



\$3 Million Now Available to Support Montana Businesses to Refill Jobs Lost Due to Pandemic Impacts

Montana businesses are now eligible to apply for workforce recovery grant dollars to help companies refill jobs that were lost due to the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Montana Department of Commerce has launched a temporary Workforce Recovery grant program as part of the Big Sky Economic Development Trust Fund (BSTF).

“Businesses across the state are managing through a variety of challenges and complications because of the pandemic,” Montana Department of Commerce Director Tara Rice said. **“The Department of Commerce’s Workforce Recovery program is meant to assist those businesses that are ready to bring jobs back and to provide a little extra support to allow the business to sustain that rehired worker into the future.”**

The Big Sky Economic Development Trust Fund Workforce Recovery program will reimburse a business for the wages of full-time, permanent jobs that are created and retained for at least six months, up to a maximum of 25 jobs per business. Businesses apply directly to the program. A reimbursement of up to \$7,500 per job is available to businesses in [high-poverty counties](#). The business must match \$3,750 per job. A reimbursement of up to \$5,000 per job, with a \$5,000 match, is available for businesses in all other counties.

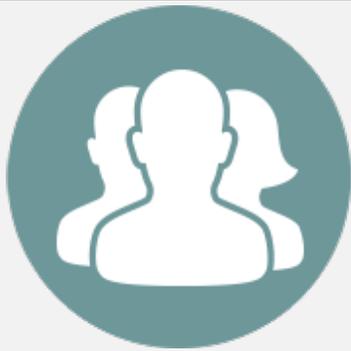
The Workforce Recovery program is in direct response to supporting businesses impacted by the economic effects of the pandemic. The ability to create the temporary program has been made possible by a governor’s directive which allows for flexibility in the Big Sky Economic Development Trust Fund program. Funding for the temporary program comes

from reverted BSTF Job Creation awards, it is not a replacement for or pausing of the well-established business development program.

Applications will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis until all funds have been committed or December 31, 2020; whichever comes first. Apply at

MARKETMT.COM/BSTF/WorkforceRecovery.

[Apply Here](#)



Governor Bullock Announces Montana Ranks 6th in Nation on Fastest COVID-19 Job Recovery

Governor Steve Bullock Tuesday announced Montana ranks sixth in the nation on employment performance since the pre-COVID-19 recession peak and emphasized the need for a healthy workforce to have a healthy economy as COVID-19 cases increase.

“A healthy economy is truly reliant on a healthy population – and a healthy population relies on masking up, avoiding large gatherings, staying home when sick, and following quarantine orders from your local health department,” Governor Bullock said. **“By taking these steps, we can keep Montana’s workers and business owners healthy and safe, allowing our economic recovery to continue.”**

The data is tracked on a [new comparative performance dashboard](#) published by the Montana Department of Labor & Industry. The new addition to DLI’s Job Tracking dashboard tracks state comparisons on a variety of metrics, in addition to county and industry comparisons. Montana continues to outperform the national economy in recovery from the pandemic.

Data highlights on the dashboard include:

- Montana's job loss from the February peak to the April trough was smaller than other states, only down 11.6% compared to the national loss of 16%. The shorter duration of Montana's shutdown helped to moderate employment losses.
- Montana's job growth since April has been strong, gaining 9.2% and ranking 20th among states.

Other highlights of Montana's economic recovery are:

- Montana ranks 11th among states for best performance in total employment over the last year (Aug 2019 to Aug 2020, in LAUS total employment).
- Montana's August payroll job level is 5.7% lower than its February level, compared to the U.S. payroll jobs level, which is 7.6% lower than in February.

On Friday, Montana's unemployment rate for August was released at 5.6%, the 7th lowest in the nation, and well below the national rate of 8.4%. Visit the Department of Labor & Industry's Labor Market Information website at lmi.mt.gov for additional information and analysis, including industry employment levels, background on the unemployment rate, and wage rates by occupation. Visit lmi.mt.gov/home/job-tracking for Montana unemployment claims and economic data for the current recession.



