

Washington County Local Business Relief Grants Program Guidelines

In early January 2021, Washington County received \$5,058,997 in county relief grants for local businesses as approved by the State Legislature on Monday, December 14, 2020. The county received this allocation from the state on a per-capita basis, and is directed by law to use the funds to make grants to individual businesses and non-profits that, to the extent it is feasible for the county to determine, are located in the county; have no current tax liens on record with the Secretary of State, and are impacted by an executive order related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Washington County Board has determined that a priority for grant funding shall go to those businesses most directly impacted by Executive Order (EO) No. 20-99. If funding remains available, eligible applicants will include businesses that have been directly or indirectly impacted by any executive orders issued to address the on-going COVID-19 pandemic, and certain non-profit businesses impacted by the pandemic, as defined below.

In order to provide immediate relief to businesses directly impacted by EO 20-99, Washington County will first provide a grant to businesses holding a food, pools or lodging license from Washington County for 2021 who have been impacted by an executive order. The amount of the grant will be equal to the 2021 license fee and shall be paid to the business as soon as practical following adoption of this program by the board of commissioners. Licensed businesses receiving a grant under this portion of the program are also eligible to apply for an additional grant as described below.

Washington County, through the Washington County Community Development Agency, will contract with the Metropolitan Consortium of Community Developers' (MCCD) Open to Business Program, a local non-profit business, to collect and review the applications, and award program grants.

Eligibility

General Requirements

- Businesses/applicant must have a physical location in Washington County.
- Business/applicant must be in good standing with MN Secretary of State Department as of the time of application (no tax liens on record have been filed).
- Business/applicant must have been impacted, directly or indirectly, by an executive order related to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Business/applicant must have been in operation on or before November 1, 2020.
- Businesses who received Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act assistance, including county small business grants, or state business grants, are eligible for this program, but must apply again to receive funds.
- Convention centers and movie theatres who receive grants direct from the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) are not eligible for this grant program.
- Ineligible businesses/applicants include corporate owned chains or businesses that primarily derive income from: gambling, adult entertainment, pawned merchandise, guns, passive investments, real estate transactions, billboards, or lobbying. Locally owned corporate franchise businesses are eligible.

For-profit business grants

- Eligible business/applicant must have 75 or less full-time equivalent employees and generated \$5 million in annual revenue or less during calendar year 2019.
- First priority, will be given to restaurants, bars, gyms, and other similar businesses who have been partially or fully closed as a result of EO 20-99, Section 7. Eligible applications from the first group will be awarded as they are received. This includes bars and restaurants operated by a non-profit, such as VFW Posts or American Legions, who have been partially or fully closed as a result of EO 20-99.
- Businesses who have been directly or indirectly impacted by executive orders issued in response to the COVID-19 pandemic are eligible. These businesses must certify that they have incurred costs related to the pandemic and have suffered a loss in revenue. Businesses indirectly impacted by executive orders is defined as a business that derives income from sales of goods or services to businesses that were fully or partially closed by an executive order.

Non-profit organizations

- The following non-profit organizations are eligible for grants under this program:
 - Non-profit organizations, such as but not limited to arts organizations, museums, and fitness centers, that earn revenue similar to businesses, including but not limited to ticket sales and memberships fees.
 - Non-profit organizations that provide social and community services, such as mental health services, housing, services for individuals with disabilities, food support, and other human service or safety net services closely related to those provided by counties.
 - Non-profit organizations that provide direct services to veterans.
- Eligible non-profits must be physically located in the county and have 75 or less full-time equivalent employees and generate \$5 million or less in annual revenue.
- If grant requests in total exceed the amount of funding available, total grants provided to non-profit organizations shall not exceed \$750,000.

Home-based businesses and self-employed entrepreneurs

- Home-based businesses or self-employed entrepreneurs that have no employees that have a physical location for their business in Washington County other than their personal residence, are eligible for grants. These businesses must certify that they have incurred costs related to the pandemic and have suffered a loss in revenue, in addition to certifying they have been impacted by an executive order related to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Grants for home-based businesses will only be made if funds remain after funding for-profit business grant and non-profit grant applications that have been received and are deemed to be eligible.

Award Amount

- All grants must be awarded and checks mailed by March 15, 2021. Once a business meets the eligibility criteria, their grant award amount will be based on the following tiers:
 - Up to \$15,000 for for-profit and non-profit restaurants and bars impacted by EO-99.
 - Up to \$15,000 for other for-profit businesses impacted, either directly or indirectly, by an executive order related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Up to \$10,000 for eligible non-profit business impacted by an executive order related to the COVID-19 pandemic as defined under the eligibility requirements.
- Up to \$7,500 for home-based or non-employer small businesses/sole proprietors.
- Applicants must certify that they have general operating costs incurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, that were not reimbursed by other city, county, state or federal funding, that meets or exceeds the amount of the grant requested.

Use of Funds

- Funds must be used for business operating expenses incurred during the COVID-19 pandemic. Those expense may include payroll expenses, rent payments, mortgage payments, payments to suppliers, insurance, utility expenses or other critical business expenses (including expenses related to closing and/or reopening). Washington County funds may NOT be used for the same expenses or activities that were paid with other sources of grant or COVID relief funds.

Applications

- Applications will be accepted starting at 8:00 a.m. on Thursday, January 7, 2021.
- Completed applications from the first priority group of restaurants, bars, gyms, and other similar businesses who have been partially or fully closed as a result of EO 20-99, Section 7 will be processed and grants awarded as they are received.
- Applications will be accepted through 4:30 p.m. on February 4, 2021. Completed applications received by this date will be reviewed and considered for grants based on the prioritization described above.
- If the application requests received as of the end of the day on February 4, 2021 does not equal or exceed the total grant funds available, the application process will remain open until such time as the application requests exceed the amount of funds available.
- Applicants who have applied on or prior to February 4, 2021 will receive priority over those applications received on or after February 5, 2021.
- If funding remains, and eligible applications are received after February 5, 2021 those applications can be reviewed and processed on a rolling basis to ensure grant dollars are awarded prior to the March 15, 2021 deadline.
- If grant applications received prior to February 5, 2021 exceed the amount of funding available for grants, Washington County reserves the right to pro-rate grant amounts in order to provide assistance to as many applicants as possible.
- If the total applications do not exceed the funding available after the application period closes on March 1, 2020, Washington County reserves the right to increase the grant amounts awarded to the first priority businesses that include restaurants, bars, gyms, and other similar businesses who have been partially or fully closed as a result of EO 20-99, Section 7, up to an additional \$15,000, if a business did not receive a small business assistance grant from the county in 2020.
- No applications will be accepted after March 1, 2021 at 4:30 pm.

Application Process

- All applications will be processed by MCCD through the Submittable web-based application. A link to the application will be posted on the Washington County CDA website.
- All businesses/applicants must complete, sign, and certify the grant application and grant agreement. The business/applicant must provide any and all required or requested information to the program manager in a timely manner and must also self-certify their eligibility.
- MCCD will review and approve/decline based on the eligibility guidelines. MCCD will review all applications but fund only the priority businesses first until February 4, 2021. At that time, funding will open up to the next priorities, including businesses not affected directly by Governor's EO 20-99, non-profits, and home-based businesses.
- All businesses that apply by the February 4th deadline will be notified by February 12th.
- 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. The Washington County Board and Washington County CDA Board reserves the right to revise these guidelines as needed to best address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.