

Yurok Tribe offers aid to Tribal businesses, entrepreneurs

June 5, 2020



The Yurok Tribal Council recently authorized the distribution of \$2 million in Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES) funding to help the many Yurok business owners and entrepreneurs that have experienced devastating losses due to the global COVID-19 crisis.

“Tribal citizen-owned businesses are essential to the long-term prosperity of our community,” said Joseph L. James, the Chairman of the Yurok Tribe. “We are committed to doing everything we can to assist our business owners and entrepreneurs during this emergency. I would like to thank our staff for working through the weekend to develop a program to rapidly disburse the relief funding.”

The CARES Act dollars were transferred to the Yurok Alliance CDFI, which is administering the COVID Relief Fund Program. Alliance CDFI staff set up a streamlined procedure to facilitate the distribution of emergency aid to those who have lost revenue because of the crisis. Tribal business owners are encouraged to fill out and submit the relief funding application. The application can be found online at

<https://bit.ly/3eNV8sK> The Yurok Alliance CDFI has scheduled two online forums to inform business owners and entrepreneurs about the forgivable grant program. The forums are happening on Friday, June 5 at 4pm and Tuesday, June 9 at 5pm. Please see the meeting information below. Alliance CDFI staff are also available to help applicants fill out the form. For assistance, please email Sara Barbour, the Deputy Executive Director of the Yurok Economic Development Corporation, at sbarbour@yuroktribe.nsn.us.

Enrollment in this economic recovery-focused program is not restricted by the location or the size of the enterprise. It is open to all Yurok-owned businesses and Yurok individuals who sell personalized products, such as handcrafted jewelry, apparel and artwork.

“No matter where your business is located, we are here to help you weather this storm,” said Don Barnes, the President of the Yurok Alliance CDFI. “Taking a first-come, first-serve approach, we will be processing applications and sending out checks as quickly as possible.”

Janet Wortman, a Yurok citizen and the proprietor of the historic Requa Inn, is facing circumstances similar to many other Yurok business owners, which depend on an influx of tourists in the spring and summer to get through the rest of the year. The beautiful bed and breakfast, located on the edge of the Klamath River estuary, has sat empty for more than two months and has lost 40 percent of its annual revenue. The Inn and many other Yurok businesses are eligible to apply for a grant from the Alliance CDFI's COVID Relief Fund. In addition to serving tourists, the Inn operates a restaurant that is normally open to residents and offers exceptional breakfasts and dinners, but it has been closed because of the emergency. The Inn also puts on special events, purchases products made by Yurok artists and contributes much to the community.

“The CARES Act funds the Tribe is distributing to Yurok businesses will allow me to keep the Inn,” Wortman said “It is hard to imagine losing a business you have put 10 years of your life into, invested your savings and retirement into. It is frightening. We are taking reservations for July in hopes that we will be able to reopen. We have had to refund all of our reservations for April, May and June. We are grateful to the Tribe for starting this program.”

During the past two years, the Yurok Tribe has put an immense amount of energy into implementing a series of initiatives that support new and existing Yurok-owned enterprises. For example, Yurok Alliance CDFI now offers loans to help small business expand into new markets. Alliance also provides micro loans for tribal vendors aiming to promote their one-of-a-kind products online and at community events.

“We had built much positive momentum prior to the COVID-19 crisis and we have plans to expand this effort to lift up Yurok-own businesses as soon as the emergency ends,” concluded Toby Vanlandingham, a Yurok Alliance CDFI Board Member.

If you have questions about the program or need assistance with the application, please email Sara Barbour, the Deputy Executive Director of the Yurok Economic Development Corporation, at sbarbour@yuroktribe.nsn.us Yurok Alliance CDFI is a Community Development Financial Institution. Alliance’s mission is to increase Tribal citizen access to credit, capital and financial literacy while building a coalition of cooperative organizations.

