ECONOMIC RESCUE TEAM
ADVISORY REPORT
November 2020
Table of Contents

Letter from the County Executive
Letter from the Economic Rescue Team Steering Committee
Acknowledgements
  Economic Rescue Team
  Community Participation
  County Staff Support

Executive Summary

The Three Crises
  Public Health
  Economic
  Humanitarian
  Through an Equity Lens

Economic Rescue Team Guiding Principles, Outcomes, and Goals

Recommendations
  Addressing Immediate Needs
  Supporting Entrepreneurship and Innovation
  Developing Our Workforce
  Investing in Infrastructure
  Leveraging Our Assets
  Ordinances & Regulations

Next Steps
  The Way Ahead
  Holding Ourselves Accountable

Appendices
  A – Survey Results
  B – Safe Practices List of Vendors
  C – St. Louis Community College Proposals
  D – University of Missouri – St. Louis Proposals
  E – Community Health Worker Fast Track (Mental Health Focus)
  F – CARES Act Funding Recommendations
Letter from the County Executive

In response to this unprecedented crisis, Executive Order 16 established an Economic Rescue Team to address economic issues specific to workers and businesses in St. Louis County adversely impacted by COVID-19.

During the last several months, The Economic Rescue Team has worked to provide the critical guidance needed to chart a path forward.

There is no denying we will continue to navigate significant challenges related to COVID-19, but thanks to the Economic Rescue Team, we are already doubling-down on our mission of building a County that is inclusive and accessible, and serves as the standard of how counties can not only recover from this event, but use their recovery as a driver for generations to come.

Thank you for your contribution to this moment, and I look forward to continuing in this journey together in the months and years ahead.

Sincerely,

Dr. Sam Page
County Executive
We are honored to have served with such a distinguished group of concerned citizens on the Economic Rescue Team. The dedicated representation of non-profits, academia, and small business members across the ERT integrated feedback from stakeholders representing our communities and various business sectors. After an intensive and well-supported process, this group has brought forth a solid set of recommendations for the St. Louis County region.

We have been impressed with Dr. Page’s leadership and poise during this challenging time – responding to the public health, economic, and humanitarian crises. The County Executive and his team have always been guided by science, data, and a commitment to equity. We appreciate his transparency, his staff’s support, and his focus on taking meaningful action.

The County Executive established this Economic Rescue Team to listen, learn, and ultimately recommend action. We started by analyzing available data, understanding the emerging effects of the crises, and acknowledging structural inequities faced by our communities. Our members took that baseline data and insight, turned conversations and debates into inclusive, actionable initiatives, and built recommendations that are vital not only to building economic and social recovery over the next few years, but also to fueling small businesses, providing employment, and creating equitable opportunities for St. Louis County residents. Economic recovery involves correcting structural deficiencies that already existed in our local economy, providing access to safety net resources, and focusing our strategy for economic development. This group of thought leaders was well-suited to recognize the moment we are in both socially and economically, and to elevate important issues that provide for more equity across St. Louis County.

For true economic recovery, we must look at every recommendation through the lenses of job creation, job quality, and increased equity. We closely examined the challenges facing small businesses, their employees, and transitioning segments of our workforce. Throughout this endeavor, we have remained hopeful about the future of every community because of Dr. Page and his team’s leadership as well as the plethora of community strengths to include financial institutions, non-profit organizations, organized labor, institutions of higher education, and individual community and business leaders. Our region has a strong entrepreneurial legacy, and we applied the spirit of that legacy to leveraging our collective strengths proactively and creatively in our recommendations. Having a voice in this process has been a worthwhile experience and we remain committed to supporting this important work.

Sincerely,

Rick Stevens, President of Christian Hospital & ERT Steering Committee Chair
Frank D. Jacobs, Business Manager of IBEW Local 1
Veta T. Jeffery, Founder of Heartland St. Louis Black Chamber of Commerce & St. Louis County Chief Diversity Officer
Kellie McCoy, Lieutenant Colonel, USA, Retired & Founder of The Candra Group
Dr. Jeff Pittman, Chancellor of St. Louis Community College
Rodney Crim, CEO & President of the St. Louis Economic Development Partnership, ex officio
Acknowledgements

St. Louis County Economic Rescue Team

Small Business & Industry

Darlene Davis  
Davis & Associates CPA

Michelle Harris  
City of Clayton

Greg Hayden  
Luxemburg Realty

Michael Holmes  
Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis

Emily Martin  
Aschinger Electric

Kellie McCoy, Chair  
The Candra Group

Rebecca Now  
Webster Groves Shrewsbury Rock Hill Chamber of Commerce

Thomas Ray  
Vintage Vinyl

Rich Ryffel  
First Bank

Mary Tillman  
Radio One

Andrew R. Tolch  
Andy’s Toys

Evan Waldman  
Essex Industries

Travis Wilson  
City of Florissant

Rebecca Zoll  
North County Inc.
Minority & Immigrant Owned Business

Gabriela Ramirez Arellano  
*Hispanic Chamber of Commerce*

Akif Cogo  
*St. Louis University*

Betsy Cohen  
*St. Louis Mosaic Project*

Nahuel Fefer  
*Arch City Defenders*

Keith Fuller  
*St. Louis Community College*

Erica Henderson  
*St. Louis Economic Development Partnership*

Brandon Holzhueter  
*26H Holdings*

Veta Jeffery, Chair  
*Heartland St. Louis Black Chamber of Commerce*

Trevaughn Latimer  
*St. Louis Economic Development Partnership*

Kristina Lee  
*LAMP*

Beth Letscher  
*CORTEX*

John Loum  
*Concordia Seminary*

Gina Montgomery  
*MODOT*

Han Ko  
*USAKO Group*

Vin Ko  
*St. Louis CITY SC*

Samuel Rebmann  
*Abby Broyles for US Senate*

Sorin Vaduva  
*Exeteur Group*

Nguyen Violette  
*Asian Chamber of Commerce*
Workforce Development

Bryan C. Baehr  
*Impact Technologies*

Joseph Besmer  
*Sprinkler Fitters Local Union 268*

Mark Boyko  
*Bailey Glasser*

Laura Bryant  
*Enterprise Holdings*

Tiffany Davis, Chair  
*St. Louis Community College*

Jesse Dixon  
*Rung for Women*

Richard P. Dorsey III  
*Ahlheim & Dorsey*

John Gaal  
*STLKC Carpenters Regional Council*

Kisha Lee  
*CareSTL Health*

Richard Lucks  
*IUPAT Painters District Council #58*

Jamie Reyes-Jones  
*Hartnett Reyes-Jones*

Allan Schindler  
*Mehlville School District, Retired*

Kristen Sorth  
*St. Louis County Library*
Community Development/Non-profit & Alternative Lending

Byron DeLear  
Ygrene Energy Fund

Dara Eskridge  
Invest STL

Karl Guenther  
University of Missouri – St. Louis

Kyle Lackey  
University of Missouri – St. Louis

John Langa  
Bi-State Development

David Noble  
Midland Bank

Brian Phillips, Chair  
Washington University Medical Redevelopment

Andrew Struckhoff  
PGAV Planners

Community Participation

Tom Chulick  
St. Louis Regional Chamber

Jeremy Degenhart  
Olin Business School Washington University

Laura Edwards Ray  
Thomson Reuters

St. Louis County Staff Support

Thomas Appelbaum  
County Counselor’s Office

Tracy May  
St. Louis Economic Development Partnership

Dr. Molly Metzger  
County Executive’s Office

Janson Thomas  
County Executive’s Office

Cora Faith Walker  
County Executive’s Office

Lindsey Vehlewald  
County Executive’s Office
Executive Summary

The public health crisis resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 shocked the St. Louis County economy and exacerbated structural inequities that manifested in an ensuing humanitarian crisis. The St. Louis County Economic Rescue team worked throughout the summer of 2020 to identify immediate needs across the County to stabilize the economy and to develop a plan for long-term economic recovery.

This report provides 11 recommendations for immediate action to address unforeseen needs resulting from the pandemic to include stabilizing small businesses, promoting public health safe practices, stabilizing households, creating new opportunities for restaurants, and assessing ongoing needs.

This report also proposes 34 actionable recommendations for accelerating economic recovery. These long-term recommendations focus ongoing economic development strategies and seek to correct structural inequities including simplifying access to information and resources for small businesses, enabling e-commerce for all business owners, expanding in-demand career training capacity, strengthening workforce-employer connections, reducing barriers to employment, bridging the digital divide, making St. Louis a “smart” region, prioritizing affordable housing, and accelerating development in North St. Louis County.

The ERT also analyzed community strengths and submits recommendations to leverage our assets to reignite our small business legacy, energize corporate and institutional support, and efficiently deploy capital – all through a lens of equity.

A summary of seven recommendations previously submitted to modify, suspend, or extend County ordinances and regulations is included.

The ERT worked closely with the St. Louis County Executive’s office to rapidly create, distribute, and analyze a survey of small business owners. The full survey results are included as an appendix and were used to validate the recommendations and priorities.

With a focus on action and implementation, this report also provides a suggested framework for prioritization, accountability, and specific funding recommendations for spending CARES Act funds in support of small businesses and those in our communities most impacted by the three-fold crisis. These prioritized funding recommendations total $5.7-6.45 million.
The Three-Fold Crisis

Addressing public health, humanitarian, and economic needs through an equity lens

Public Health Crisis

Save Lives

The novel coronavirus, known as COVID-19, brought with it an historic health care emergency. St. Louis County’s first decisions were to act quickly in the face of a new, particularly virulent, and rapidly spreading, public health crisis.

The first priority in public health was to save lives.

To save lives, St. Louis County took a two-pronged approach. We needed to flatten the curve as well as increase the capacity of the health system. These efforts combined meant hospital resources were not overwhelmed with people seeking help and St. Louis County fared better per capita than the rest of the state.

Flatten the Curve

Efforts to flatten the curve were led by prevention -- community awareness and social distancing.

A County-run website and hotline were set up as a hub for information and news. Public awareness campaigns were pushed through traditional news media, advertising space, and County-owned social media. Community stakeholders were invited to the table to help us make decisions that were in the interests of all.

The County used its authority to restrict services to encourage people to stay home and remain socially distant until a clearer picture of the COVID-19 crisis became evident. Non-essential activities and businesses were closed, and crowd sizes were limited.

In the early days, COVID-19 tests were few and expensive. St. Louis County was competing with every other region to get testing supplies. The first CARES expenses were dedicated to ensuring we could provide testing quickly and equitably. Having the ability to test as many people as possible, as quickly as possible, provided a more accurate view of how COVID-19 was moving and impacting our communities.

With confirmed cases in St. Louis County, providing assistance and support was crucial. Quarantine and isolation policies were created, as well as facilities and services for certain, more vulnerable, populations.

Build Health System Capacity

Flattening the curve helped slow the demand on the County’s health systems, but the need to provide medical professionals with support and assets increased. Building on the community awareness efforts and policies driven by St. Louis County, relationships were built to ensure local health systems were equipped to handle an unprecedented demand.
St. Louis County worked closely with the St. Louis Metropolitan Pandemic Task Force. The Pandemic Task Force, led by Dr. Alex Garza, comprises the area’s largest medical providers -- BJC Healthcare, SSM Health, Mercy, and St. Luke’s Hospital.

By opening and facilitating more frequent and direct lines of communication between health CEOs, CMOs, providers, and County Departments, St. Louis County was able to increase data-sharing and coordination.

Better coordination and data provided crucial stakeholders with timely insights into COVID-19’s spread, helping inform decisions that needed to be made quickly. This network of relationships meant strategic resources were available.

**Humanitarian Crisis**

*Help Residents Meet Basic Needs*

While the hospital system dealt with the immediate crisis of public health, the administration turned to the needs of communities impacted by prolonged illnesses and economic insecurity brought about by the pandemic. $24.1 million was invested in meeting the needs of County residents and protecting the most vulnerable.

Wherever possible, CARES funds were placed directly into community organizations. This approach ensured support was driven to those with the expertise to best serve the vulnerable populations and simply needed additional investment to expand their services to meet increased demand.

**Humanitarian Relief Program**

The Humanitarian Relief Program was allocated $9.5 million of the federal CARES Act funding. In June, the CARES committees sought RFPs from interested provider organizations throughout St. Louis County, specifically those whose services focused on impact areas of seniors and homebound programs, housing stabilization and homeless prevention, technology, and social and emotional wellness for children.

Housing Stabilization organizations were awarded $6.96 million across 24 organizations.

Seniors and Homebound Services were awarded $827,901 across 16 organizations.

Social and Emotional Wellbeing of Children organizations were awarded $500,000 across 4 organizations.

Technology RFPs were awarded $994,797 across 21 organizations.
Food Security

St. Louis County’s efforts to address food insecurity were again guided by the already remarkable work being done by community and grassroots efforts. Seven trusted food security organizations were selected to receive a cumulative total of $6,521,352.

Domestic Violence Fund

Because we knew that not everyone has a safe home environment as public health required extended shelter-in-place orders, additional resources were invested in domestic violence care providers. Twelve providers were contracted to receive CARES funding totaling $549,476.09. All agencies were required to complete a thorough risk assessment prior to contracting.

