

The Virgin Islands Consortium

SBA Readies \$16 Billion in Aid for Live-Event Businesses, \$28 Billion for Hard-Hit Small Restaurants

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As the Paycheck Protection Program comes to an end, the federal government is preparing two relief programs geared toward businesses among the hardest-hit by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Small Business Administration said it will start taking applications by week's end for a \$16-billion grant fund for live-event businesses such as live music clubs and theaters. The program was supposed to kickoff roughly two weeks ago but got delayed after the system to apply failed. Called the [Shuttered Venue Operators Grant](#), the program is expected to help thousands of businesses in the entertainment industry whose operations were devastated by the novel coronavirus.

Another grant program, called the Restaurant Revitalization Fund (RFF), was detailed by SBA Administrator Isabella Casillas Guzman Monday, including application requirements, eligibility, and a program guide for the the RFF.

The restaurant industry has been among the hardest-hit sectors during the economic downturn caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. The SBA said to help bring jobs back and revive the industry, the American Rescue Plan, signed into law by President Joe Biden, established the \$28.6 billion RFF. The SBA said it will administer the funds to the hardest-hit small restaurants.

“Today, we are starting the process to help restaurants and bars across the country devastated by the pandemic, and this is our message: Help is here. With the launch of the Restaurant Revitalization Fund, we’re prioritizing funding to the hardest-hit small businesses – irreplaceable gathering places in our neighborhoods and communities that need a lifeline now to get back on their feet,” said Ms. Guzman. “And, thanks to clear directives from Congress, we’re rolling out this program to make sure that these businesses can meet payroll, purchase supplies, and get what they need in place to transition to today’s Covid-restricted marketplace.”

Ms. Guzman emphasized, “We’re also focused on ensuring that the RFF program’s application process is streamlined and free of burdensome, bureaucratic hurdles – while still maintaining robust oversight. Under my leadership, the SBA aims to be as entrepreneurial as the entrepreneurs we serve – and that means meeting every small business where they are, and giving them the support they need to recover, rebuild and thrive.”

Under this announcement, details on application requirements, eligibility, and a program guide are now available in English at www.sba.gov/restaurants or in Spanish at www.sba.gov/restaurantes.

Ahead of the application launch and over the next two weeks, the SBA said it will establish a seven-day pilot period for the RFF application portal and conduct extensive outreach and training. The pilot period will be used to address technical issues ahead of the public launch. Participants in this pilot will be randomly selected from existing PPP borrowers in priority groups for RFF and will not receive funds until the application portal is open to the public.

Following the pilot, the application portal will be opened to the public. The official application launch date will be announced at a later date. For the first 21 days that the program is open, the SBA will prioritize reviewing applications from small businesses owned by women, veterans, and socially and economically disadvantaged individuals. Following the 21-day period, all eligible applicants are encouraged to submit applications.

The groundwork for this announcement is the result of a comprehensive effort to reach out to diverse stakeholders in order to understand the needs and barriers restaurants face in accessing emergency relief aid, the SBA said.

“Local restaurants and bars are being served very good news today,” said Erika Polmar, executive director of the Independent Restaurant Coalition. “These guidelines were

crafted by the SBA after conversations with independent restaurant and bar operators across the country. We are grateful to the SBA for their hard work to make this process as accessible as possible in a short period of time. It is clear the SBA and the Biden Administration care deeply about ensuring businesses struggling the most can quickly and effectively use this relief program, and we look forward to continued conversations and collaboration to ensure this fund works as intended for the independent restaurant and bar community.”

Community business leaders from underserved communities also welcomed RRF assistance as much-needed economic relief and are working with their broad membership bases to navigate the grant application process, according to the SBA.

“In addition to historically having less operating liquidity and revenue than almost any other small business demographic, Black-owned restaurants received significantly less stimulus funding during the COVID-19 pandemic, heightening challenges and leading to disproportionate closures,” said Ron Busby, Sr., president and CEO of the U.S. Black Chambers, Inc. “The USBC believes this initiative and collaboration with the SBA will bring needed resources and relief to these often underserved businesses to aid in stabilization, recovery and ultimately, strengthen our economy.”

In addition to restaurant groups and leading advocacy groups for underserved business communities, the SBA said it has engaged national and state trade associations, and other small business stakeholders in recent weeks to understand their concerns about relief programs.

“Small and independent craft breweries are vibrant community gathering places that can be found in nearly every congressional district in the U.S. and contribute to manufacturing, hospitality, retail, tourism, and agricultural industries,” said Bob Pease, president and CEO, Brewers Association. “We are pleased to work with the SBA to promote the Restaurant Revitalization Fund landing page and its available resources, and assist the breweries hit hardest by COVID-19 secure much needed additional relief to help them survive the pandemic and prepare for the restart of the economy.”

At all levels, the SBA said it will continue engaging with stakeholder communities to inform and design delivery of financial assistance programs. As the SBA builds and prepares to roll out the program, this dedicated [SBA website](#) is the best source for up-to-date information for eligible restaurants interested in the RRF.