



Board of Commissioners of Cook County

118 North Clark Street
Chicago, IL

Legislation Text

File #: 21-3968, **Version:** 1

PROPOSED GRANT AWARD

Department: Bureau of Economic Development

Grantee: Bureau of Economic Development

Grantor: State of Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO)

Request: Authorization to accept grant

Purpose: To use the Small Business Community Navigator Program grant to expand Cook County's Small Business Assistance Program to further support businesses recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Grant Amount: \$744,600.00

Grant Period: 7/1/2021 - 12/31/2021

Fiscal Impact: "None" (Pass-through Funding)

Accounts: The account string where cash match requirement, if applicable, is funded, in following format: Fund.Office.Object Account, Object Account Description.

Concurrences:

The Budget Department has received all requisite documents and determined the fiscal impact on Cook County, if any.

Summary: Cook County launched the Cook Country COVID-19 Recovery Small Business Assistance program to meet those needs and support small businesses under the mantra of "Together We Thrive." Our goal was to assist Cook County small business owners, ensuring that they were prepared to rebound from the impacts of the pandemic and emerge stronger than before. Along with 35+ partners across the entrepreneurial ecosystem, we have served 2,700+ small businesses with grants and/or technical assistance to date to support their recovery in response to COVID-19.

With the Small Business Community Navigator Program support, we will expand an already successful and proven Business Assistance program model to reach additional entrepreneurs, further build the capacity of our technical assistance partners, and ensure that businesses have access to all the local, state, and federal resources available to businesses during this challenging recovery period.

IL Community Navigator funding will build upon the County's CRF investments, leverage the existing infrastructure of the County's Small Business Assistance Program and provide new funding to assist small businesses access forthcoming State of Illinois Back to Business grant program. Specifically, the additional funds will support:

1. **Increased Business Advising Services for Businesses** - This funding, along with shared training and resources, will result in increased business advising capacity throughout Cook County over the long-term. We anticipate these funds will support service to approximately 2500 businesses and provide funding to the following ten (10) business support organizations:

- a. Allies for Community Business

- b. Berwyn Development Corporation
- c. Chicago Minority Supplier Developer Council
- d. Chicago Urban League
- e. Cook County Black Chamber of Commerce
- f. Illinois Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- g. Illinois Restaurant Association
- h. Southland Development Authority
- i. The Joseph Center
- j. Women's Business Development Center

The Bureau of Economic Development may substitute other business support organizations for those listed above in the event it determines that such substitution may be necessary to fulfill the purposes of the Small Business Community Navigator Program grant.

2. **Addition of a Virtual Call Center** - Many small businesses sign up for our services online or via program partners, but others may want to call in to receive immediate support or answer questions. These funds will support the addition of a staffed call line from 9am-5pm Central Time to answer basic questions or help get businesses access the right capital or service provider.
3. **Use of Centralized Intake System and Program Coordinator-** Cook County will continue to partner with Next Street, a mission-driven consultancy that mobilizes capital, customers, and capabilities to small businesses and entrepreneurs that have been systemically held back. In its role as Program Coordinator, Next Street ensures smooth and efficient operation of the program.

Next Street designed and manages a centralized platform and intake system that facilitates business access and program monitoring for the County's Small Business Assistance Program. County funding is supporting enhancements to this system based on lessons learned to date, and funding through the Community Navigator program will enable a renewed subscription to this platform and add users to the site in conjunction with to accommodate the new partners on board joining the Small Business Assistance and Community Navigator Programs.