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Snohomish County Accelerates Economic Recovery Efforts for Business and Workforce

SNOHOMISH COUNTY, Wash., April 3, 2020 – Today, Snohomish County Executive Dave Somers and County Council Chair Nate Nehring announced a whole-of-government, countywide approach to help local businesses and the workforce. This effort provides a seamless and innovative system synthesizing two key areas that are critical foundations for recovery: businesses and workforce. Building off a previous announcement establishing the Office of Economic Recovery and Resiliency and the Economic and Workforce Recovery Task Force, the Future Workforce Alliance will work hand-in-hand with these entities to ensure Snohomish County’s economic response and recovery mechanisms are coordinated to be able to move swiftly and have the flexibility to adjust to the ever-evolving environment.

“COVID-19 has hit our community hard. It has not only threatened our health and wellbeing, it has disrupted every aspect of our lives including our jobs, our businesses, and our entire economy,” said Executive Somers. “The Future Workforce Alliance, in tandem with the Economic and Workforce Recovery Task Force, will serve critical roles to ensure the voices of our business community are incorporated into regional, national, and international recovery efforts. We are working tirelessly on behalf of our businesses to lay the groundwork and develop a rapidly deployable plan for our recovery. Working together, we will get through this.”

“We must aggressively pursue economic recovery for our businesses and workers impacted by COVID-19,” said Chair Nehring. “We want to create a system to prepare now so that when we are able to get our economic system fully functioning again we will be ready to act quickly.”

The Blue Ribbon Economic and Workforce Recovery Task Force will support Snohomish County’s economic and workforce recovery from COVID-19, with its wide-ranging impacts on jobs and businesses. The Co-Chairs of the Task Force are Amy Drewel, Owner of Mosaic Insurance Alliance, LLC, and Ray Stephanson, former Mayor of Everett. Working closely with the Future Workforce Alliance, the goal of the Task Force is to stabilize Snohomish County’s economy and set it on a trajectory for long-term recovery, resiliency, and growth.

Representing businesses large and small, Kim Williams, CEO of Providence Health and Services NW, will Chair the Future Workforce Alliance, and Amy Drewel will be Vice Chair. Together, they will lead a

Board composed of private and public sector representatives that will focus on the immediate and long-term needs of businesses and their workers.

“I am honored that the County Executive has asked me to Chair the Future Workforce Alliance Board,” said Williams. “The impact to businesses and workers from COVID-19 has been far-reaching. With the Board’s support and expertise, I am confident we can chart a course for economic recovery that provides jobs and opportunity in Snohomish County.”

“By establishing the Task Force, Snohomish County is taking a leading role in the economic recovery of our region. I look forward to working with my fellow Co-Chair and Task Force members and the wider business community to put our county on a solid trajectory for recovery and growth,” said Amy Drewel.

The Office of Economic Recovery and Resiliency will support the Future Workforce Alliance Board and Economic and Workforce Recovery Task Force. The Office website <https://www.snohomishcountywa.gov/Recovery> contains information about COVID-19 resources for businesses, workers impacted by layoffs, and the public. An innovative Chat Box on the site that can answer common questions was developed in partnership with Microsoft and Zammo to assist with economic recovery efforts.

“There are many new programs, particularly from the state and federal governments, related to COVID-19 that will help businesses and those recently unemployed. Navigating these resources can sometimes be challenging, and we are grateful to our corporate partners for working alongside us in efforts to ensure the public remains well served,” said Snohomish County Executive Director Kendee Yamaguchi. “Our hope is this innovative partnership will help businesses and our residents gain easier access to much needed information during these challenging times.”

Snohomish County was able to quickly build and deploy a web chatbot in partnership with Microsoft and Zammo to make information available to our residents 24/7 about important economic recovery topics with the option to add more topics as needed. The bot was developed using Microsoft’s Azure Bot Service and leverages natural language processing and artificial intelligence to automatically convert web site content into engaging content optimized for chatbots and voice assistants.

If businesses have additional questions about the Task Force, Board, or Office of Economic Recovery and Resiliency, they should contact the Office at 425-338-3800 or they can send an email to SnohomishCountyRecovers@snoco.org.

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