

**COLUMBIA RIVER GORGE NATIONAL SCENIC AREA
BI-STATE ADVISORY COUNCIL
Meeting Notice and Agenda**

**ANNUAL MEETING
Wednesday, June 14, 2023
**** 2:30 P.M. ******

Port of Hood River, 1000 E. Port Marina Dr., Hood River, OR
Or via Zoom Meeting: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89737212907>
Or call 253-215-8782, Meeting ID: 897 3721 2907

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Estimated Time</u>	<u>Item</u>
Call to Order/Welcome/Introductions <i>OIB; MCEDD</i>	5 minutes	Information
Approval of 2022 Minutes	5 minutes	Approval
Overview of Bi-State Advisory Committee	5 minutes	Information
Oregon Consulting Group Study Presentation <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Long-term impacts of WIB/ OIB lending programs</i>• <i>Opportunities for improvements</i>• <i>Discussion/ questions from attendees</i>	45 minutes	Discussion
Oregon/Washington Investment Board Updates <i>Kevin Waters, Executive Director, Skamania EDC</i> <i>Jessica Metta, Executive Director, MCEDD</i>	10 minutes	Information
Opportunities for Further Collaboration	5 minutes	Discussion
Updates from Agencies	5 minutes	Discussion
Good of the Order	5 minutes	Discussion
Adjournment		

The meeting location is accessible to persons with disabilities. If you have a disability that requires any special materials, services or assistance, please contact us at 541-296-2266 at least 48 hours before the meeting so arrangements for appropriate accommodations can be made.

**COLUMBIA RIVER GORGE NATIONAL SCENIC AREA
BI-STATE ADVISORY COUNCIL**

July 19, 2022

3:00 P.M.

In person and Zoom Meeting

Zoom Host Mid-Columbia Economic Development District

ATTENDANCE:

OIB MEMBERS: Kirk Wright, Doug Roof - zoom, Gil Kelley – zoom, Jill Amery – zoom, Jamie Kranz – zoom, Jessica Metta – zoom (MCEDD staff),

WIB MEMBERS: Kathy McKenzie, Anita Gahimer-Crow, Matt Masco, Kevin Waters (Skamania EDC staff), Cindy Bradley (Skamania EDC staff)

GUESTS: Krystyna Wolniakowski (Gorge Commission), Michael Held (Business Oregon), Tammy Kaufman (Gorge Commission), Joanna Kaiserman (Gorge Commission),

GUESTS – via zoom: Andrea Klaas (Port of The Dalles), Lynn Burditt, Scott Clements (MCEDD Loan Administration Board), Casey Gatz (USFS), David Griffith (MCEDD board), Donna Mickley (Gorge Commission), Lisa Naas Cook (Gorge Commission), Phillip Watness (Skamania County Pioneer)

CALL TO ORDER & COMMUNITY WELCOME

Kevin Waters (EDC staff) called the meeting to order at 3:01 p.m. A round of introductions took place.

APPROVAL OF MAY 2021 MINUTES

Kirk Wright motioned to approve the May 12, 21 meeting minutes. Jill Amery seconded the motion. The motion carried with one abstention.

OVERVIEW OF BI-STATE ADVISORY COUNCIL

Created for the Columbia Gorge National Scenic Area, this meeting is joint structure that designed to coordinate the efforts of the two investment boards, along with the States of Oregon and Washington, the Columbia River Gorge Commission, MCEDD, Skamania EDC, US Forest Service, and local partners in support of economic development in the National Scenic Area.

We talk about economic development issues, market economic development program, and identify potential projects. In addition, we initiate ideas for economic development that emphasize creative thinking, partnerships, and linkages among the Columbia River Gorge Communities.

OIB and WIB are voting members of the Council. There are also non-voting members that represent the various communities and agencies involved.

2022-27 COLUMBIA GORGE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

PRESENTATION:

Jessica Metta (MCEDD) presented the final “Five Year Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy” that was developed by the region over the last year.

Every five years the region is pulled together to develop the CEDS (Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy), that is used to help understand the regional economy and to help develop goals, strategies, and action plans with the goals of creating jobs, raising the income levels, and diversifying the economy.

Jessica reviewed the plan in some detail. (See the attached presentation). The process was informed by a committee of public and private entities that represent the five-county area. The meetings were all virtual. The final plan was adopted by the MCEDD Board in March of 2022

The final plan is online at: www.gorgeeconomy.org

Jessica thanked the steering committee, the sponsors, and all that were involved in this project.

Discussion: Gil Kelley highlighted the fact that the “workforce is almost exactly 50% of the total population” asking if that is high or low percentage. Michael Held from Business Oregon indicated that workforce participation rates are usually around 62%. A threat that was listed as “impacts of continued growth”, does that really mean “ability to serve continued growth”? Jessica Metta indicated that the comment was more centered around tourism and how there is over-tourism in some areas and how it is affecting natural resources. The strategy regarding robust workforce training. What is the real gap or work to be done there? Jessica explained that the strategy was to keep up on the current industries and what skills will be needed and that people are able to get the training locally. The community colleges are involved in this process.

