MID–COLUMBIA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT

ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT
JULY 1, 2014 TO JUNE 30, 2015

Mid-Columbia Economic Development District
515 East Second Street
The Dalles, OR 97058
www.mcedd.org
ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION

Mid-Columbia Economic Development District (MCEDD) is composed of five counties bordering the Columbia River: Hood River, Wasco and Sherman counties in Oregon and Skamania and Klickitat counties in Washington. These five counties established MCEDD in 1969. The founding members realized that the sharing of a common workforce, common geography and common demographics bound together their economic fates. By joining together they benefit through better access to economic development loans and grants, pooled technical assistance, marketing, and administrative resources and a regional approach to economic development efforts.

Today MCEDD retains the distinction of being the only regionally-focused economic development agency in the Mid-Columbia, and therefore, the agency most appropriate to serve as lead agency for the Economic Development Administration. MCEDD is organized as a government non-profit in Oregon as an ORS-190 and in Washington as a RCW 39.34.010.

A 21 member board of directors governs MCEDD with a representative from each of the five counties of the district, the cities of each county, the ports, chambers of commerce and seven private sector representatives. As of the conclusion of the fiscal year, the board included:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Board of Directors</th>
<th>Appointed</th>
<th>Represents</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan Brendin, Vice Chair, Exec Comm.</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Cities of Klickitat County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ken Bailey, Sec/Treas, Exec Committee</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Private Business-Agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy White, Executive Committee</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Private Business-High-Tech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rex Johnston, Executive Committee</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Klickitat County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tonya Brumley</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Oregon Chambers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike Smith, Chair, Exec Committee</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Sherman County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rod Runyon, Executive Committee</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Wasco County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob Benton, Executive Committee</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Hood River County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe Abbas</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Private Business-Healthcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbara Briggs</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Private Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gabriel Muro</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Private Sector - Minorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Kramer</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Private Sector – Higher Ed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Robert (Eric) Proffitt</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Workforce Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jeff Helfrich</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Cities of Hood River County</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bill Schmitt</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Washington Ports</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jim Kacena</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Washington Chambers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Steve Lawrence</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Cities of Wasco County</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bob Hamlin, Executive Committee</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Skamania County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nick Hogan</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Cities of Skamania County</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joeinne Caldwell</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Oregon Ports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol MacKenzie</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Cities of Sherman County</td>
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</table>
MCEDD’s mission is to promote the creation of family-wage jobs, the diversification of the economic base, and the growth, development and retention of business and industry within the five-county district. MCEDD had seven professional staff members serving the region and the organization’s mission in FY2015.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District Staff/Volunteers</th>
<th>Joined Us</th>
<th>Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amanda Hoey</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sherry Wickert</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Finance Manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jessica Metta</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Project Manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eric Nerdin</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Loan Fund Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrie Pipinich</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Project Manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sherry Bohn</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Office Administrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michele Spatz</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Project/Mobility Manager</td>
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VISION: The Mid-Columbia region envisions a thriving and prosperous economy supporting diverse entrepreneurial opportunities that act in harmony with the area’s rural qualities, values and natural resources.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Business Retention/Expansion: Enhance the retention and expansion of businesses in the Mid Columbia/Columbia River Gorge.

Business Attraction: Achieve an increase in new business to the region that will continue to diversify the economy and create sustainable opportunities, including family wage jobs, over the next ten years.

Infrastructure: Facilitate the timely maintenance and improvement of public infrastructure and support scalable infrastructure development, which will contribute to increased economic opportunities.

Economic Resources: Increase the Mid Columbia region’s receipt of resources for economic development initiatives, including funding, technical assistance and training.

Entrepreneurial Environment: Facilitate integrative partnerships and communication across business clusters, industries, entrepreneurs, government and economic development organizations to further develop an effective economic support structure.

Workforce: Regularly assess needed workforce requirements, ensuring a regional workforce that is work-ready and well-educated.

