DCEO Reminds Local Governments To Submit Eligible Costs For The Local Cure Program

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SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) is issuing a reminder today to all local governments eligible for the Local CURE program to seek allotted funds before federal COVID-19 emergency relief funds expire. To manage funds within the federal deadline of December 30th, DCEO requires by December 1st local governments submit a survey, indicating anticipated use of allotted funds. Eligible expenses are those incurred due to the COVID-19 public health emergency, including: public health & public safety payroll, COVID-19 testing &

contact tracing, emergency medical expenses, and public health spending which was incurred to facilitate compliance with public health orders. Costs for the program must be incurred between March 1, 2020 and December 30, 2020.Through this process, the State of Illinois will ensure that all federal CARES Act dollars are deployed to meet needs of communities before funds are reallocated back to the federal government.

While DCEO has initiated the certification process with all 1,400+ governments that are eligible, many have yet to complete necessary steps to claim funds allotted to their communities. A total of 503 local government units across Illinois have received or are on pace to receive Local CURE payments totaling $112 million so far. However over 400 local governments are still eligible and have yet to follow necessary steps for these funds. A list of these cities and towns still eligible to receive Local CURE funds can be found here.

Over the last several months, DCEO has partnered closely with local governments to help them recoup the maximum amount of reimbursement allowed under their Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) eligibility. DCEO has launched a user-friendly website, fielded thousands of calls, conducted dozens of webinars, and stood up dedicated office hours to provide step-by-step instruction on submitting eligible costs over the phone with its team of experts.

"We know how hard the pandemic has hit cities and towns across our state, which is why we are strongly urging every local government eligible to take action today to claim the maximum costs," said DCEO Director Erin Guthrie. "Through the Local CURE program, we have developed a streamlined system to help governments of all sizes identify costs eligible for federal reimbursement, to submit them, and to receive payment within days. Given the extent of the need, the upcoming December 1 deadline will guide the state in ensuring that all eligible funds are placed into the hands of communities in need so they are not returned to the federal government."

Funding made available through Local CURE will help cover costs for public health and public safety payroll, PPE, and other emergency costs related to the COVID-19 response. Approximately $121 million remains available to local governments for reimbursement on COVID-19 emergency expenses in this current round of funding.

"Given the enormous pressure COVID-19 has placed on all of our budgets, it is the duty of every financial officer in local government to seek as much funding possible from this critical program" said Louisa Terronez Ewert, Treasurer of Rock Island County and President of the Illinois County Treasurers Association. "In Rock Island County we have already started receiving reimbursement funds through the Local CURE program,

and it couldn't come at a more needed moment. We are grateful to DCEO for providing hands-on assistance at every step of the way making it easy to submit and receive our funds."

Local government units are urged to complete the steps displayed on DCEO's website and claim costs before funds prior to the deadline of December 30, 2020, the last day costs may be incurred. Ahead of this deadline local governments must complete a survey by December 1st to indicate the estimated amount of eligible reimbursement requests they intend to submit. This survey will allow the Department to determine if they have need for additional funds beyond their original allocation or if they will not use the funds which have been allocated in their entirety.

"Applying for Local CURE was easy, and the City of Sesser was able to receive our funding in a timely manner," said Jason Ashmore, Mayor of Sesser. "I encourage fellow municipalities who are eligible to take note of the requirements to receive this money and to work with DCEO to navigate the process."

After reviewing all eligible requests submitted through the survey, DCEO will re-allocate any unassigned funds from local governments that will not use their full allotments to others in need of additional funding. The final deadline to receive reimbursement for eligible costs is January 31, 2021. DCEO has worked closely with legislators, counties, municipalities and many other units of government to support local officials with understanding of the stringent federal requirements and any assistance they need to apply for reimbursements under this program.

In addition to economic support for cities and towns, DCEO has also launched several financial assistance programs for small businesses to help offset the financial losses brought on by COVID-19. The historic Business Interruption Grants (BIG) program created by Governor Pritzker remains open and accepting applications for grants that can help with COVID-19 related costs, including: PPE, payroll, rent/utilities and other operational costs. To date, more than 5,500 grants have been issued, and $129 million remains. For more information on BIG or to apply today, please visit the BIG program webpage.

Local CURE was created by the Pritzker administration and the Illinois General Assembly to quickly and equitably distribute federal CARES Act funds to those communities which did not receive their own direct allocation of the Coronavirus Relief Fund. For more on Local CURE, eligible costs, or to receive technical assistance with certification or submitting costs, please visit DCEO's webpage.