

FRA Award Submission

Category: Out of the Box

Submission: COVID Restaurant Relief Program



Description:

The Hallandale Beach Community Redevelopment Agency (HBCRA) launched a special COVID relief program for restaurants by providing them with \$2,000 reimbursement for participation in the HBCRA's Food & Groove Festival. In doing so, the HBCRA facilitated an economic incentive that had multiple benefits. First, it provided financial relief to restaurants already greatly hampered by the pandemic's lock-down. Second, the Festival provided regional promotion and marketing for each restaurant via attendees, social media, and the press. Finally, the collective presence of 25 restaurants in the festival provided greater visibility for the City as a center for global cuisine, tourism and nightlife.

Innovation - How the project used new ideas to solve problems or to carry out the project or program*

The idea of providing a stimulus or reimbursement to a business is not new; however, the HBCRA decided to create a program that was connected to its broader objectives. The COVID Restaurant Relief that was provided to 25 Hallandale Beach restaurants was incentivized through participation in the HBCRA's largest event of the year: the SOBFWFF Food and Groove Festival in Hallandale Beach. The event needed the restaurants, and the restaurants needed the event. By bridging the two with a \$2,000 incentive, the restaurants not only received the promotional exposure from the event, they also received financial compensation for their participation. On another level, the relief package also solved the problem of ensuring that Hallandale Beach's restaurants would participate in the event, which was based exclusively on the prospect that attendees would enjoy a great variety of global cuisine.

Community Impact - How the project improved economic, social, design, cultural assets of the community.

The COVID Restaurant Relief fund made it possible for many more restaurants to participate in the Hallandale Food and Groove Festival, which in turn helped them attract new patrons. For the HBCRA it increased tourism and stimulated the local economy. This year (2022) was especially challenging for restaurants because they were suffering from being short staffed, having to produce their product with inputs at higher costs due to inflation and supply chain shortages, and having to compromise their normal Saturday evening business traffic (which is usually the peak time for customer volume) to participate in the event. The \$2,000 incentive greatly offset these costs in order to provide each restaurant with the opportunity to achieve wide visibility at the event.



Funding - How the project leveraged funding and in-kind assistance?

The total cost of providing COVID Restaurant Relief for 25 restaurants at the Hallandale Beach Food and Groove Festival was \$50,000 (25 restaurants x \$2,000). Additionally, the HBCRA sponsored a promotional contest for all participating restaurants with 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winners receiving \$1,000, \$500, and \$250 respectively. This brought the total cost of the COVID Restaurant Relief Program to \$51,750.

Problem Solving - How the project used problem-solving to address unique local issues*

The economic problems that our restaurants were encountering were mostly due to residual aspects of the pandemic: 1) difficulty finding employees for an industry that involves considerable person-to-person contact (labor shortage); 2) inflation and supply chain difficulties caused by the pandemic; and 3) the challenge of securing participation from restaurants on a Saturday evening (their most profitable evening of the week). The last challenge was only compounded by the pandemic in that while fewer people were patronizing restaurants, Saturday evening became a day that was indispensable for many restaurants.

Applicability to Other Communities - Why this project or program could be transferred to other communities.

This program is transferable to any city that is trying to secure the participation of local businesses, whether they are restaurants, merchants, or some other service, in festivals or events. The objective of the program is to offset opportunity costs regarding the sacrifices small businesses must make to engage in events, many of which have broad economic benefits. Determining an equitable amount to achieve this must be done in the context of the value each participant or type of participant adds to the event.

Other Things to Tell the Judges -

The SOBFWFF 2022 was a sold-out event. Over a thousand individuals were in attendance

For its third year in a row, the event doubled participation from the previous year and the year prior to that. It received considerable coverage in social media and attendees came from all over South Florida.

