## MID-COLUMBIA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT

## Mid-Columbia Economic Needs Assessment -COVID-19 and Beyond

Presented by Jane Allen

### Presentation Outline

- Project Overview
- Industry Sectors
- Summary of Needs
- Opportunities



Image MCEDD

## Project Purpose

## "Listen to Learn" framework

#### Goals:

- Identify priority concerns for region
- Reveal the positive and negative impacts from the pandemic
- Opportunities for collaboration

#### **Outcomes:**

- Provide a framework for recovery
- Reduce negative impacts
- Improve resilience

### Project Overview

- 25 stakeholders interviewed between
   January 13th-March 10th
- Stakeholders chosen to reflect key industries and organizations that contribute to economic development and vitality of region
- Questions centered around COVID-19 impacts, local needs, and hopes for the future

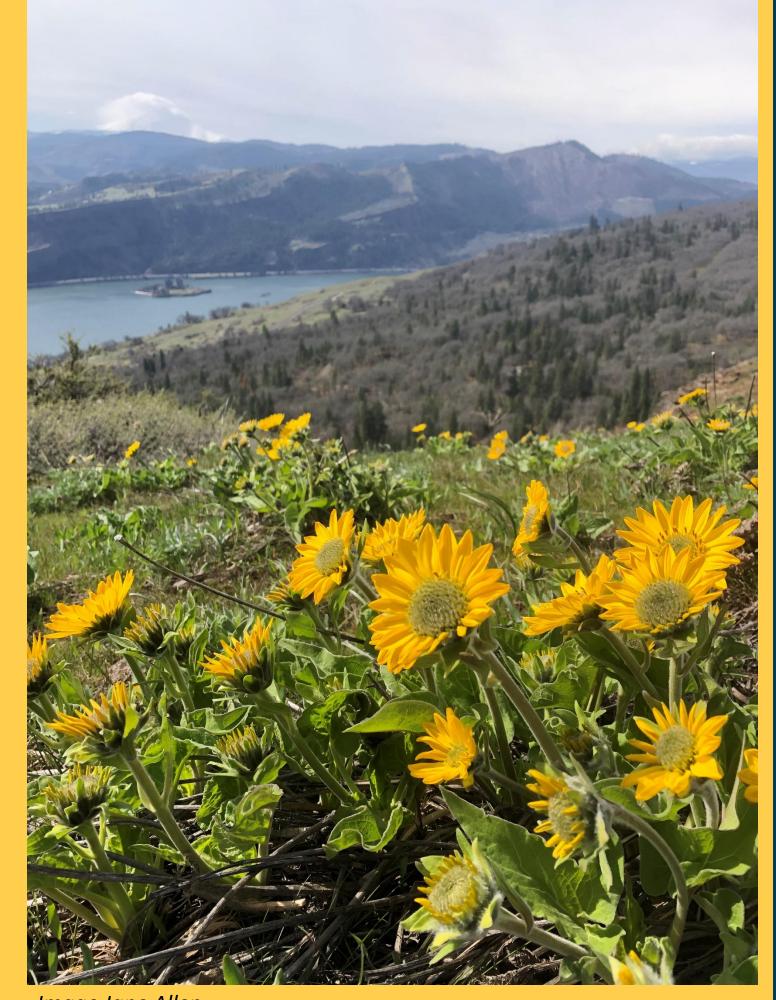


Image Jane Allen

## How Did the Community Respond?

### Meeting the Moment

- Some Ports charged half rent to keep tenants afloat
- Businesses offering unused spaces as "internet cafe" to support students without internet access
- Local chambers distributed PPE to businesses at no cost
- CRITFC partnered with organizations to bring resources and food to the in-lieu sites, partnered with One Community Health for testing and vaccine distribution
- PUD utility relief programs supported thousands in bill reductions to businesses
- Wasco emergency operations center got Wi-Fi access to orchards around The Dalles
- Local buses as Wi-Fi centers, transport to vaccine events
- Millions in grant funds for businesses throughout the five-county region

## A Closer Look: Hospitality & Tourism

- 44% of businesses surveyed in the Gorge had to lay off or terminate their employees due to COVID-19 (Travel Oregon)
- Timeliness of information and rapidly changing guidelines
- Region worked together to get out information
- Shined a light on the value of tourism





Images Jane Allen, MCEDD

## A Closer Look: Agriculture

- A lot of uncertainty
- Operations that rely on direct-to-consumer
- Local restaurants closed
- Migrant farmworkers are a vulnerable population
- Hard to socially distance, transportation challenges
- Wheat sector did well





