



News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Keeping Washington's economy strong: Newly announced federal grant supports Safe Start projects and partnerships aimed at helping Washington state businesses restart, rebuild and become more resilient

OLYMPIA, WA – As state leaders continue combatting the spread of COVID-19, they are also focused on keeping Washington's economy strong. Small businesses have experienced the adverse impact of COVID-19 in severe and often unequal ways, potentially with serious long-term consequences for Washington state workers, communities and economy. In support of the state's Safe Start efforts, the Washington State Department of Commerce spearheaded a unique collaboration among public, private and philanthropic organizations to help keep small businesses open, protect and create jobs, while also looking ahead to strengthen key sectors in the future.

Thanks to our Safe Start project partners



#SafeStartWA

The projects recently received a [\\$15 million grant](#) from the U.S. Economic Development Administration, one of the largest such grants in the nation.

“COVID has resulted in tremendous uncertainty and anxiety in Washington. People are worried about their businesses and their jobs. We need all

hands on deck to help business owners safely restart, keep Washington workers employed and strengthen our state's economy to be more equitable and more resilient," said Gov. Jay Inslee.

"The magnitude of this economic challenge is extraordinary. The only way we can truly help businesses get back on their feet and regain momentum in our economy is by bringing an extraordinary new level of collaboration with our business and philanthropic partners. This is especially true as we try to address the varied and disproportionate impacts of the pandemic, regionally and in underserved communities," said Commerce Director Lisa Brown. "We have the talent, we have the expertise, we have the funding. These projects are all about connecting those pieces so we can reopen safely today and keep building the equitable, sustainable and innovative economy of the future."

The grant funds will support a number of initiatives ultimately aimed at helping Washington small businesses and strengthening core industry clusters. Some of the projects are new, but several build off existing efforts.

Restart projects include technical assistance for businesses and entrepreneurs in underrepresented and underserved communities as well as a first-of-its-kind early detection COVID-19 modeling project that will help prevent outbreaks so that essential, high-risk businesses such as fisheries, food processors and meat packers can reopen and stay open safely.

Rebuild projects provide businesses an array of training and coaching services to help them retool or rethink their operations.

Commerce partnered with Washington State University's **Small Business Development Center**, the non-profit collaborative **Restart Partners**, the **Association of Washington Business**, Commerce's National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) Manufacturing Extension partner **Impact Washington**, the University of Washington **Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation** (IHME), the state's public-private maritime industry cluster organization **Washington Maritime Blue**, the non-profit community development financial institution **National Development Council** (NDC), and the **Thurston Economic Development Council**.

Under the grant, Commerce and its partners will develop and provide a broad range of support to help small businesses address key areas of need, such as prevention of COVID infection and transmission, connections to financial resources for immediate and future resiliency, and technical assistance to help manufacturers adapt for safe yet efficient operations.

Some programs are already underway while others are still being developed. For more information about the various programs supporting small businesses, visit the Commerce webpage at <http://bit.ly/wa-covid19>.

[View/download quotes from our partners and background](#) on the organizations and their work (pdf)

[View/download our Safe Start Projects Fact Sheet](#) (pdf)

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