

McKee Administration Announces \$4.8M in Grants to Expand Outdoor Activities Throughout Rhode Island

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Take It Outside Initiative Will Provide Funds to R.I. Intermediaries to Support Small Businesses with Expanding and Maintaining Outdoor Space Usage

PROVIDENCE, RI – Governor Dan McKee announced today approximately \$4.8 million in awards that will enable eligible small businesses to expand their capacity to do business outdoors. Funded through Governor McKee’s Rhode Island Rebounds initiative, the Take It Outside program will fund 21 intermediary organizations to support outdoor activities for small businesses. Examples of projects include purchasing items such as chairs, tables, heat lamps and tents, as well as executing al fresco opportunities for small businesses.

“The Take It Outside program has been a successful small businesses programs created during the COVID-19 pandemic as it has allowed businesses to continue economic activity while at the same time promoting public health guidelines which focused on taking activity outdoors to limit spread of the virus,” said Governor McKee. “I am proud to support the Take It Outside initiative to continue helping our local businesses who have faced extraordinary challenges since the onset of the pandemic, and I thank the General Assembly for approving this critical funding.”

“Rhode Islanders and small businesses have been big supporters of the Take It Outside program,” said Lt. Governor Sabina Matos. “We are proud to announce this new round of funding to continue to support our small businesses with their efforts to adapt and grow while keeping Rhode Islanders safe.”

Senate President Dominick J. Ruggerio and House Speaker K. Joseph Shekarchi said, “The federal recovery funds appropriated through the RI Rebounds program is one way in which the state has worked to partner with and support small businesses. The 'Take It Outside' program, in particular, has been a lifeline for many small businesses. From tables and chairs to heat lamps, the goods and services supported through this program continue to provide a lifeline to support small businesses as they work to operate in the safest manner possible.”

“Small businesses throughout the state continue to display creativity, adapting to conditions and customer preferences- as we emerge from the pandemic,” said Commerce Secretary Stefan Pryor. “These grants will support hundreds of small businesses as they continue to rebound.”

Businesses that are the ultimate beneficiaries of the program must have less than \$1 million in annual gross revenues and demonstrate a negative impact from the COVID-19 pandemic. At

least twenty percent of all funds awarded to small businesses will be reserved for awards to assist minority-owned and women-owned business enterprises.

Earlier in the pandemic, the Take it Outside program successfully awarded more than 100 intermediary organizations a total of more than \$6 million across two rounds of funding in 2020 and 2021. This year's program is made possible through Governor McKee's Rhode Island Rebounds Initiative, which is funded by the American Rescue Plan Act's State Fiscal Recovery Funds. Earlier this year RI Commerce unveiled the Small Business Grants program, the Hospitality, Tourism and Events Industry Direct Grants, and the Placemaking Initiative. The General Assembly approved Governor McKee's Rhode Island Rebounds Down Payment proposal, which included relief for children and families, small businesses, and investments for affordable housing.

The project is being supported, in whole or in part, by federal award number SLFRFP0136 (State Fiscal Recovery Funds) awarded to the State of Rhode Island by the U.S. Department of Treasury.

The Grantees include:

Center for Southeast Asians (Providence, RI) – up to \$643,500

To support businesses (member and nonmember) by providing items to increase outdoor operational capacities and accommodate public health measures adopted in response to COVID-19.

Central Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce (Warwick, RI) – up to \$250,000

To purchase goods to support outdoor activities for the small businesses in the Central Rhode Island area.

City of Cranston (Cranston, RI) – up to \$250,000

To support small businesses within Cranston to attract shoppers and restaurant goers.

City of East Providence (East Providence, RI) – up to \$150,000

To disburse funding to small businesses for eligible outdoor accommodations, increasing foot traffic to business corridors and retaining small businesses.

City of Pawtucket (Pawtucket, RI) – up to \$100,000

To support small businesses with Take It Outside-related supplies.

East Greenwich Chamber of Commerce (East Greenwich, RI) – up to \$26,000

To host a series of artist markets that will directly support eligible small businesses as well as to purchase igloos for eligible small businesses.

Federal Hill Commerce Association (Providence, RI) – up to \$248,500

To continue and increase the resources needed to execute AI Fresco on the Hill. These items include insurance, staffing and security, tables/chairs, signage, and more.

NeighborWorks Blackstone River Valley (Woonsocket, RI) – up to \$250,000

To purchase equipment such as folding chairs, pop-up tents, portable speakers, signage, a mobile stage, etc. to distribute to small businesses and to run a series of diverse, free, live music to include extensive food offerings, a vendor fair, cultural activities, youth activities, and other opportunities to engage small businesses.

North Kingstown Chamber of Commerce (North Kingstown, RI) – up to \$345,600

To support small businesses by providing items to increase outdoor operational capacities and accommodate public health measures.

Northern RI Chamber of Commerce (Lincoln, RI) – up to \$247,500

To assist small businesses in purchasing necessary items to expand outdoor dining and activities in thirteen communities across Northern Rhode Island.

Ocean Community Chamber of Commerce (Westerly) - up to \$10,000

To support small businesses in Westerly in the creation of a “Starry Lights” outdoor holiday light display.

Providence Downtown Improvement District (Providence, RI) – up to \$330,000

To fund downtown ambassadors to support cleanliness and safety for small businesses engaged in outdoor activities.

Providence Revolving Fund (Providence, RI) – up to \$450,000

To purchase supplies to support qualifying small businesses, specifically focusing on minority and women owned business.

RI Brewers Guild (Wakefield, RI) – up to \$208,000

To support small businesses, including Rhode Island based taproom breweries by providing grants for these small businesses to purchase tables, umbrellas, heaters and other PPE supplies.

Rhode Island Hospitality Association (Cranston, RI) – up to \$637,677

To work with hospitality businesses across the state to help them purchase supplies to encourage and increase outdoor activities.

The Pawtucket Foundation (Pawtucket, RI) – up to \$101,200

To provide Take It Outside equipment, particularly for distilleries breweries, and small businesses within the arts and cultural industry of Pawtucket.

Town of Cumberland (Cumberland, RI) – up to \$100,000

To support small businesses with Take It Outside-related supplies.

Town of North Providence (No. Providence, RI) – up to \$100,000

To support small businesses with Take It Outside-related supplies.

Town of Smithfield (Smithfield, RI) – up to \$100,000

To support small businesses with Take It Outside-related supplies.

Town of Warren (Warren, RI) – up to \$100,000

To provide support to small businesses to continue to expand the outdoor dining and entertainment experiences in Warren.

Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council (Providence, RI) – up to \$150,000

To create a competitive targeted grant program for eligible small businesses in the Watershed cities and towns.

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