



BELIZE PRESS OFFICE

•Phone: 822-0094 or 0092

•Fax: 822-2671

• website: www.pressoffice.gov.bz

PRESS RELEASE

Update on Unemployment Relief Program

Belmopan. October 9, 2020. 3:15 p.m.

Applications and approvals

The total number of applications received under Phase 2 of the COVID-19 Unemployment Relief Program (URP) as of October 8, 2020 was 66,859. Of these, 42,575 applications have been approved and sent to National Bank of Belize for payment.

Of the approved applications, 23,818 were from laid off persons and 18,757 were self-employed persons. Approvals are almost evenly divided between males and females.

While applicants who use their commercial bank accounts have been receiving their payments in their accounts on the same day or the following day, payments to credit union accounts continue to take a few working days for the credit unions to manually post deposits to their members' accounts. If applicants use the online status checker and get a message that "funds have been successfully deposited to the bank account provided at application," they should first check with their bank or credit union before calling or messaging URP to request an update on their payment.

Applicants can continue to check the status of their application by following this link on the Government of Belize's covid19.bz website: <https://payment.covid19.gov.bz/paymentstatus/>

TopUp Cards

In the case of TopUp prepaid cards, it is taking up to a week to have the TopUp cards prepared, plus an additional three to four working days for the cards to be taken to the location nearest to the applicant for pick up. This is because of the relatively large number of TopUp cards - a total of 12,536 so far - that have been approved.

Delivery of TopUp cards is being done through the Labour Department offices across the country. Approved applicants will be notified when the card is available for pick up at the Labour Department office that is in the district in which you live.

Recipients of TopUp cards are reminded that they will need to present a valid identification card in order to collect their TopUp card. They will also need to use the same telephone number they provided on their application to send a text to Heritage Bank in order to receive their PIN to activate their card.

Recipients are expected to follow the protocols for physical distancing and to wear their masks when they go to pick up their cards in order to protect themselves and the staff of the Labour Department.

Payments Rejected by Financial Institutions

A total of 1,817 payments have been rejected by financial institutions because of errors with applicants' account information. Of these, 1,060 remain to be corrected. Applicants who see a status message indicating that their deposit was rejected are reminded to follow the process for correcting their banking information so that payments can be successfully processed. Please ask your bank **"how to set out the bank account number, including any transit codes that may be needed in order to receive electronic payments."**

When you send in corrected banking information, please remember to include, in addition to the bank account number, your name and Social Security number to ensure you can be properly identified. Applicants are advised to use bank and credit union accounts in their own name and to avoid using accounts in the name of other persons.

Excluded Applications

As of October 8th, 14,862 applications are on a list of exclusions. Applicants are reminded that they are placed on the excluded list if they fall under at least ONE of the following categories:

1. BOOST recipients;
2. Receive Government or Social Security Pension;
3. Applied as "long term unemployed" in Phase 1; that category is not available in phase 2;
4. Are below the age of 18;
5. Appear in the Social Security Board database of deceased persons; or
6. Have identified an employer that says the applicant did not work at their business establishment and follow up verification does not adequately clarify the situation.

Applicants are also reminded that if they check their status and see that they have been excluded for the reasons stated above and feel that this is an error, they may provide additional information by sending an email to unemployment@covid19.bz so that their application can be reviewed.

Ends