



## Workforce System Response to COVID-19 Clark, Cowlitz & Wahkiakum Counties June 4, 2020

As we move into the [Safe Start Recovery](#) and [Phase 2](#), our business services team is ready to assist you with rehiring employees and meeting your workforce needs. Please reach out to our Director of Business Services Darcy Hoffman at [dhoffman@workforcesw.org](mailto:dhoffman@workforcesw.org).

*Kevin Perkey*

Chief Executive Office

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### Responding to Business Needs

**BUSINESS SURVEY** – Fifty-nine companies from a variety of industries responded to our COVID-19 Business Impact Survey. The majority had fewer than 25 employees pre-COVID.

Through the survey, we learned companies in Southwest Washington have responded to the COVID-19 pandemic by allowing employees to work from home (63% of respondents), temporarily laying off workers (39% of respondents), reducing work hours (34% of respondents), implementing hiring freezes (27% of respondents), and cutting jobs or permanently laying off workers (29% of respondents).

Thirty-one companies indicated they have been significantly impacted by COVID-19 because the majority of their employees are required to perform their jobs onsite. Thirteen companies had to completely shut down operations.

When asked what WSW could do for those that indicated they temporarily laid off employees, some thought On-the-Job Training (OJT) could potentially help them bring workers back faster when safe to do so. Few indicated they could benefit from employee skills training and certifications.

Eight percent of respondents believe they will be able to rehire all of their employees by July 2020. Five percent believe they will be able to rehire all of their employees by staggering onboarding over 6-12 months.

WSW is receiving inquiries and requests for support from businesses that are rehiring workers. We're hearing of companies bringing workers back but in different positions requiring different skills. For example, one local business no longer has a need for the job

their former employee was hired to do. Instead, they plan to work with WorkSource to help this employee obtain their Class A Commercial Driver's License and move into a higher-paying position.

Many companies bringing workers back are concerned about the training required to perform work safely in a COVID environment such as temperature checks, use of personal protective equipment, social distancing and distance markers, frequent hand washing, surface sanitation, and the impacts these safety measures have on the way work is conducted. Last week, the Association of Washington Businesses released a [Business Toolkit](#) to aid in safe reopening. WSW is referring businesses to this resource.

As the survey indicates, companies feel that OJT could help them bring workers back faster. The team is now talking to small businesses about how we can co-invest in employee wages to alleviate some of the pressure and allow small businesses to retain more workers.

A new tech company was seeking an intern to conduct a data analysis project. They had a recent WSU Vancouver graduate in mind but were unsure they would have full-time work beyond the project. The graduate qualified for OJT and the company offered her a full-time position in May.

**FOCUS ON MANUFACTURING** – Since the beginning of the crisis, we have been supporting and assisting manufacturing companies impacted by COVID-19. Many manufacturers faced temporary layoffs and work-hour reductions and we have been in close contact to assist with connections to the Shared Work program and to provide information on how to help employees file for unemployment. We anticipate employers' top concerns to be the financial impacts of COVID-19, a potential recession, and the effects on the retention and productivity of their workforce.

Alyssa Joyner, WSW's Senior Project Manager for Manufacturing, has been discussing with our manufacturing partners how we can help them bring back their employees at a quicker pace as it's safe to do so. We are seeing more doors open, assisting to fill new positions, and beginning discussions on training opportunities and best practices for protecting the health and safety of the manufacturing workforce.

In early February, Alyssa began working with a small metals manufacturer in Vancouver. Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, Alyssa was collaborating with them on Incumbent Worker and On the Job Training (OJT) opportunities. The employer requested support to develop a documented process to properly train and onboard new employees. Though this company did end up administering a temporary layoff that affected approximately 60 employees, Alyssa was able to assist the human resources department to help employees file for unemployment. The company has now rehired all employees and is fully back to work, maintaining new safety protocols. Alyssa is currently working with the company to develop new virtual and onsite training for both existing and new workers.

