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County of Berks / COVID-19 Leadership Team Alert

Berks County's Small Business Restart program now offering grants to local businesses

Reading, PA— 6/29/2020 — To properly assist more local businesses with direct funding, Berks County has relaunched its Small Business Restart program to offer grants instead of loans. Applications for the grants are available on the Neighborhood Housing Services of Greater Berks' website, www.nhsgreaterberks.org, and will be accepted until Friday, July 17, 2020.

The revamped Small Business Restart Grant (SBRG) program is funded from both federal and local sources and will provide up to \$1,800,000 in grants to local small businesses that are struggling to pay bills and maintain payroll due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The effort was initially launched in May as a loan program, but Commissioner Michael Rivera said it quickly became evident the model needed to be altered.

“We heard from local business owners about their needs as they were preparing to reopen and determined that they really needed one-time grants rather than loans,” Commissioner Rivera said, noting that relief from the CARES Act is also issued as grants. “We believe this change will make these funds more accessible to the small businesses that need the most help to survive this pandemic.”

The SBRG Program will serve small businesses in Berks County and outside the City of Reading with 2-8 employees and less than \$1,000,000 in annual revenue. Applicants must meet specific eligibility requirements to qualify. Approved applicants will receive between \$2,500-\$10,000 to assist with rent/mortgage payments, employee payroll, and other operations costs including inventory and utilities.

The program was made possible through several local organizations, including the Berks County Redevelopment Authority, Neighborhood Housing Services of Greater Reading, and Kutztown University Small Business Development Center. Additional information, including program guidelines and a list of required documents for the application is available on the Neighborhood Housing Services of Greater Berks' website at www.nhsqb.org/small-business-restart-loan-program. Any questions may be directed to SBRLBerkscty@nhsqb.org.

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