Bi-State Engagement: Engage elected representatives in Oregon and Washington to advocate more effectively for the common needs of the Columbia River Gorge.
OPERATIONS BUDGET OVERVIEW

(note: this section of the report will be completed following the closing of the fiscal year)
PROGRAM UPDATE

MCEDD staff and board members are actively involved with several local, regional and statewide economic development efforts. The following is a brief synopsis of activities.

Revolving Loan Fund Programs
Small businesses create the majority of new jobs in the Mid-Columbia area and MCEDD supports these small businesses with its revolving loan fund program. As one of MCEDD’s most successful economic development strategies, this program lends to small business that are unable to access traditional financing needed to start, grow, expand and even just stay in business. Started in 1980, MCEDD has successfully grown this program to acquire a total of just over $4.6 million in federal and state loans and grants and almost $1.9 million in local matching funds to capitalize our revolving loan programs. MCEDD’s revolving loan fund programs use repayments from the loans to continually relend, creating the potential for additional job growth. Since inception of the program, MCEDD has made 222 loans to businesses totaling over $13.4 million. MCEDD loan client businesses have created or retained over 2,033 jobs. MCEDD funds have also leveraged just over $12 million in additional public funding and over $28.6 million of private capital.

This fiscal year, MCEDD made 9 loans totaling $1,122,451. These loans helped create 57 jobs and retain 11 jobs in the region and resulted in these loan clients investing $250,000 of additional public funding and over $551,000 in private funding into their businesses, outside of their normal business cash flow. MCEDD’s participation in these projects made it possible for businesses to invest in the region’s economy. The following are businesses supported through MCEDD financing this year:

- LDB Beverage Company located in Stevenson, WA started a hard cidery with a co-packing and bottling facility with the help of loan funds through MCEDD and Skamania County Economic Development Council. This new business has already created over 10 new jobs and anticipates creating another 30-40 jobs over the next two years.
- Ground Coffee, LLC purchased Doppio Coffee in Hood River with the assistance of a $125,200 MCEDD loan. This purchase helped retain 11 jobs.
- Riverhood Rentals, LLC received $43,000 to purchase additional inventory, move to a larger facility, offer more rental options and expand the operations of their party and event rental business in Hood River.

Since 1980, MCEDD has made 222 loans to businesses totaling over $13.4 million.
• Sherman County Health District borrowed $249,251 from MCEDD to remodel and expand its health clinic and offices in Moro.
• NuCulture Foods, LLC opened its doors in The Dalles. This plant based food manufacturer purchased equipment and moved into a commercial facility with the assistance of a $100,000 MCEDD loan.
• Hank Tank, LLC dba 64 oz. opened a craft beer taphouse and growler station in Hood River with the assistance of a $55,000 MCEDD loan.

The revolving loan fund program has a larger impact due to its partnership with the SBDC, local financial institutions, and business and civic organizations.

**Attainable Housing Revolving Loan Funds**

This fiscal year, $2 million in funds through the State of Oregon was directed to MCEDD to seed an Attainable Housing Development Revolving Loan Fund. The Attainable Housing Revolving Loan Fund supports a solution to one of the region’s primary economic development barriers: a shortage of quality housing stock at price ranges and rental levels which are commensurate with the financial capabilities of workers and households in the region. The purpose of the fund is to provide funding for gap lending to aid in addressing the North Central Oregon regional attainable housing challenge. The North Central Oregon Regional Solutions Advisory Committee prioritized workforce housing and worked with the legislature to ensure these funds were available for housing development activities in Hood River, Wasco and Sherman counties.

**The Dalles Urban Renewal**

MCEDD provides assistance to individuals and entities accessing The Dalles Urban Renewal programs. This year, MCEDD staff consulted on multiple projects and presented three applications. All three of these applications received approval for grants. Grants totaled $61,725 and these building rehabilitation and façade improvement projects leveraged $14,368 of private monies.

**Cascade Locks-Hood River Enterprise Zone**

MCEDD administers the Cascade Locks-Hood River Enterprise Zone. The Enterprise Zone incentivizes certain business investments through exemption of property taxes normally assessed on new plant and equipment. MCEDD approved one applicant for a standard three year tax abatement. This applicant is engaged in development on the waterfront in Hood River. More information on the program is available at http://mcedd.org/services/business/HR_EZ.html.

