Carver County Small Business Emergency Assistance Program

Implementation Report
March 2021

NextStage
Supporting Entrepreneurs at Every Stage

Section 1. Overview and Context

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, also known as the CARES Act, was an economic stimulus bill passed by Congress on March 27, 2020 in response to the economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States.

This bill provided $150 billion dollars in funding to state governments, eligible local governments (for example, Hennepin and Ramsey Counties in Minnesota), the District of Columbia, US Territories, and Tribal governments.

The State of Minnesota was allocated $1.87 billion from the CARES Act and in June of last year announced a plan to distribute $841 million of those funds to "support local government Coronavirus relief efforts." These funds were distributed to counties, cities and townships in the state using a formula based on population size.

Carver County received $12.8 million to fund its Coronavirus relief efforts. The County created the Carver County Small Business Emergency Assistance Fund "to provide emergency financial assistance, through a $10,000 beneficiary payment, to small businesses located in Carver County who have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The goal of program is to assist and stabilize businesses through this economic crisis."

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Section 2. Application and Award Process and Data

Carver County approved the Small Business Emergency Assistance (SBEA) program in July 2020 and initially released $700,000 in funds to Carver County Community Development Agency (CDA) to provide assistance to qualified small businesses in its jurisdiction. These funds were supplemented by investments from the cities of Waconia, Norwood Young America, Carver, Chaska, Chanhassen, Mayer and New Germany who worked in partnership with the CDA, contributing a portion of their own CARES funds to support additional businesses in their jurisdictions.

Acting as the program administrator on behalf of CDA and participating cities, NextStage received and processed 275 unique applications. This included applications received in the initial application period, applications from the waitlist, and a secondary application round to include home-based businesses. (Table 1)

While the original program guidelines excluded home-based businesses, the CDA later added funding to support these applicants making awards of up to $5,000 per home-based applicant available. Applicants from the original application pool who had been deemed ineligible as home-based were reviewed based on the updated criteria. Additionally, a second application window was opened and home-based businesses in Carver County were encouraged to apply.

The review process determined that 7% of the applications were ineligible for funding from Carver County's SBEA program (Table 2). Another 32% of applicants either failed to complete the process or withdrew their application. The resulting award approval rate was 61%.

A list of the 168 businesses that received funding can be found in Appendix A.

Table 1: Carver County SBEA Approval Rate	
Unique County Applications (Less Duplicates)	275
LESS: Ineligible Applications (see Table 2 for detail)	20
LESS: Applicant Withdrew or Failed to Complete	87
Total Approved Awards	168
Award Approval Rate	**61.1%**

Table 2: Unfunded Applications by Reason		
Reason	**Applications**	**% of Total Applications**
Funded by DEED/City	6	2.2%
Income > $2 Million	4	1.5%
Ineligible Business Type/Industry	4	1.5%
Unable to Demonstrate Impact	3	1.1%
Not in Carver County	2	0.7%
More than 40 Employees	1	0.4%
Subtotal of Ineligible Applications	20	7.3%
Withdrawn	6	2.2%
Incomplete at Program Deadline	4	1.5%
Failed to Respond to Repeated Contact	77	28.0%
Total Unfunded Applications	**107**	**38.9%**

Carver County provided emergency assistance of almost $820K to approximately 100 businesses. Including funding awarded by cities in Carver County – Carver, Chanhassen, Chaska, Mayer, New Germany, Norwood Young America, and Waconia – the SBEA Program administered a total of 168 awards of almost $1.47 million. (Table 3)

Table 3: Approved Awards by Funding Source		
Funding Source	**Awards**	**$ Amount**
Carver County Initial Round	68.8	$665,300
Carver County Home-Based Businesses	31.0	$153,000
Subtotal: Carver County	99.8	$818,300
Carver	6.0	$58,100
Chanhassen	15.0	$138,000
Chaska	10.0	$97,600
Mayer	2.0	$20,000
New Germany[1]	0.2	$2,000
Norwood Young America	13.0	$120,900
Waconia	22.0	$212,700
Total Approved Awards	**168**	**$ 1,467,600**

[1]New Germany business qualified for the full $10k award -- NG provided $2k, with the balance coming from CDA funds.

Exploring the awards by business type, reveals that "Food" businesses – restaurants, bars, grocery stores etc. – received over 22% of awarded funds. "Service to Consumer" and "Health Care & Wellness" businesses were close behind in the second and third spots with 21% and 19% respectively. (Table 4)

Table 4: Approved Awards by Business Type			
Business Type	**Grants**	**Total Award Amount[1]**	**% of Total Amount**
Food: Restaurants, Bars, Convenience, Grocery	33	$330,000	22.5%
Service to Consumers	37	$310,500	21.2%
Health Care & Wellness	30	$271,600	18.5%
Retail	18	$159,200	10.8%
Service to Business	19	$129,100	8.8%
Other	7	$65,000	4.4%
Manufacturing	5	$45,000	3.1%
Finance & Insurance	4	$39,000	2.7%
Construction	5	$38,200	2.6%
Agriculture	3	$30,000	2.0%
Transportation & Warehousing	4	$20,000	1.4%
Asset & Property Management	2	$20,000	1.4%
Wholesale	1	$10,000	0.7%
Total Approved Grants	**168**	**$ 1,467,600**	**100.0%**

<u>Application Process</u>: Carver County Small Business Emergency Assistance Program

The Carver County SBEA Program offered small businesses that completed the application process and met all requirements a reimbursement of operating expenses up to $10,000 ($5,000 for home-based businesses). The application window for this program ran from August 17 to September 4, 2020.