Digital Equity Initiative

Partnering with the St. Louis County Library, County CARES invested $4 million in the Digital Equity Initiative to support students across the County with remote learning. The Digital Equity Initiative sourced Chromebooks, internet hotspots, and tutoring services for children who could otherwise risk falling behind in school without reliable access to the internet and educational support. School districts identified need and coordinated with the library to distribute more than 6,015 Chromebooks, 9,878 internet hotspots, and more than 1,400 hours of tutoring.

Child Care Relief

With the increased demand for front line workers and without the guarantee of in-school education during the day, there was an anticipated increase in the need for childcare services. St. Louis County set aside $1,875,365 for 123 approved childcare facilities to receive federal CARES funds.

Economic Crisis

Revive the Local Economy

While immediate moves were taken to safeguard the health and safety of County residents, we recognized that the long-term viability of the region hinged on helping businesses stay afloat when faced with shutdowns and reduced income. $24.1 million was invested in strategies to revive the County’s economy, including lifting the economic restrictions, helping non-essential businesses, re-open, helping restaurants return to dine-in service, and pushing the local economy forward.

Support Local Businesses

In May, St. Louis County announced the Small Business Relief Fund. Of the $173 million in federal CARES funds, $17.5 million was earmarked for local small businesses. The Small Business Relief Funds could be used to pay for the costs of business interruption as a result of
the County’s Stay at Home Order and to cover costs incurred through implementing the required Health Department safety protocols to reopen businesses.

Nearly 1,700 small businesses applied and all businesses that were in good standing with their taxes were approved and fully funded by the Small Business Relief Fund. St. Louis County did not want to turn away applicants from these necessary funds, so the overall federal CARES Act investment was increased to $19 million to completely fund every eligible applicant.

**Economic Rescue Team**

In a continuing effort to make strategic decisions that were in the best interest of the County’s economy, the Economic Rescue Team was formed by Executive Order in March.

This committee made up of volunteer external leaders from the St. Louis County business world was tasked with creating a plan of action that recommends efficient, impactful, and equitable use of resources -- both in the immediate and long-term.

The immediate needs of St. Louis County’s economy cover items like stabilizing small businesses and creating new opportunities for business owners to thrive. Looking toward 2021, investments in infrastructure, further workforce development, and pathways to supports innovation and entrepreneurs in our region.

This presentation will outline these recommendations and holistic strategic framework of the Economic Rescue Team.

**Through an Equity Lens**

As St. Louis County responded to this COVID-19 pandemic, it was clear that the region suffers from disparities that keep us from rising together.

Underlying health conditions exacerbated by lack of access to healthcare, lack of access to affordable health insurance, and lack of access to markets that provide healthy food options create an inability to effectively fight COVID-19.

When we began our response to this pandemic, County Executive Dr. Sam Page committed to getting the federal stimulus grant funds to those who need it the most. For many of the CARES initiatives, this meant that allocations were decided on a weighted system of need based on average household income and other qualifying identifiers. Calculations and assessments were done in conjunction with Washington University Brown School to ensure an equitable result. The end result was a focus on 11 ZIP Codes, mainly in North St. Louis County. However, CARES funds, and St. Louis County’s efforts, have helped residents of all areas of St. Louis County. The partnerships established are ongoing and it is hoped that we can continue offering support through the end of the year.
Economic Rescue Team

Executive Order 16 specifically asked the ERT to understand and provide advice concerning economic issues specific to workers and businesses in St. Louis County impacted by COVID-19. The ERT Policy Brief further directed us to serve as the County’s “eyes and ears” as the crises unfolded and to ensure the voices of small businesses and workers were heard as the County deployed resources to assist with recovery.

The Economic Rescue Team was comprised of over 40 volunteers and advisors from across the region. Four working groups met at least once a week throughout the summer of 2020. These working groups, representing our region’s diverse population and vibrant small business community, focused on issues related to Small Business & Industry, Minority & Immigrant Owned Business, Workforce Development, and Community Development.

The ERT approached its work with the following guiding principles:

- Let every voice be heard. Model collaboration.
- Have a bias toward action. Address immediate needs quickly and put available resources to work.
- Maintain a positive outlook. Find opportunities in the crises.
- Provide equitable access to resources above all.
- Use data to drive decisions that make the most impact.

The working groups collaborated with numerous community advisors and organizations toward the following outcomes:

- Support the small business economy.
- Expand economic opportunity, quality employment, and financial security.
- Accelerate investments to address inequities.
- Build on our region’s strengths to capture new opportunities.

The ERT Steering Committee’s specific goals for this report are to propose actions that:

- Prevent previously healthy small businesses from failing.
- Reduce unemployment and poverty.
- Invest private and public sector capital intentionally and strategically to achieve equitable growth with a focus on areas where socioeconomic conditions lag.
- Invest in emerging in-demand target industries and sectors.
- Bridge the digital divide.

Conversations with business owners, community advisors, civic leaders, and residents across the region made clear the COVID-19 public health crisis had exacerbated humanitarian needs,
underscored the positive impact of cooperative economic development, and highlighted the opportunity we have to address inequality in a visible and meaningful way.

The Economic Rescue Team remains engaged with the community and County Government leaders. We are committed to implementing the recommendations submitted in this report to address the region’s immediate and emerging needs. We remain optimistic that swift action, cooperation, collaboration, and persistence will drive equitable economic recovery and accelerate economic development.
Economic Rescue Team Recommendations

“We will harness the creative capacity of the St. Louis community to grow our economy, resulting in sustained increases in living standards and quality of life for all our residents.”

This report is the culmination of a process that began in March 2020 and expands on interim reports submitted over the past several months:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 23, 2020</td>
<td>Executive Order 16 establishes the ERT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 15, 2020</td>
<td>Steering Committee Kickoff Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 10, 2020</td>
<td>Recommendations on Ordinances and Regulations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 24, 2020</td>
<td>Recommendations for Immediate Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 15, 2020</td>
<td>Recommendations for Long-Term Recovery</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ERT submits 11 recommendations for near-term implementation to address immediate needs directly resulting from the related public health, economic, and humanitarian crises.

The ERT also considered the lasting impacts of these crises and makes 34 recommendations for long-term economic recovery. These long-term recommendations align with four strategic pillars of the 2017-2022 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy published by the St. Louis Economic Development Partnership in December 2016. Those strategic pillars are:

- Supporting Entrepreneurship and Innovation
- Developing our Workforce
- Investing in Infrastructure
- Leveraging Our Assets

The ERT’s proposals were developed independently by the four working groups and subsequently organized under this framework. In doing so, our intent is to help the County focus, prioritize, and accelerate implementation of the elements of each CEDS strategy that will have the most impact on economic recovery given the events of 2020. In some instances, we propose actionable items to augment the CEDS in areas that have emerged as opportunities for economic development since 2016.

The ERT worked closely with County officials and staff to understand and navigate the challenges of developing an economic recovery strategy while federal guidance for CARES funds and other stimulus programs was clarified. We sought input from the County Data Office and repurposed

---


a citizen survey to gather as much quantifiable data as possible to validate our recommendations (see Appendix A).

Prioritizing recommendations was challenging as the crisis deepened and persisted resulting in a continuously changing environment. While we benefitted from a variety of expertise in the ERT working groups, we recognize that we lack visibility of the full spectrum of existing and new programs and initiatives. Our intent is never to be duplicative or “reinvent the wheel.” We have looked for opportunities to consolidate, improve awareness or “get the word out,” make connections, and reduce the burden of accessing resources on individuals and business owners.

In providing interim reports to the County throughout the summer months of 2020, we intended to support rapid decision making to address immediate needs as the ERT shifted its focus to long-term economic recovery. By August 2020, it became clear that the public health crisis would extend beyond the end of 2020 and therefore, so would the economic crisis for small businesses. Despite the initial rounds of stimulus funds, grants, and other support, some businesses that could survive remained at risk of failing and some businesses that closed could have stayed open or be reopened with additional support.

We recognize the County and many organizations have made tremendous contributions supporting the immediate and basic needs of many St. Louis County residents. In the spirit of being good stewards of our resources, the ERT endorses judicious, data-driven, targeted expenditures of remaining CARES funds to address immediate needs. We have provided a menu of long-term proposals well-suited for budgeting seed or pilot programs in 2021.
Addressing Immediate Needs

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to have a profound economic impact on many St. Louis County households and small businesses. The ERT believes the small business employer and employee aspects of this problem are interconnected and require a multi-faceted solution. CARES Act funds should be prioritized to the proposals under the following five ERT strategies:

- Stabilize Small Businesses
- Promote Public Health Safe Practices
- Stabilize Households
- Create New Opportunities for Restaurants
- Assess Ongoing Needs

Most St. Louis County small businesses continue to operate at reduced capacity, are experiencing significantly decreased revenue, and/or have been slow to rehire furloughed employees. Federal aid helped bridge small businesses during the initial months of the crisis, but many will remain in crisis management mode well into 2021 and require continued assistance to avoid failing. We have prioritized actions for continued stabilization of small businesses that, had it not been for COVID-19, were likely to survive, and perhaps thrive, but are now deemed at risk of failing. These actions aim to address three identified areas of need: 1) cash liquidity; 2) access to information; and 3) new market opportunities. Given the constraints on the restaurant industry, we highlighted recommendations to address their unique needs in a separate strategy.

Small business owners also face financial pressure within their own households as do their employees, former employees, and customers. Households that were financially insecure prior to March 2020 and households whose financial security depended on the viability of a small business remain at risk. Working parents struggle to care for children, manage the challenges of various school opening models, and may have been furloughed, laid off, or seen a reduction in their work hours. We must address the false choice presented to those who work and care for children to allow for and encourage both income-producing activities and adequate childcare. We have also examined the school-family connection and areas where the County can take proactive measures to support families with school-age children.

The public health crisis created the economic crisis we are now navigating, and we believe complacency is our greatest risk as the public health threat from COVID-19 persists. We want to highlight the efforts at the State and County levels to promote safe practices in businesses, households, and across the broader community. Practices such as social distancing, physical barriers in places of business, mask wearing, sanitizing, and hand washing are likely to remain in place for the foreseeable future. While small businesses have adapted quickly and the supply chain for PPE has started to stabilize and recover, the incremental expenses are a burden for already struggling businesses. As COVID-19 cases decline, so does the incentive to sustain these practices. We believe the County can encourage sustained safe practice behaviors through creative initiatives that support and augment public mandates or guidance.
Stabilize Small Businesses

The ERT recognizes the positive impact that programs such as PPP and the Small Business Relief Grant Program have had on the region’s economy. The rapid infusion of cash helped many businesses react to the initial crisis. However, some businesses continue to struggle and face difficult decisions regarding additional furlough or permanent closure due to mounting expenses. The St. Louis County Small Business Survey conducted in August 2020 indicated over half of respondents would apply for additional financial assistance to cover basic expenses with 65% indicating they would use funds specifically to cover payroll expenses. Some business owners may not have applied for or received funds under previous programs because they did not think they needed additional cash, did not understand payback requirements, grew frustrated by the application process, or were not approved.

❖ Create a Small Business Rapid Deployment Fund (RDF)

This proposal continues in the spirit of the Small Business Relief Grant Program to address immediate needs of small businesses. Many small and micro businesses remain at risk of permanent closure as they struggle to recover revenue, rebuild operations, and rethink their business model. A Small Business Rapid Deployment Fund provides business owners with small, needs-based grants to cover basic expenses such as mortgage/rent, utilities, operating expenses, and job-related childcare. With a streamlined and simple approval process, small businesses receive financial relief quickly to avoid failure or accumulating additional debt. The ERT recommends administration under the St. Louis Economic Development Partnership (STL Partnership) in coordination with the proposed Business Navigator Program.

❖ Create a Set Aside Minority and Immigrant Owned Business Support Fund

Like the RDF, establish a grant fund set aside for minority- and immigrant-owned small businesses. Establish this fund under the administration of the STL Partnership in coordination with the ethnic Chambers of Commerce who are well suited to provide referrals, conduct promotion and community outreach, assist in the disbursement of funds, and connect businesses to the STL Partnership.
Promote Public Health Safe Practices

Businesses that rely on in-person service or foot traffic to generate revenue have an inherent incentive to create a safe space in their place of business for customers. While safe practices have been thoroughly disseminated across the community, they add costs and further strain resources. As the previous chart shows, 27% of Small Business Survey respondents indicated they would use additional financial assistance to cover PPE expenses. The ERT considered how to encourage long-term compliance with established safe practices.

❖ Establish a Small Business Safe Practices Voucher Program

We recommend ongoing support of the state “Show Me Strong” pledge program and other efforts to encourage public health safety for employees and customers in every business. Incentivize compliance with the standards outlined in the “Show Me Strong” pledge through creation and funding of a Safe Practices Voucher Program. This program provides tax-free vouchers to small businesses for procurement of PPE and safe practices related products and services from local vendors. The County administers vendor reimbursement through the Department of Health and coordinates promotion of the program through the STL Partnership. Appendix B provides a list of local vendors suitable for enrollment in this program.

Figure 1. St. Louis Small Business Survey (August 2020).