In FY 2015, MCEDD made loans totaling $1,122,451. These loans helped create over 57 jobs and retain 11 plus jobs.
**Oregon Investment Board**

Since 1998, MCEDD has coordinated the Oregon Investment Board’s grant and loan program for Oregon counties in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. Project funding awarded through the OIB helps to strengthen and diversify the economy of the region.

This fiscal year, the OIB awarded a $125,000 loan to support a start-up brewery business in The Dalles. In addition, the OIB had two ongoing grant-funded projects making significant progress:

- Port of The Dalles Trade Show program ($10,000 OIB grant). Three businesses received grants to help them attend a trade show in an effort to expand their markets: Nuculture Foods, Inc; Young’s Fishing Service; and Integrated 3D.
- Regional Wetlands Permit project ($10,000 OIB grant). The project is proceeding and has convened a Technical Advisory group.

OIB has received four federal funding appropriations totaling just over $4 million and has approved grants and loans (by utilizing revolved funds) totaling over $8.3 million, including over $1.5 million in grants and more than $6.8 million in loans. OIB grants and loans have leveraged nearly $28 million in public and private investment in OIB funded projects. The program has contributed to the creation and retention of more than 600 jobs in the region.

**Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and Stronger Economies Together (SET)**

Annually MCEDD updates the region’s Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The CEDS provides a framework to support economic vitality of the region and MCEDD activities are geared toward implementing the strategies in the CEDS. MCEDD takes pride in being the region’s primary representative for the Economic Development Administration (EDA) and developing the EDA funded CEDS. MCEDD has also aligned processes to combine the CEDS with the USDA Stronger Economies Together program into a single regional document.

As part of the annual update, the MCEDD Board develops a list of prioritized technical assistance and infrastructure projects. The following projects, which are listed as priorities in the CEDS, have been supported by MCEDD staff during this last fiscal year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Activities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Columbia Gorge Regional Airport Flex Space</td>
<td>MCEDD assisted Klickitat County Economic Development. City of The Dalles and Columbia Gorge Regional Airport in a successful EDA public works application. Project was granted $625,000 in EDA funding. This will retain a critical employer- Life Flight- and provide space for additional business growth.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>Regional Wetland Strategy</td>
<td>MCEDD staff served on the Regional Wetlands Permit technical advisory committee, convened by the Port of The Dalles. Through the Oregon Investment Board, local resources were also dedicated to this project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moro Medical Clinic</td>
<td>The project was financed with $250,000 through MCEDD’s Sherman IRP and Revolving Loan Funds, with support through Sherman County.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hood River Workforce Housing</td>
<td>$2 million in funding was allocated for an attainable housing development revolving loan fund. The City of Hood River received a $30,000 technical assistance grant from Oregon DLCD to update their housing inventory. Additional work on both financial and non-financial barriers is ongoing by City, County and regional partners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giles French Park</td>
<td>MCEDD staff worked with Sherman County, the City of Rufus and a consultant to develop a plan for lease of Giles French Park from the Army Corps of Engineers. Work is ongoing to identify an appropriate path forward for Giles French.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Macks to Mouth Trail</td>
<td>Staff assisted in an application to Oregon State Parks. Funding was not awarded and staff continues to work with state agencies to refine the project.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bingen Point Access</td>
<td>The State of Washington transportation package includes funding for the proposed Bingen Point Overpass, supported by MCEDD. The package allocates $22 million for the project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>River Point Building</td>
<td>MCEDD assisted Skamania County Economic Development and Port of Skamania in a successful EDA public works application. Project was granted $925,000 in EDA funding. MCEDD is providing loan fund support to tenants of the facility.</td>
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**Agora Investment Platform**

Agora is an online marketplace designed to advance community and economic development priorities by matching community needs with relevant funding sources across public, private and philanthropic sectors. It was developed and piloted in the MCEDD region over the past three years. MCEDD uses it in the CEDS process and to support priority projects as Agora allows us to more effectively and efficiently connect our rural projects to funding opportunities.

