

February 27, 2019

Sen. James Manning, Jr. (Co-Chair); Rep. David Gomberg (Co-Chair); Sen. Jeff Golden; Sen. Bill Hansell; Rep. Paul Evans; Rep. Gary Leif; Rep. Rachel Prusak; Rep. Duane Stark

900 Court St. NE  
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: 2019-2021 Regional Infrastructure Fund (RIF)

Members of the Ways and Means Subcommittee on Transportation and Economic Development:

I am writing to offer my strong support for the the Governor's Regional Solutions Program and the Regional Infrastructure Fund (RIF) part of Business Oregon's budget.

I am the Founder and President of Southern Oregon Air Academy, and in 2018 our organization applied for RIF funding. While selected by the local committee as one of three finalists from our region, we were ultimately not selected by the state committee, but included as an alternate.

If we had been selected last year, the RIF funding would have allowed us to renovate a 10,000 sq. ft. facility on the Grants Pass Airport grounds, to create a high-tech, CTE campus for youth interested in aviation and aerospace careers (see attached maps and SOAA RIF application).

SOAA intends to apply again for funding in the next biennium, likely for Phase II development of our campus – or again for Phase I funding, if that has not already been secured by then.

RIF is an incredible source of funding for rural-based, industry-driven programs like ours.

- locally-oriented, ultimately reflecting regional priorities and opportunities
- flexible parameters, unlike many sources of capital funding, that come w/many restrictions
- funds are distributed to all part of the state, as opposed to other centrally-located funds
- creative, innovated projects are inspired - and often ignited - by the large size of RIF

Thank you for this opportunity to communicate our support for vital rural funding opportunities like RIF that fuel industry revitalization and workforce development efforts in all Oregon communities.

Sincerely,



Caleb LaPlante  
(541) 646-0068

Founder and President | Southern Oregon Air Academy | [www.soairacademy.com](http://www.soairacademy.com)

Founder and President | Take Flight Oregon | [www.takeflightoregon.com](http://www.takeflightoregon.com)

Founder and Chairman | Grants Pass Balloon & Kite Festival | [www.gpballoonfest.com](http://www.gpballoonfest.com)