

Aaron Rodgers Small-Business COVID-19 Fund



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After Aaron Rodgers' guest hosting appearance on "Jeopardy!" resulted in a large donation, the North Valley Community Foundation is opening applications for a second round of grants from the Aaron Rodgers Small-Business COVID-19 Fund.

"Jeopardy!" matched the winnings of all contestants over the two-week period that Rodgers was guest host. That resulted in a donation of \$236,725 to Rodgers' small-business fund at NVCF.

"It was a lifelong dream to host 'Jeopardy!' and I can't overstate how much I enjoyed it," said Rodgers. "I am so grateful for the opportunity, and doubly grateful that 'Jeopardy!' is donating nearly a quarter of a million dollars to help small businesses in Butte County. These grants provide a lifeline that they need to emerge from this long struggle. We will get there together."

Eighty locally owned and operated restaurants and retail stores in Butte County received more than \$1 million in grants for rent and other fixed costs in the first round of funding announced in March. Rodgers, the Chico native and three-time NFL Most Valuable Player, donated \$1 million to the fund. It was augmented by a \$100,000 donation from an anonymous community member, \$100,000 from NVCF's COVID-19 Rapid Response Fund and many smaller contributions.

The "Jeopardy!" donation, along with money remaining from the first round, will support the next round of grants, which will be determined by a grant selection committee.

The next round of grants is for:

- Restaurants and retail businesses that did not receive grants from the first round.
- Bars, wineries and brew pubs that were not eligible in the first round.
- Family and entertainment venues such as bowling centers, rolling skating rinks, museums, theaters and so forth.
- Personal service businesses such as hair salons, barber shops, gyms and yoga studios will be considered.

Qualifying businesses must have no more than 20 full-time equivalent employees.

Businesses must have a business license and a physical address. Food trucks are eligible if they pay rent where the truck is parked. Work-from-home businesses are not eligible. Independent contractors are not eligible.

Businesses that meet those criteria can apply for aid through the fund and will be asked to demonstrate need to get financial help for rent and other fixed costs.

Businesses can read about all eligibility guidelines at www.nvcf.org. Applications must be filled out at nvcf.org and submitted by 5 p.m. on Monday, April 26. The application must include a video up to three minutes long talking about how the pandemic has affected the viability of the business and the need for help.

Rodgers has been a valuable founding member of the Butte Strong Fund along with NVCF and Sierra Nevada Brewing Co. He also has been involved in coronavirus and North Complex Fire relief efforts.

“Working with Aaron to help our region recover from the Camp Fire and COVID-19 will always be one of our greatest blessings,” said Alexa Benson-Valavanis, NVCF president and CEO. “Aaron stepped up and brought focus to something very important -- that we all need to support local small businesses. He gave those businesses a sense of hope and taught all of us about the importance of community. He’s our true hometown hero.”