



FRESNO REGIONAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

Business and Industry Committee
November 2, 2022 @ 4:00 p.m.

Workforce Connection
3170 W. Shaw Avenue
Conference Rooms 105/106
Fresno, CA 93711

Business and Industry Mission Statement: To actively support and engage the Fresno business and industry community with Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act resources and facilities through information and education to stimulate job growth and job retention.

REMINDER: PLEASE TURN OFF CELL PHONE OR PUT IT ON VIBRATE

ROLL CALL

AGENDA CHANGES: REMOVAL OF ITEMS OR EMERGENCY ADDITIONS

ABSTENTIONS/RECUSALS/DISCLOSURE OF POTENTIAL CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

COMMITTEE CHAIR/STAFF COMMENTS

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Item	Description	Presenter	Enclosure	Action	Page #
1.	February 2, 2022, Business and Industry Committee Meeting Minutes	Konczal	Yes	Approve	3
2.	Rapid Response – Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act Notice	Stogbauer Lecat	Yes	Information	7
3.	2022-2023 Quarterly Business Awards Recognition	Espinosa	Yes	Information	9
4.	Firebaugh Business Grant Program	Espinosa	Yes	Information	10
5.	Update on Rural Guided Pathways Project	Dacuyan	No	Discussion	--
6.	Meeting Feedback	Konczal	No	Discussion	--

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

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**Fresno Regional Workforce Development Board
Business Industry Committee
2022
Attendance Roster**

	2/2/2022	Canceled 5/4/2022	Canceled 8/3/2022	11/2/2022
Avila Grundfos Pumps	--	--	XX	
Guzman LifeBridge International	A	XX	XX	
Miller Gazebo Gardens	A	XX	XX	
Neil Fresno EDC	P	XX	XX	
Olivares TransAmerica	P	XX	XX	
Silveira Kaiser Permanente	P	XX	XX	
Zabrycki* CAPTRUST	P	XX	XX	

* = Chairperson
P = Present
A = Absent
-- = Not a Ratified Member at Time of Meeting
XX = Meeting Cancelled

FRESNO REGIONAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

AGENDA ITEM:	1
MEETING DATE:	November 2, 2022
ACTION:	APPROVE

2125 Kern Street, Suite 208 • Fresno, CA 93721 • (559) 490-7100 • Fax (559) 490-7199 • www.frwdb.net

TO: Business and Industry Committee
FROM: Blake Konczal, Executive Director
SUBJECT: February 2, 2022, Business and Industry Committee Meeting Minutes

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the minutes of the February 2, 2022, Business and Industry Committee meeting.

ATTACHMENT:

February 2, 2022, Business and Industry Committee Meeting Minutes Summary



FRESNO REGIONAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

Business and Industry Committee

February 2, 2022

SUMMARY MINUTES

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m. and was held via Zoom.

ROLL CALL: PRESENT - Sherry Neil, Joe Olivares, Michael Silveira, and Lydia Zabrycki

ABSENT - Fely Guzman and Scott Miller

AGENDA CHANGES: None

ABSTENTIONS/RECUSALS/
DISCLOSURES OF
POTENTIAL CONFLICTS OF
INTEREST: None

STAFF/CHAIR COMMENTS: None

PUBLIC COMMENTS: None

Item Description/Action Taken

1. **Resolution to Allow for Electronic Board Meetings Pursuant to AB361 and Making Requisite Findings of State of Emergency Due to COVID-19**

Blake Konczal, Executive Director, Fresno Regional Workforce Development Board (FRWDB) presented a resolution to allow the Business and Industry Committee to meet electronically. If adopted, the resolution would be effective for 30 days.

SILVIERA/OLIVARES – ADOPTED A RESOLUTION TO ALLOW FOR ELECTRONIC BOARD MEETINGS PURSUANT TO AB361 AND MAKING REQUISITE FINDINGS OF STATE OF EMERGENCY DUE TO COVID-19. VOTE: YES-4, NO – 0 (UNANIMOUS).

2. **May 5, 2021, Business and Industry Committee Meeting Minutes**

Mr. Konczal presented the May 5, 2021, meeting minutes for corrections and/or approval.

