



Mid-Columbia Economic Development District

MID-COLUMBIA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT

Fiscal Year 2020

Annual Report

**Mid-Columbia Economic
Development District**
802 Chenoweth Loop Road
The Dalles, OR 97058
www.mcedd.org



From the Board Chair and Executive Director

It is our pleasure to present the Mid-Columbia Economic Development District annual report. This has been a year like no other, with the appearance of COVID-19 in early 2020 and all the economic changes it has brought to our region. But we are strong, having just celebrated 50 years of MCEDD serving the five county bi-state region, building economic vitality and focusing on opportunities to support business and entrepreneurs. That is 50 years of learning to work collaboratively as we adapt to change and build an even better foundation for economic success.

This year, on top of pivots to address the pandemic, we continued to deliver high quality technical assistance, business assistance and industry support through our core programs, while also expanding our service offerings. Significant milestones and accomplishments in fiscal year 2020 include:

- Supporting **economic resiliency** as a result of COVID-19 with information and resource sharing, trainings, loans and grants responses to a myriad of economic shocks in 2018.
- Providing technical assistance for our members accessing **federal economic disaster funding** for public works projects.
- Implementing the regional **Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy**, in coordination with our members, and hosting a sold-out Economic Symposium to build connections across the region.
- Launching **the Gorge Regional Transit Strategy** to support the regional Gorge TransLink public transportation system.
- Expanding the LINK transportation system, providing **over 22,000 passenger trips**.
- Providing direct business assistance through our loan programs, providing **almost \$1 million in funding this fiscal year to businesses**.
- Consolidating MCEDD's **administrative office** into the The Dalles Transit Center for better staff connection and cost savings.
- Supporting **MCEDD through a transition** in the Executive Director position.

We invite you to explore this annual report, which provides a snapshot of the resources MCEDD delivered to our service area in fiscal year 2020. And, as we embark on a new year of more changes, we extend our appreciation to our members and partners.

Sincerely,

Bill Schmitt

Bill Schmitt,
MCEDD Board Chair

Jessica Metta

Jessica Metta
MCEDD Executive Director

Overview

Mid-Columbia Economic Development District (MCEDD) was established in 1969 by five counties bordering the Columbia River: Hood River, Wasco and Sherman counties in Oregon and Skamania and Klickitat counties in Washington. MCEDD is governed by a Board of Directors representing public and private interests throughout the region.

2020 Board of Directors

Bill Schmitt, Chair
Washington Ports

Bob Hamlin, Vice Chair
Skamania County

Steve Kramer, Sec/Treas
Wasco County

Rex Johnston
Klickitat County

Les Perkins
Hood River County

Joe Dabulskis
Sherman County

Eric Proffitt
Workforce

Scott Clements
Private Business

Ken Bailey
Agriculture

Tonya Brumley
Oregon Chambers

David Griffith
Oregon Ports

Robert Kimmes
Healthcare

Stephanie Hoppe
Higher Education

Gordon Zimmerman
Cities of Hood River

Dana Peck
Washington Chambers

Sue Knapp
Cities of Wasco



Staff and the Executive Committee adapted with Zoom meetings.

Leana Kinley
Cities of Skamania

Jan Brending
Cities of Klickitat County

Mark Zanmiller
High Tech

Erik Glover
Cities of Sherman

Buck Jones
Food and Beverage

MCEDD Staff

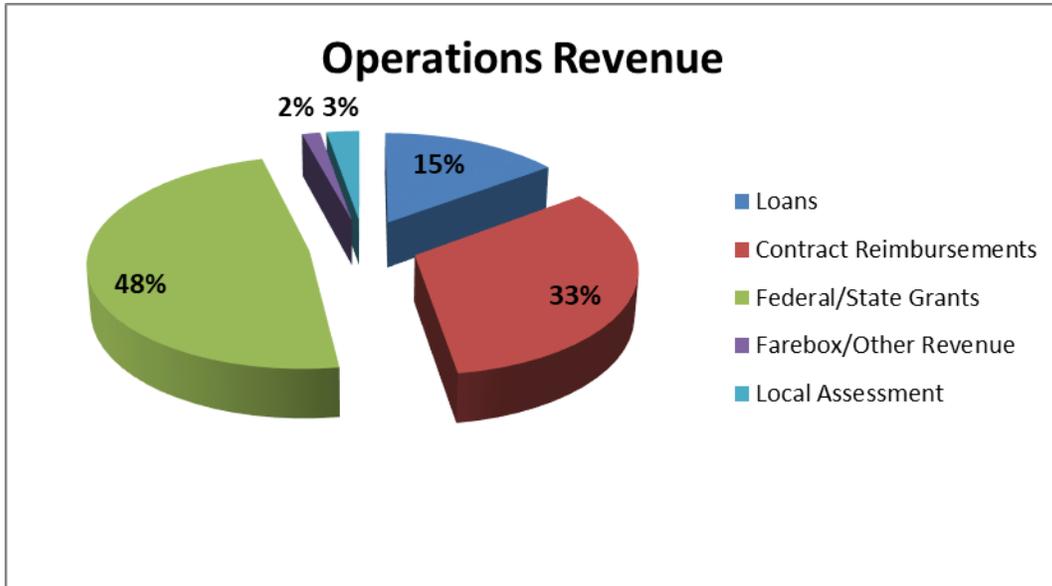
A professional staff provides business assistance, technical assistance and regional coordination for the five-county bi-state area of the Columbia River Gorge.

