



DeKalb Chamber of Commerce Small Business Recovery Program

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**Proposal Requesting Support for the DeKalb Chamber of Commerce
Small Businesses Recovery Program**

Giving you access to People, Information, and Opportunities.

1484 Brockett Road | Tucker, GA 30030

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Comprehensive Timeline
 Small Business Recovery Program Direct Cost Budget
 DeKalb County Economically Disadvantaged Area Map



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The DeKalb Chamber of Commerce has continued to be a leader in providing resources, opportunities, advocacy, and connections for the business community in DeKalb County. To increase our viability in providing avenues for businesses to connect and benefit from opportunities offered through the Chamber, the DeKalb Chamber of Commerce is submitting this proposal requesting **\$1,040,449** in Pandemic Relief funding for the Chamber’s Small Business Recovery Program (SBRP). Funding will be used to help small business owners in economically distressed areas with the essentials critical to maintaining a small business in DeKalb County. Many of our industries in DeKalb County are still recovering from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the two-year disruption in the operational balance of conducting business. This is compounded by additional challenges including current inflation rates and the challenge of acquiring affordable capital for ongoing business needs. DeKalb County business industries would benefit from an opportunity to connect and access resources to help with resilience planning, contracting and workforce development.

PROJECT LOCATION: DeKalb County, Georgia

FUNDING AMOUNT REQUESTED: \$1,040,449 (over three years).

PROJECT BOUNDARIES

The project will serve businesses within the legal boundary of Dekalb County that reside in one of the targeted economically disadvantaged communities, as defined by HUD’s fiscal year 2023 Qualified Census Tracts. The following “Qualified Census tracts” are considered economically disadvantaged: 212.04, 213.05, 213.09 213.10, 214.09, 214.17, 214.18, 214.19, 214.20, 214.21, 217.11, 217.12, 218.15, 218.16, 219.06, 219.08, 219.10, 219.11, 219.13, 219.16, 219.17, 220.05, 220.07, 220.11, 220.12, 220.13, 220.14, 224.04, 224.05, 225.01, 231.02, 231.08, 231.12, 231.13, 231.14, 232.13, 232.15, 232.17, 232.18, 232.21, 232.22, 233.19, 233.20, 233.21, 234.10, 234.11, 234.29, 234.30, 234.31, 234.38, 234.39, 235.01, 235.04, 235.05, 235.07, 236.02, 236.03, and 238.02.

DESCRIPITON OF THE ISSUE

In April of 2020 at the height of the pandemic, DeKalb County’s unemployment rate was at 13.4%. Social distancing restrictions, health and economic-driven demand shifts from COVID-19 reduced small business operations and entrepreneurial ventures in Dekalb County. These issues may have been exacerbated by the pandemic in such a way that the impact has caused many of our small business to fold. To understand the depth or magnitude of COVID-19 on small businesses in Dekalb County, we examined microdata from the U.S. Census Bureau and Small Business Pulse Survey (SBPS) which measures the effect of changing business conditions during the Coronavirus Pandemic. The data shows that the Pandemic had a large negative effect on 25% of businesses in the Metro area lasting six months or more. In DeKalb County, many of our major business hubs are seeing an increase in vacancies because of the long-term effect on small businesses. The long-term vacancies are impacting primary corridors (i.e., Memorial Drive, Chandler Road, etc.) that prior to the pandemic had a steady flow of business.



SCOPE

This important program will provide education, training, marketing, and opportunities for resilience planning for small businesses that faced economic hardship due to the pandemic and other economic factors. For this program's purpose, the Chamber defines a small business as one with no more than fifty (50) employees (including the owner). This program will apply 100% of time in economically distressed areas of DeKalb County. The economically distressed areas are Qualified Census Tracts (QCT) identified in connection to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban (HUD) income data for impacted areas during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The new program will hire staff and increase the opportunity for small businesses to collaborate with service providers in DeKalb County that are participating partners in this program. In addition to what is outlined in the scope, staff will work with program partners to make sure opportunities for businesses to connect and receive services is communicated throughout DeKalb County.

