

Chamber launches new grant program supporting business growth



Small businesses are the backbone of communities like Aurora and now the Aurora Chamber of Commerce has launched a new grant program to help companies like these grow and flourish.

The Small Business Grants program, announced by the Chamber last week, includes the RiseUp grant and the ScaleUp grant, each providing \$2,500 to eligible small businesses in Aurora to achieve their goals.

The RiseUp grant applies to for-profit businesses with an annual revenue of up to \$50,000, have been in business for less than two years, and with clear missions, purposes, and a demonstrated case on how funds will be used to support business growth and development.

The ScaleUp grant, on the other hand, is for businesses with an annual revenue of between \$51,000 and \$200,000, with at least one employee or full-time contract equivalent, and a track record of two-plus years in their field.

“We have been thinking about providing business grants for small businesses for a while now and this year just seemed to be a good time to support some of the small businesses in Town who were looking to either really get their businesses off the ground or to start looking at how they could start to scale up their businesses and get it going,” says Sandra Ferri, President & CEO of the Aurora Chamber of Commerce, noting the RiseUp grant is essentially for start-ups. “Often the start-ups take a bit of time to get off the ground. It means they’re still in the start-up phase, trying to grow their businesses and this is intended to get their e-commerce going, their website revamped, or to buy some equipment that they could use to make their business a little easier, more successful, to help automate their business in some way.

“For [ScaleUp] those are businesses that are just on the cusp of starting to grow to the next level and we wanted to see if there was anything we could do to help them get to that next level. It could be websites, it could be equipment, it could be a number of areas. We haven’t specified what it has to be, they just have to let us know what the money is going towards and how it is going to support their business growth.”

Applications for the grants are now open and one business in each category will be recognized this year and announced at the Chamber’s Business Excellence Awards in the fall.

A judging committee will review all applications received.

Participating businesses will be asked to explain their missions; problems they are addressing; their social, community and economic impact; how funds will be used; and the impact funds will have on their business.

?We always ask that question in everything we do,? says Ferri of having businesses outline the social impact of their companies. ?We just feel that giving back to the community is always a big part of what a business should be looking at doing and we try to do that at the Chamber as well.

?We will be open to any type of business as long as it is a legitimate business and they are registered as a business. [Selected] businesses will be required to report back on how the moneys have been spent and the impact it has had. We're hoping we will see these businesses flourishing and this money will help them along hat road. I know it is not a lot of money, but hopefully it is enough money to get one small piece of their business up and running a little bit better.

?This is about advocating for yourself and telling us why this money can support you. I would encourage all small businesses who fit the criteria to come forward and ask for the support they need to help with their business. That's what we're here for as a Chamber.?

Applications for the new grant program are available at aurorachamber.on.ca and will be accepted through August 25. The application review process will take place between August 28 and September 22, with successful applicants being informed on September 29.

Winners will be presented with their grants at the Business Excellence Celebration, which will take place at the Royal Venetian on Industrial Parkway South on October 18.

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