



Board of County Commissioners Agenda Request

7A
Agenda Item #

Requested Meeting Date: September 22, 2020

Title of Item: Aitkin County CARES for Business Grants

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> REGULAR AGENDA	Action Requested:	<input type="checkbox"/> Direction Requested
<input type="checkbox"/> CONSENT AGENDA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Approve/Deny Motion	<input type="checkbox"/> Discussion Item
<input type="checkbox"/> INFORMATION ONLY	<input type="checkbox"/> Adopt Resolution (attach draft)	<input type="checkbox"/> Hold Public Hearing*

**provide copy of hearing notice that was published*

Submitted by: Ross Wagner	Department: Economic Development & Forest Ind
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Presenter (Name and Title): Ross Wagner, Economic Development & Forest Industry Coordinator	Estimated Time Needed: 30 Minutes
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Summary of Issue:

At the July 28, 2020 Aitkin County Board meeting the County Board authorized the Aitkin County CARES for Businesses Grant program. Aitkin County contributed \$500,000 of Federal CARES Act funds and the City of Aitkin subsequently contributed \$30,000.00 for a total grant fund of \$530,000.00. Applications were accepted on a first come first serve basis and were due by August 31st. The Economic Development Committee has reviewed all of the applications for content and eligibility and recommend funding Applications as listed on the attached spreadsheet.

The Economic Development Committee also reviewed CARES Act funding requests from East Central Regional Library and North East Office of Jobs and Training. The recommendation is to grant \$13,800.00 to East Central Regional Library and \$12,495.00 to North East Office of Jobs and Training. From the Aitkin County CARES for Businesses grant funds.

Lastly, the ED Committee recommends a second round of CARES for Businesses grants. With the remaining funds and the contributions committed to the grant fund from various City's and Townships there will be approximately \$200,000.00 remaining for a second round of Aitkin County CARES for Business Grants. The Economic Development Committee is recommending that a round 2 be offered with some modifications to the original grant application form and requirements. The modified application form will be sent out separately.

Alternatives, Options, Effects on Others/Comments:

Recommended Action/Motion:

Approve Aitkin County Cares for Business Grants Applications; Approve CARES Funds donations to the East Central Library for \$13,800 and the North East Office of Jobs and Training for \$12,495; Approve a second application period with funds from new contributions and remaining funds from round one.

Financial Impact:

Is there a cost associated with this request? Yes No

What is the total cost, with tax and shipping? \$

Is this budgeted? Yes No *Please Explain:*

CARES Act Funds are already awarded to Aitkin County. Aitkin County in turn awards the grants to Businesses.

Business Name	Contact	Grant Request \$	Back up information	Eligible	Location	City of Aitkin	Total
Voyager Press	John Grones	9,554.72	Y	Y	McGregor		
Minnesota Nat. Golf Course	Elisa Proulx	10,000.00	Y	Y	McGregor		
Superior Thermowood	John Bieganeck	10,000.00	Y	Y	Palisade		
Lake Area Home Investments	Marc Hoffman	7,500.00	Y	Y	Mille Lacs Area		
Cornerstone Custom Homes	John Baker	6,000.00	Y	Y	Aitkin		
Larson's Barn	Kathy Larson	10,000.00	Y	Y	Palisade		
Sorenson Root Funeral Home	Jason Brezinsky		Y	Y	Aitkin	10,000.00	
Trails Inn Quadna Mountain	Renae Rasmusson	10,000.00	Y	Y	Hill City		
Rustic Trail	Dawn Quade	7,500.00	Y	Y	Palisade		
McGregor Thrifty White	Pauline Anderson	10,000.00	Y	Y	McGregor		
LemCo Hydraulics	Erin Boleman	10,000.00	Y	Y	Hill City		
Hill Lake Café	Pat Korst	10,000.00	Y	Y	Hill City		
McGregor Printing	Mike Kruse	10,000.00	Y	Y	McGregor		
The Joint, Tavern & Eatery	Cindy Chuhanic	10,000.00	Y	Y	Bennetville		
Rivers Edge Assisted Living	Scott Duffney		Y	Y	Aitkin	10,000.00	
40 Club Inn/Banquet Center*	Jerry Dagen		Y	Y	Aitkin	10,000.00	
40 Club Restaurant and Bar	Jerry Dagen	10,000.00	Y	Y	Aitkin		
The Red Door Resort	Brian Linne	10,000.00	Y	Y	Wealthwood		
Hillcrest Resort	Joel Carr	10,000.00	Y	Y	McGregor		
Country Meadows Inn	Dipal Patel	10,000.00	Y	Y	McGregor		
Ripple River Motel & RV Park	Dipal Patel	10,000.00	Y	Y	Aitkin		
Hair by Clair	Clair Taylor	1,797.80	Y	Y	Aitkin		
Coombs Cuts	Stephanie Coombs	4,060.00	Y	Y	Aitkin		
McGregor Lanes	Christina Williams	10,000.00	Y	Y	McGregor		
Roadside Restaurant	Peter Welshons	10,000	Y	Y	Aitkin		
Zorbaz of Big Sandy	Cole Hansen	10,000.00	Y	Y	McGregor		
Forester Pontoons	Chad Christenson	10,000.00	Y	Y	Hill City		
Memories and Milestones	Donelle Welch	2,452.00	Y	Y	Aitkin		
Knuckleheads	David Olson	10,000.00	Y	Y	Hill City		
Harry's Bar	Alan Hilton	10,000.00	Y	Y	Hill City		
Snap Fitness	Mark Filas	9,692.69	Y	Y	Aitkin		
Ruthies Restaurant	Randall Landrus	9,022.88	Y	Y	Hill City		
Village Laundromat	Kari Dragovich	5,000.00	Y	Y	Aitkin		
Lorries Hair Studio	Heather Duffney	10,000.00	Y	Y	Aitkin		
The Glen Store and Grill	Chris Hagman	10,000.00	Y	Y	Glen		



