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Governor Bullock Announces Support for Local Meat Processors, Small Businesses and Local Governments Across Montana

CARES Act funding will be used to put more Montana meat on shelves and reimburse local governments for COVID-19 related expenses

MONTANA – Governor Steve Bullock today announced funding through the federal CARES Act will be used to boost in-state processing and storage capacity for local meat processors, to provide additional financial assistance for small businesses, and to reimburse local governments for COVID-19 related expenses.

The Montana Meat Processing Infrastructure Grant is available to aid small and medium-sized meat processors responding to COVID-19 supply chain disruptions by supporting local meat processing infrastructure and capacity in Montana.

“These grants will boost processing and storage capacity. They’ll help Montana businesses put more Montana meat onto more shelves. Plus, an increase in in-state processing means more direct sales, and better, value-added markets for producers,” Governor Bullock said. **“These investments will bolster Montana’s food security, making us stronger in response to the pandemic, as well as long into the future.”**

Due to interruptions in national supply chains, meat processing capacity throughout the US has been significantly impacted. Supporting in-state meat processing infrastructure and capacity will provide alternative market channels for Montana’s cattle, hog and poultry producers. Examples of eligible expenses include equipment and infrastructure that increases processing and/or storage capacity, costs associated with becoming state or federally inspected, and other business adaptation and diversification activities. Total funding available through the program is \$2,000,000, with a maximum award of \$150,000. Applications are being accepted now at COVIDRELIEF.MT.GOV. The deadline to apply is July 2, 2020 at 5:00pm.

Governor Bullock also announced an additional \$25 million will be added to the Business Stabilization Program to aid small businesses in recovering from the economic impacts of COVID-19. The program, which is operated by the Department of Commerce, was initially allocated \$50 million. The program has received more than 8,000 applications, with funding requests totaling more than \$60 million. Learn more and apply at COVIDRELIEF.MT.GOV.

Additionally, Governor Bullock is making available reimbursements to local governments for COVID-19-related expenses. Localities can submit requests to the Department of Administration for reimbursement for items like medical expenses, public health expenses, or employees' regular and overtime hours substantially dedicated to mitigating or responding to COVID-19.

“Along with Montanans, our local governments have gone to great lengths throughout our response to COVID-19 to keep their local communities safe – and that has come with an extra cost,” Governor Bullock said. **“I’m pleased we have been able to build on long-established working relationships with the Montana Association of Counties and the Montana League of Cities and Towns, and on our existing partnerships with county commissioners, mayors and other local officials across Montana to respond with a united front in the face of the pandemic.”**

“From the creation of the Task Force which prioritized private sector recovery and economic stability; through the framework for local government reimbursement for public safety and public health stability; we thank the Governor and his administration for allowing input from Montana Counties,” said Eric Bryson, Executive Director, Montana Association of Counties.

“We are thankful for the ongoing partnership with the Governor and his team at the State,” said the President of the Montana League of Cities and Towns and Roundup Mayor Sandra Jones. **“We have worked side by side during this pandemic including developing the local government reimbursement program. These funds are critical to Montana’s 127 cities and towns and the work we do to serve Montanans every day.”**

Localities will submit requests for reimbursements by June 12, July 17, September 4, and/or December 1, 2020, and will be reimbursed within 30 days of these deadlines. Any entity will receive a maximum of four reimbursement payments.

Local governments may also be eligible for reimbursement through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Public Assistance grant program for costs related to emergency protective measures as a result of COVID-19, such as emergency operations center activities, training, facility disinfection, technical assistance and more.

Local governments can apply at COVIDRELIEF.MT.GOV or email LGSportalregistrations@mt.gov for questions.

The funding announcement today through the CARES Act is part of the \$1.25 billion provided to Montana from the federal government. Today’s announcement adds to the \$123 million in

funding announced by Governor Bullock in May. A comprehensive information resource and application portal is available at [COVIDRELIEF.MT.GOV](https://www.covidrelief.mt.gov).

New to the website is a transparency dashboard at <https://commerce.mt.gov/Montana-Coronavirus-Relief/Awarded-Grants>.