Jessica Metta, *Executive Director*
Brad Houghton, *Deputy Director*
Dana Woods, *Finance and Operations*
Carrie Pipinich, *Senior Project Manager*
Israel Ayala Guevara, *Loan Fund Manager*
Jacque Schei, *Project Manager*
Marla Harvey, *Program Manager*
Lauren Hernandez, *Office Administrator*
Ami Beaver, *Administrative Assistant*
Tatiana Eckhart, *RARE Project Coordinator*

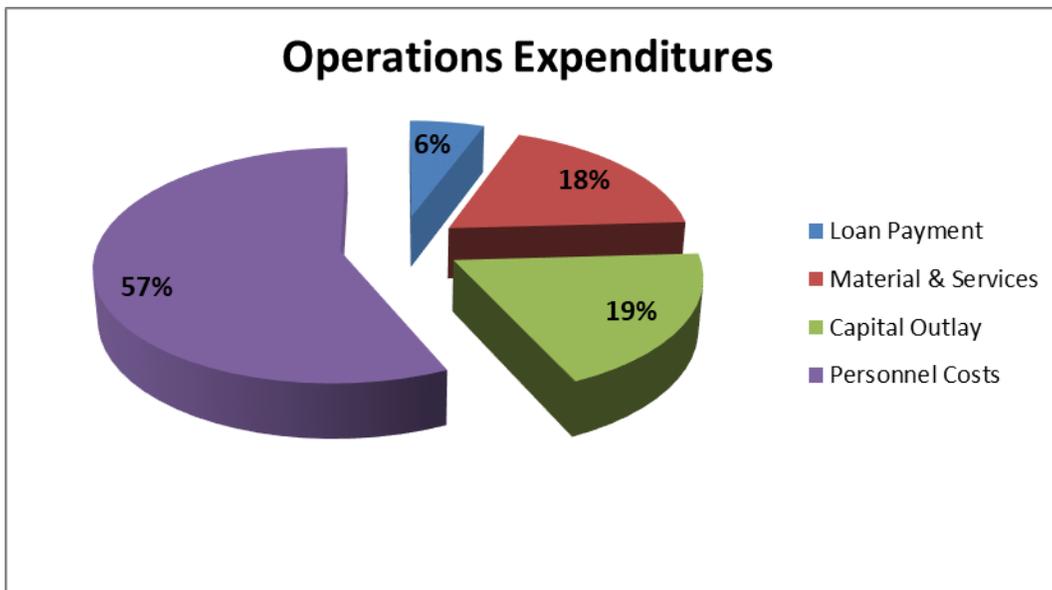
Kathy Fitzpatrick, *Mobility Manager*
Charlotte Sallee, *Transportation Operations Manager*
Cheryl Sallee, *Transportation Operations Manager*
DeAnn DePaepe and Sherry Stephenson, *Link Dispatchers/ Schedulers*
Gerald Benedict, Fred Bergren, Scott Isaak, Robbyn Deswert, Nancy Reed, Gary Methvin, Casey Ruiz, Antonio Silva, Jim Hall, Steve Wilson, Louis Herring, and Margaret Rodriguez, *Link Drivers*

Statement of Financial Activities

MCEDD's Operations Revenue is derived from Loans (15%), Contract Reimbursements (33%), Federal and State Grants (48%), Local Dues (3%), Farebox and Other Revenue (2%). Operations Revenue totaled \$2,243,774 in FY20.