VITAL SIGN INDICATORS FOR ECONOMIC VITALITY:

Krystyna Wolniakowski introduced Lisa Nass Cook to present the “Vital Sign Indicators for Economic Vitality”. Lisa presented an overview of The Vital Sign indicator plan that is currently being developed. (See the attached presentation).

Input is being requested from the OIB/WIB boards regarding this plan. Some of the information they are seeking from the boards are:

What do the OIB and WIB currently track?

What are the new reporting requirements for the USDA Rural Business Development Grant?

Where are the information gaps; what else could we be tracking:

How could an OIB and WIB Vital Sign be useful to support economic vitality withing the NSA?

VSI is a joint Gorge Commission and Forest Service monitoring effort. The purpose is to monitor the health of the resources that are protected in the National Scenic Area. The resources include, scenic, natural, cultural, recreation, and local economies. This plan is building on an initial effort that started in 2009 and currently streamlining and updating a smaller list of indicators to incorporate both changes that were made in the Gorge 2020 management plan as well as thinking about things such as climate change that wasn't explicitly talked about in the previous effort nor in the 2020 plan. Equity is also being intentionally considered.

Discussion:

The group discussed the 4 questions that were asked. Further information will be provided to VSI by the OIB and WIB once the information has been gathered.

There will be additional opportunities to engage in this process. Attendees that are interested are encouraged to contact Lisa Naas Cook to join the workgroups. Workgroups are expected to begin in the fall.

Additional information resources are currently being researched across the area sectors.

Gil Kelley asked how the loan programs leveraging or assisting women and minority owned businesses? How are we tracking jobs that are promised during the loan process? How are we bridging gap between the workforce skills and new jobs being created? This data will be requested during the process from the OIB and WIB. Jessica from OIB and Kevin from WIB gave a brief overview of the of the current data collection processes.

Discussion ensued regarding the current funding availability and potential future needs and the loan sizes potentially needed in the future. Cooperative loaning is one of the solutions to the fund larger loans. The cooperation can be between the local agencies along with commercial banks and private investors.

OREGON/WASHINGTON INVESTMENT BOARD UPDATES:

Jessica Metta gave an update on the OIB program. They have had some rule updates on their micro lending program loans. They just approved its first loan under the new micro lending rules, which is a Boutique in The Dalles. They have approved their first USDA loan for a restaurant in Hood River. Earlier this year they approved a small loan for a Yoga studio. Lending is showings indications of picking up. MCEDD work on the rules for the new USDA loan program. The first loan has proved challenging. The OIB approved the loan in April and funded it with MCEDD funds but are months in trying to get the USDA to approve the loan which is still pending.

Kevin Waters gave an update on the WIB program. The WIB loans have been slow in the last year. The WIB did a large loan last year for \$500,000. This loan was an exception to lending cap that is usually applied to the loans. The business is a Hot Springs lodging property that is open and operating now. This loan helped to fund the first phase of a potential of 7 phases. They are in good standing and the WIB is expecting them to convert the loan to commercial lending in the future. The WIB has a new loan in process. This is to a company that had a loan for their initial phase, paid that loan off and are now looking to expand. They worked with a company out of White Salmon for a USDA loan for about six months. However, the company was able to secure commercial financing. During the COVID pandemic the WIB lent five \$40,000 emergency loans, four of the five have repaid the funds. All five businesses have been able to remain in business.

Both agencies reported that they are marketing the loan programs.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR FURTHER COLLABORATION:

The OIB and WIB both look to work with other lending partners for the larger loans. Both agencies are continuing to look for additional fund availability. The WIB would like to have more funds available to support our local public agency with infrastructure funding.

Michael Held of Business Oregon indicated that they are willing to collaborate with OIB for the larger loans.

OIB will be presented a Business Oregon collaboration loan next week.

UPDATES FROM AGENCIES:

Krystyna Wolniakowski from the Gorge Commission reported that they are currently working on the budget for 2023. In the budget they are requesting additional funding for a couple staff positions. One is a Climate Change planner. They are also requesting funding for a Diversity Equity and Inclusion program.

Donna Mickley, Forest Service reported that have the Historic Hwy permit program in place and working. They had to secure the funding and employees, which proved to be a challenge. They are working on the Hazardous Fuels reduction from Oregon Senate bill 762 and House Bill 1168. The Forest Service had doubled its target for hazardous fuels reduction. They are coordinating with DNR and ODF on this project. They are also, working with ODOT on the Historic Trail that is being constructed along I84 in the Gorge. The Forest Service is expecting an increase in their budget this year. They are working to fill vacant positions; they have a third of their positions open. They are working on a local and a national hiring program.

Tammy Kaufman from the Gorge Commission reported that they are starting a study on Accessory Dwelling units in the scenic area. They are in the initial stages. They will be seeking community input during the process.

The Gorge commission is also looking at the Cottage/Home Based Business industry currently in the scenic area.

NEW BUSINESS/ GOOD OF THE ORDER

Nothing noted.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 4:36 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Cindy Bradley, EDC Finance Manager