Program Eligibility Requirements

- o Business have been open and actively operating as of January 2020
- o Be in good standing with the State of Georgia Department of Revenue
- o Operating in compliance with applicable federal and Georgia tax laws for tax year 2019-2023
- o Not in business to advance partisan political activity
- o Not in business to directly lobby federal or state officials
- o Eligible businesses include corporations, LLCs, partnerships, and sole proprietorship.
- o Business must have fifty or fewer full-time employees

PROJECT GOALS

The goal of the Small Business Recovery Program is to provide forgivable loans to businesses with addresses in one of the DeKalb County economically disadvantaged census tract. For the loan to be forgiven, businesses will be required to complete mandatory training and develop a small business resilience plan. In addition to the business location in an economically disadvantaged area, the focus will also include assisting industries that were exceedingly impacted, and those we consider a priority impact.

- *Exceedingly Impacted Industries* are those that have been closed or operating at significantly diminished capacity since March 2020 and are likely to continue operating at a diminished level because of the pandemic. (Businesses will be addressed in economically distressed Qualified Census Tracts or geographic areas that are disproportionately impacted by the pandemic)
- *Priority Impact Industries* although they have not experienced long-term shutdowns in the same way that highly impacted industries have, they continue to experience significantly depressed demand because of inflation rates, COVID 19 pandemic and other economic factors. (Businesses will be addressed in economically distressed Qualified Census Tracts or geographic areas that are disproportionately impacted by the pandemic)



PROPOSED PROJECT ACTIVITIES

DeKalb Chamber will provide awards to small businesses located in industries and economically disadvantaged areas hardest hit by the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. The attached Comprehensive Timeline provides a list of industries targeted in this proposal.

Project Activities

1. Market and promote program to small and minority owned businesses within the economically disadvantaged areas of DeKalb County.
2. Provide soft skills training to small business.
3. Corporate training for small business recovery provided through Georgia Piedmont Technical College
 - a. Training courses focus on the following areas:
 - i. Soft Skills
 - ii. Entry Level Small Business Development
 - iii. Intermediate skills for small businesses
 - iv. Advanced operations within small businesses
4. Work with business to develop a business resilience plan
5. Grant awards will be **\$10,000-\$30,000** max. Award amount is scaled according to proof of a business's loss during the designated timeframe. Grants will be awarded and funded on a rolling basis until funds are exhausted but no later than July of 2026.
6. DeKalb Chamber will monitor businesses over a three-year period to make sure there is the ability to withstand a temporary problem, such as a decrease in sales, lack of capital or loss of key employees or customer(s).
 - a. Review of production and overhead expenses
 - b. Review of cash flow budget that shows exactly when income will arrive and when payments are due.
 - c. Review customer list - Purpose, to calculate the effect of a compounding loss of customers at once and their ability to stay in business.
 - d. Loss of Key employees – Determining the cost to bring replacements on board for each key employee, and the loss of productivity or sales a departure will have on a company.
 - e. Lines of credit – Chamber finance institution partners will examine lines of credit and determine the effect on each business if they lose one or more lender.
7. Business loan underwriting/training. DeKalb Chamber is partnering with Citizens Trust Bank, Ameris Bank and Delta Credit Union to underwrite business loans of participants in the program.



SMALL BUSINESS TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Each business owner has 63 course options offered through the Small Business Recovery Program in connection with Georgia Piedmont Technical College (GPTC). Courses are designed to be delivered via one-day workshops or multi-day training options offered online through GPTC Ed2Go Platform. The list below is a brief sample of what will be offered by GPTC through the program.

Soft Skills Training

Course Description

Basic Bookkeeping - Participants receive basic bookkeeping skills required to operate a business. The course will provide a basic understanding of certain IRS requirements, and other state requirements.

Budgets and Financial Reports - The Budgets And Financial Reports workshop will give participants a solid foundation in finance. GPTC will cover topics like commonly used terms, financial statements, budgets, forecasting, purchasing decisions, and financial legislation.

Business Acumen- The workshop will help your participants recognize learning events, manage risk better, and increase their critical thinking. Business Acumen has the ability to influence an entire organization, and provide an additional edge that will lead to success.

Course Description

Administrative Support- In the Administrative Support course, participants will learn the core skills that will help them use their resources efficiently, manage their time wisely, communicate effectively, and collaborate with others skillfully. The practices presented in this course may take time to be a part of your daily work routine.

Building Confidence and Assertiveness - The Building Confidence and Assertiveness course will provide participants with the tools to overcome fear, gain personal empowerment, and inspire confidence in others. By believing in our potential and the positive changes that we can make, we are able to grow personally and professionally.

