



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and City Council

FROM: Veronica Briseño, Chief Economic Recovery Officer, City of Austin
Sylvia Holt-Rabb, Acting Director, Economic Development Department

DATE: December 31, 2020

SUBJECT: Economic Development Department Year-End Update

This memorandum summarizes the City of Austin's Economic Development Department (EDD) staff's delivery of financial assistance and support programs for Austin workers, businesses, and non-profit organizations that were impacted by the global COVID-19 pandemic. To the greatest extent possible, EDD prioritized equity, need, and vulnerability to develop and implement these programs. Equity strategies included: circulating informational materials and applications in multiple languages; offering one-on-one application assistance to anyone who needed support; and scoring applications to account for demographic factors including race, ethnicity, gender, and zip code.

COVID-19 Economic Recovery Programs

EDD launched eleven COVID-19 financial assistance and support programs since [Mayor Steve Adler's declaration of a local state of disaster](#) on March 6, 2020. **Collectively, these programs distributed \$32,877,216.98 to 4,853 individuals, non-profit organizations, and businesses impacted by the global COVID-19 pandemic.** Each program helped businesses and non-profit organizations avoid closure and retain jobs, including jobs for historically marginalized workers and artists. These programs also helped individuals, creatives, and households meet their basic needs.

- The [Austin Childcare Provider Relief Fund](#) distributed \$1,048,000 in grants to 72 center-based and home-based childcare providers. Council designated an additional \$5 million for the program through the [Save Austin's Vital Economic Sectors \(SAVES\) Fund](#) on October 1, 2020. EDD selected the United Way for Greater Austin to distribute this second round of funds. United Way is accepting applications until January 15, 2021. Childcare providers can visit [ATXrecovers.com](#) to view eligibility guidelines and apply for one-time grants up to \$60,000.
- The [Austin Creative Space Disaster Relief Program](#) distributed \$987,943 in grants to 32 for-profit live music venues, performance spaces, art galleries, arts-focused non-profits, and individual artists facing temporary or permanent displacement. Recipients used these funds for commercial rent and to defray rent hikes, property acquisition costs, or other space-related needs such as facility improvements or displacement-related expenditures.
- The [Austin Creative Worker Relief Grant](#) distributed \$3,344,000 in grants to over 1,866 creative sector workers impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Recipients used their one-time grants for expenses such as rent, bills, groceries, and other COVID-19 related expenses.

- The [Austin Economic Injury Bridge Loan Program](#) distributed \$645,000 in short-term, low interest loans to 19 small businesses impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Recipients used their loans to pay for business expenses like rent, payroll, and debt. EDD used a portion of the City's federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act allocation to forgive these loans.
- The [Austin Live Music Venue Preservation Fund](#) will distribute \$5,000,000 to eligible live music venues in two phases. In Phase One, eligible applicants with an immediate risk of closure will receive a one-time \$20,000 grant for emergency needs. A total of \$693,999.98 was distributed from December 24 through December 31 to 35 local, live music venues during Phase One. In Phase Two, eligible applicants can apply for up to \$140,000 in additional funding after creating an Equity Strategic Plan. The Long Center was selected to administer this program and distribute these funds. The Long Center is accepting applications until January 11, 2021. Live music venue operators can visit [ATXrecovers.com](#) to view eligibility guidelines and apply for funding.
- The [Austin Music Disaster Relief Fund](#) distributed \$1,500,000 in grants to 1,500 performing musicians impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Recipients used their one-time \$1,000 grant to offset demonstrated income loss as a result of the global COVID-19 pandemic.
- The [Austin Non-Profit Relief Grant](#) distributed \$6,027,510 in grants to 365 non-profit organizations impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The [Austin Small Business Relief Grant](#) distributed \$16,243,367 in grants to 885 small businesses impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. EDD will distribute an additional \$2,387,397 to 79 small businesses that previously applied for the program but did not receive funds. This additional distribution stems from other program recommendations (Worker and Customer Safety: Small Business Safety Compliance Grants, Technical Assistance Fund, and Rent Assistance for Commercial Landlords) that were [reallocated to support the overwhelming need of local small businesses](#).