On June 11, WSW is co-hosting a virtual conversation for the region's metals manufacturers in partnership with the Columbia River Economic Development Council (CREDC), Cowlitz Economic Development Council (CEDC), and Impact Washington. We'll be presenting free Impact Washington resources to help manufacturers safely restart, learning more about potential impacts to local supply chains, and gaining a better understanding of hiring projections for the next 12-24 months. JobsEQ data shows demand for approximately 800 job openings in occupations such as welding, machining and maintenance in the next two years.

For workshop details or other manufacturing assistance, contact Alyssa Joyner at [ajoyner@workforcesw.org](mailto:ajoyner@workforcesw.org) or 503.410.0408.

## Labor Market: Spotlight on Manufacturing

### Top 25 Manufacturing Industry UI Claimants Mar. 8 - May 23 : Clark County

Industry	
All Other Plastics Product Manufacturing	111
Fruit and Vegetable Canning	97
Ready-Mix Concrete Manufacturing	90
Fabricated Structural Metal Manufacturing	84
Cut Stone and Stone Product Manufacturing	81
Cement Manufacturing	71
Heating Equipment (except Warm Air Furnaces) Manuf..	56
Metal Tank (Heavy Gauge) Manufacturing	55
Other Industrial Machinery Manufacturing	50
Machine Shops	49
Dental Laboratories	48
Sporting and Athletic Goods Manufacturing	43
Aircraft Manufacturing	41
Commercial, Industrial, and Institutional Electric Lighti..	41
Measuring, Dispensing, and Other Pumping Equipment ..	40
Other Commercial and Service Industry Machinery Man..	40
Other Snack Food Manufacturing	40
Plate Work Manufacturing	40
All Other Miscellaneous Manufacturing	37
Power Boiler and Heat Exchanger Manufacturing	37
Retail Bakeries	37
Sign Manufacturing	35
Metal Heat Treating	34
Confectionery Manufacturing from Purchased Chocolate	33
Wood Preservation	33
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1,323</b>

## Manufacturing Industry UI Claimants Mar. 8 - May 23 : Cowlitz County

Industry	
Sheet Metal Work Manufacturing	26
All Other Miscellaneous Food Manufacturing	22
All Other Plastics Product Manufacturing	23
Machine Shops	14
Industrial Valve Manufacturing	17
Seafood Product Preparation and Packaging	15
Commercial Screen Printing	12
All Other Miscellaneous Fabricated Metal Product Manufa..	11
Metal Tank (Heavy Gauge) Manufacturing	9
Commercial Printing (except Screen and Books)	7
Fluid Power Cylinder and Actuator Manufacturing	7
All Other Rubber Product Manufacturing	7
Cut Stone and Stone Product Manufacturing	5
Measuring, Dispensing, and Other Pumping Equipment Ma..	5
Sign Manufacturing	4
Truss Manufacturing	5
Metal Coating, Engraving (except Jewelry and Silverware),..	5
Mechanical Power Transmission Equipment Manufacturing	4
Retail Bakeries	3
Other Basic Inorganic Chemical Manufacturing	8
Grand Total	209

Manufacturing occupations with the largest number of unemployment claimants March 8 - May 23:

- **Clark County:** Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers; Helper-Production Workers; Assemblers and Fabricators; First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers; Dental Laboratory Technicians
- **Cowlitz County:** Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers; Helper-Production Workers; Assemblers and Fabricators; Machinists; First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers
- **Wahkiakum County:** data is not available

## Reopening Resources for Business

- The [Association of Washington Business](#) created a [comprehensive Business Tool Kit](#) of guidance and resources to prepare your workplace and safely welcome back employees and customers.
- [Federal Resources for U.S. Small Businesses](#) - the official federal resource website for U.S. small businesses affected by COVID-19. View relevant federal agency resources, access the latest news and search for a Small Business Advisor.

**Workforce Southwest Washington (WSW)** funds services that help individuals gain skills to find good-paying jobs or advance in their careers and help companies recruit, 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). WSW | 805 Broadway, Suite 412 | Vancouver, WA 98660