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Serving Essex, Gloucester, Manchester-by-the-Sea, and Rockport

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Cape Ann Businesses Set for Focused, Grant-Funded Support This Summer

(July 1, 2021)—A grant-funded collaborative will drive a powerful pilot program to promote and showcase the rich mix of businesses based in Essex, Rockport, Manchester-by-the-Sea, and Gloucester this summer.

Designed to give all businesses on Cape Ann a boost coming out of the pandemic, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Regional Pilot Program grant was awarded in April to the four municipalities of Cape Ann and will be administered by the Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce. The cooperative program blends digital marketing, training, and consumer promotion tools and leverages local expertise to give Cape Ann businesses access to what they need to come back strong.

The \$180,000 grant funds three major program components—a dynamic online directory of Cape Ann businesses, training resources that connect individual businesses with relevant expertise and services, and a marketing campaign to drive local consumer engagement. The pilot program, which organizers hope will become a year-round resource, is being managed by a committee of representatives from all four Cape Ann municipalities and the Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce.

To market the program, the committee tapped a unique union of local expertise representing the best of Cape Ann. For local media, the *Manchester Cricket*, the *Gloucester Daily Times*, and The Bridge Cape Ann will work together, covering 100 percent of Cape Ann households with online traffic, print and social media. Gloucester-based Armstrong Brand Consulting will develop the campaign concept. Addison Choate Inn in Rockport will produce videos and blog content.

Together, the team will create a four-month promotion engine for compelling, sharable content that can be pushed through social media, traditional news, email, and online targeting to support local business.

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Organizers will introduce the program to the Cape Ann business community first, to present the concept and let them know what's coming. Two important aspects of business support will include a small outreach team, who will visit businesses in person to collect and update information for the online directory. This team will work closely to coordinate business outreach with the community business liaisons. And while all businesses are eligible to participate, they can also opt-out. The second critical element focuses on business training and support for a wide variety of business needs. To identify and meet these needs the committee has developed a simple survey and is counting on businesses to let them know how the grant can provide the most support. All information regarding the grant, and business support, can be found at www.capeannchamber.com/regional-pilot-grant.

Then, starting in July, the integrated consumer programming will kick off and continue through September 2021. The professionally-produced video on Cape Ann featuring standalone "chapters" on each community—Essex, Rockport, Gloucester and Manchester—will be launched and promoted. Weekly programming will continue throughout the summer, and will include advertising, live video streaming on Facebook and Instagram with The Bridge Cape Ann and The Cricket, and inclusive social media campaigns designed to tag, share and follow.

All businesses are encouraged to participate. They do not need to be a member of the Chamber, an association, or organization. It's open to all, and each element of the project is intended to ensure that Cape Ann businesses, especially those on Main Street, downtown and cultural district areas have the tools and the support they need to make a strong recovery from the severe economic impacts of the pandemic.

For information on the Cape Ann Regional Grant, contact Grant Manager Anne Williams at anne@capeannchamber.com.