

Pritzker Administration Awards \$14 Million in Emergency Grants to More than 700 Small Bars, Restaurants, and Hotels

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CHICAGO - Governor JB Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO), in partnership with Accion Serving Illinois and Indiana, awarded \$14 million in small grants to over 700 small bars, restaurants, and hotels. 12,000 businesses applied for funding and grantees were selected via a random lottery conducted by Accion. Bars and restaurants received an average grant of \$14,000

while hotels received an average grant of \$30,000. The grants can be used to support working capital - like payroll and rent – job training, and technology to support shifts in operations including increased use of carry out and delivery.

“While the financial hardships related to this virus have permeated just about every industry, we know that our hospitality businesses have experienced some of the most significant hardships,” said Governor JB Pritzker. “Funding from the Hospitality Emergency Grant Program will help ease the burdens businesses in every corner of the state are facing and keep their operations up and running.

Awards for the Hospitality Emergency Grant Program were drawn from existing DCEO funds budgeted for tourism promotion, job training, and general operations. More than 450 small bars and restaurants received an average grant of roughly \$14,000 while more than 250 small hotels received an average grant of \$30,000. Applications were accepted by Accion from March 25 through April 1st and the lottery to select grantees was held from April 4th to April 7th.

“With hospitality businesses among the first hit hard by the economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic, this initiative has delivered much needed working capital to the smallest of hospitality businesses to allow them to survive and continue to make payroll in the opening weeks of this crisis,” said Erin Guthrie, Director of DCEO, “The funds granted through this program will serve as a critical stopgap for these businesses as many of them seek federal assistance.”

The awarded businesses are located across the state of Illinois. Approximately one-third of the businesses receiving grants are located outside of Cook and the collar counties.

“Small businesses throughout Illinois are struggling right now, and hospitality businesses are among the very worst hit by this crisis,” said Brad McConnell, CEO of Accion Serving Illinois and Indiana. “Creating a large and equitable grant program overnight has been challenging, but we are honored be working with the Governor’s team to provide over \$14M to small businesses in need.”

“The Illinois Restaurant Association appreciates DCEO's program to provide immediate relief for the smallest independent restaurants and bars,” said Sam Toia, President and CEO of the Illinois Restaurant Association. “These grants will provide aid to the smallest operations in the hospitality segment, and every dollar helps during this time of crisis. We applaud this effort and will continue to advocate at the federal level for broad-based economic relief for the state's 25,000+ eating and drinking establishments and their employees.”

“Illinois’ hotel community is grateful for Governor Pritzker and DCEO’s appreciation for the hotel community’s role as an economic engine to the state’s economy,” said Michael Jacobson, President and CEO of the Illinois Hotel and Lodging Association. “Today’s grant awards are the first step in many to help get the state’s hospitality industry back on their feet and growing again once COVID-19 is behind us.”

DCEO continues to identify new resources and services for businesses impacted by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, including resources under the federal CARES Act including the Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL), EIDL Emergency Advance, and the Paycheck Protection Program. A list of resources available to small businesses is published and updated on DCEO’s website.