

CORONAVIRUS STATE FISCAL RECOVERY FUND



Promote Puerto Rico: Promote Domestic Tourism

Program Guidelines

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Table of Contents

Program Overview	3
Background	3
Program Description	3
Points of Contact.....	4
Eligibility Criteria	4
Allowable Expenditures	4
Ineligible Expenditures.....	4
Process Overview	5
Compliance	6
Reporting Requirements.....	6

Program Overview

Background

Since March of 2020, Puerto Rico, like most jurisdictions in the United States and countries worldwide, has experienced an unprecedented emergency caused by the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (“COVID-19”) pandemic. To slow the spread of the disease and ensure the stability of its healthcare system, the Government of Puerto Rico has implemented measures to address the emergency. On March 12, 2020, the Government of Puerto Rico issued Administrative Bulletin OE-2020-020, which formally declared a state of emergency due to the imminent impact of the coronavirus in Puerto Rico.

During the state of emergency, Puerto Rico suffered significant loss of life and severe economic hardships, which have impacted a Commonwealth still reeling from a natural disaster. Puerto Rico lost over 2,500 citizens, tourism dwindled with hotel registrations falling 95% from February to April 2020, and ~460,000 residents of Puerto Rico experienced unemployment, twice the previous number of unemployed individuals. Despite these hardships, Puerto Rico persevered, and with over 2,600,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccines administered, Puerto Rico is positioned to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic.

To help Puerto Rico emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, Congress passed the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (“ARP Act”), and the President signed it into law on March 11, 2021. To assist state governments with addressing the lingering public health emergency while targeting areas and industries in need of economic development, the ARP Act established the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund, which provides \$350 billion in direct assistance to states, territories, counties, metropolitan cities, tribal governments, and non-entitlement units of local governments. As part of the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund, Puerto Rico received \$2.47 billion under the Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund (“CSFRF”).

To ensure the expeditious processing of apportioned funds from the CARES Act, the Government of Puerto Rico established the Disbursement Oversight Committee, consisting of the Secretary of the Department of the Treasury, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OGP), and the Executive Director of the Puerto Rico Fiscal Agency and Financial Advisory Authority (AAFAF). The Committee was created on May 15, 2020, by means of Executive Order No. 2020-040. On May 7, 2021, by means of Executive Order No. 2021-034, the Governor of Puerto Rico extended the Committee’s oversight to include CSFRF.

Program Description

Puerto Rico’s tourism industry was devastated as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns. Between March and December 2020, the average hotel and *paradores* occupancy rate was 27.8%, compared to a 66.3% average occupancy rate between March and December 2019.¹ This dramatic decline in tourism led to unprecedented unemployment and economic hardships for many citizens of Puerto Rico. As COVID-19 vaccines begin to allow a return to normalcy, non-domestic tourism will slowly start to reinvigorate the tourism industry. While that is occurring, Puerto Rico must focus on promoting domestic tourism for residents of Puerto Rico to help revitalize Puerto Rico from within.

Disbursement of Program funds will be subject to the strictest standards to ensure compliance with federal regulations and best practices. Therefore, each request for disbursement will be duly documented and subject to control and audit.

Points of Contact

The Program will be administered by the Coronavirus Relief Fund Disbursement Oversight Committee (Committee) in conjunction with the Puerto Rico Tourism Company (PRTC) and AAFAF.

Eligibility Criteria

Eligible Applicants must meet all the following criteria:

- Be Puerto Rico Tourism Company (PRTC);
- Commit to abide by the Program's terms and conditions; and
- Agree to return the Program funds if it is determined that they did not comply with any of the Program eligibility requirements or if the Program funds were not spent on eligible expenses by December 31, 2024.

Allowable Expenditures

Allowable expenses under this award must be:

- Promoting and marketing – this includes advertising and other marketing efforts to sustain hotel occupancy with domestic tourism throughout the offseason, identification and labeling of specific tourist areas and attractions, and updating the official website;
- Market study – investigation of the profile of domestic tourism;
- PRTC Program Expansion- Paradores of PR, Gastronomic Inns, Sustainable Tourism, Nautical Tourism, Cultural Tourism, and Sports Tourism;
- Local event sponsorships to expand entertainment offerings, including craft fairs, Major League Baseball Games, races, and art and music shows;
- Recovery and Development of Domestic Air Access Grants;
- Improvements to Tourist Attractions;
- Expenses necessarily incurred due to the public health emergency with respect to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19); and
- Expenses incurred during the period that begins on March 3, 2021 and ends on December 31, 2024.

For further guidance, please refer to the [Guidance](#) and the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) published by the U. S Treasury.

Other CSFRF Programs

In addition to the Program detailed above, the Governor allocated funds for additional programs to address the public health emergency, ensure continuity of government services, address negative economic impact, provide premium pay, invest in water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure, and provide for the provision of government services (up to lost revenue). Please visit the [AAFAF website](#) for additional information about these programs.

