



News Release

April 7, 2021

Contact:

Matt Morrison
PNWER CEO
Matt.Morrison@pnwer.org

Steve Myers
Senior Program Manager
Steve.Myers@pnwer.org

Pacific NorthWest Economic Region (PNWER) Awarded U.S. Department of Commerce SPRINT Challenge Grant to Respond to Coronavirus Pandemic through Innovation and Entrepreneurship

[Pacific NorthWest Economic Region \(PNWER\)](#) is excited to share that they are 1 of 44 organizations awarded the Economic Development Administration's (EDA) Scaling Pandemic Resilience through Innovation and Technology (SPRINT) Challenge Grant [announced yesterday](#) by U.S. Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo.

The SPRINT Grant award will support the creation of "Congregate: A Solutions Accelerator" focused on scaling solutions that help safely re-open tourism, performing arts, travel, and hospitality (TPATH). With PNWER's history of working with state and local governments, industry leaders, and innovators on solutions that drive the economy forward, Congregate will:

- Be a catalyst for innovation in biotechnology, health security, and supply-chain solutions,
- Increase regional, national, and government connectivity across innovation clusters to support entrepreneurship, and
- Scale models to address the new congregation environments post-pandemic.

The Congregate Accelerator will find and incubate potential solutions, pilot these solutions with affected industries, and scale solutions globally to reopen and bring jobs to the U.S. economy. PNWER is excited to have partners from Amazon, Microsoft, Washington Technology Industry Association, Alaska Travel Industry Association, and Future Border Coalition join this project with expertise and resources that will support the Congregate Accelerator.

Tourism is a key economic driver for many rural and urban-adjacent communities. Since March of 2020, COVID-19 has halted tourism and affiliated services— the cumulative losses of the creative industries in the Seattle metro area alone resulted in the loss of 57,144 jobs and \$596 million in sales. The goal of Congregate will be to foster connections between the tech community, public health agencies, and performing arts and tourism venues and to develop requirements for demonstration projects and

implement solutions for economic development and economic recovery during and after COVID.

###

ABOUT PNWER

The Pacific NorthWest Economic Region (PNWER) is a public/private non-profit organization created by statute in 1991. Member jurisdictions include Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, Montana, and Washington, and the Canadian provinces and territories of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, the Northwest Territories, and Yukon. PNWER's mission is to increase the economic well-being and quality of life for all citizens of the region; identify and promote "models of success; and serve as a conduit to exchange information.