

Pritzker Administration Grants \$94 Million in Funding to Businesses and Communities Across Illinois

October 29 2020 11:10 AM



CHICAGO—Governor JB Pritzker today joined the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) to announce the release of \$94 million in emergency relief funds for communities and small businesses statewide. More than \$46 million in small business grants through the historic Business Interruption Grants (BIG) program will provide relief to offset COVID-19 related costs for over 1,200 businesses in all corners of the state. Additionally, over \$48 million in Local CURE funding has

been issued to 163 local governments submitting eligible emergency costs for reimbursement.

“Already, we’ve been able to help 1,200 businesses in this second round of Business Interruption Grants, totaling \$46 million in funding for more than 340 communities in 79 counties statewide – including \$19.5 million for restaurants and bars alone. That builds on our first round of Business Interruption Grants – \$49 million to more than 2,800 businesses in over 400 cities and towns across 78 of our 102 counties,” said Governor JB Pritzker. “This support is but one portion of the \$1 billion in economic relief for business owners and communities that my Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity has deployed in response to this pandemic – while simultaneously calling on the federal government to deliver more for Americans in every state, because this is not a crisis we can weather alone.”

Guided by an equity framework, these programs seek to address the hardest hit communities with emergency relief dollars. These latest funds reflect the geographic diversity of Illinois – with funds provided to over 79 counties, and over \$68 million for downstate communities alone. In addition, over \$35 million has been directed to regions currently under mitigations to prevent the further spread of COVID-19, or where mitigations will soon take effect.

“While we know the needs facing our Illinois communities and businesses are great – these latest funds released will provide a much-needed boost to cover losses and withstand the ongoing nature of the crisis,” said DCEO Director Erin B. Guthrie. “Under Governor Pritzker’s leadership, Illinois is taking necessary steps to overcome the virus quickly so we can begin the long-term work of rebuilding our businesses and our local economy. Economic support programs like BIG and Local CURE are an essential component of protecting our communities, and we encourage more small businesses and local governments to apply for remaining funds to address their COVID-19 costs.”

“This is exactly the kind of aggressive program we need to quickly connect the dots between the assistance available and the businesses that need it,” said Illinois Senate President Don Harmon. “I commend the governor for doing what he can to keep small businesses on their feet during this global pandemic.”

BUSINESS INTERRUPTION GRANTS

More than \$46 million has been deployed this week as part of the second round of BIG awards – with funding for 1,238 businesses in over 340 communities. This includes over 1,000 grants totaling \$36 million for regions currently or that will soon be under mitigation, and \$19.5 million (35 percent) dedicated to restaurants and bars.

The \$220 million current round makes emergency relief available to small businesses across the state, with priority for hard hit industries, including hospitality, performing arts centers, and other heavily impacted sectors – as well as for disproportionately impacted areas (DIAs) based on areas with high total case counts and that have experienced high rates of poverty and underlying economic distress. In this round, \$9.8 million has been provided for heavily impacted sectors and \$19.6 million for businesses located in DIAs.

“Independently-owned venues and not-for-profit venues face similar challenges: we were the first to close and will be the last to reopen,” said Tim Tuten, Chicago Independent Venue League and Illinois chapter National Independent Venue Association. “Governor Pritzker's foresight to allocate funding to the most distressed businesses, like Illinois venues, demonstrates both an understanding of the cultural and economic impacts we have on our communities, and the dire consequences should independent music venues shutter for good.”

The BIG program has granted \$12.4 million to businesses located in Chicago so far in this round, for a total of \$33.7 million in BIG awards for the city's businesses. Additionally, \$20.4 million has been awarded to downstate communities in this round, for a total of \$32 million outside of Chicago and the 5 collar counties. Businesses can use BIG funds to cover working capital costs – which includes payroll, rent, PPE and other operational costs.

"We are pleased to see this round of the BIG program getting meaningful relief dollars into the hands of our devastated creative organizations. We must support the cultural sector as COVID continues to severely limit or entirely prevent our ability to do our core work, the work of bringing joy, meaning and hope across the state," said Claire Rice, Executive Director of the Arts Alliance Illinois. "Although we're happy to see, these initial grants, we want to be sure that all our for-profit and nonprofit creative businesses know these funds are still available for them and we strongly encourage our colleagues across the sector to apply."

BIG Round 2 grants span a diverse geography, as well as business type – with nearly 50 percent of grant recipients reporting they are minority-owned. To ensure businesses owned by underrepresented populations and businesses in DIAs can access grants in Round 2, DCEO invested in partnerships with community navigators – community-based organizations dedicated to outreach and technical assistance for businesses applying in hard to reach communities. These efforts have resulted in engagement with over 8,000 minority business owners, and nearly 1,700 applicants.

“The BIG grant assisted me in keeping my doors open and my employees paid. The jobs my business provides are pivotal in helping my employees keep food on the table and a

roof over their head, especially here on the West Side," said Latrusia May, Founder and CEO of L May Creations Event Space in the Austin neighborhood. "With the ongoing pandemic making the months ahead unpredictable for small community-based businesses like mine, this state grant is a much needed lifeline for my business."

With these latest awards, the BIG program has paid out more than \$250 million to nearly 9,000 small businesses and childcare providers – including \$95 million for non-childcare businesses located statewide. The latest allocation builds on more than \$49 million released in the first round, which reached 2,800 small businesses across 400 communities in Illinois. Over half of Round 1 awards went to minority owned businesses, and half also went to businesses located in DIAs. A full list of Round 1 and current Round 2 recipients can be [found here](#).

LOCAL CURE PROGRAM

More than \$48 million has been released as part of the Local CURE program, covering 163 local units of government and 67 counties. More than \$18 million of the funding covers regions currently under mitigation. An estimated \$21.5 million is in the pipeline and is anticipated for release in the coming days.

Local CURE helps local governments cover the costs of the emergency response, with eligible costs including PPE, staff time and other public health expenses. The Local CURE program was created to distribute \$250 million in Coronavirus Relief Funds (CRF) for those communities beyond Cook County and the collar counties that did not receive a direct allocation. More than 1,300 units of local government are eligible - including municipalities, counties, fire departments and public safety agencies.

DCEO has taken an active role in working with municipalities and counties to help them recoup the maximum amount of reimbursement since the program launched in August. To assist local governments with applying and qualifying for these funds, DCEO has held dozens of webinars, fielded thousands of calls and engaged in direct outreach to hundreds of municipalities, recently launching weekly office hours to help answer questions on submissions for payment in real-time. Local governments can find more information on how to prepare and submit eligible costs on [DCEO's website](#).

"The local CURE program was and will be critical in helping to offset the cost of public safety services to the residents of Collinsville by providing much needed revenues thereby ensuring we are able to maintain these critical services to the public in combatting the COVID 19 pandemic," said Mitch Blair, Collinsville City Manager. "The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity was very helpful in clarifying the application process to obtain the funding and the City sincerely appreciates their assistance."

With a significant amount of funding still on the table, DCEO is urging more businesses and local communities to apply for a combined \$350 million in remaining BIG and Local CURE funds. DCEO continues to be available as a resource to both businesses and local governments seeking assistance. For more on how to submit for these programs, visit the [DCEO website](#).