

News Release

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Mower County provides \$1.25 million in COVID-19 relief to small businesses, nonprofits, animal agriculture

Grants up to \$10,000 available for eligible applicants

August 8, 2020 Up to \$1.25 million in federal funding is available to assist Mower County small businesses, nonprofits and animal agricultural producers who have suffered financial from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Mower County Board of Commissioners recently approved the Small Business Relief Grant program to provide the funding from the county's allocation of federal CARES Act funds. Mower County was allocated just over \$4.9 million under the CARES Act. The CARES Act sets three criteria that all expenses must meet to be an eligible use of the funds: they must be necessary, unaccounted for in the current budget, and incurred during the covered period between March 1 and Nov. 15, 2020.

Grants of up to \$10,000 will help entities cover payroll, rent, mortgage payments, utility bills and operational expenses, including cleaning and disinfecting supplies as well as personal protective equipment, since March 1, 2020. Once approved, businesses and nonprofits should receive grants by the end of September.

Small businesses, community organizations and animal agriculture producers are invaluable parts of our communities, said Jeff Baldus, chair of the Mower County Board.

"They keep us connected, provide important jobs and resources for residents, and help keep the local economy ticking," Baldus said. "Through this program, we hope to help those businesses and organizations hit hardest during temporary closures and business changes as a result of COVID-19."

The county is partnering with the Development Corporation of Austin, a local nonprofit economic development organization, to administer the grants. Online applications are available starting today. Applications must be submitted by 4:30 p.m. on Monday, Aug. 31.

"I encourage all entities who may be eligible for these grants to apply," said DCA board chair Shelley King. "We know these groups have suffered tremendously. Every job we can save means more economic security for all of us during these challenging times."

To qualify, businesses must be:

- Able to demonstrate financial hardship as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- An employer of the equivalent of 50 or fewer full-time workers.
- A business, nonprofit or animal ag producer who has a permanent physical location in Mower County.
- Majority-owned by a permanent resident of Mower County or an adjacent county in Minnesota or Iowa.
- Be in good standing as of March 1, 2020, with the Minnesota Secretary of State and Minnesota Department of Revenue.

Only one application needs to be submitted per business. If the number of applications exceeds available funding, a ranked selection process will be used based on economic impact due to the executive orders made by Minnesota Governor Tim Walz in response to COVID-19.

Businesses that applied for the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) grant program but were not selected are encouraged to apply to the Mower County program.

For complete grant information, visit: www.austindca.org/cares. For questions, call 507-433-9495 or email cares@austindca.org.