

Satpal Sidhu
Whatcom County Executive
215 Grand Avenue
Bellingham, WA 98225

March 19 2020

Re: Community Development Block Grant Economic Opportunity proposal

Dear Mr. Sidhu:

Thanks for agreeing to support this opportunity to secure a \$500,000 Economic Opportunity grant award from the WA Community Development Block Grant program.

Opportunity Council is eager to help implement this CDBG project, and we are pleased that Whatcom County can submit an application that will provide a financial boost to qualified small businesses, specifically, (a) to new and existing home-based child care providers that help to address the child care crisis, and (b) to wholesale farm- and food-based businesses that are ready to expand.

This is a unique opportunity for the County to secure a \$500,000 pass-through grant for microenterprise assistance (MEA) activities. If Whatcom County agrees to be the CDBG Applicant, Opportunity Council (OC) has agreed to implement the project, to be reimbursed by the County with CDBG funds, based on performance.

There are a number of ways that OC can add significant value as a CDBG subrecipient:

- Over many years OC has partnered with Whatcom County as a CDBG subrecipient on important capital and public service programs. OC's capacity to serve as a reliable CDBG subrecipient can minimize the general administrative burden at the County.
- Child care center technical assistance that is ready to be tapped to add value to this project through our Quality Child Care Team.
- The OC's and Chamber of Commerce's proposed Center for Child Care Retention and Expansion (CCCRE) is designed to provide technical assistance and support to home-based child care microenterprises, many of whom will qualify for the proposed CDBG MEA project.
- OC's strong relationships with an array of organizations that can add value to this project with matching dollars and in-kind technical assistance. For example, OC can join with Whatcom County to ask the cities of Bellingham

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and Mount Vernon to pledge some amount of their annual CDBG for MEA activities because some of the microenterprise owners will want to locate in those cities.

I am pleased that Paul Schissler Associates has offered to help the County submit an application for this opportunity. Schissler was one of the architects of a recently completed, and highly successful, CDBG MEA project, and it will be great to have access to Schissler's expertise.

Please let me know how OC can be helpful as the County considers moving forward with this unique opportunity.

With gratitude for everyone's consideration,



Greg Winter
Executive Director