



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 8, 2020

Contacts:

Joshua Berger, Washington Maritime Blue

joshua@maritimeblue.org

Peter McGraw, Port of Seattle

McGraw.P@portseattle.org

Penny Thomas, Washington State Department of Commerce

Penny.thomas@commerce.wa.gov

Maritime Blue, Port of Seattle launch second wave of maritime innovation accelerator

Applications open now through Nov. 20 from maritime businesses looking to innovate and grow

SEATTLE—Maritime is one of Washington’s biggest and oldest industries, and it’s also becoming one of the most innovative. Washington Maritime Blue and the Port of Seattle have partnered again to launch the next cohort of the Maritime Blue Innovation Accelerator, an intensive four-month program providing access to a global network of mentors and advisors alongside Washington’s maritime industry and ocean economy leaders. The accelerator helps maritime businesses develop, grow and secure funding in a sector where capital is often scarce.

Established in 2019 and funded by the Port of Seattle and a grant from the Washington State Department of Commerce, the accelerator is advancing key elements of the state’s [Strategy for a Blue Economy](#), which charts a detailed course to becoming a thriving, world-class, sustainable maritime industry.

“The Port of Seattle is proud to once again sponsor Washington State’s ongoing effort to spur innovation in the maritime sector,” said Fred Felleman, Port of Seattle Commission Vice President. “We were inspired by our last cohort of innovators and look forward to seeing how this next round of entrepreneurs will help our region navigate to a more inclusive and sustainable blue economy.”

Applications for the new cohort are open through Nov. 20. Interested applicants, potential mentors and funders can watch the 2020 showcase of the inaugural cohort of 11 businesses, learn more about the accelerator, and apply for the 2021 opportunity at www.maritimeblue.org/blue-accelerator.

In April this year, 11 startups graduated after a successful showcase that led to a number of wins among the inaugural cohort, including a substantial Series A equity investment, seed level funding, demonstration projects, customer contracts, regulatory certifications, and significant revenue increases.

For example, Seattle-based Discovery Health MD developed the first fitness for duty assessment for mariners that now involves COVID-19 testing and quarantine. Dr. Ann Jarris, cofounder and CEO of the growing company, said “I had cargo and petroleum clients who were calling on Chinese ports asking us for help. It was difficult when we couldn’t get people off their ships in ports to receive foreign medical care.”

“I didn’t know where to focus energies to scale or build a network in maritime industry. I didn’t have connections within the governance, political, or regulatory world,” Jarris explained. This need to make new connections and determine a growth strategy prompted her to apply for the Maritime Blue Accelerator program.

The accelerator enabled a deep collaboration between the company, the fishing industry, the Port of Seattle, and University of Washington that led to a plan for COVID-19 frontline testing and developed risk reduction strategies for the North Pacific Fishing Fleet, assisting in quarantine procedures and planning for a safe workforce.

“I loved that we worked so closely with other companies in the accelerator...we all worked to understand our different needs; how we interacted with the industry,” Jarris said.

Ultimately, the company ramped up and administered COVID-19 tests to over 5,000 fishers before the current commercial fishing season. This is now the model for the rest of world.

“Because of this model, the North Pacific Fishing Fleet is successfully fishing right now,” Dr. Jarris said.

“Washington’s maritime industry strengthens communities not only for Puget Sound’s busy ports, but all across the state. Washington Maritime Blue and the Port of Seattle’s Maritime Innovation Accelerator are ensuring that we remain global leaders in the sustainable ocean economy and continue creating good jobs well into the future,” said Commerce Director Lisa Brown.

The second wave of businesses coming into the accelerator signals continued growth and investment opportunities in the global Blue Economy. One of the state’s oldest industries, the \$21.4-billion maritime sector has been repositioning itself to better leverage the vast technical, advanced manufacturing, and innovation resources Washington has to offer. Washington Maritime Blue programs, such as the innovation accelerator, provide a powerful opportunity for local companies to grow, recruit new jobs and talent, and secure funding in a sector where capital is often scarce.

“We are humbled by the support and success of our inaugural cohort and thrilled to reach back out into the innovation ecosystem to catch the next wave of founders and entrepreneurs. We are looking for those who are ready to grow, innovate, and provide critical solutions to the challenges our ocean, waterways and communities are facing every day. Last year at this time we thought this was a good idea, and now it is even more critical that we work to get capital flowing, solve for climate impacts, and stand for equitable and resilient communities,” said Joshua Berger, Gov. Inslee’s Maritime Sector Lead, Founder and Board Chair of Washington Maritime Blue.

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About the Maritime Blue Innovation Accelerator:

Maritime Blue is now accepting applications from any startup or new venture that is passionate about finding innovative solutions that benefit the Blue Economy—growth in the maritime and ocean sector; addressing the climate crisis and supporting a healthy ocean and marine environment; and fostering resilient and equitable communities. Applications will be scored based on both their growth viability as well as their potential impact for meeting the goals of Washington State Strategy for the Blue Economy. Applicants will be reviewed and selected by a group of Maritime Blue innovation advisors. For more information, go here www.maritimeblue.org/blue-accelerator.

About Maritime Blue

[Washington Maritime Blue](#) is a non-profit, strategic alliance formed to accelerate innovation and sustainability in support of an inclusive blue economy. With a mission to implement Washington State's Strategy for the Blue Economy delivered by Governor Jay Inslee's Maritime Innovation Advisory Council, we are a partnership between industry, public sector, research & training institutions, and community organizations. Maritime Blue works to create a world-class, thriving, equitable and sustainable maritime and ocean industry through knowledge sharing, joint innovation, entrepreneurship, commercialization, business and workforce development.

About the Port of Seattle:

Founded in 1911, the Port owns and operates Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, Fishermen's Terminal—home of the North Pacific fishing fleet—and public marinas. The Port also owns two cruise ship terminals, a grain terminal, real estate assets, and marine cargo terminals through its partnership in the Northwest Seaport Alliance. Port operations help support nearly 200,000 jobs and \$7 billion in wages throughout the region. Over the next 18 years, the port's "Century Agenda" seeks to create an additional 100,000 jobs through economic growth while becoming the nation's leading green and energy-efficient port. Learn more at www.portseattle.org.

About Commerce

Commerce works with local governments, businesses, community-based organizations and tribes to strengthen communities. The department's diverse portfolio of more than 100 programs and effective public and private partnerships promote sustainable community and economic development to help all Washingtonians thrive. For more information, visit <http://www.commerce.wa.gov>. For information on locating or expanding a business in Washington, visit choosewashingtonstate.com.