OLIVARES/NEIL – APPROVED THE MAY 5, 2021, BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES. VOTE: YES - 4, NO – 0 (UNANIMOUS)

3. **New Business and Industry Committee Member**

Mr. Konczal presented for the Committee's approval, a recommendation that the FRWDB ratify Director Stephen Avila as a member of the Business and Industry Committee.

OLIVARES/NEIL – RECOMMENDED THAT THE FRWDB RATIFY NEW BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY COMMITTEE MEMBER. VOTE: YES - 4, NO - 0 (UNANIMOUS).

4. **Rapid Response – Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act Notice**

John Lorance, Business Services Coordinator - Government/Rapid Response, reported on Rapid Response services provided in the Second Quarter (Q2) of Program Year (PY) 2021 – 2022.

During Q2, the Rapid Response team met with (six) 6 businesses who were either closing, conducting layoffs or downsizing. Orientations were provided to 43 people, and 264 people were affected by the layoffs.

The Rapid Response team hosted a Job Fair on January 20, 2022. Sixty people affected by the above-mentioned layoffs attended. A link highlighting an interview with ABC 30 was provided to Committee members.

This was an information item.

5. **Firebaugh Business Grant Program**

Erik Cherkaski, Business Services Manager, reported on a partnership between the FRWDB and the City of Firebaugh in a micro business grant program. He shared that the program provides up to \$7,500 in grant funding to small businesses through this program, which is a community business development block grant through the Cares Act. The City of Firebaugh received \$264,000 in funding for this program that will last (two) 2 years.

Mr. Cherkaski shared the qualifications for businesses to participate in the program and informed the Committee that the FRWDB would act in an outreach and administrative capacity. Mr. Cherkaski indicated that Sergio Martinez, Business Services Coordinator, FRWDB, was doing a great job providing information and application assistance in English and Spanish.

To date, 15 businesses were interested; with the goal being 25.

This was an information item.

6. **2021-2022 Quarterly Business Awards Recognition**

Mr. Cherkaski presented (two) 2 videos that revealed the Outstanding Business Achievement Award winners for Q2 of PY 2021-2022. The Youth Employer of Excellence was awarded to Second Chance Animal Shelter, and the Adult Employer of Excellence was awarded to Browning Contractors. Inc.

This was an information item.

7. **Agenda Items for May 4, 2022 Meeting**

Chair Zabrycki reminded the Committee that if they have any items to be added to the agenda for the May 4, 2022 meeting, to send those items to FRWDB staff at least (2) weeks before the meeting.

8. **Meeting Feedback**

Mr. Konczal asked for suggestions on how the Business and Industry Committee meetings could be improved. The Committee provided no feedback.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:26 p.m.

FRESNO REGIONAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

AGENDA ITEM:	2
MEETING DATE:	November 2, 2022
ACTION:	INFORMATION

2125 Kern Street, Suite 208 • Fresno, CA 93721 • (559) 490-7100 • Fax (559) 490-7199 • www.frwdb.net

TO: Business and Industry Committee

FROM: Phyllis Stogbauer, Senior Deputy Director
Garret Lecat, Rapid Response Coordinator, Central Labor Council

SUBJECT: Rapid Response – Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act Notice

INFORMATION:

As requested by your committee, and in an effort to stay abreast of economic developments in Fresno County, Fresno Regional Workforce Development Board (FRWDB) staff provides the Business and Industry Committee a quarterly update of Rapid Response activity as it applies to business closures or downsizing.

During the First Quarter of Program Year (PY) 2022-2023, the Rapid Response team contacted four (4) companies that were either downsizing or closing, two (2) companies provided WARN notices and two (2) were discovered via contacts.

Overall, there were 126 employees that were affected during this quarter. A Rapid Response Orientation was held on October 5, 2022, attempting to reach 111 of the Dislocated Workers affected in the First Quarter.