Anticipating greater demand than available funding was likely to meet, the program was designed with several eligibility requirements intended to narrow the focus of the funding without making direct allocations. To be eligible, businesses had to meet the following conditions as of March 1, 2020:

- Be a locally owned and operated for-profit business with a physical establishment in Carver County.
- Have 40 or fewer employees.
- Have $2 million or less in annual revenue.
- Be open and operating on or before January 1, 2020.
- Be in good regulatory standing with the State of Minnesota, Carver County, and city in which the business is located. This includes being current on applicable licenses, in compliance with city regulations, and being current on property taxes.
- Be located in a commercial or industrial zoned district or allowed by a conditional use permit as defined by the regulating authority's approved Land Use Map.
- Be able to demonstrate a loss of revenue of at least 10 percent since March 15, 2020 (no credit score or collateral requirements apply).
- For-profit farming operations are eligible.
- Businesses that applied for or were awarded any COVID-related federal funding, such as the Small Business Administration's Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) or the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) are eligible for this funding.

The program guidelines defined as <u>ineligible</u>:

- Businesses without a physical establishment in Carver County
- Non-profit organizations
- Corporate or multi-state chains. Franchisees are considered eligible businesses.
- Businesses in default conditions prior to March 1, 2020.
- Businesses the primarily derive income from any of the following: gambling; adult entertainment; passive investment; real estate transactions; property rentals/property management; billboards; or lobbying.
- Businesses that primarily sell pawned merchandise, guns, tobacco or vaping products.
- Businesses awarded COVID related emergency funds through the State of Minnesota Small Business Emergency Loan or the Small Business Relief Grant programs are ineligible.

Carver County businesses that were interested in applying for funding were directed to an online application process. In addition to completing the application, applicants were required to provide:

1. An *Itemized Budget for Use of Funds* (Appendix B) that identified the following qualified business expenses incurred between March 16 and August 31, 2020:
    - payroll,
    - rent or mortgage,
    - utilities,
    - vendor or supplier payments, and
    - expenses related to COVID safety measures.
2. Documentation of 2019 Federal taxes paid,
3. Impact statement of business losses due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and
4. Completed and signed W-9 form.

As the program administrator, NextStage staff reviewed the application materials, submitted documents, and, where necessary, conducted follow-up investigation to determine that each applicant:

- Met the definition of "impact" required by the CARES Act,
- Conformed to the County-Approved Criteria set forth in the Program Guidelines,
- Provided detailed expenses for reimbursement allowable under the rules of the CARES Act, and
- The expenses were reasonable compared with the regular expenses reflected in the applicant's historical tax and financial documentation.

Demographics of Awardees

Three demographic questions were asked during the application process regarding: Gender, Race/Ethnicity, and Veteran Status. The questions were voluntary, and applicants were offered the option of "prefer not to say."

As shown in Table 5, the SBEA program provided financial assistance to women-owned and minority-owned businesses at a higher rate than they are represented in the Carver County business community (green cells) according to the US Census Bureau (2012). Veteran-owned businesses, however, were underrepresented in the program (orange cells).

Table 5: Demographics of Awardees[1]

Demographic	Category	#	%	CC Business Owners[2]
Gender	Male	74	56.9%	65.0%
	Female	55	42.3%	35.0%
	Other	1	0.8%	Not Collected
	Total	130	100.0%	100.0%
Race/Ethnicity (One Stage)	Amer Indian/Alaska Native	1	0.8%	
	Asian	12	9.2%	
	Black/African American	2	1.5%	
	Hispanic/Latinx	2	1.5%	
	Non-White	17	13.1%	6.2%
	White/Caucasian	113	86.9%	93.8.%
	Total	130	100.0%	100.0%
Veteran Status	Yes	7	5.4%	7.5%
	No	123	94.6%	92.5%
	Total	130	100.0%	100.0%

[1] Collected during application process. Percentages are of those that responded to the question.

[1] 2012 US Census for Carver County Business Owners

Section 3. Audit Process and Results

NextStage designed the application process with two audit objectives in mind:

1. Ensuring that the emergency funds were only used for expenses permitted by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, and
2. Ensuring that the expenses reimbursed with these funds were not reimbursed by any other funding source that did not require the funds to be paid back.

Application Process Contribution to the Audit Process

To address these objectives, the application process required each applicant to complete an *Itemized Budget for Use of Funds* and enumerate the eligible expenses the business incurred within the reimbursement period (March 16 to August 31, 2020). A template was provided (see Appendix B) and required three data points for each eligible expense:

1. The business' actual and documented expenses for each expense category.
2. The amount of the expense, if any, that was reimbursed by another funding source with no expectation of repayment (e.g., other CARES-funded programs, funding from an association, etc).
3. The calculated difference between the first and second columns, which would be the amount of the expense eligible for reimbursement from Carver County's SBEA program.

As part of the application review process, NextStage staff examined every applicant's submitted budget documents and compared the proposed expenses to historical documentation provided by the applicant – including tax returns and payroll reports – to confirm the reasonableness of the proposed expenses.

