



**COLUMBIA
ECONOMIC
TEAM**

Annual Report

2021

Mission & Purpose

The Columbia Economic Team's mission is to promote the creation, retention, growth, and attraction of business and industry throughout our county.

As a private/public membership organization, we strive to be accessible, agile, polished, and proactive in representing the economic interests of Columbia County.

We operate with these strategic goals in mind, guiding the work we do:

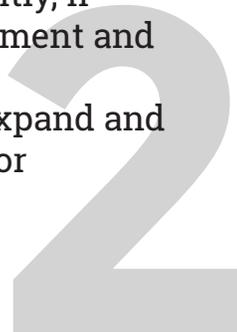
- Expand, retain, and recruit businesses and industries participating in existing or new industry clusters.
- Increase per capita income, diversify the economy, and promote sustainable economic growth and family-wage jobs.
- Coordinate the delivery of professional economic development services by leveraging relationships, partnerships, and the collaborative efforts of existing organizations.
- Provide leadership to ensure a climate in which businesses thrive while attracting diverse new investment.

The purpose of our annual report is two-fold:

1. A fiscal year-end self-assessment of whether we're on-course with our mission and objectives.
2. A report card for our investors and partners to reinforce the value proposition of Columbia Economic Team and to demonstrate the value they are creating as investors by supporting the work we do.

Though never satisfied, we are pleased with the work we've accomplished and the impact we've been able to contribute over the past year, as well as the work we are undertaking as we move into the next.

We invite your review, comments, feedback, and critique. Most importantly, if current members believe we've fulfilled their investment in our commitment and purpose to the economy of Columbia County, we invite your renewed membership, and investment by new members as well, to strengthen, expand and always improve our organization to help achieve economic prosperity for Columbia County.



Business Retention & Recovery

SUPPORTING OUR EXISTING BUSINESSES, KEEPING THEM HERE, AND HELPING THEM GROW HAS NEVER BEEN MORE CHALLENGING OR IMPORTANT THAN IN 2020 -2021, WITH THE COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH PANDEMIC AND RESULTING ECONOMIC DISRUPTION.



With the onset of pandemic infections, restrictions, quarantining and lockdowns, customer traffic and workforce disruptions immediately impacted the smallest of businesses and the largest employers. Our Board of Directors immediately directed staff to focus expressly on small businesses facing customer and worker disruptions, financial impact, and outright shutdowns.

OUR RESPONSE

Columbia Economic Team immediately stood up new communication networks to deliver updates, alerts, and support information countywide, compiling contact databases to reach a wide spectrum of businesses and organizations on a daily basis. Emphasis was on the public health and safety priorities, particularly as they affected business operations and consumer behavior.

CET published nearly 250 daily ENews updates before scaling back frequency as the crisis has begun to recede, pushing out business tips and know-how, tools and toolkits, best-practices and innovations gathered from national and global sources, and especially providing alerts and facilitation of small business funding assistance. A Small Business website (smallbizhub.columbiacountyoregon.com) was immediately created to provide an evergreen clearinghouse for small business resources, health information, and financial assistance opportunities.

Informing wasn't enough though and gaps existed in getting actual assistance to businesses teetering on the edge. Columbia Economic Team partnered with the State of Oregon, Columbia-Pacific Economic Development District (Col-Pac), and Columbia County to establish and manage four rounds of grant funding to small businesses and non-profit organizations. In total, more than \$1.6 million was directed by CET to over 337 businesses throughout every community in Columbia County. We were also able to directly connect more than two dozen businesses to additional selective state and programmatic funding.

In the process of guiding grant applicants, we provided grant and small business support consulting to more than 70 individual businesses, and referred more than



a dozen businesses to Oregon Small Business Development Centers, the Capital Access Team and Business Oregon for free advising, business planning, financial strategy, and resource accessibility.

To provide business education and to refresh ideas and innovation to adapt, we collaborated with Wauna Credit Union, local Chambers of Commerce, and local experts to execute an eight-week small business workshop series covering everything from basic business planning to insurance, legal, all aspects of marketing, and business regulatory strategy, and we provided scholarships for tuition reimbursement for business owners that enrolled in PCC business classes.

And of course, CET's Keep It Local program, created five years ago to promote and increase local business spending, has been a key provider of glue between Chambers, CET, and communities throughout the county.

