



News from the Office of
Adam J. Bello
Monroe County Executive



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**Monroe County Executive Adam Bello Announces
The Launch of Fast Forward Monroe 2.0**

(Wednesday, September 8, 2021) — Monroe County Executive Adam Bello today announced the launch of Fast Forward Monroe 2.0, an expansion of the successful Fast Forward Monroe Small Business Grant Assistance initiative. Under FF 2.0, the county will join with the Urban League of Rochester, PathStone Foundation, and the Ibero-American Action League to make the program more accessible and provide comprehensive application help and support.

*“Small businesses are a key economic engine for our local economy and they face unprecedented hardships created by the COVID-19 pandemic,” said **Monroe County Executive Adam Bello**. “That’s why I launched the Fast Forward Monroe Small Business Grant Program last year. But just like this pandemic is not over, the economic stress on our business owners has not ended, and we know that minority-owned small businesses have suffered an even more dramatic hit. Through these important partnerships, Fast Forward 2.0 recognizes these ongoing difficulties and helps make it easier for applicants to gain access to the help they need. I am grateful to Congressman Joe Morelle, Sen. Charles Schumer and Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand for their help in securing CARES Act funding for our small businesses.”*

The initial Fast Forward program, launched in October 2020, helped well over 1,500 local small businesses survive the pandemic with \$22 million of funds from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act.

Fast Forward 2.0 is funded with an additional \$20 million in CARES Act money, which must be distributed by the end of this year. In addition to offering businesses more personalized help with completing their applications via the partnership with Urban League, Ibero and PathStone, the Monroe County Department of Planning and Development has added nine temporary workers in order to make the approval process faster.

Eligible businesses can receive grants of either \$10,000, \$15,000, or \$20,000 depending on the number of full-time employees. The money can be used for rent, payroll, operating expenditures, or COVID-related business expenses and other funding shortfalls.

Businesses that did not receive funding in the first version of the program will be given priority under Fast Forward 2.0. To apply, visit www.monroecounty.gov/fastforwardmonroe.

“Small businesses are the backbone of our economy, but unfortunately COVID-19 has left too many in our community and across the country struggling to keep their doors open,” said Congressman Joe Morelle. “We need to ensure these businesses have the support they need to navigate these challenging times—which is why I’m proud to have helped secure funding through the CARES Act for the Fast Forward Monroe program that is helping so many local entrepreneurs make ends meet. I’m grateful to County Executive Bello for his partnership and steadfast leadership to ensure our community recovers from this crisis stronger than ever.”

“Small businesses form the backbone of Monroe County’s economy,” said Senator Kirsten Gillibrand. “This funding will help ensure that businesses throughout the county have the resources they need to survive and thrive despite the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. I am proud to have worked to pass the CARES Act that provided this funding and will continue fighting on behalf of local entrepreneurs.”

“Small businesses, restaurants, and neighborhood stores are the lifeblood of the Rochester region. That’s why I was proud secure funding in the CARES Act to provide these grants for so many Monroe County businesses,” said U.S. Sen. Charles Schumer. “The first Fast Forward Monroe grant program was instrumental in helping small businesses who struggled due to the pandemic, but many of these businesses, and the thousands of workers they employ, continue to face challenges. I commend County Executive Bello for taking advantage of these funds to reinvigorate our local economy, and for involving community organizations in the process to maximize the reach and assistance this program will provide.”

“On behalf of the Ibero Business Center’s (IBC) staff, I like to thank the Monroe County Executive and the County’s Department of Economic Development for putting together the second round of Monroe Fast Forward program to give breathing room to our existing entrepreneurs in our county and city that persevered against all the odds,” said Agustin Rodriguez, senior director of Ibero Investors. “While IBC continues to help aspiring entrepreneurs launch their business dreams, IBC is proud to play its part in helping our existing business community through this partnership with the County.”

“We recognize that small business recovery after the pandemic can be a long and stressful process for entrepreneurs. This grant program puts more resources in place to help Monroe County’s small businesses rebuild and create new momentum in our local economy,” said Javier E. Zapata, president and executive director of PathStone Enterprise Center. “Without a doubt, this collaboration represents a great opportunity to continue with our quest to help grow and strengthen our communities’ small businesses.”

“The Business Development Division at the Urban League of Rochester (ULR) is excited to have this partnership with Monroe County. The hurdles that small business owners, specifically minority owned businesses have to jump to sustain their businesses are both intimidating and difficult. The fast forward program will help our business owners sustain, strengthen and grow their businesses,” said Chantz Miles, division director of business development for the Urban League of Rochester. “ULR is committed and dedicated to being a key role player in rebuilding and sustaining our small business community here in Monroe County.”