



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** May 20, 2021

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**BENZIE COUNTY SMALL BUSINESSES IMPACTED BY COVID-19  
CAN APPLY FOR GRANTS BEGINNING MAY 24**

*Regional Resiliency Program Grants Administered by Venture North*

**Benzie County, Michigan** – Small businesses in Benzie County with nine or fewer employees may apply for COVID-19 relief grant funding beginning May 24 at 8 a.m. to June 4 at 5 p.m. through the Regional Resiliency Program (RRP), administered by Venture North Funding and Development. A grant application must be completed online at [www.venturenorthfunding.org](http://www.venturenorthfunding.org).

The RRP provides grants of up to \$5,000 to businesses with urgent needs or needs involving adapting their operations to meet COVID-19 challenges. Grants have been used to meet payroll, cover rent, support employee retention, purchase inventory, begin new online sales systems and many others. A minimum of \$24,000 is available for grants, including \$1,000 from the Benzie County Economic Development Corporation, \$3,000 from the Urgent Needs Fund of the Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation and \$20,000 from Venture North. In addition, for Benzie County applicants that have electricity supplied by Cherryland Electric, additional funds have been made available for the RRP by Cherryland to support recovery of their customers who meet RRP eligibility requirements.

“We certainly hope eligible small businesses will apply if they need help recovering from COVID-19,” said Benzie County EDC Business Retention Subcommittee Chair, Betsy Evans, who is providing technical assistance to businesses as part of the RRP. “The application should take no longer than 30 minutes to complete. And businesses should remember that this is a grant that does not require repayment.”

The RRP was created in 2020 with the support of a \$200,000 award from the Consumers Energy Foundation. By raising additional funds, including awards from local partners, a total of nearly 200 grants totaling over \$500,000 were awarded in 2020 in Venture North’s 10-county region. The goal for 2021 is to match or surpass the 2020 results.

“We are pleased by the progress toward recovery from COVID-19,” said Venture North President, Laura Galbraith. “However, many small businesses continue to struggle due to a loss of cash flow, customers and employees. The supply line of products remains slow or even nonexistent, posing big threats to businesses that count on those supply sources for products they sell. Relief is needed while processes are restored and normalized and companies source products to market and sell.”

“If any business has questions or needs help completing the grant application, we are happy to assist,” said Galbraith. “We want to ensure applications are complete and submitted on time.” Those needing help should contact Venture North at 231-995-7115 or by email at [info@venturenorthfunding.org](mailto:info@venturenorthfunding.org)

Venture North, a tax-exempt nonprofit, continues to seek donations to the RRP to meet the demand. “Any entity or person can donate to the RRP program and know that 100 percent of their contribution will be used for grants to eligible small businesses that apply for funding,” Galbraith said. Funds may be donated online at “Donate to the RRP” at [www.venturenorthfunding.org](http://www.venturenorthfunding.org) or by calling 231-995-7115.

“Venture North’s main business is business financing to support the growth of small businesses and jobs in the ten-county area,” Galbraith explained. “We want RRP grant recipients to contact us in the future about growth capital. We can provide flexible terms and welcome banks and credit unions as partners. We want to play a big role partnering with small businesses and communities to support the recovery process.”

Venture North Funding and Development is a certified Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) focused on providing support for underserved populations such as minority, women, and veteran-owned businesses in low-income communities.

