

Date: February 26, 2025

To: Satpal Sidhu, Whatcom County Executive

From: Greg Winter, Executive Director, Opportunity Council

Subject: Closeout summary - WA CDBG microenterprise assistance project

In 2020, Opportunity Council partnered with Whatcom County for a Washington Department of Commerce grant to assist home-based, licensed child care providers and small farm businesses in Whatcom County and Skagit County. Due to the relatively large amount of pandemic-related child care business funding that emerged, this project ended up focusing almost exclusively on farm-based businesses. The project aimed to provide operating support grants of up to \$10,000 each to up to 25 microenterprises with an owner whose household income was less than 80 percent of the area median income. Eligible microenterprises have five or fewer employees.

In this project, the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) provided a direct benefit to the microenterprise and the income-qualified household whose member owns the business. WA Commerce and CDBG regulations allow cash grants to the microenterprise for purchase of equipment, supplies, vehicles, technical assistance, payroll, working capital, or any other purpose deemed a priority by the microenterprise.

The project made grants to 21 businesses. Eleven of 21 participants served were from Whatcom County, ten from Skagit County. The project was designed to be similar to a microenterprise program that had recently concluded, based in Skagit County (that served both Skagit and Whatcom counties).

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