MCEDD's Operations Expenditures are categorized into four categories, Loan Payments (6%), Materials and Services (18%), Capital Outlay (19%), and Personnel Costs (57%). The office remodel for our combined facility at The Dalles Transit Center, as well as the completion of a bus barn for The Link, resulted in a much higher Capital Outlay figure than is typical. Total Operations Expenditures were \$2,139,829 in FY20.



Regional Economic Development Strategy

Updating the Regional Strategy

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs) is a guide to understanding the regional economy and crafting goals, strategies and actions to create jobs, raise income levels, diversify the economy, and improve the quality of life.

“The strategy develops regional consensus on our highest priorities so we can move forward together as a single region.”

Columbia Gorge Economic Symposium

MCEDD hosted the annual Columbia Gorge Economic Symposium in November 2019, featuring David Anderson, the CEO of NW Natural, as keynote speaker, followed by regional economists presenting data on employment, wages, and industry changes.

MCEDD's 50th Anniversary

The Symposium celebrated MCEDD's 50th anniversary with a congratulatory video message from Governor Kate Brown regarding the organization's past and future impact on the region. The event also honored Board members past and present for their guidance of the organization over the years.



MCEDD coordinated a panel session of representatives of the region's key industries including WyEast Timber Services, Cascade Cherry Growers/ Sage Fruit Company, Imperial Stock Ranch, pFriem Family Brewers, Cardinal Glass Industries, Real Carbon, and The Renewal Workshop. The companies discussed critical components of our regional economy and issues to explore moving forward. The symposium filled to capacity with approximately 150 attendees.

Vision

The region envisions a thriving economy supporting diverse business opportunities that act in harmony with the area's rural qualities, values and natural resources.

Priority Areas

- Housing
- Financial Capital, Entrepreneurial Environment
- Workforce
- Infrastructure
- Regulatory Environment

Access the report:
[Summary document](#)
[Full document](#)

Join us for the next **Columbia Gorge Economic Symposium**, scheduled for a virtual platform on November 6, 2020!

Economic Resiliency

Resiliency Materials

Building on work from our Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and experiences in response to economic shocks, MCEDD staff, with support from our AmeriCorps RARE intern, conducted an assessment of responses to past disasters to identify strategies that will enhance future economic responsiveness and resiliency. The resulting report summarizes effective practices used in past disasters and identifies areas for improvement and opportunities for addressing gaps.

To address one gap identified in the report, MCEDD developed a communication toolkit of one-page documents to use in disaster preparedness and response (English and Spanish versions available) and a home on our webpage: mcedd.org/ready. The tools use consistent design elements that can be adapted to use across the region, regardless of the event. In addition, MCEDD worked with the graphic designer to develop statewide versions of the toolkit for use by members of the Oregon Economic Development Districts.

Mid-Columbia Economic Resiliency Team

In response to the COVID-19 crisis, MCEDD and Governor Brown's Regional Solutions Team jointly convened the Mid-Columbia Economic Resiliency Team, a bi-state team of local, regional, and state officials from Washington and Oregon to collaborate, coordinate, and communicate on a COVID-19 economic response and recovery strategy. Our staff created a COVID-19 page linked from the mcedd.org/ready page to post resources and updates. We also hosted weekly meetings with the team to discuss economic recovery topics, emailed a regular digest of resources and information to the team for dispersal, coordinated with Joint Information Centers regionally, and worked with partners to collect information on economic impacts. This work will be ongoing in FY21 as we continue our pandemic response and recovery.

Broadband

Effective networks are critical to resiliency and a key component to our comprehensive regional economic development strategy. MCEDD places a core focus on increasing broadband accessibility throughout the region. This year, MCEDD's broadband work was highlighted at the Western Governor's Association's Reimagining the Rural West conference, and staff engaged in the following activities:

- Moderated the only session on broadband at the Oregon Infrastructure Summit. The session highlighted the Maupin Fiber Project as well as projects from other areas in Oregon.

Assessment of Strategies to Support Economic Resiliency, July 2019



Prepare in advance and be ready to respond if an economic shock or disaster occurs.

Broadband Training

Our staff hosted three WebWorks Business Trainings to highlight ways to leverage connectivity for businesses in Maupin, Condon, and Hood River.



