

Kern Recovers is a county-funded two-part program developed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to help local small businesses – specifically with forgivable loans and PPE.

On March 19, 2020, the Governor of California, Gavin Newsom, ordered all individuals living in the State of California to stay home, except as needed to maintain continuity of operation in the critical infrastructure sectors. Not unlike all counties across California, the immediate shutdown of non-essential businesses was sure to impact Kern's economy. We have a rich history of family owned, small businesses in our community and Kern was recently ranked as the third largest U.S. metro with the most diversified economy. We are proud of our heritage and accolades. These attributes are two of the things that make Kern a great place to raise a family and our local government recognized the importance of protecting them.

On March 27, 2020, the President of the United States, Donald Trump, signed the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act into law. The CARES Act allowed for direct disbursement of relief funds to state, county and municipal governments with a population of 500,000 or more. At the direction of the Board of Supervisors, Kern County's Chief Administrative Officer, Ryan Alsop, and staff acted swiftly to secure a direct disbursement. On April 23, 2020, Kern received \$157,078,307. At the time, the Federal Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) was exhausted but there were hundreds of small businesses in our community that did not receive support. Our county's leaders knew immediate action had to be taken to protect our community. On May 5, 2020, Kern County's Chief Operations Officer, James Zervis, presented an initial utilization plan of the CARES Act funding to the Board of Supervisors. This plan carved out \$35,000,000 to support local small businesses.

In a matter of three weeks, Chief Operations Officer James Zervis and staff launched the Kern Small Business Relief Program (KSBRP). During those three (3) weeks, applicant eligibility was determined, program guidelines were established, an application form was developed, and an application process was implemented. This program was developed and implemented in partnership with four (4) locally based financial institutions. Uniquely leveraging private industry expertise to deliver this program enabled the County to make it available throughout the over 9,000 square miles of the county swiftly while insuring a high level of transparency and accountability. KSBRP

provided business loans of up to \$75,000 to local small businesses like restaurants, gyms and salons. KSBRP loans are fully forgiven to the extent they are used according to the program guidelines. In addition to the KSBRP loans Kern County staff developed a Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) program for small businesses. This program was launched in July and provides hard to acquire PPE to small businesses throughout our large County through the use of existing County staff and 16 county facilities, such as libraries, that were closed due to COVID-19. Small businesses can apply for this program on a recurring basis every two weeks.

In roughly 60 days, the KSBRP issued 937 small business loans, across 255 industries, for a program total in the amount of \$30,000,000. To date, the PPE program has served 1,927 businesses including 46,168 employees – many on a recurring basis. Throughout the course of these programs, Kern County has used Microsoft Power BI to present real time data to the public improving transparency and public trust. Kern County is focused on changing the way our community feels about government and the services it provides. These programs have been a positive force in our community at a time when small business owners are struggling the most. Kern Recovers has eased the burden felt by small business owners by infusing funds and helping them meet their need for PPE to reopen and stay open.

Kern Recovers is a replicable program for all counties, whether they are a prime or sub-recipient, as it meets the federal expenditure guidelines of CARES funding. Both programs were created, implemented, and administered without the creation of additional positions; in fact, existing resources and positions were creatively revised to work with these programs. Most, if not all, existing local governments could recreate our efforts and produce similar results.

For additional information, please contact Kern County's Chief Operations Officer James L Zervis. His office is located at 1115 Truxtun Avenue on the 5th floor in Bakersfield, California. He can be reached via email at zervisj@kerncounty.com or via phone at (661) 868-3198.

For additional statistical data, please review our public dashboards: [KSBRP](#) and [PPE Program](#). Access to a more in-depth, executive summary dashboard can be provided upon request.