



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, September 25, 2020

### **Multiple Whatcom County public agencies pool additional resources to help businesses and nonprofits impacted by COVID-19**

*Whatcom County agencies pool additional CARES Act dollars to provide relief to local economy*

Starting September 25, 2020 at 8:00am applications are being accepted for another competitive grant program – called Working Washington Small Business Emergency Grants (WWSBEG) 2.0 – which are designed to continue to provide financial support and relief to small businesses and economic development nonprofits throughout Whatcom County.

Through the Port of Bellingham, Whatcom County’s associate development organization, WWSBEG 2.0 will issue approximately \$200,000 in general grants to small businesses, who are eligible to apply to grants of up to \$10,000 each. This round of funding is targeted to reach those businesses who have not applied for previous local grant programs.

In addition to small business grants and in recognition the importance of nonprofits to our economy and community, the Port of Bellingham, Whatcom County, and the City of Bellingham intend to pool an additional \$270,000 in grants to nonprofits that focus on economic development within Whatcom County.

“We recognize the vital work of nonprofits which provide support to our businesses and local economy in many ways. These grants are intended to reduce the financial pressure that has so affected them during COVID-19 so they can again focus on their primary objectives,” said County Executive Satpal Sidhu. “I am very pleased that we are able to partner again with the Port and City of Bellingham to effectively and collaboratively implement this grant program.”

The purpose of this program is to collaborate in support of local businesses and nonprofits who are continuing to experience economic injury due to COVID-19 and drive economic recovery. More information, including eligibility guidelines, criteria, and applications can be found on the [WWSBEG 2.0 webpage](#) on the Port of Bellingham website. Grant applications will be accepted September 25 through October 1, 2020. Funding decisions are anticipated in the first week of October and funding is expected to be disbursed by November.

“We know small businesses throughout Whatcom County have suffered greatly due to the global pandemic” said Port Executive Director Rob Fix. “The Port and the Regional Economic Partnership are working hard to identify state and federal relief packages and bring this funding into

our community as quickly as possible to keep Whatcom County strong as we navigate this public health crisis.”

Gina Stark, Economic Development Project Manager for the Regional Economic Partnership, has been responsible for managing multiple small business grant programs since the COVID-19 outbreak in March 2020. Stark noted that the emergency and relief “grant programs are especially important to our small businesses who may not want or be able to take on additional debt or loans.” Furthermore, she stated that “small businesses are essential to the vitality of Whatcom County’s economic ecosystem” and “the high number of applications received for each grant program issued to date really illustrates the struggle our businesses are experiencing and severity of the situation.”

Suzanne Smith, owner of Betty Be Good in Birch Bay and Lynden, reported that the “grant award means so much to us as we are recovering from the losses of the COVID closure. With help from the Port of Bellingham it means we can invest in our web platform and social media to help keep the business strong in the event of future closures or economic downturn.”

In addition to these business and economic COVID-19 response efforts, the Port of Bellingham, the City of Bellingham, and Whatcom County continue to work together to make Whatcom County a great place to live, work, and do business.

For more information about WWSBEG 2.0, visit:  
<https://www.portofbellingham.com/944/WWSBEG-20>

**Media Contacts:**

Jennifer Noveck, Ph.D.  
Research and Communications Manager  
Regional Economic Partnership, Port of Bellingham  
[jennifern@portofbellingham.com](mailto:jennifern@portofbellingham.com) or (360) 739-5103

Mike Hogan  
Public Affairs Administrator  
Port of Bellingham  
[mikeh@portofbellingham.com](mailto:mikeh@portofbellingham.com) or (360) 676-2500

Janice Keller  
Communications Director  
City of Bellingham  
[jkeller@cob.org](mailto:jkeller@cob.org) or (360) 778-8100

Jed Holmes  
Community Outreach Facilitator  
Whatcom County  
[jholmes@co.whatcom.wa.us](mailto:jholmes@co.whatcom.wa.us) (360) 778-5209