Broadband, continued

- Supported the Sherman Cities Fiber Project in partnership with GorgeNet to complete connections in City of Rufus and plan for improved connections in Biggs Junction. This project provides high-speed, wired connections in each community, reducing traffic on the broader countywide wireless network that serves farms and ranches around the County.
- Engaged in the City of Goldendale Broadband Planning efforts, and also with a variety of stakeholders for technical assistance and actions focused on broadband availability assessments.

Community Economic Development

Our staff worked with communities across the region to support economic development projects that enhance the resilience of our economy and communities. Projects this year included:

- Engaged in economic development planning efforts through Economic Opportunities Analysis (EOA) processes for Cities of The Dalles, Grass Valley, Maupin, Moro, Rufus, and Wasco. These efforts leveraged CEDS industry clusters and several data sources to identify economic trends and buildable lands in each community, and to highlight parcels where zoning may not be appropriate for desired development.
- Supported the City of Maupin in efforts to seek funding for and begin the process of conducting a Housing Needs Analysis. Paired with their EOA, this will provide a wholistic picture of development opportunities and any needed shifts in zoning needed to support growth and build on investment in robust broadband infrastructure.
- Worked to identify funding for, and moving infrastructure assessments or feasibility studies forward in Biggs Junction, Dufur, Grass Valley, Pine Grove and Wamic.
- Administered Sherman County's two housing grant programs that encourage development of new rental housing units and rehabilitation of existing housing.
- Participated in Klickitat County's Buildable Lands Inventory planning efforts.

Community Economic Development

Staff assisted the community of Grass Valley (population approx. 160) in Sherman County explore the transition from septic-only to a community wastewater treatment system to allow for business growth.



Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Oregon Investment Board



Sustained Impact:

From a \$4 million allocation, the Board has approved grants and loans (utilizing revolved funds) totaling almost \$9.8 million.

Leveraging:

Leveraged over \$15.2 million in private funds and more than \$13.3 million in public funds.

Employment:

Funds are provided through grants and loans to support infrastructure, business assistance, and workforce development. The Board has provided funding to projects to directly create or retain nearly 700 jobs.

Fiscal Year 2020 Summary

Project funding awarded through the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Oregon Investment Board helps to strengthen and diversify the economy of the region. Staffing is provided by MCEDD. Key activities in FY 2020 included:

Deployment of an **Emergency Relief Loan program** which allowed the Board to be responsive in providing flexible financing during the pandemic. Two loans were provided through this program to a florist and a restaurant, both in Hood River, to alleviate impacts caused by COVID-19.

The Board also proactively offered **relief to current loan clients in response to COVID-19**. Clients were able to receive up to three months of deferred interest and principal payments, followed by up to six months of interest-only payments. **Almost ten** existing OIB loan clients benefited from this support.

To highlight the work of the OIB and increase visibility for its impact in the region, the Board also explored a videography marketing project in FY20, which will be launched in FY21.

Loan Client Profile: Lucy's Informal Flowers



Lucy's Informal Flowers is a full service floral shop in Hood River. Lucy's offers flowers arranged or by the stem, plants, cards and gifts. With a working capital loan from the OIB, Lucy's was able to complete maintenance on their delivery vehicle and flower cooler so they can continue to provide beautiful flowers for a wide variety of clients in the Columbia River Gorge.

Oregon Investment Board Members

John Kasberger, Chair * Jill Amery, Vice Chair * Jorge Barragan, Secretary/Treasurer
Doug Roof * Tammy Miller * Craig Bowder

Business Assistance Division

Since inception of our business loan program, MCEDD has made 311 loans to businesses totaling over \$18.36 million. This year **the loan program funded more than \$900,000 in new loans** in support of:

- Development of seven attainable housing units in The Dalles.
- Acquisitions of two essential rural grocery markets, one each in Wasco County and Sherman County.
- New business startup of a backflow company.
- Expansion of a new women's clothing boutique.

MCEDD's Loan Administration Board also proactively offered **relief to current loan clients in response to COVID-19**. Clients were able to receive up to three months of deferred interest and principal payments, followed by up to six months of interest-only payments. **Almost fifteen** existing MCEDD loan clients benefited from this support.



Loan client Willow & Bark Boutique, The Dalles

Loan Administration Board Members

Scott Clements, Chair * Bob Hamlin, Vice Chair * Joe Dabulskis * Les Perkins * Rex Johnston * Steve Kramer * Dillon Borton * AJ Tarnasky

Loan Client Profiles: Mid-Columbia Backflow LLC



Mid-Columbia Backflow, LLC specializes in residential and commercial backflow testing and landscape irrigation repair. With financing secured through MCEDD, owner Philip Agnor was able to purchase a local backflow testing business, allowing him to expand his customer base and service area.