Coronavirus Relief Programs Still Available

Montanans in every corner of the state have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. As Montana works to recover from the unprecedented economic situation caused by this novel Coronavirus, the state is making emergency financial relief available from the federal government to those who have been hardest-hit by impacts of COVID-19

The following relief programs are taking applications:

- **Business Adaptability:** Businesses and nonprofits eligible for reimbursement for personal protective equipment, business adaptations needed in response to the pandemic. Apply at COVIDRELIEF.MT.GOV. Application deadline, Nov. 15, 2020.
- **East Edge of Glacier Park Tourism Business Grant:** Tourism-reliant businesses in the Babb – St. Mary - East Glacier corridor may be eligible to apply for a grant of up to 25 percent of their 2019 gross revenue based on a 2019 tax return. Apply at COVIDRELIEF.MT.GOV.
- **Emergency Housing Assistance:** Monthly rent, deposit and mortgage payment assistance is available for those who have lost income due to the pandemic. Apply at COVIDRELIEF.MT.GOV
- **Live Entertainment:** Montana-based businesses and non-profits that are directly engaged in the business of live entertainment, and whose revenues primarily come from live entertainment events. Apply at COVIDRELIEF.MT.GOV.
- **Local Government:** Reimbursement is available to local governments as part of the CARES Act and the Federal Emergency Management (FEMA) Public Assistance (PA) grant program for direct costs associated with COVID-19. Application deadline, Sept. 25. Apply at COVIDRELIEF.MT.GOV.
- **Supporting Montana's Families School-aged Child Care Grant:** Grants are available to organizations who are providing out of school time programs. Eligible programs are for-profit business, non-profit organizations, school/school districts, community organizations, summer camps, and licensed childcare programs that serve children aged 5 to 18. Apply at COVIDRELIEF.MT.GOV.
- **Social Service Nonprofit Program:** Grants available for nonprofits equal to 10% of their 2019 operating budgets or a maximum of \$150,000. Apply at COVIDRELIEF.MT.GOV.
- **Working Capital Program:** Businesses are eligible for grant funds to support working capital loans from eligible lenders. [Apply with a participating lender](#). Application deadline, Oct. 23, 2020.



REMINDER: Montanans Can Still Respond to the 2020 Census

A U.S. District Court Judge has ordered that the U.S. Census Bureau continue its 2020 operations through October 31. As of today, that order stands despite attempts to appeal the ruling. On Monday, the U.S. Census Bureau put out a [press release](#) saying it intends to defy that court order and wind down operations by October 5.

The state of Montana will continue to support outreach and promotional efforts to make sure Montanans know why it's so important to respond to the Census. Today, the deadline is Oct. 31 – but **Montanans should not wait to respond, do it right now!** As the goal posts have continued to move throughout this process, it's critical to stay focused on what's truly important: ensuring Montanans are represented at every level of government, and make sure Montana gets its fair share of federal funding. Make sure your friends, family and neighbors respond today at <https://MY2020CENSUS.GOV> or by calling 1.844.330.2020.



More Montanans Can Now Qualify for Emergency Rent, Mortgage Payment Assistance

More Montanans may now be eligible for monthly rent and mortgage assistance. Montana Housing has made updates to the Emergency Housing Assistance program to help more Montanans access emergency housing assistance.

Program Updates:

- Montana Housing will pay the difference between **25 percent** of the household's current **net** monthly income and their eligible housing assistance costs, up to \$2,000 a

month with a **minimum monthly payment of \$250**. Household income limits range from \$75,000-\$125,000 based on family size. Montanans receiving other forms of housing assistance are not eligible.

- The program has eliminated the \$10,000 readily available assets limit.

Emergency Housing Assistance applicants who need assistance with the application can contact NeighborWorks Montana at covidrelief@nwmmt.org or by calling 406.604.4500.