Agora pilot milestones achieved during the fiscal year include:
As of June 2015, in our five county region, there are approximately 350 registered account users, more than 100 projects and over 50 capital pools represented.

MCEDD attended the National Association of Development Organizations Annual conference in August and was a speaker on the opening plenary panel, “RDOs as Game Changers.” The panel session featured a small group of NADO members sharing initiatives that are changing the face of regional development. MCEDD’s presentation focused on the Agora Investment Platform and generated significant interest from districts interested in implementing the technology in their regions.

Agora provided matching of projects and funding. MCEDD demonstrated successful opportunities for statewide replication, beginning in Oregon, and received confirmation of funding through the USDA Rural Community Development Initiatives program to support expansion of Agora to four additional Economic Development Districts. It is matched by a $100,000 challenge grant through Meyer Memorial Trust and additional resources by the Economic Development Districts. MCEDD staff has developed training materials and a best practices manual for new districts seeking to implement Agora and is confirmed to host an AmeriCorps RARE participant next year.

The Agora Platform not only allows communities to manage projects more efficiently, it also encourages users to better understand their own community needs and projects.

Regional Solutions Teams
MCEDD actively participates with the North Central Oregon Regional Solutions Team in both state team resource meetings as well as through membership on the advisory committee. This dual role ensures strong collaboration on economic development projects prioritized in the CEDS. During this reporting period, MCEDD hosted a joint meeting between the MCEDD Board of Directors and the North Central Regional Solutions Advisory Committee to jointly identify top regional priorities and projects. This has now become an annual event. That meeting was followed by continued conversation with the Regional Solutions Coordinator regarding means of integrating the CEDS strategy into the Regional Solutions work plan and ensuring alignment across our industry cluster targets.

Grant Administration
MCEDD offers resources to the region in the administration of federal grants: assisting in record keeping, labor standards compliance, and reporting. We retain qualified staff; providing pooled technical assistance for small communities without the capacity to administer grants with state
and federal requirements. In this fiscal year, MCEDD provided the following grant administration services:

- **Klickitat County PUD/Wishram:** MCEDD provided assistance to the Klickitat PUD in developing a $750,000 CDBG grant application to construct a new well to upgrade the Wishram water system. In order to determine eligibility to apply for these funds, an income survey was completed in conjunction with the application. MCEDD also conducted the income survey.

- **City of Cascade Locks:** MCEDD is providing grant administration services to support the City with a Community Development Block Grant for their Wastewater Master Plan.

- **City of Mosier Wastewater:** MCEDD provided technical assistance and contacts with other local governments in the region. The City was analyzing their maintenance contract and exploring options for joint management. MCEDD coordinated a meeting of wastewater treatment operators in the region to collaboratively approach joint solutions to local wastewater issues.

- **Klickitat County Community Development Block Grant:** Klickitat County, in partnership with Klickitat School District #402 is completing a remodel of an existing 8,000 SF community center located in Klickitat, Washington. MCEDD is providing the grant administration for this project, which includes navigating through the process of monitoring and complying with all labor standard provisions.

- **Dallesport Water District:** The District, as subrecipient to Klickitat County was awarded a Community Development Block Grant to a distribution system, new reservoir and new well in Murdock. Four systems are involved: Murdock, PJ, Odem and Minor. MCEDD is providing grant administration services.

- **MCEDD supported multiple communities in analyzing opportunities for federal funds, in particular for those seeking Community Development Block Grants.**

**Columbia Gorge Symposium**

The Gorge Economic Symposium was a half day event focusing on economic and employment trends in the regional economy (Hood River, Wasco, Sherman, Klickitat and Skamania counties). Approximately 80 individuals participated. Materials are now posted from the presentations at www.gorgesummit.org.
Investing in Manufacturing Communities Partnership

MCEDD, in partnership with Washington State University, received an EDA Economic Adjustment Assistance grant. The grant funded the Columbia Gorge Autonomous Systems Manufacturing Strategy, a bi-state project to develop a strategic implementation plan to support growth of autonomous system manufacturing businesses in the Mid-Columbia region. The regional strength of manufacturers in this region cuts across sectors including composites, unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) and value added food processing.

