Interest-Free Loans Available to Florida Small Businesses Impacted by Coronavirus

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Jacqueline Bozzuto

The impact of COVID-19 has become not only a health crisis, but also a financial one. For small business owners who are suffering from coronavirus-related shutdowns and closures, the Florida Small Business Emergency Bridge Loan program can provide access to much-needed emergency capital.

Activated by Governor DeSantis on March 16, the bridge loan program uses public funds to provide short-term, interest-free for one year to small businesses experiencing economic difficulties from COVID-19. Loans may be awarded up to $50,000 per business, or possibly $100,000 in special circumstances. Up to $50 million has been allocated for the program.

To be eligible to apply, a small business must have between two and 100 employees (one of which can be the owner); have been established prior to March 9, 2020; and demonstrate the economic impacts of COVID-19. Additionally, the applicant must be an individual who owns 51% or more of a for profit company.

Applicants are highly encouraged to submit their forms online for faster processing. You may also submit a completed application with required documents by mail or courier. Applications will be accepted under this program through May 8, 2020, contingent on availability of funds.

The application includes seven sections, with Section 4 including information regarding the loan amount that you are requesting.

Please be aware that a credit report is required, so applicants will need to unlock their credit. Approval is dependent upon a certain credit score, but better scores make processing faster.

Almost 30,000 applications are being received each day. The average application process takes approximately two to three weeks to complete. Submitting your completed application with all the necessary documentation helps ensure it is processed in a timely way. Applicants with incomplete applications will be contacted.

Only one loan may be made per eligible business, but individuals may apply for a loan for each eligible business that they own. If you have been a bridge-loan recipient in the past, all previous bridge loans must be paid in full in order to receive this new loan.

Loans will be interest-free for the loan term (1 year). The interest rate will be 12% per annum on the unpaid balance thereafter, until the loan balance is repaid in full. Loan default is subject to a normal commercial collection process.

If you are a business owner and having financial issues, you should consider applying for all three of the following options available to you:

- Small Business Association
- Florida Small Business Emergency Bridge Loan Application
- Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (options include a bridge loan and an economic recovery loan)