

Mobile County Small Business Relief Fund Program

The Small Business Relief Fund Program is a collaborative effort between the Mobile County Commission and the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce designed to promote economic development by providing immediate grant funding to Mobile County small businesses that are experiencing extreme hardships as a result of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis. The Program will assist in providing relief to businesses that were temporarily closed, assist those struggling with rent and utility payments and other overhead costs, and support businesses faced with personnel layoffs. The Commission intends to consider approving the Program at an upcoming Commission meeting, notice of which will be published at least 7 days prior to the meeting as provided in Alabama Constitutional Amendment 772. The Commission is expected to determine that, in the aggregate, the grants awarded under the Program will confer a direct public benefit to a significant part of the public. Eligibility criteria have been developed to ensure that funds appropriated under the Program will promote the prosperity, contentment, and general welfare of the community.

The public benefits to the County to be derived from the Program include (i) promoting local economic development and stimulating the local economy, (ii) maintaining existing and creating additional employment opportunities in the County, (iii) maintaining the County's tax base, resulting in sustained tax revenues for the County, and (iv) promoting the retention and maintenance of small businesses in the County, all of which inure to the economic health of the County and constitute important public benefits to the County and its citizens.

Eligible small businesses may obtain up to \$25,000 in grant funding based on demonstration of need. Applicants must complete the Mobile County Small Business Relief Fund Application to be considered for grant funding. All applications will be reviewed by a five-member committee of Commission-approved volunteers comprised of representatives from banking, accounting, county government, legal, and the Small Business Development Center of South Alabama. This Review Committee will (i) review applications to determine whether each applicant meets certain criteria established by the County Commission and (ii) make recommendations to the County Commission for awards.

The County Commission will review each recommendation from the Review Committee and will grant funds upon a determination that such appropriation will promote the economic development of the County and serve a valid and sufficient public purpose, notwithstanding any incidental benefit accruing to the awarded entities or any other private entity or entities. Each grant will be awarded subject to Amendment 772 approval process requirements, including publication of a notice in *AL.com* at least 7 days prior to the public meeting. Such notice(s) will describe in detail the action proposed to be taken, a description of the public benefits sought to be achieved by the action, and identifying each entity to which the County proposes to grant funding.

The Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce, a progressive advocate for business needs to promote the Mobile Area's economic well-being, will serve as the Small Business Relief Fund Program Administrator to manage the grant application process and distribution of funds. (Applicants are not required to be members of the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce, and no preference will be given to Chamber members over non-members.)

Businesses must meet the following criteria:

- Must have experienced and be able to demonstrate a financial hardship as a result of COVID-19
- Must have employed 100 or fewer than full time employees (FTE) as of February 29, 2020
- Must be in good standing with state and local government jurisdictions
- Must be located within Mobile County

Eligible Costs:

- Employee Compensation and payroll costs (salary, wage, commission, payment of cash tips or equivalent) including healthcare and insurance benefit costs included in employee benefit packages. Medical leave for which a credit is allowed under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act is not an allowable use of grant proceeds.
- Payments of interest on any mortgage obligation (shall not include any prepayment of or payment of principal on a mortgage obligation).
- Rent or lease payments, utilities, interest on debt obligations incurred prior to February 29, 2020.

Business Selection and Distribution of Grant Funds:

- The staff of the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce will receive the grant applications submitted, and any requested paperwork and documents from the applicants.
- The Review Committee will meet on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday of each week to review applications and supporting documentation and make recommendations to the County Commission for funding for applicants.
- Applicants recommended by the Review Committee for approval will then be considered for approval by the Mobile County Commission at a public meeting following public notice, a public hearing, and vote by the Commission.
- Following Commission approval, grant recipients will receive funding directly from the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce within 24 hours. The Chamber will continue to administer grant funds until the balance is depleted.

Applicants will also be required to submit the following documents:

- Federal tax returns for the past two years (unless the business is only one-year-old)
- 12/31/2019 Year-end financial statements (balance sheet and income statement)
- Interim financial statements dated within the last 90 days
- Copy of 2019 Mobile County Business License
- Current bank statement