

2022 -- H 7922

LC005162

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2022

A N A C T

RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- RHODE ISLAND COMMERCE CORPORATION

Introduced By: Representatives Tobon, and Barros

Date Introduced: March 07, 2022

Referred To: House Finance

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Chapter 42-64 of the General Laws entitled "Rhode Island Commerce  
2 Corporation" is hereby amended by adding thereto the following section:

3 **42-64-42. Retailer competitive grants revolving fund.**

4 (a) There is hereby established a separate fund within the department of the general  
5 treasurer to be known as the retailer competitive grants revolving fund (the "fund"). This fund shall  
6 be administered by the general treasurer in accordance with the same laws and fiscal procedures as  
7 the general funds of the state, and in consultation with the commerce corporation. The fund shall  
8 consist of such sums as the state may from time to time appropriate, as well as at least one million dollars  
9 (\$1,000,000) received from federal COVID-19 response funds ("COVID-19 response funds")  
10 received by the state to assist the state in its public health, community and economic recovery  
11 efforts related to the state of emergency concerning the novel coronavirus disease outbreak declared  
12 by the governor on March 9, 2020. This fund shall also consist of interest earnings, money received  
13 from the federal government, gifts, bequests, donations, or otherwise from any public or private  
14 source.

15 (b) The fund shall be used for the purpose of issuing grants through a competitive bid  
16 application process to local retailers based in Rhode Island and who sell goods, services, and  
17 products, primarily from a so-called "on the ground" and "brick-and-mortar" physical location(s)  
18 that is a retail store, in Rhode Island. These grants shall be issued to assist in making local merchants

1 more economically competitive with out-of-state sellers from neighboring states and out-of-state  
2 online realtors and to help with business lost during the pandemic.

3 (c) Pursuant to subsection (a) of this section, the general assembly shall appropriate, out of  
4 any money not already appropriated for the fiscal year commencing July 1, 2022, the sum of one  
5 million dollars (\$1,000,000), as the initial sum to start the retailer competitive grants revolving  
6 fund.

7 (d) The fund shall be credited with:

8 (1) Revenue authorized by the general assembly and specifically designated to be credited  
9 to the fund from federal funds allocated to the state pursuant to federal legislation enacted after  
10 December 4, 2020 and in response to the COVID-19 outbreak or related economic recovery, but  
11 excluding federal grants that are not subject to appropriation and funds related to increased federal  
12 medical assistance percentage rates under section 1905(b) of the Social Security Act 42  
13 U.S.C.1396b; provided that, federal funds made available in the form of newly created  
14 reimbursement programs may be authorized by the general assembly and designated to be credited  
15 to the fund; and

16 (2) Amounts credited to the fund shall be subject to appropriation and money remaining in  
17 the fund at the end of a fiscal year shall not revert to the general fund and shall be available for  
18 expenditure in the subsequent fiscal year.

19 (e) The secretary of the commerce corporation, in consultation with the general treasurer  
20 and the department of business regulation, shall promulgate rules and regulations for the  
21 administration of this section, which shall include, but not be limited to, the process of applying for  
22 a grant under the fund and the criteria to be used in awarding a grant from the fund.

23 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF  
A N A C T  
RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- RHODE ISLAND COMMERCE  
CORPORATION

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1           This act would establish the retailer competitive grants revolving fund to award grants,  
2 through a competitive process, to local "on the ground" businesses. The purpose of the grants would  
3 be to assist in making local merchants more economically competitive with out-of-state sellers from  
4 neighboring states and out-of-state online realtors.

5           This act would take effect upon passage.

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