



NEWS FROM CITIZENS COMMITTEE FOR NEW YORK CITY

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## **West Side Community Fund Announces COVID Relief Grant Program Supporting Small Businesses in Chelsea, Hudson Yards, Hell's Kitchen Neighborhoods**

*Local Businesses of up to 10 Employees Eligible for Aid Aimed at Retaining Workforces, Developing Innovative Financial Solutions to Coronavirus*

*Initial Seed Funding From Google.org, Jamestown, Related/Oxford Hudson Yards, Tapestry Inc.'s Coach Foundation, WarnerMedia, and Wells Fargo Foundation*

**NEW YORK, NY** - The West Side Community Fund (WSCF) launched a [grant application for small businesses](#) that have been economically hurt by COVID-19 and subsequent stay-at-home mandates. The West Side Small Business Grants (WSSBG) program will help vulnerable businesses like restaurants, salons, food carts, and retail shops, as well as nonprofits and community groups that may be less eligible for federal stimulus loans. Citizens Committee for New York City, a longtime partner of WSCF, will administer the grants.

"Nobody in our community has escaped the hardship brought on by this virus, which is why it's vital that we work together to preserve our neighborhood," said **Michael Phillips, President of Jamestown and West Side Community Fund leader**. "Today's announcement means essential money in the hands of small business leaders, so they can adapt their businesses or pay rents, insurance, employee wages and other costs. We're proud to work with Citizens Committee for New York City and the other generous WSCF donors once again."

Nearly all companies in the area have felt the economic impact of COVID-19, and consequently many have had to furlough or lay off workers. Some businesses have had to shutter entirely. The WSSBG, which was seeded by funding from Google.org, has received support from Jamestown, Related/Hudson Yards, Tapestry Inc.'s Coach Foundation, WarnerMedia, and Wells Fargo Foundation. The program is intended to assist with operating costs that businesses with a demonstrable revenue decline may otherwise be unable to pay.

"Small and medium businesses are the backbone of our community, and helping them grow and thrive has always been a focus of Google as a neighbor," said **Angela Pinsky, Head of Government Affairs for Google New York**. "Now facing the impacts of COVID-19, we are stepping up again with the West Side Community Fund to provide resources to help out our local Chelsea business neighbors that are struggling in these difficult times and ensuring that the West Side will weather this storm."



The WSSBG will also provide additional support for business owners through workshops and coaching, so that they can have a clear pathway toward a tentative New York reopening in May. Funds will be allocated based on an assessment of greatest need, with special consideration for minority and/or immigrant-owned businesses. The organization's top priority with WSSBG is to preserve workforces and keep businesses afloat, where employers can no longer afford to pay staff. Grant applications opened on April 23 and awards of between \$5,000 and \$10,000 will be announced on a rolling basis.

The program will be administered by Citizens Committee for New York City (Citizens Committee), a nonprofit that was founded in response to the fiscal crisis of the '70s. Citizens Committee provided instrumental community support after the 9/11 terrorist attacks and Hurricane Sandy. Last month, the organization conducted a [survey](#) of its extensive network of grassroots community groups to determine the needs and challenges of New York's most vulnerable communities during the COVID-19 crisis. With nearly 1,000 responses, the survey reveals three urgent priorities: financial assistance, food and water, and health care.

"Citizens Committee has a history of supporting New Yorkers during emergency situations and we're going to continue working strategically with community leaders to ensure their livelihoods during this time of crisis," says **Dr. Rahsaan Harris, CEO of Citizens Committee**. "We are glad to be able to work with the West Side Community Fund to begin supporting New Yorkers with the financial assistance they need."

"While absolutely necessary to combat the spread of the virus, it's no question that many businesses — especially small- and medium-size businesses — have been hurting because they are operating at a limited capacity, or in some cases not at all," said **Congressman Jerry Nadler**. "Today's grant will hopefully serve as a lifeline for those who have struggled through this health crisis by covering some operational costs and employee pay."

"As we battle this pandemic, we must do all we can to assure the survival of our small businesses - the backbone of our economy - as well as our nonprofits and community groups," said **NYC Council Speaker Corey Johnson**. "Many mom-and-pop shops have had no income for weeks and won't for the foreseeable future, yet they have to keep paying business-related expenses, such as rent. I commend the West Side Community Fund for launching this grant initiative that will help brick-and-mortar business, local nonprofits and organizations which need economic relief and assistance."

"Google came to Chelsea in 2011 because they recognized the incredible value that the neighborhood's small business culture would add for their workforce," said **Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer**. "There is a history of entrepreneurship and innovation in this district that simply cannot just be recreated. The West Side Small Business Grants will help preserve that history and shore up its future."

"Small businesses help define our neighborhood," said **Assembly Member Richard N. Gottfried**. "It's painful to watch them take so much of the brunt of the economic fallout caused by this crisis. The money being given through the West Side Small Business Grants will be vital help for many of them. I appreciate Google's seed funding and the other West Side Community Fund donors' support to help our district get through this pandemic."



“Our favorite neighborhood businesses are facing an existential threat from COVID-19,” said **Senator Brad Hoylman**. “They need all the help we can give them. I’m thrilled the West Side Small Business Grants will be providing crucial financial support and business coaching to small businesses impacted by this horrible pandemic, and encourage every eligible business owner to apply.”

Go to [citizensnyc.org/grants/west-side-small-business-grants](https://citizensnyc.org/grants/west-side-small-business-grants) to learn more about the West Side Small Business Grants program and apply.

### **About the West Side Community Fund**

Founded in 2018 with the goal of supporting underserved residents in Chelsea and Hudson Yards, the West Side Community Fund has provided 56 grants for community improvement projects benefiting more than 38,000 residents. The Fund continues to develop long-lasting relationships with community leaders to better serve and understand the needs of those residents. In the last thirteen months alone, WSCF, with support from 21 corporate funders, awarded over \$430,000 in grants to local organizations, community groups and residents.

### **About Citizens Committee for New York City**

Citizens Committee for New York City’s mission is to help New Yorkers—especially those in low-income areas—come together and improve the quality of life in their neighborhoods. Since 1975, we have promoted the spirit of volunteerism, local engagement, and social justice that drives our work. Residents are uniquely situated to define and act on the issues affecting their communities. When provided with modest support, neighborhood and school groups can effectively mobilize with the assistance of grants, skills-building workshops, project planning assistance and an equipment share library. In 2019, we provided 596 projects with \$2.3 million in grants and services, impacting more than 130,000 residents in 164 different neighborhoods across the five boroughs. Go to [citizensnyc.org](https://citizensnyc.org) to learn more.

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