New Hampshire Department of
BUSINESS AND
ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

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April 28, 2023

The Honorable Ken Weyler, Chairman
Fiscal Committee of the General Court *and*

His Excellency, Governor Christopher T. Sununu
And the Honorable Council
State House
Concord, New Hampshire 03301

REQUESTED ACTION

Pursuant to RSA 14:30-a, VI, authorize the Department of Business and Economic Affairs (BEA) to accept and expend funds in the amount of $10,012,500 in federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) State Fiscal Recovery Fund (SFRF) for the purpose of implementing the results of the Business Support Portal Feasibility and Design Project, effective upon Fiscal Committee and Governor and Executive Council approval through June 30, 2025. This is an allowable use of ARPA SFRF funds under Section 602 (c)(1)(A) to respond to the public health emergency or its negative economic impacts. **100% Federal Funds.**

Funds are to be budgeted in FY2023 in the following account:

03-22-22-220510-26680000[1] Division of Economic Development
ARP Business Support Portal

Class-Account	Description	FY2023 Current Adjusted Authorized	Requested Action	FY2023 Revised Adjusted Authorized
Expenditures				
040-501587	Indirect Cost	$2,500	$2,500	$5,000
041-500801	Audit Fund Set Aside	$1,003	$10,000	$11,003
102-500731	Contracts for Program Services	$1,000,000	$10,000,000	$11,000,000
	Total Expenses	**$1,003,503**	**$10,012,500**	**$11,016,003**
Source of Funds				
000-400338-16	Federal Funds	$1,003,503	$10,012,500	$11,016,003
	Total Revenue	**$1,003,503**	**$10,012,500**	**$11,016,003**

[1] All direct program costs will be accounted for using activity 00FRF602PH2206B and all administrative and indirect costs will be accounted for using activity 00FRF602PH2206Z. Accounting classifications may be subject to technical changes at the discretion of the Department of Administrative Services' Division of Accounting Services.

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EXPLANATION

The requested funds would be used to implement an all-new online portal that would use technology to significantly enhance the ability for New Hampshire employers to access the services they require from the State on a single platform. The feasibility study and design of the platform were previously approved, conducted after competitive bidding, and are now complete.

As noted at the feasibility and design stage, the economic impacts of COVID-19 have resulted in a significant increase in demand for digital platforms and options that ease the burden and improve the efficiency of accessing business and government services. Significantly reducing the burden for new and existing businesses to access state government services is also central to New Hampshire's Economic Recovery and Expansion Strategy (ERES) economic development and workforce development goals. Moreover, other states have advanced initiatives such as this, putting New Hampshire at a competitive disadvantage.

To address these issues, upon approval of this item, a qualified third party will work collaboratively with BEA, the Department of Information Technology (DOIT), and essential state agencies associated with business and employee support to develop a strategic road map to create a more responsive and cohesive online system dedicated to addressing the needs and expectations of businesses, employees, and small business owners in the state.

This platform would drive economic gains and make New Hampshire one of the first New England states to implement this type of technology. States that use this technology have had an average 5-year growth rate for small businesses that was 30% higher than states with no portal. Use of these portals also enables faster registration for startups, and overall higher satisfaction and greater international engagement is reported. Finally, public sector entities in these states typically see a 15-25% reduction in cost-to-serve.

Over the past few months, BEA has worked with a qualified third party and essential state agencies to develop a strategic road map to create a more responsive and cohesive online system dedicated to addressing the needs and expectations of businesses, employees, and small business owners in the state. The resulting strategic implementation plan will serve as the basis for the next steps to full implementation and allow New Hampshire businesses to drastically enhance their partnership with state agencies. The strategic implementation plan was developed utilizing research from over thirty interviews, direct interaction with ten state agencies and their information technology staff, a review of all 50 states, and data analysis from partnering state agencies.

Components of this new system are slated to include:

- Landing page, basic search and navigation, accessibility settings, triage mechanisms to direct questions and information to appropriate agencies;
- Profile management, single sign-in designations, personalized dynamic checklists to track state required filings, permits, etc.;
- Outcome metrics and satisfaction monitoring; and

- Customized access to state vendor RFPs and other opportunities to do business with state agencies.

BEA plans to utilize these funds to implement this new business services portal strategy in New Hampshire. The portal will serve as a single-entry point for business owners, or aspiring business owners, to easily complete tasks, receive help, and explore opportunities with multiple state agencies and partners. Existing state agency internet-based services will not be impacted by this and will benefit significantly from the institution of this single point of entry.

Funds are being budgeted in the classes listed below as follows:

Class 040 - All agencies receiving outside funding from any source are required by RSA 21-1:75 to recover a proportional share of the outside funding source to alleviate agency indirect costs.

Class 041 - Audit Fund Set Aside to comply with RSA 124:16 that requires all agencies that receive federal funds to set aside a percentage (0.1 %) of the federal revenue amount received to pay for financial and compliance audits.

Class 102 - Contracts for Program Services to cover contractual services that will set up and provide technical assistance.

In the event that Federal Funds become no longer available, General Funds will not be requested to support this project.

Respectfully submitted,

Taylor Caswell,
Commissioner