

April brings grant opportunities for businesses affected by pandemic

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
East Oregonian

UMATILLA COUNTY — State and federal COVID-19 relief legislation will present more grant opportunities to businesses in April.

The Restaurant Revitalization Fund is a \$28.6 billion grant fund created by the American Rescue Plan, the latest federal stimulus package. The Small Business Administration has not named a specific date yet for applications to begin, but has said it expects to open the application period sometime in April.

According to the SBA, the fund will provide tax-free federal grants to restaurants, bars, food trucks and other eateries to cover their losses caused by COVID-19 and related restrictions since February 2020. The list of eligible items for the grant money to be spent on includes payroll, rent



A sign from the Hermiston Chamber of Commerce along East Main Street in Hermiston advises shoppers that businesses are open on Nov. 20, 2020.

or mortgage, utilities, food and beverages, cleaning supplies, paid sick leave and expenses related to creat-

ing outdoor dining areas. Publicly traded companies or those with more than 20 restaurants are not eligible.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce is urging restaurant owners to prepare now, before the grant period

opens, by registering with the federal System of Award Management and preparing documentation of gross revenues for 2019 compared to 2020. More information can be found at restaurant-sact.com.

On April 8, the Small Business Administration also expects to open applications for the Shuttered Venue Operators grant, for venues affected by COVID-19.

Qualifying entities include event venue operators, theatrical producers, live performing arts organizations, movie theaters, museums and more. For organizations in operation before January 2019, grant awards will be for 45% of gross revenues from 2019 or \$10 million, whatever is less. More information is available at sba.gov/funding-programs/loans/covid-19-relief-options/shuttered-venue-operators-grant.

Business Oregon just closed its first round of applications for the Commercial Rent Relief Grant, but expects to open up another application period in mid-April. The grant is available to help commercial landlords and small business owners by providing rent money for tenants with fewer than 100 employees that have fallen behind on their rent payments because of the pandemic.

More information can be found at oregon4biz.com/Coronavirus-Information/CRR.

Locally, chambers of commerce, the Umatilla Electric Cooperative Business Resource Center in Hermiston and the Blue Mountain Community College's Small Business Development Center can provide additional information to area businesses interested in pursuing state and federal grants.



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

A Pacific Power lineman uses a fire extinguisher to douse a smoldering utility pole on Southwest 10th Street in Pendleton shortly after 10 p.m. on Sunday, March 28, 2021. Just before 10 p.m., the Pendleton Fire Department was dispatched to a utility pole fire resulting from windblown electrical equipment. Shortly after Pendleton Fire arrived on scene, line crews from Pacific Power responded and extinguished the pole.

Wind storm damage limited

Wind speeds reach 74 mph at Pendleton Airport

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
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UMATILLA COUNTY — Strong winds whipped through the Pacific Northwest on Sunday, March 28, causing damage in Eastern Oregon.

Wind speeds of 74 miles per hour were recorded at the Pendleton Airport, according to the National Weather Service, and hit 68 miles per hour at the Hermiston Municipal Airport. The highest reported location in the area was in Mission, where wind gusts reached 85 miles per hour.

The wind caused a few small power outages in the area. Tom Gauntt, a spokesperson for Pacific Power, said in the Pendleton area, eight different reported outages added up to about 150 total customers who lost power, with 11 customers yet to be restored as of 10:30 a.m. on Monday, March 29.

“Those are from trees on

lines and that sort of thing,” he said.

Gauntt said Pacific Power didn't see any outages that covered more than 200 customers in Northeastern Oregon. The company's largest reported outages for the weekend were in the Bend area, where about 6,000 customers lost power. But for areas where high winds are common, Gauntt said, the infrastructure proved resilient.

Umatilla Electric Cooperative spokesperson Steve Meyers said the cooperative received reports of a “few scattered outages” and broken poles, causing three members to lose power in the Homestead area and about 40 members to lose power in the Poverty Flats Road area about 8:20 p.m. on March 28.

