

**For Release Monday 9/28/2020**

## County of Berks / COVID-19 Leadership Team Press Release

*Berks County announces new grant program to distribute CARES funds to local organizations*

**Reading, PA— 9/28/2020** — The Berks County Board of Commissioners will be launching another new grant program this week to help distribute the County's CARES Act funds to local organizations that have been negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Berks County CARES Grant Program will award up to \$19 million in grants to four specific sectors: Public Health Services, Municipalities and Authorities, Nonprofits and Educational Institutions and Services. The program will be administered by the County of Berks and the applications will be reviewed by panels comprised of community leaders and volunteers who work within the designated sectors.

Applications for the grant program will be accepted from Wednesday, September 30, 2020 until October 16, 2020 at 5 p.m. More information about the program, the four categories and the applications will be available Sept. 30 at [www.countyofberks.com/CARES](http://www.countyofberks.com/CARES).

The Berks County CARES Grant Program is funded through a portion of the \$38 million CARES Act allocation the County received under the COVID-19 County Relief Block Grant through the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development. The County conducted a detailed and comprehensive Community Needs Assessment in July to help gauge the greatest needs in the community.

As a result of those findings, the County designated \$19 million to cover the needs of public health, municipal, nonprofit and educational organizations. The Commissioners previously allocated \$6 million from the county's CARES Act funds for the Berks County Small Business New Start Grant Program that targeted the need of local businesses. The application portal for the New Start Grant Program closed on Sept. 23 and the submissions are currently being reviewed.

“While we are pleased to offer this grant program to help alleviate some of the financial blow from COVID-19, we believe the true need in our community is much greater,” Commissioner Kevin S. Barnhardt said. “The Commissioners continue to advocate to have more funds available to address the critical and unmet needs that affect so many of our local businesses and social service organizations.”

The specific guidelines for the four grant categories vary upon the sector, but for all four applicants must show how they have been negatively impacted by COVID-19 and must verify compliance with Governor Wolf’s directives regarding COVID-19 safety precautions. Applicants must also deliver services in Berks County and provide data about the demographics they serve and the impact they have on the community to mitigate specific needs. Organizations may apply for this program if they have received prior funding through the CARES Act, but they must declare the receipt of those grants and funds in the application.

The grants can only be used to reimburse costs for necessary expenditures incurred between March 1, 2020 and Sept. 30, 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Eligible expenditures include PPE, cleaning services, increased technology capacity for telework, business interruption costs and employee paid leave due to illness or quarantine.

The County will be hosting a live informational program about the Berks County CARES Grant Program on September 30 at 3:30 p.m. as part of the Commissioners’ Weekly Media and Public Update.

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**For more information, press only:**

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