July 7, 2020

**Portland’s Small Business Program for Utility Relief (SPUR)**

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**What is the Small Business Program for Utility Relief (SPUR)?**

The Portland Water Bureau and the Bureau of Environmental Services have allocated one million dollars to provide financial support to Portland’s small businesses. The bureaus will provide one-time credits on qualifying businesses’ sewer/stormwater/water bills.

Credits are expected to range from $1,000 to $10,000 and will assist between 200 and 300 small businesses. This program is modeled after Prosper Portland’s Small Business Relief Fund which provides relief for small businesses affected by the pandemic economic and public health emergency.

Business owners can sign up now to receive an email notification when the application opens on July 8: portlandoregon.gov/water/smallbiz.

**Who is eligible?**

To qualify, the business must:

* Have lost revenue due to the impacts of the pandemic.
* Have two million dollars or less in annual gross revenue.
* Have 50 or fewer employees.
* Receive sewer, stormwater, and/or water service from the City of Portland.
* Have been in operation and in compliance with the State of Oregon registration requirements on or prior to July 1, 2019. (Sole proprietors operating under the owner’s name are not required to register with the State of Oregon, so they meet this eligibility requirement.)

All applications will be evaluated using a racial equity and vulnerability lens. The City of Portland is committed to centering racial equity in its collective response to the pandemic. Recognizing that Black, Indigenous and all People of Color, and women are disproportionally affected, the City of Portland is dedicating resources and creating support systems to ensure this crisis does not exacerbate existing inequities.

**How can I apply?**

Online applications will be open for two weeks beginning July 8. Every application will be evaluated using a racial equity and vulnerability lens. Credits will not be distributed based on who applies first.

**What is the timeline for applying for the program and receiving funds?**

* Wednesday, July 8: Applications open
* Wednesday, July 22: Applications close
* Wednesday, Aug. 5: Credits announced, applicants notified
* Wednesday, Aug. 19: Credits applied to accounts

**How will businesses receive the money?**

If the application is approved, the business will receive funding as a one-time credit on its sewer/stormwater/water bill.

**What if my small business does not directly receive a sewer/stormwater/water bill?**

Not all small businesses receive a utility bill directly; some pay those costs through rent.Businesses interested in the program are encouraged to collaborate with the utility bill account holder on the application process and negotiate how to share any allocated resources.Account holders who apply and indicate that they are working with their tenants will be given priority in the application review process.

**What if my small business operates from my home?**

The SPUR application is open to home-based businesses. For the application, the business will need the account number where it receives sewer/stormwater/water service.

**In the meantime, what should business owners do about their bills?**

Business owners should continue to pay their bills. If they’re struggling to make current monthly payments, businesses are encouraged to contact the Water Bureau to set up payment plans. The Water Bureau is not currently shutting water off for non-payment.

If a business owner is approved for this program, a credit will be applied to the existing sewer/stormwater/water bill. Business owners will still be responsible for any remaining charges on the bill.

**Where is the money coming from? Will this program raise rates?**

The SPUR is a bill credit, not an out-of-pocket cost for the utility bureaus. No rate increase is tied to this program. The bureaus are anticipating an overall reduction in revenue because of the pandemic, and the SPUR is part of that anticipated reduction.

This is a wise business decision for the bureaus and the right thing to do. The utility bureaus are investing in small businesses now, so they will be here to invest in sewer/stormwater/water infrastructure for years to come. The bureaus are supporting businesses now so they can stay in business, recover, and continue contributing to the community.

**Why are the utility bureaus partnering with Prosper Portland?**

Through the development and implementation of the Small Business Relief Fund earlier this year, Prosper Portland established an effective program for selecting, notifying, and funding eligible small businesses using a racial equity and vulnerability lens. While the Portland Water Bureau and the Bureau of Environmental Services will administer the overall Small Business Program for Utility Relief (SPUR), the utility bureaus will leverage the program guidelines Prosper Portland developed to ensure the program serves the city’s most vulnerable businesses.

**Why is the City doing this?**

Commissioner Fritz heard from the business community, particularly from communities of color, women and others with historical disadvantages to capital, that the financial burden of the pandemic was becoming untenable. These small businesses are the fabric of the community that we love and wish to preserve. Commissioner Fritz asked the Water Bureau to work with community partners to find a solution.

**How can I find out more?**

Program details can be found on our website: portlandoregon.gov/water/smallbiz. Customers can call 503-823-7770 or email [smallbiz@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:smallbiz@portlandoregon.gov) for support.

**ABOUT THE PORTLAND WATER BUREAU**

*The Portland Water Bureau serves water to almost a million people in the Portland area. Portland’s water system includes two great water sources, 53 tanks and reservoirs, and 2,200 miles of pipes. With 600 employees working on everything from water treatment to customer service, the Water Bureau is committed to serving excellent water every minute of every day. Find us on Twitter @PortlandWater and visit us at* [*portlandoregon.gov/water*](https://www.portlandoregon.gov/water/index.cfm?)*.*

**About the Portland Bureau of Environmental Services**

*The City of Portland Bureau of Environmental Services - your sewer and stormwater utility - provides Portland residents with programs to protect water quality and public health, including wastewater collection and treatment, sewer construction and maintenance, stormwater management, and stream and watershed restoration. Follow on Twitter - @BESPortland. On the web:* [*portlandoregon.gov/bes/news*](https://www.portlandoregon.gov/bes/46634)*.*

**About PROSPER PORTLAND**

*Prosper Portland creates economic growth and opportunity for Portland. Our vision is to make Portland one of the most globally competitive, healthy, and equitable cities in the world by investing in job creation, encouraging broad economic prosperity, and fostering great places throughout the city. We aspire to be a workplace of choice with passionate staff excelling in an open and empowering environment and sharing a commitment to our collective success. Follow us on Twitter @prosperportland or visit us at* [*prosperportland.us*](https://prosperportland.us/)*.*