



Mid-Columbia Economic Development District

**Executive Committee Meeting**  
**Wednesday, June 5, 2024**  
**4:00 P.M.**

Via Zoom Only: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86709819782>  
Or Call 669-900-6833, Meeting ID: 867 0981 9782

**AGENDA**

<b><u>Topic</u></b>	<b><u>Estimated Time</u></b>	<b><u>Item</u></b>
Call to Order, Introductions		
Executive Committee Minutes <i>April 2024</i>	2 minutes	Approval
District Boundary Expansion Update	10 minutes	Recommendation
Draft Strategic Plan	15 minutes	Recommendation
Executive Director Report	20 minutes	Information
Other New Business; Committee Members Updates		
<b>Adjourn</b>		

The meeting location is accessible to persons with disabilities. If you have a disability that requires any special materials, services, or assistance, please contact the MCEDD office at 541-296-2266 (TTY 711) at least 48 hours before the meeting.

MCEDD is an equal opportunity lender, employer and provider.

**MID-COLUMBIA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT**  
**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**WEDNESDAY, APRIL 3, 2024**  
**4:00 PM**  
**ZOOM TELECONFERENCE**

**ATTENDANCE**

*Attending:* Scott Clements, Joe Dabulskis, Eric Proffitt, Steve Kramer, Ken Bailey

*Staff:* Jessica Metta (Executive Director), Jill Brandt (Administrative Assistant), Heidi Juenger (Finance and Operations Manager)

**CALL TO ORDER / INTRODUCTIONS**

Steve Kramer called the meeting to order at 4:00 pm. A quorum was present. A round of introductions took place.

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES**

Chair Kramer asked for any questions, comments or edits on the February and March 2024, minutes as presented. *There were none.*

**Scott Clements motioned to approve** the minutes from February 7<sup>th</sup> and March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2024, meetings as presented. Eric Proffitt seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

**FINANCIAL REPORT**

Heidi Juenger introduced herself to the Board and gave a brief introduction of her background. The financial report is not completed at this time and will be emailed out when it is ready.

*Heidi Juenger left the meeting at 4:10pm.*

**HEALTH INSURANCE BENEFITS FOR PART-TIME EMPLOYEES**

Jessica recounted her activity pursuing information on this topic since the last discussion at the February Executive Committee meeting. Her research discovered a wide range in the benefits offered by CAT, the City of The Dalles, and Wasco County to employees. At the last Executive Committee meeting, the Board suggested offering benefits on a pro-rated basis for staff working over 20 hours per week. Part timers' checks are not sufficient to cover dependent premiums. Jessica asked for any additional feedback that can be incorporated as the budget preparation process begins.

*Discussion: There was support to offer coverage following the City of The Dalles' example, which covers benefits for employees working over 20 hours per week on a pro-rated basis.*

*Employees working 40 hours per week are fully covered. Employees working 20 or fewer hours per week are ineligible. Steve asked if this benefit could be offered optionally, so that if a spouse/partner could cover their cost they would be allowed to access MCEDD's benefits. A part-time worker at 20 hours per week will cost MCEDD \$1250 per month to cover the employer's portion at 50%. Jessica would need to confirm with CIS/ SDAO.*

*Eric described his personal opt-out for his employee benefits because his wife also works for the State, and he has coverage through her benefits. He asked if this type of option could be available and a benefit for MCEDD staff. Ken asked about the scenario when a spouse has*

*income but no insurance option. Steve clarified that in this case MCEDD would not have to pay 50%. Jessica replied that full-time staff are covered 100%, so to be an equal benefit part-time staff would need to be covered at 50%. If an employee works 75% of full-time (29hrs), then MCEDD would cover 75% of the premium and the employee would be responsible to cover 25%. There was agreement that part-time employees can be offered the choice to buy spouse and/or family coverage at the full cost. This option will not create a large cost for MCEDD and will offer the employee the resource of coverage if they wish to pay for it.*

*Steve suggested that Jessica run this by legal counsel and bring back their feedback before the Board acts to create a policy. Jessica agreed and will bring her findings back to the next meeting.*

*Eric asked about the timeline for pursuing these details since the budget process timeline is approaching quickly. Jessica replied that adding this spouse/family piece at the employee's expense will not impact the budget, and the budget will include the options for part timers as discussed.*

**Eric Proffitt motioned** to move forward with the option to provide prorated covered of health benefits for part-time employees working 20 or more hours per week, no coverage for spouse/ dependents but they can buy it at full price if desired) that was in the packet. Scott Clements seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion carried.