Maupin Market



Sara Morelli purchased the Maupin Market at the end of 2019 with financing help from MCEDD and an award from Business Oregon's Small Business Sustainability Fund. The store serves travelers, seasonal tourists, and local residents. The market is a reliable local source for pantry staples and household items.

Infrastructure Development

Project Highlights: Antelope



The City of Antelope completed construction on its Water System Improvements project in June 2020, including two new 80,000-gallon reservoirs.

Cascade Locks



The Cascade Locks Corrosion Control Treatment Facility was completed in November 2019.

Increasing Resources for Priority Infrastructure

MCEDD places a priority on ensuring adequate infrastructure for business and community success. Our staff provided support for:

- **1. Technical assistance** to secure funding and move projects toward construction, including support for EDA Disaster Fund applications for Skamania PUD, City of Cascade Locks, and City of Stevenson, as well as an EDA application for Columbia Gorge Regional Airport.
- **2. Water/ wastewater systems:**
 - **Biggs Service District water system:** labor standards and grant administration support for USDA Rural Development grant and loan.
 - **City of Antelope water system:** labor standards and grant administration support; support in receiving additional Safe Drinking Water (SDW) RLF loan and Water/Wastewater program grant and loan.
 - **Crystal Springs Water District water project:** labor standards and grant administration support for two SDWRLF projects, support in requesting an increase in funding to cover cost increases since original application.
 - **Cascade Locks corrosion control treatment facility project:** labor standards, grant administration, and project completion support for SDWRLF.
 - **Cascade Locks wastewater:** new agreement for grant administration and labor standards support for a Clean Water State RLF project.
 - **Regional wastewater coordination:** continuation of discussion of shared needs and opportunities.
- **3. Other infrastructure improvements** including helping **South Wasco Parks and Recreation District** with labor standards and grant administration for Oregon State Marine Board and Department of Fish and Wildlife grants for improvements to the Pine Hollow boat ramp.

Transportation

A Vibrant Regional Public Transportation Network

Gorge TransLink Alliance



The regional transit response to COVID-19 included:

- Partnerships with food banks, grocery stores, and public health agencies,
- Thousands of grocery, pharmacy, and prepared meal deliveries per week, and
- Continued transit services for essential workers with many providers offering free rides.



Gorge TransLink Alliance

MCEDD staff manages this alliance of regional transportation providers. This year staff worked to support:

- Increased regional connectivity and transit services.
- 100% increase in regional transit ridership through December 2019.
- Launch of the Gorge Regional Transit Strategy, a region-wide transit planning effort.
- Full-service emergency response to COVID-19 pandemic, providing essential services for residents.

The Link Public Transportation

As operator of Wasco County's public transportation service provider The Link, MCEDD increased capacity and expanded service this year, including:

- New weekly service to South Wasco County and Native American communities at Celilo Village and Lone Pine in-lieu site.
- Expanded staff and hours for more service, including service on Saturdays
- Purchase of a new ADA-accessible bus.
- Completion of the Transit Center bus barn to better protect the vehicles from the elements.



The Link Public Transportation



FY20 by the Numbers:

- Total Passenger One-Way Trips: **22,236**
- Elderly/Disabled One-Way Trips: **10,262**
- Revenue Service Hours: **8,489**
- Revenue Service Miles: **108,017**

Transportation Administration Board Members

Steve Lawrence, Chair * Tyler Stone, Vice Chair * Darcy Long-Curtis
Dee Van Gilder * Sophie Miller * Dana Peck * Kathy Schwartz * Lara Dunn

Industry Sector Support

Expanding Industries

MCEDD has targeted development of opportunities in strong regional industry sectors.

Renewable Energy

Staff coordinates the Columbia Gorge Bi-State Renewable Energy Zone with focus this year on support for the regional priority Goldendale Pumped Storage Hydro project, sharing information on developing relevant federal storage legislation, and utility Integrated Resource Plan Request for Proposals.

MCEDD also provides project management assistance to the **Hood River County Energy Council**, which supports development of energy projects that increase economic and physical resilience. In addition to regular monthly meetings, staff supported:

- Getting ten critical facilities in Hood River County in the first-of-their-kind “energy resilience” studies to design solar and storage systems to keep the buildings operating for two weeks during a power outage.
- Grant writing and management for four energy projects that, if awarded, would increase access to energy efficiency upgrades for low-income communities, increase transportation access, and increase renewable energy development.

