

City of New Bedford to distribute federal funding toward food security, internet access, and education

The City of New Bedford will distribute \$850,000 in federal funding dedicated toward COVID-19 under the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program to benefit food security, remote learning, and internet access during the pandemic.

To support food security in New Bedford, the largest allocation of funds, \$450,000, will benefit People Acting in Community Endeavors (PACE) Inc. and its food distribution center. PACE will use the funding to establish a centralized food distribution center, which would “solve a long-term solution to food insecurity in Greater New Bedford,” according to the organization’s application, thanks to the City’s disbursement of CDBG funds for the project. Before the pandemic, PACE served about 1,000 families per month, but that has risen to 1,200 families per week due to the economic effects of the pandemic.

“We are grateful to the City for making this investment in our efforts to address food insecurity,” said Pam Kuechler, Executive Director of PACE. “This investment will allow us to serve the thousands of New Bedford households who have experienced food insecurity challenges during the pandemic, and help us create a sustainable solution for years to come.”

CDBG funds in the amount of \$150,000 will also support remote learning and enrichment at YMCA Southcoast’s Early Learning

Center, licensed by the Department of Early Education and Care and designed to meet the development of young children. The learning enrichment and daycare programs provide a variety of activities from arts and crafts and dramatic play to outdoor play, music, and education basics.

“YMCA Southcoast has been moved and proud of the ways the City of New Bedford has stepped up to support our most important work, that of teaching and caring for children in a safe and nurturing environment,” said Jim Scherer, President and CEO of YMCA Southcoast.

MassHire of Greater New Bedford will receive \$100,000 to provide job training for local youth, including maritime job training, as well as funding an employee with a partnership with the Immigrants’ Assistance center to assist laid off workers with navigating the unemployment system.

“We’re pleased that MassHire of Greater New Bedford will be able to provide youth with the skills and job training they need, and to assist workers who are dealing with the fallout of the pandemic,” said Jim Oliveira, Executive Director of MassHire of Greater New Bedford.

The City’s Management Information Systems office will receive another \$150,000 to install and enhance WiFi internet access in New Bedford parks in eligible areas in order to benefit neighborhood residents and children.

“We’re pleased to support these important projects that address key needs in New Bedford, which have only been underscored by the effects of the pandemic,” said Mayor Jon Mitchell. “This funding will go a long way toward strengthening our city as it moves beyond the pandemic in the coming year, and ensuring that more residents have access to resources that enable them to thrive.”