

ESD sets 'Raising the Bar' restaurant recovery fund

More than \$3 million in grant funding available through financial support led by Diageo North America, supported by Coastal Pacific Wine & Spirits & implemented by National Development Council

Eligible restaurants can receive up to \$5,000 to assist with COVID-19 safety measures

Empire State Development announced the more than \$3 million "Raising the Bar" restaurant recovery fund to assist restaurants in New York during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This grant funding has been made possible through financial donations led by Diageo North America and supported by Coastal Pacific Wine & Spirits (a division of Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits) and will be implemented by the nonprofit National Development Council (NDC). The "Raising the Bar" restaurant recovery fund will help eligible restaurants adjust their operations to the impacts of COVID-19 and adherence to New York state's public health and safety measures during the winter months when outdoor dining is limited.

Empire State Development Acting Commissioner, and President and CEO-designate Eric Gertler said, "The restaurant industry is a critical component of our state's economy - encompassing hundreds of small businesses who employ thousands of New Yorkers. This industry has been among the hardest hit by the devastating effects of COVID-19, working hard to stay open, serve customers and keep employees safe. This fund is designed to help establishments adapt during this unprecedented time with assistance to sustain their businesses during the winter months to come."

"Raising the Bar" grant funding can be used for COVID-19-related improvements and equipment that will allow the business to comply with social distancing guidelines, expand take-out/de-

livery operations, or accommodate outdoor dining such as Plexiglas barriers/partitions; signage promoting social distancing and hygiene protocols; and heaters, heat lamps, weatherization upgrades and insulated delivery bags - all improvements that will allow the business to continue operating through the winter months. In addition, eateries may opt for filtration system upgrades and food heaters to maintain temperature for to-go orders; purchasing PPE and sanitation supplies necessitated by the pandemic; and COVID-19-related business improvements such as patio heaters or contactless technology.

Qualifying purchases and expenditures must be from Sept. 1, 2020, onwards to be eligible. The first round of grants is up to \$5,000.

Initial grant funding will be awarded based on the received applications and dispersed independently by NDC, an experienced national economic nonprofit that has been in operation since 1969.

"Diageo is committed to supporting restaurant owners, particularly those in underrepresented communities, who have been disproportionately harmed by COVID-19," said Debra Crew, president, Diageo North America. "We are honored to serve as a founding contributor of the 'Raising the



Bar' restaurant recovery fund, providing much-needed relief to an important industry that serves as a vital part of the economic engine of local communities. We encourage other organizations and businesses that also call New York 'home' to join us in this endeavor to make the impact of the program even stronger."

Wayne E. Chaplin, CEO of Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits, said, "The hospitality industry in New York needs help now more than ever and we are here for them like they've always been here for us. The 'Raising the Bar' restaurant recovery fund provides an essential lifeline to restaurant owners so they can continue to operate safely, and stay afloat during this critical time. We are proud that our Coastal Pacific Wine & Spirits division is working with the state of New York, our valued supplier, Diageo, and

the NDC to provide this much-needed and urgent financial support."

Dan Marsh, president of National Development Council, said, "At NDC, we are eager to get moving on this restaurant grant program. Having worked on numerous loan and grant programs in New York and across the country, what we have seen is that smaller restaurants - especially minority and woman-owned establishments and those in hard-hit neighborhoods - are not getting the help they really need. A tailored grant program specific to this industry is critical."

Eligible businesses consist of New York restaurants that have no more than \$3 million in 2019 revenue and are engaged in providing food services and meals prepared on-premises to patrons who traditionally order and are served while seated, including

certain on-premises food and drinking establishments licensed through the State Liquor Authority (SLA) and which need funding to adjust to COVID-19-related impacts and protocols.

Establishments providing takeout or grab-and-go food services due to COVID-19 restrictions are also eligible to receive the grant from NDC. Additionally, these establishments must have been in operation on or before March 1, 2019, and certify and demonstrate they have experienced financial hardship due to COVID-19.

All businesses must continue to comply with the "New York Forward" reopening guidance and cluster action initiative guidance, as applicable.

Restaurants can apply to the "Raising the Bar" restaurant recovery fund starting Monday, Jan. 11. For more information, visit the ESD website at <https://esd.ny.gov/raising-bar-restaurant-recovery-fund>. Applications will begin to be accepted on Jan. 11.

IN THE NEWS

Driver's license expiration extended again

Niagara County Clerk Joseph A. Jastrzemski on Tuesday said Gov. Andrew Cuomo has issued executive order 202.87, which extends the expiration dates on licenses and permits that expired after March 1, 2020, to Jan. 29, 2021. In addition, the executive order also continues to require all in-person transactions at DMVs be done by appointment only.

"While the governor has once again extended the expiration dates, I would encourage people to make an appointment to renew their licenses now that we have significantly reduced our backlog," said Jastrzemski. "At this time, the governor is still not allowing walk-ins, but there

are many appointment slots available."

Jastrzemski said people can make an appointments at www.niagaracounty.com/departments/Motor-Vehicles-Department.

Fatima Shrine Festival of Lights postponed

Our Lady of Fatima Shrine has postponed its annual Festival of Lights benefit and basket auction, which was scheduled for this Saturday, due to ongoing concerns

regarding the coronavirus.

Tickets will be honored at the new date, which is yet to be announced. Ticketholders also can receive a full refund.

The Barnabite Fathers-directed basilica is located at 1023 Swann Road, off Route 18 East in Lewiston.

Lewiston Dems seek candidates

The Lewiston Democratic Committee is looking for individuals

interested in running for elected office in Lewiston. In 2021, elections will be held for the offices of town supervisor and two seats on the Town Board. There also are two Niagara County Legislature seats open this year for areas which include Lewiston.

Anyone interested in any of these offices should send a letter of interest to the Lewiston Democratic Committee, PO Box 155, Lewiston, NY 14092, as soon as possible.

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