



# BELIZE PRESS OFFICE

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## PRESS RELEASE

### Update on Unemployment Relief Program

*Belmopan. September 28, 2020. 1:00 p.m.*

The total number of applications received under Phase 2 of the COVID-19 Unemployment Relief Program as of this morning, September 28, is 64,252. Of these, 30,544 applications have been approved, all of which have been sent to the National Bank of Belize for payment.

Total applications received	64,252
Number on Excluded list	13,019
Applicants requested to make corrections	3,447
Applications remaining to be reviewed	17,243
Total approvals so far	30,544

Applicants can check the status of their application using the following link on the Government of Belize's covid19.bz website: <https://payment.covid19.gov.bz/paymentstatus/>. To seek information and clarification on their applications, applicants can also send an email to [unemployment@covid19.bz](mailto:unemployment@covid19.bz).

### Rejected payments

In Phase 2, the level of rejected payments continues to be significantly lower than in Phase 1 with a total of 973 payments rejected so far. Of these, 499 applicants have provided corrected banking information and have been successfully paid.

Applicants who have received a text message indicating that their deposit was rejected are reminded to follow through on the process for correcting their banking information so that payments can be successfully processed. Please

ask your bank **how to set out your bank account number, including any transit codes that may be needed, in order to receive electronic payments.**

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. When corrected banking information is submitted, please remember to include, in addition to the bank account number, your name and social security number to ensure you can be properly identified.

### **Processing of Payments by National Bank of Belize**

The National Bank sends through electronic payments to approved applicants' accounts on the same day that payment instructions are received. Applicants who use their commercial bank accounts will normally see payments in their accounts on the same day. Payments to credit union accounts are also sent on the same day, but it normally takes a few working days for the credit unions to manually post deposits to their members' accounts.

In the case of TopUp prepaid cards, it takes several working days to prepare the TopUp cards, and an additional three to four days for the card to be taken to the location nearest to the applicant for pick up. Persons who received Unemployment Relief payments via TopUp cards in Phase 1 are reminded that, if they are approved again in Phase 2, the same TopUp card can be reused. Applicants are advised to hold on to their cards. When requesting a TopUp Card, please do not select "direct deposit" as your method of payment. Select ONLY "TopUp Card" as your method of payment.

### **Delivery of TopUp Cards**

Delivery of Phase 2 TopUp cards is being done through the Labour Department offices across the country. Approved applicants will be notified when the card has been prepared and 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 TopUp card.

### **Excluded Applications**

As of today, 13,019 applications are on a list of exclusions. These are applications from persons who fall under 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 as 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 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](mailto:unemployment@covid19.bz) so that their application can be reviewed. Even as additional applicants have been automatically added to the excluded list, hundreds have been removed once the information is provided.

### **Period covered by Phase 2**

Phase 2 of Unemployment Relief was intended to cover the three-month period August to October. All efforts are being made to ensure that all six payments are processed for all approved applicants by the end October. For those who are being approved later in Phase 2, there will be some acceleration of payments as we come to the end of Phase 2, similar to what took place at the end of Phase 1.

### **Fake COVID-19 Messages**

The public is advised that there are text messages coming from an unknown source informing person that funds have been deposited into their bank accounts. In the instances where this has been brought to our attention, these persons have not applied for Unemployment Relief, but leave their homes to go to Government Offices to follow up on what appears to be unsolicited offers of money. These messages are not coming from the Government of Belize's Unemployment Relief Program (URP) and, therefore, should be disregarded.

**Ends**