At the state, regional and federal levels, we advocated for businesses for more assistance, more accessible programs, and for common sense regarding workplace safety, regulation, legislation, progressive permitting, and land use decisions.

We partnered with the Columbia County Board of Commissioners to fund and create a PPE "pop-up store" at the county fairgrounds, providing buying power and supply chain help to small businesses and non-profits, distributing masks and other essential personal protective equipment on a volunteer basis.

Under the pressure of the public health and economic pandemics, our connections to our longtime partners have grown even stronger. And we've found new partners and allies in the interest of collaboration, communication, coordination and helping improve the environment for growth of existing and new businesses.

We are meeting regularly with city councils and their management and staff, as well as the County Board of Commissioners and county staff, managing assets and facilities, land development and planning, public health, emergency services, transportation, and more.

We are collaborating on strengthening our communities where big gaps persist – like with childcare and preschool education – and their interdependence on workforce issues and employment.

We have aggressively managed the county's two Enterprise Zones that provide incentives for investment, in exchange for increased employment and above-average wages.



Business & Industrial Recruitment & Expansion



THIS FISCAL YEAR, CET STAFF PREPARED 23 PROJECT RFP PROPOSALS SOLICITED BY BUSINESS OREGON AND GREATER PORTLAND INC., REPRESENTING A CUMULATIVE JOB COUNT EXCEEDING 3,000.

These proposals range from pitch letters to full Excel workbooks and unique multi-page applications. While competition for these projects is high, both in-state and nationally, they are opportunities to not be overlooked as an asset, and each provides an excellent opportunity to work with stakeholders, landowners, brokers, utilities, city government, and our regional workforce and economic development partners to improve our knowledge, our assets, and our marketing effectiveness.

We worked with four prospective industrial developers, directly and outside the RFP process. Two projects are still active and viable, with cumulative job count of approximately 350.

We approached six, and are still working with two, companies considering relocation to Columbia County. Their industries are manufacturing and metal fabrication, with estimated cumulative job count exceeding 80.

We are currently working with three companies with existing operations in Columbia County to facilitate significant expansion of operations and core business, plus new product line development.

CET re-energized its BRE strategy to welcome new companies and ensure their successful establishment in our communities. Our most recent welcome was JT Marine, now in Rainier, for whom we were able to facilitate energy efficiency, workforce, and other key contacts to achieve key goals and cost savings.

CET is fortunate to have collaborative partners at the Port of Columbia County and city governments. To enhance our recruitment, together we've developed a new project tracking system to ensure benchmarks are met, infrastructure and entitlements are coordinated, and real-time transparency exists on project status and prioritization with partners, to improve outcomes.

Tourism



COLUMBIA ECONOMIC TEAM
SERVES AS THE DESTINATION
MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION FOR
COLUMBIA COUNTY, REPRESENTING
THE AREA IN STRATEGY, POLICY, PLANNING,
AND FUNDING MATTERS WITH THE PORTLAND
REGION AND TRAVEL OREGON.

We have intensified our engagement in coordination and funding decisions, as well as market coordination and earned media efforts. With all tourism and travel marketing shut down by Executive Order, CET focused instead on infrastructure and destination development, obtaining and deploying \$115,000 to fund projects that support our county's Outdoor Recreation strategy. Outdoor Recreation in Columbia County is experiencing record surges in visitors and economic activity; oddly, we have COVID cabin-fever to thank and capitalize upon.

CET committed \$25,000 in partnership with Columbia County to complete all interpretive signage along the Crown Z Trail, where visitor and usage counts have skyrocketed as one of the closest developed trail systems to the Portland urban population center.

CET also sought grant funding for multiple development projects and successfully obtained two Oregon Tourism Grants for more than \$90,000 for Destination Development and Community Recovery and Improvement. One project will place four fully equipped BikeHub Stations in Clatskanie, Rainier and Vernonia, and create both expert and new family-friendly bike routes on popular GPS applications, reinforcing the county's burgeoning trails and cycling attractions. The second project will create building-size murals, pocket gardens, lighting and planting equipment and other safety and aesthetic improvements to beautify downtown Vernonia, which is a gateway to our trails system and a substantial share of the visitor camping and outdoor recreation in the county. Both projects will be completed by Fall 2021.

