



March 14, 2025

Dear Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Transportation and Economic Development:

I am writing to voice my strong support for continued (and expanded, if possible) support for Business Oregon. I would like to call out Business Oregon's Rural Opportunity Initiative (ROI) program - an amazing program that deserves to continue and grow.

ROI is focused on rural Oregon, and intentionally enhancing the entrepreneurial ecosystems in rural communities. Also by definition, these rural entrepreneurs are small - but so very impactful to local and regional economies.

ROI seeks to grow sustainable organizations that deliver the boots on the ground ecosystem building. ROI supports, trains and builds capacity in these economic support organizations - and provides a forum for ROI communities across the state to share best practices, potential landmines and generally support each other's work.

I serve as the Executive Director of the Economic Development Alliance of Lincoln County (EDALC). We have been an ROI organization since 2021. I am not exaggerating when I say that joining the ROI community literally saved our 26 year old economic development organization from closing its doors. I'll repeat - without ROI, there would NOT be an EDALC today.

Through ROI, we were able to lean into one of our passions - supporting our Lincoln County entrepreneurs (with a special focus on our Creative Economy entrepreneurs). We were able to leverage ROI funding many times over to provide the operational support to thrive and grow as an organization - all to support the mission of enhancing Lincoln County's economic vitality.

ROI had helped us deliver core economic development services (such as manage our Enterprise Zone and take full advantage of Oregon Prospector to market commercial sites), create an ongoing Fail Fest event series (celebrating



entrepreneurial failure as a stepping stone to future success), deliver our annual Lincoln County Economic Summit, support the SBDC's Youth Entrepreneurship Program, help the City of Toledo with its ART Toledo arts revitalization program (including running their Art, Oysters and Brews annual event series) and provide startup training to budding Lincoln County Entrepreneurs.

ROI helps EDALC deliver its good work - and to learn from and share our success stories with our peer organizations. It's a true jewel of a program and deserves all the support it can get.

Cordially,

Paul Schuytema, Executive Director