As part of the strategy development, MCEDD and WSU hosted a number of forums this fiscal year including:

- Hosting several tours of researchers to connect with value added food processing businesses.
- Hosting a forum on UAS opportunities in local agriculture (September 2015).
- Hosting a composites forum and conducting company visits to discuss composites research and new market opportunities (October 2015).
- Hosting a forum on growing the value added food processing businesses (November 2015).
- Conducting outreach to universities to increase connections to Gorge high schools and businesses
- Connecting Washington State University’s research and economic development capabilities to autonomous systems manufacturers.

As part of the grant, MCEDD also issued a contract to ETI Group USA for Quality Systems Certifications research work. The contract with the ETI Group was intended to determine appropriate quality systems certifications (ISO 9001, AS9100, SQF, BRC, FSSC) to meet the needs of the target cluster manufacturing firms. MCEDD worked with ETI to develop workshops to educate small manufacturing businesses on the value of obtaining the appropriate certification with detail on the certification process. As part of their contract deliverables, ETI provided a supply chain summary report and Ebooks on How to Implement AS9100 and ISO9001 QMS.

Developing additional partnerships for higher education continued to advance as a top priority for this project throughout the fiscal year, with a focus to creating strong networks with several key universities that graduate the top students with degrees of significant interest to the UAS industries of the Columbia River Gorge. Staff worked with Insitu to leverage networks through the Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University and in November, individuals from the IMCP team visited Embry-Riddle with Insitu leadership to explore furthering a partnership for the region. This visit was then followed-up by a visit of Embry-Riddle representatives to the region in January, 2015. From these visits, we have developed a draft
partnership paper identifying potential roles for entities in the region. If successful in the initiatives with Embry-Riddle, we then intend to repeat the effort to develop relationships with other universities.

Finally, conversation around the need for industrial cooperatives and makerspaces increased over this fiscal year as part of the IMCP strategy. WSU developed a draft design for this type of space.

This grant concluded June 30, 2015 with the development of the strategic implementation plan referenced above.

**Gorge Technology Alliance**

The Gorge Technology Alliance contracts with MCEDD to provide project management assistance for the organization. In this fiscal year, the GTA continued to host regular networking and educational events to support the tech businesses of the region, including monthly membership meetings, Geek lunches, CEO Excellence Forums and a new series targeted to supporting cloud application developers.

MCEDD staff again hosted a STEM Career Day (science, technology, engineering and math) with around 800 7th graders from the region attending. New activities for this year included a focus on the 10th anniversary of the organization with increased publicity in regional media and the development of a STEM college scholarship for local students. The scholarship fund will be launched at an event in July 2015 for first awards in spring 2016. MCEDD staff did this while increasing individual support meetings with member businesses and participation in a number of grants and opportunities to support STEM education and/or manufacturing businesses in the region.

**Robotics:**

MCEDD staff raised almost $28,000 in private industry funds for the GTA’s robotics program. This allowed the GTA to purchase thirty new robotics kits, support the robotics tournaments and teams and continue the successful loaner robot/ laptop program. The GTA hosted the Gorge FIRST LEGO League Qualifying tournaments on Dec 6, 7 and 13 in Hood River and The Dalles and supported the FIRST Tech Challenge qualifier in The Dalles on Jan 31. These robotics events involved about 450 students in the Gorge. Tech businesses in the region repeatedly mention this program as a great example of an effort to inspire their next generation of employees.
Fermentation Cluster
Activity and growth in the region’s Fermentation Cluster has exceeded expectations in the last year. In addition to wine, a growing number of “fermentation businesses” including breweries, distilleries, cheesemakers, cideries and others are forming. Our regional strategies are increasingly focusing to support of these businesses.