---

3 https://showmestrong.mo.gov/pledge/
Stabilize Households

The ERT took a holistic view of immediate needs. We recognize the tremendous efforts by the County and regional organizations to address the humanitarian crisis and focused our analysis on the intersection of household stability and small businesses. Both owners and employees feel the effects of changes in schooling in addition to the financial stress of business uncertainty. We recognize the importance of prioritizing public health and the challenges associated with opening schools for in-person learning. We also recognize the potential economic impacts of these decisions on both employers and employees. Although extensive resources have been extended throughout the region, we see a persistent need that requires additional funding.

❖ Enhance School-Family Connection through Child Care Incentives

Our intent is to recommend flexible incentives that:

1) alleviate the pressure on working parents to choose either to work or to care for and educate their children;
2) encourage safe, creative, and flexible solutions; and
3) provide equitable access to these solutions.

In coordination with the Department of Human Services, create or extend programs that reimburse, subsidize, or create a tax incentive for business owners who provide or pay for child care and/or organized virtual learning groups to include funding related to virtual learning resources, equipment, and supplies. Action steps to consider include:

- Designate funding from CARES Act Child Care Plan to increase benefits to families under the Child Care Subsidy and Transitional Child Care Subsidy programs.
- Designate funding for transportation subsidies, including Metro passes and on-demand shared ride services.
- Expand access to childcare for enrolled UMSL and STLCC students and recent graduates.\(^4\)

\(^4\) For example, in addition to offering free or subsidized childcare for students during class time, allow students to access subsidized childcare for up to 40 hours per week while a registered student and continuing for up to six months following graduation.
Extend Basic Needs Financial Support

St. Louis County, along with local and regional non-profit, community, and faith-based organizations, has made a significant positive impact on many residents’ ability to provide for their individual and household basic needs. The ERT recommends extending these programs and prioritizing efforts in underserved areas of the community with the highest COVID incidence rates using the Health & Economic Risk Index (“HERI10”) data or other similar metrics. We support extending programs built around:

- **Mortgage and Rent Relief.** Extend the CARES Act Housing Program and include assistance for landlords.

- **Eviction Support.** Assist those facing evictions with no-cost mediation services.

- **Food Security.** Focus efforts in North St. Louis County.

- **Health Care and Mental Health Provisions.** Invest in access particularly in underserved areas of the community. Build on the mobile hotspot distribution program by deploying mobile devices or physical platforms to support telehealth.
Create New Opportunities for Restaurants

The ERT recognizes the restaurant sector as a vital part of the regional economy and one that has been significantly impacted by the public health and economic crises. Further, the rapidly approaching winter of 2020-2021 adds seasonal challenges. To preserve as many of the region’s restaurants as possible will require a sustained and focused effort to address safe operations and to strengthen the financial health of these businesses - especially those that are new or small businesses.

❖ Establish a Cross-Functional Restaurant Task Force

The County’s Department of Public Health led a working group focused on assisting restaurants in navigating mandated changes to their operations. Although available data are limited, the ERT assumes many restaurants and food trucks remain at risk of failure and those that continue to operate are increasingly leveraged and facing new seasonal challenges through the winter of 2020-2021. A cross-functional task force composed of business, public health, finance, and restaurant industry experts inclusive of minority and immigrant restaurant owners should evaluate the current state of the restaurant sector and advise the St. Louis County CARES Team on processes, approaches, and funding for long-term recovery. Ideally, this task force would replace ad hoc groups, promote best practices, and provide equitable representation of the region’s restaurant owners.

❖ Seed a Regional Restaurant Reinvention Microgrant Fund

Nearly every restaurant has changed its operating model in some way since March 2020. Some were fortunate to have the knowledge, skills, and experience to navigate quickly to a digital platform, set up mobile ordering, retrain employees, etc. Others innovated or took creative approaches to sustaining operations through streamlined offerings, single use menus, etc. The rapidly approaching winter months bring new challenges such as providing outdoor heaters and declining foot traffic for food trucks. Under the administration of the STL Partnership, this fund provides more equitable access to resources for entrepreneurial restaurant and food truck owners.

*Figure 2. National Business Closure Data as of September 2020.*
Assess Ongoing Needs

❖ Rapidly Diversify St. Louis County Boards and Commissions

As of July 10, 2020, St. Louis County has close to 80 different boards and commissions, most of which are populated by the County Executive’s decision. St. Louis County has an estimated population of 994,204, with 40% composed of minority and foreign-born populations. Our working group strongly feels that the input of our diverse communities will enrich the decision-making process of County’s boards and commissions, while at the same time improving equity, equality, and inclusion in decision-making bodies of government.

Minority groups and immigrants make our communities stronger and contribute to the County’s growth as business owners, leaders, parents, volunteers, students, and vital members of the workforce. It is imperative to have diverse representation from the County on the various Boards and Commissions. The ERT fully supports the ongoing initiative by the Coordinator for Boards and Commissions along with the County Office of Diversity and Inclusion to implement measures that achieve this imperative.

The ERT suggests an amendment to the St. Louis County’s board and commission appointment procedures to increase minority and immigrant participation in the County’s everyday processes. We propose a change to the rules so that each board and commission creates an additional spot or makes available an existing place permanently for members who are of a minority or immigrant background, if possible.

❖ Develop a Small Business Risk Index

Rapidly develop a holistic metric that captures the health and economic needs of small businesses. Dr. Molly Metzger at Washington University’s Brown School has done similar work in developing the Health and Economic Risk Index (HERI10), which combines economic data from the American Community Survey and health data from the Missouri ZIP Health Ranking Project. The HERI10 index has been used to identify specific St. Louis County ZIP codes at elevated risk for the health and economic impacts of the current pandemic.

propose partnering with Washington University to develop a similar index for the health of small businesses in the region.

❖ **Update the State of Business Report for St. Louis County**

The County produced a “state of business” report in 2018. We recommend the County actively collect and analyze data across the County, track changes, and identify emerging trends. Updating this report will provide additional data to drive decisions going forward. Working with the STL Partnership, this report would also inform an assessment of progress made under the 2017-2022 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.

❖ **Develop School Closure Contingency Support Plans for Small Business**

Related to the recommendation for childcare incentives, the ERT proposes continued contingency planning in the event of widespread school shutdowns into 2021. Specifically, these plans should address support for small business employers and the small business workforce – many of whom may not have the capacity to enact employee support programs on a corporate level. Additionally, some small businesses, particularly if they are classified as “essential,” cannot implement remote work policies. A future school closure or broader shutdown could have a deeper impact on businesses than was experienced in Summer 2020 and a rapid response will be essential to support small businesses and their workforce – most of whom have little to no cash reserves. These plans should explore creative action steps such as the ones below that can be implemented preemptively or proactively as needed.

- Publish guidelines and authorize interim or temporary certification of on-site childcare in places of business.
- Share a playbook and best practices for setting up and operating a micro school or “homeschooling pod” via community organizations particularly in low-income areas.
- Create grants for micro school expenses to include tutor wages.
- Develop community-based solutions for childcare and education.

---

Supporting Entrepreneurship and Innovation

Build on our region’s strengths and capture new opportunities

The St. Louis County region has sustained its support for entrepreneurs, startup founders, and innovators despite the challenges of 2020. There are ample resources and programs available for small business owners and aspiring business owners. Through anecdotal feedback, open source reporting, and the results of the August 2020 Small Business Survey, the ERT assessed a need to simplify and streamline the way a business operator accesses information and resources specific to their needs.

❖ Create a Business Navigator Program

To close the information gap, we recommend the immediate creation of a team to call every small business, assess their needs and serve as “case managers” to help them navigate available resources in a timely manner. In the near term, this team of 3-5 individuals (plus a cohort of temporary volunteers) could augment the County CARES call center and/or the STL Partnership as a dedicated resource for small businesses who may have survived the initial months of the crises, but are at risk of failing in 2021 without responsive assistance for their specific needs. This includes businesses that closed but have a desire to reopen. The ERT envisions piloting this program in conjunction with the Rapid Deployment Fund with a desired outcome of giving struggling business owners a personal connection to their Business Navigator who not only directs them to available resources, but assists them with applications, approvals, and access to funds and other support.

![Figure 3. St. Louis County Small Business Survey (August 2020).](image)

Ideally, the Business Navigator Program swiftly expands to 20+ Navigators under the direction of the STL Partnership to serve as the primary resource for businesses struggling or seeking to grow. With a significant number of business owners in the region approaching retirement, the Business Navigator Program could also attract and support acquisition entrepreneurs to the region.
❖ Promote Digital Solutions Resources for Small Businesses

This report addresses Bridging the Digital Divide as a strategy under the Investing in our Infrastructure. The ERT emphasizes the need to specifically reach out to small businesses to include minority and immigrant owned businesses with resources and tools to assist them in optimally leveraging technology in their business operations. As of 2016, the majority of business owners in the St. Louis County region was over age 45. While some may have adopted technology solutions and expanded their knowledge and skills either personally or through hiring, many have not. Timely outreach with appropriate technical support and digital solutions could make a difference for an experienced business owner considering closing in 2021.

Developing Our Workforce

Expand in-demand career training capacity, strengthen workforce-employer connections, and reduce barriers to employment

The COVID-19 pandemic has devastated the local economy of St. Louis County. Like many regions across the country, widespread business closures – temporary or permanent – have had a negative impact on the solvency of companies while also displacing workers. Individuals have had to navigate the health and economic crises simultaneously, which has caused extraordinary stress amidst an uncertain future.

Since March, industries critical to our local economy have been impacted. The economic pain has been most acute in the following industries: tourism and hospitality, travel, retail, and healthcare. Since March, we know that there have been at least 14,521 people working for companies in St. Louis County or the near vicinity affected by layoffs directly associated with the impact of COVID-19.9 This number only reflects what companies have reported and likely significantly understates the true number of people affected. According to the latest numbers presented by MERIC, the unemployment rate for St. Louis County stands at 8.9%.10 Based on the latest month with available data, there are around 53,184 unemployed persons in St. Louis County. For comparison, there were 15,079 unemployed persons in St. Louis County in April 2019.11

While the unemployment rate is one indicator for evaluating the impact of COVID-19, we can also look at the number of Unemployment Insurance filings as a more precise number for evaluating the number of people affected. Based on data shared by the state of Missouri, there are at least 62,000 individuals in the St. Louis County area who have filed for unemployment.12 The Job Centers in St. Louis County receive daily calls from individuals asking for assistance with unemployment insurance.

Nationwide, COVID-19 has had a disproportionate impact on unemployment rates for African Americans. Using national data, we can see that the unemployment rate for African American workers dropped from 16.8% in May to 15.4% in June. In contrast, unemployment for White workers fell from 12.4% in May to 10.1% in June. Not only was the drop in monthly unemployment for White workers more significant than it was for Black workers, but the gap between White and Black unemployment appears to be growing, as well.

Currently there is greater parity in the unemployment rate between African American youth (ages 16-19) and White youth in the same age group, though unemployment rates for both groups remain high. The unemployment rate for African American youth (ages 16-19) was 23.2%

---

9 Gathered from layoff reports provided by the State of Missouri.
11 Gathered from FRED - https://fred.stlouisfed.org/.
12 Data shared by the State of Missouri with St. Louis County.
for June, which was down significantly from 34.9% in May. White youth unemployment was 23.3% in June, down from 28.3% in May.

Below is a look at the loss in St. Louis County employment through May (Source FRED - fred.stlouisfed.org). The left-hand graph shows monthly value by year. The right-hand graph shows the monthly average for 2017 thru 2019, the 2020 values and the difference between the prior three (3) average to 2020 by month (“Change”). The Change values are shown as red dashes in the graph. The average gain in employment for January thru March of 2020 over the prior three (3) year average is 10,990. Adding that gain to the losses shown for April and May indicate overall COVID-19 employment losses of:

- April 2020 (54,908)
- May 2020 (59,330)

St. Louis County’s challenge is to increase employment by approximately 60,000. Workforce development and job creation (through business partnerships) are both key components of the County’s efforts to obtain that goal.

These recommendations are expected to prepare the workforce to access jobs with an immediately impactful wage and potential for short-term career and wage growth. With guidance for business relationships, accelerated training opportunities, youth employment, and supportive services for the workforce, the recommendations below highlight the components of a complex workforce development system that benefits the entire region.
Expand In-Demand Career Training Capacity

The recommendations in this report are intended to prepare the region for the future of the workforce, which will look different than it has in the past. Many studies show that laid-off workers may never regain the pay levels they had before losing their jobs and that many jobs may not come back quickly. Because of this pattern, the best way to drive recovery is to reframe workforce development and re-train the workforce into industries with sustainable futures.

Based on surveys gathered from the St. Louis County Workforce Development Division, the industries experiencing some of the greatest need currently include the following: healthcare, transportation, manufacturing, hospitality, construction/management, and education. These are the industries most often represented by the employers eager to partner with St. Louis County on virtual hiring events. A wide range of occupations and jobs - temporary and permanent - are needed across these industries. One of the best ways to meet these needs at scale is to create greater opportunities for partnership.