The second objective – ensuring that the applicant was not "double-dipping" on expense reimbursement – was of particular concern. Multiple CARES-funded programs – Paycheck Protection Program, SBA EIDL, Minnesota DEED grants, etc – were running concurrently with Carver County's program, but there was limited public information available on these other programs. As a result, it was impossible to independently confirm what, if any, additional funding an applicant may have received, or what expenses those funds might have reimbursed. Consequently, NextStage needed to rely solely on an applicant self-reporting and signing statements certifying the information provided was accurate.

As part of the application process, each applicant was required to certify that:

- the information they provided was true and accurate,
- they understood the source of the funding,
- funds awarded from the program would not be used to reimburse any expense reported to or reimbursed by another CARES-funded program, and
- they were subject to audit by NextStage.

Each applicant's *Itemized Budget* was included in the *Official Funding Agreement* and the applicant was again required to sign and recertify the same statements they certified in the application process (see Appendix C).

Audit Process

NextStage selected a random sample of 28 awardees – almost 17% of the 168 businesses that received assistance from the program. The businesses selected were required to provide the following:

- Documentation of each individual expense greater than $250 that was reimbursed using the awarded funds.
- Total documentation representing at least 80% of the total award.
- A summary list of individual expenses less than $250 that were reimbursed by the award. This list could not exceed 20% of the total award.

These documents were reviewed by a NextStage auditor, who is separate from the staff who reviewed the applications. The auditor reviewed each document provided by the applicant to determine if it represented an eligible expense under the program and CARES rules, and if it fell within the window for eligible expenses per the original program guidelines – March 16 to August 30.

Auditors reviewed and logged each reported expense in an audit summery document, detailing the document type, time period, description, expense category, and the portion eligible for program reimbursement. An awardee was issued a passing grade if the business owner was able to provide expense detail and sufficient documentation to support the total award and the expenses were within the eligible time period of the program.

Table 6: Carver County SBEA Program Audit Pass Rate

Audit Process Outcome	Awardees	Rate
Passed Audit Process	28	100.0%
Failed Audit Process	0	0.0%
Total Audited: 16.7% of Awardees	28	100.0%

As shown in Table 6, all awardees audited by NextStage passed the process. We attribute the high audit pass rate to two factors:

1. The time period for eligible expenses was lengthy, nearly six months. It is not difficult for any business, even small businesses, to have incurred eligible expenses of at least $10,000 over that length of time.

2. NextStage built into the review process a rigorous examination of the claimed expenses for each applicant. For example, the initial budget review compared the expenses identified by the applicant for reimbursement to the business' historical expenses. While most applicants were able to demonstrate eligible expenses of at least $10,000 as explained in the first point, nearly 18% of applicants received less due to the upfront review.

Section 4. Survey Results

NextStage, in consultation with Carver County staff, developed a survey to measure the satisfaction of award recipients with the SBEA Program process and outcomes.

The survey invitation was sent to every Carver County business that received an award for a total of 168 invitations with a response rate of 41%. This rate is well above the expected rate of 30% for this type of survey. Below are the key findings and complete analysis from this survey.

Level of Operation Question: Which level of operation best describes your business currently?

Almost 86% of businesses that responded to the survey were open at full or partial capacity as of February 2021. This compares to 95% of businesses from the total cohort of business across all counties and cities that participated in the survey. (Table 7)

Table 7: Current Level of Operation[1]

Level of Operation	Carver County		Total Cohort[2]	
	#	%	#	%
Open -- Full Capacity	20	29.0%	230	40.6%
Open -- Partial Capacity	39	56.5%	310	54.7%
Closed -- Temporarily	10	14.5%	27	4.8%
Closed -- Permanently	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Total	69	100.0%	567	100.0%

[1] As of Februrary 2021
[2] "Cohort" is the aggregated group of respondents from all participating counties and cities

Impact of Award Questions: Please indicate the level of impact this financial assistance had on the following areas of your business.

Over 62% business owners indicated the SBEA award they received had a significant impact on their ability to pay their bills (green cell). This positive perception aligns closely with the total cohort. (Table 8)

In general, a higher percentage of Carver County businesses felt the SBEA program had a significant positive impact on their business than the cohort, with two exceptions. Only 12% of businesses felt the program had a significant impact on the ability to keep all or most of their staff employed (orange cell). The other low score – although to a lesser degree – was the ability to keep your employees and customers safe.

The higher percentage of Carver County businesses indicating stronger impact on "pay yourself" over "keep staff employed" correlates with Carver County's decision to include self-employed/no-employee businesses and home-based businesses – nearly one-third of the County's grantees had one or no employees. Several counties in the comparison group, *Total Cohort,* established significantly more restrictive eligibility requirements, which explains the variation in the perceived impact.