ATTACHMENT: Rapid Response 121 Report – First Quarter of PY 2022-2023

Name of Reporting Local Area: Fresno Regional Workforce Development Board
 Local Area Lead RR Contact Person: Garret Lecat
 Email address: glecat@workforce-connection
 Telephone Number: 559-230-4433
 Fax Number: 559-230-4044

Date Submitted: 10/17/2022
 Quarter Ending: 9/30/2022

INSTRUCTIONS: Activities reported on the Rapid Response 121 Report are those relating to visits in response to layoffs or closures, as defined in this Directive. Reportable visits include Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) and non-WARN events. The Rapid Response 121 Report must be completed for all layoff/closure planning/orientation meetings. Planning meetings and orientations for 9 or less employees are for information only and will not be used in the calculation of the dislocation-based formula funding factor. Complete a separate line item entry for each visit occurring on different days, locations or employers.

Complete a single line item entry if multiple sessions are conducted on the same day, at a single location, and for a single employer with the note of how many multiple orientations were made that day. The Rapid Response 121 Report is cumulative, must be completed quarterly and submitted via e-mail by the 20th of the month following the quarter end to the assigned Regional Advisor, with a "cc" to the Local Workforce Development Area (Local Area) Administrator. For example, submit the 03/31 report by 04/20.

