



MEMORANDUM

TO: Whatcom County Council

FROM: Satpal Singh Sidhu, County Executive
Tyler Schroder, Deputy Executive

DATE: July 14, 2020

SUBJECT: CARES Act Funding – Update on Coordinated Response to COVID-19
Whatcom County and the Cities of Whatcom County

The purpose of this memo is to update the County Council on the continued coordination between Whatcom County and the cities of Whatcom County in the use of the local CARES Act federal stimulus dollars. In total, our community has been awarded approximately \$16,000,000, with Whatcom County awarded \$12,391,500; the City of Bellingham has been awarded \$2,703,300; and the Small Cities have collectively been awarded a total of \$1,206,120.

Whatcom County, the City of Bellingham, Port of Bellingham and the small cities have been working on developing guidelines and programs to utilize the awarded federal stimulus dollars through the CARES Act. This coordination between the County and the cities is necessary to help to create efficiencies and ensure we are responding to our communities' most urgent needs.

On June 16th the County Council passed the supplemental budget ordinance to accept the CARES Act dollars and provide budget authority on the programs outlined in the June 15th memo from the County Executive to County Council outlining the CARES Act Funding Framework and anticipated program allocations. This work has been accomplished with the help of many, including established workgroups/taskforces, as follows: Business Response Workgroup, Food Security Taskforce, Childcare Taskforce, and a Digital Infrastructure Workgroup. Overall, this has led to the development of plans and programs to focus on the following components for community-wide support;

- **Whatcom Restart – \$3.4 million – Business Grants in Support of Businesses Impacted by COVID**
 - Countywide Partnership, which includes Whatcom County and the cities of Bellingham, Lynden, Ferndale, Sumas, Everson, Nooksack and Blaine.
 - Includes \$8000,000 for childcare operators

- **Housing Assistance Program - - \$700,000 – Housing Assistance for those impacted by COVID**
 - Countywide support to provide stable housing for those at or below 80% average median income
 - Up to \$3,500 per household or equal to no more than two month’s rent/mortgage payment, whichever is less
- **Digital Infrastructure (Schools) - \$500,000 – Equipment and Connectivity Support for School Districts**
 - Working with all Whatcom County School District to reimburse cost of purchasing much needed computer equipment for students.
 - Co-Sponsor a \$1 Million-dollar USDA Distant Learning Grant for teacher’s computer equipment
- **Behavioral Health - \$350,000 to \$600,000 – Support Behavioral Health and Social Service Organizations**
 - Health Department Human Services group is working with organizations to quantify costs to respond to COVID health pre-cautions and telework needs.
 - Increase allocation to up to \$6000,00 due to need for the community organizations. Corresponding reduction from the Homeless allocation since there is additional funding for those purposes.
- **Food Security - \$600,000 – Support Food Distribution Countywide (additional details to follow)**
 - Work with Countywide food banks to help support additional delivery of food
 - Identifying costs for additional food and equipment purchases, including refrigeration needs

The Administration has provided guidance to most, if not all, of the programs listed above. We will continue to engage the Council as details are refined on the Food Security and Behavioral Health programs. The funding contracts will be prepared consistent with purchasing policies; contracts greater than \$40,000 will be submitted to council for approval.

We look forward to continued coordination on these community wide programs provided from the CARES act funds.