In thinking through a data-driven workforce response, it is also important to consider new jobs that are in high demand that are now more widely available, partially because of the pandemic. In May of 2020, Burning Glass Technologies, a major firm analyzing job market data, released a report titled “Filling the Lifeboats” which points to specific jobs that are good prospects for those who have lost jobs but who require little to no training.13 These jobs also set people on a path for further prospects down the road. The report highlights the increased demand for contact tracers, community health workers, and drivers to distribute goods across the United States. The report also stresses that the best “lifeboat jobs” do not require lengthy reskilling but do contain upward career advancement and wage mobility. These jobs often contain “skill adjacencies,” or a skillset that overlaps with the skills of a worker’s old job. Listed below are a few recommended “lifeboat jobs” to consider:

- Driver/Sales Workers
- Computer Network Support Specialists
- First Line Supervisors of Construction Trades
- Personal Care Aides

Workforce development partnerships combine many perspectives and needs, from education and training providers, businesses, and community resources to support the implementation of sustainable and effective workforce development initiatives. Meaningful partnerships allow the opportunity to leverage the collective resources, knowledge, and expertise of diverse organizations and stakeholders around a concerted effort. Using the building blocks of workforce development, St. Louis County can design initiatives that meet current and future regional labor market needs.

❖ Create Training and Employment Pipelines for “Lifeboat Careers”

This proposal addresses job losses in industries that were harder hit by the crises. A “lifeboat career” supports employment regardless of economic downturns. The short-term focus should be directed towards retooling and upskilling the workforce into stable industries by promoting short-term, stackable credentials for in-demand fields with growth opportunities (“lifeboat jobs”). While many short-term training programs exist, they are underutilized. Creating pipelines from career centers to training providers to career pathways is the best way to shift the region’s workforce into lifeboat jobs.

❖ Support the UMSL COVID-19 Nursing Learning Resource and Simulation Center

This center helps address critical shortages in clinical rotations needed to train registered nurses to provide excellent patient care and help our region reduce the number of deaths and poor health outcomes related to COVID-19. The ERT supports St. Louis County contributing funds to support construction of this state-of-the-art center and curriculum development. Details of this proposal are in Appendix C.

❖ Support the St. Louis Community College Nursing and Health Sciences Center of Excellence

This initiative expands and creates new programs in nursing and health sciences designed to address the healthcare workforce needs of the St. Louis region. Details of the proposal are included in Appendix B. The ERT supports St. Louis County contributing funds to support rapid execution.

❖ Support the St. Louis Community College IT Center of Excellence

This proposal adds capacity to the new Center for Nursing and Health Sciences at the Forest Park campus and builds the region’s capacity to deliver cutting-edge IT education and training designed to meet the technological workforce needs of area employers. The ERT supports St. Louis County investment in accelerating growth of this high impact center. Details of the proposal are found in Appendix B.

❖ Support and Develop Accelerated Training for In-Demand Industries

The ERT supports programs for which Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funding is insufficient or for which County residents are ineligible. All training programs listed below are currently in-demand and are accelerated, so participants can begin gaining higher wages for middle skills jobs quickly. The ERT prioritizes training and fast track programs for Medical Assistants, Certified GEOINT Professional, Commercial Driver’s License, Diesel Technology Certificate of Specialization, and Industrial Maintenance Technician. In addition, we highlight the opportunity to fast track Community Health Workers with a Mental Health focus (see Appendix D).
Strengthen Workforce-Employer Connections

St. Louis County economic recovery efforts must center on supporting business growth as well as reconnecting dislocated workers to job opportunities and reducing barriers that might prevent people from getting back to work. We can create more opportunities for people and meet the needs of industry if we promote greater collaboration and coordination between business and workforce development entities or organizations that are training and preparing people for success.

Strategic regional coordination that involves direct employer engagement can provide opportunities to solve two significant labor market challenges: finding employment for skilled workers who were furloughed or laid off; and finding candidates to fill vacancies in career clusters with high demand.

❖ Create a “Bridge Strategy”

Using available labor market data, County leaders should engage employers directly that have laid off or furloughed high numbers of individuals to identify the skill areas they were proficient in and salary ranges they had been receiving.

County leaders can then identify industries with high vacancy rates such as health care, technology, and supply chain/logistics and determine the qualifications and skills required for their open positions. Once the skills are identified and analyzed across these sectors, a crosswalk analysis could inform a “bridge strategy” where customized job referral and re-training/upskilling can be facilitated for the region targeting clusters of laid off/furloughed employees based on their most recent jobs.

❖ Create and Promote a Regional Workforce-Job Connections

• Hire Liaisons (similar to the Business Navigator program)

• Create or centralize a regional portal that centralizes business engagement services and helps align skills of unemployed workers with in-demand positions (Healthcare, IT, Logistics/Supply chain) and Career Pathways.

• Leverage the web portal to:
  - Connect with businesses to identify entry level employment opportunities
  - Companies to report by skill set and location of employees being laid off
  - Hiring companies to view available employees with contact information for source organization

• Integrate Communication across the region:
  - Posting on county website
- Promote pilot programs such as ScholarPath (see below)\(^{14}\)
- Post on St. Louis County Library’s website
- Press release to St. Louis Post Dispatch and St. Louis Business Journal
- Via local chambers
- Virtual monthly meetings

- Designate funding for portal design, launch, and maintenance

❖ Establish Partnerships for Youth Transition Employment

- Businesses. Specifically focus on part-time and/or full-time youth (16-24) employment as adult workforce shifts to sustainable career paths.
- Community Based Organizations. Establish youth employment pipelines.
- School Districts. Establish youth employment pipelines.

❖ Fund Virtual Workforce Development Workshops

Specifically focus on youth with workshops on job readiness and soft skills training.

❖ Fund and Promote Career Pathways

Create a clear vision for the future of the workforce. Employer partnerships are key to the success of Career Pathways, as they ensure industry expertise and employment pipelines. Included in these recommendations are three specific proposals related to Career Pathways from regional higher education institutions. Using projections and data for in-demand fields, the ERT recommends that the County strategically partner with local training providers and educational institutions to create and fund career pathways in the following industries:

- IT. Help Desk, Software Technician, and GIS Data Analyst
- Logistics/Supply Chain. CDL Driver, Diesel Technician, Warehouse Manager, Logistics Coordinator
- Healthcare. Allied Health, Patient Care Technician, Community Health Worker, Respiratory Technician, Registered Nurse, Diagnostic Medical Sonography
- Construction. Skilled Trades, Certifications, Construction Administration

\(^{14}\) [https://scholarpath.com/](https://scholarpath.com/)
Reduce Barriers to Employment

❖ Support UMSL Workforce Transition Relief Grants

This grant program helps students pay off prior tuition balances up to $2,500 allowing undergraduate and graduate students to return to college, complete their degrees and re-enter the workforce in areas of high-industry need. The ERT supports the County contributing funding to support this proposal. A detailed description of the grant program is provided in Appendix C.

❖ Fund and Promote Education Pathways

Education Pathways are programs that link students to specific careers. These programs boost regional attractiveness for business recruitment and retention. The ERT supports prioritized funding for creation, expansion, and promotion of Education Pathways.

- High School Equivalent (GED) Pathway, “JumpStart Program” that guides individuals from GED into middle-skills training for employment pipelines

- Promotion of vocational programs as viable education pathways to sustainable careers

- Create education and business partnerships that support registered apprenticeship programs and lead to industry recognized certifications.

- Promotion of entrepreneurial training programs to promote opportunities for increased sustainable business owners in minority and immigrant communities.

- Leverage online Community College Two-year programs to upskill workforce for upward mobility into sustainable careers and convert to four-year degrees
❖ **Pilot ScholarPath**

ScholarPath is an engagement app that guides students to their “Best Fit” career pathway. The ERT supports funding a pilot program with appropriate metrics and oversight.

![ScholarPath How It Works for Students](image)

❖ **Fund Workforce Training and Media Campaigns**

The St. Louis County region has been active and innovative in creating workforce training programs and providing resources to sustain workforce development. The ERT recommends focusing efforts on supporting proven training programs and, more importantly, leveraging all available communication channels through a media campaign to connect those seeking employment or additional skill development with the array of existing programs.

❖ **Fund Employer Wage and Training Subsidies**

According to the results of the St. Louis County Business Survey conducted in August 2020, 68 percent of respondents indicated they had an immediate need for 1-3 additional workers. Twelve percent indicated they would hire 10 or more additional workers (see Appendix A). The ERT recommends targeting these micro-opportunities for hiring with wage and/or training subsidies to encourage small businesses to expand operations and stimulate economic recovery.
Investing in Infrastructure

Accelerate investments to address digital inequities and lead the region in “smart” technology infrastructure and sustainable development

The ERT believes broadband service is essential and on par with other utilities such as electricity and water. The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and related shifts in business and school operations leveraged technology to great positive effect across the region. However, those without access to broadband services, those who lack basic equipment to utilize the service, and those without the knowledge and skills to navigate online tools are significantly disadvantaged. This gap can – and must – be rapidly closed to provide equitable access to education, workforce opportunities, and small business opportunities. The ERT recommends including expansion of network services and hardware distribution as a key component of overall infrastructure development across the region.

The ERT’s recommendations specifically address steps for improving access and affordability of broadband services specifically in North St. Louis County, for minority and immigrant communities, and for small businesses. These recommendations are grounded by a 2012 study on digital access in Detroit conducted by the Knight Foundation that identified five elements of consideration that the ERT found useful in addressing the specific issues in St. Louis County:

- Partner for success
- Focus on digital literacy
- Provide computers/devices
- Remove other financial barriers
- Lower rates for internet access

Taking a longer view, St. Louis County should strongly consider leading transformative “Smart City” infrastructure development to not only mitigate or eliminate the digital divide but as a community and economic development driver. The directly associated budget cost savings can then be redirected to community revitalization and growth initiatives, creating a zero-net neutral budget impact for the County. The reallocation of the “expenses” to an “investment” at regional scale create an opportunity for an exponential “return on investment” that can be forecast over the next generation. Articles that support this concept: Driving the Smart, Just a City; Smart Cities Promise a New way of Living; Bhubaneswar Smart City Plan; Smart Cities and Sustainability Initiative
Bridge the Digital Divide

❖ Partner for Success - Appoint a County Digital Champion

Appoint a St. Louis County Digital Champion to lead strategy development, oversee program implementation, act as a strategic connector, relationship builder, and policy advisor to the County Executive. With a background in technology and executive leadership experience, the Digital Champion works broadly across the community with various entities to include utilities, landlords, County Information Technology experts, the County Council, and various public/private/non-profit organizations.

❖ Partner for Success - Build a Digital Equity Coalition

Direct the Digital Champion to build a coalition of organizations modeled on a similar effort in the City of Baltimore. The Digital Equity Coalition is charged with a mission of bringing new investments to accelerate the shared work of bridging the digital divide. The ERT envisions a broad coalition of partners including libraries, municipal government, school districts, churches, CDCs, trusted community members, nonprofits, and private companies. The coalition should be charged with determining metrics to measure success and impact of investments and advising the Digital Champion on strategy development and prioritization of initiatives.

❖ Focus on Digital Literacy

Coordinate with community partners (Launch Code, Create a Loop, St. Louis Community College, School Districts, UMSL College of Education etc.) to hold digital literacy classes that encourage broadband adoption by exposing community to the importance of the internet to everyday task like paying bills, applying for jobs, searching for medical information and helping children with homework.

❖ Provide Computers and Devices

- Coordinate with public/private sectors to obtain low cost or refurbished computers.
- Establish incentive programs for community members to obtain a free or low-cost computer for taking the digital literacy course and maintaining skills.
- Expand on Maryville’s existing donation program for used computers which can be refurbished and distributed to underserved community members.
- Expand St. Louis County Library Wi-Fi nodes to provide expanded access and identify other locations to replicate the model (county-owned properties, schools, etc.)
- Expand Wi-Fi Hot Spot lending library programs that provide access to those that do not have broadband subscriptions.
❖ **Remove Financial Barriers**

- Coordinate with community partners to identify financial barriers preventing access to broadband services. (ex: credit checks, outstanding balances, etc.)
- Establish alternative solutions to overcoming those obstacles (ex: nonprofits banding together to pay for the upfront cost)

❖ **Lower Rates for Internet Access**

- Coordinate with service providers to establish a process for providing affordable broadband services for low-income or distressed communities.
- Broaden awareness of broadband provider discount plans, Spectrum, AT&T, etc.