Table 8: Impact of Carver County SBEA Program					
Area of Business	Level of Impact	Carver County		Total Cohort[1]	
		%	Weighted Score	%	Weighted Score
Ability to stay open or reopen	Significant Impact	55.1%	3.2 out of 4	52.4%	3.2 out of 4
	Moderate Impact	17.4%		21.3%	
	Some Impact	23.2%		20.5%	
	Little to No Impact	4.3%		5.8%	
Ability to pay yourself (owner)	Significant Impact	46.4%	2.7 out of 4	33.2%	2.5 out of 4
	Moderate Impact	10.1%		14.6%	
	Some Impact	11.6%		17.1%	
	Little to No Impact	31.9%		35.1%	
Ability to keep all or most of your staff employed	Significant Impact	11.6%	2.3 out of 4	27.7%	2.6 out of 4
	Moderate Impact	37.7%		27.7%	
	Some Impact	24.6%		25.6%	
	Little to No Impact	26.1%		19.0%	
Ability to pay your bills	Significant Impact	62.3%	3.4 out of 4	60.3%	3.4 out of 4
	Moderate Impact	18.8%		19.9%	
	Some Impact	11.6%		16.0%	
	Little to No Impact	7.2%		3.7%	
Ability to keep your employees and customers safe	Significant Impact	34.8%	2.5 out of 4	39.0%	2.7 out of 4
	Moderate Impact	8.7%		18.2%	
	Some Impact	27.5%		18.3%	
	Little to No Impact	29.0%		24.5%	
Aggregated Impact Score	Significant Impact	42.0%	2.8 out of 4	42.5%	2.9 out of 4
	Moderate Impact	18.6%		20.4%	
	Some Impact	19.7%		19.5%	
	Little to No Impact	19.7%		17.6%	

[1] "Cohort" is the aggregated group of respondents from all participating counties and cities.

Green Cells = Area of Business the award was perceived to have the MOST impact

Orange Cells = Area of Business the award was perceived to have the LEAST impact

Awareness of Program Question: How did you hear about the opportunity to apply for financial assistance from Carver County's Small Business Emergency Relief Program?

As with other cities and counties that participated in this survey, businesses were largely made aware of the program through the governmental entity's website or a business association, like the Chamber of Commerce.

Professional associations had a bigger impact on spreading the word within the Carver County business community than with the total cohort. The real take away from this table, however, is that no one source of information played a significant role in getting the word out and demonstrates the importance of having a diversified, multi-faceted information campaign.

Table 9: Awareness of Carver County SBEA Program

Source of Information[1]	Percent[2]	Cohort Rank[3]
Business Association/Chamber of Commerce	33.3%	1
Carver County Website	21.7%	2
Carver County Staff or Elected Official	20.3%	3
Professional Associate	15.9%	7
Friend or Family Member	14.5%	6
Media Coverage/Press Release	8.7%	4
Community Organization	7.2%	8
Flyer/Mailing	4.3%	5

[1] Listed in order of highest percentage of respondents selecting the source of information.
[2] Percentages add to more than 100% as respondents selected all that applied.
[3] "Cohort" is the aggregated group of respondents from all participating counties and cities.

Satisfaction with Process Questions: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements regarding the application process.

Overall, the responses to these questions were very positive with almost 100% agreement – at some level -- with the statements (gray row in Table 10).

Although there was uniformity in the overall agreement, differences can be seen when comparing the strength of that agreement. For example, compare the statement "NextStage was responsive with communications," which had the highest *Strongly Agree* rate of 71% (green cell) to "I was able to complete the application online without difficulty," which had the lowest *Strongly Agree* rate of 59% (orange cell).

Table 10: Satisfaction with Process

Level of Agreement	The application was clear and understandable.		I was able to complete the application online without difficulty.	
	#	%	#	%
Strongly Agree	40	58.8%	45	66.2%
Agree	22	32.4%	18	26.5%
Somewhat Agree	5	7.4%	3	4.4%
Agree Combined	**67**	**98.5%**	**66**	**97.1%**
Somewhat Disagree	1	1.5%	1	1.5%
Disagree	0	0.0%	1	1.5%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Weighted Score	**5.5 out of 6**		**5.5 out of 6**	

Table 10 (continued): Satisfaction with Process

Level of Agreement	NextStage was timely and responsive with communications.		NextStage was knowledgeable and informative.		The process used by NextStage for providing documentation was understandable and clear.	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Strongly Agree	48	70.6%	46	67.6%	44	64.7%
Agree	15	22.1%	17	25.0%	19	27.9%
Somewhat Agree	5	7.4%	5	7.4%	4	5.9%
Agree Combined	**68**	**100.0%**	**68**	**100.0%**	**67**	**98.5%**
Somewhat Disagree	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	1.5%
Disagree	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Weighted Score	**5.6 out of 6**		**5.6 out of 6**		**5.6 out of 6**	

Green Cell = Statement with which highest percent of respondents "strongly agree"
Orange Cell = Statement with which lowest percent of respondents "strongly agree"

Summary of Open-Ended Comments

Survey respondents were provided three opportunities to share their thoughts and opinions regarding:

- the application process,
- the program administrator, NextStage, and
- the overall impact of the program and further needs of your business.

Despite the guidance provided by the wording of the open-ended questions, the responses were not always on topic. The verbatim comments can be found in Appendix D; although, personal names were replaced with generic language.

It is clear from the comments that Carver County businesses are very grateful for the financial assistance they received form the SBEA program during these challenging and uncertain times. With few exceptions, the comments were very positive about the process, NextStage, and the overall impact of the program. Here are just a few examples:

> "Great experience, well managed. Next stage was very helpful with the questions that I had during my application and throughout the process."

> "I appreciate every grant we have received. Receiving this grant came at a very critical time for us. Our funds were running low for payroll and this helped me pay my employees and keep our doors open."

> "Really appreciated the ease of applying and receiving funds. Everyone was responsive and pleasant."

> "Thank you so much for this program. Absolutely life-changing lifeline at the right time in the struggle!

> "Great experience. Next stage was incredibly helpful throughout the grant process."

