

COVID-19 COUNTY RELIEF BLOCK GRANT

Program Guidelines | June 2020



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Section I – Statement of Purpose

Act 24 of 2020 was signed by Governor Wolf on May 29, 2020. This legislation provides \$625 million in CARES Act funding by means of block grants for counties in the commonwealth through the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED). This funding is strictly for support of COVID-19-related activities to offset the cost of direct county COVID-19 response; assist businesses and municipalities; provide behavioral health and substance use disorder treatment services; fund nonprofit assistance programs; and deploy broadband to unserved or underserved areas.

Section II – Background

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act was signed into law on March 27, 2020. The \$2 trillion economic relief package aims to protect the American people from the public health and economic impacts of COVID-19. The CARES Act provides economic assistance for local governments and American workers, families, and small businesses.

Section III – Eligibility and Formula for Block Grant Funding

- A. **Minimum Distribution** – No eligible county shall receive a distribution of less than \$1,000,000.
- B. **Proration** – The distribution to an eligible county shall be adjusted on a pro rata basis to the extent necessary to meet the minimum distribution requirements and to not exceed the total amount of funds appropriated for the COVID-19 County Block Grant.
- C. **Exclusion** – A county that has received a disbursement directly from the Federal government through the CARES Act is not eligible to receive funds.
- D. **Population Proportion Amount** – The population proportion amount shall be determined as follows:
 - The allocation of funding distributed to each county is based on a formula which takes into consideration the total of each county’s population as a percentage of the total population of the sixty counties (6,905,235) that have not received a direct disbursement under the CARES Act minus those counties receiving the minimum allocation of \$1,000,000. That percentage is then used to determine the allocation for each county of the \$625,000,000 in total program funds.
 - Population estimate is defined as the county’s population equal to the published estimate by the United States Census Bureau Population estimates for Calendar Year 2019.
- E. Counties must have been, and remain, in compliance with all relevant laws, orders, and regulations during the period of the COVID-19 disaster emergency under the Governor’s proclamation dated March 6, 2020, and any and all subsequent renewals. The foregoing includes, but is not limited to, orders by the Governor, Secretary of Health, or other commonwealth officials empowered to act during the emergency. Authorized signatories for applicants must certify such compliance under penalty of perjury and fines pursuant to 18 Pa. C.S. § 4904 (relating to unsworn falsification to authorities). Any noncompliant county will be ineligible for funding under this program and may be required to return all, or a portion, of the funds awarded under the COVID-19 County Relief Block Grant.

Section IV – General Program Requirements

A. Eligible Expenditures

Eligible expenditures must have been incurred during the period from March 1, 2020, through December 30, 2020. Funds appropriated to a county through the COVID-19 County Relief Block Grant shall be used for the following purposes:

- Offsetting cost of direct county response, planning, and outreach efforts.
- Purchase of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in response to pandemic.
- Administration of the grant by the county of no more than 2% of funds received or \$200,000, whichever is less.
- Assistance to the county’s municipalities for response and planning efforts, including purchase of PPE.
- Preference will be given to small business grant programs for businesses with fewer than 100 employees and that did not receive funding through the Federal Paycheck Protection Program or the Economic Injury Disaster Loan Program established under the CARES Act.
- To tourism businesses of all sizes, including state and county fairs. CDFIs can be used to administer the grant program for small businesses and tourism businesses.
- Grant programs to support costs of assisting businesses during COVID – CEDOs, LDDs, IRCs, SBDCs, and EDCs.
- Behavioral health and substance use disorder treatment services.
- Broadband deployment with priority to unserved or underserved areas.
- Nonprofit assistance programs for 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(19) organizations.

B. Compliance Requirements

Fund payments are subject to the following requirements in the Uniform Guidance (2 C.F.R. Part 200): 2 C.F.R. § 200.303 regarding internal controls, 2 C.F.R. §§ 200.330 through 200.332 regarding subrecipient monitoring and management, and subpart F regarding audit requirements.

Section V – Other Requirements

A. Conflict of Interest Provision

An officer, director, member, or employee of an applicant who is a party to or has a private interest in a project shall disclose the nature and extent of the interest to the governing body of the applicant and may neither vote on action of the applicant concerning the project nor participate in the deliberations of the applicant concerning the project. Additionally, the applicant's board members and directors must complete an annual financial disclosure statement.

B. Nondiscrimination

No assistance shall be awarded to an applicant under this program unless the applicant certifies to DCED that they will not discriminate against any employee or against any person seeking employment by reason of race, gender, creed, color, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or in violation of the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religious creed, ancestry, age, sex, national origin, handicap or disability, or in violation of any applicable local, state, or federal laws. All contracts for work to be paid with program assistance must contain the commonwealth's official nondiscrimination clause.

C. Program Records

The applicant must maintain full and accurate records with respect to the activities and must ensure adequate control over related parties in the project. DCED requires access to such records, as well as the ability to inspect all work, invoices, materials, and other relevant records at reasonable times and places. Upon request of DCED, the applicant must furnish all data, reports, contracts, documents, and other information relevant to the project.

D. Financial Audit

Audit Guidelines for Federally Funded Contracts exceeding \$750,000

A Recipient or Sub-Recipient that expends \$750,000 or more in federal awards during its fiscal year is required to provide the appropriate single or Program-Specific Audit in accordance with the provisions outlined in 2 CFR § 200.501.

Section VI – Application Process

A. Application Procedures

Applications are due no later than June 16, 2020. All applications for the COVID-19 County Relief Block Grant must be completed and submitted online using DCED’s Single Application, which can be accessed at www.dced.pa.gov or www.esa.dced.state.pa.us. Paper applications will not be accepted.

Applicants should carefully follow instructions outlined in the Single Application and provide all requested information. Help can be obtained by contacting DCED Customer Service at 1-800-379-7448 or ra-dcedcs@pa.gov.

B. Application Evaluation

The allocation of funding distributed to each county is based on a formula which takes into consideration the total of each county’s population as a percentage of the total population of the sixty counties (6,905,235) not receiving direct assistance via the CARES Act minus those counties receiving the minimum allocation of \$1,000,000. That percentage is then used to determine the allocation for each county of the \$625,000,000 in total program funds.

C. Procedures for Accessing Funds

Following acceptance of the application, a grant agreement will be sent to the applicant for execution. Upon execution by the county, the agreement must be returned to the DCED. All grant funds must be expended by December 30, 2020.

Section VII – Program Inquiries

Program inquiries should be directed to:

Department of Community & Economic Development
Governor’s Center for Local Government Services
Commonwealth Keystone Building
400 North Street, 4th Floor
Harrisburg PA 17120-0225

Telephone: 888-223-6837 or 717-787-8158

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