

MontcoStrong Restaurant Grant Program

Montgomery County Commerce Department

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What is the MontcoStrong Restaurant Grant Program? What is the goal of the program?

A. This program is a Montgomery County initiative established by the Montgomery County Board of Commissioners and the Montgomery County Commerce Department in partnership with the Redevelopment Authority of Montgomery County. The goal of the program is to provide small businesses in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania with financial support as relief due to disruptions caused by the COVID-19 global pandemic.

Q. How is this program being funded? Will there be additional rounds of funding available?

A. Total available funding **\$5,000,000**. The money for this program comes from the County's economic development funds.

Q. In 2020, I received a MontcoStrong Small Business Program Grant. May I apply for this grant program?

A. Yes, as long as the business meets all of the program eligibility criteria.

Q. How many applications are expected to be received?

A. We anticipate high demand for the program. With up to \$5,000,000 available and grant award amounts of \$10,000, the maximum number of grants will be 500.

Q. What are the eligibility criteria?

A. Eligible applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Be a for-profit restaurant, food truck, deli, bakery, brewery, distillery, vineyard, caterer, or other food service for-profit entity with a physical location in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania that has been in operation since at least January 1st, 2020 and has experienced disruption due to the COVID-19 global pandemic meeting the additional following criteria –
 - o Is current with all taxes owed (or in an approved payment plan with all taxes bodies to which a tax delinquency exists as of the date of application).
 - o Is and has been in compliance with all lawful COVID-19 mitigation orders issued by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania since March 12th, 2020.
 - o Eligible applicants may not be a publicly traded company.
 - o Eligible applicants may be a franchisee, but the franchisee entity may not have more than 4 locations globally. All grant funds received by a franchisee entity must be used only at their location(s) in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania.
 - o Entities with multiple locations in Montgomery County may apply for each location. Entities with locations both in and out of Montgomery County may only apply for their location(s) in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania.
 - o Applicant entities that have been ordered closed for any public health violation by the Montgomery County Office of Public Health, including any issues related to the spread of COVID-19, or have willfully violated all lawful COVID-19 mitigation orders issued by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania since January 1st, 2020 may not apply.

Q. If I am not one of the first applications submitted, does that mean I won't receive grant funding through this program? How long will applications be accepted for? How are applications reviewed?

A. The intent and design of the program is not a first come, first served program. The application window for this program will open at approximately **Noon on Wednesday, December 30th, 2020** and close at approximately **Noon on Wednesday, January 6th, 2021**. Completed applications will be reviewed and considerations for grant awards will be based on satisfaction of eligibility criteria and demonstrated need in the grant application. Particular consideration will be given to businesses that are minority and/or women owned enterprises, and veteran-owned enterprises. Overall evaluation of need and grant award decision criteria will include:

- Complete and thorough application.
- Well explained and demonstrable need due to COVID-19 disruptions.
- Evidence in the application that the applicant has read and understands the program guidelines.
- Achieves program goal(s) based on economic impact of the applicant entity and sector.
- Supports the economy of our communities and/or the entire county in the short and long term.

Feedback on applications will not be provided regardless of award status.

Q. I am having trouble accessing the online application form?

A. We are encouraging everyone to be patient in submitting their applications. Please note applications will not be formally accepted for review before **Noon on Wednesday, December 30th, 2020**. **The online application form will not be available until the application window opens.** We expect that when the program opens the system will be inundated with application submissions. You may need to clear your web browser's cache if you continue to have trouble reloading the application form. Also, please make sure you complete all required sections of the online application form and upload all the required documents. The program is not first come, first served.

Q. I have an at-home business; how does that impact my use of grant funding?

A. At-home businesses are eligible, but with the following provisions:

- Allowable use of funds for mortgage or rent must include documentation for grant reporting that indicates the percentage of the domicile used for business purposes. Example – if 10% of the domicile is used for business purposes, only 10% of the rent/mortgage can be paid with grant funds.
- Allowable use of funds for utilities is only permissible if the account is in the name of the business. If, for example, a personal cell phone is used for business purposes, that would not be an eligible use of grant funds.

Q. If a business has multiple locations in Montgomery County, do I need to submit a specific application for each location?

A. This would depend on how the business is structured. If each location is treated as its own entity legally, then yes, you would need to file an application for each location. However, because of limited funding and in order to be equitable, we are encouraging businesses with multiple locations/entities to only submit one application for just one business/entity. If you have multiple locations under one entity (and are then only to submit one application for that sole entity) or as separate entities (and are applying for each) this should be referenced in your application narrative describing the business and its structure.

