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Monroe, Washington Economic Development Newsletter for the week of June 15-19, 2020

Monroe **Business**

SPECIAL COVID-19 UPDATE

Safe Start Washington

Re-opening Our Economy

ARE WE OUT OF THE WOODS...?

On June 5, the Washington State Sec'y of Health approved the Snohomish County application to move to Phase 2. That allowed many local businesses in Monroe to open for the first time since the shutdown began March 23rd. Although a welcome relief, opening required businesses to meet a variety of Dept. of Health and Labor & Industries guidelines in order to do so. That included specific signage directed at customers on safety precautions being taken to protect them, providing masks and necessary sanitation for workers who engage the public and capacity restrictions limiting the number of people inside a business to allow for social distancing. The ability to move forward into Phase 3 and continue the re-opening further rests on businesses meeting these requirements and their customers following health guidelines to keep the rates of infection low.

As some states resume normal economic and social activity, the Center for Disease Control last week reported sharp increases in the rates of infection in AZ, FL, GA and TX, states which opened rapidly and relaxed most restrictions. Now local municipalities in those states are backtracking. Businesses there are voluntarily shutting out of fear for their workers' safety. Laws requiring masks, not required by state law, are being implemented by local jurisdictions where rates of infection are rising rapidly. What does all this mean for us here in Monroe?

The first opportunity we will have to move to Phase 3 June 25th, 3 weeks after moving to Phase 2. But we are already seeing a rise in cases. As of June 16th, 2020, there were [3,187 cases with 159 deaths in Snohomish County](#). [Ninety-four of those cases and 15 of the deaths were right here in Monroe](#). So the answer is no, we are not out of the woods yet. If we want to continue opening up, we will need to keep the infection rate low and adhere to the guidelines provided by the health authorities. So, put on your mask, wash your hands and stay six feet apart. **Stay Safe Monroe!**

Monroe Offers Small Business Relief Grant

The City of Monroe is announcing the establishment of the Monroe CARES grant program to disburse \$110,000 in CARES Act funds to businesses and non-profits affected by the COVID-19 crisis. The program will disburse funds through two grant programs: **The Small Business Relief Grant** will make available \$60,000 for Monroe businesses, and the **Community Relief Grant** will make available an additional \$50,000 for non-profit organizations that serve Monroe's most vulnerable residents.

The **Small Business Relief Grant** will give priority to businesses that have not been eligible for Federal, State and County grant funds. Grant funds must cover costs associated with the impact of COVID-19, such as rent, utilities, payroll and business licensing fees. "Our highest priority right now is getting our entire community back up and running as quickly as possible and as safely as possible," said Mayor Geoffrey Thomas. "Providing support to our local businesses and non-profit agencies, ensuring the availability of products and services for all Monroe residents, will help us get there."

Please visit the **Small Business Relief Grant [webpage](#)** for more information on eligibility and to begin the application process. **[Applications are due by 4:30 p.m. on Tuesday, June 30.](#)**

The **Community Relief Grant** will assist non-profit organizations meet the increased demands of providing basic services to Monroe's most vulnerable residents during this critical time. Details of the Community Relief Grants will be announced in early July.

WHEN WILL MONROE MOVE TO PHASE 3?

The earliest Snohomish County will be able to move into Phase 3 is June 26th, 3 weeks from the Phase 2 approval. Although cases of COVID-19 infection are expected to rise as the economy opens back up they are not expected to rise to a level that would prevent us from moving into Phase 3. The main numbers to watch will be the number of people testing positive and the hospital capacity. If those two numbers start moving away from the goal between now and the 25th, the Sec'y of Health may consider alternatives to a full Phase 3 entry. You can track statistics for Snohomish County here => [Risk Assessment Dashboard](#)



SNOHOMISH COUNTY RISK ASSESMENT AS OF JUNE 16TH, 2020

	VALUE	GOAL	MEETING GOAL?
Rate per 100K of newly diagnosed cases during the prior two weeks	20.4	<25	Yes
Number of individuals tested for each new case during the prior week	32.4	>50	No
Percent of Individuals testing positive for COVID-19 during the past week	3.2%	<2%	No
percent of Licensed beds occupied by patients	76.7%	<80%	Yes
Percent of licensed beds occupied by COVID-19 patients	3.7%	<10%	Yes

The key to keeping the infection rate down is adherence to the health and safety guidelines provided by the Washington State Dept. of Health and Washington Dept. of Labor & Industries. Those guidelines for specific industries can be found here => [Industry Specific Guidelines for Re-opening](#).