❖ **Address Specific Needs of Minority and Immigrant Communities**

- Provide access to government online services through public libraries, minority & immigrant chambers of commerce, churches, community college or any other organizations that have direct access to targeted populations and are trusted by them.
- Develop “Train the trainer programs” on how to navigate those services by individuals listed above so they can in turn teach the targeted population
- Create public-private partnerships to educate targeted population on the benefits of using computer technologies, new trends in business software tools, and how small businesses can pivot towards e-commerce presence
- Use appropriate channels of communication accessible by targeted population to disseminate the services e.g. radio, public TV, churches, minority supporting groups, minority leaders, grocery stores, etc.
- Engage/hire foreign natives to translate the information in various languages, including particularities inherent to different cultures
- Incentivize the dissemination of resources and information by creating a program that compensates referrals and use of programs
- Use a database that keeps track of users, service points, who served them, who referenced them, the issues accessed, if the problem was solved, etc.
- Analyze the data recorded to improve the service
- Create intentional collaborations with key community organizations that can access the target groups by engaging in public-private partnerships to provide training in business related computer tools, knowledge of navigating and searching web resources using educators skilled in native language(s) of minorities and educators experienced in teaching people with minimum or non-existing general education.
❖ Address the Digital Divide in Small Businesses

The issue of bridging the digital divide is not limited to low-income residents. Small independent businesses (especially historically marginalized ones) have been disproportionately impacted by the dual crises. Many of them lack the basic infrastructure to move to e-commerce platforms. To facilitate their economic recovery and provide more equitable options for their business operating model, the ERT proposes specific programs for small businesses digital acceleration

- Small Business Digital Literacy Training & Support
  
  Identify struggling businesses in distressed communities like those in the Promise and Opportunity Zone to help convert to e-commerce platforms.

  Collaborate with business partners to develop digital literacy workshops with incentives to help reposition businesses to grow on a local, national, and global level.

- Small Business Grant/Loan Program for Equipment/Software Upgrades
  
  Identify funding sources to provide small independent businesses located in historically marginalized communities with resources to upgrade their processes.

  Establish a fund to support website creation services, e-commerce software and updated computers, tablets and point of sale devices.

  Provide non-refundable loans or grants for individual small business owners after participating in training programs for buying computer equipment and internet modems.
Make Saint Louis a Smart Region

❖ Hire a Smart Region Consultant

Initially, request a proposal for an assessment of the status of our digital infrastructure and to present relative best practices.

An enduring position could be created under the County Executive or Digital Champion to assisting in driving the Smart Region initiative across the County staff, integrate with public-private partners, and assist in provider selection.

Prioritize Affordable Housing

❖ Accelerate Implementation of Forthcoming County Housing Strategic Plan

In the summer of 2020, a team led by Dr. Molly Metzger of the Brown School at Washington University, developed a strategic plan to address affordable housing in St. Louis County. The ERT supports accelerated implementation of this plan and emphasizes the need for holistic, data-driven decisions to increase the stock of affordable housing and solve for housing needs in every area of need in the County.

Accelerate Development in North St. Louis County

❖ Pilot a Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) for New Development

Community Benefits Agreements are multi-party contracts executed by community-based organizations (CBO) in partnership with one or more developers. They include developers’ commitments to deliver a range of benefits to the community through proposed projects with the support of the signatory CBOs. Designed to promote inclusivity and accountability, CBAs are legally binding and provide the community a means of enforcement. The ERT supports piloting a CBA in North St. Louis County to stimulate development and engage the community with a vision for future growth and opportunity.

❖ Accelerate Ongoing Work with North St. Louis County Incubators and CDFIs

Stimulating and supporting entrepreneurs in North St. Louis County is an important part of economic recovery and development. The STL Partnership’s incubator in Wellston is a prime example of the type of physical spaces and programming the ERT recommends accelerating and supporting. The proposed CDFI Liaison (see below) should play a key role in this effort.
Leveraging our Assets

Our region was built on small businesses and has a deeply connected small business community. The legacy of iconic St. Louis County small businesses as well as new, highly entrepreneurial business owners provide powerful stories to ignite consumer confidence. The region is known for its generous philanthropic spirit, but also has a thriving, creative, and proactive capital market. Along with anchor institutions, community support organizations, and the support of the corporate community, the region has ample opportunity to leverage its assets in support of economic recovery and continue development.

Reignite Our Small Business Legacy

- **Shop STL First Marketing Campaign**

  Our region has a strong legacy of small business success. Many business owners have demonstrated inspiring entrepreneurial spirit in navigating the crises. Not only do they deserve recognition for their contributions to the regional economy, but also the County has an opportunity to educate and promote in an enduring way how shopping locally makes a direct impact on the quality of life in St. Louis County. The ERT envisions the County leading the region in a “Shop STL First” campaign.

  We recommend immediately soliciting proposals and funding a contract with a local agency (preferably a small business) to create a marketing campaign to encourage consumers to shop local, educate them on the impact it has on the local economy, and encourage local companies to first try to source products they need to purchase from the area.

Energize Corporate and Institutional Support

- **Partner with North St. Louis County Anchor Institutions**

  The ERT fully supports County initiatives to partner with and activate outreach to North St. Louis County Anchor Institutions on job training, procurement best practices, and workforce initiatives.

- **Corporate, Community Support Organization, and Anchor Institution Pledge**

  The ERT endorses a corporate and anchor institution public pledge supporting the region’s recovery, small businesses, and development efforts in NSLC. The ERT requests the Regional Chamber of Commerce or similar organization draft and promote this commitment.
**Efficiently Deploy Capital**

❖ **Hire a County CDFI Liaison to Build a Bridge Lending Program**

To work with Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) to specially liaison with those CDFIs, to support and focus as many lending, financial bridge, and alternative underwriting programs as possible for the at-risk community.

❖ **Evaluate a Universal Basic Income Pilot**

A Universal Basic Income program provides a guaranteed basic living stipend to residents. The ERT recognizes the challenges of successfully implementing such a program. We also note that there have been positive outcomes in some areas of the US and in other countries to include improved mental health, increased financial stability, and led to increased employment opportunities. The ERT proposes evaluating a small pilot test to experiment with program design, gather data, and drive alignment on how to define success.
Ordinances & Regulations

The Economic Rescue Team recommended temporary suspension of the following County ordinances and regulations (executive order):

**Construction Permits.** Allow plans to be submitted, reviewed, and signed/sealed electronically (i.e., via email for immediate implementation). Eliminate the requirement to submit building documents in person. A more responsive County Building Permit Process will help keep building contractors and subcontractors working steadily without administrative delays.

**Sales Tax.** Suspend, reimburse, or rebate county sales tax prepayments and/or suspend penalties for the remainder of fiscal year 2020.

**Sale of Alcoholic Beverages.** Review applicable sections of Chapter 801 (Alcoholic Beverages) of the Municipal Code to waive enforcement of any ordinance that would restrict a licensed business from selling alcoholic beverages; specifically, review the “original packaging” and “on the premises” restrictions.

**Any Ordinances that limit hours of operation.** Limited hours of operation restrict the number of hours employees can work and earn wages.

- **Ordinance 819.090** can be temporarily lifted for 90 days to allow more employees to work additional hours.

- **Ordinance 801.180** Hours of Sale—Sales on Sunday

The Economic Rescue Team recommended modification of the following County ordinances and regulations (legislative action):

**Ordinance 819.090—Emergency School Closings**

*There may be occasions when schools are closed due to emergencies such as inclement weather. On those days, in order to accommodate enrolled school-age children needing day care due to the unscheduled school closing, the child day care home shall be permitted to exceed for the day its licensed capacity by one third (1/3). This one-third (1/3) excess attendance for emergency school closing shall not be in addition to the one-third (1/3) excess allowed for overlap care, so that at no time may the total number in care be more than one-third (1/3) over the licensed capacity. This emergency school closing overlap shall not be permitted for scheduled days of school closing.*

Without adequate childcare, because of capacity limitations, some employees have limited availability to work. Ordinance 819.090 can be temporarily applied during COVID-19 (as if there is an emergency school closing) to allow more people to return to work, while ensuring children are in safe childcare facilities.
Ordinance 27,784—Parking Area Zoning. Waive parking area zoning reuse requirements in Section 3b. Expand authorizations in Section 1 and Section 2 to include portable heaters and other reasonable modifications to outdoor spaces as the seasons change.

Reformation of Chapter 101. During the COVID-19 crisis, businesses in the process of reopening or getting started faced multiple inspections, fees and requirements which could place an undue burden on businesses experiencing revenue losses. Consider amending Chapter 101, General Administrative Provisions, adding a new Section for the “One-Step” (“Life Safety” centered) permitting process, to address the immediate needs of businesses. Emphasis should be placed on streamlining the permitting process with the goal of:

- Creating a “One-Step” process that would allow a business to receive all of its required inspections/permits on the same day to avoid a prolonged and cumbersome multi-step process.
- Temporarily suspending any permit requirements that are not focused on “Life-Safety”; and,
- Temporarily suspending permitting and licensing fees in an effort to remove financial barriers to struggling businesses.
Next Steps

The Way Ahead

The ERT enthusiastically endorses and acknowledges the positive economic development path that St. Louis County was on going into 2020. The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy was designed to extend through 2022 and provides an existing framework upon which we built the economic recovery plan. Creating lasting economic change is a multi-year journey and we must stay focused, use our resources judiciously, and seek a bias toward action.

However, the near-term opportunity to deploy CARES Act funds within federal guidelines drove the ERT to create a prioritization framework designed to address the immediate needs identified in this report as well as to accelerate longer term strategies. With our guiding principles in mind and a commitment to execution and good stewardship of funds, we analyzed each proposal to evaluate its:

- breadth and depth of need
- immediacy of impact
- ease of implementation
- regulatory and legal compliance

See Appendix F for Funding Recommendations.
**Holding Ourselves Accountable**

As we move swiftly into action and implementing the proposed recommendations, we propose a lead office within the St. Louis County government for several recommendations. Leaders within the County government will work closely with community leaders to execute these recommendations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CEDS</th>
<th>ERT Strategy</th>
<th>Proposal</th>
<th>Recommended Owner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Addressing Immediate Needs</td>
<td>Stabilize Small Businesses</td>
<td>Create a Small Business Rapid Deployment Fund</td>
<td>STL Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Create a Set Aside Minority &amp; Immigrant Owned Business Support Fund</td>
<td>STL Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Promote Public Health Safe Practices</td>
<td>Establish a Small Business Safe Practices Voucher Program</td>
<td>Dept of Health &amp; STL Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stabilize Households</td>
<td>Enhance School-Family Connection through Child Care Incentives</td>
<td>Human Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Extend Basic Needs Financial Support*</td>
<td>Human Services working with community partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Create New Opportunities for Restaurants</td>
<td>Establish a Cross-Functional Restaurant Task Force*</td>
<td>CARES Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Seed a Regional Restaurant Reinvention Microgrant Fund</td>
<td>STL Economic Development Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conduct Ongoing Needs Assessments</td>
<td>Rapidly Diversify Boards &amp; Commissions*</td>
<td>Coordinator for Boards &amp; Commissions with D&amp;I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Develop a Small Business Risk Index</td>
<td>Data Officer &amp; WUSTL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Update the County State of Business Report</td>
<td>Data Officer &amp; STLEDP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Develop School Closure Contingency Support Plans for Small Business</td>
<td>DPH &amp; Superintendent's Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting Entrepreneurship &amp; Innovation</td>
<td>Simplify Access to Information and Resources</td>
<td>Create a Business Navigator Program</td>
<td>STL Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enable E-Commerce</td>
<td>Promote Digital Solutions Resources for Small Businesses</td>
<td>STL Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing Our Workforce</td>
<td>Expand In-Demand Career Training Capacity</td>
<td>Create Training and Employment Pipelines for “Lifeboat Careers”</td>
<td>UMSL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Support the UMSL Nursing Learning Resource &amp; Simulation Center</td>
<td>UMSL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Support the STLCC Nursing &amp; Health Sciences Center of Excellence</td>
<td>STLCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Support the STLCC IT Center of Excellence</td>
<td>STLCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Support and Develop Accelerated Training for In-Demand Industries (MHW fast track, etc)</td>
<td>DPH, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengthen Workforce-Employer Connections</td>
<td>Create a “Bridge Strategy”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Create and Promote Regional Workforce-Job Connections</td>
<td></td>
<td>STL Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Establish Partnerships for Youth Transition Employment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fund Virtual Workforce Development Workshops</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fund and Promote Career Pathways</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce Barriers to Employment</td>
<td>Support UMSL Workforce Transition Relief Grants</td>
<td></td>
<td>UMSL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fund and Promote Education Pathways</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pilot ScholarPath</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fund Workforce Training and Media Campaigns</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fund Employer Wage and Training Subsidies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEDS</td>
<td>ERT Strategy</td>
<td>Proposal</td>
<td>Recommended Owner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investing in Infrastructure</td>
<td>Bridge the Digital Divide</td>
<td>Partner for Success - Appoint County Digital Champion</td>
<td>County Executive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Partner for Success - Build a Digital Equity Coalition</td>
<td>Housing Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Focus on Digital Literacy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Provide Computers and Devices*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Remove Financial Barriers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lower Rates for Internet Access</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Address Specific Needs of Minority and Immigrant Communities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Make St. Louis a Smart Region</td>
<td>Address the Digital Divide in Small Businesses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prioritize Affordable Housing</td>
<td>Hire a Smart Region Consultant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accelerate Development in NSLC</td>
<td>Accelerate Implementation of Forthcoming County Housing Strategic Plan</td>
<td>Housing Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pilot a Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) for New Development</td>
<td>Human Services with STL Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Make St. Louis a Smart Region</td>
<td>Accelerate Ongoing Work with NSLC Incubators and CDFIs*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prioritize Affordable Housing</td>
<td>Shop STL First Marketing Campaign</td>
<td>County Executive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Energize Corporate &amp; Institutional Support</td>
<td>Partner with NSLC Anchor Institutions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Efficiently Deploy Capital</td>
<td>Corporate, CSO, &amp; Anchor Institution Pledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reignite Our Small Business Legacy</td>
<td>Hire a County CDFI Liaison to Build a Bridge Lending Program</td>
<td>Human Services &amp; STL Partnership Promise Zone Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluate Universal Basic Income Pilot</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix A – Small Business Survey Results

Overview
ETC Institute administered a business survey for St. Louis County during the summer of 2020.

