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Note: Abbreviation for Northeast Iowa Community College is **NICC**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Helpline expanded to provide guidance for ALL businesses applying for funding assistance during the COVID-19 emergency.

Business owners may call (563) 588-3350 between 8:30 a.m. – 4 p.m., Monday through Friday, or email at sbhelpline@nicc.edu

DUBUQUE—A joint partnership established between Northeast Iowa Community College, Greater Dubuque Development Corporation (GDDC), The Small Business Development Center (SBDC) and the East Central Iowa Intergovernmental Association has expanded to help business owners, nonprofits and self-proprietors to navigate the application process for federal, state and local funding.

“It makes no difference whether you employ 500 or if you are self-employed, the COVID-19 Business Helpline is here to help. This free service is designed to do what we can to make sure that every employer in our market knows of every local, state and federal program that is available to help them work through these challenging times, said Rick Dickinson, President and CEO of Greater Dubuque Development Corporation.

Trained experts from the organizations will help guide businesses, nonprofit leaders and self-proprietors seeking assistance through the programs including the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, passed by Congress on March 27, 2020, which is intended to assist business owners with their needs during the COVID-19 emergency. Many new resources are now available for ALL businesses with less than 500 employees, including the following:

- Payment Protection Program (PPP) Loans that will provide cash-flow assistance through 100 percent federally-guaranteed loans to employers who maintain their payroll during this emergency.

- Small Business Debt Relief Program that provides immediate relief to small businesses with non-disaster Small Business Administration (SBA) loans; in particular 7(a), 504, and microloans.
- Economic Injury Disaster Loans & Emergency Economic Injury Grants (EIDL). These grants provide an emergency advance of up to \$10,000 to small businesses and private non-profits harmed by COVID-19 within three days of applying for an SBA Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL).
- Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA), which is legislation that requires certain employers to provide their employees with paid sick leave or expanded family and medical leave for specified reasons related to COVID-19.

Since launching the Business Helpline on March 25, experts with the Business Helpline assisted 185 businesses in navigating the application process, answering questions and guiding them to programs relevant to their business.

Kevin Dragotto, TFM Co, said, “With all of the changes and uncertainty with the passage of the new stimulus bills by Congress, the Greater Dubuque/SBDC helpline has been an absolute lifesaver. Help line counselors, GDDC and the entire staff have played a huge part in helping us to understand the new available benefits and find the right fit for our company and our employees.”

In addition to these newly-approved federal programs, the Business Helpline is still available to assist and guide businesses on state initiatives including the Targeted Small Business Sole Operator Fund and Tax Relief program through Iowa Economic Development Authority.

“The Northeast Iowa Community College staff has been instrumental in the implementation of this helpline in order to assist our community. The Helpline is ensuring ALL businesses have guidance and assistance in understanding the financial resources they need to help them during this difficult time,” said Wendy Mihm-Herold, NICC Vice President of Business and Community Solutions.

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