



Pinellas County

Staff Report

File #: 20-769A, Version: 1

Subject:

Adopt Resolution Approving Pinellas CARES Small Business Grants Program.

Recommended Action:

Adoption of a resolution approving the Pinellas CARES Small Business Grants program to support eligible small businesses impacted by the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic.

- Grant program will provide emergency financial support for eligible small businesses negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic due to orders to close or limit operations.
 - \$5,000.00 one-time payment per eligible small business.
 - Eligibility criteria:
 - Occupies commercial space within Pinellas County.
 - Has at least 1, but no more than 25, full-time equivalent (FTE) employees, including the business owner. The firm can have many more part-time employees as long as the total weekly hours of all employees does not exceed 1,000 (25 FTE x 40-hour work week).
 - Operating since at least October 1, 2019 and was still in operation on February 29, 2020.
 - Firm is expected to return to full operations after local and state emergency guidelines during COVID-19 are rescinded.
 - Eligible business types:
 - “Food Service Establishments” as defined in Chapter 500, Florida Statutes, and “Public Food Service Establishments” as defined in Chapter 509, Florida Statutes.
 - Bars, pubs and nightclubs as described in Governor’s Executive Order 20-68.
 - Short-term lodging establishments and vacation rental management companies that collect and remit Tourist Development Taxes.
 - Non-essential businesses covered under Section 5 of the “State of Florida & Pinellas County ‘Safer-at-Home’ Guidance” document.
 - Places of public and private assembly covered under Section 2 of the “State of Florida & Pinellas County ‘Safer-at-Home’ Guidance” document.
 - Businesses that have already applied or received funding from municipal grant programs are eligible for this program.
 - Owners with more than one eligible business may submit an application for each legal entity.
 - Non-profit and home-based businesses and publicly traded companies are not eligible.
 - Estimated 6,500 businesses will be eligible and sufficient funding exists for each of these firms to receive a \$5,000.00 grant.
 - Secondary phase may be considered with expanded eligibility.

- Small businesses represent over 90% of all businesses in Pinellas County and are critical to the community.
- Payments would help cover expenses such as employee wages, vendor bills and rent. Payments can only be used to reimburse the costs of business interruption caused by required closures provided those costs are not paid by insurance or by another federal program.
- Program to be initially funded with up to \$35,000,000.00 from Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act payment.
 - Total payment received from Treasury was \$170,129,283.40.
 - Funds may be utilized for various programs.
 - Budget resolution will be brought forward at May 5 meeting to recognize and appropriate these funds in the Fiscal Year 2020 Budget.
- Applications will be submitted using a digital online portal. Applicants will be required to digitally sign the application and attest, under penalty of perjury, that all information submitted is truthful.
- Program outreach and education will be conducted from April 28 to May 3 in support of opening the application portal on May 4. The application portal will remain open until June 1.
- Estimated time to issue payments will be dependent upon application volume. Review and approval of each application is anticipated to require one hour with payment issuance within 10 business days after approval.
 - Dedicated staff have been identified within Economic Development and other departments to support review and approval of applications as well as support for questions from applicants.
- Payments will be issued by check daily by the Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller. The Clerk is dedicating staff to support timely payment processing.

Strategic Plan:

Ensure Public Health, Safety, and Welfare

2.1 Provide planning, coordination, prevention, and protective services to ensure a safe and secure community

2.3 Be a facilitator, convener, and purchaser of services for those in need

2.4 Support programs that seek to prevent and remedy the causes of homelessness and move individuals and families from homelessness to permanent housing

Foster Continual Economic Growth and Vitality

4.2 Invest in communities that need the most

Deliver First Class Services to the Public and Our Customers

5.2 Be responsible stewards of the public's resources

Summary:

Pinellas County has initially identified up to \$35 million in emergency relief funds to support the small businesses hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. Funds are available as part of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act federal stimulus package.

Pinellas County will provide emergency financial support through the Pinellas CARES Small Business Grant for qualified small businesses that are negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic due to orders to close or limit operations. This program is intended to help offset the significant, temporary loss of revenue to these qualified businesses during this pandemic, and to

assist businesses in retaining and paying employees.

The program will offer one-time \$5,000 grants to qualifying small businesses to cover expenses such as employee wages, vendor bills and rent. The emergency relief is targeted specifically to help local brick and mortar businesses cover immediate financial needs. Grants are strictly limited to businesses located physically within Pinellas County. Funds can only be used to reimburse the costs of business interruption caused by required closures provided those costs are not paid by insurance or by another federal program.

Regardless of whether a business is or is not eligible for this program, it may still qualify for other existing funding programs. Visit www.pced.org/covid19loans for a list of federal and state programs assisting businesses impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Background Information:

On March 27, 2020, the CARES Act was enacted to provide emergency relief to families and small businesses that have been impacted by the coronavirus. Through the \$150 billion Coronavirus Relief Fund, the CARES Act provides for payments to State, Local, and Tribal governments navigating the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Amounts paid to States, the District of Columbia, U.S. Territories, and eligible units of local government were based on population as provided in the CARES Act. A unit of local government eligible for receipt of direct payment includes a county, municipality, town, township, village, parish, borough, or other unit of general government below the State level with a population that exceeds 500,000. Pinellas County received its \$170 million payment on April 22.

The CARES Act requires that the payments from the Coronavirus Relief Fund only be used to cover expenses that:

- (1) are necessary expenditures incurred due to the public health emergency with respect to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19);
 - (2) were not accounted for in the budget most recently approved as of March 27, 2020 (the date of enactment of the CARES Act) for the State or government; and
 - (3) were incurred during the period that begins on March 1, 2020, and ends on December 30, 2020.
- Additional guidance on eligible uses of Fund disbursements by governments and FAQs were issued by the Treasury on April 22.

Fiscal Impact:

Payment to Pinellas County from the CARES Act Coronavirus Relief Fund was received on April 22 in the amount of \$170,129,283.40. The Pinellas CARES Small Business Grant program is initially funded with up to \$35,000,000.00 from this payment. This amount is sufficient to support \$5,000.00 payments to all eligible small businesses (estimated at 6,500). A budget resolution will be brought forward at May 5 BCC meeting to recognize and appropriate these funds in the FY20 Budget.

Staff Member Responsible:

Mike Meidel, Director, Economic Development

Partners:

United States Department of Treasury

Attachments:

Resolution

Exhibit A - Pinellas CARES Small Business Grant

Exhibit B - "State of Florida & Pinellas County 'Safer-at-Home' Guidance" document

Chapter 500, Florida Statutes

Chapter 509, Florida Statutes

Governor's Executive Order 20-68

CARES Act Coronavirus Relief Fund Treasury Guidance and FAQ