

Charles County Announces the Small Business Relief Grant Program

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La Plata, MD - The Charles County COVID-19 Small Business Relief Grant Program, a \$2.5 million plan, is designed to provide grants to local businesses in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The money for the grant program comes from the County's CARES Act distribution, which Charles County Government recently received. The program will be administered by the Charles County Economic Development Department.

Businesses with zero to four employees will be eligible for grants up to \$5,000. Those with a minimum of five and no more than 75 full-time equivalent employees may apply for up to \$10,000 in grant funding. Half a million dollars is designated to go to businesses that are agriculture and aquaculture related.

"Assisting our local businesses is a top priority to this Board of Commissioners," said Commissioner President Reuben B. Collins, II, Esq. "Each Commissioner is committed to providing resources to help businesses with losses due to business interruptions or to expenses related to reopening safely."

Businesses may use funds from the COVID-19 Small Business Relief Grant for expenses such as payroll, inventory, rent, utilities, and costs related to prevention measures for protecting employees and customers from the virus, such as personal protective equipment, signage, barriers, and other items. The grant funds are for expenditures occurring between March 1, 2020, through December 30, 2020.

Eligible businesses are those that are for-profit, headquartered in Charles County, been in operation for at least one year as of May 2020, and able to provide evidence of financial disruption due to the COVID-19 crisis. Businesses may be organized under any legal structure, including sole proprietors and independent contractors without (W2) employees. Agriculture and aquaculture related businesses meet the same eligibility requirements listed above, including the grant amount based on the number of employees. Businesses that qualify for this designation can include farms and farm stores, agritourism enterprises, equestrian operations, value-added operations, and enterprises engaged in the harvesting of seafood.

"Each business, each industry is different. In developing the criteria for this business grant, we wanted to provide the maximum flexibility for businesses to be able to use this money in a manner that best meets their specific needs," said Economic Development Director, Darréll Brown. "Even the businesses that have been opened during this crisis had challenges, including revising their operations and adjusting their business models. It not just about losses; it's about extra expenses, too."

Visit www.meetcharlescounty.com/charles-county-covid-19-business-grants for Information about the program, FAQs, eligibility requirements, and the program application. Applications will be reviewed on a first-come, first-served basis. Citizens with special needs may contact the Maryland Relay Service at 711, or Relay Service TDD: 800-735-2258.

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