



To: Joint Committee on Ways and Means - Subcommittee on Transportation and Economic Development

Re: Letter of Support – Business Oregon’s ROI, TA & EEIP Programs

March 17, 2025

Dear Co Chairs Woods and Gomberg and Members of the Committee ,

We are writing to tell the story of rural frontier entrepreneurs and voice our strong support for Business Oregon’s ROI, TA and EEIP Programs. You’ve seen the impact numbers, here is the rest of the story.

Who We Are -High Desert Partnership (HDP) is a non-profit organization located in Harney County. We bring diverse partners to the table to address and solve complex issues at the local and regional levels. We convene six different collaborative working groups. By working together we’ve found practical ways to tackle some of our community’s hardest challenges—restoring forests and wetlands, mitigating wildfire, creating opportunities for youth, and growing our local economy. Through funding from Business Oregon’s ROI, TA & EEIP programs HDP has created regional partnerships that serve entrepreneurs in 12 rural/frontier counties in Oregon, almost 1/3 of the state!

Our *valued* partners include: **Northeast Oregon Economic Development District (NEOEDD), Launch Pad Baker, Oregon Frontier Chamber, Burns Paiute Tribe, Euvalcree, SBDC- Treasure Valley Community College and The Foundry Collective.** Collectively we offer technical assistance, education, and one-on-one support to the good folks we serve. Individually we provide tailored assistance to meet the unique needs of each of our counties.

Local Providers Meeting Local Needs -This funding is essential to support rural economic vitality for Oregon entrepreneurs. HDP works with partners to identify their needs, we write grants to seek funding, receive funding and then distribute it to partners who live and work in their community. We are boots on the ground. We know the folks we serve. We know the needs of our communities and we know how to provide the services they need..

Knowledge is Power -We believe that education is essential to set our clients up for long term success. We provide hands-on education helping entrepreneurs learn financial literacy, business management skills, marketing, HR, and strategic planning. We connect entrepreneurs to the resources they need. This includes legal support, accounting support, branding and website professionals, industry specific experts, and local mentors.



Access to Capital -We help our clients receive funding through small business grants, KIVA Loans, IDA accounts, and traditional bank funding. We find the right solution for each client. We prepare them by helping them restore their credit (if needed) and building a business plan with financial projections. We ensure they are supported every step of the way.

Breaking Down Barriers -Not all of our work is about numbers and skills. Much of what we do to break down barriers is to build relationships. We are the counselors, the cheerleaders, the sounding board - we build confidence and encourage our clients to keep going!

Marla Bilonick, Director of Small Business Development at the Latino Economic Development Center, LEDC said it best when she said, *"didn't we all get into this field to help entrepreneurs create more wealth for themselves, their families, the people they employ and the communities where they reside? Technical assistance provides entrepreneurs with a trusted advisor to help them navigate the bumpy road of business ownership"*.

Accountability With Funding -We recognize the value of every single dollar invested into our communities. Therefore we manage and account for funding as intended by the legislature for each program.

Small Businesses are the Backbone of Rural and Frontier Oregon -These small businesses provide essential goods and services for our communities. They provide jobs!! They create the framework of vitality for small towns in Oregon. Your support and investment into our communities yield huge dividends in economic, social, cultural and environmental ways.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Andrea Letham'.

Andrea Letham
Biz Harney Grant Manager
High Desert Partnership

One More Word of Note -We would NOT be able to do the life changing work we do without our Business Oregon counterparts. Special thanks to Brian Plinski, Ambar Solarte, Maggie Finnerty & Lesly Garcia for being true partners in our work.