This digest is a compilation of information and resources related to employment, commerce and economic development issues surrounding COVID-19. There are numerous online resources for those seeking health-related information, including daily COVID-19 updates from the Oregon Health Authority at https://govstatus.egov.com/OR-OHA-COVID-19.

Oregon was recently designated as eligible for Small Business Administration (SBA) Economic Injury Disaster Loan assistance. This is an important declaration because it makes SBA loans available statewide to small businesses and private, nonprofit organizations to help alleviate economic injury caused by COVID-19. Loans may be used to pay fixed debts, payroll, accounts payable and other bills that can’t be paid because of the disaster’s impact. The interest rate is 3.75 percent for small businesses and 2.75 percent for nonprofits. SBA offers loans with long-term repayments in order to keep payments affordable, and applicants can apply online at https://disasterloan.sba.gov/ela. Applicants can also call SBA’s Customer Service Center at (800) 659-2955 or email disastercustomerservice@sba.gov for more information.

Lane County, the City of Springfield, the City of Eugene and Community Lending Works have come together to create a Small Business Emergency Loan Fund (SBELF) to help our local businesses weather this storm. Funds are limited at this time and will be evaluated ongoing. Eligible businesses include those with 20 FTE or fewer as of the end of 2019 and located within Lane County. The funds will be managed by Community Lending Works. Interested businesses will be able to apply starting at noon on Sunday, March 22, at www.communitylendingworks.com.

Business Oregon has an extensive list of resources for businesses related to COVID-19, including information on financing, childcare, free and discounted business coaching and more.

Oregon is seeing a very large number of new unemployment insurance claims, with long wait times both in person and over the phone. While WorkSource offices remain open across the state, people should strongly consider applying online for benefits through the Oregon Employment Department.

The state has set up a Rapid Response task force designed to promote economic recovery and help businesses respond to layoffs and the dislocation of workers. The team will work directly with businesses and their employees to assist in layoff aversion strategies, help affected workers apply for unemployment benefits and find access to health care resources and training so they can get back to work rapidly.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce has created a Coronavirus Small Business Guide, with a range of resources for employers.

USDA Rural Development announced today that the agency is entering remote operational status, meaning the agency will continue to serve customers remotely. The agency serves many communities
throughout Oregon, and is a primary funder of loans and grants to help expand economic opportunities and create jobs in rural areas. With staff working remotely, communities might find it helpful to have an agency directory to ensure that communication about current and future funding opportunities continues seamlessly. You can find your regional representative in the staff directory here.

**State guidance for small businesses**...While restaurants, bars and other establishments that offer food or beverages for sale are restricted to carry-out or delivery, the state has guidance for other types of small businesses. The state urges these businesses to assess their practices, implement strong social distancing measures, and close their doors temporarily if they cannot put the new guidance in place. The state also urges businesses to keep the health and safety of Oregonians at the forefront as they make hard business decisions. Updated and current information from the state on coronavirus can be found here.

The [Family First Coronavirus Response Act](https://www.whitehouse.gov/coronavirus-response/) was signed into law March 18. The FFCRA requires certain employers to provide employees with paid sick or family leave for specified reasons related to COVID-19. These provisions will apply from April 2, 2020 through December 31, 2020. The law is applicable to private employers with fewer than 500 employees, as well as all government employers. Summary of details [here](https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/pandemic/ffcra/ffcra.html).

The Center for Small Farms and Community Food Systems at Oregon State University have COVID-19 information related to [small farms and food safety](https://www.oas.fgf.oregonstate.edu/). Business Oregon has developed [Business Survival Tips During a Pandemic](https://www.businessoregon.org/), viewable here.

**Wyden Introduces $17B Bill to Relieve Small Business Loan Payments for 6 Months.** Read more here.

**Wyden, Merkley Announce Senate Passage of Families First Coronavirus Act.** Read more here.