibility, generate grant agreement documents, disburse grant proceeds, or meet program reporting requirements.
	+ Failure to submit any required documentation will result in forfeiture of funding award. Grant proceeds will be disbursed after applicant complies with all policy provisions; and executes a grant agreement.

Note: The Washington County CDA Board reserves the right to revise these guidelines as needed to best address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.