The purpose of the survey was to ensure that St. Louis County’s economic recovery priorities are aligned with the needs of local businesses. The survey will be used to help identify and improve programs and services available to support economic relief efforts for small businesses in St. Louis County.

Methodology
ETC Institute mailed a survey packet to a random sample of small businesses in St. Louis County. Each survey packet contained a cover letter, a copy of the survey, and a postage-paid return envelope. Businesses that received the survey were given the option of returning the survey by mail or completing it online. Ten days after the surveys were mailed, ETC Institute sent emails and placed phone calls to businesses that received the survey to encourage participation. The emails contained a link to the online version of the survey to make it easy for businesses to complete the survey. Businesses were also given the opportunity to complete the survey over the phone.

The goal was to obtain completed surveys from at least 500 small businesses. The goal was exceeded, with a total of 561 small businesses completing the survey. The overall results for the sample of 561 small businesses have a precision of at least +/-4.1% at the 95% level of confidence.

Major Findings

COVID-19 Operations

● Reasons for Applying for Financial Assistance. The top reasons that businesses would apply for financial assistance were for payroll (65%) and rent/utilities (51%). Over three fourths (78%) of businesses would apply for some type of financial assistance.

● Concerns Related to Safety Practices in the Workplace. Twenty-four percent (24%) of businesses would like information on what to do if one of their workers is diagnosed with COVID-19, and 23% would like information on what to do if one of their workers is exposed to COVID-19.

● Recognition for Adhering to Specific Safe Practices. Twenty-six percent (26%) of businesses would be interested in receiving recognition for adhering to specific safe practice standards; 41% are not interested in receiving recognition, and 32% indicated “not sure”.

- Participating in Safe Practices Online Training. Thirty-eight percent (38%) of businesses would be willing to participate in safe practices online training; 37% are not willing to participate, and 25% indicated “not sure”.

- Obtaining PPE and Cleaning Supplies. Forty-one percent (41%) of businesses have found it “very easy” or “easy” to obtain PPE and cleaning supplies, while 28% have found it “very difficult” or “difficult”; 26% indicated “neutral”.

- Impact of the Additional Costs of Implementing Safe Practices. Seventeen percent (17%) of businesses feel that the additional costs of implementing safe practices has had a major impact on their business, and 32% feel it has had a moderate impact on their business. Forty-eight percent (48%) feel the additional costs of implementing safe practices has had a “minor impact” or an “insignificant impact” on their business.

Workforce Issues

- Likelihood of Hiring Youth Workers within the Next Year. Forty-nine percent (49%) of businesses are “very unlikely” to hire youth workers on a part-time basis within the next year, and an additional 12% are “somewhat unlikely”. Twenty-six percent (26%) are “very likely” or “somewhat likely” to hire youth workers on a part-time basis within the next year.

- Likelihood of Hiring Applicants with a Criminal Background within the Next Year. Fifty-five percent (55%) of businesses are “very unlikely” to hire applicants with a criminal background within the next year, and an additional 11% are “somewhat unlikely”. Nine percent (9%) are “very likely” or “somewhat likely” to hire applicants with a criminal background within the next year.

- Workplace Training Program. Sixty-three percent (63%) of businesses do not feel they would benefit from a workforce training program offered by a college, university, or a federally recognized apprenticeship program to help meet a critical hiring need. Sixteen percent (16%) feel they would benefit, and 21% are “not sure”.

- Willingness to Participate in Apprenticeship Programs to Train New Employees. Twenty-seven percent (27%) of businesses would be “very willing” or “somewhat willing” to participate in apprenticeship programs to train new employees. Thirty-seven percent (37%) would be “very unwilling” or “somewhat unwilling” to participate.

- Need for Additional Workers. Twenty-one percent (21%) of businesses have an immediate need for additional workers. Of the businesses that have an immediate need for workers, 68% have a need for 1-3 workers, and 21% need workers to perform COVID-19 related safe practices. Twenty-seven percent (27%) indicated that adding additional workers will require an investment in machinery or office equipment.
**Business Assistance Programs**

- St. Louis Economic Development Partnership Services/Programs. Businesses were asked if they are aware of various St. Louis Economic Development Partnership services/programs. Thirty-seven percent (37%) are aware of small business loans, 15% are aware of business retention and expansion, and 14% are aware of small business consultancy.

- Twenty-four percent (24%) of business have used small business loans; 5% or less have used any other service/program.

- Finding Information and Resources. Forty-four percent (44%) of businesses feel it is “very easy” or “easy” to find the information and resources they need; 21% feel it is “very difficult” or “difficult”. Thirty-five percent (35%) indicated “not sure”.

- Utilizing a Free-One Stop Resource Connecting Businesses with Trained Individuals to Help Navigate Available Resources. Thirty-nine percent (39%) of businesses indicated they would utilize a free-one stop resource to connect them with trained individuals who could help them navigate the available resources for small businesses; 27% would not utilize the service, and 34% indicated “not sure”.

- Utilizing Free Business Advisory Services and Coaching to Assist with Creating a Plan for Long-Term Recovery. Twenty-seven percent (27%) of businesses indicated they would utilize free business advisory services and coaching to assist with creating a plan for long-term recovery; 39% would not utilize the service, and 34% indicated “not sure”.

- Preferred Methods of Getting Information About Business Assistance Programs. Businesses indicated that the most preferred way of getting information about business assistance programs is through email (64%).

**Other Topics**

- Certified Safe Practices Program. Thirty-two percent (32%) of businesses feel a “Certified Safe Practices” program which highlights small business’ commitment and compliance with public health safe practices and public health reopening guidance would be a useful marketing approach to make customers aware that their business is safe to patronize during COVID-19; 40% indicated “no”, and 29% indicated “not sure”. 

50
Appendix B – Safe Practices List of Vendors

Sanitizing and Disinfection

CINTAS
6200 Olive Blvd.
University City, MO 63130
(636) 940-2225
www.cintas.com

CLEAN
1316 7th Avenue
St. Louis, MO 63104
314.421.1234 Tel
314.421.4902 Fax
www.cleanuniform.com

ENVIRO-MASTER
777 Merus Court
Fenton, MO 63026
(314) 270-1964
www.enviro-master.com

One Time Cleaning – Routine

BUILDINGSTARS
33 Worthington Access Drive
Maryland Heights, MO 63043
(314) 991-3356
www.buildingstars.com

CITY WIDE MAINTENANCE OF ST. LOUIS
1736 Westpark Center Drive - #100
Fenton, MO 63026
(636) 717-1140
www.gocitywide.com

STANLEY STEEMER - ST. LOUIS
2205 Forte Court
Maryland Heights, MO 63043
(314) 770-9999
www.stanleysteemer.com

WOODARD CLEANING & RESTORATION
9308 Manchester Road
St. Louis, MO 63119
(314) 961-9102
www.woodard247.com

On-Site Cleaning

BUILDINGSTARS
33 Worthington Access Drive
Maryland Heights, MO 63043
(314) 991-3356
www.buildingstars.com

CITY WIDE MAINTENANCE OF ST. LOUIS
1736 Westpark Center Drive - #100
Fenton, MO 63026
(636) 717-1140
www.gocitywide.com
On-Site Cleaning (cont.,)

CLEAN
1316 7th Avenue
St. Louis, MO 63104
314.421.1234 Tel
314.421.4902 Fax
www.cleanuniform.com

JAN-PRO
233 Millwell Drive
Maryland Heights, MO 63042
(314) 989-9997
www.jan-pro.com

RAPID DRY - ST. LOUIS
10765 Indian Head Industrial Blvd.
St. Louis, MO 63132
(314) 291-8888
www.rapiddrystl.com

SERVICEMASTER OF ST. LOUIS
8610 Natural Bridge Road
St. Louis, MO 63121
(314) 890-0033

STERI CLEAN
180 Hughes Lane
St. Charles, MO 63301
(888) 577-7206
www.rapiddrystl.com

WALL 2 WALL
Fenton, MO 63026
(636) 442-1941
www.wall2wallcleaningservices.com

Facility Service Companies

ALSCO
315 Lynch Street
St. Louis, MO 63118
(314) 865-4500
www.alsco.com

ARAMARK
10822 Midwest Industrial Drive
St. Louis, MO 63132
(314) 222-0210
www.aramarkuniform.com

CINTAS
6200 Olive Blvd.
University City, MO 63130
(636) 940-2225
www.cintas.com

CLEAN
1316 7th Avenue
St. Louis, MO 63104
314.421.1234 Tel
314.421.4902 Fax
www.cleanuniform.com

ENVIRO-MASTER
777 Merus Court
Fenton, MO 63026
(314) 270-1964
www.enviro-master.com

SERVICEMASTER OF ST. LOUIS
8610 Natural Bridge Road
St. Louis, MO 63121
(314) 890-0033
UNIFIRST
PPE

ALSCO
315 Lynch Street
St. Louis, MO 63118
(314) 865-4500
www.alsco.com

ARAMARK
10822 Midwest Industrial Drive
St. Louis, MO 63132
(314) 222-0210
www.aramarkuniform.com

CINTAS
6200 Olive Blvd.
University City, MO 63130
(636) 940-2225
www.cintas.com

CLEAN
1316 7th Avenue
St. Louis, MO 63104
314.421.1234 Tel
314.421.4902 Fax
www.cleanuniform.com

FASTENAL
2815 Scott Avenue
St. Louis, MO 63103
(314) 772-1620
www.fastenal.com

GRAINGER
2227 Clark Avenue
St. Louis, MO 63103
(800) 472-4643
www.grainger.com

SCRUBS & BEYOND
9954 Kennerly Road
St. Louis, MO 63128
(314) 843-588
www.scrubsandbeyond.com

UNIFIRST UNIFORM SERVICES - ST. LOUIS
4159 Shoreline Drive
Earth City, MO 63045
(314) 770-2929
www.unifirst.com

HVAC CLEANING COMPANIES

ADAMS
14927 Manchester Road
Ballwin, MO 63011
(314) 207-7237
www.adams-heating-air-conditioning-hvac-contractor.business.site

AIR EXCELLENCE HEATING & COOLING
16024 Manchester Rd. #200
Ellisville, MO 63011
(636) 980-0998
www.airexcellenceheatcool.com

MCQUERRY'S 24 HR. HEATING & AIR
111 Prospect Avenue - #103
Kirkwood, MO 63122
(636) 458-4100
www.24heatandair.com

MILLER'S HEATING & AIR CONDITIONING
15478 Manchester Rd.
Ballwin, MO 63011
(314) 310-5703
www.millers-heating-air-conditioning-hvac-contractor.com
HVAC CLEANING COMPANIES (cont.,)

SAMMYS HEATING & AIR CONDITIONING
16141 Swingley Ridge Rd.
Chesterfield, MO  63017
(314) 582-9775

SCOTT-LEE HVAC
11010 Gravois Industrial Court
St. Louis, MO  63128
(314) 200-0788
www.scottleeheating-com

SUPERIOR HEATING & COOLING
11437 St. Charles Rock Road
Bridgeton, MO  63044
(314) 209-7500
www.superiorhvacstl.com
Appendix C – St. Louis Community College Proposals

July 16, 2020

Mr. Rick Stevens
Chairperson
St. Louis County Economic Rescue Team

Dear Rick,

Attached please find a proposal for a Nursing and Health Sciences Center of Excellence at St. Louis Community College for consideration by the St. Louis County Economic Rescue Team.

Please contact me at jeffpittman@stlcc.edu or 812-249-3713 if you have questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,

Jeff L. Pittman, Ph.D.
Chancellor

Attachment
July 16, 2020

St. Louis Community College (STLCC)  
COVID-19 Nursing & Health Sciences Center of Excellence Proposal

Background and Summary

Recently, the world has been engulfed in a global pandemic with millions of people feeling the effect of COVID-19 in their daily lives. The pandemic has caused economic disruption at unprecedented speed and scale. The crisis will certainly have long-lasting effects on our economy, businesses, and the ways St. Louisans work and live in the years ahead.

Prior to the crisis, St. Louis employers were citing a shortage of workers as their greatest challenge to continued growth, sustainability and prosperity. Data illustrates there are large workforce gaps in key sectors for the St. Louis region, including health care, IT, financial services, manufacturing, and bio-technology. While employers had already had a difficult time finding qualified applicants, the pandemic has made available labor in these sectors even more scarce.

St. Louis Community College is working to address this crisis and bring forward the solutions for success – not only for companies and industries but for individuals and families, too. STLCC is the largest institution of higher education in the region, serving approximately 700 square miles in St. Louis County, St. Louis City, and two additional counties including large underserved and underemployed minority populations. Currently, the College trains the vast majority of nurses and health science workers in the area— with employment demand in this sector only projected to grow.

