

# Press Release

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*For Immediate Release*



## Bridge Loan Applications For Small Businesses to Be Submitted Locally

*Florida SBDC at USF Administers Loans in 10-county Tampa Bay region*

**TAMPA (March 20, 2020)** – The Florida SBDC at University of South Florida is facilitating the application process for the Florida Small Business Emergency Bridge Loan Program, for all small businesses in the Tampa Bay region.

The Florida Small Business Emergency Bridge Loan Program, activated by Governor Ron DeSantis on Monday, March 16, is available to small businesses in Florida that are experiencing economic damage as a result of COVID-19.

“We understand the urgency surrounding the Florida Small Business Emergency Bridge Loan program,” Eileen Rodriguez, regional director of the Florida SBDC at USF, said. “We are here to help and will work with small business owners as quickly as possible, as we are experiencing a high volume of inquiries right now.”

The Florida SBDC at USF is accepting applications for the following counties: Desoto, Hardee, Hernando, Highlands, Hillsborough, Manatee, Pasco, Pinellas, Polk, and Sarasota.

To qualify, applicants must be for-profit, privately held small businesses that maintain a place of business in Florida. Businesses must also be an employer with 2 to 100 employees. Loans are interest-free for one year. Businesses can qualify for up to \$50,000 in most instances. Applications will be accepted through May 8.

The Florida SBDC at USF is available to answer questions and assist small business owners in submitting applications. Loan decisions are made by an independent committee made up of economic development and finance professionals from within the region. Financing is provided by the state of Florida using public funds. The state is also working diligently to make an online application available as well.

Due to the overwhelming response to the opening of the bridge loan program, we are asking small businesses to take the following steps:

1. Review [eligibility requirements and loan process](#).
2. Register with the SBDC by following this link. <https://sbdctampabay.com/schedule-consultant/>
3. Download, complete and sign the [application form](#).
4. Gather required [support documentation](#).
5. Submit completed and signed application and support documentation to [USF@FloridaSBDC.org](mailto:USF@FloridaSBDC.org) .

Applications missing supporting documents are considered incomplete and will only delay the process. Once these steps are completed, we will be able to assign a consultant to process the application package.

*It is important to note that only one method of submission is required, and the most expedited option is going to submit applications and any other inquiries via an email to [USF@floridasbdc.org](mailto:USF@floridasbdc.org).*

For additional qualifications, details and updates, please visit us online at [SBDCTampaBay.com/coronavirus](https://SBDCTampaBay.com/coronavirus).

As a principal responder in the state's Emergency Support Function (ESF) 18 for Business & Industry, the Florida SBDC Network is a key economic development organization that supports disaster preparedness, recovery, and mitigation through its [Business Continuation services](#).

**About the Florida SBDC Network:**

For over forty years, the Florida SBDC Network, the state's principal provider of business assistance [[Fl. Stat. 288.001](#)], has nourished a statewide partnership between higher education and economic development to provide existing and emerging small and medium-sized business owners with management and knowledge resources that enable overall growth, increased profitability, and economic prosperity for Florida's economy. Since 2011, Florida SBDCs have provided 624,331 hours of professional business consulting to 58,975 client businesses, resulting in 281,831 jobs impacted; \$36.7 billion in sales generated; \$2.7 billion in government contracts acquired; \$1.6 billion in capital accessed; and 4,520 new businesses started. A statewide network of over 40 offices, the Florida SBDC is funded in part by the U.S. Small Business Administration, Defense Logistics Agency, State of Florida and other private and public partners. The Florida SBDC Network, headquartered at the University of West Florida, is nationally accredited by the Association of SBDCs and is a 2016 recipient of the President's E Award for Export Service. Florida SBDC services are extended to the public on a nondiscriminatory basis. Language assistance services are available for individuals with limited English proficiency. For more information, please visit [www.FloridaSBDC.org](http://www.FloridaSBDC.org).

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