



**Snohomish County**

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## **Executive Somers Announces \$5 Million In Pandemic Recovery Investments to Support Small Businesses, Entrepreneurs, and Tourism**

*American Rescue Plan Act Investments Will Launch the new Small Business Innovation Assistance Program and Support Ongoing Tourism Marketing*

**Snohomish County, Wash., April 25, 2022** – Snohomish County Executive Dave Somers today announced \$5.2 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) investments to support pandemic recovery efforts for small businesses, entrepreneurs, and tourism. These investments include: the creation of a Small Business Innovation Assistance (SBIA) program, which provides technical assistance and grants to small businesses and entrepreneurs; and an expansion of the county’s [tourism marketing initiative](#).

Supporting jobs, small businesses, entrepreneurs, and tourism is crucial to Snohomish County’s recovery. In the county, 90 percent of businesses have fewer than 20 employees, and these small businesses account for the highest percentage of employment among all businesses by size. The county received 2,136 applications for its Relief, Recovery & Resiliency (R3) small business grants, which were administered throughout 2020 using federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funds. Through the R3 program, Snohomish County funded \$25.5 million in grants that supported 1,423 small businesses and 5,171 workers.

“Small businesses are the backbone of our community and economy. They bring tens of thousands of jobs to our county, from entry-level positions to highly skilled workers. While we’re seeing encouraging signs of recovery for our small businesses and workers, it’s clear that there’s more work to do. With these investments, we can boost economic growth and innovation across our county, and help business owners and entrepreneurs build resiliency and thrive,” said Executive Somers.

While economic recovery signs in Snohomish County are improving, according to the [state](#), total nonfarm employment still lags behind pre-pandemic levels. While some industries are posting encouraging employment gains, others – like manufacturing – continue to lag.

“These funds will go a long way to respond to concerns I’ve heard from small business owners,” said Council Chair Megan Dunn ([District 2](#)). “Direct assistance is a critical investment to fortify small businesses and in turn also support the households that rely on those doors staying open.”

“It's no secret the small business community has borne the brunt of the pandemic these last few years. That's why I'm proud Snohomish County is in a position to continue helping our small business owners adapt and thrive in this new economic climate,” said Council Vice Chair Jared Mead ([District 4](#)).

“The pandemic and related government restrictions dealt a devastating blow to our small businesses. I am proud of the work we have done through the Economic and Workforce Recovery Taskforce and these additional investments to help reinforce our small business community as they continue to recover,” said Councilmember Nate Nehring ([District 1](#)).

“It is important to get these resources out into the community, so we can nourish the seeds of innovation and creation that are necessary to grow a robust and thriving economy,” said Councilmember Stephanie Wright ([District 3](#)). “Putting these tools in the hands of small businesses and entrepreneurs will invigorate our recovery and strengthen our county for years to come.”

“Small businesses are the life blood of our rural communities. They need our support now more than ever to recover from these last few years,” said Councilmember Sam Low ([District 5](#)).

Snohomish County’s Economic Development Team and Office of Recovery & Resilience (ORR) are investing \$3.1 million in ARPA funds to create a Small Business Innovation Assistance (SBIA) program, which will couple technical assistance and idea development with grants. The program has three parts:

1. Provide technical assistance, counseling, and system navigation to small businesses within impacted industries to help them problem-solve issues that came about or were exacerbated by the pandemic;
2. Develop an entrepreneur incubator program focused on individuals who were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic that helps new entrepreneurs shape and grow their ideas; and
3. Distribute grants to ensure program participants have capital to pursue solutions and grow their businesses.

The Economic Development Team and ORR are also partnering to invest \$2.1 million in ARPA funds in a recovery marketing campaign focused on the tourism and hospitality industry. The campaign will work with economic, workforce, and tourism development community partners that bring new businesses, investments, and visitors to the county. There will be a special focus on encouraging visitors to patronize leisure and hospitality businesses with strategic attraction from regional, national, and international markets.

The county has issued Request for Proposals (RFP) for a Program Administrator for SBIA. Interested parties can find more information on the [Snohomish County Purchasing Portal](#).

Executive Somers established ORR to guide the county’s recovery work by ensuring federal pandemic relief is administered quickly, effectively, and equitably. Information on the county’s recovery work – including updates on these two initiatives – can be found at [www.snohomishcountywa.gov/recovery](http://www.snohomishcountywa.gov/recovery).

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