



workforce  
SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON



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Contact:

Workforce SW WA: Julia Maglione, 360.567.3176, [jmaglione@workforcesw.org](mailto:jmaglione@workforcesw.org)

Comcast Oregon/SW Washington: Amy Keiter, 503.605.6350, [amy\\_keiter@comcast.com](mailto:amy_keiter@comcast.com)

## **Workforce Southwest Washington Partners with Comcast to Keep Vulnerable Populations Connected**

**Vancouver, Wash. (May 6, 2020)** – [Workforce Southwest Washington](#) (WSW), through a partnership with Comcast Oregon/SW Washington, has purchased six months of pre-paid internet access for 200 low-income job seekers through Comcast’s [Internet Essentials](#) program.

“As workforce services have moved online, we are keenly aware that not everyone in our community is able to connect to these services,” said Kevin Perkey, CEO of Workforce Southwest Washington. “Internet access is critical to ensure low-income individuals have access to the tools and resources they and their families need to weather this crisis.”

“We are fortunate that the Community Foundation for Southwest Washington provided a rapid-response grant of \$30,000 from its SW Washington COVID Response Fund to make this project a reality,” said Perkey.

WSW is working with its community partners including WorkSource, Next, Lower Columbia Community Action Program, Partners in Careers, Goodwill of the Olympic Rainier Region and Cowlitz Habitat for Humanity to identify families in need of support. Priority will be for families receiving public assistance.

Since the week ending March 14, the three counties served by WSW (Clark, Cowlitz and Wahkiakum) have seen 50,036 total initial claims for unemployment insurance (UI). Before the coronavirus crisis, Clark County registered between 300 and 400 unemployment claims a week and Cowlitz was fewer than 170 per week. Beyond providing access to vital information and services, pre-paid Internet will also provide some financial relief for residents who are feeling the effects of the economic downturn.

“A major focus of the SW Washington COVID Response Fund is to ensure basic human needs are met during this emergency, and this program is a great example,” Jennifer Rhoads, President of the [Community Foundation](#), said. “We hope that local residents will join our efforts to grow this emergency fund, so that we can continue sustaining our region’s most pressing relief efforts.”

“During this unprecedented time, it is vital for Washingtonians to stay connected to the Internet – for education, work, and personal health reasons,” said Comcast’s Vice-President of External Affairs, Marion Haynes. “We’re proud to partner with Workforce SW Washington to help get people connected through our Internet Essentials program.”

Since its inception in 2011, Internet Essentials has connected more than 52,000 low-income households in the Oregon/SW Washington region. The program charges \$9.95 per month, but in response to the

*Serving businesses, job seekers and youth in Clark, Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties.*

COVID-19 crisis, Comcast is offering two months free for customers who sign up on or before June 30. People who qualify for a broad range of federal assistance programs including Medicaid, HUD-assisted housing, SNAP, and SSI, among others, are eligible to apply for Internet Essentials.

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**About Workforce SW Washington** – Workforce Southwest Washington (WSW) funds community prosperity by investing in services and training that help individuals gain skills to find a good-paying job or advance in their careers and help companies attract, train and retain workers. Our investments strengthen the region’s businesses and contribute to a strong economy. Since 2003, we’ve invested more than \$100 million in Clark, Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties. Learn more at [www.workforcesw.org](http://www.workforcesw.org).

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**About the Community Foundation for Southwest Washington** – Established in 1984, the Community Foundation helps local residents build a more vibrant community by inspiring investments in local philanthropy. The Foundation holds more than 360 distinct funds, which are actively invested to grow charitable assets. Governed by an esteemed volunteer Board of Directors, the Community Foundation offers benefits and services to donors, nonprofits and the community at large. Learn more at [www.cfsww.org](http://www.cfsww.org).