As the pandemic restrictions recede, our attention will again turn to tourism marketing and promotion focusing on each community's unique flavor, and to leverage visit conversions from regional and statewide marketing by our partners at Travel Portland and Travel Oregon.

Collaboration, Cooperation, Connection

WORKING AND PARTNERING EFFECTIVELY IN A COMMUNITY MEANS COMMITTING TO, ACTIVELY PARTICIPATING IN, AND HELPING SHAPE OUTCOMES WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS DRIVING THEIR OWN CORE WORK.

Representing Columbia Economic Team and the entire county we serve, our staff has been and continues to be a member/leader in these organizations:

- North Coast Economic Recovery Team
- Economic Development Advisory to Northwest Oregon Works/Workforce Board
- South County Leadership Roundtable
- Travel Oregon/Travel Portland Regional Tourism Team
- Columbia County Emergency Management Economic Recovery Task Force
- Scappoose Economic Development Committee
- Columbia River Public Utility District (CRPUD) Budget Advisory and Rate Advisory Committees
- GPI Economic Development Professionals and Small Cities Consortiums
- Oregon Economic Development Association policy subcommittee
- Economic Development Advisory to Northwest Childcare Resource and Referral Service

Those are in addition to our active engagement with the Rainier, Clatskanie, and South Columbia County Chambers of Commerce.

Selected for specific leadership roles in 2020 and 2021, CET's Executive Director was appointed by the Governor to serve on the Regional Equity in Recovery Council, was elected to the Governance Board of the NW Regional Early Learning Hub, and serves on the St. Helens Main Streets Board Development Committee.

Our thirteen CET Board members are community leaders in their own right, and each hold multiple elected and appointed board seats in local, regional, statewide, and national organizations, providing valuable leadership and visibility, as well as reciprocating with experience, ideas, and innovation gained from these organizations to inform the Columbia Economic Team's work.

Financial

Columbia Economic Team ends the 2020/2021 Fiscal Year on sound footing, with a responsible carryover that reflects reduced expense from the 2019-2020 budget achieved through efficiencies and COVID impacts that include mandatory event cancellation, travel, and business expenses. We generated approximately \$40,000 in new, non-dues revenue through management of grant programs and the Enterprise Zone. We have upgraded and fully automated our bookkeeping and will conduct a financial Single Audit in summer 2021, a requirement due to the high level of pass-through grant management. Budgeting for 2021-2022 will be completed in July, recognizing that both COVID-related funding and expense will significantly decrease, anticipating minimal budget increases, and relying principally on dues revenue to fund all operations and activity.

Plans In Action

ONCE ABLE TO MEET IN PERSON IN APRIL, THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS HELD A STRATEGIC PLANNING RETREAT TO ASSESS THE ORGANIZATION, CURRENT ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT, DYNAMIC CHANGES IN BUSINESS SECTOR PRIORITIES, AND POST-COVID MARKET SIGNALS REGARDING WORK FORCE, SUPPLY CHAIN AND INDUSTRIAL INVESTMENT.

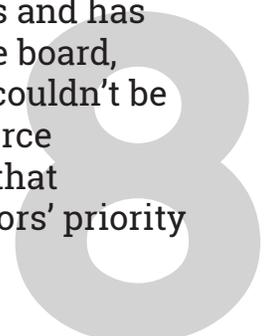
A Strategic Plan is under development forecasting out two-to-five years. Our top three short-term goals are to develop a Small Business Resource Center, Support Business & Economic Post-pandemic Recovery, and expand “BRRE” – Business Retention, Recruitment & Expansion. Our longer-term goals include enhanced development of Tourism, CET Membership Growth, and Outreach, Marketing, and Advocacy. Clearly CET will be active in all these areas on a continuous basis, as essential to our county’s economic growth and prosperity, while focusing on a manageable selection of priorities is tied to our capacity to pursue targeted goals and sustain our daily core functions.

