WHEDco helps Bronx businesses access new NY Pandemic Small Business Recovery Grant

By Jason Cohen
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During the height of the pandemic many Bronx business owners did not receive financial help. Some didn’t know it was available and others couldn’t access it.

But, on June 8, Governor Andrew Cuomo announced that applications are now open for the $800 million COVID-19 Pandemic Small Business Recovery Grant Program. This reimburses small businesses with grants of up to $50,000 for COVID-related expenses incurred between March 1, 2020 and April 1.

Grants will be awarded to small and micro businesses and small for-profit independent arts and cultural organizations, with priority being given to socially and economically disadvantaged business owners, including minority- and women-owned business enterprises, service-disabled veteran-owned businesses and veteran-owned businesses, and businesses located in economically distressed communities.

“Small businesses are one of the most critical components of New York’s economy and were disproportionately impacted by the economic devastation resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic,” Cuomo said. “As we build New York back better than it was before, this program will help these small businesses -particularly those with socially or economically...
disadvantaged owners -regain an economic foothold so they can forge ahead toward a brighter, more prosperous future.”

The fund was made possible because of the advocacy work of groups like USBNYC, a coalition of community groups — including Bronx nonprofit WHEDco, that has been advocating for local small businesses’ interests. It has been hosting various actions throughout the last year, presenting testimonies and meeting with elected officials and city/state agencies to help secure some sort of funding for struggling small businesses.

**WHEDco** is one of a few statewide technical assistance providers for the grant.

It is doing outreach in under-represented neighborhoods by answering questions and scanning documents for those that can apply on their own, but need a little assistance and helping folks fill out the application. WHEDco is providing these services both at their place of business and remotely.

Jerome Avenue’s Small Business Grant from New York State. Apply starting on June 10, 2021 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FcxsKv1Frg&t=131s

Marco Castro, senior program manager at WHEDco, recognizes that many small business owners did not get financial assistance last year and hopes that can change. As the Bronx has a large immigrant population, English is often not the first language spoken at home. Therefore, understanding how and where to access the documents can be challenging.
Furthermore, numerous businesses and households lack quality internet or only use it for Facebook and Whatsapp.

“We will be helping businesses that were left out of the federal level of PPP,” he explained. “They need a little bit more hand holding and we’re happy NY State created this grant.”

Castro is also hosting an event with Davidson Community Center, 2038 Davidson Ave, on June 14 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. to help businesses apply for the grant. More pop-up events/clinics to follow, but people should call WHEDco at 347-973-0945 to get help applying for their grants, check out WHEDco’s Facebook page for other events in the neighborhood, or join our WhatsApp business groups (EN/SP) to get news/updates.

More than 330,000 small and micro businesses are potentially eligible for this program, including 57 percent of the state’s certified MWBEs. The application site for the program will be powered by Lendistry, a minority-led Community Development Financial Institution. The state will also be launching an ad campaign to promote this program to small businesses, as well as an array of other pandemic recovery programs.

Grants will be for a minimum award of $5,000 and a maximum award of $50,000 and will be calculated based on a New York State business’ annual gross receipts for 2019. Reimbursable COVID-19 related expenses must have been incurred between March 1, 2020 and April 1, 2021 and can include:

- Payroll costs
- Commercial rent or mortgage payments for NYS-based property
- Payment of local property or school taxes
- Insurance costs
- Utility costs
- Costs of personal protection equipment necessary to protect worker and consumer health and safety
- Heating, ventilation, and air conditioning cost
- Other machinery or equipment costs
- Supplies and materials necessary for compliance with COVID-19 health and safety protocols

Link: https://www.bxtimes.com/whedco-helps-bronx-businesses-access-new-ny-pandemic-small-business-recovery-grant/