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For more information, contact Water Bureau Public Information at 503-823-8064.

**More than 500 small businesses to receive sewer/stormwater/water support from the City of Portland utilities**

More than 500 small businesses received credits through the Small Business Program for Utility Relief (SPUR), from the City of Portland’s utility bureaus, Water and Environmental Services. The City of Portland utility bureaus partnered with Prosper Portland, the city’s economic development agency, to develop the program.

In June, Portland City Council approved $1 million for the first-of-its-kind program and the utilities anticipated funding up to 300 applications. The program received more than 2,000 applicants. In response to the overwhelming need in the business community, and at the recommendation of the SPUR selection committee, Commissioner Amanda Fritz and Mayor Ted Wheeler worked to allocate an additional $600,000 to the program. With a total of $1.6 million available, more than 500 businesses received credits, approximately one-quarter of the businesses that applied.

“Thank you to all of the businesses that participated in our SPUR program. I commend the crucial role you play in our community, and the resilience you have shown through these challenges,” said Commissioner Fritz. “We knew the need would outweigh the available credits. We know all small businesses are still struggling. We hope the bill credits will alleviate some stress and burden to the small businesses that receive them.”

Created to support small businesses impacted by the public health and economic crisis, SPUR prioritized businesses owned by Black, Indigenous, and all People of Color (BIPOC) and women, childcare providers, and businesses open as part of Phase 1 of the state’s reopening plan. The selection process was driven by a clear recognition that Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities are disproportionately affected by this crisis.

**SPUR Awards Report**

* 519 SPUR credits awarded (an additional 20 businesses are still in process)
* 87 percent of credits (88 percent of the dollars) were awarded to BIPOC identified businesses
* 60 percent of credits (52 percent of the dollars) were awarded to women and non-binary owned businesses
* 84 percent of credits ((74 percent of the dollars)) were awarded to businesses with nine employees or less

A selection committee made up of community small business leaders determined which businesses received SPUR credits. This SPUR Selection Committee used the eligibility criteria and equity and vulnerability priorities [set by City Council](https://efiles.portlandoregon.gov/Record/13755358/) in the authorizing ordinance from June 3, 2020 and developed additional criteria to prioritize the applications. The committee included representatives from:

* [Council for Economic and Racial Equity](https://prosperportland.us/council-for-racial-and-economic-equity/#:~:text=Roles%20and%20Responsibilities,strategies%20to%20advance%20equitable%20outcomes.)
* [Portland Utility Board](https://www.portland.gov/pub)
* [Oregon Native American Chamber](https://onacc.org/)
* [Philippine American Chamber of Commerce of Oregon](https://www.pacco.org/)
* [Black American Chamber](https://blackamericanchamber.org/)
* [Hispanic Metropolitan Chamber of Oregon](https://hmccoregon.com/)
* [Asian Pacific American Chamber of Commerce](https://weareapacc.wildapricot.org/About-us#:~:text=APACC%20fosters%20business%2Dto%2Dbusiness,help%20develop%20international%20business%20opportunities.)

“Being a part of this selection committee was an impactful experience. The level of dedication everyone brought to the table was inspiring and ensured equity and access reached those it was meant to, said Jesse Hyatt, executive director of the Black American Chamber of Commerce. “When people with diverse backgrounds come together for real community impact, it creates hope for the future of true collaboration in Portland.”

Recipients received notification of their application funding status on Wednesday, Aug. 5 and received bill credits by Wednesday, Aug. 19. **Several recipients have agreed to be interviewed by the media. Contact information is available by request.**

Mayor Wheeler said, “Being there for the most vulnerable people in our community, when they need us, is the highest purpose we can serve in local government. I want to acknowledge the selection committee for ensuring an efficient and equitable process for the consideration and selection of all participating businesses. We will continue finding resourceful ways to support the small businesses that define our city.”

Prosper Portland Executive Director Kimberly Branam said she and her colleagues were pleased to partner with the Portland Water Bureau and the Bureau of Environmental Services to develop the SPUR program. “We are gratified to know that BIPOC-owned businesses will receive the majority of available fund. “[As we prepare to distribute federal CARES Act funds](https://prosperportland.us/portfolio-items/portland-small-business-relief-fund/), we’ll work closely with the team to ensure that SPUR applicants receive personalized notice of the opportunity for this new funding.”

Water and Environmental Services offer financial assistance programs that serve thousands of Portlanders and a menu of options for reducing portions of utility bills.

**Services for all customers**

[Payment arrangements](https://www.portlandoregon.gov/water/article/565236) provide additional time for paying past due charges without incurring new fees on the past due balance.

* [Monthly statements](https://www.portlandoregon.gov/water/64398) offer the option of paying each month to avoid a quarterly bill that includes three months of sewer/stormwater/water charges.
* [Clean River Rewards](https://www.portlandoregon.gov/bes/41976) provide savings for those who manage stormwater on their property.
* [Water Efficiency](https://www.portlandoregon.gov/water/index.cfm?&c=29334) offers free water-saving devices and rebates for toilet and irrigation upgrades.

**Services for residential customers:**

* Utility [Safety Net Program](https://www.portlandoregon.gov/water/article/565244) and crisis assistance provides flexible, long-term interest-free payment arrangements for those with employment, medical, or other personal emergencies.
* [Bill discounts](https://www.portlandoregon.gov/water/article/565238) and crisis assistance are available for income-qualified customers.
* [Assistance for renters in multi-family properties](https://www.portlandoregon.gov/water/article/689542) in the amount of up to $500 is available through a partnership with Home Forward for renters at risk of eviction. Contact 211 for assistance.
* [Water leak repair assistance](https://www.portlandoregon.gov/water/80983)  funds repairs of water leaks for income-qualified homeowners.

To learn more about how the city can help, or to view detailed information about these programs, visit [portlandoregon.gov/water/cs](https://www.portlandoregon.gov/water/cs). If you still have questions, email [PWBCustomerService@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:PWBCustomerService@portlandoregon.gov) or call 503-823-7770.

**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/).