

BCU Expands COVID-19 Emergency Microgrant Fund for Small Businesses

PRESS RELEASE

May 6, 2020

BCU Expands COVID-19 Emergency Microgrant Fund for Small Businesses

- **Program expanded to include companies and nonprofit organizations in Battle Creek, Springfield, Emmett Charter Township, Bedford Charter Township, and Pennfield Charter Township**
- **Round 2 applications are due by May 11**

Battle Creek, Mich. – The Battle Creek Unlimited (BCU) COVID-19 Emergency Microgrant Fund has grown to \$600,000 after receiving a \$200,000 donation from the Consumers Energy Foundation, a \$75,000 donation from BCU, and an additional \$75,000 from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation (WKKF). BCU started the emergency fund in April after receiving an initial \$250,000 in support from WKKF.

The COVID-19 Microgrant Fund was created to help small businesses and nonprofits impacted by the coronavirus pandemic. Funds may be used to maintain payroll and workforce expenses, including accounts payable, rent and other bills that could have been paid otherwise if the executive order had not been issued. The fund is not intended to replace lost sales, profits, or business expansions.

The additional money will allow BCU to open up the microgrant fund to eligible small businesses and nonprofit organizations in Battle Creek as well as the adjacent communities of Springfield, Emmett Charter Township, Bedford Charter Township, and Pennfield Charter Township. To qualify, applicants should have fewer than 15 employees and less than \$1 million in annual revenue. The maximum award for Round 2 will be \$5,000. Companies which previously were denied a grant are invited to reapply.

“We are grateful for the generosity of the Consumers Energy Foundation and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation,” said Joe Sobieralski, President & CEO of BCU. “With the initial award of \$250,000, we anticipated making between 35-50 awards. We received 127 applications requesting more than \$1.8 million in the initial round. The combined additional funding will enable us to support an additional 65 to 85 businesses across the Battle Creek region.”

The Consumers Energy Foundation’s contribution is part of an effort to help small business customers in this time of need. “Small businesses are the backbone of our economy and have been significantly impacted during this unprecedented time,” said Brandon Hofmeister, president of the Consumers Energy Foundation. “Consumers Energy is committed to helping Michigan’s small business community succeed now, more than ever. We are making an investment in our communities, business owners, workers and their families, and a commitment to help power through together.”

The Consumers Energy Foundation is donating \$1.8 million to nine organizations to provide a lifeline to small businesses across Michigan – focusing in particular on helping female- and minority-owned businesses. In all, the Foundation has given over \$3 million to meet the needs of Michigan residents

affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Consumers Energy Foundation's contribution is part of an effort to help small business customers in this time of need. Consumers Energy is promoting a hotline, 800-805-0490, and ConsumersEnergy.com/smallbusinessrelief to provide meaningful and immediate help.

The COVID-19 Microgrant Guidelines and Application are available at battlecreekcovid-19.com. Applications are due by the close of business on Monday, May 11, 2020.

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ABOUT BATTLE CREEK UNLIMITED

Established in 1972, Battle Creek Unlimited (BCU) is a private, non-profit corporation which serves as the economic development arm for the City of Battle Creek and manages the Fort Custer Industrial Park. The Fort Custer Industrial Park is home to over 80 businesses, including 25 international companies, and employs over 13,000 people. BCU's mission is to build a strong community by driving strategic investment and job creation.

ABOUT CONSUMERS ENERGY FOUNDATION

The Consumers Energy Foundation is the charitable arm of Consumers Energy, Michigan's largest energy provider. The Foundation enables communities to thrive and grow by investing in what's most important to Michigan — its people, our planet and Michigan's prosperity. For more information about the Consumers Energy Foundation, visit www.ConsumersEnergy.com/foundation.

MEDIA CONTACT

Joe Sobieralski, President & CEO, Battle Creek Unlimited
TEL 269-962-7526