TABLE 1: EDD-ADMINISTERED ECONOMIC RECOVERY PROGRAMS		
April 2020	May 2020	June 2020
Austin Economic Injury Bridge Loan Program		Austin Creative Space Disaster Relief Program; Austin Music Disaster Relief Fund
July 2020	August 2020	September 2020
Austin Childcare Provider Relief Grant; Austin Non-Profit Relief Grant; Austin Small Business Relief Grant	Austin Music Disaster Relief Fund Round 2; Austin Creative Worker Relief Grant	Austin Non-Profit Relief Grant Round 2
October 2020	November 2020	December 2020
24/7 COVID-19 Health and Wellness Support Line	Healthcare Access Program Partnership	Austin Childcare Provider Relief Grant; Austin Live Music Venue Preservation Fund

To provide greater transparency and accountability for the COVID-19 recovery programs, EDD created and published interactive dashboards for each grant. Each dashboard displays information such as the number of applications received for each program, profiles of applicants (minus personal identifying information), and approval and denial rates. The dashboards can be viewed online through [ATXrecovers.com](#).

EDD is preparing to announce more financial assistance programs as early as January 2021. This includes launching the [Austin Legacy Business Relief Grant](#), which will distribute \$5 million to eligible businesses that have operated from a publicly-facing (brick and mortar) business for at least 20 years in an area that is currently within a City of Austin Council District. EDD will provide more information about future programs in subsequent memoranda, as well as through the City's economic recovery website: [ATXrecovers.com](#).

COVID-19 Supportive Services

EDD created new services to help workers, small business owners, and non-profit leaders overcome the unprecedented challenges caused by the global COVID-19 pandemic. EDD also modified existing business operations to support and sustain stakeholders throughout the year.

- EDD quickly created [ATXrecovers.com](https://www.atxrecovers.com) as a one-stop location for the community to find information about recovery grants and services offered by the City of Austin, Central Texas jurisdictions, and community partners. The site also features the latest information about local, state, and federal recovery policies, as well as economic indicators for the local economy.
- EDD partnered with the U.S. Small Business Administration's (SBA) San Antonio District Office to host a [virtual Federal Financial Resources workshop](#) to ensure Austinites understood the eligibility requirements and application processes for federal resources available to businesses, non-profit organizations, and self-employed individuals impacted by the global COVID-19 pandemic. Discussion topics included information about the Paycheck Protection Program and the Economic Injury Disaster Loan Program. More than 100 guests registered for the event. Both EDD and the SBA received positive feedback from attendees. The workshop empowered local employers and entrepreneurs to take full advantage of these federal disaster relief programs.
- EDD partnered with Alliance Work Partners to create [a confidential and no-cost 24-hour mental wellness](#) support line to provide short-term counseling and support to Austin workers and families whose mental health was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The support line will operate into 2021, and services are available in English, Spanish, and more than 150 additional languages. Alliance Work Partners' counselors are trained to support individuals experiencing stress, depression, anxiety, domestic violence, alcohol and drug abuse/dependency, marital and family issues, and more. Counselors also provide resources and referrals for various needs, including childcare, eldercare, legal, and financial support.
- EDD partnered with Health Alliance for Austin Musicians (HAAM) to provide access to affordable health care for Austin's low-income, underinsured working musicians through the [Healthcare Access Program](#). This partnership supported Austin musicians by offering year-long comprehensive coverage that includes access to mental health care.
- EDD's Small Business Division pivoted their operations to provide more than 1,022 hours of no-cost virtual business training, educational events, and coaching to empower entrepreneurs and local businesses. These critical services sustained businesses through the year, fostered job retention and creation, and supported the growth of new and existing businesses by providing capacity building information, tools, and resources. Business owners and entrepreneurs can continue to access these services online at www.smallbizatx.org.
- EDD facilitated more than 125 engagements with community stakeholders and City-wide staff to identify pragmatic opportunities to support Austin's economic recovery and resiliency. These efforts will inform the City's Economic Recovery and Resiliency Framework, which is tentatively scheduled for a public reveal in early 2021.

Next Steps

EDD will continue implementing many of the programs and services mentioned in this memo. EDD is also preparing to launch new programs in 2021, including the Austin Legacy Business Relief Grant. EDD remains committed to ensuring every program effectively and equitably addresses the needs of local businesses, nonprofit organizations, and residents. Please contact me at Veronica.Briseno@austintexas.gov if you have questions regarding this update.

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