More information about Safe Start Washington here => [Safe Start WA](#)

If you have a specific questions about how to comply with these safety practices you can submit your question to the state's Business Response Center at [General Business and Return to Work Inquiries](#).

SAFE START WASHINGTON Re-Opening Toolkit



As businesses begin to re-open, they must enact the necessary precautions to protect their employees and the public from infection. To assist businesses with adhering to these guidelines, the City of Everett has created the Getting to Safe re-opening guide. This handy guidebook has been endorsed by the Snohomish County Board of Health as well as a number of cities in Snohomish County, including Monroe. By having a standard applied to businesses throughout Snohomish County, the public can be assured that consistent guidelines are implemented no matter where they go in the county. Please take a minute to download and read the guide. You can get a copy here => [Getting to Safe Guide for Businesses](#)

One of the guidelines that will help us keep moving toward a more open economy is wearing face coverings. Whether you're a worker who engages the public (required to wear) or a resident visiting your local grocery store (highly recommended to wear) wearing a face covering helps reduce the spread of infection. Businesses are required to post signage recommending the public wear a face covering when inside. You can get and print signage that you can post at the entrance to your business here => [Store Signage to Please Wear a Mask](#). Remember, although you are not required to enforce the wearing of face masks by customers (You can require them in your place of business if you so wish.) businesses ARE REQUIRED to provide face masks to employees that engage the public. For more information on face coverings, such as the various types, how to make them and best practices for wearing and cleaning your mask, you can go to the => [CDC's page on face coverings](#).

Getting our economy back on its feet and moving forward will require that everyone do their part.

KEEP CALM, WEAR A FACE MASK, WASH YOUR HANDS and CARRY ON!

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE UPDATE

SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION UPDATE

New Rules for Loan Forgiveness on PPP

On Wednesday, June 17th, the Federal Government released a new and simplified forgiveness application for small business owners who received a loan through the government-backed Paycheck Protection Program.

In a joint news release, the Small Business Administration and the Treasury Department announced they had posted a "borrower-friendly" five-page forgiveness application, which can be found [here](#).

The agencies also released a three-page [EZ Version](#), which applies to borrowers who are self-employed or have no employees; did not reduce the salaries or wages of their employees more than 25 percent and did not reduce the number of hours of their employees; or experienced reductions in business activity as a result of the coronavirus pandemic and did not reduce the salaries or wages of their employees by more than 25 percent.

A concern among small business owners who tapped the Paycheck Protection Program was that guidelines on how to spend the money were too strict and could potentially leave them on the hook for repaying the money.

The rules on how small business owners need to spend the money in order for it to be forgiven have been eased. Loan recipients are now only required to spend 60 percent of the aid on maintaining payroll, rather than the previous 75 percent rule. The money that can be spent on operating costs like rent and utilities increased to 40 percent from 25 percent.

The Paycheck Protection Program Flexibility Act extended the timeline for businesses to spend the money from two months to 24 weeks. However, if businesses choose to get the loan forgiven after eight weeks, they are still able to do so.

Another key aspect of the PPFA is that it gives businesses until Dec. 31 to rehire workers in order for their salaries to count toward forgiveness; previously, they had until June 30 -- a problem for some in states where businesses were slower to open their economies. The employee salary eligible for forgiveness is still capped at \$100,000.

The law also eased rehiring requirements for businesses. For instance, if a small business owner is unable to rehire an individual who was an employee on or before Feb. 15, or is able to prove they were unable to hire a similarly qualified candidate, their loan may still be eligible for forgiveness.

If the loans are not forgiven, a business will have five years at 1 percent interest to repay the loan, rather than the initial two years.

The PPP is approaching its [final application deadline of June 30](#). The PPP was created to offer low-interest loans to small businesses and forgive them if the funds were used to keep workers on the payroll.