In Pendleton, Parks and Recreation Director Liam Hughes said in an email on the morning of March 29 that crews were still checking everything out, but so far he knew of three trees down in Pendleton parks and “a bunch of downed limbs.”

In Morrow County,

Commissioner Melissa Lindsay said she had heard some reports trees that had toppled over, and there was a large sheet metal grain bin that had fallen over into part of Kilkenny Road in the central part of the county. Overall, however, she said the damage didn't seem to be nearly as severe as the May 2020 wind storm that caused extensive damage to the Wilson Road Mobile Home Park in Boardman.

“I made some phone calls, did some double-checking, and I think Morrow County did OK,” she said.

The wind blew dust across Interstate 84 and Interstate 82 in the region, at times obscuring visibility. The Sherman County Sheriff's Office posted warnings to Facebook about dust shrouding Interstate 84 along the Columbia Gorge. And according to a traffic alert from Washington State Patrol's public information officer, a “minor injury” crash involving seven vehicles temporarily blocked the westbound lanes of I-82 outside Richland, Washington.

CTUIR to vaccinate new groups at clinics

MISSION — Yellowhawk Tribal Health Center will be holding another set of mass vaccination clinics at Wildhorse Resort & Casino at the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, this time with more groups eligible, according to the health center's website.

Those eligible for the vaccine include CTUIR tribal members, people living on the reservation, Yellowhawk eligible patients, employees of any CTUIR entity and their families, students over the age of 16 and teachers and employees from Pendleton, Athena, Pilot Rock, Helix and Nixyaawii schools, and staff at Blue Mountain Community College.

Workers from all Pendleton area restaurants, food trucks, fast food chains and grocery stores are also eligible to get a shot.

First doses will be administered at the Wildhorse clinic on April 12 and April 13 from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Second doses will be administered on May 3 and May 4 at the same times.

People interested in getting a vaccine can call 541-240-8733 to schedule an appointment or use the registration link <https://airtable.com/shrb-74wCvIR6fnNJR>.

Yellowhawk officials ask that, on the day of the appointment, patients bring their current class schedules or student identification, employee paystub or employee identification, and plan to spend 15 to 20 minutes onsite after the vaccination to be monitored for any potential side effects.

Locals invited to Small Business Day

MILTON-FREEWATER — The Milton-Freewater Downtown Alliance invites local entrepreneurs to Small Business Day, an

LOCAL BRIEFING



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian, File/Bend Bulletin

Cpl. John Shown with the Oregon National Guard administers a COVID-19 vaccine to Mary Freeman during a COVID-19 vaccination run by Yellowhawk Tribal Health Care Center at Wildhorse Resort & Casino in Mission on Feb. 23, 2021.

online conference on April 13 hosted by Main Street America.

To support small business owners facing challenges in the coronavirus pandemic, the conference will offer marketing strategies, informational resources and workshops with retail experts.

Registration for small business owners costs \$25, but the local Downtown Alliance will pay that fee for the first 20 Milton-Freewater business owners who ask to attend.

For more information, call Milton-Freewater Downtown Alliance Executive Director Julie Culjak at 541-969-4485.

ODFW seeks applicants for council positions

SALEM — The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife is looking for volunteers to serve on the Access & Habitat Northeast Regional Council, according to a press release.

Applications are being accepted for the position of chairman and landowner representative until April 25. To apply, complete an application, which can be found on the ODFW website.

Volunteers in these positions meet quarterly to consider funding projects

that open private land to hunting access or improve wildlife habitat for game animals.

Applicants for the regional positions should live or work in the northeast region of the state, which includes Union, Willowa, Umatilla, Morrow, Gilliam, Wheeler, Grant and Baker counties.

The statewide board and regional councils are each made up of seven volunteers — three landowner representatives, three hunter representatives and the chair. Duties of the position include participation in up to four public meetings each year in various communities in their region to review A&H project proposals and conduct other council business.

The A&H Program is funded by a \$4 surcharge on hunting licenses, and the sale of deer and elk raffle entries and auction tags.

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