Customer Service - The Customer Service workshop will look at all types of customers and how we can serve them better and improve ourselves in the process. Participants will be provided a strong skill set including in-person and over the phone techniques, dealing with difficult customers, and generating return business.



GEOGRAPHIC BOUNDARIES AND DEMOGRAPHIC MAKEUP

The geographic boundary of the proposed project is DeKalb County, Georgia with a population of 759,297. The focus of the Small Business Recovery Assistance program will impact forty-four economically disadvantaged census tracts that have a total population of 198,728. The census tracts consist of the following twenty-nine zip codes: 30002, 30021, 30030, 30031, 30032, 30033, 30034, 30035, 30037, 30038, 30058, 30079, 30083, 30084, 30088, 30307, 30315, 30316, 30317, 30319, 30322, 30324, 30329, 30340, 30341, 30345, 30360, 30362, 39901. The racial makeup of the county 54.8% Black or African American, 35.9% white, 6.5% Asian, 0.5% American Indian, and 2.2% from two or more races. Those of Hispanic or Latino origin make up 8.5 % of the population. The demographics on race and income per census tract, were not available from the United States Census Bureau at the time of writing the narrative for this proposal.

PROJECT DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

The objective of the Businesses Recovery Assistance Program is to provide relief for small businesses hit the hardest by COVID-19. Funding will be used to help businesses with working capital expenses, including payroll cost; rent; utilities; resilience planning and other operational costs. Businesses will have to demonstrate they were negatively impacted by the COVID-19 public health emergency. Businesses that are unable to demonstrate a negative economic impact from the public health emergency will not be eligible. To accomplish the aforementioned, the DeKalb Chamber has developed three (3) strategic goals accompanied by strategic objectives that will guide program implementation and drive measured outcomes.

Strategic Goal 1. Introduce the Small Business Recovery Program (SBRP) to businesses surveyed in the economically disadvantaged areas of DeKalb County.

- *Strategic Objective 1.1:* Expand access to capital and training through the DeKalb Chamber of Commerce Small Business Recovery Program and network of members.
- *Strategic Objective 1.2:* Incorporate Georgia Piedmont Technical College (GPTC) online courses to assist small business in their recovery efforts. Also, provide ongoing resilience training and assistance.
- *Performance Indicators:*
 - Small Businesses Assisted – Number of businesses assisted that were impacted by COVID-19 in the designated area.
 - Grant/Loan dollars approved – The long-term goal from 2023 to fiscal year 2026 is to assist small businesses with finance training, resilience training and ongoing counseling and assistance.

Strategic Goal 2. Provide entrepreneurial education, ongoing quarterly year counseling for three years, and training to support businesses impacted by the pandemic, help to create new businesses, and ensure resources are aligned with the needs of businesses within the focus area.

- *Strategic Objective 2.1:* Have a field presence within 90 days of receiving grant funds where staff is working onsite with impacted businesses.
- *Strategic 2.2:* Employ a strategic communication plan focused on preparedness for future economic disasters.



- *Performance Indicators:*
 - Recovery Assistance (targets established annually)
 - Percent of small businesses sustaining economic injury that remain in operation one year after disbursement of funds.
 - Percent of small businesses impacted by a reduction in employees that have recovered one year after disbursement of funds.

Strategic Goal 3. Industry Related Assistance – Our goal is to assist business impacted to not only recover from the impact of the pandemic, but to assist them in long term sustainability and increase their resilience against future catastrophic events.

Strategic Objective 3.1: Create business cohorts by industry for specific focus assistance. The purpose is for the Chamber and its partners to provide in-depth training, services, and resilience planning.