Headquarters: 111 Dellwood Street North
Cambridge MN 55008
Phone (763) 689-7390

*Branches in Aitkin, Chisago, Isanti,
Kanabec, Mille Lacs, and Pine Counties*

August 27, 2020

Jessica Seibert, County Administrator
Aitkin County
307 2nd St. NW
Aitkin, MN 56431

Dear County Administrator,

As East Central Regional Library has pivoted to provide safe, contactless service to your citizens during the COVID-19 pandemic, the library has incurred many unplanned expenses in order to protect our staff and our communities. The commissioners on the ECRL Finance Committee have directed me to reach out to each county to seek reimbursement for these expenses from your CARES funding as well as to ask for your county to consider funding some of the library's additional needs to provide safe, contactless services going forward.

As you are aware, ECRL operates as one library and does not generally designate items for one library or county. This allows us to provide consolidated services and save money by not duplicating overhead. It does however mean that it is more difficult to quantify some things for just one location or county. For items that were clearly for one location, the costs are allocated to the location's county. For regional items, the Commissioners on ECRL's finance committee agreed that the best way to divide costs for regional items was on a percentage based on number of libraries. See below for details on the calculated percentages:

County Share - based on locations (total locations 14)		
	# of library branches	Percentage
Aitkin	2	14.29%
Chisago	4	28.57%
Isanti	1	7.14%
Kanabec	1	7.14%
Mille Lacs	3	21.43%
Pine	3	21.43%

For each county, I have compiled a detailed list of expenses and the amount that ECRL is requesting in reimbursement. If you would like to see detailed invoices or quotes on any of these expenses, we are happy to provide them. ECRL hopes your County will consider utilizing its CARES funding to assist this organization in adapting our service model and remaining strong so that we are able to assist the region's citizens with healing and revitalization.

I am also including a list of proposed expenses that will allow us to continue safe operations going forward. Without county CARES funding, ECRL will be unable to make these changes at this time. Once we receive approval from your county that funding will be provided, ECRL will move forward and use the money by Dec. 1. In particular, with regard to the regional cost recovery project, if ECRL doesn't receive approval from all six counties, this important improvement will be put on hold. Details about each project are listed below.

Finally, I have been contacted by some counties requesting the library's assistance with new initiatives including more hotspot loans and video conferencing spaces. If your county is interested in exploring this in any of your county branches, please let me know. I provided some general information regarding these two options for your consideration. ECRL can move to provide these expanded services quickly and economically for you.

If you have questions, I'm happy to discuss with you individually or present to your County Board.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carla Lydon".

Carla Lydon, Executive Director
clydon@ecrlib.org

Aitkin County Details

Incurring Expenses

Invoice is attached for incurred costs. Included are expenses for PPE, curbside delivery supplies, technology expenses for appointment system, online summer reading, curbside pickup, etc.

