

## **Stronger Economies Together Session 2: Assets and Challenges**

February 9, 2012

Dallesport, Washington

59 participants from the Mid-Columbia region came together to discuss our regional challenges and assets. Individually participants brainstormed and then shared with a small group of approximately six participants. After sharing their assets and challenges, these small groups wrote down their top five assets and challenges to share with the room. After sharing each of the seven lists, participants ensured that nothing was missing from the assets and challenges that were put forward by their peers. After this discussion, participants were asked to vote with three dots a piece on their priorities for both assets and challenges. The following list is a result of this exercise.

This list will be incorporated into MCEDD's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy as well as provide a foundation for the Stronger Economies Together process that will eventually lead to a vision, goals and an action plan for our region.

### **Top 5 Assets and Challenges (by vote)**

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#### **Assets:**

1. Regional Coordination, Collaborative human networks, positive attitudes toward working together
2. Transportation—location, variety
3. Natural and cultural resources—fishing, agriculture, history, values to protect, timber, fruit
4. Agriculture-value added, land base, climate
5. Natural resources, scenic beauty with year round recreation

#### **Challenges:**

1. Education, training—expanding on existing opportunities in K-12, community college, 4 year college and graduate degree access
2. Housing—affordable, workforce, and the age of our housing stock
3. Shortage of capital—bank lending, public and private
4. Regulations—state, federal, and local and specifically dealing with permitting, wetlands, and coordination between permitting agencies
5. Communications—internet access, regional marketing strategy, regional communications system (forum)