CAPABILITIES AND COMPETENCIES

The DeKalb Chamber of Commerce in partnership with the Georgia Piedmont Technical College (GPTC) will bring forward a plethora of experience and expertise needed to implement this project. The following in partnership with GPTC demonstrates a core of competencies with managing and implementing funds allocated by DeKalb County for the project:

- Frankie Atwater, President and CEO of the Chamber of Commerce, will be responsible for managing the project. Mr. Atwater managed more than \$3 billion in federal and state resources for the State of Illinois, and over \$140 million in public funds allocated to 175 local units of government to assist small businesses. He also created capital access to a \$130 million economic development loan program for businesses and local government.
- Dr. Tavarez Holston, President Georgia Piedmont Technical College, has been an educator and advocate for technical education for over 20 years. Dr. Holston holds a Doctorate in Education from Valdosta State University, a Master of Science in Management with a focus in Leadership and Organizational Effectiveness from Troy University, and a Bachelor of Business Administration and Management from the University of North Georgia. He is also a U.S. Army Veteran.
- All funds will be managed and disbursed by the DeKalb Chamber of Commerce. To maintain the integrity of the project, quarterly monitoring of all participating businesses will be implemented during its development and implementation. Businesses that are addressed within the economically distressed areas of DeKalb County, will receive a grant/subaward if they agree to submit to the program requirements. From 2023-2026 the Chamber is expecting the participation of 50-100 business in the program, with a maximum sub award of \$30,000. The Chamber Director of Operations will work in coordination with GTPC Coordinator for Business and Industry Services and the college Small Business Success Navigators. In addition, the Chamber will employ three additional field representatives, underwriter, and small business assistance manager.



- The Chamber of Commerce and Georgia Piedmont Technical College (GPTC) staff have decades of combined experience in creating, administering, and delivering economic development programs that assist small businesses, monitoring their effectiveness and modifying them to meet local needs and priorities. Staff is proficient in implementing federal and state regulations, responding to community needs, and developing appropriate policies with direct experience in managing federal disaster and emergency relief programs.
- Effective immediately following the execution of the grant agreement between the DeKalb Chamber of Commerce and DeKalb County, the Chamber will initiate hiring key personnel that will be responsible for reporting and monitoring subgrantees.

Finance and Accounting

Platinum Financial Services is the Certified Public Accounting firm responsible for the responsible for managing the financial actions of the DeKalb Chamber of Commerce and the Dekalb Chamber Foundation. Their responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Tracking cash flow and financial planning
- Analyzing the Chamber's financial strengths and weaknesses
- Proposing corrective actions
- Provides timely and accurate financial statements
- Invoices are paid and regulatory filings are prepared and filed timely and accurately.
- On a monthly basis, enter all accounting transactions for the Dekalb Chamber of Commerce and the Dekalb Chamber Foundation into its QuickBooks general ledger.
- Perform reconciliations for all bank accounts.
- Adjust journal entries as necessary, including depreciation.
- Record receivables, process payables, and set up new vendors on an as needed basis.
- On a monthly basis, PFS prepares financial reports including balance sheet, income statement, statement of cash flows, actual vs. budgeted reports, sales reports, and statistical data.
- On a quarterly basis, PFS prepares variance explanations and reconciles your A/P and A/R subledger systems to the general ledger.
- On an annual basis, PFS prepare and file the federal and state 990 tax returns for both the Dekalb Chamber of Commerce and the Dekalb Chamber Foundation



MEASURING PROGRAM PERFORMANCE AND SUCCESS

The Proposed Project Activities section of the DeKalb Chamber of Commerce proposal outlines the Chambers approach to implementing the Small Business Recovery Program and measured outcome strategy that includes performance indicators to help the Chamber measure performance and program effectiveness.

The success of the Small Business Recovery Program (SBRP) will be attributed to the number of businesses assisted that were impacted by the health emergency in the designated economically distressed areas. In addition to those impacted, the success will be determined on the percent of small businesses sustaining economic injury that remain in operation one year after disbursement of funds and the percent of small businesses impacted by a reduction in employees that have recovered one year after disbursement of funds.

Staff will continue to track the success of each participating business for three years after initial participation. Full success of the program will be determined by the percent of businesses that have achieved stability after three years of coaching while participating in the program.

Performance data will be collected by the Program Administrator, Business Counselors, and our partner organization Georgia Piedmont Technical College Business Services. The Program Administrator will be responsible for performance measurements and reviewing the information with staff to determine the success of the program or to make any program adjustments.

CONCLUSION

The DeKalb Chamber of Commerce has a decorated history of promoting and advocating for small business in DeKalb County. We are a 501c (6) organization recognized for our innovation, leadership, drive for excellence and talented employees. Over the past two years we have achieved every strategic objective and performance goal that we set out to achieve.

The Chamber success is made possible because of our members and collaboration with external economic development partners in the Atlanta region. We have a team of professionals that champion our mission of providing exceptional customer service and connections.