Date of Visit	Reason for On-Site Visit: Planning (Plan) or Orientation (OP)	Was more than one orientation conducted per day? Y/N	If multiple orientations per day, how many?	Company Name	Street Address	City	Zip Code	Industry Sector Code/Title	Date of Layoff that Caused Visit	Total number of affected employees	Number of affected employees who actually attended orientation	Comments
8/2/2022	Plan	n	N/A	Riley's Brew Pub	2674 Owens Mountain Pkwy Ste 104	Clovis	93611	81 Other Services	Unknown	Unknown		Madera Location burned down. RR contacted Fresno location to inquire if it had impacted personal there. It
8/4/2022	Plan	n	N/A	Promenade Care Center	2715 Fresno St	Fresno	93721	62 Healthcare and	9/30/2022	111		PERMANENTLY CLOSED-Received WARN Notice. Left message for Authorized Representative on
8/5/2022	Plan	n	N/A	Promenade Care Center	2715 Fresno St	Fresno	93721	62 Healthcare and	9/30/2022	111		PERMANENTLY CLOSED- Left message for Human Resources at impacted site.
8/8/2022	Plan	n	N/A	Promenade Care Center	2715 Fresno St	Fresno	93721	62 Healthcare and	9/30/2022	111		PERMANENTLY CLOSED- Left message for Authorized Representative on WARN Notice (Yehoshua
8/9/2022	Plan	n	N/A	Promenade Care Center	2715 Fresno St	Fresno	93721	62 Healthcare and	9/30/2022	111		PERMANENTLY CLOSED- Spoke to receptionist at impacted site (Delores) and left message for HR
8/10/2022	Plan	n	N/A	Promenade Care Center	2715 Fresno St	Fresno	93721	62 Healthcare and	9/30/2022	111		PERMANENTLY CLOSED- Spoke to receptionist at impacted site (Maria) and was informed that HR
8/11/2022	Plan	n	N/A	CVS Downtown Fresno	1302 Fulton Mall	Fresno	93721	44 45 Retail Trade	Unknown	Unknown		PERMANENTLY CLOSED- RR Coordinator learned from Business Journal that Location was excepted to
8/11/2022	Plan	n	N/A	Promenade Care Center	2715 Fresno St	Fresno	93721	62 Healthcare and	9/30/2022	111		PERMANENTLY CLOSED- Performed site visit. Was told to speak with HR Manager but that she had left
8/15/2022	Plan	n	N/A	Promenade Care Center	2715 Fresno St	Fresno	93721	62 Healthcare and	9/30/2022	111		PERMANENTLY CLOSED- Spoke to receptionist at impacted site. Was informed that HR Manager was
8/15/2022	Plan	n	N/A	CVS Downtown Fresno	1302 Fulton Mall	Fresno	93721	44 45 Retail Trade	Unknown	Unknown		PERMANENTLY CLOSED- Spoke to representative (Gretchen) that Store Manager was off for the day
8/17/2022	Plan	n	N/A	CVS Downtown Fresno	1302 Fulton Mall	Fresno	93721	44 45 Retail Trade	Unknown	Unknown		PERMANENTLY CLOSED- Spoke to ASM again (Bill). Was informed that approximately 14 people
8/17/2022	Plan	n	N/A	CVS Downtown Fresno	1302 Fulton Mall	Fresno	93721	44 45 Retail Trade	Unknown	Unknown		PERMANENTLY CLOSED- Briefly spoke to Store Manager (Mitch). He was on the sales floor and was
8/22/2022	Plan	n	N/A	Promenade Care Center	2715 Fresno St	Fresno	93721	62 Healthcare and	9/30/2022	111		PERMANENTLY CLOSED- Left message for HR Manager
8/23/2022	Plan	n	N/A	CVS Downtown Fresno	1302 Fulton Mall	Fresno	93721	44 45 Retail Trade	Unknown	Unknown		PERMANENTLY CLOSED- Spoke to Store Manager Mitch. Briefly discussed RR services. Mitch
8/23/2022	Plan	n	N/A	Promenade Care Center	2715 Fresno St	Fresno	93721	62 Healthcare and	9/30/2022	111		PERMANENTLY CLOSED- Performed site visit. Was told by receptionist (Jennifer) that HR Manager was
8/24/2022	Plan	n	N/A	Promenade Care Center	2715 Fresno St	Fresno	93721	62 Healthcare and	9/30/2022	111		PERMANENTLY CLOSED- Performed site visit. Was told by receptionist (Jennifer) that HR Manager was
8/24/2022	Plan	n	N/A	Promenade Care Center	2715 Fresno St	Fresno	93721	62 Healthcare and	9/30/2022	111		PERMANENTLY CLOSED- RR Coordinator performed more research and contact HCAi (California
8/25/2022	Plan	n	N/A	Promenade Care Center	2715 Fresno St	Fresno	93721	62 Healthcare and	9/30/2022	111		PERMANENTLY CLOSED- RR Coordinator performed site visit. Was told that HR Manager was out to
8/26/2022	Plan	n	N/A	Promenade Care Center	2715 Fresno St	Fresno	93721	62 Healthcare and	9/30/2022	111		PERMANENTLY CLOSED- RR Coordinator held quarterly RR Partner meeting. RR Coordinator
9/2/2022	Plan	n	N/A	Promenade Care Center	2715 Fresno St	Fresno	93721	62 Healthcare and	9/30/2022	111		PERMANENTLY CLOSED- Attempted to contact HR Manager. Unsuccessful
9/2/2022	Plan	n	N/A	Promenade Care Center	2715 Fresno St	Fresno	93721	62 Healthcare and	9/30/2022	111		PERMANENTLY CLOSED- Met with Marketing Manager to discuss creation of Rapid Response
9/6/2022	Plan	n	N/A	Promenade Care Center	2715 Fresno St	Fresno	93721	62 Healthcare and	9/30/2022	111		PERMANENTLY CLOSED- Marketing manager provided rough draft of RR orientation flyer pending
9/9/2022	Plan	n	N/A	CVS Downtown Fresno	1302 Fulton Mall	Fresno	93721	44 45 Retail Trade	Unknown	Unknown		PERMANENTLY CLOSED- RR Coordinator attempted to follow up with Store Manager Mitch and
9/13/2022	Plan	n	N/A	Promenade Care Center	2715 Fresno St	Fresno	93721	62 Healthcare and	9/30/2022	111		PERMANENTLY CLOSED- Working along with Business Services, RR coordinator gained commitment
9/15/2022	Plan	n	N/A	Promenade Care Center	2715 Fresno St	Fresno	93721	62 Healthcare and	9/30/2022	111		PERMANENTLY CLOSED- RR Coordinator met with Marketing Manager to finalize orientation flyer.
9/15/2022	Plan	n	N/A	CVS Downtown Fresno	1302 Fulton Mall	Fresno	93721	44 45 Retail Trade	Unknown	Unknown		PERMANENTLY CLOSED- RR Coordinator attempted to follow up with Operations Supervisor John
9/16/2022	Plan	n	N/A	Promenade Care Center	2715 Fresno St	Fresno	93721	62 Healthcare and	9/30/2022	111		PERMANENTLY CLOSED- RR Oreination released from Marketing. RR Coordination provided copies
9/16/2022	Plan	n	N/A	Promenade Care Center	2715 Fresno St	Fresno	93721	62 Healthcare and	9/30/2022	111		PERMANENTLY CLOSED- Attempted to contact HR Manager. Unsuccessful
9/20/2022	Plan	n	N/A	Promenade Care Center	2715 Fresno St	Fresno	93721	62 Healthcare and	9/30/2022	111		PERMANENTLY CLOSED- RR Coordinator performed site visit and distributed RR orientation flyers to all
9/21/2022	Plan	n	N/A	Promenade Care Center	2715 Fresno St	Fresno	93721	62 Healthcare and	9/30/2022	111		PERMANENTLY CLOSED- RR orientation posted on Instagram and Facebook. Postings will remain active
9/23/2022	Plan	n	N/A	Promenade Care Center	2715 Fresno St	Fresno	93721	62 Healthcare and	9/30/2022	111		PERMANENTLY CLOSED- RR Coordinator attempted to follow up Administrator Lynette McDowell.
9/23/2022	Plan	n	N/A	Schneider Electric	200 W. Pontiac Way, Bldg 5	Clovis	93612	31 33 Manufacturin	11/23/2022	15		Partial Shut Down-RR coordinator received WARN letter. RR Coordinator left message with HR Manager
9/26/2022	Plan	n	N/A	Schneider Electric	200 W. Pontiac Way, Bldg 5	Clovis	93612	31 33 Manufacturin	11/23/2022	15		Partial Shut Down-RR coordinator left voicemail and sent email to HR Manager
9/27/2022	Plan	n	N/A	Schneider Electric	200 W. Pontiac Way, Bldg 5	Clovis	93612	31 33 Manufacturin	11/23/2022	15		Partial Shut Down-RR coordinator received email response from HR Manager. HR Manager informed RR
9/28/2022	Plan	n	N/A	Schneider Electric	200 W. Pontiac Way, Bldg 5	Clovis	93612	31 33 Manufacturin	11/23/2022	15		Partial Shut Down-RR coordinator left voicemail with HR Manager to follow up
9/29/2022	Plan	n	N/A	Promenade Care Center	2715 Fresno St	Fresno	93721	62 Healthcare and	9/30/2022	111		PERMANENTLY CLOSED- RR Coordinator met with Marketing Manager on Facebook Live to promote
9/30/2022	Plan	n	N/A	Schneider Electric	200 W. Pontiac Way, Bldg 5	Clovis	93612	31 33 Manufacturin	11/23/2022	15		Partial Shut Down-RR coordinator sent email to HR Manager to follow up