**Images MCEDD** 

## A Closer Look: Healthcare

- Had to stop elective procedures early on
- Supply chain disruptions
- Administering vaccines
- Increased telehealth services,
   disparities for rural residents





### SUMMARY OF NEEDS



Workforce development

Improved broadband

Targeted support for most impacted businesses

High-quality, affordable childcare

Attainable Housing

### Opportunities: Attainable Housing

Image F. Muhammad PixelBay

#### ACCESS TO RESOURCES

Help communities access resources to reduce barriers to housing development such as code updates, infrastructure investments, and financing tools

#### SHARE INFORMATION

Share info on resources for energy efficiency, incentive programs, and other opportunities for investment in the region

#### SUPPORT VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

Partner with orgs - Mid-Columbia Housing Authority, Mid-Columbia Community Action Program, and local banks and developers to support housing for our most vulnerable populations

## Opportunities: Small Business Support



#### AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN

Work with local businesses to access resources through stimulus plan

#### PARTNER WITH LOCAL ORGS

Partnerships with The Next Door Inc., SBDC and local chambers to share info, build skills, provide targeted support for underserved populations

#### TARGETED SUPPORT

Identify support strategies for businesses with less capacity.

Image Tim Mossholder Unsplash

## Opportunities: Access to Childcare

#### **SUPPORT PARTNERS**

Work with local partners - CGCC and partners in Klickitat County are exploring feasibility of developing childcare centers



#### STIMULUS PROGRAMS

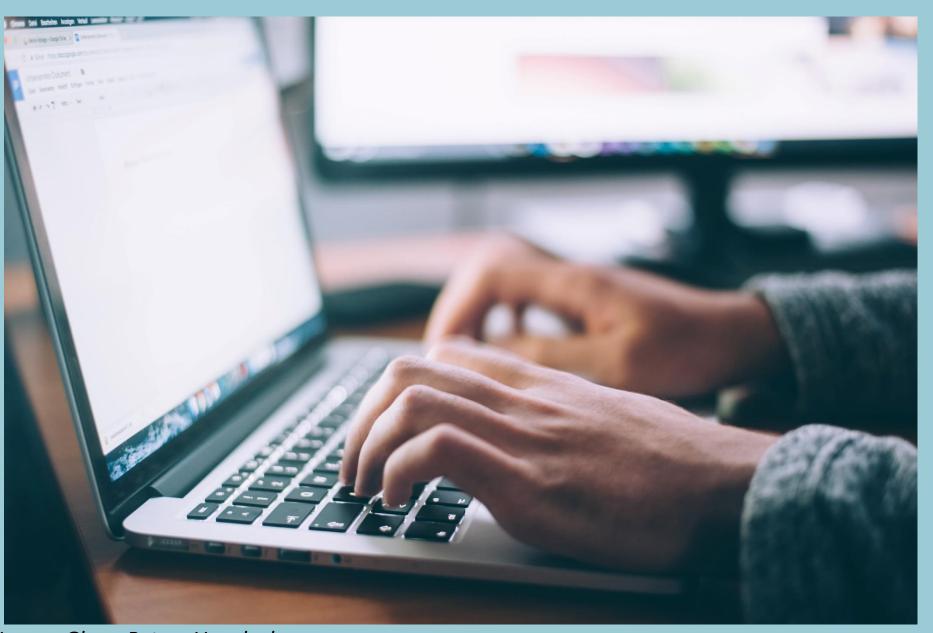
Explore opportunities to provide funding for childcare initiatives

#### **EXPLORE SUCCESSFUL MODELS**

Identify and explore successful models for addressing this issue, including employer-based childcare, center-based childcare, and others

Image Anna Earl Unsplash

### Resilient Infrastructure: Broadband



#### **INVEST IN TECH**

Invest in scalable technology to meet needs and allow for growth

#### **ADDRESS KEY ISSUES**

Explore resources targeted for key uses such as distance learning, smart infrastructure, telemedicine

#### GORGE BROADBAND CONSORTIUM

Continue to share information through Gorge Broadband Consortium and use it to support action

Image Glenn Peters Unsplash

# Opportunities: Workforce Development



### SUPPORT WORKFORCE AGENCIES

Continue to develop partnerships between OR and WA workforce services to support transitions into workforce

#### **ENHANCE CAREER PATHWAYS**

Create and enhance opportunities for CTE pathways and other college career tracks

#### **DEVELOP PARTNERSHIPS**

Support partnerships between industry, workforce, and higher ed

Image Jeriden Villegas Unsplash



## Collaboration, Partnerships, Coalition Building



## Framing Question

### EQUITABLE RECOVERY

How might we create a recovery strategy where no one was left behind? What would that look like?