Also included is a subscription to Homework Help and Job Assistance Database which the library implemented in March 2020 based on anticipated need. The decision was made to cancel other databases to allow for this service. If County CARES funding is allocated for this purpose, the library can continue to provide the resources we had budgeted for. The Homework Help and Job Assistance databases are something the library would not have done but not for COVID and the resulting need for distance learning and employment assistance.

Payment for some or all of our incurred COVID-19 expenses is appreciated.

Proposed Projects (in priority order)

- Hand Sanitizing Stations – 5 total (2 McGregor, 3 Aitkin) at \$299 each - **\$1,495 total**

Locating stations at all entries and service points for easy use by library patrons to limit spread of virus

- Regional Cost Recovery System - cost \$120,017.50 – **\$17,145.36 Aitkin Share**

Allows for easy, contactless payment for printing, copying and faxing services as well as payment of fines and other fees. Added advantage of recovering organizational costs due to unpaid or unwanted printing/copying.

- Self checkouts (1 per location) – 2 at \$5500 each - **\$11,000 total**

Allows for easy, contactless self service at each library location

Optional Projects

- Hotspot loans – Funds for additional hotspots circulated region wide. Currently ECRL circulates 32 hotspots regionally that have been grant funded. Waiting lists for these devices are already long. Contributions in any amount will assist the library with adding devices for circulation and addressing some of the temporary need. If you would like to discuss a specific project, please feel free to reach out. Alternatively, the county can allocate an amount and the library will utilize it accordingly.

Amount: TBD

- Video conferencing equipment – Install video conferencing equipment in library study or conference room for public use.

Amount: ~\$5000 per room

Possible Aitkin County locations: Aitkin & McGregor – if interested, library will work to determine appropriate equipment and costs.



EAST CENTRAL REGIONAL LIBRARY
111 DELLWOOD STREET N
CAMBRIDGE, MN 55008
(763)689-7390

Invoice

Date	Invoice #
8/27/2020	2020-38

Bill To
Aitkin County Administrator Aitkin County Courthouse 209 2nd St NW Aitkin, MN 56431

Description	Amount
Sneezeguards - 2 at each Branch	840.00
Curbside Signs - 1 per Branch	262.76
Regional Costs based on your County's percentage	
PPE/Curbside Delivery Expenses	413.07
Technology Expenses	1,291.07
Databases - Homework Help & Job Search	2,957.14
Strengthen · Connect · Support	
Total	\$5,764.04

CARES Act Funds Mobilization

a proposal

Prepared for:

Aitkin County Board of Commissioners

Prepared by:



August 2020

Background

The Northeast Minnesota Office of Job Training (NEMOJT) is a local unit of county government and a well-established workforce development entity which serves Aitkin, Carlton, Cook, Itasca, Lake, Koochiching, and St. Louis counties – serving on average more than 1,500 individuals and families in Northeast Minnesota annually. We work with diverse populations to provide career planning and guidance to assist people in becoming empowered and economically self-sufficient. These populations include participants who are eligible for enrollment based on being disadvantaged, thus need as much support as possible to ensure long term career and personal success – and even more so during these unprecedented times. Our clientele are the individuals in your communities most in need of support during this national COVID-19 public health emergency.

Current Programs and Initiatives

We currently administer programs that aid in the areas of need that the CARES Act supports and look forward to securing CARES Act funding to assist us in continuing to administer these programs under the new conditions of the COVID-19 public health emergency.

- Diversionary Work Program (DWP)
- Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP)
- WIOA Adult
- WIOA Youth
- WIOA Dislocated Worker (DW)
- State Dislocated Worker (DW)
- Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)
- Incumbent Worker Program (IW)
- 218 Trades
- Career EdVenture
- Support Services
- Universal Customer Resources

Statement of Need

Due to the technological adaptations required by the COVID-19 public health emergency, we have found that our outreach is being diminished by our technology limitations and we are seeking CARES Act funding to modify our business practices. Like most organizations, the COVID-19 public health emergency has significantly altered how we can serve individuals and businesses. For decades, our budgets focused on providing high quality client services and only minimal investments were made to advancing technology. Since inception, we have administered these programs, exceeded federal and state performance measures, and provided excellent customer service. Now, the COVID-19 public health emergency requires us to quickly adjust our delivery methods by reimaging and transforming the way we interact with clients to deliver our programs and services in an effective, efficient, and secure manner while protecting our employee's health and safety.

