



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



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OVER 2,000 CHICAGO BUSINESSES AND NONPROFITS AWARDED GRANT FUNDS FOR THE NEW YEAR UNDER THE CHI BIZ STRONG GRANT PROGRAM AND OUTDOOR DINING GRANT PROGRAM

Small business and nonprofit community receive much needed financial relief and community-based business support organizations offer assistance engaging and activating commercial corridors

CHICAGO – Today, Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot and the Chicago Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection (BACP) announced over 2,000 small businesses and nonprofits have been awarded grants under the Chi Biz Strong Grant Program and Outdoor Dining Grant Program. The over \$20 million programs will provide critical financial relief to grant recipients to assist in the recovery from the COVID-19 economic impact and to boost start-of-the-year operations. In addition, community-based business support organizations awarded grants under the \$2.7 million COVID-19 Small Business Support Program (CSBS) continue to provide business owners and entrepreneurs with targeted assistance, expert training, and resources to help address common challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. These organizations provide support to small businesses by addressing the ever-evolving needs of Chicago's business community during the ongoing period of pandemic recovery.

"Small businesses and nonprofits are a vital part of our neighborhoods and the socioeconomic vibrancy of the entire city," said Mayor Lightfoot. "That's why it is critical that they have what they need to thrive during and long after this pandemic is over. As our small business and nonprofit community continues to recover and prepare for the year ahead, we are proud to deliver additional financial relief and resources."

"We are using all of the tools at our disposal to assist in the recovery and vitality of Chicago's small business owners," said BACP Commissioner Kenneth J. Meyer. "Financial relief and important business support resources like these help spur innovation and our local economy."



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The Chi Biz Strong Grant Program and Outdoor Dining Grant Program help promote an equitable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic by providing critical financial relief to small businesses and nonprofits across the city, in neighborhoods, and downtown. The Chi Biz Strong Grant Program awarded grants in the amount of either \$5,000 or \$10,000 to businesses and nonprofits across Chicago that have experienced revenue losses or expense increases related to the pandemic, depending on the business or nonprofit size. The Outdoor Dining Program awarded grants of \$5,000 to small restaurants and bars to support the purchase of outdoor furniture, pandemic-related signage, and personal protective equipment. Collectively, these \$20M programs have awarded over 2,000 small businesses and nonprofits in grants. These grant programs build upon the over \$100 million in pandemic relief already distributed to small businesses by the City of Chicago – more than any other US city.

“We enter the new year with the ability to purchase outdoor furniture and personal protective equipment because of the Outdoor Dining Grant Program funding,” said Tigist Reda, Owner, Demera Ethiopian Restaurant. “Throughout the entire COVID-19 pandemic, the City has been focused on providing local entrepreneurs and neighborhood businesses critical lifelines. The grant funding will allow our patrons to safely experience Ethiopian hospitality and cuisine in the vibrant neighborhood of Uptown.”

“The COVID-19 pandemic has led to economic impact across many industries, but the City has once again stepped up to provide significant financial relief,” said Sean Armstead, Phenomenal Fitness. “As we prepare for the year ahead, the funding from the Chi Biz Strong Grant Program will support our business operations so we can focus on providing an individualized approach to the health and well-being of our clients.”

“We are beyond grateful for the Chi Biz Strong Grant Program to have included the opportunity for nonprofits to receive critical funding for operations,” said Jill Reid, Chief Advancement Officer, High Jump. “The grant funding couldn’t have arrived a better time, as we continue to expand our programs offered to 7th and 8th grade students with limited economic means. We will be able to provide academic enrichment and essential support needed to empower the youth because of the grant funding.”

The programs were administered by BACP with support from Allies for Community Business (A4CB), which assisted with outreach efforts and the eligibility review of the applications.

“As Chicago's small businesses continue to fight the effects of the pandemic, A4CB is pleased to help the City distribute much-needed funds throughout our neighborhoods,” said Brad McConnell, CEO of Allies for Community Business (A4CB).



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In conjunction with the Chi Biz Strong Grant Program and Outdoor Dining Grant Program, the COVID-19 Small Business Support Program (CSBS) leveraged the business development expertise and credibility of community-based business support organizations to connect local small businesses with vital resources to ensure they recover and thrive. The program funded a diverse range of initiatives, each tailored to the needs of the local community. These included funding for free advising, coaching, and language access for businesses impacted by the pandemic; activations and campaigns that encourage Chicago residents and visitors to support local businesses; and supporting outdoor activities and plazas. Through the program, grantees channeled resources to local businesses to further revitalize neighborhood commercial corridors.

“Small businesses are the economic engine of our City, and as a COVID-19 Small Business Support Program grant recipient we are able to deliver free highly specialized business services to business owners to aid in their recovery,” said Jessica Gutierrez, Director of Community Relations, Puerto Rican Cultural Center. “As a community-based business support organization, we connect local small businesses with vital resources to ensure they recover and thrive. Through the COVID-19 Small Business Support Program, we are able to provide language access services to better communicate support services for the business community.”

Chicago’s small businesses are fundamental to the economic livelihood of countless residents. The COVID-19 Small Business Support Program (CSBS) program allowed nonprofits to assist small businesses in mitigating financial hardship, addressing the impacts of the pandemic, implementing COVID-19 prevention tactics, and establishing strategic business growth plans.

“The COVID-19 Small Business Support Program provided the funds we needed to launch ShoCo Chicago, a first-of-its-kind project designed to support small businesses that give back to the community.” said Carina Daniels, co-founder of ShoCo Chicago. “We created a robust directory promoting these businesses and executed a highly successful public relations campaign that raised their profiles and generated sales.”

Businesses such as Southside Blooms and the Male Mogul Initiative, have been able to leverage their partnership with ShoCo Chicago to market their business and increase their customer base, while also serving youth.

The CSBS program previews future strategic investments that will create an equitable economic recovery for Chicago’s business community as outlined in the Chicago Recovery



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Plan. The Chicago Recovery Plan will invest holistically in communities and industries hardest hit by the pandemic to support economic recovery across the City.

For 2022, to expand economic opportunity and catalyze growth in the hardest-hit neighborhoods and industries, \$87 million will be allocated to support businesses and entrepreneurs, connect residents with jobs, and increase the vibrancy and safety of commercial corridors. Inclusion and access will continue to be among the most important priorities for aiding small businesses through recovery.

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