FRESNO REGIONAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

AGENDA ITEM:	3
MEETING DATE:	November 2, 2022
ACTION:	INFORMATION

2125 Kern Street, Suite 208 • Fresno, CA 93721 • (559) 490-7100 • Fax (559) 490-7199 • www.frwdb.net

TO: Business and Industry Committee
FROM: Martha Espinosa, Marketing and Grants Manager
SUBJECT: 2022-2023 Quarterly Business Awards Recognition

INFORMATION:

The Fresno Regional Workforce Development Board Outstanding Business Achievement Awards for the First and Second Quarters have been awarded to:

First Quarter Youth Employer of Excellence: California Tiny Houses

First Quarter Adult Business of Excellence: Top Build Tru Team

Second Quarter Youth Employer of Excellence: Hotel Piccadilly

Second Quarter Adult Business of Excellence: B & L Mechanical

FRESNO REGIONAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

AGENDA ITEM:	4
MEETING DATE:	November 2, 2022
ACTION:	INFORMATION

2125 Kern Street, Suite 208 • Fresno, CA 93721 • (559) 490-7100 • Fax (559) 490-7199 • www.frwdb.net

TO: Business and Industry Committee
FROM: Martha Espinosa, Marketing and Grants Manager
SUBJECT: Firebaugh Business Grant Program

INFORMATION:

Martha Espinosa, Marketing and Grants Manager for the Fresno Regional Workforce Development Board (FRWDB), will provide an overview of the progress and recommendations for the City of Firebaugh's Micro Business Grant Program. The City of Firebaugh selected the FRWDB Business Services Center as their primary partner to implement their business finance program, which kicked off in January 2022. Eligible businesses can receive up to \$7,500 in grant funding to support various operative costs impacted by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Approximately \$264,000 will be made available.