Their words express how it has helped not only their business, but the people that depend on them to be open – their employees and the communities they serve.

> "Our business dropped 31 percent in gross income due to Covid and having to shut down and then only be partially open. We were able to keep all 19 part time employees employed, and our business from closing, due to the assistance we received."

Home-based businesses expressed their appreciation for opening the program to include them.

> "This was so very helpful as a self-employed health care provider. I have a home-based office and was literally a few hours too late to apply for the EIDL grant and was too nervous about payback ability to apply for the loan. When this opportunity came, I was both elated and then heartbroken as initially, home-businesses were excluded. Thank you so much for allowing us to be a part of this. It has helped me and I am holding hope I can apply for the next grant and be awarded something. My practice has declined as telehealth is not always an appropriate medium for my clients, and in-person in their homes is still not safe. Thank you for opening this up for me."

Business also made it clear that additional assistance and expanded programs would be necessary for them to survive.

> "Another round of this program, perhaps with a slightly higher ticket value would be amazing should the federal funds come available. The b2b opportunities are looking up as we go forward, but there's still a couple month gap between the prospecting opportunities and getting paid again. Thank you, thank you, thank you for what you've done for Carver County businesses!"

Some businesses made suggestions to improve the process and program impact.

> "It would be helpful if we could get a reply that our documents were received."

> "It was very easy to apply and the responses were prompt. Only suggestion would be for an email acknowledge of the initial submission of intent of interest."

Section 5. Wrap-Up and Recommendations

Through the Carver County Small Business Emergency Assistance Program, Carver County and its city partners distributed 168 small business awards, providing more than $1,467,000 of emergency aid to struggling businesses throughout the County. More than 90% of recipients credit the program with helping to keep their doors open, and more than 80% say it helped them retain their employees. Given the goal of the program and the intent of the CARES Act, this program was a huge success.

Relative to peer counties NextStage administered, the Carver County CARES program had a very low rate of denied/ineligible applicants (less than 10%) with the largest reason for ineligibility being otherwise qualified applicants receiving a CARES-funded grant through DEED. This is a direct result of the County's initial decisions related to eligibility; the program set eligibility limits for the maximum number of employees and revenue, but set no minimum employee requirement, and a low revenue requirement. These decisions – along with eventually opening the program up to home-based businesses – were instrumental in ensuring that the program was open and accessible to the vast majority of locally owned, owner-operated businesses in the county.

Without diminishing the program's overall success, there were challenges in the delivery of this program, and lessons that we can learn for the benefit of future programs.

Non-Responsive Applicants

As we now evaluate the program and our processes, one factor that really stands out was the high volume of applicants (27%) who were completely non-responsive to any follow-up for information or documents despite repeated attempts at contact.

This phenomenon was not unique to Carver County as other regional program – and programs around the country – experienced similar issues. It does, however, create real challenges with projecting total commitments, and slows down processing overall as we wait for response. Carver County received more applications than it could fund in the initial application, necessitating a lottery for initial selection and review. In delivering this program, we erred on the side of giving business as much time/opportunity as possible to respond, but that meant a long wait before pivoting to businesses placed on a waitlist- which may have exacerbated non-responsiveness once they were moved to active status.

Recommendation: NextStage saw essentially the same response/non-response rates in subsequent programs it administered with much shorter response windows. Given this, NextStage recommends keeping a tighter schedule in future programs and pivoting away sooner to alternate applicants or uses.

Application/Process Complexity

While 97% of respondents agreed that the application process was clear and manageable, less than 2/3's of respondents indicated that they strongly agreed. Additionally, the survey pool only consists of approved applicants, so it is possible that confusion with the application process was a factor for some number of non-responsive applicants as well. Much of the program and application complexity was unavoidable as there were multiple federal, state and local programs running concurrently utilizing CARES funds, and it was critically important to ensure that Carver funds were not used to reimburse expenses covered by any other source. However, for future programs we would consider the following:

- Client-management software with client-facing interface for applicants to monitor their progress.
- A program-specific website that would provide program-wide updates, and include tutorials and FAQ's detailing the process.
- Establish/Communicate alternative methods for providing program documents (such as mail & fax options, possibly a drop-off site).

Appendix A. List of Award Recipients

Funding Source	Business Name	City	Award Amount
CDA	[redacted]	Carver	$9,000
CDA	[redacted]	Chanhassen	$10,000
CDA	[redacted]	Chanhassen	$10,000
CDA	[redacted]	Chanhassen	$10,000
CDA	[redacted]	Chanhassen	$10,000
CDA	[redacted]	Chanhassen	$10,000
CDA	[redacted]	Chanhassen	$10,000
CDA	[redacted]	Chanhassen	$10,000
CDA	[redacted]	Chanhassen	$10,000
CDA	[redacted]	Chanhassen	$10,000
CDA	[redacted]	Chanhassen	$10,000
CDA	[redacted]	Chanhassen	$10,000
CDA	[redacted]	Chanhassen	$10,000
CDA	[redacted]	Chanhassen	$10,000
CDA	[redacted]	Chanhassen	$10,000
CDA	[redacted]	Chanhassen	$9,800
CDA	[redacted]	Chanhassen	$10,000
CDA	[redacted]	Chaska	$10,000
CDA	[redacted]	Chaska	$10,000
CDA	[redacted]	Chaska	$10,000
CDA	[redacted]	Chaska	$10,000
CDA	[redacted]	Chaska	$10,000
CDA	[redacted]	Chaska	$10,000
CDA	[redacted]	Chaska	$8,200
CDA	[redacted]	Chaska	$10,000
CDA	[redacted]	Chaska	$10,000
CDA	[redacted]	Chaska	$10,000
CDA	[redacted]	Chaska	$10,000
CDA	[redacted]	Chaska	$10,000
CDA	[redacted]	Chaska	$10,000
CDA	[redacted]	Chaska	$10,000
CDA	[redacted]	Chaska	$9,900
CDA	[redacted]	Chaska	$10,000
CDA	[redacted]	Chaska	$10,000
CDA	[redacted]	Cologne	$10,000
CDA	[redacted]	Cologne	$10,000
CDA	[redacted]	Hamburg	$10,000
CDA	[redacted]	Mayer	$10,000
CDA	[redacted]	New Germany	$10,000
CDA	[redacted]	Norwood Young America	$10,000
CDA	[redacted]	Norwood Young America	$10,000