PPP Loans are still available. Contact your local banker if you would like to learn more, or Katie Woods at Coastal Community Bank at [<kwoods@coastalbank.com>](mailto:kwoods@coastalbank.com) .

WA State Dept of Commerce seeks applications for Child Care Partnership Grants

Funding available to support local partnerships that increase child care capacity in Washington communities.

The Washington State Department of Commerce is soliciting applications to support local partnerships to develop action plans that stabilize and expand child care capacity in communities. The following organizations are eligible to apply on behalf of a collaborative group:

- Washington nonprofit organizations
- Federally recognized tribes
- Local government entities, including school and educational service districts.

Applicants and populations served must be located in the state of Washington.

We anticipate awards of up to \$100,000. This is the first of two application rounds and all projects must be completed by June 30, 2021.

Examples of eligible activities to be funded could include but are not limited to:

- Community-wide plans, needs assessments, and feasibility studies
- Establishing partnership agreements and cross-system collaborations
- Implementation plans and conducting pilots

Schedule for Funding Round 1

- [Applications Due 5p.m.: July 10](#)
- Successful Applicants Announced: July 24
- Performance Period: Aug.14, 2020- June 30 2021

Anticipated Schedule for Funding Round 2

- Notice of Funding Availability Release: Aug. 17
- Applications Due 5 p.m.: Sept. 11
- Performance Period: Oct. 9, 2020 - June 30, 2021

For more information and to apply click => [here](#) or contact Mary Baldwin at the Washington State Department of Commerce mary.baldwin@commerce.wa.gov

Snohomish County Small Business Relief, Recovery and Resiliency Grants - UPDATE

NEW GRANTS AVAILABLE

Snohomish County has announced a second round for the R3 grant. The first round closed on June 4, 2020; award announcements are expected on June 24, 2020. Those applicants from the first round that are not selected for award will automatically be considered in this second round of funding though criteria have changed.

The Small Business Relief, Recovery, and Resiliency (R3) Grant Program is a key part of the relief and recovery actions Snohomish County is taking to help businesses impacted by the pandemic.

For more information and to begin the application process, go to => [Snohomish County Small Business Relief, Recovery, and Resiliency \(R3\) Grant Program](#)

NEW R3 GRANT SCHEDULE

6/12/2020 Application Opens

6/25/2020 Public Question Period Closes

6/26/2020 Application Closes @ 5:00 PM

7/13/2020 Grant Awards Announced

7/27/2020 All Awarded Grantee Agreements Executed

Contact Us >>>

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Frequently Asked Questions

I have a medical issue. Must I wear a facial covering or mask at work?

Workers with [medical issues preventing mask](#) use should provide their employer with a medical professional's accommodation statement that facial covering or masks should not be worn due to their condition.

Can I require my employee to return to work?

No, you cannot **require** an employee to come back to work at this time. Employees who choose to remove themselves from a work site because they do not believe it is safe to work due to the risk of COVID-19 exposure may have access to [certain leave or unemployment benefits](#).

Must I search for work to receive unemployment benefits?

You are typically required to look for work and document your job search to remain eligible for unemployment benefits. This requirement has been suspended until June 28th, at the earliest. As long as the suspension is in effect, you may select "no" on the job search question on your weekly claim. You may wish to revisit the ESD [job search requirements page](#) as the end of the month approaches.

I suspect unemployment fraud. How do I report it?

If you are a victim of unemployment fraud, follow the Employment Security Department's [Unemployment Imposter Fraud checklist](#). Avoid divulging personal information over email or phone to any party claiming to represent ESD. Only file a fraud claim through ESD's secure [fraud report form](#). Victims of unemployment imposter fraud are [not liable to repay benefits](#) issued in their name to a fraudster.

How do I know if I'm properly sanitizing my workplace?

The CDC has published [guidance for cleaning](#) of public spaces, workplaces, business, schools and homes. The resources within that page can help you develop a sanitization plan for your workplace. You may also consult with the Department of Labor & Industries to ensure that your safety plan meets state and sector-specific requirements. Visit the [L&I website](#) to request a consultation.



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