Ineligible Expenditures

Ineligible expenses will be determined by the Committee, the U.S. Department of the Treasury, the Office of Inspector General (OIG), and other regulatory bodies, and under this award include, but are not limited to:

- Payments to institutions that do not meet the eligibility criteria;
- Necessary expenses that have been covered or reimbursed or that will be covered in the future by other state or federal programs, including funds received through the CARES Act or from FEMA;
- Deposits into any pension funds;
- Offsetting a reduction in net tax revenue resulting from a change in law, regulation, or administrative interpretation during the covered period that reduces any tax;
- Executive bonuses, debt refinancing, salary increases, or other expenses that are determined to be unnecessary for continued operations in the COVID-19 environment; and
- Expenditures not mentioned in the resolutions approving the funds.

For further guidance, please refer to the [Guidance](#) and the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) published by the U. S Treasury.

Process Overview

The following outlines how funds from the CSFRF will be distributed under the Program. Funds will be distributed in phases according to PRTC achievements and spending amounts.

August 03, 2021	Award Announced
February 15, 2022	Initial Funds Approved to the Puerto Rico Tourism Company
March 1, 2022– Funds Expended	Biweekly Use of Funds Report
March 15, 2022 – Funds Expended	Monthly Performance Report
December 31, 2024	Deadline for Award to be Used
January 2025- Until total expenses are audited	Program Audits and Compliance Reviews

Requests

Requests will be submitted electronically using the [Agency Request](#) for Funding process along with the [request processing portal](#) administered by OGP. Applicants should submit requests under the PP Form-CSFRF Fund Request. Upon submission, Applicants will receive a confirmation via electronic mail. More information on forms, documents, and eligibility can be found on the [web](#).

Evaluation

For all requests, decisions will be evaluated for completeness and eligibility, and final determinations will be made by a representative of AAFAF. Each request will be evaluated, and Program funds will be allocated using a standard of necessity.

The Disbursement Oversight Committee will approve final funding award decisions.

For the proposed grants to airlines, only United States or Puerto Rico based airlines are eligible for funding.

If federal financial aid has already been provided to airlines identified as potential beneficiaries of the PRTC program, the use of CSFRF funds must be consistent with the terms of any existing aid, including any applicable reporting requirements.

If CTPR fails to qualify for reimbursement because of negligence or failure to meet applicable standards or requirements, GPR can recoup the funds.

Award and Funding

Requestors will be notified via electronic mail of funding decisions. Subsequent funding opportunities (including expansion of eligible institutions and use of funds) will be determined based upon the availability of funds remaining after completion of initial awards.

Compliance

Any government entity receiving funds must adhere to the Uniform Guidance, [2 C.F.R § 200](#) (“Uniform Guidance”). This Uniform Guidance outlines the “Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards.” Recipients and their personnel are responsible for reviewing, understanding, and applying the complete underlying legislation and guiding documents. Topics included in the Uniform Guidance include, but are not limited to:

- Procurement standards and requirements
- Contract cost and price principles
- Bonding requirements
- Document retention and auditing provisions

Any government and the non-government entity receiving Program funds will be required to retain use of funds records and supporting documentation for five (5) years. Furthermore, by accepting CSFRF funds, government and non-government entities are required to certify proper and legal use of the funds and agree to cooperate in any audit proceedings requested by the Government of Puerto Rico or other governing entity responsible for the compliant use of Program funds.

Reporting Requirements

On an annual basis, the Government of Puerto Rico is required to submit a performance report detailing the progress and impact of the use of CSFRF funds. This Recovery Plan Performance Report will include descriptions of the projects funded and information on each award's performance indicators and objectives, helping residents understand how their governments are using the substantial resources provided by Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds program.

The key output performance indicators for this Program include:

- Number of visits to [voyturisteando.com](#)
- Number of airlines participating in the program
- Number of tourist attractions renovated
- Number of businesses certified in CTPR Programs

The key outcome performance indicators for this Program include:

- Monthly room occupancy tax collection
- Number of businesses participating in the CTPR programs
- Increase in visits to tourist attractions
- Increase in entertainment and activities realized in Puerto Rico

To ensure timely reporting, the Government of Puerto Rico requires the recipient to adhere to the following reporting frequency:

- On a weekly basis, the Puerto Rico Department of Treasury will provide a summary of all program disbursements to date.
- On a monthly basis, the recipient will provide a report of all performance indicators mentioned above.

To ensure timely reporting, the Government of Puerto Rico requires the Recipients to adhere to the following reporting frequency:

- On a biweekly basis, recipients will be required to submit financial reports using the reporting template provided by the Program. Upon program close, recipients will be required to submit a comprehensive final financial reconciliation report detailing the use of program funds.

As reporting needs may change over time, the Program reserves the right to request additional data from the Lead Agency or Recipients at any time.