

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) Relating to COVID-19 for Texas Businesses and Community Economic Development Partners

Our priority is the health and safety of Texas residents, local businesses and communities throughout the state. The Office of the Governor's Economic Development & Tourism staff and our community partners are closely monitoring the situation and following the advice of health officials and government agencies. This is a dynamic situation and we will update this information as we find out about new resources and hear about new policies devised to help businesses cope during and after this crisis. For additional news and resources regarding the Coronavirus (COVID-19), go to [gov.texas.gov/business/coronavirus](http://gov.texas.gov/business/coronavirus).

### **Q: I am struggling to pay my taxes as I normally would. What should I do?**

**A:** The Comptroller's Office recognizes these are challenging times. During periods of economic hardship, paying or remitting taxes and fees on time can feel like an extra burden when there's so much uncertainty. The Comptroller's Office is offering assistance to those businesses that are struggling to pay the full amount of sales taxes they collected in February. This assistance is in the form of short-term payment agreements and, in most instances, waivers of penalties and interest.

In addition, the Comptroller's Office is temporarily suspending the 60-day deadline for businesses to contest audit results. This applies to both redetermination and refund hearings. The Office will waive interest accrued during this period, and will notify businesses to reestablish a request deadline at a later date. For more information on requesting a hearing, visit: <https://bit.ly/2UA2Gqy>

Please contact the Comptroller's **Enforcement Hotline at 800-252-8880** to learn about your options for remaining in compliance and avoiding interest and late fees on taxes due.

In addition, the office has a variety of online tools for businesses seeking assistance. See [COVID-19 emergency response webpage](#) for access to online tools, tutorials and other resources for tax services.

### **Employment:**

#### **Q: As an employer, where can I get advice about what I should do in this crisis?**

**A:** The [Texas Workforce Commission – Resources for Employers](#) provides information and actionable advice for employers facing layoffs or interacting with employees during this crisis. The site offers an option for subscribers to receive updates as new content is posted.

#### **Q: I am self-employed and can no longer work during this crisis. Can I apply for unemployment assistance?**

**A:** The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act includes provisions for temporary coverage of individuals who have exhausted their entitlement to regular Unemployment Compensation (UC) and individuals who are not eligible for regular UC, such as individuals who are self-employed or have limited recent work history. A newly created Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) fund is the bill's primary vehicle, empowering states to extend federally-funded unemployment benefits by an additional 13 weeks (past the usual 26 weeks).

Workers not eligible for regular or extended benefits or PEUC could be eligible for **Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA)**. Akin to disaster unemployment assistance, the PUA program provides unemployment benefits for individuals who lost their jobs or self-employed who are no longer working as a direct result of the pandemic, and who applied but are not eligible for regular unemployment benefits.

The Department of Labor is currently working on guidance for self-employed individuals looking to file a claim, which will be released within the next week. For more detailed information on PEUC and PUA, read the [Department of Labor's Unemployment Insurance Program Letter](#).

#### **Funding/Loans:**

##### **Q: I am a small business and need a loan to stay in business. What options are available?**

A: The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) is offering low-interest federal disaster loans for working capital to small businesses suffering substantial economic injury as a result of COVID-19. The Economic Injury Disaster Loans can be made to small businesses, most private non-profit organizations and small agricultural cooperatives. These loans may be used to pay fixed debts, payroll, accounts payable and other bills that can't be paid because of the disaster's impact. The interest rate is 3.75% for small businesses and 2.75% for non-profits. Terms are determined on a case by case basis, based on each borrower's ability to repay.

Small businesses who believe they may be eligible for an SBA EIDL, should visit the [SBA's website](#) where they can directly apply for assistance. The online application is the fastest method to receive a decision about loan eligibility.

##### **Q: I am thinking about applying for the SBA Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL). Do you have any information for me to consider before applying?**

A: The SBA knows this is an unprecedented event and is working diligently to ensure resources are made available to those small businesses in need of assistance. SBA loan reviews and approvals will be on a case-by-case basis, so applicants should be sure they have provided **everything** required to make the application complete or applications will be returned. There are several forms that will need to be completed, regarding considerable current and historical information about the business. Guidelines regarding the application are listed on the SBA disaster loan website. The SBA disaster loan application is available online [here](#).

##### **Q: Where can I find more information regarding the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act?**

A: The [CARES Act](#) was passed by Congress on March 27, 2020. The programs and initiatives in the Act are intended to assist business owners and nonprofits with current needs due to the COVID-19 crisis. The SBA and the U.S. Department of Treasury [announced](#) a robust mobilization effort of banks to allow businesses to contact a participating SBA 7(a) lender, bank, or credit union, apply for a loan, and be approved on the same day. Some of the small business provisions in the Act are outlined below. For specific loan requirements, application details and additional information, download the [CARES Act and PPP Loan Overview](#).

- [Economic Injury Disaster Loan Advance](#) - Due to the CARES Act, small businesses and non-profits can get up to a \$10,000 advance on an EIDL, even if a previous application was declined or still pending.

- **[Paycheck Protection Program](#)** - The CARES Act established a \$349 billion SBA-backed Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) to provide immediate access to capital for small businesses who have been impacted by COVID-19. It will provide critical capital to businesses without collateral requirements, personal guarantees or SBA fees. If employers maintain payroll, certain portions of the loans can be forgiven, including payroll, interest on mortgage obligations, rent and utility payments.
- **[Small Business Debt Relief Program](#)** - This program provides immediate relief to small businesses with non-disaster SBA loans, in particular 7(a), 504 and microloans.
- **Employee Retention Credit for Employers Subject to Closure or Experiencing Economic Hardship** - This provision provides a refundable payroll tax credit for 50% of wages paid by eligible employers to certain employees during the COVID-19 crisis.
- **Delay of Payment of Employer Payroll Taxes** - This provision allows taxpayers to defer paying the employer portion of certain payroll taxes through the end of 2020.

