



# News from the Office of **ADAM J. BELLO** **MONROE COUNTY EXECUTIVE**

**For Immediate Release**  
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## **MONROE COUNTY EXECUTIVE ADAM BELLO ANNOUNCES FAST FORWARD MONROE SMALL BUSINESS GRANT PROGRAM**

*Utilizes \$15 million in CARES Act funding to assist businesses hurt by the COVID-19 pandemic*

ROCHESTER, NY – Today, Monroe County Executive Adam Bello announced that Monroe County is committing \$15 million in CARES Act funding to support local small businesses affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. [The Fast Forward Monroe Small Business Grant Program](#) is a direct response to the Fast Forward Monroe business survey released earlier this year, and will provide financial assistance to small businesses with two to 50 full time employees in the personal services industry, including retail and dining.

The program aims to provide funds to businesses with the greatest needs, while helping as many small businesses as possible. Businesses that have not yet received COVID-related aid and minority and women owned businesses will be prioritized in this round of funding. A [study released in August by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce](#) showed that minority-owned businesses have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and that nearly two in three minority small business owners were worried about having to permanently close their businesses due to the pandemic.

“It’s no secret that COVID-19 has changed nearly every aspect of our lives, but it has especially affected the economic vitality of our small businesses, many of which serve as the backbone of our local economy,” **said County Executive Bello**. “Recent studies show that minority-owned small businesses have suffered an even more dramatic hit and have been left struggling to find funding to help weather the storm. We’re able to make this critical investment in our small businesses and prioritize those most in need thanks to the federal CARES Act funding secured for Monroe County by Congressman Joe Morelle, Senator Chuck Schumer and Senator Kirsten Gillibrand.”

The Monroe County Department of Planning and Development, in conjunction with the Greater Rochester Chamber of Commerce and Greater Rochester Enterprise, released the Fast Forward Monroe business survey throughout the months of August and September in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Results of the survey showed that in addition to needing PPE and other critical supplies, many small businesses were seeking financial assistance to help cover COVID-related business expenses and other funding shortfalls.

Eligible applicants to the Fast Forward Monroe Small Business Grant Program will receive:



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- Up to \$10,000 in funding for businesses with between 0 and 2 employees
- Up to \$15,000 for businesses with 3 - 25 full-time employees
- Up to \$20,000 for businesses with 26-50 full-time employees

**U.S. Senator Charles Schumer said,** “Small businesses, restaurants, and neighborhood stores are the lifeblood of the Rochester region. These businesses, and the thousands of workers they employ, continue to struggle due to the pandemic which is why I am proud to have secured this funding in the CARES Act to provide these grants for so many Monroe County businesses. I commend County Executive Bello for taking advantage of these funds to reinvigorate our local economy, specifically by prioritizing minority and women-owned businesses who have been especially hit hard by the pandemic.”

“This grant funding will be critical to small businesses in Monroe County as they continue to adjust to the challenges of the pandemic in coming months. Even as our economy slowly reopens, small businesses – especially minority and women owned businesses – have struggled to stay afloat,” said Senator Gillibrand. “They need flexible and direct relief and I commend County Executive Bello for this new program to deliver funding to businesses that need it the most. I’m proud to have secured this funding in the CARES Act and I will continue fighting for more relief for New York’s small business community.”

“COVID-19 has left small businesses in our community and across the country struggling to make ends meet, retain their employees, and adapt to this new normal,” said **Congressman Joe Morelle.** “And unfortunately, those issues have been compounded for many already-marginalized sectors like black and women-owned businesses. These entrepreneurs are the lifeblood of our local economy, and they need our help—which is why I’m so proud to have helped secure funding through the CARES Act to support small businesses during these challenging times. I’m grateful to County Executive Bello for his partnership and steadfast leadership to ensure our community recovers from this crisis stronger than ever.”

Businesses applying for the Fast Forward Monroe grant funding must be for profit, provide their NY 45 or similar documents as of June 30, 2020 and submit appropriate banking information. Previous year’s tax returns will not be required. Ineligible industries include professional service firms such as doctor’s offices, lawyers/law firms, engineering firms and financial managers.

“On behalf of our region’s business community, Greater Rochester Chamber of Commerce commends County Executive Bello and his team for cutting through the bureaucracy and red tape to deliver this \$15 million grant program, which will provide much-needed financial support for our small businesses during this unprecedented time. 98% of Greater Rochester Chamber’s members are small businesses, and many are in need of this timely assistance. We wholeheartedly support the mission of this program, are honored to help spread the word far and wide, and thank County Executive Bello, Congressman Morelle, and Senators Schumer and Gillibrand for working to make this funding available,” **added Greater Rochester Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Bob Duffy.**



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“As the backbone of our local economy, small businesses need access to funds to navigate unforeseen challenges created by the pandemic. We applaud County Executive Adam Bello's decision to launch the Fast Forward Monroe Small Business Grant Program to support small businesses during these uncertain times. We look forward to working with Monroe County and the Chamber of Commerce on the initiative and ensure that businesses can access the funding as soon as possible,” **said Greater Rochester Enterprise President and CEO Matt Hurlbutt.**

“Small businesses, especially restaurants, need help to get through the winter months. This innovative grant program, with its focus on women and minority-owned businesses, will provide welcome relief. I thank County Executive Bello for recognizing the need for bold action during this economic crisis,” **said Monroe County Legislature Minority Leader Yversha Roman.**

“Rochester was recently ranked as a top 'foodie' city because we have so many independent restaurants. They are a huge part of our economy and many are at risk of closing during the pandemic,” **said Legislator Rachel Barnhart.** “That’s why I’m grateful County Executive Bello took the time to visit Village Gate with me two weeks ago to listen to the concerns of restaurant owners. His team acted very quickly to make this program available.”

“The small business community has never before faced a challenge of this magnitude, and restaurants specifically are facing unprecedented hardships. While many of us have been propped up by direct federal aid, the support coming from our local representatives is especially significant, and downright moving. We reached out for their assistance, and they immediately and thoroughly answered the call. This program will be the difference between survival and closure for many small businesses across Monroe County, and we're incredibly grateful for the quick action taken by Legislator Rachel Barnhart and County Executive Adam Bello,” **said Kristen Flores-Fratto, co-owner, the Gate House Café.**

“I'd like to thank Rachel Barnhart and Adam Bello and his team for taking the time to listen to the needs of not only restaurateurs, but all locally owned and operated small businesses in downtown Rochester. They moved very quickly to develop this program, which will really make a difference to small businesses across the city and Monroe County,” **said Tom Polizzi, owner of Polizzi's Restaurant.**

The number one thing that small businesses need in this tumultuous time is financing. Whether covering payroll or operating costs, or trying to find alternative ways to accomplish business goals, it all comes down to being able to finance staying open. As we all know, restaurants already operate at tiny margins of profit which often go back into the business in normal times. Being at 50% capacity and losing the use of patio space is terrifying and will likely be detrimental to most small businesses, especially restaurants. This program will help immensely!” **added Kelly Metras, Salena's co-owner.**



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“In a recent survey from the New York State Restaurant Association, 63% of restaurants owners declared they would not be profitable and would close by the end of this year. Restaurants are in a unique position, with 50% capacity and other restrictions, we face a grim future. These grants are crucial to our survival,” said **Kelly Bush co-owner of Marshall Street and The Union Tavern and NYSRA Rochester Chapter President.**

Applications for the Fast Forward Monroe Small Business Grant Program are available at [www.monroecounty.gov/fastforwardmonroe](http://www.monroecounty.gov/fastforwardmonroe). The deadline to apply is Monday, November 2, 2020.

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