### **DRAFT MCEDD DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION PLAN**

Jessica gave a brief overview of the action on this topic to date. MCEDD issued an RFP and selected Mariann Hyland as the consultant to develop this plan. She worked with a committee comprised of two board members and three staff to develop the draft framework that is the first few pages of this document. The action items and target measures were added by staff in discussions after the consultant's contract ended. Jessica shared a draft with Board member Leana Kinley before bringing the document back to this group. She explained that staff will continue to work on these items as there is time, and she explained that the progress has taken so long because the contracts and grants deadlines have priority. There are some items specific to the Board. She opened the floor for feedback.

*Discussion: Eric liked the goals and strategies. He appreciated having this as a guide to use to tap into unknown job /labor markets. The current labor shortage makes it tough to find people, and so expanding the pool when looking for new hires is important. He noted that most people in the Gorge do not know that MCEDD exists, citing his own experience when he applied years ago in response to a small newspaper ad. He appreciated that Jessica has taken this project on.*

*Jessica asked if the group felt this draft was OK to bring to the full board. Scott and Steve felt this was a good working document that would continue to be modified over time as trends come and go. All agreed that this was ready to be presented to the full Board. Ken added that the Full Board was a more diversified group and might have more input.*

*Scott asked if an additional staff person would be needed to administer this. Jessica answered no. Jessica explained that various staff: Kathy, Sara, Jesus, Ami, Jill – all can and will work on pieces of this as time and workflow allows. Eric liked the fact that many of the staff would participate because the best ideas come from group participation. Steve asked if the DEI staff*

*meetings would continue, and Jessica affirmed that the staff meetings have continued as learning opportunities for different things related to DEI. The latest topic explored was a new initiative called Black in the Gorge, that brings together black and biracial residents. There will be a Juneteenth celebration that Sara plans to attend with the Link's transit information booth.*

**Scott Clements motioned to recommend** MCEDD's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan to the full Board. Ken Bailey seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and motion carried.

**STAFF UPDATES:**

Jessica reported that Butch Miller resigned after the last Board meeting for personal reasons. The vacant seat represents the Cities of Hood River County and will be appointed, so we are waiting to hear who the replacement will be.

The Gorge Commission presentation will be coming up on Tuesday at the Readiness Center. Board members are invited to attend.

On the Budget preparation, Dana Woods has cancelled her offer to help. Jessica asked for an OK to push the Budget committee meeting back one week to May 23<sup>rd</sup> for more time.

*Discussion: Eric asked if the meeting would have public notice beforehand. Jessica replied yes, the standard procedure is for the notice to go out eight to fourteen days before the meeting. Ken saw no problem with giving staff the extra time, and the others agreed. Jessica thanked the Board and will get the calendar invite updated.*

**OTHER NEW BUSINESS/ COMMITTEE MEMBERS UPDATES**

Jessica asked for any updates or new business from the Board. *There were none.*

*Jill Brandt left the meeting at 4:28 pm.*

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR EVALUATION**

Pursuant to *ORS 192.660(i)* for the performance evaluations of public officers and employees, Chair Kramer called the meeting into an Executive Session at 4:28 p.m. to consider the annual evaluation for Jessica Metta.

*Regular session reconvened at 4:51 p.m. No actions were taken.*

**ADJOURN**

Chair Kramer adjourned the meeting at 4:51 pm.

*Respectfully submitted by Jill Brandt and Jessica Metta*

## Memorandum

**To: MCEDD Executive Committee**  
**From: Jessica Metta, Executive Director**  
**Date: May 29, 2024**  
**Re: District Boundary Expansion Update**

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MCEDD was formed in 1969 by the five member counties in recognition of their shared economic base and was officially recognized at that time by the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA). After more than a year of careful deliberation, the MCEDD Board of Directors passed a resolution in March 2023 to amend the District's boundaries to include Gilliam County. Our boundaries are set by the EDA, which must authorize any boundary modifications after consideration of the justifications.

After the March 2023 Board resolution, staff gathered the required letters of support from both the Oregon and Washington Governors, a resolution from Gilliam County and a resolution from Gilliam County's current district Greater Eastern Oregon Development Corporation (GEODC). This was all submitted to the EDA in May 2023. In October 2023, the EDA responded with a list of additional information required, including an update to our Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) to include Gilliam County, and to have GEODC submit an updated CEDS as theirs was out-of-date. Knowing the GEODC CEDS would take some time, I waited until this Spring to begin the update to our CEDS.

Meanwhile, the political climate in Gilliam County has shifted with successful recall efforts in May 2024 that removed both Judge Elizabeth Farrar and Commissioner Pat Shannon, who had been our two connections on this request. MCEDD's capacity has also shifted, with the loss of several long-time staff members. Staff requests Executive Committee discussion on moving forward with the boundary modification, in preparation for a discussion at the June Board meeting.

Options:

- Agree to continue as planned.
- Vote to pause the modification request until certain conditions or time frame is met. Provide guidance on what those might be.
- Vote to discontinue the modification request.