[Apply here](#)

Transparency Dashboard Updated Weekly

More than 13,000 Montana businesses and nonprofits have now received relief funding through more than two dozen programs created by Governor Bullock's Coronavirus Relief Fund.

The state of Montana has launched a [dynamic dashboard](#) that shows the Coronavirus Relief Fund grants that have been awarded to businesses and nonprofits. This dashboard will be updated weekly until all grant dollars have been expended.

COVID-19 RESOURCES

- Montana COVID-19 Hotline: 1-888-333-0461 or COVID19info@mt.gov
- Montana Coronavirus task force: COVID19@MT.GOV
- If you are a **business owner** and have questions related to the the phased approach to reopening and how the plan applies to you directly, please call **1-800-755-6672**.
- **If your question relates to unemployment insurance/benefits**, please contact the Department of Labor and Industry at 406-444-2545. If you think you are eligible for unemployment benefits accessible to workers laid off due to COVID-19, you can apply for benefits online at: www.montanaworks.gov or contact the Unemployment Insurance Division over the phone at 406-444-2545.
- CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>

- Visit Montana: VISITMT.COM or 1-800-847-4868

Upcoming Application Deadlines

- **TODAY! September 30, 2020:** Indian Equity Fund grant applications are being accepted from Aug. 1-Sept. 30. [Learn more and apply here.](#)
- **TODAY! September 30, 2020:** Tribal Business Planning grant applications are being accepted from July 1-Sept. 30. [Learn more and apply here.](#)
- **October 15, 2020:** CDBG Community Planning grant applications are being accepted through Oct. 15. [Learn more and apply here.](#)
- **December 16, 2020:** Big Sky Economic Development Trust Fund Job Creation, Planning Project. [Learn more and apply here.](#)
- **December 31, 2020:** Big Sky Economic Development Workforce Recovery grant program. [Learn more and apply here.](#)
- **Ongoing:** CDBG Housing Stabilization Program applications are accepted on an ongoing basis. [Learn more and apply here.](#)
- **Ongoing:** CDBG Economic Development Program applications are accepted on an ongoing basis. [Learn more and apply here.](#)



6 Made in Montana Companies to Produce 'Montana Aware' Masks

25,000 masks will be distributed to Montana's Convention and Visitors Bureaus and Tourism Regions



Montana Robe Company face mask

The Montana Department of Commerce today announced that six Made in Montana program members will produce 25,000 masks as part of the state's "[Montana Aware](#)" initiative to promote safe and responsible fall travel.

The following six companies will produce the masks at their Montana-based facilities: Montana Robe Company in Belgrade, Glacier Clothing Company in Columbia Falls, Rebekah Jarvey in Havre, 406 Creative Vibe in Missoula, REcreate Designs in Polson, and Red Ants Pants in White Sulphur Springs.

"Made in Montana companies across the state have stepped up during the pandemic to provide goods and services to keep people healthy and safe," Commerce Director Tara Rice said. **"This partnership is an opportunity to support local small businesses, promote the important Montana Aware message to visitors, and continue to encourage responsible public health practices."**

The Department of Commerce will use \$175,550 of its tourism safety allocation of Coronavirus Relief Fund dollars to make the masks available to Montana's 19 Convention

and Visitors Bureaus and six tourism regions. The CVBs and regions can then distribute free masks to travelers during the fall season.

Montana Robe Company Founder and CEO Jenny Thuen says her business started making and donating masks in March.

“We saw a local need and wanted to rise to the challenge to help,” Thuen says. **“Now, with the award of this Made in Montana mask program, this opportunity to help has never felt more empowering. We're expanding our seamstress network, boosting our production and making more masks than ever. We're so thankful and excited for the opportunity to help on a greater scale!”**

There are more than 2,300 members of the Made in Montana program, which promotes Montana-made products and small businesses. Visitors and Montanans alike seek out authentic Made in Montana products. According to the Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research, visitors to Montana spent an estimated \$81 million on Made in Montana products in 2019.



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