

**Hon. Nigel Clarke, DPhil, MP**  
**Minister of Finance and the Public Service**  
**Statement to Parliament**  
**Update on the CARE Programme**  
**May 12, 2020**

The Government's CARE Programme has received over 500,000 applications across the available grant types. Given the disproportionately high number of applications for the Compassionate Grant (over 400,000), processing and payment of these has taken precedence.

Given the unprecedented size and scope of this social intervention programme, and the speed with which it has been designed and implemented and my desire for transparency nonetheless, I wrote to the Auditor General and invited her to independently review the application and disbursement processes of the CARE Programme. The Speaker tabled the first report on the application system last Tuesday. Processing of Compassionate Grant payments only began after this report became available to the administrators of the CARE Programme.

The CARE Programme started making Compassionate Grant transfers to financial institutions during the middle of last week and these have been available to applicants from last Thursday May 7th.

**Compassionate Grants**

Many persons selected to receive their Compassionate Grant from remittance companies.

**Table 1: Compassionate Grant Applications by type of Financial Institution**

Commercial Banks	210,267
Remittance Entities	162,024
Credit Unions/ Building Societies	29,023
<b>Total</b>	<b>401,314</b>

Of this number 378,919 were deemed eligible and 22,395 or 6% have been determined to be ineligible due to the fact that they are on a recent payroll.

So far approximately J\$2.65 billion in Compassionate Grant payments, for some 265,000 applicants, or 70% of those eligible, has been made to the financial institutions selected by applicants. The remainder are being processed including for validation of banking information.

**Collection of Compassionate Grants - Banks**

Applicants who have received a text message confirming eligibility and whose bank accounts have been verified can expect the funds to be sent directly to their bank account.

Over 106,000 applicants who elected to receive Compassionate Grants by way of their bank accounts have had their accounts credited.

Where the bank account information submitted is not valid, which may arise, for example, if the name on the account differs from the name on the application, or if the branch is incorrect, or if the account is dormant, the applicant receives a text message advising of such and they are invited to correct the banking information or to select to receive their grant by remittance. Once the updates are completed these transfers will be made after re-validating and batching.

Last Friday, May 8 we had 77,000 applicants in this category. As at today, May 12 that number was reduced to 44,000, as applicants corrected their banking information.

The numbers of electronic transfers required to be processed by the CARE Programme dwarf any other payment made by the Accountant General's Department (AGD) in the monthly cycle. The next largest would be monthly salary payments where only 60,000 are processed by the AGD. The processing of these payments with 380,000 eligible, has introduced new challenges which the team was worked diligently to resolve.

### **Collection of Compassionate Grants – Remittance Agencies**

Beneficiaries receiving Compassionate Grants through the Remittance Agencies are reminded of the requirements for presentation of a Government of Jamaica issued picture ID, TRN and Application Reference Number to be able to collect grants.

Where an applicant does not have a government-issued ID but is on the printed voter's list he/she can contact the Electoral Office of Jamaica, which will open their offices from Wednesday, May 13.

I am appealing to beneficiaries to please follow the guidelines of remittance companies who have indicated an orderly procedure for collection.

Persons receiving text messages advising them of dates to collect are of the mistaken belief that the funds will not be available after those dates. Please allow me to clarify that where you have received a text message that you are eligible for a Compassionate Grant and that grant is ready, please know that the Compassionate Grant will be with that financial institution for you until 30<sup>th</sup> of June. So there is no need to rush. You have until 30<sup>th</sup> of June to collect your Compassionate Grant.

We have to be accountable for these funds and so where you have not collected your Compassionate Grant from the remittance company by the 30<sup>th</sup> of June, the funds will be returned to the Consolidated Fund.

Arrangements are being made to accommodate CARE Applicants in Kingston on the grounds of the National Stadium and inside the National Arena. Today, that made collection much smoother.

Crowding at remittance companies risks your health and the health of your family. There is no need to crowd as there is ample time to collect.

The Government is exploring mechanisms for the third party collection of Compassionate Grants for persons over 65-years old.

### **SET Cash**

SET Cash Payments will begin shortly. The Auditor General is currently reviewing the list of payees to confirm compliance with the defined eligibility rules and the expectation is that payments will be authorized this week.

The SET Cash Grant is for persons who were terminated after March 10 and whose income is J\$1.5 million or less. Processing is automatic and computer generated. I have invited the Auditor General to audit the implementation of the programme, in accordance with the established rules, and so the implementation team understands that the rules must be followed.

I would like to take this opportunity to remind employers to upload P45 forms for their employees.

However, if employers put the termination date prior to March 10 the system will deem the application ineligible.

If the Gross Income exceeds J\$1.5 million the system will also deem the application ineligible.

This J\$1.5 million threshold exists as the vast majority of affected employees in the tourism and other industries have income at or below this threshold and we are targeting the intervention to the majority who are most vulnerable.

