



JOINT PRESS RELEASE WITH JEFFERSON COUNTY GOVERNMENT

JEFFERSON COUNTY AWARDED OCRA GRANT

David Bramer

Holly Love-Gibson or Sarah Prasil

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RELIEF FOR JEFFERSON COUNTY, IN SMALL BUSINESS IS HERE

September 1, 2020 – Madison, IN... It is with great excitement that Jefferson County and the Jefferson County Board of Tourism (JCBT), along with Lt. Governor Suzanne Crouch and the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA) announce Jefferson County as one of 42 rural Hoosier communities that will receive federal grant funding through the COVID-19 Response Program. The grant to Jefferson County for loans to small and micro businesses to retain low-to-moderate income (LMI) jobs is the first grant of its kind for Jefferson County. The funds can be used for working capital, to continue operations, or to support remote work.

Since the announcement of the OCRA grant opportunity in April, JCBT member Tami Hagemier, and Visit Madison, Inc. (VMI) Grant Writer Holly Love-Gibson had been working diligently on applying. The realization that small businesses may still suffer long after the effects of the COVID pandemic was at the forefront of wanting to help bring relief to small businesses.

The grant will be turned into a Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) program for the local small and micro businesses with low-to-moderate income (LMI) employees. Applications are open now. Businesses can go to <https://jeffersoncounty.in.gov/JCRLF2020> to apply online, download the application and find additional information. **The deadline to apply is September 18, 2020.**

“Jefferson County’s application highlighted that the Revolving Loan fund gives the highest priority to any veteran, woman, and minority-owned businesses located inside the County limits. OCRA is pleased to support programming to help ensure diversity is maintained in the county. Assisting small businesses through this grant and ultimately helping Main Streets and rural downtowns continue to recover is a top priority for the State,” said Matt Crouch, Interim Executive Director of the Office of Community and Rural Affairs.

“Many small businesses in Jefferson County face financial issues a good deal of the time and these issues have been significantly intensified during our current situation. These small business loans will provide some much-needed help to enable them to survive the very unpredictable times we are experiencing. It is exciting to see the hard work of the Jefferson County Board of Tourism pay off in leading the effort to secure this grant which will provide some help to the small businesses and the citizens of Jefferson County,” said County Commissioner President David Bramer.

Tami Hagemier, JCBT board member and grant co-writer was enthusiastic about the opportunity and stated, “The \$250,000 award indicates JCBT and county commissioners are working closely with Visit Madison and members of the tourism community to bring new and exciting opportunities for our local, small businesses that have been impacted by COVID-19 and employ some of our most hardworking, low income employees.”

Grant writer and VMI employee Holly Love-Gibson said, “The \$250,000 OCRA CDBG grant is a great step for helping small and micro businesses county-wide that have been hit the hardest by the Coronavirus pandemic. This could not have been done without the help from the Jefferson County Government, Jefferson County Board of Tourism, State officials, and Visit Madison, Inc. We look forward to helping as many businesses in the county as possible and retaining as many low-to-moderate income jobs as possible.”

As stated by Visit Madison Executive Tourism Director, Tawana Thomas, “Very much like our small businesses throughout Jefferson County, Visit Madison has been greatly impacted as a result of the COVID crisis. With the majority of Visit Madison’s tourism budget determined by the innkeeper’s tax, our organization has experienced what many of our small businesses have experienced. With fewer overnight stays the innkeeper’s tax has been reduced by almost 40% and thus, our own tourism budget adjustments have been a necessity. How wonderful is it that we can be a part of assisting our small businesses/tourism partners (as a result of this \$250,000 OCRA CBDG grant) as we all begin to rebuild our tourism efforts and the economic impact it has on our beautiful Madison. As Executive Director, I am so proud of our entire Visit Madison staff, our board members who supported our efforts to get this grant written and submitted, and our commitment to working in collaboration with Jefferson County and the members of the Jefferson County Board of Tourism.”

The program’s marketing and branding was nurtured and designed by Visit Madison’s Marketing & Advertising Director, Sarah Prasil. With direction to bring the “Restart-Sustain-Succeed” to an appealing vision, Sarah Prasil outdid herself in making the “Restart-Sustain-Succeed” Jefferson County Program accessible and user-friendly.

The requirements for the county-wide loans are as follows:

- Up to \$25,000 per business
- 3 to 5 year term
- Up to 2% interest
- Up to 1% loan administration fee
- Monthly, quarterly, or annual payments
- Payments can be deferred for first six months at 0% interest
- Requires annual reporting by the community in perpetuity
- Balance can convert to a grant if business retains jobs for at least 2 years
- Businesses have to have less than 50 employees
- Businesses have to have been in business in 2019 and a for-profit business.

If you have any questions, please contact the Program Coordinator, Holly Love-Gibson at holly@visitmadison.org or call 812-265-2956. Interested businesses should contact Holly Love-Gibson at Visit Madison, Inc. by September 18, 2020.