

\$5 million of HIRE Fund loans have been awarded

Within 48 hours of Governor Laura Kelly announcing the establishment of the Hospitality Industry Relief Emergency (HIRE) Fund, all \$5 million allocated for the loan program have been awarded.

“The hospitality industry in Kansas was one of the first to be hit financially by the COVID-19 crisis,” Governor Kelly said. “Department of Commerce Secretary David Toland and the teams at Commerce and NetWork Kansas moved swiftly to stand up the HIRE Fund program and process applications in a short period to help us quickly get these critical dollars into the hands of hospitality businesses across the state.”

The initial response to the HIRE Fund program was overwhelming. More than 1,400 applications for funding were received, with more than 800 submitted within 24 hours of the program being announced.

In total, 344 Kansas hospitality businesses will receive HIRE Fund loans. In the Kansas City metro area, \$2 million will be distributed amongst 136 businesses; in Sedgwick County, \$1 million will be distributed to 68 companies; and across the rest of the state, \$2 million will be distributed to 140 businesses.

“We know that many Kansas businesses are struggling right now, and we know that \$5 million doesn’t come close to making up the losses that the hospitality industry and others have and will continue to incur,” Secretary Toland said. “But anything we can do – no matter how big or how small – to infuse dollars into Kansas businesses to help them make payroll, pay their electric bills or meet their mortgage obligations, we’re going to do it.”

The HIRE Fund, which was announced Friday, March 20, offers Kansas hospitality businesses including event and convention centers, restaurants, bars and lodging facilities one-time, zero-interest loans up to \$20,000. The program is administered by NetWork Kansas, a non-profit with a system of small business loan underwriters across 64 Kansas counties.

“Standing up a new loan fund within a matter of days wouldn’t have been possible without our partners at NetWork Kansas,” Secretary Toland said. “Their team spent hours over the weekend processing and responding to the hundreds of applications received, and we couldn’t be more grateful for their support to get these dollars quickly into the hands of those who need it most right now.”

While there are no funds currently available, applications are still be accepted should future dollars for the HIRE Fund be made available. Hospitality businesses should visit <https://kansascommerce.gov/hirefund> to complete their application.

Businesses also can apply for federal disaster loan assistance up to \$2 million through the U.S. Small Business Administration at <https://disasterloan.sba.gov/ela>.

For more information about the Kansas response to COVID-19, please visit: <https://govstatus.egov.com/coronavirus>. To access resources available to businesses, please visit <https://kansascommerce.gov/covid-19-response>.