For the latest updates and information related to COVID-19, visit the Kansas COVID-19 Response and Recovery website. covid.ks.gov.

Governor Laura Kelly Announces New Effort to Support Kansas Businesses in COVID-19 Recovery

Feb 23, 2021

Governor Laura Kelly today announced that funding provided to Kansas' hospitality industry through the Hospitality Industry Relief Emergency (HIRE) Fund has been converted from bridge loans to grants.

Originally established as a working capital loan program through NetWork Kansas, these funds will no longer need to be paid back. Businesses that have made repayments will be reimbursed.

"There's nothing more important my administration can do than give Kansas businesses the long-term, continued support they need to not only recover from the pandemic but prosper now and into the future," **Governor Kelly said.** "In communities of all sizes, hospitality businesses provide a source of shared space and shared identity. This action allows the loan dollars we delivered at the beginning of the pandemic to no longer need to be paid back, helping businesses maintain operations as we work to recover from the challenges brought about by COVID-19."

Governor Kelly joined Lieutenant Governor and Commerce Secretary David Toland today at Jenny Dawn Cellars in Wichita for the announcement.

"Hospitality businesses like restaurants, bars, lodging facilities, conference centers and event spaces were among the businesses hit hardest by closures, cancellations and social distancing requirements," **Lieutenant Governor and Commerce Secretary Toland said.** "Working with our wonderful partners at NetWork Kansas, we moved quickly to roll out a working capital loan program that delivered millions of dollars to hundreds of hospitality businesses in communities statewide. Today, we're announcing an important step forward in helping these businesses get back on their feet and recover from a very difficult situation."

The HIRE Fund was established in March of 2020 to provide immediate relief to Kansas hospitality businesses faced with revenue losses due to COVID-19. In total, $5 million was delivered to 344 businesses in communities statewide.

"We were happy to play a small role in assisting Governor Kelly and the Department of Commerce during the HIRE fund process," **said Erik Pedersen, Vice President of Entrepreneurship for NetWork Kansas**. "NetWork Kansas values and respects all of the hospitality-industry businesses, as well as all other Kansas businesses as they navigate these difficult times."

All HIRE recipients will receive an email with details on the process and timeframes involved with this conversion. The Department of Commerce will notify the partners/organizations that are assisting with collections to stop collections and forward all funds to NetWork Kansas for reconciliation.

Businesses can expect the process of issuing repayment and other paperwork to be completed in the next 30 days.

About the Kansas Department of Commerce

As the state's lead economic development agency, the Kansas Department of Commerce strives to empower individuals, businesses and communities to achieve prosperity in Kansas. Commerce accomplishes its mission by developing relationships with corporations, site location consultants and

stakeholders in Kansas, the nation and world. Our strong partnerships allow us to help create an environment for existing Kansas businesses to grow and foster an innovative, competitive landscape for new businesses.

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