CDA	[redacted]	Norwood Young America	$8,000
CDA	[redacted]	Norwood Young America	$10,000
CDA	[redacted]	Norwood Young America	$10,000
CDA	[redacted]	Norwood Young America	$5,000
CDA	[redacted]	Norwood Young America	$10,000
CDA	[redacted]	Victoria	$10,000
CDA	[redacted]	Victoria	$10,000
CDA	[redacted]	Victoria	$10,000
CDA	[redacted]	Victoria	$10,000
CDA	[redacted]	Victoria	$10,000
CDA	[redacted]	Victoria	$10,000
CDA	[redacted]	Victoria	$10,000
CDA	[redacted]	Victoria	$10,000
CDA	[redacted]	Waconia	$10,000
CDA	[redacted]	Waconia	$10,000
CDA	[redacted]	Waconia	$10,000
CDA	[redacted]	Waconia	$10,000
CDA	[redacted]	Waconia	$7,500
CDA	[redacted]	Waconia	$10,000
CDA	[redacted]	Waconia	$4,400
CDA	[redacted]	Waconia	$10,000
CDA	[redacted]	Watertown	$10,000
CDA	[redacted]	Watertown	$10,000
CDA	[redacted]	Watertown	$5,500
CDA	[redacted]	Watertown	$10,000
CDA	[redacted]	Watertown	$10,000
CDA	[redacted]	Watertown	$10,000
CDA	[redacted]	Watertown	$10,000
Home-Based	[redacted]	Carver	$5,000
Home-Based	[redacted]	Carver	$4,100
Home-Based	[redacted]	Chanhassen	$5,000
Home-Based	[redacted]	Chanhassen	$5,000
Home-Based	[redacted]	Chanhassen	$5,000
Home-Based	[redacted]	Chanhassen	$5,000
Home-Based	[redacted]	Chanhassen	$5,000
Home-Based	[redacted]	Chanhassen	$5,000
Home-Based	[redacted]	Chaska	$5,000
Home-Based	[redacted]	Chaska	$5,000
Home-Based	[redacted]	Chaska	$5,000
Home-Based	[redacted]	Chaska	$5,000
Home-Based	[redacted]	Chaska	$5,000
Home-Based	[redacted]	Chaska	$5,000
Home-Based	[redacted]	Chaska	$5,000
Home-Based	[redacted]	Chaska	$5,000
Home-Based	[redacted]	Cologne	$5,000

Home-Based	[redacted]	Cologne	$5,000
Home-Based	[redacted]	Cologne	$5,000
Home-Based	[redacted]	Hamburg	$5,000
Home-Based	[redacted]	New Germany	$5,000
Home-Based	[redacted]	Norwood Young America	$5,000
Home-Based	[redacted]	Norwood Young America	$5,000
Home-Based	[redacted]	Victoria	$5,000
Home-Based	[redacted]	Victoria	$5,000
Home-Based	[redacted]	Waconia	$5,000
Home-Based	[redacted]	Waconia	$5,000
Home-Based	[redacted]	Waconia	$5,000
Home-Based	[redacted]	Watertown	$5,000
Home-Based	[redacted]	Watertown	$3,900
Home-Based	[redacted]	Watertown	$5,000
Carver	[redacted]	Carver	$10,000
Carver	[redacted]	Carver	$10,000
Carver	[redacted]	Carver	$10,000
Carver	[redacted]	Carver	$9,400
Carver	[redacted]	Carver	$8,700
Carver	[redacted]	Carver	$10,000
Chanhassen	[redacted]	Chanhassen	$10,000
Chanhassen	[redacted]	Chanhassen	$10,000
Chanhassen	[redacted]	Chanhassen	$10,000
Chanhassen	[redacted]	Chanhassen	$9,900
Chanhassen	[redacted]	Chanhassen	$5,300
Chanhassen	[redacted]	Chanhassen	$10,000
Chanhassen	[redacted]	Chanhassen	$10,000
Chanhassen	[redacted]	Chanhassen	$10,000
Chanhassen	[redacted]	Chanhassen	$9,400
Chanhassen	[redacted]	Chanhassen	$10,000
Chanhassen	[redacted]	Chanhassen	$10,000
Chanhassen	[redacted]	Chanhassen	$10,000
Chanhassen	[redacted]	Chanhassen	$10,000
Chanhassen	[redacted]	Chanhassen	$3,400
Chanhassen	[redacted]	Chanhassen	$10,000
Chaska	[redacted]	Chaska	$10,000
Chaska	[redacted]	Chaska	$10,000
Chaska	[redacted]	Chaska	$10,000
Chaska	[redacted]	Chaska	$10,000
Chaska	[redacted]	Chaska	$10,000
Chaska	[redacted]	Chaska	$7,600
Chaska	[redacted]	Chaska	$10,000
Chaska	[redacted]	Chaska	$10,000
Chaska	[redacted]	Chaska	$10,000
Chaska	[redacted]	Chaska	$10,000

