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COVID-19 grant applications now available for Fayette County hospitality businesses

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Bob Shark

Local hospitality businesses impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic can now apply for grant funding to help them recover.

Fay-Penn Economic Development Council is now accepting applications from businesses for funding from Fayette County through the state's COVID-19 Hospitality Industry Recovery Program (CHIRP).

The county was allotted \$1.4 million in CHIRP funds from the \$145 million set for distribution throughout the entire state.

As a certified economic development agency, Fay-Penn sent a proposal to the county commissioners and was approved to administer the funds.

“The county’s intent is to distribute the funds among as many eligible businesses as possible,” said Bob Shark, Fay-Penn executive director.

With the help of some of Fay-Penn’s partners, Shark said they’ve identified approximately 550 hospitality businesses in Fayette County that could be eligible for the program such as hotels, campgrounds, restaurants, bars, taverns, food trucks, caterers and others.

“We’re actively promoting the program through a variety of channels, but it’s difficult to estimate how many hospitality businesses will actually apply,” he said Tuesday.

Basic eligibility requirements include that the for-profit businesses provide accommodations, food or drink to the public; have fewer than 300 employees; have less than \$15 million in business net worth per establishment and show at least a 25% decline in gross receipts.

“We’ve simplified the program’s eligibility criteria on our application form to a series of ‘yes’ or ‘no’ check boxes, but there are always questions depending upon circumstances, which we’re ready to help with,” Shark said.

The grants can range from a minimum of \$5,000 and a maximum of \$50,000.

“The main drivers for grant awards are how many eligible businesses apply and what their financial hits are,” Shark said. “The minimum grant award is \$5,000, but it’s difficult to predict what the maximum amount will be until the applications start coming in.”

Shark said Fay-Penn is rolling out the program in phases with Phase 1 ending on April 15. He anticipates businesses that are awarded grants in that phase will see their money within a few weeks of that April 15 deadline.

If funding remains after Phase 1, Fay-Penn will announce Phase 2, but with many businesses being eligible, it's believed the funding will quickly go.

Business owners who are unsure whether they're eligible for the program can contact Shark at Fay-Penn at 724-437-7913 or email at bobs@faypenn.org. The application form is available online at www.faypenn.org/chirp or by emailing info@faypenn.org.