

Gov. Evers: Announces \$420 million in Wisconsin Tomorrow Small Business Recovery Grants

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Participating businesses to receive \$5,000; grant program to potentially help approximately 84,000 Wisconsin small businesses

WAUWATOSA — Gov. Tony Evers today announced the state will award up to \$420 million to small businesses affected by the COVID-19 pandemic through the new Wisconsin Tomorrow Small Business Recovery Grant program, a collaboration between the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) and the Department of Revenue (DOR). The effort, funded by the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA), has the potential to help approximately 84,000 Wisconsin small businesses that have an annual gross revenue between \$10,000 and \$7 million. Under the program, small businesses would be eligible for grant awards of \$5,000.

“We want small businesses to know that help is on the way. And once we receive federal funds, we aren’t going to wait to get these funds out quickly to help small businesses restock shelves, catch up on bills, rehire and retain workers, and continue to help keep their customers, employees, and our communities safe as we work to bounce back together,” said Gov. Evers. “We can’t sit around and wait to get these funds out the door, and we can’t afford to let politics get in the way of getting resources and support to those who need our help.”

The governor’s announcement today regarding Wisconsin Tomorrow Small Business Recovery Grants reflects the strategy of the new [Wisconsin Tomorrow: Building an Economy for All](#) report recently released by the WEDC, which calls for investments that advance

economic well-being for individuals and communities.

“The new grants are intended to support those small businesses who were hardest hit by the pandemic and through savvy planning, grit and sacrifice are poised to make a strong recovery, and we are committed to being a strong partner in helping these businesses on the road to recovery,” WEDC Secretary and CEO Missy Hughes said.

Last month, Gov. Evers [announced](#) a robust plan to use the \$3.2 billion the state will receive under the ARPA. Among the governor’s key investments for the funds is \$2.5 billion toward the state’s economic recovery and well-being, which includes \$600 million in funds designated to supporting small businesses. The up to \$420 million in grants announced today are included in the \$600 million Gov. Evers has designated will go to small businesses.

“Both of my parents were entrepreneurs and small business owners, and I followed in those footsteps, so I know first-hand how challenging it is to keep a business running. Also, in my role as Secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Revenue, I see the direct impacts of COVID-19 on small business owners in this state. I am very pleased that we are able to provide some relief, so they can get back on their feet and, eventually, beyond where they were before the pandemic hit,” said DOR Secretary Peter Barca.

Details of the new grants will not be finalized until federal rules for ARPA funds are in place. States continue to await federal guidance before being able to provide complete program details or open applications. However, preliminary plans by WEDC and DOR call for targeting the program at Wisconsin small businesses, including those that started in 2020, in sectors that have been hit hardest by the pandemic. Individuals and businesses interested in learning more about the Wisconsin Tomorrow Small Business Recovery Grant program can [visit this page for updates](#).

Gov. Evers today also vetoed a series of bills passed by Republicans in the Legislature last week that would dictate how Wisconsin’s ARPA funds should be spent. Among the legislation vetoed by the governor was a bill that prescribed spending only \$200 million from Wisconsin’s \$3.2 billion in ARPA funds to support Wisconsin’s small businesses. Gov. Evers’ plan for the ARPA funds eclipses the proposal, tripling the investment proposed by the Legislature and investing \$600 million in ARPA funds to provide relief and support to small businesses.

“The Legislature’s proposal to spend just a small portion of our American Rescue Plan funds on small businesses simply won’t cut it for me,” said Gov. Evers. “Our

Main Streets have been hit hard during this pandemic and we need to do everything we can to make sure they can bounce back.”

The governor’s vetoes today come weeks after Republicans in the Wisconsin State Legislature passed legislation requiring legislative oversight and approval of the federal funds, leaving the potential for delays for an indeterminate period of time and therefore preventing resources and support from getting out quickly to Wisconsinites who need it. Under Wisconsin state law, the governor is responsible for overseeing the use of federal funds. The bill was ultimately vetoed by Gov. Evers who objected to any potential delays in providing relief. Republicans in the Legislature have also suggested they will consider suing over the funds, a course that could likely also delay funds from being distributed.

[Veto message for AB 232.](#)

[Veto message for AB 233.](#)

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