Mayer	[redacted]	Mayer	$10,000
Mayer	[redacted]	Waconia	$10,000
NYA	[redacted]	Norwood Young America	$10,000
NYA	[redacted]	Norwood Young America	$10,000
NYA	[redacted]	Norwood Young America	$6,900
NYA	[redacted]	Norwood Young America	$9,800
NYA	[redacted]	Norwood Young America	$6,500
NYA	[redacted]	Norwood Young America	$10,000
NYA	[redacted]	Norwood Young America	$10,000
NYA	[redacted]	Norwood Young America	$10,000
NYA	[redacted]	Norwood Young America	$10,000
NYA	[redacted]	Norwood Young America	$10,000
NYA	[redacted]	Norwood Young America	$10,000
NYA	[redacted]	Norwood Young America	$7,700
Waconia	[redacted]	Waconia	$10,000
Waconia	[redacted]	Waconia	$10,000
Waconia	[redacted]	Waconia	$10,000
Waconia	[redacted]	Waconia	$10,000
Waconia	[redacted]	Waconia	$10,000
Waconia	[redacted]	Waconia	$10,000
Waconia	[redacted]	Waconia	$10,000
Waconia	[redacted]	Waconia	$10,000
Waconia	[redacted]	Waconia	$10,000
Waconia	[redacted]	Waconia	$3,900
Waconia	[redacted]	Waconia	$10,000
Waconia	[redacted]	Waconia	$10,000
Waconia	[redacted]	Waconia	$10,000
Waconia	[redacted]	Waconia	$9,600
Waconia	[redacted]	Waconia	$10,000
Waconia	[redacted]	Waconia	$10,000
Waconia	[redacted]	Waconia	$10,000
Waconia	[redacted]	Waconia	$10,000
Waconia	[redacted]	Waconia	$9,200
Waconia	[redacted]	Waconia	$10,000
Waconia	[redacted]	Waconia	$10,000
Waconia	[redacted]	Waconia	$10,000

Appendix B. Itemized Budget for Use of Funds (Template)

Business Name:			
Payroll Costs	**Eligible Expenses**	**Funded by Other Grant/Support Program**	**Request for Reimbursement by CC SBEA**
March (50% of Cost)			
April			
May			
June			
July			
August			
Rent/Mortgage			
March (50% of Cost)			
April			
May			
June			
July			
August			
Utilities			
March (50% of Cost)			
April			
May			
June			
July			
August			
Suppliers/Inventory			
March (50% of Cost)			
April			
May			
June			
July			
August			
Other Costs, PPE, Safety Improvements (Describe)			
Totals			

*Max $10,000

Appendix C. Certifications of Responses and Documentation

Certifications and Signatures

TO BE COMPLETED AND SIGNED BY THE BUSINESS OWNER/OFFICER AUTHORIZED TO SIGN ON BEHALF OF THE APPLICANT BUSINESS

By signing below, I certify that all of the information in the Carver County Small Business Emergency Assistance Fund (CC SBEA) application- along with any and all attachments submitted here- is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge. I understand that I will be audited by the Fund Administrator and will be required to provide receipts and other evidence showing how the business spent the CC SBEA funds. In applying for financial assistance from the CC SBEA, I agree to comply with all federal, state, and local laws and regulations to the extent that such are applicable.

I certify that I am authorized to apply for this award on behalf of the applicant business, and that the following are true:

- The applicant business was open and conducting commerce prior to January 1st, 2020;
- The applicant business has a dedicated Carver County location from which it conducts its principle business that is physically separate from any owner's personal residence;
- That applicant business is a for-profit entity, that was financially viable (not in default conditions) prior to March 1st, 2020, and has been negatively affected by the COVID-19 emergency and/or Governors Executive Order 20-04 or 20-08; and
- That applicant business does not engage in lobbying, derive its primary income from gambling, real estate transactions, the sale of pawned merchandise, guns, tobacco or vaping products, passive investments including property rentals or billboards, or derive any income from adult entertainment.

I understand that information that I submitted in my application to the Carver County Small Business Emergency Assistance Program is considered public, and may be shared with County, City, and CDA staff and officials. I acknowledge that NextStage has been retained by the Carver County CDA to conduct a review of the application information and may rely on representations made in this application in its recommendation to provide funds to my business. I understand that NextStage is authorized to make all inquiries it deems necessary to verify the accuracy of the information, and that all financial data submitted to NextStage will be treated as private or nonpublic data pursuant to the Minnesota Data Practices Act.

Legal Name of Business: _____

Authorized Signer: _____

Title: _____

Business Address: _____

_____

Appendix D. Verbatim Open-Ended Comments from Survey

Open-Ended Question: Please provide any additional feedback regarding your experiences with the application process.