St. Louis Community College is seeking investments to expand and create new programs in nursing and health sciences designed to address the healthcare workforce needs of the St. Louis region. The College is also committed to increasing diversity in the healthcare field. Over 50% of all African-American nurses in St. Louis are graduates of STLCC. It’s also a fact that the majority of STLCC students continue to stay in the St. Louis region after they graduate— continuing to contribute to the health of the local economy.

Need

Over the past ten years the growth rate for healthcare jobs was 14% compared to 1% for all industries. Thirty-eight percent of healthcare employers in the St. Louis region cite shortages of knowledgeable and skilled workers. Over 47% of healthcare employers are forced to hire less experienced workers. The St. Louis vacancy rate for staff nurses is 19.1%, higher than the statewide vacancy rate of 18%.
Proposal -- Nursing and Health Sciences Center of Excellence at STLCC

In 2019 STLCC invested $41M to build the new Center for Nursing and Health Sciences at our Forest Park campus, home to approximately 900 students in nursing and health sciences professions. It is the first new building constructed on campus in 20 years, a state-of-the-art learning environment featuring the latest technology. This open and innovative space helps STLCC students continue to be an integral part of the region’s growing healthcare industry. With the new facility we expect to increase program capacities in nursing and many of our health science and medical training programs. At the conclusion of this academic year, we will have an additional ninety-two students entering the program each year. We are also committed to expanding our nursing programs, at Meramec (Kirkwood), Florissant Valley (Ferguson), Wildwood and Forest Park campuses, by seventy-five percent.

The STLCC Center for Nursing and Health Sciences has approximately 14,000 square feet of undeveloped space on the fourth floor of this new building, which provides the physical space, ideal location and professional resources to increase the number of students in our Patient Care Technician and Medical Assistant training programs and add programs to train much needed Central Sterile Processing Technicians, and Polysomnography Technicians, among others.

Outcomes

An investment in the STLCC Center for Nursing and Health Sciences will allow us to grow our current health care career training programs (listed below), plus add high demand programs like Central Sterile Processing and Polysomnography.

Patient Care Technicians (PCT)
STLCC offers a PCT program serving hospitals throughout the St. Louis area. Our current PCT training capacity supports a limited number of cohorts at a maximum cohort size of 16 students. By adding new labs, classrooms, and staff, we can increase the cohort size to 20 students and offer more frequent classes to keep up with demand.

Central Sterile Processing Technician
A Central Sterile Processing Technician program has previously been offered at STLCC and discussions have developed with area health care leaders to offer this training at local hospitals for existing and new staff. The program would include classroom instruction and clinical instruction, as well as certification preparation. A classroom/lab that contains sterilization equipment and workstations would allow us to meet those needs.

Medical Assistant Training
This high demand program currently is limited to 14-16 students per cohort for a 23-week program. It could also be expanded with the build out of the 4th floor of the STLCC Center for Nursing and Health Sciences.

Polysomnography Technician Training
There are current discussions with area hospitals for Polysomnography Technician training. There is no school in Missouri providing this training. This is a high demand career field for area hospitals with sleep labs. This program would require eight weeks of classroom study plus clinical hours.
Current STLCC Nursing and Health Sciences Program Offerings:

Clinical Laboratory Technology – one of the longest running in the region (1969)
Dental Assisting
Dental Hygiene
Diagnostic Medical Sonography
Emergency Medical Technology
Nursing – FP, FV, MC, WW
Occupational Therapy Assistant
Paramedic Technology
Physical Therapist Assistant
Radiologic Technology
Respiratory Care – one of the regions’ first fully accredited program (1975)
Surgical Technology – the region’s first and longest running program (1978)

Budget Request

The overall goal is to raise $11 million for the STLCC Center of Excellence for Nursing and Health Sciences. The estimated cost to build out the unoccupied fourth floor and equip it for classroom and lab training is approximately $4.5 million.

We invite industry leaders and employers to partner with STLCC on refining curriculum goals, educational competencies, and on the job training to position our students as an essential part of the healthcare sector’s workforce. Our programs aim to provide an increased pool of trained, work-ready healthcare professionals to meet the needs of St. Louis area employers.
July 16, 2020

Mr. Rick Stevens  
Chairperson  
St. Louis County Economic Rescue Team  

Dear Rick,

Attached please find a proposal for an IT Center of Excellence at St. Louis Community College for consideration by the St. Louis County Economic Rescue Team.

Please contact me at jeffpittman@stlcc.edu or 812-249-3713 if you have questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,

Jeff L. Pittman, Ph.D.  
Chancellor  

Attachment
July 16, 2020

St. Louis Community College (STLCC) COVID-19 IT Center of Excellence Proposal

Background and Summary

The current Pandemic has created a multitude of issues for the St. Louis Region’s workforce and economy. Unemployment has skyrocketed as a result of the initial shutdown of businesses and continues to be an issue with current re-opening guidelines in place to minimize the transmission of the disease.

Simultaneously, data illustrates there are large workforce gaps in key sectors for the Region, including health care, IT, financial services, manufacturing, and bio-technology. While employers have for some time had a difficult time in finding qualified applicants in these sectors, the Pandemic has made finding available labor even more difficult, even to the point of some employers looking to other markets to find an available workforce.

The St. Louis Region and the state of Missouri face a critical shortage of qualified IT workers, and St. Louis Community College is in need to update and expand the capacity of IT programming to meet the needs of area employers. IT workers are needed in almost every sector of employment in the St. Louis economy.

Need

As an emerging technology hub, Missouri’s IT industry employs over 143,000 workers in more than 10,500 establishments. Sixty-one percent of IT firms in the St. Louis Region are experiencing a shortage of skilled applicants, according to STLCC’s State of the St. Louis Workforce 2018 report, data from the Missouri Economic Research and Information Center, and data from Burning Glass Technologies. Local IT employers identified the shortage of IT training as an issue of high importance. The problem has prompted STLCC to build its capacity to deliver cutting-edge IT education and training designed to meet the technological workforce needs of area employers through an IT Center of Excellence.

Proposal – Center of Excellence: IT

To address the shortage of IT workers in the St. Louis Region, STLCC is implementing a comprehensive IT capacity-building plan that includes: (1) the development and piloting of an immersive cybersecurity boot camp curriculum; (2) an overhaul of IT academic curriculum that will lead to stackable credentials; (3) classroom technology upgrades and remodeling on three campuses; (4) the intensification of professional development to better equip IT faculty for cutting-edge training.
edge teaching; (5) the addition of apprenticeships/internships, and (6) the transformation of our Center for Emerging and Advanced Information Technology into a Center of Excellence.

Outcomes

Implementation of these initiatives will result in an increased pool of trained work-ready IT professionals. We anticipate the capacity to award degrees to 150-200 students per semester. These students will be prepared for careers as computer network architects, computer programmers, computer network support specialists, computer use support specialists, and software developers. Once the IT Center of Excellence is operational, the curriculum overhaul will prepare students to pass tests for a variety of industry-recognized credentials including CompTIA A+, CompTIA Network+, CompTIA Security+, Linux+, Cisco Certified Network Associate (CCNA), Cisco Certified Entry Networking Technician (CCENT), and Cisco Certified Network Professional (CCNP). The Center of Excellence could potentially house additional credentialing and certification currently under consideration in other important areas such as RedHat Systems Administration I and II and also basic cloud computing certifications. In addition to serving more incumbent workers, the College’s expanded capacity will enable the recruitment of students who are underrepresented in IT fields such as immigrants who reside in STLCC’s service area, residents of the St. Louis Promise Zone, ethnic minorities, and unemployed or underemployed residents.

Budget Request

The anticipated cost of this center is $1,596,765. The largest percentage (49%) of the proposed budget will cover renovation costs and classroom technology upgrades on the Forest Park, Florissant Valley, and Meramec campuses. The remainder of the budget covers equipment upgrades (34%) and professional and curriculum development (17%). Community partners investing in STLCC IT programs include: Cisco, Gateway to Innovation, and Bank of America.

The center of excellence will facilitate exceptional student learning experiences and provide opportunities to build additional partnerships with the local industry. These partnerships will provide a pipeline for students to regional employment opportunities. Partnering directly with the regional IT industry will help keep programming current through new opportunities to connect beyond career and technical education advisory boards. Ultimately, the center of excellence will address the profound needs of the IT industry by providing an increase in the number of students earning credentials that make them employable.

STLCC is the largest institution of higher education in the region, serving approximately 700 square miles in St. Louis city and three counties including large underserved and underemployed minority populations.
Appendix D – University of Missouri – St. Louis Proposals

UMSL COVID-19 Nursing Simulation Proposal

Executive Summary
The COVID-19 pandemic heightens the importance of healthcare professionals to our society and puts the ability of the University of Missouri–St. Louis to supply the St Louis region with nurses in peril. Due to lower tax revenue, the state of Missouri canceled its financial commitment to a new Nursing Learning Resource and Simulation Center for the UMSL College of Nursing. Supply of clinical rotations are increasingly challenging, thus making the Center mandatory for students who need opportunities to hone their clinical judgment and skills in a variety of simulated patient care situations. This is especially critical for the St. Louis regional healthcare industry, as 90 percent of UMSL nurses stay in the region. UMSL proposes funding to match committed gifts and campus funds to build the shovel-ready Nursing Learning Resource and Simulation Center.

The St. Louis region and the state of Missouri faced a critical nursing shortage before the COVID-19 pandemic. In its grip, nurses are coming out of retirement to help meet the dire need for nursing care during an unprecedented global health crisis that is taking an enormous toll on our health care providers, hospitals, and the overall healthcare ecosystem. Shortages are evident at all levels including RNs, nursing instructors and clinical training rotations, essential to quality training. Increasing the supply of RNs is critical to helping the St. Louis region respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, to serving the health care needs of all Missourians, and to the continued stability and growth of the health care industry. As one of the largest training institutions for preparing nurses in St. Louis and the state of Missouri, the nationally ranked UMSL College of Nursing serves as a critical workforce development provider. UMSL faces a critical need to update and expand its simulation facilities to help address the dual crisis of COVID-19 and nursing shortages in the region.

Need
There is a critical shortage of registered nurses in St. Louis and in the state of Missouri. According to the Missouri Hospital Association 2020 Missouri’s Health Care Workforce report, the 2019 RN vacancy rate in St. Louis was 10.4% and 11% in Missouri overall with 4,208 positions unfilled in the state. Increasing the supply of RNs is critical to maintaining vibrancy of the health care industry in our state and to serving the health care needs of Missourians, during and following the pandemic crisis.

There is a “perfect storm” of factors resulting in the nursing shortage. Nursing school enrollment cannot meet the projected demand without enough faculty, clinical sites, and clinical simulation resources; high rates of nursing turnover in hospitals, insufficient staffing and high stress cause nurses to leave the profession; and a large percentage of the nursing workforce is nearing retirement age. These factors and an aging population, combined with a global COVID-19 pandemic that has affected university funding and clinical education, significantly reduce access to and quality of care for Missouri residents.

Nursing students require excellent clinical experience, in person or via simulation. Nurse accrediting bodies require quality clinical training and a specified number of hours that expose students to a variety
of health conditions they must learn to assess and treat. Clinical rotations in health care settings are diminishing due to competition for limited clinical sites, faculty shortages, newer patient safety initiatives, shorter hospital stays, and the amount of time that instructors need to spend supervising students. Clinical training placements are at capacity in the St. Louis region and cannot accommodate more students. As a result, *nursing simulation has become an essential part of RN training.*

**Simulation is an excellent way to educate nurses.** Students learn by trying many scenarios, handling clinical situations through failures and successes. UMSL nursing faculty understand national simulation standards and how to create real-life scenarios with necessary equipment. However, UMSL’s current simulation facilities are markedly out-of-date. The proposed lab is critical to provide current students with required lab experience and to increase student numbers as proposed.

**Proposed Solution**

The proposed state-of-the-art Nursing Learning Resource and Simulation Center at UMSL will help address critical shortages in clinical rotations needed to train RNs in order to provide excellent patient care and help our region reduce the number of deaths and poor health outcomes related to COVID-19.

The proposed expansion will shift 33 percent of current clinical learning from clinical agencies to simulated learning, enabling UMSL to increase enrollment without increasing clinical training placements in the community. In addition, expansion of the Simulation Center will enable UMSL to increase graduates in the pre-licensure BSN program by 20 percent from 2019 baseline of 172 new RN eligible graduates to 206 or more RN eligible graduates annually.

**State of the Art Simulation.** The Simulation Center will increase the number of simulation rooms from five to eleven, each equipped with high-fidelity mannequins designed to imitate various health conditions, care situations, and respond to the care provided by the students. When students take appropriate actions, the mannequin patient improves and if the interventions are erroneous, the mannequin patient may deteriorate and could die. Acute care areas will replicate actual healthcare settings and include wheeled workstations for electronic health records, equipment for medication administration, operational suction, oxygen, ventilators, a baby warmer, and related simulation features. In these surroundings and using these tools, students can simulate responding to emergencies and other scenarios that are virtually impossible to practice otherwise, either in the classroom or in a real hospital.