## Memorandum

**To: MCEDD Executive Committee**  
**From: Jessica Metta, Executive Director**  
**Date: May 29, 2024**  
**Re: Strategic Plan Draft Review**

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MCEDD began a process to develop an organizational Strategic Plan this year with the assistance of Alison Hart of A. Hart Associates as our consultant. This is MCEDD's first Strategic Plan in remembered history. The process began with a Board training attached to the regular March Board meeting and a Board Retreat in April. While only 5 of the 22 Board members (plus myself and Carrie Pipinich) attended the Board Retreat, discussion was robust and all agreed the outcome was valuable. A smaller group of attendees (Chair Steve Kramer, Vice-Chair Leana Kinley and myself) met after the retreat to get the attached draft ready for review by the Executive Committee and then the Board.

## Strategic Plan Next Steps

*A guide for the Strategic Planning implementation (Begin after Refinement session)*

Item	Detail	Timeline
<b>Present draft Strategic Plan at Board Meeting</b> (Strategic Planning Refinement Group)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Solicit feedback from full Board on the work of the Refinement group</li> </ul>	Suggested within one month
<b>Strategic Plan Review for Operationalization</b> (Staff)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assign lead for each Strategy</li> <li>Leads identify tactics/action items for each Strategy. Determine timeline (Q1, Q2, etc.) for each tactic/action item</li> <li>Develop Performance Measures for each strategy informed by Vision of Success for each Focus Area</li> <li>Consider how each Focus Area, Strategies and Performance Measures overlap</li> <li>Review full plan once timelines are determined to assess resources and feasibility and shift timelines as needed if too many Strategies/ Performance Measures overlap</li> </ul>	Within one month of Board review
<b>Final Strategic Plan Draft with Timelines and Performance Measures Presented to Board</b> (Executive)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Solicit feedback on Timelines and Performance Measures</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> The goal is to move the plan toward adoption of Focus Areas, Strategies and Performance Metrics at the next Board meeting.</p> <p>Tactics are an operation function and are the purview of staff. Generally they are not subject to Board review or approval.</p> <p>The ‘Tactics’ column can be hidden in the Excel spreadsheet.</p>	

<b>Final Strategic Plan Adoption</b> (Board)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CEO presents final Strategic Plan draft for Board adoption</li> </ul>	
<b>Create Budget Based on Strategic Plan</b> (Executive)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop budget for the upcoming year that reflects the priorities outlined in the Strategic Plan</li> <li>Submit to Board for approval</li> </ul>	
<b>Create Work Plan (tactical actions that support overall plan)</b> (Staff)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assign Lead for each Strategy. The Lead drafts the Work Plan section for their assigned Strategy. The Work Plan is a more detailed timeline of the tactics, with the steps that lead up to satisfying each Strategy. (See Work Plan sheet of Strategic Plan Draft document.)</li> </ul>	
<b>Review Process</b> (Staff)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Set calendar for monthly review of plan (See Template)</li> <li>Monthly for lead and key team members; more frequently if needed</li> <li>Develop Stoplight reporting method for the Board in ‘Status’ column</li> <li>Assign reporting responsibility</li> </ul> <p><b>Stoplight Status Key:</b>            Gray = Not Started            Red = Off Track (0–25%)            Yellow = Slow Progress (25–50%)            Green = On Track (50–90%)            Blue = Complete (90–100%)</p> <p><b>Resource:</b> Review Calendar template</p>	
<b>Set Quarterly Review Rhythm for Staff</b> (Executive)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lead and key team members provide status report on Strategic Plan progress</li> <li><b>Repeat quarterly</b></li> </ul>	
<b>Set Quarterly Review Rhythm at Board Meeting</b> (Executive)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CEO provides status report on Strategic Plan progress</li> <li>Discussion and feedback on items that require strategic decisions</li> <li><b>Repeat quarterly</b></li> </ul>	