**Q: Where can I find a Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) lender and how do I receive forgiveness on the loan?**

A: Loans will be available through existing SBA-certified lenders in Texas, including banks, credit unions and other financial institutions. Businesses can find a local lender by contacting their local Small Business Development Center, or by visiting the SBA's new [lender search portal](#). The SBA will continue to add new lenders to this tool. Some banks will be ready to begin accepting applications starting April 3, 2020. To prepare for when your bank is ready to accept applications, the U.S. Department of the Treasury has published some more information for small businesses [here](#), and a fact sheet [here](#). The Treasury also published an application form [here](#), that businesses can review for insight into the type of information needed to apply, however, banks may also have their own applications.

You must apply through your lender for forgiveness on your loan. In this application, you must include:

- documentation verifying the number of employees on payroll and pay rates, including IRS payroll tax filings and State income, payroll and unemployment insurance filings
- documentation verifying payments on covered mortgage obligations, lease obligations and utilities
- certification from a representative of your business or organization that is authorized to certify that the documentation provided is true and that the amount that is being forgiven was used in accordance with the program's guidelines for use

**Q: Besides SBA loans, where can I go for financial assistance for my business?**

A: Financial resources may be available in your local community. Check with your local and regional economic development organization for local resources which may be available, as well as your local financial institutions. Community Development Finance Institutions (CDFI) may also be able to provide assistance. Click [here](#) to download the full list of CDFIs in Texas.

**Other:**

**Q: I have a restaurant and cannot serve people on premises during the crisis. How can I keep my business alive?**

A: We know this is a challenging time for restaurants and other service-related industries who are not able to serve patrons onsite. However, these restrictions will ensure the health and safety of our residents and neighbors. Many restaurants are offering take-out, drive-thru and delivery options for

customers. Additionally, Governor Abbott issued a [waiver](#) that now allows restaurants with a mixed beverage permit to deliver alcoholic beverages with food purchases to patrons, including beer, wine and mixed drinks. Visit the [Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission website](#) to learn more about the qualifications necessary for your restaurant to offer this service.

Restaurants may also offer a Comfort Food Care Package on their online ordering system for customers to purchase on behalf of at-risk families and youth in the community. The package should contain enough food to feed a family of four and be priced between \$50 and \$100. The Texas Restaurant Association, Favor Delivery and other partners will promote your restaurant's involvement statewide. To sign up for the Comfort Food Care Package program, go to the Texas Restaurant Association's [website](#).

**Q: I can supply emergency supplies to Texas state agencies involved in COVID-19 emergency response. How can I connect with these state agency buyers?**

A: Governor Abbott created the Texas Supply Chain Strike Force to help source critical equipment for medical providers, such as personal protective equipment (PPE) and infection-control products. Visit the [Texas Supply Chain Strike Force Portal](#) to submit any supplies for procurement consideration or donation to the State of Texas. Due to the pressing timeline, the Supply Chain Strike Force will only consider procurement with companies that offer the following information in the initial outreach: product type, available inventory, units they can produce per day/week, the price per unit, tax ID, FDA registered (yes/no) and shipment date. For any questions, contact [dfsc@soc.texas.gov](mailto:dfsc@soc.texas.gov).

**Q: How can I find out what businesses are deemed essential and allowed to remain open?**

A: Governor Greg Abbott issued an [Executive Order](#) implementing Essential Services and Activities Protocols for the entire state of Texas. The Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) will maintain an online list of essential services specified in the Governor's Executive Order at [tdem.texas.gov/essentialservices/](http://tdem.texas.gov/essentialservices/). Other essential services may be added to this list with the approval of TDEM. These orders will remain effective on a statewide basis through April 30, 2020, subject to extension thereafter based on the status of COVID-19 in Texas and the recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

If your city and/or county has issued Shelter in Place orders, please review those orders for what *your* community has designated as an "essential" business.

**Q: Which businesses and individuals are eligible to receive an exception from the travel-related quarantine requirements?**

A: If a business falls within the essential services categories as defined by the Texas Executive Order GA-14, the employees of that business are automatically exempt from the travel-related quarantine requirements and are not required to apply for an exemption. The TDEM will determine, on a case-by-case basis, whether the self-quarantine order applies to individuals traveling in connection with commercial activity, military service, emergency response, health response or critical-infrastructure functions. In order to apply for an exception, visit TDEM's website [here](#).

In addition, Federal employees and their contractors are exempt if traveling for business purposes. Individuals traveling for essential health care services (unrelated to COVID-19) with a doctor's note are exempt and do not need to apply for an individualized exemption.

**Q: Where else can I find information that could help my business during the crisis?**

A: For the most up-to-date information, please utilize the following resources:

[Additional SBA Resources & Programs](#)  
[U.S. Department of Treasury PPP Information Sheet](#)  
[Texas Department of State Health Services](#)  
[Texas Department of Licensing & Regulation](#)  
[Texas Comptroller's Office](#)  
[Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission](#)  
[Texas Department of Agriculture](#)  
[AssistHer Emergency Relief Grant for Women-Owned Businesses](#)  
[Texas Creative Arts/Film Industry Resources](#)  
[Texas Music Industry Resources](#)  
[U.S. Chamber of Commerce Disaster Preparedness & Recovery Quick Guides](#)  
[SBA Guidance to Faith-Based Organizations](#)  
[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)  
[World Health Organization](#)

The federal government has a “one stop shop” regarding the [Government Response to Coronavirus, COVID-19](#). This page is being updated daily and has the most current federal government agency actions and information. Of particular interest are the actions [the U.S. Small Business Administration](#) is taking to help small business during this uncertain time.

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