
US caterers and companies seeking relief funding

By **Rick Lundstrom** on April, 22 2020 | Catering



APEX/IFSA CEO Joe Leader

The United States Department of Treasury is receiving applications from airline caterers, aircraft cleaners and related companies in civil aviation for a portion of the US\$3 billion allocated through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act.

Meanwhile in Europe, potential aid for related industries must move through a network flowing from Brussels to the member states. The resulting delays and uncertainty prompted an April 14 letter from the [International Flight Services Association](#) (IFSA) and the [Airline Passenger Experience Association](#) (APEX) to the European Commissioner for Transport Adina-Ioana Vălean.

“We would like to hereby request your attention to the aviation sector and request that relief be provided specifically for airline suppliers and vendors which are a fully integrated part of the airline industry,” wrote Joe Leader Chief Executive Officer of APEX/IFSA.

Without the aid, the letter goes on to say, that when the industry recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic, there may not be enough important suppliers available to support airline operations.

“Airlines are not built for this type of shutdown in the face of COVID-19,” Leader tells PAX

International. “And they are going to need support from their nations and the European Union and it needs to be done in as evenhanded a manner as possible, otherwise it will create some real winners and losers in the process.”

Not only does the structure of the EU leave much to the discretion of the member states for distribution, Leader says that airlines owned partially or entirely by governments “creates a dynamic that is not equitable, if there is not a more coordinated approach across the European Union.”

Stateside, Lauren Costello, Executive Director of IFSA, confirmed association members have been applying to the Treasury Department for a portion of the \$3 billion available through CARES. She says some of the applications have been approved but funding has not yet reached the businesses. Both domestic caterers and foreign caterers with US subsidiaries are able to request the funds to help operations and retain workers through the crisis.

Leader says that there is enough flexibility within the language of the CARES Act to prompt suppliers that work with airlines and caterers to apply for the federal aid. He says he hopes companies in the US take advantage of the opportunity.

“We consider this a really big win for our efforts because, as you know, in the original package there was nothing allocated for suppliers and having \$3 billion makes all the difference in the world to make it through this crisis.”

The two groups are also continuing plans to host the annual APEX/IFSA Expo October 20 to 22 in San Diego. Leader said the group is fortunate to have decided to schedule the Expo in the last half of October. He says the event will probably occur around the same time as the Annual General Meeting of the International Air Transport Association in Amsterdam, which was originally scheduled for this summer, before it was postponed.

“We believe that everything will not only be on solid ground for EXPO, but also an opportunity for airlines to show the world we can come back together stronger than ever after COVID-19,” Leader says.