The Simulation Center will provide space for students to practice high-touch healthcare that occurs outside of traditional hospital rooms, including mental health crisis interventions, transitioning patients to assisted living environments, and end-of-life discussions with patients and their families. Future nurses will be able to hone critical skills in communication and interpersonal relations by practicing in authentic environments such as the home health suite and the community health replication.

The Simulation Center video recording system will allow faculty and students to review in detail how students responded and how they can improve their ability to manage a deteriorating patient situation in a hospital setting or to speak with a family member in a home setting about palliative care decisions. A renovated, technology-enhanced classroom will allow access to the many resources available to develop and evaluate student learning prior to their experiences in the Simulation Center.

**Innovative Curriculum.** With a focus on developing critical thinking and clinical judgement skills, the curriculum helps students’ master concepts applicable to a variety of patient situations across cultures, lifespans, illnesses, and care settings. With the rapid expansion of knowledge in healthcare, it is not possible to teach students every fact they need to know. However, it is possible is to provide students
with deep understanding of key concepts and the thinking skills to apply those to any patient situation that they may encounter in the workforce, including working with interprofessional partners. Simulation is an increasingly essential component of nursing education, and offers an effective and efficient use of the limited faculty and clinical placement resources in the nursing field. A 2014 study conducted by the National Council of State Boards of Nursing found that simulation experiences deliver the same educational outcomes for nursing students as traditional clinical experiences, and offer opportunities to make mistakes and repeat lessons without exposing patients to risk. More than a substitute for in-person clinical experiences, simulation broadens student competencies as they perform duties that only licensed registered nurses can perform in the real world.

**Expected Outcomes**

The expansion of the Simulation Center will allow the UMSL to increase graduates in the pre-licensure BSN program by 20% from the FY 2019 baseline of 172 graduates. Upon completion, the first enrollment increase will occur during the 2021-2022 academic year. The four semester nursing curriculum requires students to take courses in sequential order. This requires a phased in approach to increase the number of students admitted to start the program each semester from 88 up to 102. The new steady state with 206 graduates each year and growing will begin in the 2023-2024 academic year.

**Qualifications**

UMSL is a major workforce provider of nursing graduates equipped with the skills, knowledge, and compassion needed to provide the highest levels of healthcare to the St. Louis region and the state of Missouri. UMSL offers bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral (PhD and DNP) degrees in nursing. Online curricula and affordable tuition make the programs attractive to working adults. UMSL’s master’s and doctoral nursing programs are in the Top 100 in the 2020 U.S. News and World Report rankings, with the RN to BSN program ranking number 15 on the best value college rankings and the DNP program in the top 25 percent online programs and top online program in Missouri.

UMSL educates over 1,000 nursing students each year, the majority of whom are from Missouri. Over 40 percent of UMSL nursing students are first-generation college students, 34 percent are from minority populations and 45 percent are Pell-Grant eligible. More than 90 percent of UMSL’s nursing alumni live and work in this region. Graduates are highly sought after and placement rates for graduates from the pre-licensure BSN program is consistently between 95-100 percent following graduation. Upon completion of the pre-licensure BSN program, nursing graduates are eligible to take the NCLEX-RN examination and become a licensed RN. The first-time success rate on the NCLEX-RN (qualifying) exam for UMSL nursing students in calendar year 2019 was 87.4%.

**Budget Request**

UMSL requests $3 million to complete the shovel-ready Nursing Learning Resource and Simulation Center. Renovations will occur in three phases, with completion slated for late summer 2021. The projected total costs include $7,000,000 for the Simulation Center renovation and equipment and $980,000 for related classroom renovation and equipment. Costs include construction to renovate existing space, architectural engineering fees, project management, and asbestos abatement. Equipment includes simulation suites, learning laboratories and audio-visual systems to support the
suites, learning laboratories, and the interactive classroom. As of June 2020, UMSL has raised $1,459,472 toward renovation through a $2.5 million fund-raising campaign including major donors such as Mercy Health Care, Missouri Baptist Hospital, the Hearst and Jefferson foundations, and a number of private donors.
UMSL Workforce Transition Relief Grant Proposal

Executive Summary

The University of Missouri-St. Louis plays an essential role in generating an educated workforce and enhancing economic development for the St. Louis region. UMSL proudly serves as an Anchor Institution for St. Louis, and one of the key goals of its strategic plan is to increase the number of educated citizens in the St. Louis metropolitan area. The university has aligned with the Chamber of Commerce on the St. Louis Regional Education Commitment to increase the number of adults in St. Louis who hold a bachelor’s degree to 40 percent by 2025. In order to reach this ambitious goal, UMSL must reengage near-completers and assist them with returning to college to finish their degrees.

The United States is home to 36 million adults with some college, but no degree (Degrees When Due, 2019). In the St. Louis metropolitan area, there are approximately 400,000 working adults with some college credit but no degree, and approximately one third of these individuals are within a semester or two of degree completion (Gateway to Degrees, 2018). Many of these individuals face challenges returning to college because of financial holds due to past-due balances. UMSL is no exception to these financial obstacles with over 600 students leaving the university with past due balances averaging $2,200 since the summer of 2015. These issues have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting financial crisis. By removing these financial barriers for near-completers, UMSL can assist hundreds of students with returning to college and completing their degrees positioning them for career advancement and higher earning potential.

UMSL proposes the development of Workforce Transition Relief Grants for students to pay off prior balances up to $2,500 and allow undergraduate and graduate students to return to college, complete their degrees and re-enter the workforce in areas of high-industry need. The direct result of this initiative will be a more educated, empowered workforce that will make St. Louis an exemplary, desirable place for technology start-ups, corporations and other industry innovators who have the power to bring growth, prosperity and lasting sustainability to our region. UMSL is uniquely positioned to significantly expand the college-educated workforce in St. Louis while contributing to the social mobility of the local population.

Need

Due to record unemployment and lost wages because of the global COVID-19 pandemic, students and working adults find it difficult to continue their education and upgrade their skills for a changing job market. This is especially true at UMSL – where 41 percent of students are Pell-Grant eligible and the median family income is below $35,000. UMSL students were heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Approximately 56 percent of UMSL students who applied for emergency financial assistance
through the CARES Act were dealing with housing and/or food insecurity due to loss of employment – with the percentages even higher for African American students and Pell-Grant recipients. Even after distributing $2.9 million in CARES Act/HEERF funds to students who were dealing with financial hardships related to the pandemic, UMSL had over two hundred students who could not return this fall due to outstanding balances. The proposed **Workforce Transition Relief Grants** will allow these students, who are primarily first-generation and low-income students, to return to UMSL and continue their education.

**Proposed Solution**

UMSL requests funding to develop **Workforce Transition Relief Grants** that will pay off prior balances up to $2,500, allowing undergraduate and graduate students to return to college, complete their degrees, and reenter the workforce in high demand occupations. These transition grants will complement the Fast-Track Workforce Incentive Grant program launched in 2019-2020 by the Missouri Department of Higher Education & Workforce Development (MDHEWD) to address workforce needs by helping adults pursue certificates, degrees, or industry-recognized credentials in high-demand areas. While the Fast-Track Grant provides funding for individuals who are 25 years or older to pursue postsecondary credentials, it does not address the barrier of past-due balances that prevent thousands of students from returning to college each year.

UMSL has signed onto **Degrees When Due**, an equity initiative that helps colleges increase degree attainment for adults with some college and no degree. This initiative is coordinated by the Institute of Higher Education Policy (IHEP) and provides critical supports for near-completers to return to college and complete their degrees. The **Workforce Transition Relief Grants** will open doors for more students to participate in the Degrees When Due initiative. By combining gap funding with critical student support services, we can effectively eliminate two major barriers to degree completion.

**Expected Outcomes**

The **Workforce Transition Relief Grants** will allow UMSL to recruit 150-200 near-completers back to the university to complete their degrees on an annual basis. We anticipate a completion rate of 80-90 percent, similar to our other degree completion programs (**Finish Your Degree Scholarship and Senior Degree Completion**). This will result in an additional 500-680 college graduates over the next four years. This will provide the St. Louis region with hundreds of additional college graduates who will enrich the civic and economic life of our community. College graduates contribute more in taxes annually and are less reliant on government services and assistance than their peers in the workforce whose highest level of education is a high school diploma.

**Qualifications**

Providing social mobility to its graduates is a prominent point of pride for UMSL. The university ranked in the Top 100 nationally on the inaugural social mobility index produced by **U.S. News & World Report**. The opportunity to affect the ability of financially vulnerable students to pay down debt and return to UMSL will further expand its commitment to the transformative power of higher education.

Student success is integral to the fundamental purpose of UMSL to educate and graduate diverse students as they seek different and better lives. UMSL’s strategic plan sets goals to increase annual
degrees conferred from 3000 to 3,200 by 2023 and to focus investments in scholarships and support services for Pell-Grant recipients. UMSL consistently out-performs institutions with similar student demographics in graduation rates, which provides evidence of our commitment to creating an inclusive and academically supportive environment for all students.

**Budget Request**

The total estimated cost for the proposed Workforce Transition Relief Grants is $2 million to support up to 200 students per year for the next four years with the goal that 80 to 90 percent will complete their degrees and help create a more equitable and inclusive St. Louis regional workforce and economy.
Appendix E – Community Health Worker Fast Track
(Mental Health Focus)

Fast tracks students training as CHW with Mental Health focus to get them working in the community as soon as possible.

Statement of Need

Utilizing evidence-based approaches, community health workers (CHWs) are trained members of the community who work in association with the local public and private health care systems in both urban and rural environments. Since CHWs typically reside in the community they serve, they have the unique ability to bring information and provide care where it is needed most. CHWs can reach community residents wherever they are. CHWs are frontline agents of change, helping to reduce health disparities in underserved communities.

Some of CHWs’ service outcomes are:

- Improved access to health care services.
- Increased health and screening.
- Increased use of health care services.
- Improved adherence to health recommendations.
- Reduced need for emergency and specialty services.

With the many unseen mental health challenges that will develop because of the COVID-19 pandemic, CHWs equipped with mental and behavioral health knowledge and techniques will not only benefit individuals, but also the communities they serve. Their rapport with community members and their specialized mental health training will help deliver valuable services to underserved communities. In addition to job creation and upskilling, this training will add a focused skill set to already in-demand positions as well as add another career step in the health care ladder.

Project Deliverables

Workforce Solutions Group will coordinate the following St. Louis Community College services upon award of this project:

1. Instruction for a specified number of students in a cohort-based model.
2. This training will be delivered as a 16-week non-credit program (seated, online, or blended).
3. Development of mental health curriculum through an outside partnership.
4. Instructional supervision of the program.
5. Contract and fiscal management of the program including invoicing and reporting.
6. Coordination of student admissions, enrollment, and placements.
Appendix E – Funding Recommendations

Using the prioritization framework outlined in this report, the ERT recommends the following recommendations for funding under the CARES Act. The remaining recommendations should be considered as the County finalizes the 2021 budget and in ongoing dialogue with community support organizations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CEDS</th>
<th>ERT Strategy</th>
<th>Proposal</th>
<th>Funding Recommendation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Addressing Immediate Needs</td>
<td>Stabilize Small Businesses</td>
<td>Create a Small Business Rapid Deployment Fund</td>
<td>$500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Create a Set Aside Minority &amp; Immigrant Owned Business Support Fund</td>
<td>$250,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Promote Public Health Safe Practices</td>
<td>Establish a Small Business Safe Practices Voucher Program</td>
<td>$500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stabilize Households</td>
<td>Enhance School-Family Connection through Child Care Incentives</td>
<td>$500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Extend Basic Needs Financial Support*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Create New Opportunities for Restaurants</td>
<td>Establish a Cross-Functional Restaurant Task Force*</td>
<td>No cost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Seed a Regional Restaurant Reinvention Microgrant Fund</td>
<td>$500,000-$1,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conduct Ongoing Needs Assessments</td>
<td>Rapidly Diversify Boards &amp; Commissions*</td>
<td>No cost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Develop a Small Business Risk Index</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Update the County State of Business Report</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Develop School Closure Contingency Support Plans for Small Business</td>
<td>No cost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneurship</td>
<td>Simplify Access to Information and Resources</td>
<td>Create a Business Navigator Program</td>
<td>$250,000-$500,000 (Pilot funding)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing Our Workforce</td>
<td>Expand In-Demand Career Training Capacity</td>
<td>Support the UMSL Nursing Learning Resource &amp; Simulation Center</td>
<td>$500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Support the STLCC Nursing &amp; Health Sciences Center of Excellence</td>
<td>$500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reduce Barriers to Employment</td>
<td>Support the STLCC IT Center of Excellence</td>
<td>$500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Support UMSL Workforce Transition Relief Grants</td>
<td>$500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure</td>
<td>Bridge the Digital Divide</td>
<td>Partner for Success - Appoint County Digital Champion</td>
<td>$500,000 (program seed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leveraging Our Assets</td>
<td>Reignite Our Small Business Legacy</td>
<td>Shop STL First Marketing Campaign</td>
<td>$150,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Efficiently Deploy Capital</td>
<td>Hire a County CDFI Liaison to Build a Bridge Lending Program</td>
<td>$500,000 (program seed)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL CARES Act Funds = $5.7-6.45M