



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Countywide partnership launches grant program for businesses impacted by COVID-19

CARES Act funds pooled by County and cities to boost economic recovery

Applications are being accepted beginning this week for a competitive grant program – called Whatcom ReStart – designed to support businesses and non-profits throughout Whatcom County that have been affected by COVID-19.

Whatcom ReStart will issue up to \$2.6 million in general grants and another \$800,000 for licensed childcare operators. For-profit and non-profit businesses and organizations impacted by COVID-19 are eligible to apply for general grants of up to \$15,000 each. There is no cap on grants to support childcare.

Whatcom County and the cities of Bellingham, Lynden, Ferndale, Sumas, Everson, Nooksack and Blaine have teamed up and combined their federal CARES Act allocations to offer this competitive grant program to assist businesses that have experienced revenue losses and expenses due to COVID-19-related closures or impacts.

The purpose of this program is to collaborate in support of local businesses and drive economic recovery. More information, including eligibility guidelines, criteria, and applications can be found on the [Whatcom ReStart page](#) of the Port of Bellingham website. Grant applications will be accepted July 16 through July 31, 2020. Funding decisions are anticipated in August and funding is expected to be disbursed in September.

“By joining forces, combining County and cities’ CARES Act funding, we are able to increase the reach and efficiencies of our response effort,” said Whatcom County Executive Satpal Sidhu. “I am very pleased with the level of cooperation and willingness of each jurisdiction to work collaboratively for the benefit of all our communities.”

The grant program, funded by \$2.6 million of federal CARES Act allocations, provides up to \$15,000 to businesses employing up to 25 people prior to the pandemic to cover expenses related to losses caused by COVID-19 related closures. A portion of these funds are set aside for ground-floor, front-facing businesses in the City Center and Fairhaven Districts of Bellingham. A separate pool of \$800,000 is dedicated to grants for licensed childcare businesses.

“Economic recovery is a priority throughout our COVID-19 response,” Bellingham Mayor Seth Fleetwood said. “These grants will help businesses stabilize as they work to recover from the economic impacts of the pandemic. We are working together to get more of our community members back to work and to revive local businesses affected by COVID-19 restrictions, so we can see our local economies thriving once again.”

“Many businesses are really struggling today, particularly our childcare industry, and need quick access to this aid,” said Ferndale Mayor Greg Hansen. “All partners recognized the time-sensitive nature of the need and agreed that the grant application and administration should be as simple, inclusive and streamlined as possible.”

“Whatcom ReStart is designed to give a meaningful boost to local small businesses and their employees. We want these grants to have the greatest possible impact on our economy and community to foster resilience as we move forward. Both the eligibility requirements and the application scoring guidelines were developed with this in mind,” said Don Goldberg, Director of Regional Economic Partnership, which is playing a key role in the administration of the grant program.

In addition to these business and economic response efforts, CARES Act funding has also been dedicated to support the public emergency response, food and housing security, and services and facilities to those living unsheltered.

For more information about Whatcom ReStart, visit www.portofbellingham.com/933/Whatcom-Restart.

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