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Community Collaborative to Support Local Businesses

LYNCHBURG, TN (Mar. 20, 2020) – Motlow State, chambers of commerce, local government organizations, downtown groups, and economic development agencies throughout south-central Tennessee have begun stepping up to help businesses looking for direction and assistance in the face of the COVID-19 threat. As the crisis unfolds, the coalition has been working diligently to create a survey system featuring one survey for local businesses and an additional survey for community organizations working to support the local economy.

The COVID-19 Local Business Survey collects information from local businesses about their immediate needs and adjusted operational strategies, such as hours of operation, closings, online presence and delivery. The information from the survey is automatically entered into a database, which is then shared with other businesses and community organizations for distribution to the greater community, providing updates on how to support local businesses safely. Local businesses are also asked to identify business resources that would be helpful to them at this time, such as help with social media, hosting remote events, fundraising, and other useful business tools and creative strategies.

By facilitating the sharing of information, resources, strategies, ideas, toolkits, and inspiration among the numerous organizations throughout the area, this collaborative effort hopes to promote economic resiliency for the area. In order to react to the business community's needs as quickly as possible, this collaborative community initiative is ongoing, continuing to take shape and gain momentum daily. Social distancing is the right thing to do and protecting the health and safety of the community is always the top priority. Yet the negative ripple effect of the coronavirus on our local economy also has the potential to leave many small businesses and families devastated. As the area's community college, Motlow supports the initiative to unite organizations and local businesses throughout the region to send a clear message that we will get through this together. According to TVA's Economic Development Program Manager Melissa Halsell, "this is uncharted territory for us all; however, the communities who are able to embrace and roll with these rapidly-changing and disruptive times and who are willing to get out of comfort zones collaboratively and creatively to meet the challenges will come out of this crisis strong than imagined today." Ms. Halsell commended the collaborative effort and continues to share successful and replicable strategies with members of the group for distribution.

Local businesses and community organizations that would like to receive a participation form should email Shelley Smith at ssmith@mscc.edu with the subject line "Support Local Safely." #####