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MAYOR LIGHTFOOT ANNOUNCES \$11 MILLION AWARDED IN GRANTS TO NEARLY 1,100 BARS, RESTAURANTS AND PERFORMANCE VENUES THROUGH EMERGENCY RELIEF PROGRAMS

Grants awarded through the Hospitality Grant Program and the Performance Venue Relief Program will provide critical emergency support to industries greatly impacted by COVID-19

CHICAGO – Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot today announced that over \$11 million has been awarded in grants to nearly 1,100 Chicago bars, restaurants and performance venues through two critical relief programs. The Chicago Hospitality Grant Program has awarded grants of \$10,000 to 995 independent bars and restaurants while 100 performing arts venues have been awarded grants of at least \$10,000 through the Performance Venue Relief Program. Grants from both programs, which are being awarded this week, will provide much-needed emergency relief to businesses that have been greatly impacted throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, especially following recent state-wide mitigation measures that have closed indoor service and performances.

“We are at a critical moment in our fight against COVID-19 and we must continue to do everything we can to navigate this winter safely and successfully,” said Mayor Lightfoot. “These emergency funds demonstrate our commitment to doing everything in our power to supplement state and federal programs and help our businesses survive this difficult time.”

Designed to supplement state and federal programs, the Chicago Hospitality Grant Program, administered by the Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection (BACP), was announced on Nov. 5 and open for applications from Nov. 10 through Nov. 24. Bars or restaurants with annual revenue of under \$3 million were eligible to apply, provided that they were not regional and/or national chain businesses with more than two total establishments or adult entertainment facilities. To help businesses understand the program and prepare their applications, the City held eight webinars during the application period in English, Spanish, Polish and Mandarin. Recipients were selected via a lottery and all applicants were notified this week.



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“Chicago’s businesses have stepped up throughout this crisis to do what is necessary to save lives,” said Rosa Escareno, BACP Commissioner. “Our hospitality industry has been decimated by COVID-19, and we hope that these grants will help many of the independent bars and restaurants that are in desperate need of support.”

The Chicago Hospitality Grant Program was administered with the support of World Business Chicago and Accion Chicago and funded through a reallocation of CARES Act funds from the Chicago Small Business Resiliency Fund. This reallocation was made to ensure that businesses most impacted by the recent state-imposed mitigation measures would have access to emergency grant funds at this critical time. Grants were awarded across the city with an eye towards equitable distribution – while community areas with more hospitality businesses such as West Town, Lake View and the Loop received the highest number of grants, over 36% of grants were awarded to businesses in low- and moderate-income community areas. Over 59% of grant recipients are minority-owned businesses, and 36% of businesses are women-owned. The \$10,000 grants must be used to cover operational costs including payroll expenses, replenishment of inventory and/or mortgage, rent and utility payments.

“I was so grateful when I heard that we were awarded a hospitality grant,” said Kelly Richardson, owner of Some Like It Black Creative Arts Bar in Bronzeville. “This money is the difference between our business staying open and being forced to close and I want to thank this program for renewing my hope during a difficult time.”

“As the owner of a local neighborhood tavern, this year has brought unprecedented challenges beyond what we could have imagined,” said Jason Burrell, owner of The Long Room in Lakeview. “I am very grateful for this grant, which couldn't have arrived at a better time. This will cover the majority of January and February rent which is our most significant expense, and will hopefully buy us time until much needed federal relief is approved.”

“Small, independent restaurants like ours are such an important part of Chicago’s rich neighborhoods,” said Alfonso Sotelo, owner of 5 Rabanitos in Pilsen. “While we look forward to returning to normal in the future, this grant means we can continue serving our community over the coming months.”

The Performing Arts Venue Relief Program, administered by the Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE) was created to help performing arts venues that have lost significant revenue due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Announced on Oct. 2, the program had two application periods and the latest group



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of awardees are being notified this week. For-profit and nonprofit Chicago-based performing arts venues that have been closed to performances were eligible to apply, including venues focused on theatre, dance, performance art, and/or live music or live mixing by DJs. The grants were made possible due to funding from the Walder Foundation and the Arts for Illinois Relief Fund as well as CARES Act funds.

"Performing arts venues are incredibly important to our City because they make up the fabric of our neighborhoods," said Mark Kelly, DCASE Commissioner. "Working with Mayor Lightfoot and the local philanthropic community, we are proud to provide support for Chicago's diverse and legendary music clubs, theatres and dance venues – which have experienced devastating losses of income due to COVID-19."

"Some of the hardest hit businesses have been Chicago's independent music venues and performance spaces," said Jim & Jo Schuman-Webster, owners of Berlin in Lakeview and members of the Chicago Independent Venue League (CIVL). "The Performance Arts Venue Grants come at a critical time for businesses who are the lifeblood of Chicago's culture. As the shutdown nears its tenth month, this financial relief offers breathing room so many independent businesses are gasping for."

These two programs, along with all other business grants and loan programs implemented by the City during COVID-19, would not have been possible without the support of Accion Chicago. Accion is based in East Garfield Park and is one of the premier financial resources for Chicago-area small businesses. The organization has played a critical role in helping tens of thousands of businesses acquire hundreds of millions of dollars in loans and grants throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Every business in Chicago has been impacted by COVID-19 and this deadly virus continues to create unprecedented challenges for our small business ecosystem," said Brad McConnell, CEO of Accion. "Accion is proud to have played a role in connecting businesses to emergency financing throughout this crisis and we thank Mayor Lightfoot for her leadership in delivering these critical funds."

The Chicago Hospitality Grant Program is part of an emergency hospitality relief package announced by Mayor Lightfoot on Nov 5. In addition to the \$10 million in grants, Mayor Lightfoot has worked with City Council to implement a temporary 15% cap on fees charged by third-party delivery companies to restaurants, effective Nov. 23. The City has also created the [Take Out Chicago](#) challenge and partnered with the Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership to create the [ChiServes.com portal](#) for hospitality workers impacted by COVID-19 to access workforce development support resources. Finally, the City Council is poised to pass legislation today



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providing critical regulatory relief to all businesses, including the extension of license expirations dates to July 15, 2021.

“Chicago’s businesses need our support more than ever,” said Emma Mitts, 37th Ward Alderman and Chairman of the Committee on License and Consumer Protection. “I am proud to work with Mayor Lightfoot to provide an array of relief to the business community and I look forward to continuing to do everything in our power to deliver support.”

These two emergency funds build on Chicago’s commitment to providing financial relief to businesses throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. To date, the City has directed over \$100 million in loans and grants to businesses through these two programs and others, including the Small Business Resiliency Fund, the Microbusiness Recovery Grant Program and the Together Now Fund. In addition to these locally implemented programs, the City has been working to connect Chicago businesses to emergency grants from the State of Illinois Business Interruption Grant (BIG) Program, which closed yesterday. The [BIG program](#) is a \$636 million program funded by CARES Act dollars to provide economic relief for small businesses hit hardest by COVID-19.

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