



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 15, 2020

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Organizations Partner to Gauge Potential Economic Impact of COVID-19 on West Virginia

WV Association of Regional Councils, WV's Chambers of Commerce, and WV Development Office Hope to Position State for Future Stimulus Funds

CHARLESTON, WV – On April 15, 2020, the WV Association of Regional Councils (WVARC), WV Chamber of Commerce, the WV Development Office and the New River Gorge Regional Development Authority announced a partnership to maximize stimulus funds for West Virginia in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, the organizations will be collecting data on the impact of business closures and accommodations to better understand recovery needs and to assist the public with locating restaurants, pharmacies and other businesses that are still providing services in the midst of closures.

As part of the partnership, WVARC will work with the WV Chamber and local Chambers of Commerce to utilize a combination of polling efforts and Geographic Information System (“GIS”) mapping to quantify the COVID-19 economic impact. That data will be analyzed by the Regional Councils to fully understand the true economic impact. Once completed, the data will be released to the public and utilized to maximize public relief efforts.

“Obviously, the impact that COVID-19 has had on West Virginia to date is enormous,” said Shane Whitehair, President of WVARC. “However, we don’t really have detailed data regarding the jobs lost, and corresponding business closings, beyond the sheer number of unemployment claims filed in recent days. We think that the best way we can help West Virginians in this time of need is to utilize our resources in a manner that positions the state well for future economic recovery.”

“West Virginia citizens and businesses alike are hurting right now,” said Steve Roberts, President of the WV Chamber of Commerce. “As the U.S. Congress considers further stimulus and relief efforts, we felt one of the best things we could do to help all West Virginians is to put the state in the best position possible to receive such recovery funds.”

The WV Development Office also provided support to this effort. “Our job at the WV Development Office is to provide our communities the best opportunity to be successful. With this information, it will allow the State to be in position to attract and receive much-needed stimulus funding to better our communities,” commented Mike Graney, Executive Director of the WV Development Office.

The Regional Councils provide a multitude of services throughout the state, focusing on infrastructure expansion and improvement, broadband, transportation, and small business development. The WV Chamber is the voice of business in West Virginia, with members in all 55 counties that employ over half of West Virginia’s workforce.

To take the Business Impact survey and the survey for businesses with amended hours and procedures during the pandemic, please [click here](#) or visit bit.ly/COVIDWVImpact.

To learn more about this effort, please contact Shane Whitehair, President of WVARC, at SWhitehair@regionvii.com.