

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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INSLEE ANNOUNCES \$5M IN NEW SMALL BUSINESSES GRANTS TO JUMP START ECONOMY

State Department of Commerce partnering with local economic groups, TRIDEC to award funds

TRI-CITIES, WASH. – Gov. Jay Inslee announced today a new grant program aimed at helping small businesses navigate unexpected financial hardships relating to COVID-19 executive actions. The “Working Washington Small Business Emergency Grant” (WWSBEG) is being offered by the Washington State Department of Commerce and will provide \$5 million of funds to eligible small businesses throughout the state.

According to the Department of Commerce, the grant will provide up to \$10,000 to eligible applicants who meet the following criteria:

- Have been in business for at least one year;
- Employ no more than 10 individuals, part-time or full-time, including the sole proprietor;
- Can show the specific way(s) in which their business has been impacted by one or more executive orders; and,
- Are vital members of their local community.

Additionally, the department added that businesses who apply will be prioritized by, “the severity of the impact the business is facing due to COVID-19, including from being forced to close by the government-mandated closures, social distancing measures or illness. Awards will be approved on a case-by-case basis and are dependent on the availability of funds.”

According to Gov. Jay Inslee, the objective of the program is to support businesses through the crisis and enable them to retain as many employees as possible

“This is a statewide resource that any county can take advantage of,” said **Washington State Department of Commerce Director Lisa Brown**. “We know small businesses have been heavily impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak and we're working to bring relief as quickly as we can.”

Brown also outlined criteria on how funds may be used, including expenses related to consulting, marketing, training, or for operational expenses including rent, supplies/inventory, utility bills, etc. WWSBEG funds may not be used for payroll, capitalized equipment, travel, office equipment, computer software, or to help launch a new business.

To process the significant number of anticipated applications, the Department of Commerce has requested county and local economic development groups process them before submitting to the State for final evaluation. In Benton and Franklin counties, the Tri-City Development Council (TRIDEC) will oversee that application process.

While the Department of Commerce has pledged to distribute funds proportionally throughout Washington state, **TRIDEC President and CEO Karl Dye** stressed urgency.

“Five million dollars isn’t a lot,” said **Dye**. “it’s imperative that Tri-Cities business owners act quickly to maximize the share we receive.”

Applications are currently available on the Department of Commerce’s website and eligible businesses may receive one WWSBEG award during the current budget cycle, which ends on 06/30/2021.

“Include all the details and tell your story,” **Dye** added, referencing the application. “[TRIDEC’s] ready to advocate for your business, and we have the best shot at securing those funds when you’re able to provide a complete and compelling account of the important service your business provides to our community.”

Although WWSBEG funds are limited, Dye also emphasized numerous local, state, and federal programs available to help businesses of all sizes during this unprecedented and uncertain time.

For more information about the WWSBEG or to view a full list of resources for business owners, visit TRIDEC’s website at <http://www.tridec.org/>

To apply for the WWSBEG, visit the Washington State Department of Commerce’s website at <http://startup.choosewashingtonstate.com/covid-grants/>

Established in 1963, TRIDEC is the region’s only organization focused solely on preserving and growing the economic vitality of Benton and Franklin counties.

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