**Executive Director's Report**

**Prepared for the June 2024 Executive Committee Meeting**

**Regional Work and Outreach**

- **EDA:** I am helping host our EDA representative Wes Cochran for a visit to the region on June 12. The focus is the Port of Skamania, but I have tagged on visits with the Ports of Hood River and The Dalles as well as the Dufur Innovation Hub at Wy'east Resource Conservation and Development.
- **Washington Dept of Commerce** issued a new funding opportunity for county Associate Development Organizations (ADOs) to hire grant writers (such as MCEDD). I reached out to our two local entities (Skamania County Economic Development Council and Klickitat County Economic Development Authority) with the offer to write the grant application if they were interested in contracting with MCEDD. Skamania County's needs the County are being met by a private grant writer, but Klickitat County Economic Development Authority was interested. We ended up with a contract for only May and June and are working quickly to support the Port of Klickitat, City of White Salmon, White Salmon Valley Pool Metropolitan Park District, and Klickitat Valley Health as the CEDS-list project proponents interested in support. We are starting to prepare for the round of funding that will open in July (anticipated) with outreach to our public partners in Klickitat County.
- **Oregon HB 3395** which would provide grant writing funding to all Oregon Economic Development Districts, including MCEDD, to support Oregon communities stalled in its distribution from the OR Dept. of Administrative Services. We sought and received a legislative fix to the bill language to disburse the funds in the 2024 legislative session, but still are awaiting the arrival of the contract/ funds.
- **Statewide Associations:** The Oregon Economic Development District (OEDD) Association continues to meet monthly virtually. Our Spring in-person visit occurred in Roseburg in late April. In May, I convened another quarterly meeting of the WA EDDs for information sharing.
- We hosted a meeting of the **Hood River Economic Development Group** in April with a discussion of upcoming bonds and levies in the County, and a plan to host a meeting to present information about ways employees can address the lack of available and affordable housing. One result of this meeting is a virtual gathering I planned for June 5 at 9am with Oregon state staff to share housing-related legislation that came out of the 2024 session - let me know if you'd like to attend!
- Our **Pub Talks in Skamania and Klickitat County** continue, thanks to the grant we received from Washington State Microenterprise Association. These events included one in Lyle with Gorge Women in Business in April, May 8 with Mt Adams Chamber in White Salmon, May 22 with Goldendale Area Chamber in Goldendale, May 29 with Skamania County EDC in Stevenson, and June 4 with The Next Door Inc. in Bingen in Spanish.
- The **Gorge PitchFest** has been a big focus with around \$22,000 raised in sponsorship funds that will be given to the winners. Around 50 businesses applied to pitch and five finalists were selected. The event is June 6, 5:30-8pm at The Granada with free reservations here: <https://www.mcedd.org/2024-gorge-pitchfest/>

- The Loan Administration Board approved a new Attainable Housing Loan for a duplex in The Dalles in May (not yet disbursed).
- Our successful application for the **Regional Innovation Hub** work began with a training in Portland in May. We will be posting the new position funded with this grant shortly – a Venture Catalyst to help connect innovation-based businesses to resources to help them grow and to build venture capital in the region. We will also be reaching out to partners soon to confirm who can serve on the Leadership Team for the effort.
- We have been searching for grants to help fully fund the Energy Project Manager position to work on Hood River County Energy Council goals. Unfortunately, we were unsuccessful with applications to Oregon Community Foundation and the Roundhouse Foundation.

### **Facilities, Trainings and Operations**

- We reinstated the non-profit status of Four Rivers Community Corporation! The review took less time than anticipated and opens up grants and sponsorship to MCEDD and our partners.
- We had a positive site review with WSDOT staff for oversight of our Mobility Management grants with no issues to address. We are also preparing for a much more intensive multi-day review with ODOT oversight of The Link's operations in July.
- Completing the budget has been my primary focus over the last few months. The Budget Committee meeting went well with a recommendation for the Board to approve the budget.
- We have signed a contract with Christa Wolfe, CPA with Wolfe Advisors, to serve in an interim capacity as our Finance Manager and help catch us up. Dana Woods closed January's books before she left at the end of February, but we have not yet closed any following months. We have had to ask for extensions on all ODOT reports and invoices, as well as several other quarterly grant reports/ invoices. We are also behind in providing financial reports to our financial service clients CREA and Northern Wasco County Parks and Rec, as well as to internal clients like MCEDD, OIB, MHEA, and GTA. I also need the CPA's assistance in determining if a Supplemental Budget is needed (likely given the fuel and vehicle maintenance costs especially). If yes, this would be included in the June Board meeting.
- I have also been focused on filling the Deputy position. We interviewed 7 candidates in the first round and 2 in the second round. I have made a job offer and will likely be able to announce the candidate prior to the Executive Committee meeting. I am grateful to partners Matthew Klebes, The Dalles City Manager, for serving on both interview committees, and to Steve Kramer for serving on the second interview committee.
- We have had some interest in the Finance Manager position, but the strength of the candidate pool is not certain. We posted June 3 as the initial deadline to apply for first-round interviews.
- I attended the Regards to Rural Conference held by Rural Development Initiatives in Kennewick in April. Sessions included action planning tools, Native American partnerships, better Latino outreach, and opportunities for rural funding.
- I held orientations with Cascade Locks City Councilor Denise Baker, our new Cities of Hood River County rep, and Chair Jennifer Euwer, our new Hood River County rep. Miland Waling, our Cities of Klickitat County rep has asked to step down and I am working on his replacement.
- The 2024 Oregon legislative session included some changes to Oregon Family Leave Act and Paid Leave Oregon with a July 1 effective date. I am waiting on the update of the Oregon Government employee handbook from HR Answers to use in updating our Personnel Policy (expected release is June 7). This will come before the June Full Board, but we didn't have it in time for the Executive Committee.