ATTACHMENT:

City of Firebaugh Micro Business Program Report

City of Firebaugh

CDBG-CV Grant

City of Firebaugh Micro Business Program



Fresno Regional Workforce Development Board

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Background and Introduction

The City of Firebaugh received \$264,000 in funds from the Community Development Block Grant. The City established a business assistance grant program to help businesses that were affected by COVID-19 and was meant to offset the negative affects of shelter in place orders. Businesses are eligible to receive a grant of up to \$7,500. The following are the requirements for businesses to qualify for the grant, as written in the City of Firebaugh's program guidelines.

Program Guidelines

- The business must be a for-profit business (non-profits are not eligible) and located within Firebaugh city limits.
- The business must be brick and mortar with a physical presence in the City of Firebaugh.
- The business must be legally operating with any required local business licenses, insurances and permits for local, state and federal requirements.
- The business must be located in a commercial or industrial space. Home-based businesses are not eligible.
- The business must be in operation for at least six (6) continuous months prior to March 15, 2020, when the pandemic began.
- A business that has not already received funding for the same purpose as the funding request, or a "duplication of benefits". Applicants will be required to disclose all COVID-19 relief funding, including but not limited to Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL), the County of Fresno, the State of California or the City of Firebaugh; This will be documented by a self-certification that must be notarized and attached to the application.
- The business must have 25 or less full-time employees, or an equivalent combination of full or part time employees, including the owner, at the time of application. It should be noted that a maximum of four (4) part time employees can equate to one (1) full time equivalent employee.
- The business must be in good standing with the City, meaning: business license fees are current and no outstanding tax liens or existing municipal code violations.

The grant pays for costs in the following categories that the owners of the business incurred after April 1, 2020, rent/mortgage, utilities, payroll, operations or Personal Protective Equipment.

The following documentation is necessary for an application to be considered complete:

- Complete Grant Application.
- Active City of Firebaugh Business License.

- Current Profit and Loss Statement.
- IRS W-9 Form.
- Documentation supporting proposed use of grant funds (i.e. rent/mortgage statement).
- Current Payroll documenting the number of employees.
- Documentation the business has been negatively impacted by COVID-19, by showing sales from the business are down compared to the same time period from previous calendar year by at least ten percent (10%). Example: Businesses may provide sales records or profit/loss statements from time periods affected by COVID.
- Proof of business registration on SAM.gov.

Efforts and Marketing

The Fresno Regional Workforce Development Board agreed to help The City of Firebaugh administer this grant. The Business Services Center helped the City, and work done for the City was charged to Rapid Response funds. Per the City's guidelines, FRWDB was responsible for providing outreach and marketing through the following channels:

- City's website and social media channels.
- Social media outlets.
- In-person workshops.
- FRWDB website.
- E-Flyers.
- Direct outreach campaign to business license holders in the City.
- Outreach through Chambers of Commerce and other merchant associations.
- Press releases.

In addition to marketing and outreach, the FRWDB also gathered and processed applications. This involved gathering applications in person and online via the FRWDB's Business Services Center website, <https://www.fresnobsc.com>, maintaining a log of applications, following up with clients to insure completeness of applications, answering questions, and recommending applicants to the City.

Some of the activities that the FRWDB undertook included creating paper applications in both English in Spanish, as well as provided English and Spanish applications online. The FRWDB held a kick-off event on January 20, 2022, at the Community Center in Firebaugh. This event was attended by 14 business owners who came to learn more about the grant and ask questions. Marketing efforts for the event included in-person distribution of English and Spanish flyers created by the FRWDB. Ben Gallegos, Firebaugh's City Manager, assisted with distribution of flyers. Over 30 businesses

received the flyers, along with paper applications, if requested. Paper applications were also available during the kick-off event.

