

# Lansing Region Small Business Restart Program Grants

## Grant Application Review Process

The Lansing Economic Area Partnership (LEAP) has created a multi-entity and multi-stage review process consisting of LEAP staff, Diversity Equity & Inclusion (DEI) partner organizations, the Capital Region Michigan Small Business Development Center (SBDC), Capital Area Michigan Works! (CAMW!), as well as stakeholders from a diverse variety of additional organizations and larger businesses in the community that have expressed interest in reviewing statewide grant applications of business locations in Clinton, Eaton and Ingham counties based on the criteria being developed as part of the Michigan Small Business Restart Program.

### Review Process

#### Review Committees

A multi-entity committee made up of LEAP as administrator, DEI partner organizations, Capital Region SBDC, and CAMW! as key regional partners, will be involved at each stage of review process.

#### 1<sup>st</sup> Stage - Scoring

LEAP utilized 30 individuals on the scoring panel for our administration of the Michigan Small Business Relief Program (MSBRP) grant applications in March, representing a variety organizations and larger businesses across the community. Those 30 scorers were paired up into 15 scoring teams to reduce any individual scoring bias on a given application. The 15 scoring teams each reviewed approximately 125 applications to accommodate the nearly 1,900 eligible grant applications received.

For the Restart Grant Program, we anticipate a similarly large number of applications, perhaps over 2,000. We have more time to implement a review process, and have developed efficiencies in the application data sorting, analysis and scoring administration through previous programs. Thus, we intend to utilize 50-100 individual scorers for this program, including representatives of LEAP, our 10 DEI partner organizations, SBDC, CAMW!, local government partners and a variety of other individuals and organizations that have expressed interest in participating in the review process.

We will go through a conflict of interest acknowledgement process with all scorers to ensure that each individual will not be scoring any applications of friends, family members, business clients/customers, financially-contributing members or directly-assisted applicants in the course of contractual work. For local government or economic development staff with specific coverage or jurisdictions at the county, municipality, or sub-municipality level, such reviewers may not score applicants located in that specific geography.

Application batches (likely 50-75 applications each) will then be provided to assigned scoring teams, each made up of two scorers. Applications will be scored individually, with the two scores then combined for review by each scoring team. Each team will discuss and reconcile their top applications to elevate an agreed top 10-20 applications as finalists for 2<sup>nd</sup> stage consideration.

The MEDC and LEAP are working under a legislative mandate that at least 30% of Restart Grant funds go to underrepresented groups, defined by the State of Michigan as women-owned, veteran-owned and minority-owned (further defined specifically as those identifying as Black or African American; Hispanic American; Native American (Alaska native, native Hawaiian, enrolled members of a federally or State recognized Indian tribe);



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Asian Americans; Arab or Middle Eastern Americans). Nonprofits are excluded from underrepresented business ownership consideration.

- Each scoring team will specialize in one business type (traditional small business, microbusiness, or nonprofit) and review only that application type within their batch
- Underrepresented business owner applications will be as evenly distributed into the traditional small business and microbusiness application batches as possible
- Scoring teams assigned application batches of traditional small businesses or microbusinesses will be required to ensure a certain percentage of selected finalists are underrepresented business owners
  - 30% threshold for traditional small businesses
  - 50% threshold for microbusinesses (higher than 30% to compensate for the nonprofit exclusion and meet the minimum 30% overall fund use requirement)

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Stage – Finalist Deliberation

8-person deliberation panel consisting of four LEAP staff, two DEI partner organization representatives, one SBDC staff and one CAMW! staff.

Panel includes a diversity of backgrounds with each member bringing a unique perspective and strong experience working with grant work and small businesses throughout their careers.

The finalist deliberation panel will meet on at least three occasions to discuss and deliberate on the finalists for each of the three categories above and make final selections. DEI partner organization representatives may change for each of these three category-based review sessions based on interest and experience.

Collectively, panels will consider approximately 600-1,000 top applications as elevated by the scoring teams and select the top 402 applicants to receive a grant, broken down as follows:

- 125 Traditional Small Businesses awarded \$20,000
- 200 Microbusinesses awarded \$10,000
- 77 Nonprofits awarded \$10,000

Note: if applicant pool and resulting finalist pool is insufficient to accommodate the intended fund split, LEAP and the finalist deliberation panels will adjust the fund split as they deem appropriate.

## Next Steps for Awarded Businesses

Awarded businesses will be required to submit an updated W9 form, if not already provided during MEDC application process, and bank account information within 48 hours of grant award acknowledgement in order to expedite fund processing.

Awarded businesses will also be required to sign a simple grant agreement that specifies eligible use of funds and basic reporting requirements for 3-6 months following receipt of grant funds. The agreement, or business certification form, is intended to be part of the statewide application process.



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