

Gov. Evers: Announces \$45 million in targeted assistance for restaurants impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic

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Eligible businesses will receive \$20,000 grant by year-end

MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers announced today with the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) that restaurants and other targeted small businesses affected by the COVID-19 pandemic will receive \$45 million in assistance, bringing the total assistance distributed to Wisconsin businesses this year to more than \$220 million.

The program, We're All In For Restaurants, is aimed at businesses throughout Wisconsin that, as gathering places, have been challenged from the beginning of the pandemic, and are incredibly important employers and community members.

"Restaurants and other venues have been among the businesses hit hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic," Gov. Evers said. "They've made the tough decisions to keep employees and customers safe by restricting indoor seating, offering delivery and curbside pick-up, and providing outdoor tables. We greatly appreciate the changes they've made to prioritize the health and safety of our communities, but now with winter coming, we are glad to provide this support at a critical time."

The program will be administered by the Department of Revenue (DOR) in collaboration with WEDC. Unlike previous We're All In grants, businesses will not have to apply for the grants, but will be identified and contacted directly by the DOR based on the businesses' state tax records.

“We have all the systems in place to quickly disburse funding to these businesses who need it to get through the coming winter months. Our staff is ready to assist, and I am pleased we are able to help,” said DOR Secretary Peter Barca.

According to preliminary DOR estimates, restaurants will account for roughly 95 percent of the approximately 2,000 businesses to receive the funds. The program will target businesses with annual revenues of more than \$1 million and less than \$7 million. Previous state grant programs have focused on businesses with annual revenues of less than \$1 million.

This is the third phase of the We’re All In grant program from WEDC aimed at helping businesses weather the economic storm created by the pandemic. The first phase provided more than \$65 million in grants to more than 26,000 businesses statewide, while the second phase is currently disbursing more than \$120 million to more than 24,000 small businesses statewide.

Funding for We’re All In programs comes from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act, which expires on Dec. 31. Additional federal funds for small businesses have not yet been approved.

“Locally owned restaurants have a huge impact,” said WEDC Secretary and CEO Missy Hughes. “They’re often the heart of their communities – employing local workers, relying on local supply chains, and providing a place for neighbors to meet. We want to do all that we can to keep them going through this difficult time.”

“This is exactly the life support and leadership the hospitality and tourism industry has needed in Wisconsin,” said Luke Zahn, co-owner of the Driftless Café in Viroqua and host of Wisconsin Foodie. “It feels like a ray of sunshine in a dark winter– and we can continue to be stewards of the nation’s best farmers, food producers, and employers in one of the largest sectors of our state’s economy.”