

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

Steve Bullock
GOVERNOR



Mike Cooney
LT. GOVERNOR

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CONTACTS:

Marissa Perry, Communications Director, Governor's Office, (406) 444-4514

Erin Loranger, Press Secretary, Governor's Office, (406) 444-9725

Emilie Ritter Saunders, Director of Communications & Public Affairs, Commerce, (406) 841-2557

**Governor Bullock Announces Additional Support for Destination
Communities and Small Businesses Heading into Phase 2**

Bullock requests Yellowstone National Park to reopen effective June 1

MONTANA – Governor Steve Bullock today announced further efforts to protect communities heading into Phase Two of the Reopening the Big Sky Plan on June 1, including additional resources for community testing and contact tracing in high-visitation communities, an informational campaign to educate visitors on responsible travel, and a grant program for small businesses across the state to implement safety measures.

“As we enter the next phase of Montana’s reopening, we are asking the same of our visitors as we do from Montanans – heed state and local guidelines, engage in public health precautions, and exercise patience as tourism communities gradually welcome visitors back,” Governor Bullock said. **“We must all continue to work together to ensure that we can move forward together, while protecting our residents and businesses alike.”**

Governor Bullock also announced that he sent a letter to Yellowstone National Park’s Superintendent Cam Sholly requesting that the park reopen access to and from the park to visitors at the Cooke City, Gardiner, and West Yellowstone gates effective June 1.

“I appreciate the coordination that Yellowstone National Park has provided with state and local officials as we’ve developed a reopening approach that more fully integrates the needs of Montana’s gateway communities,” said Governor Bullock. **“We will continue to ensure that we remain in close coordination with the park and the surrounding communities to create an effective early warning system that can serve to protect workers and visitors alike, inside and outside the park.”**

In addition to encouraging businesses in high-use, highly trafficked areas to develop plans to implement safety measures for employees and customers, the state will be providing support to destination communities in the following ways:

- Implementing community snapshot testing for frontline workers at no cost with need determined by local jurisdictions.
- Providing resources to local providers for community testing to develop an early warning system for identifying new cases.
- Assistance with contact tracing in the event of a positive test. Montana National Guard members currently on Title 32 orders have been directed to take online contact tracing course and obtain a certificate, adding an additional 150 contact tracers if needed.
- Offering financial assistance for safety measures to small businesses to better protect their customers and workers.
- Public education outreach campaign, including resources for communities, tourism promotion organizations, employers and employees.

Utilizing Montana Department of Commerce data, destination communities were determined through analysis of typical visitor travel in the state over the period from June-September looking at the top destination counties, as well as those counties that experience high visitation per resident. Those counties are: Cascade, Ravalli, Lewis and Clark, Flathead, Yellowstone, Missoula, Silver Bow, Sanders, Lake, Custer, Gallatin, Dawson, Carbon, Big Horn, Glacier, Madison, Beaverhead, Park, Mineral, and Richland. Other counties will be eligible based on identified needs.

Beginning Monday, June 1, additional financial assistance through two new programs will be available to protect workers in Montana's travel destination communities and at other small businesses throughout the state, as well as to educate travelers about the public health and safety measures they are expected to follow to protect against the spread of COVID-19 in Montana.

The two new programs join the nine grant programs funded through the CARES Act and announced earlier this month, as well as the state's suite of existing support services and direct federal appropriations.

The **Montana Business Adaptation Program** will provide reimbursement for COVID-19 expenses related to keeping staff and businesses safe – from the purchase of personal protective equipment to resources needed for staff to work remotely. Eligible small businesses must be Montana-based, have incurred eligible adaptation expenses since Feb. 15 due to COVID-19, and be in good standing. Total funding available is \$20 million, the maximum reimbursement amount per business is \$5,000. Eligible costs include communications tools, remote work equipment, business adaptations required to allow for better cleaning and social distancing, cleaning supplies, and travel/hotel costs related to quarantining workers.

The **Tourism Education Program** will make available \$15 million in CARES Act funding to carry out a statewide informational campaign to educate visitors prior to and after arriving in Montana. The Department of Commerce, in coordination with the Department of Public Health

and Human Services, is leading this effort. Commerce will be working with local tourism partners across the state to deliver this public health and safety message to visitors.

A comprehensive information resource and application portal is available at COVIDRELIEF.MT.GOV. The application for the Business Adaptation Program will be available on Monday, June 1.