High Technology

The Gorge Technology Alliance contracts with MCEDD for project management assistance. In addition to regular membership meetings, highlights this year included:

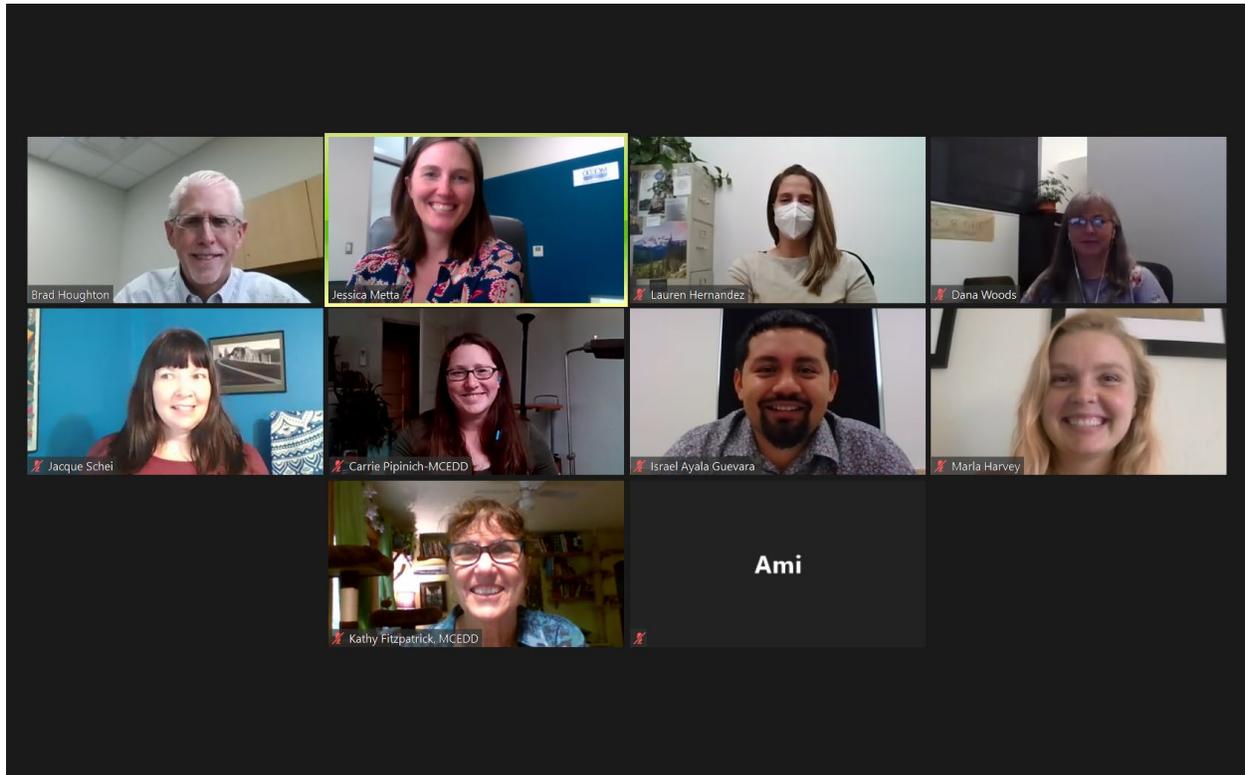
- The third-annual Gorge Tech Showcase highlighted ten businesses to an audience of around 75 people from around the Gorge and the Portland Metro area.
- The screening of the second episode in the Chasing Grace series focused on the role of women in tech with around 50 attendees and a robust panel discussion.
- Staff attended three targeted university career fairs to draw new talent to the region to support this critical sector.
- The GTA completed a rebranding effort and will be highlighting the results throughout the year (new logo at right).

COVID-19 Adaptations

Staff worked diligently to plan for execution of major events for the Gorge Tech Alliance, including the Wind Challenge, STEM Career Day, and an international drone trade show, but these events were canceled due to COVID-19. The local tech industry has continued its strong performance during COVID-19, with the GTA focusing on local connections and networking opportunities via technology platforms.



In Closing



Some of MCEDD's staff connecting during our weekly staff meetings, held virtually since COVID-19. We are honored to work with so many members and partners through the region, and proud of the work in this report.



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MCEDD is an equal opportunity Employer, Lender and Provider.