As you can expect, this transformation has presented a number of challenges, first and foremost, is available technology. As a grant funded organization, we are limited in our capacity to meet the new technological demands thrust upon us by the COVID-19 public health emergency and are seeking opportunities to apply for technology grants or funding. We understand that the CARES Act was designed to provide ready funding to address unforeseen financial needs and risks created by the COVID-19 public health emergency and that allocated funds need to be dedicated expenditures incurred due to mitigating or responding to the COVID-19 public health emergency. We believe our need for enhanced technology is necessary, would result in demonstrable mitigation of the impacts the COVID-19 public health emergency has on those we serve, allow us to administer programs and services virtually, and would ensure access to our programming for the most vulnerable populations in a safe way. The costs incurred would significantly and immediately increase our capacity to meet the needs of those we serve.

With that said, we are interested in discussing the possibility of accessing CARES Acts funds from Aitkin County to support our need for increased technology resources to administer workforce development programs due to the impacts of the COVID-19 public health emergency. The project to accelerate the modernization of technology at NEMOJT is necessary as we are running on an outdated, slow system that is no longer supported, nor fully secure. To ensure the safety of our front-line counselors who serve our communities most in need individuals, we must provide them with the mobile technology to hold virtual meetings or offer safe face-to-face options. These meetings can no longer occur in the spaces utilized prior to the COVID-19 public health emergency and require access to mobile technology. Laptop options would accommodate meetings with clients that adhere to proper social distancing protocols or occur remotely. Additionally, these laptops could be transported to more remote locations where we do not have brick and mortar offices enabling us to expand our outreach efforts.

NEMOJT is an innovative, result driven organization that is made up of a team of individuals who have dedicated their lives to helping those most in need. This technology upgrade would allow for more efficiency and a greater reach to outlying communities and individuals – allowing us to expanded programs, reduce enrollment processing time, and ultimately enhance the overall services individuals, businesses, and communities receive. Without this funding, NEMOJT would need to complete this project over a period of more than 5 years. However, with support from the CARES Act, the project could be conducted in FY2020 as a single effort to replace the inadequate systems currently in place. The final outcome will be to have a modern, mobile case management system that will provide operational benefits of increased efficiency, cost savings, and improved client services. We believe these expenses are necessary to respond to and mitigate the impacts of the COVID-19 public health emergency and meet the eligibility requirements set forth in section 601(d) of the Social Security Act.

In addition, we would be thrilled to collaborate, share, and integrate our efforts and utilize the CARES Act funds on common COVID-19 response efforts – this can be done by first addressing NEMOJT's needs for improved mobile technology to support the public assistance and employment and training programs we administer. We are fully engaged and ready to mobilize efforts to address these needs and utilize funds before December 30, 2020 as required by the statute to avoid returning much needed funds for our counties back to the Department of Treasury.

Objective

To fully update and modify our operations to a mobile platform to respond to the need for virtual programming and services due to the COVID-19 public health emergency which will increase our ability, organization-wide, to expand our services and reach the most vulnerable individuals, businesses, and communities.

Budget

Laptops	
31 Staff x \$2,500	\$77,500
Docking Stations	
31 Staff x \$250	\$7,750
Portable Printers	
31 Staff x \$200	\$6,200
Scanners	
31 staff x \$100	\$3,100
Mobile Signature Technology	
31 staff x \$200	\$6,200
Peripherals	\$11,000
Systems Deployment	\$14,000
Staff Training	\$1,500
Network Infrastructure Upgrades	\$15,000
Total	\$142,250

Organizational Structure

Local Elected Officials Board:

Donald Niemi - District 3 Aitkin County Commissioner
Thomas Proulx - District 3 Carlton County Commissioner
David Mills - District 3 Cook County Commissioner
Burl Ives - District 4 Itasca County Commissioner
Peter Walsh - District 1 Lake County Commissioner
Kevin Adee - District 2 Koochiching County Commissioner
Paul McDonald - St. Louis District 4 County Commissioner

Executive Director:

Marie Domiano

Northeast Minnesota Office of Job Training

BUILD THRIVING COMMUNITIES BY GUIDING AND EMPOWERING INDIVIDUALS