In support of the burgeoning wine cluster, MCEDD has continued to engage with the Columbia Gorge Winegrower's Association, with activities including:

- Supporting redevelopment of a technical group focused on the viticulturalists in the region to share expertise both from local participants and outside speakers on topics key to the successful cultivation of wine grapes. This effort has been a partnership between CGWA, OSU Extension, and WSU Extension. The need for these sessions was identified through the needs assessment conducted in 2013.
- Work with the CGWA to identify needs for their continued organizational development and seek funding to support their efforts. Staff worked with the organization to submit two grant applications to support new initiatives for the Winegrowers Association this year.

Nationally, the hard cider industry has exploded over the last several years, and the Mid-Columbia is poised to take advantage of this market trend with its significant tree-fruit crops, and entrepreneurs. Staff worked with a group of cideries and orchardists in the region to submit a successful Specialty Crop Block Grant Application for $50,000 over two years that will support determining the best organizational approach for this cluster and increasing marketing activities for the region to brand it as a premier cider destination. Work underway with the group includes:

- Design and distribution of a Columbia Gorge Cider Route map throughout the region and into the Portland Metro area.
- Creating CiderCamp, a weekend long, behind the scenes exploration of the Gorge Cider industry
- Engaging with the Hood River Chamber of
Commerce to support the Hard Pressed CiderFest tasting event, which grew to approximately 1800 attendees in 2015.

- Developing organizational structure for the Gorge Cidermasters group moving forward.
- Development of a strategic marketing plan for the Gorge Cider region in partnership with the cideries and a local marketing firm.

Lastly, as the number of breweries has also increased over the years, their owners have determined that creating a non-profit industry organization to support continued development and collective marketing strategies would benefit these businesses. MCEDD staff have participated in these conversations in order to provide technical assistance and support.

**Columbia Gorge Bi-State Renewable Energy Zone**
MCEDD continued development of the Columbia Gorge Bi-State Renewable Energy Zone (CGBREZ), a collaborative group focused to supporting utilization of renewable energy technologies in the region. MCEDD facilitated regular discussions for CGBREZ and assisted in marketing the region to attract manufacturing and small scale renewable energy development. Activities included:

- Hosting Pacific Northwest National Labs to discuss opportunities for companies and local governments
- Support for conversations to further a Pumped Storage project with the Klickitat PUD.
- Coordination of efforts to address federal regulations related to renewables development in the region.
- Establishing a contract for a government affairs specialist to support CGBREZ counties’ interests in expanding renewable energy markets for the region.

**Columbia Gorge Arts and Culture Alliance**
MCEDD serves on the planning committee for the Columbia Gorge Arts and Culture Alliance and acts as fiscal agent for the Alliance. MCEDD managed funding from Alliance members to support printing and development of the Alliance’s 2015 Gorge Arts and Culture map.

**Hood River Economic Development Group**
MCEDD provides staff to manage meetings and activities of the Hood River County Economic Development through the Economic Development Group. The group meets monthly to discuss economic opportunities,
address challenges and to collaborate on current economic development efforts in Hood River County.

**Sherman County Economic Development**
MCEDD provides staff to support Sherman County economic development services. This year, MCEDD worked intensively with the County to support parks development at Giles French Park. MCEDD staff continued work with the US Army Corps of Engineers and outreach to tribal governments on the review of the Giles French Park Master Plan. Through this process, the County is examining partnership opportunities to maintain parks rather than lease options.

MCEDD continued to support Sherman County through participation in the John Day River Territory (JDRT), a tourism marketing organization. MCEDD is implementing a USDA Rural Business Enterprise Grant for JDRT that is supporting growth of culinary and agri-tourism businesses in the region through inventoring, workshops and a promotional event. As part of this support, MCEDD is planning for the “Taste of Oregon’s Old West” event on September 12, 2015.

Staff also assisted the cities of Sherman County in pursuing downtown design plans to guide redevelopment and reinvestment in Grass Valley, Moro, Rufus and Wasco. Staff connected County and city funds to contract with a consultant for the development of the plans, supported the consultant in community outreach and is assisting the community in exploring the creation of façade improvement funds to encourage business investment.

