

Press Release:

For publication before September 3, 2020

Mercer County COVID-19 Relief Block Grant Program NOW LIVE!

<https://www.mcc.co.mercer.pa.us/cares-act-funding/>

Providing needed assistance to small businesses and nonprofits

COVID-19 has negatively affected the operations and revenues of many small businesses, nonprofit organizations, and local governments in Mercer County. Across the mid-Atlantic region, more than half of all businesses have been temporarily closed at some time since March 2020 and employment losses have exceeded 50 percent in numerous industries.

The County Commissioners are administering a \$9.88 million COVID Relief Block Grant Program to help mitigate the economic strain that COVID-19 has placed on our community. There are seven permitted uses for the program funding:

- Small Business Grant Programs to support businesses with fewer than 100 employees and to support businesses and other entities that are primarily engaged in the tourism industry;
- Behavioral health and substance abuse disorder treatment service providers;
- Nonprofit assistance programs for tax exempt entities (those covered by Section 501(c)(3) or 501(c)(19) of the Internal Revenue Code);
- Grant programs to support certified economic development organizations (CEDOs), small business development centers (SBDCs), industrial resource centers (IRCs) and economic development corporations (EDCs) for costs incurred assisting businesses during the COVID-19 emergency;
- Broadband internet deployment, with priority given to unserved or underserved areas;
- Assistance to cities, boroughs, towns, and townships for COVID-19 response and planning efforts, including the purchase of Personal Protective Equipment; and
- Offsetting the cost of Mercer County's COVID-19 direct response, planning, and outreach efforts, including the purchase of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

Grant funds can be used to cover appropriate COVID-19 expenditures that were incurred between March 1, 2020 and December 30, 2020. Local governments may only request funds for costs not accounted for in their most recently approved budget (as of March 27, 2020).

Grant funds may not be used for expenses not related to the COVID-19 emergency; for expenses reimbursed from any other funding source, including by insurance; for payroll or benefits for employees who are not substantially dedicated to mitigating or responding to COVID-19; for employee bonuses (other than overtime) or for severance pay; for legal settlements; or for reimbursing donors for donated items or services.

Commissioners announced the creation of a portal for COVID Relief Block Grant Program applications—<https://www.mcc.co.mercer.pa.us/cares-act-funding/> “The goal of this program is to ensure that eligible entities are able to obtain the funding they need to continue to serve their communities and the people of Mercer County,” said the Commissioners. “The website will be accepting applications starting September 3, 2020 and we will have a fast turnaround time for reviewing the applications.”