

PROVIDENCE, R.I. — Governor Dan McKee, Rhode Island Secretary of Commerce Liz Tanner, Senate Majority Whip Valarie Lawson, Representative Jennifer Boylan, East Providence Mayor Bob DaSilva, and Providence Mayor Brett Smiley today announced eligibility details and application timelines for the Washington Bridge Small Business Grant Program during an event held at the Red Bridge Tavern in East Providence.

Included in the State's FY25 budget and funded through federal State Fiscal Recovery Fund (SFRF) dollars, the Washington Bridge Small Business Grant Program will offer grants of up to \$2,500 to support small businesses impacted by the temporary closure and reconstruction of the Washington Bridge.

"This winter was tough for businesses that rely on the Washington Bridge, and even though we were able to get six lanes moving again pretty quickly, and traffic volume is back to where it was, businesses still need help to offset some of the losses they experienced this winter," said **Governor Dan McKee**. "I want to thank the cities of East Providence and Providence, the RI Commerce Corporation and our legislature for working together to make \$2.6 million available to local businesses."

"We thank Governor McKee and the General Assembly for including these funds in the FY25 budget and look forward to continue working alongside the Cities of Providence and East Providence to quickly administer these grants," said **Secretary of Commerce Liz Tanner**. "We continue to urge Rhode Islanders across the state to support our vibrant small businesses on both sides of the Washington Bridge by buying, shopping and dining local."

The application portal for the Washington Bridge Small Business Grant Program will officially open on Tuesday, Sept. 10 at 2 p.m. and remain open for an initial period of two weeks. For the purposes of this grant program, eligible small businesses are defined as businesses based in Rhode Island with less than \$2 million in annual revenue. Sole proprietors and non-profit organizations are eligible to apply.

Applicants must have experienced a negative revenue impact (minimum \$500 or 10% revenue loss) as a result of the Washington Bridge temporary closure and reconstruction.

"In the face of the challenges presented by the Washington Bridge reconstruction project, Rhode Islanders have pulled together to support our small businesses. These grants are the latest step in the process as Governor McKee, Rhode Island Commerce, the General Assembly, and our local leaders work together to provide direct assistance to the affected businesses," said **Lieutenant Governor Sabina Matos**. "I encourage all Rhode Island business owners to check their eligibility and consider applying for this important assistance."

"Rhode Island's economy depends upon our local businesses, and many have been negatively impacted by the closure and reconstruction of the Washington Bridge. I was proud to work with my colleagues in the legislature to include significant funding in the state budget to support

businesses affected by the bridge closure,” said **Speaker K. Joseph Shekarchi (D-Dist. 23, Warwick)**.

Senate Majority Whip Valarie J. Lawson (D-Dist. 14, East Providence) said, “The Washington Bridge closure has created serious hardships for small businesses and the hard-working people they employ. Through no fault of their own, they have faced enormous disruptions. As leaders of our communities and our state, it’s our responsibility to stand up for all of them. Helping businesses keep their doors open and keep workers on the payroll is the most immediate and impactful assistance we can provide. That’s what makes this grant program so important, and I am grateful for everyone who worked hard to make it a reality. To the business community in East Providence, Providence, and all of Rhode Island – we stand with you, and we will continue to support you.”

Depending on applicants’ locations, the new grant program will be administered by Rhode Island Commerce, the City of East Providence, or the City of Providence. Of the \$2.6 million allocated to this program, \$1.2 million is earmarked for businesses located in East Providence; \$800,000 for businesses located in Providence; and \$600,000 for businesses located in all other municipalities across the state.

“East Providence is a resilient community,” said **East Providence Mayor Bob DaSilva**. “Our residents and small businesses have rebounded from what was a challenging situation with the Washington Bridge Closure. This \$1.2 million will be an incredible boon to our local economy and will help businesses make a complete rebound from the situation,” Mayor DaSilva added.

“As we navigate the challenges brought on by the Washington Bridge closure, it’s vital that we support our small businesses,” said **Providence Mayor Brett P. Smiley**. “This grant program is for those who have felt the economic impact most acutely. We’re committed to ensuring that our local businesses not only survive but thrive, keeping our Providence economy strong and resilient.”

Grant awards for eligible small businesses are set at pre-determined tiers of \$500, \$1,000 and \$2,500. Grant amounts will be determined based on applicants’ reported levels of economic impact. Grant tiers and eligibility requirements were set collectively by Rhode Island Commerce, the City of Providence, and City of East Providence.

Businesses can find more information and the application link for their city or town by going to CommerceRI.com/wbgrants. All applications open on Tuesday, September 10 at 2 p.m.