

THE SUN-GAZETTE

Self Help, Exeter offer small business COVID grants

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The city of Exeter alongside Self Help Enterprises continues to distribute grant funding to small businesses until funds run out

EXETER – Self Help Enterprises continued to help the city of Exeter administer small business grants this year, and said that there is still money left for more struggling businesses.

The Exeter City Council voted in favor of applying for a \$259,000 community development block grant (CDBG) specifically dedicated to help businesses weather the pandemic back in 2021. This year there are a little under half of the funds left, according to Self Help Enterprises program manager Yadira Medina. Businesses can receive up to \$35,000 through this grant, and so far, only three businesses in the city have received the funding.

“It has helped small businesses purchase items that they weren’t able to purchase, or bring back employees that they had to let go because they were making enough revenue,” Medina said. “It will help them for a few months to recuperate while they’re getting everything back on track.”

There is a fourth business in the process of receiving the grant funding and will be reviewed by the Self Help Enterprises this week, according to Medina. She said that there will now be enough funding left for roughly two businesses to receive the full \$35,000, and possibly a third business to receive partial funding.

There is no end date to the grant, but instead will be distributed until funds run out, according to Medina. The reason for the grant was to “respond, prepare and prevent” COVID-19, by not only helping businesses stay afloat, but also give them the needed funds to buy preventative measures such as hand sanitizer, masks and other health related purchases. It also helps businesses maintain their staff.

Businesses hoping to qualify for this funding must meet myriad criteria. According to an Exeter staff report, businesses: must be a private, for profit business; business and/or any owner may not be suspended, debarred, proposed for debarment, declared ineligible, or voluntarily excluded from participation in federal transactions; must have less than 50 full-time employees; must have a physical storefront establishment within Exeter’s city limits; must have a current Exeter business license or bring current as a result of assistance; must have experienced a negative impact due to the pandemic, by certifying that the business has experienced at least a 25% reduction in revenue since March 1, 2020 and that grant proceeds will be used for allowable expenses; must not be a national chain; and must have been operating as a business since January 2020.

If a business receives a CDBG grant then they have to at least create or retain a full-time employee as a requirement. They may also create or retain a low or moderate-income permanent job if they do not have a full-time position.