Please note that gross income is calculated before gratuities. If the employer adds this to gross income and the amount exceeds the threshold the application will be deemed ineligible. There is a separate space on the P45 to record gratuities.

Persons who earn above J\$1.5 million and who are on the tax register, and who were laid off may have an opportunity for a unemployment refund as they would have paid taxes in January, February and maybe March with the expectation of earning above the income tax threshold this year but at the time of being laid off would not have passed the threshold. Please contact Tax Administration Jamaica.

More information will be forthcoming on this option.

Furthermore, the system will first process those laid off in March prior to processing those laid off in April. Payments that are currently being done are for persons laid off between March 10 and March 31, 2020 and then another round of payments will be for persons laid off between April 1 and April 30, 2020.

Finally, applicants whose employers have submitted BEST Cash application on their behalf are not eligible for SET Cash Grants as the Government will be transferring cash to these employers which they will remit to their employees.

### **BEST Cash**

Eligibility verification for BEST Cash applications for the period March 10 – 31, 2020 will commence shortly, with payments to follow thereafter.

### **Small Business Grants**

Small Business Grants are for small businesses that file income tax returns and payroll returns indicating that the small business has at least one employee. Individual owners who have no other employee other than themselves can make a payroll return for themselves.

The size of the Small Business Grant, at J\$100,000.00, is a large sum, and was calibrated to be for businesses that employ other Jamaicans.

The verification of Small Business Grant applications is underway and after the review of the Auditor General, payments will be processed. We expect payments of Small Business Grants to be made in May.

All small businesses, whether or not they employ others are eligible for the Small Business Tax credit of J\$375,000.00 introduced for the first time this year. Small Businesses who file taxes will not pay income taxes on their first J\$1.5 million of net profit.

### **General Grant**

Eligibility verification activity for General Grant applicants is now in progress through the collection of Registrants data from the Municipality, Early Childhood, Ministry of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sports and Transport Authority Government bodies.

In some cases, the Auditor General's Department is conducting a review / audit of data before payments are actioned so this may lead to some delays. It is expected that the verification activities will be completed in May and eligible applicants will be notified accordingly.

Verification will include matching applicants against approved lists received from the appropriate authorities as well as verification of bank account information.

**Table 2: General Grant Applications by Occupation**

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Number of Applications</b>
PPV Licence (Vehicle Owner)	5,992
Taxi Operator	5,132
Market Vendor	4,593
Early Childhood Educator	3,510
Bar Operator	3,228
Contract Carriage	3,207
Craft Vendor	1,598
Hairdresser	1,565
Cosmetologist	1,544
Barber	963
Bus Operator	851
Beauty Therapist	657
Entertainment - Practitioner	576
Craft Producer	281
Independent Tour Guide	218
Golf Caddy	195
Raft Captain	173
Airport – Red Cap	120
Club Licence Owner	117
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>34,520</b>

**Call Center & Customer Support**

The Programme continues to benefit from the strong Customer support response being provided by Sutherland Global with call volumes exceeding three thousand (3,000) calls per day. Applicants can also email at [info@wecare.gov.jm](mailto:info@wecare.gov.jm).

**Concluding Remarks**

This CARE Programme is a collaboration of many government ministries, departments and agencies working together towards the common objective of providing some support to individuals and businesses which have been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

I would like to thank all involved for their dedication to the objectives of the CARE Programme.

**APPENDIX**

**CARE Programme applications by Parish**

<b>Parish</b>	<b>BEST Cash</b>	<b>Compassionate Grant</b>	<b>General Grant</b>	<b>SET Cash</b>	<b>Small Business Grant</b>	<b>Grand Total</b>
Clarendon	3	35,800	3,030	2,193	278	<b>41,304</b>
Hanover	7	9,177	1,200	4,925	101	<b>15,410</b>
Kingston	16	58,189	3,102	7,198	516	<b>69,021</b>
Manchester	3	26,147	2,568	1,939	303	<b>30,960</b>
Portland	7	14,153	1,021	1,073	150	<b>16,404</b>
St. Andrew	23	35,787	2,135	3,401	563	<b>41,909</b>
St. Ann	35	29,644	3,706	9,803	278	<b>43,466</b>
St. Catherine	6	72,981	5,975	8,300	559	<b>87,821</b>
St. Elizabeth	6	22,983	2,068	1,638	283	<b>26,978</b>
St. James	52	21,258	4,057	13,538	428	<b>39,333</b>
St. Mary	13	22,980	1,450	3,217	151	<b>27,811</b>
St. Thomas	6	15,740	1,056	959	143	<b>17,904</b>
Trelawny	12	10,791	1,106	4,681	136	<b>16,726</b>
Westmoreland	35	25,684	2,046	6,815	254	<b>34,834</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>401,314</b>	<b>34,520</b>	<b>69,680</b>	<b>4,143</b>	<b>509,881</b>