



For Immediate Release

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PRESS RELEASE

Grant Funds Available to Assist Small Businesses in Franklin County and Roanoke Region

Franklin County and Virginia Career Works – Blue Ridge have partnered to provide grant funding to small businesses in the area for assistance with sanitization and/or telework expenses. Virginia Career Works has received funding to make grants within the region and approximately \$10,000 has been allocated to Franklin County businesses. Due to the importance of these efforts to minimize layoffs and preserve employee health during the COVID-19 emergency, Franklin County is contributing approximately \$10,000 in local funds to expand the effort. Grant funding will be awarded to a limited number of Franklin County small businesses that employ less than 250 people.

Because of the immediate need by small businesses for these grants, applications will be taken on an expedited basis. The application for funds will be open on the Virginia Career Works – Blue Ridge website from Monday, March 30th through 5 PM on Friday, April 3rd. Then decisions will be made about which businesses will receive funding. As part of the application, businesses will be asked for information about how they will use the funds to save jobs, including the number of jobs saved, estimated amount of annual wages saved, and other project-specific outcomes. Then, once the grants have been

awarded, the small businesses will be reimbursed for their expenses after documentation is submitted. A contract between the business and Virginia Career Works MUST be in place prior to any reimbursable purchases.

Eligible small business projects should focus on layoff aversion strategies and activities that are designed to prevent, or minimize the duration of, unemployment resulting from layoffs due to COVID-19. Examples of these projects could include, but are not limited to:

- A small business that needs their employees to be at work, on site, but cannot afford frequent deep cleaning to help prevent potential exposure to COVID-19. Layoff aversion funds could be used to pay for cleaning supplies, protective equipment and/or a cleaning/sanitation service;
- A small business whose employees use specific software or computer applications and will need to work from home/remotely in order to support social distancing and limit potential exposure to COVID-19. Layoff aversion funding could be used to purchase the software/programs that the employee would need to use from home to support their work;
- A small business needs to have their employees work from home/remotely in order to support social distancing and limit potential exposure to COVID-19. Layoff aversion funding could be used to purchase remote access supplies, including laptop computers and/or smart phones, which the employee would need to use from home to support their work; and/or
- Other needs as identified and reviewed to stop the spread of COVID-19.

For more information about eligibility and to start the application process, please visit <https://vcwblueridge.com/covid-19-funding/>. Businesses at risk for lay-offs or closure are encouraged to reach out to Brad Stephens, Business & Development Manager with Virginia Career Works, at bstephens@vcwblueridge.com or (540) 988-3937.