



# Back to Business Program FAQ

## Program Overview

The Department of Labor and Training's Back to Business program helps businesses provide recruitment and incentive packages to get Rhode Islanders back to work, while ensuring employers have the talent they need to remain competitive as we rebuild from Covid-19.

Grants will be available for employers that have suffered job losses during the pandemic and continue to experience a worker shortage. The granted funds can be used for a hiring incentive, referral payment, and other recruitment efforts.

Grant monies will be available on a first come, first served basis. Priority will be given to employers who have not received funding through similar federal initiatives (such as Restaurant Revitalization Funds or Shuttered Venue Operators Grants) and who have fewer than 50 employees.

The application will open at 9:00 am on Thursday, November 4, 2021 and will close at 4:00pm on Friday, November 12, 2021.

## Eligibility

### Who is eligible?

Rhode Island employers with fewer than 200 employees are eligible to apply for funding through the Back to Business incentive program. The employer must attest that it has been impacted by Covid-19 and has faced Covid-related hiring/staffing shortages. While nationally-owned chain businesses are not eligible to apply, an independently owned and operated Rhode Island business that is part of a regional or national franchise that includes franchisees with locations outside of Rhode Island may.

Priority will be given to employers who have not received funding through similar federal initiatives (such as Restaurant Revitalization Funds or Shuttered Venue Operators Grants) and who have fewer than 50 employees.

### If my application is rejected, can I reapply?

No; because the program is limited in funds and duration, applicants with a rejected application are not eligible to reapply.

## Grant Uses

What activities are eligible for funding?

Hiring incentives, referral payment, and other recruitment efforts are eligible for funding.

Is there a funding cap?

Businesses are eligible for grants up to \$5,000. Funding for hiring and referral incentives are capped at \$1,000 per employee, not to exceed five (5) employees.

What documentation do I need to provide for proof of activities/services administered?

No documentation is required to apply. However, employers must keep records of their activities in the event of an audit.

## Application Process

What information is needed on the application?

To apply for funding, employers must provide their Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN) and their state unemployment account number (if available). They also must provide a list of uses of the funding i.e., hiring incentive, referral payment, and other recruitment efforts.

If I have questions about the application process, who should I contact?

Please call 401-680-5959 or email [back2business@skillsforri.com](mailto:back2business@skillsforri.com).

## Grant Award

Am I required to pay back these funds?

No, you are not required to pay back these funds, unless it is determined that the application for funds contained information that is fraudulent or false. This is not a loan; it is a grant.

## Additional Questions

**I asked for the wrong amount, can I change my request?**

Unfortunately, due to high demand, the amount described in an award letter is final and cannot be revised.

## **What are allowable uses of the funds?**

Hiring incentives, referral payment, and other recruitment efforts are eligible for funding.

Hiring incentives and referral payments are capped at \$1,000 per employee. Bonuses for current staff are not allowable uses of the Back to Business grant funds. Examples of other recruitment expenses include but are not limited to; job fairs, job ads, promotional recruitment materials, recruitment firms.

Training, seminars, and equipment/uniform purchases are only allowable expenses if they are necessary elements of hiring a new employee. Thus, training that is required to prepare a new hire to perform their job functions can be funded as "other recruitment activities," but training to promote knowledge, skills, or retention cannot.

## **Can I change the categories for which I intended to use the funds? (i.e., job ads instead of new hire bonuses)**

Yes, however, all of the uses must be derived from the list of allowable uses and are subject to audit.

If funds were requested for a new-hire incentive payment and no hire is made within the allowable period, these funds can be repurposed for other allowable uses, including, for example, purchasing promotional recruitment materials.

## **When do I have to hire someone/use the funds by?**

While funds can be expended after 12/31/2021, the need for the funding (i.e., the hiring challenge for which the funding was requested to help address) must exist before 12/31/2021, and funds must be spend by March 31, 2022.

## **I recently hired someone - can I use these funds to provide a bonus to them?**

Funds may only be used prospectively and cannot be applied to recent hires.

**If I can't use all the funds I received for hiring related purposes or no longer have any hiring needs, what should I do?**

If you no longer have any hiring needs, please contact Skills for Rhode Island's Future to arrange to return left over funds. If you continue to have a hiring need, funds can be spent on tangible recruitment materials (signs, flyers, online job posting service subscriptions).

**How do I report on my use of the funds in case of an audit?**

Please keep detailed records related to your use of funds, including, but not limited to: receipts, invoices, names of new hires, and names of referring employees and the employee.

**I am on the waitlist. Will you be releasing additional funds for this program?**

We are currently reviewing and will announce further funding if/when it is made available.

**Will there be additional grant programs to support small businesses?**

The state has a number of opportunities available for small businesses. Many can be found: at <https://commerceri.com>.

**Is it still a new hire if they are the same seasonal employee?**

If the individual is not currently employed, this would count as a new hire.