During the first month of the grant, FRWDB staff was in Firebaugh twice a week canvassing and conducting outreach efforts, as well as following up with applicants. After the first month of the program, FRWDB staff was in Firebaugh at least once a week and, starting in March 1, 2022, held regular office hours at Firebaugh City Hall on Wednesdays from 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM. Applicants were made aware of FRWDB staff office hours during the initial follow-up on their application and this information was also included in other marketing materials. In March, FRWDB staff worked with the City to send out informational flyers in both English and Spanish in City of Firebaugh envelopes to all Business License holders in Firebaugh. The FRWDB refunded the City of Firebaugh for the cost of labor and materials to send out the flyers. In total, flyers were sent out to 147 recipients.

On April 12, 2022, the FRWDB held a workshop to help current applicants or provide information to businesses who might be interested in applying. FRWDB made personal visits to 15 businesses who had not yet applied and provided them with flyers about the workshop. FRWDB staff called and emailed current applicants to inform them about the workshop and let them know they could attend and receive help with their application. Current applicants were also reminded about FRWDB staff's regular office hours, should they need assistance with any part of the application process. At the time of the workshop, there were 17 eligible applicants and only one (1) business attended the workshop.

Other marketing and outreach efforts involved taking pictures and doing a Facebook Live with the first recipient of the grant, as well as taking pictures with the second recipient of the grant. The City also helped the FRWDB's marketing and outreach efforts by posting on the City's social media pages about FRWDB events and staff office hours. FRWDB staff received calls from the Fresno Economic Development Corporation, who stated that they had also been promoting the grant to businesses in Firebaugh.

Applicants and Trends

As of August 25, 2022, there had been 23 applicants for the Firebaugh grant. Out of the 23 applicants, five (5) were disqualified. One (1) business did not have the required ten percent (10%) loss in sales, one (1) had not been established long enough, and three (3) did not have a separate physical storefront. The last application was received on May 23, 2022, and there have not been any new applications since. Three (3) businesses have received the grant.

Observations

FRWDB staff was informed directly from applicants in regards to their experiences and the experiences of others, that perhaps the biggest obstacle in applying for Firebaugh Business grant was the amount of documentation required. This could have been due to business practices, business owners not filing their taxes, or businesses paying their employees in cash. For example, a decrease in sales could have been proven by showing a business profit and loss statement from when they file their taxes. This is one of the easy ways in which business owners could use an existing resource to complete one of the requirements. There are other venues, such as online templates, that can be filled out by the applicants, but this requires careful record keeping that many business owners do not have. Another deterrent could have been that business owners were worried to show their financial documentation to the City because they do not pay taxes. Applicants have questioned why so much documentation was required when previous grants required less. FRWDB staff did explain that this grant was from a different source, the federal government, and that the guidelines and regulations are set by the federal government. Perhaps the mention of the federal government deterred some from continuing with the application process. A couple of applicants also stated that the grant is not worth the work that is required to complete the application process. Another issue was the digital divide that exists in rural parts of Fresno County. Many applicants are not tech savvy and requirements such as being registered on SAM.gov are difficult, even for people who are more tech savvy. FRWDB staff made it understood to applicants that staff was available to assist with any part of the application process, including the registering on SAM.gov.

Recommendations

The City of Firebaugh has (2) two years to use the funds it received before it has to return any unused funds, which as of now is roughly around \$241,500. If the City wishes to continue offering the grant, FRWDB staff recommends increasing the amount of the grant offered from \$7,500 to \$10,000 to encourage more businesses to apply. Unfortunately, nothing can be done at the City level to change the amount of documentation that is required, as this is set at the federal level; however, the amount of required documentation could be considered in the future when the City pursues other grant opportunities. FRWDB staff also recommends that by the end of November, the City speak with the grant consultants on what other options exist for the City to use the funds.