Everyone was very helpful. I truly appreciate it.
good and quick responses to my inquiries.
Great experience, well managed. Next stage was very helpful with the questions that I had during my application and throughout the process.
Help us go though this pandemics..Thanks
I appreciate all the help, very smooth
I appreciate every grant we have received. Receiving this grant came at a very critical time for us. Our funds were running low for payroll and this helped me pay my employees and keep our doors open.
I have pre-existing and current health conditions that create challenges ; no computer to work from home; was grateful for the patience of your staff, the help from my bookkeeper, and luck to find a driver that day to complete the application process.
I was happy with the people I dealt with. Very helpful.
It was very easy to apply and the responses were prompt. Only suggestion would be for an email acknowledge of the initial submission of intent of interest.
It would be helpful if we could get a reply that our documents were received.
Just a huge THANK YOU for this program
Not for sure if I got 6000 or 8000 from the city grant
Our business is a bit unique and I had to chat with CDA staff a few times. They were professional, prompt, and caring. Appreciate what y'all did and how you did it.
Really appreciated the ease of applying and receiving funds. Everyone was responsive and pleasant
Simple and easy to use
Straight forward. Not as cumbersome as some other applications.
thank you for the help
Thank you for including us in the opportunity
Thank you so much for this program. Absolutely life-changing lifeline at the right time in the struggle!
THANK YOU THE GRANT HELPED GREATLY
Thank you very much for the assistance
The staff were terrific helping me navigate the application process!
We experienced no problem and any questions we had were answered promptly and respectfully!

Open-Ended Question: Please provide any additional feedback regarding your experiences with the program administrator, NextStage.

Again, it would be helpful to receive communications about the status of the application and documents; Received, in process, etc.
Easy
Everyone I encountered was very helpful and responsive.
Great experience. Next stage was incredibly helpful throughout the grant process.
It would be quite convenient & less difficult for me if the application process could be done on the cell phone as I have no computer.
NextStage staffperson is a rock star. Always has been. Always will be.
Next stage was great to work with.
Professional
Thank you!
Thanks.
Very pleased and appreciative with our experience!

Open-Ended Question: Please provide any comments you wish to share with Carver County about the impact of this award or the further needs of your business.

Another round of this program, perhaps with a slightly higher ticket value would be amazing should the federal funds come available. The b2b opportunities are looking up as we go forward, but there's still a couple month gap between the prospecting opportunities and getting paid again. Thank you, thank you, thank you for what you've done for Carver County businesses!
As my healthcare consulting services business was devastated overnight by COVID, getting any amount of support has been important.
I appreciate the county recognized small at home businesses for funds. We felt forgotten.
I appreciate the help. This has been an extremely difficult time to be a business owner.
I have lost a considerable amount of revenue. 83% for 2020. Being a cinema I have to give away 50 to 60% of ticket revenue. With limited capacity and COVID numbers high in the county. These funds help pay down fixed and fluctuating utility costs. Without the previous grant I wouldn't have been able to pay my gas bill to heat the building these first 2 months of winter or remove overflowing trash dumpsters created this summer while we were closed. This Money just helps and is keeping me from going Bankrupt and out of business right now.
I really appreciate the availability of this grant. It truly made a huge difference for my business and my well-being during these stressful times.
It was GREATLY appreciated!
It was timely and helped us get through a difficult time
It's somewhat arbitrary to state which dollar of assistance, PPP vs. SBEA for example, was used for which expense, e.g. rent vs. payroll. The combination of these funds enabled us to retain employees, meet financial obligations and make investments in outdoor accommodations. The current round of assistance is going to have even greater positive impact on our business. The drop in sales during the winter executive ordered closure and other restrictions is much greater than that experienced last spring. So this assistance helps us cover the shortfall and make additional investment in outdoor accommodations.
My business remains on the edge, with less than two months of cash to continue to operate.
My business still needs extra funding. I've filled out the application again. At this point, anything helps.
Our business dropped 31 percent in gross income due to Covid and having to shut down and then only be partially open. We were able to keep all 19 part time employees employed, and our business from closing, due to the assistance we received.
Please refer to any future beneficiary payments as grants. The language was confusing for some business owners.
Thank you for making it available in a timely manner.
Thank you so much for the life line!

Thank you! This was so helpful.
THANK YOU!!!
Thank you.
These funds were very helpful. Additional funds would be appreciated. My small business was temporarily closed for 6 months last year.
This program has been a life save. My business was greatly impacted and this assistance went a long way in helping me to continue with my business.
This program was critical to keeping people employed, keeping me as an owner comfortable that with this assistance we feel we can weather the COVID storm.
This was a big help to my small business. I lost about 70% of my customers. I truly appreciate everything you all do. It has helped me keep my business open. I've used it for payroll.
This was so very helpful as a self-employed health care provider. I have a home-based office and was literally a few hours too late to apply for the EIDL grant and was too nervous about payback ability to apply for the loan. When this opportunity came, I was both elated and then heartbroken as initially, home-businesses were excluded. Thank you so much for allowing us to be a part of this. It has helped me and I am holding hope I can apply for the next grant and be awarded something. My practice has declined as telehealth is not always an appropriate medium for my clients, and in-person in their homes is still not safe. Thank you for opening this up for me.
Very timely and helpful assistance!
we absolutely needed the help. I hope we get more support in the future
We feel very blessed to have been able to participate and be awarded money to help us out this year! It has been a very trying year on so many and we appreciate it deeply.