For example, already we are enhancing our marketing presence through rebranding and

COLUMBIAECONOMICTEAM.COM

a new Columbia Economic Team website developed for all our key audiences and launched in June. Already we are laying the groundwork for new member recruitment for 2021-2022, and we have particularly achieved significant progress in establishing a Small Business Resource Center (SBRC), Columbia County’s first, which bears mention. CET developed a plan for an SBRC in early 2021, enlightened by our small business experience during the pandemic that demonstrated high need and demand for business advising, training, and ongoing education. We took our plan to key stakeholders, including PCC, its Small Business Development Center, Business Oregon, and the Oregon Small Business Development Center Network (OSBDCN). Seeded with a grant obtained through Col-Pac, we have now secured a commitment for continuous base funding from OSBDCN for an SBRC and inclusion in its statewide network, and a federal earmark that may provide 25% additional support. We are now securing complete funding for the four-year start-up phase and hope to announce the establishment of the locally operated and staffed SBRC in Q3 of this year.

Further, we have elevated our focus on workforce, aligned with the opening of Columbia County’s brand-new Portland Community College (PCC) Workforce Training Center at OMIC, the nexus of advanced and innovative manufacturing in Oregon. PCC is a leader in coordinating all regional workforce partners and has brought on a business outreach manager, as has our partner workforce board, Northwest Oregon Works (NOW). CET is a part of this network, which couldn’t be more important than under the current COVID and post-COVID workforce dynamics being experienced globally. It is notable in our recruitment that workforce has risen to the top of prospective investors’ and site selectors’ priority lists.



PLANS IN ACTION CONTINUED

Our BRRE is already underway, conducting industry, sector, and cluster analysis of a Columbia County business/employer database to develop growth, expansion, and development support strategies. A collaborative project to update the industrial land inventory has been initiated and will be complete in Q2 2021.

As part of our BRRE strategy for leveraging the advantages of our existing industry sectors, Columbia Economic Team will work to strengthen its partnership with Oregon Manufacturing Innovation Center as the leader of the Advanced Manufacturing priority of the Governor's 10-point Recovery Plan, and actively engage to support recovery funding programs from federal, state, and local governments through deployment of American Rescue Plan Act funding, as appropriate and requested.

Columbia Economic Team recently welcomed a new company to its membership, NEXT Renewables, which is planning a substantial renewable fuels manufacturing investment that represents many hundreds of construction jobs and 240 full-time employees. CET is assisting and will advocate for NEXT Renewables as needed in its permitting and development processes in Q3 2021.

Board actions to grow the organization include the hiring of Paul Vogel as permanent Executive Director in October 2020, and our Board of Directors expanded its size to enable the addition of more key leaders. PCC Training Center Director, Andrew Lattanner joined the Board in 2020 and a new Board member has been nominated for election at the 2021 Annual Membership Meeting.

To say this has been an unprecedented year is a galactic understatement. The pandemic has cost lives and to some extent, our old way of life. Some businesses will never recover and our economy will take years. Our resilience, recovery and re-focus are what will carry us forward globally, and here in Columbia County, Oregon.

There is more work underway and more stories to tell, but this reflects the focus, intensity, and connectivity of the Columbia Economic Team over the past year.

If you're already a member of Columbia Economic Team, thank you for your investment and support. This, and much more, is what you're helping accomplish. You're having significant positive impact and contributing to the economic prosperity of Columbia County. If you're not yet a member, sign up today, and become part of The Team.

Columbia Economic Team advocates for economic growth, and partners to make it happen.

Columbia County is the place to grow your business, and The Team is where to start.





**COLUMBIA
ECONOMIC
TEAM**

Membership Application

Yes, we want to join CET in support of business retention, investment, and economic growth in Columbia County and the region.

Enclosed is our annual payment in the amount of: (Choose your level)

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sole Proprietor/Individual \$100 | <input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining \$2,500 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Contributing \$250 | <input type="checkbox"/> Distinguished \$5,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> General \$500 | <input type="checkbox"/> Visionary +\$5,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Catalyst \$1000 | |

Company Name: _____

Contact Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Type of Business/Organization: _____

Website: _____

I will represent our organization, but please designate this person as our membership representative or alternative contact.

Contact Name: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Membership dues are paid in alignment with our fiscal year, July 1 - June 30. A receipt will be provided for your records. Memberships will automatically include you on our ENews and update distribution list.

Contact: Wela Negelspach
Administration & Program Manager
wnegelspach@columbiacountyoregon.com
503-410-1061
PO BOX 1653
St. Helens, OR 97051