Q. Are franchise locations eligible?

A. If an individual or entity owns 1 franchise in one location in Montgomery County, then yes. If an individual or entity owns up to 4 franchise locations (with at least 1 being in Montgomery County) they are eligible to apply for a grant for the Montgomery County location(s). However, if an individual or entity owns more than 4 franchise locations (regardless of location) they may not apply.

For example, if you own 1 location "Dairy King" and it is in Montgomery County, you can apply for a grant for that location.

If you own 3 locations of "McDowell's" and 2 of the locations are in Montgomery County, you can apply for a grant and use grant dollars for those locations in the County.

If you own 5 locations of "Burger Jester" with 4 in Montgomery County and 1 elsewhere in the world, you are not eligible for this program.

Q. What am I allowed to use grant funds for? What can I not use grant funds for?

A. Eligible grant expenses are as follows:

- Rent/mortgage payments for the business location between January 1st, 2021 to March 5th, 2021.
- Payments for utilities for the business location between January 1st, 2021 to March 5th, 2021.
- Purchases of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) between January 1st, 2021 to March 5th, 2021. PPE is defined as –
 - o Cleaning supplies.
 - o Gloves.
 - o Masks.
 - o Face shields and eye coverings.
 - o Thermometers.
 - o Hair nets and gowns.
 - o Hand sanitizer and hand sanitizer dispensing equipment.
 - o Other items may be approved at the discretion of program administrator; grant awardees should inquire about such items before purchase.
- Payroll for non-owner employees (and/or their family members) between January 1st, 2021 to March 5th, 2021.

Please note - Grant funds are used for payments made, not only expenses incurred, during the allowable period. So, if you received a bill in December 2020 and use the grant funds for that bill, it would be an allowable expense under this program because you made the payment during the allowable expense period.

Grant awardees will be required to submit documentation as part of the grant reporting process. This documentation may include (depending on the use of funds) lease agreements, mortgage statements, proof of payment of utilities, receipts for payments for PPE, and/or other appropriate documentation as determined by the program administrator. Grant awardees are encouraged to communicate with the grant program administrator (the Redevelopment Authority of Montgomery County) during the grant period and to complete the grant reporting as soon as \$10,000 in allowable expenses have been made.

Q. I am a sole proprietor and do not have an EIN; what should I do to complete the application?

A. For the application, please provide the last four digits of your social security number.

Q. How were the parameters for allowable use of grant funds determined?

A. This program was developed to respond to the urgent need of the industry sector and based on the lessons learned from the MontcoStrong program in 2020 as well as from the experiences of nearby counties.

Q. How will I know if I am awarded a grant? If I am awarded a grant, how soon will funds be disbursed?

A. Applicants awarded grant funding will be contacted via email by the Redevelopment Authority of Montgomery County and required to sign a grant contract and documentation provided as part of the award and disbursement process. The grant contract must be signed within 15 calendar days upon receipt by the grant awardee of the grant award is forfeited. Upon execution of the grant contract and it being returned to the Redevelopment Authority of Montgomery County, efforts will be made to disburse funds within approximately 10-15 business days. Grant administration, grant contracting, and fund disbursement will be done by the Redevelopment Authority of Montgomery County.

Q. I expended all of my grant funds. When should I submit my final grant report?

A. Final grant reports, as detailed in the grant contract, should be submitted as soon as all funds have been expended and all required documentation is ready. Grantees are encouraged to submit their final report as soon as they are able to do so. Staff from the Montgomery County Commerce Department and/or the Redevelopment Authority of Montgomery County will periodically check-in with grantees regarding the status of their grant fund usage and also to remind them to submit their final grant reports.

Q. What if I have a question that isn't answered in the guidelines or the FAQ?

A. All questions about the program can be submitted through the Commerce Department's Assistance Request Form. The link to the form can be found on the Commerce Department's homepage, www.montcopa.org/Commerce.

Q. If I am not awarded a grant, what are some other options for my business to get help due to the COVID-19 global pandemic?

A. Montgomery County maintains and regularly updates a list of business information and resources on the County's COVID-19 data hub (www.montcopa.org/COVID-19) and on the Montgomery County Commerce Department's homepage (www.montcopa.org/Commerce).