



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



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MAYOR LIGHTFOOT ANNOUNCES \$10 MILLION CHICAGO HOSPITALITY GRANT PROGRAM AS PART OF EMERGENCY RELIEF PACKAGE FOR RESTAURANTS, BARS AND THEIR EMPLOYEES

Grant program will reallocate CARES Act funds to businesses most impacted by State-imposed mitigation measures; proposed temporary cap on third-party delivery fees, Take Out Chicago contest and hospitality worker portal will provide much-needed help to hospitality industry

CHICAGO – Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot today joined City and business leaders to announce an emergency COVID-19 relief package for the hospitality industry, including a \$10 million grant program for Chicago’s restaurants and bars that continue to face significant challenges due to the COVID-19 crisis. Opening for applications this month, the Chicago Hospitality Grant Program will reallocate CARES Act funding to supplement state and federal relief programs with grants of \$10,000 to independent bars and restaurants throughout Chicago that have been affected by the state’s recent closure of indoor service. Mayor Lightfoot also announced that she will introduce legislation to City Council to temporarily cap the fees that third-party companies can charge restaurants for their delivery services, while calling on Chicagoans to support their local establishments through the new *Take Out Chicago* contest. The City is also announcing the creation of a new ChiServes.com portal for hospitality workers impacted by COVID-19 to access workforce development support resources.

“As we navigate the second surge of COVID-19, I am committed to using every available resource to its maximum potential to protect our residents and support our businesses,” said Mayor Lightfoot. “Our hospitality industry is at a crossroads and we each have a role to play in helping our bars and restaurants survive. This City relief package will help, but we still need all residents to wear a mask, social distance, avoid gathering in large groups and wash their hands. When we all do our part to bring cases down, we not only save lives but also ensure that our businesses can reopen quickly and safely.”



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Today's announcement comes as Chicago, the state of Illinois and the entire Midwest region continue to experience an alarming surge of COVID-19. Chicago is close to recording 1,400 new cases per day (based on a 7-day rolling average), the test positivity rate has risen above 10% and, overall, the city is now close to 110,000 cases since the start of the pandemic.

In response to this rise in cases and hospitalizations, last week the State imposed new mitigation measures designed to minimize the spread of COVID-19. Effective Friday, October 30, Chicago entered Tier 1 of the State's Resurgence Criteria, leading to the closure of indoor service at bars and restaurants and a new limit of 25% capacity or 25 people at events. In order to save the lives of countless Chicagoans and help reopen bars and restaurants, the City is calling on all Chicagoans to double down on the COVID-19 precautions that have been proven to work: wear face coverings, social distance, minimize gatherings and wash hands often.

"We're very concerned about the continued rise in COVID cases in the city but we all know what it takes to bend the curve – we did it once and we can do it again," said Chicago Department of Public Health Commissioner Allison Arwady, M.D. "Until then, we all need to do what we can to support this industry and the vital jobs it provides."

The new Chicago Hospitality Grant Program has been designed to supplement existing federal and state financial programs by providing emergency relief to bars and restaurants that have been most affected by the COVID-19 crisis. The \$10 million program is 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.

The Chicago Hospitality Grant Program, which will be administered with the support of World Business Chicago and Accion Serving Illinois and Indiana, will provide businesses with grants of \$10,000 each. To be eligible, establishments must be a bar or restaurant, as defined by City and State code, with annual revenue of under \$3 million, and must have experienced economic distress and loss due to COVID-19 on or after March 1, 2020 totaling at least 25% of annual net revenue. Regional and/or national chain businesses with more than two total establishments are ineligible, as are adult entertainment facilities. Funds must be used to cover operational costs including payroll expenses, replenishment of inventory and/or mortgage, rent and utilities payments. Grants will be distributed via lottery to recipients throughout the city, with 60% of grants reserved for businesses in low- and moderate-income Community Areas. Applications will open the week of November 16; more details will be announced in the coming days.



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“Chicago’s hospitality industry has been decimated by COVID-19, and we must do everything in our power as a City to support these independent bars and restaurants,” said Rosa Escareno, Commissioner of the Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection. “These relief measures represent the latest in the City’s ongoing commitment to lessen the pain for our business community while making sure thousands of hospitality workers receive the support they need.”

In addition to the Hospitality Grant Program, Mayor Lightfoot today also announced that she will collaborate with City Council to pursue legislation that will temporarily cap the fees that third-party companies can charge restaurants or bars for their delivery services. This initiative, which requires City Council action, would provide immediate relief to local establishments that are relying on third-party delivery services now more than ever while they cannot operate indoors. Mayor Lightfoot will be working with the Chicago City Council to pass this legislation as soon as possible.

“Our independent restaurants add so much to Chicago’s neighborhoods, and now more than ever we must show our support,” said Tom Tunney, Alderman of the 44th Ward. “I am proud to support these emergency efforts, and I believe a temporary service fee cap will provide much needed relief for thousands of businesses.”

Mayor Lightfoot recognizes that, despite these relief measures, restaurants and bars are in desperate need of support from their community during this difficult time. To encourage all Chicagoans with the capacity to support our beloved hospitality industry, the City is launching the *Take Out Chicago* contest. Through this program, launched with the support of Choose Chicago, residents that order takeout from ten unique bars and restaurants between today and December 15 will be entered into a contest to win a VIP experience at one of Chicago’s premier cultural institutions. Chicagoans can learn more and submit their entry at [Chicago.gov/takeout](https://chicago.gov/takeout). Recipients will be selected via lottery to win VIP tours for themselves and three family members at a select Chicago destination, including the Art Institute, DuSable Museum, Lincoln Park Zoo, Soldier Field and more. Residents participating in the contest should also post their orders using the hashtag #takeoutchicago.

“Bar and restaurant districts throughout the city have experienced unprecedented devastation over the past seven months,” said Carla Agostinelli, Executive Director of the West Loop Community Organization. “These measures will bring much-needed relief to businesses in the West Loop and our entire city and I want to thank Mayor Lightfoot for her dedicated leadership throughout this crisis.”



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The City recognizes that COVID-19 has had a devastating impact on hospitality workers, many of whom have lost their jobs and can no longer access increased unemployment benefits due to expired federal relief. To support these workers, the City has partnered with The Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership to launch ChiServes.com, a portal that hospitality workers who have lost their jobs can use to access a network of resources through The Partnership. The Partnership is also launching a new text campaign where registered recipients will receive weekly blasts of current job listings. By texting “ChiServes” (or “ChiSirve” for Spanish-speakers) to 474747, workers will receive texts with information about who is hiring now, upcoming virtual or in-person workshops and hiring events. Additionally, restaurant workers are encouraged to apply for a grant through the [Restaurant Employee Relief Fund](#), created by the Illinois Restaurant Association.

“Restaurant and hospitality workers have transferrable skills that can be useful in other industries-- skills such as customer service, communications, critical thinking and adaptability.” said Karin M. Norington-Reaves, CEO of the Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership. “By working with The Partnership’s network of agencies, job seekers can utilize and leverage these skills, receive additional training, or ultimately find employment in other sectors such as healthcare and retail.”

To help bars and restaurants apply for the new Chicago Hospitality Grant Program, the City will be hosting a series of webinars over the next few weeks. To register and learn more, visit chicago.gov/businesseducation. Additionally, the City is directing businesses to apply for grants through the State of Illinois Business Interruption Grant Program (BIG). Applications are available today at illinois.gov/dceo.

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