

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TO: All Media

FROM: City of Holyoke

DATE: April 13, 2020

**Greater Holyoke Chamber of Commerce and City of Holyoke
Announce COVID-19 Business Emergency Operations Grant Program**

HOLYOKE - In an effort to provide assistance to Holyoke businesses to meet the challenges of COVID-19, Mayor Morse and Greater Holyoke Chamber of Commerce Executive Director, Andréa Marion are pleased to introduce the COVID-19 Holyoke Business Emergency Operations Grant Program.

The primary purpose of this COVID-19 Business Emergency Operations Grant Program is to help Holyoke-based businesses to withstand and mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 public health emergency. The Grant Program is administered by the City of Holyoke Office for Community Development and the Greater Holyoke Chamber of Commerce, using Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Funds should be used by businesses to help them remain open, retain employees, or adapt business operations remotely or online during the public health emergency.

Businesses must meet one of the following HUD eligibility requirements:

- Business must be owned by a low/moderate-income household, or
- Employ full time at least one full-time equivalent low/moderate-income person or
- Provide a service (like a restaurant or grocery store) in a low and moderate-income primarily residential neighborhood where at least 51% of the residents are low or moderate income.*

*Information on low/moderate income qualifications will be made available with the grant applications on the Chamber Website.

Applications will be made available on Monday, April 13 and the first round of application reviews will begin on April 17, 2020; application review will continue on a weekly basis until all funds are committed. The review committee consists of representatives from the Greater Holyoke Chamber of Commerce, the City of Holyoke, and EforAll Holyoke.

Total fund availability at this time is \$90,000, and while there is currently no specific maximum request amount, resources are extremely limited and the City will seek to maximize the community impact of the COVID-19 Business Emergency Operations fund. More program details and an electronic fillable application are available at the Chamber's COVID-19 resource page, which is accessible via www.holyokechamber.com. Please contact Andréa Marion (andrea@holyokechamber.com)

Additional details about grant requirements and eligibility are included below:

Eligibility Requirements

- Business must be located in the City of Holyoke
- Must be for-profit; non-profit businesses cannot apply
- Business must have been in operation as of January 20, 2020
- Meet the following HUD eligibility requirements: Business must be owned by a low/moderate-income household, or employ full time at least one full-time equivalent low/moderate-income person or provide a service like a retail or grocery store in a low and moderate-income primarily residential neighborhood where at least 51% of the residents are low or moderate-income.
- Applicant must be compliant with the Massachusetts Department of Unemployment Assistance and all applicable state and federal employment laws and regulations
- Applicant must demonstrate efforts to access funding resources including bank financing and SBA programs

Approved Uses of Grant Funds:

- Equipment / Technology
- Consultant Fees including but not limited to:
 - Website Creation/Improvements
 - Accountant
 - Lawyer
 - Marketing
- Employee/Staff Payroll
- Inventory or supplies
- Rent / Utilities (applicant may need to demonstrate efforts to modify or defer these)

Ineligible Use of Grant Funds (not exhaustive)

- Owner salary/pay
- Paying off taxes, liens or other outstanding debts
- Personal purchases
- Any items purchased prior to grant approval

For Questions related to CDBG Funding and technical assistance please contact the Holyoke Office of Community Development, Alicia Zoeller (zoellera@holyoke.org)

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