



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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Milwaukee County Executive David Crowley Announces Small Business Recovery Initiative Grants and Community Resource Navigator Employment Program

Both programs funded by federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES) Funds allocated in July

MILWAUKEE – Today, Milwaukee County Executive David Crowley announced the launch of the Small Business Initiative Grant program to relieve businesses adversely affected due to COVID-19 and the Community Resource Navigator Employment program to get Milwaukee County residents back to work.

“At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, very few of us expected to still be in such an intense fight against the disease six months later, but today we are still working hard to keep Milwaukee County residents safe and provide economic relief for those trying to keep their heads above water,” said Milwaukee County Executive David Crowley. “The relief programs we’re rolling out today couldn’t come at a better time as gridlock continues to stall the second round of federal aid. We have an opportunity to invest in equity by offering aid to diverse small businesses without access to large cash reserves or reasonable business loans. We know that businesses and workers that power the economy in Milwaukee County can’t wait – they need help now.”

The Small Business Initiative Grant program is now open for business owners facing immediate financial emergencies due to COVID-19 to apply. Awards will be made to qualified businesses; eligibility is based on accurate and complete submission. Priority will be given especially to businesses that include a letter of support from a member of the Ethnic & Diverse Business Coalition, a group of chambers of commerce supporting entrepreneurs of color, women, LGBT and veteran-owned businesses and other enterprises in historically under-served places who don’t have access to flexible, affordable capital. Grants will be made in amounts ranging from \$7,500 to \$20,000. MEDC will use the funding to provide grants to businesses facing immediate financial pressure because of Covid-19.

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“I am happy to see that Milwaukee County is looking out for area businesses and prioritizing the recovery of Black owned businesses as our community continues to navigate the pandemic, its aftermath, and the economic ruin its causes so many business owners and their families,” said Ossie Kendrix, president and CEO of the African-American Chamber of Commerce of Wisconsin. “Many of our businesses are looking to other sources of assistance to see them through the rest of the year, so the Small Business Initiative Grant Program will be a welcome addition of needed resources.”

“It’s clear that Milwaukee County sees small businesses and their workers as partners in keeping our community safe,” said Marjorie Rucker, Chair of the Ethnic Diverse Business Coalition. “Having partners that want to help small businesses by eliminating financial pressures is helpful for business owners trying to keep their businesses sustainable while making health-conscious decisions that don’t proliferate the spread of COVID-19. It’s a sign that we’re all in this together when it comes to keeping our community safe and prosperous.”

Milwaukee County also invested \$3.5 million of relief funds in the Community Resource Navigator Employment Program – a partnership with Employ Milwaukee and WRTP/BIG Step. The funds help add 275 to 300 additional employment opportunities and increase the number of placements in the program to approximately 200.

“We’re happy to have another partner in Milwaukee County contributing to the success of the Community Resource Navigator program to train, employ, and deploy more individuals across the city to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and direct their fellow residents to critical resources,” said Chytania Brown, President and CEO of Employ Milwaukee.

Projections show that county financial needs could reach \$300 million as direct costs, lost revenue, re-opening costs, and service needs continue to increase. Currently, CARES funding provides a temporary, stop-gap measure to address the immediate needs of the county and its residents.

“I’m happy to help provide immediate assistance to get people back to work and keep small businesses afloat, but we know that the demand for county services will continue to grow while our ability to pay for those services plummets as we project over \$100 million in lost revenue for 2020 alone,” concluded Crowley. “I continue to implore our state and federal partners to provide additional direct and flexible funding to Milwaukee County and enable us to effectively respond to the challenges caused by this pandemic,” concluded Crowley.

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