**Wasco County Economic Development**
MCEDD provides staff to support Wasco County economic development services. Staff works with the Wasco County Economic Development Commission on strategic planning and completion of projects intended to support and develop the County’s economy. This fiscal year, MCEDD staff assisted the EDC in updating the role they take in the County to better reflect current needs and conditions. This role has moved the EDC toward more active engagement and leadership in economic development activities in Wasco County as well as support for community capacity development. Staff supported the Commission in the following activities to begin implementation of this new role:

- Developing a working committee structure to further engage EDC Commissioners with projects supporting community identified
challenges. This year, these committees are focused on working with communities as they address basic infrastructure challenges with water, waste water, and transportation systems.

- Maintaining the Business Siting Guides developed to support communities throughout Wasco County in their efforts to encourage business development.
- Working with multiple businesses seeking financing to expand operations and preparing business recruitment packets for targeted outreach.
- Assisting with the advancement of priority infrastructure projects, including the Mosier Bike Hub, Mosier Waste Water Treatment Plant Management, Riverfront Trail, Barlow & Wamic water systems, Tygh Valley Fire Hall, The Dalles Main Street, Dufur water system, and the Dufur Community Center.

Mobility Management, Regional Transportation
MCEDD provides a regional Mobility Manager to focus on transportation issues, working closely with regional transportation providers to assess local and regional transportation services, passenger experience, service costs, funding needs, innovative and relevant technology and areas for potential collaboration and coordination. MCEDD arranges and facilitates regular meetings and communication between Gorge TransLink Alliance providers while also conducting outreach to organizations to increase awareness of transportation services among vulnerable and special needs populations, in addition to employers and the general public. Achievements and outcomes of note during the fiscal year include the following:

- MCEDD facilitated a stronger partnership between Skamania County Community Transit, Gorge Towns to Trails, US Forest Service, Western Federal Lands Highway Division and the Skamania County Chamber of Commerce to enhance the seasonal week-end routes of the Skamania County Transit's West End Transit (WET) bus. Working collaboratively, the group created a new schedule that better connects riders with Tri-Met and C-TRAN, provides recreationists adequate time at the trail heads and added additional stops at key destinations. The success of this year's collaboration resulted in planning sessions to apply for a two-year extension of this grant project.
- MCEDD is leading the North Central Region’s Transportation-Human Services Coordination Study, one of three regional studies being conducted by the Association of Oregon Counties (AOC) under contract to the Oregon Department of Transportation. The North Central Region’s pilot project goal is: Improved communication, coordination, education and outreach to transit-dependent community members of Hood River, Wasco and Seasonal Week-end Bus: strong collaboration improved safe transit options into the Gorge, relieved parking at popular trailheads and resulted in plans to extend the project.
Sherman counties to live, work and play and is focused on Limited English Proficiency individuals.

- MCEDD staff participated on the Gorge Hubs Project Steering Team to reconnect the towns through a cycling/hiking path along the Historic Columbia River Highway State Trail. The first of the six welcoming centers or “Hubs” along the Historic Columbia River Highway trail project was dedicated in Hood River in June 2015.
- In partnership with Commute Options, MCEDD continues to maintain Commute Options Partnership with area employers including Columbia Gorge Community College, Mid-Columbia Medical Center, Insitu, Hood River County and Mt. Hood Meadows. The outreach program has resulted in nearly 300 registered individuals in the Drive Less Connect online ride-matching tool in Hood River, Wasco, and Sherman counties.
- Year two of the partnership established between the Port of Hood River, Mt. Adams Transportation Services and Gorge TransLink to provide fixed route service between White Salmon/Bingen, WA and Hood River, OR transporting cyclists and pedestrians safely across the Hood River Interstate Bridge, saw MCEDD help plan and execute a collaborative promotional blitz as the summer season approached.
- The Mobility Manager connected with faculty from Columbia Gorge Community College to promote computer science students working on local transportation issues thus providing real-world application to their studies.
- The Mobility Manager engaged over 40 gatekeeper agencies during the fiscal year to provide education on transportation options and identify potential areas of efficiency through assessment of services and primary areas for connection.

Broadband and Telecommunications
Broadband access and utilization has been identified as a strong priority through MCEDD’s Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. To support addressing un-and underserved areas of our region, MCEDD has spearheaded several projects that have raised the profile of this challenge.

To continue to meet critical broadband needs in the region, MCEDD applied for, and received a $25,000 grant from Google to replicate the model developed in Klickitat and Skamania counties through the Local Technology Planning Team program in South Wasco County while continuing to host a regional dialogue around broadband. This funding has supported:

- Replicating the community based access model that relies on working with providers to create a business case through demand and asset inventories. Surveys were conducted throughout South
Wasco County, with 224 responses returned, analyzed and presented to partners for additional input on community connections and broadband utilization as well as discussion with internet service providers.

- Expand the “Web Works: Anywhere!” forums. An additional forum was held in The Dalles that highlighted strong businesses that utilize their online presences in differing ways. Additional forums will be held in the region in the coming months.

- Hosting bi-annual regional broadband meetings to continue to develop the conversation around broadband access and learn from each other’s approaches to addressing challenges. The first of these meetings was hosted in March 2015 along with a regional conversation around FirstNet, the nationwide public safety network being developed.

MCEDD’s Executive Director also serves on the North-Central Oregon Regional Solutions Advisory Committee, which also identified broadband as a priority challenge to address for economic development. Through this designation, the Committee requested $1.5 million in funding through the State to support broadband infrastructure projects targeted for Sherman and Wasco counties.

**Telecommunications Conference**

MCEDD staff continued to engage in the Oregon state conversation around broadband access and utilization through hosting the Oregon Connections Conference annually. 2014’s theme was “The Age of Big Data and the Internet of Things” which underscores the continued need to bring our rural communities the necessary access to participate in the economies created around internet dependent technologies as they become more prevalent. The keynote speaker was Daniel Obodovski, a veteran of the wireless and high-tech sectors who has focused on developing and commercializing the machine-to-machine technologies that make up the internet of things. Over 200 individuals participated in the conference. MCEDD will again be the host in 2015, with the conference theme “Broadband Comes of Age: 20 Years of Oregon Connections.” Keynote speaker for the event is Paul Mitchell, the General Manager for Technology Policy at Microsoft. More information is available at http://www.oregonconnections.info/.
### Many Thanks to the MCEDD Financial Supporters

#### Counties:
- Hood River County
- Klickitat County
- Sherman County
- Skamania County
- Wasco County

#### Cities:
- City of Antelope
- City of Bingen
- City of Cascade Locks
- City of Dufur
- City of Goldendale
- City of Hood River
- City of Maupin

#### Ports:
- Port of Cascade Locks
- Port of Hood River
- Port of Klickitat
- Port of Skamania
- Port of The Dalles

#### Federal and State Funding Sources:
- Columbia River Gorge NSA Oregon and Washington Investment Boards
- Oregon Business Development Department
- Oregon Department of Agriculture
- Oregon and Washington Departments of Transportation
- U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development
- U.S. Economic Development Administration
- Washington Department of Commerce

#### Other Partner Funding Sources:
- Association of Oregon Counties
- Cider Cluster Sponsors
- Columbia Gateway Urban Renewal Agency
- Columbia Gorge Arts and Culture Sponsors
- Columbia Gorge Community College
- Columbia Gorge Economic Development Association
- Columbia Gorge Winegrowers
- Columbia Pacific Economic Development District
- Columbia River Gorge Commission
- Commute Options
- Google
- Gorge Health Connect
- Gorge Technology Alliance and member businesses
- Hood River Chamber of Commerce
- Hood River County Transportation District
- Hood River Cultural Trust
- Klickitat County Senior Services
- Lower John Day River Territory and members
- Mid-Columbia Council of Governments
- Mid-Columbia Housing Authority
- Oregon Connections and sponsors
- Oregon Economic Development District
- Special Districts Association of Oregon
- Transportation Network
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