



March 18, 2025

Subject: Testimony in Support of Business Oregon's 2025-27 Budget and Regional Innovation Hub Funding

Co-Chairs Steiner and Sanchez, Members of the Joint Ways and Means Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Business Oregon's budget and the continuation of Oregon InC funding for Regional Innovation Hubs. I serve as the Entrepreneurship Program Manager for the South Coast Development Council, where I lead the Southwest Oregon Innovation Hub (SOIH) – one of nine designated hubs across the state.

The SOIH serves Coos, Curry, and Douglas counties—rural communities where small businesses are the backbone of our economy. In our region, the success of a business doesn't just impact an individual entrepreneur; it supports local jobs, strengthens supply chains, and creates economic resilience for entire communities. Without the resources Business Oregon helps fund, many aspiring entrepreneurs and small business owners in our region would lack the support they need to start, sustain, and grow their ventures.

Since October 2024, SOIH has:

- Supported 46 companies with direct advising, programming, and business development resources.
- Hosted 29 business-focused events that engaged 779 participants, offering valuable education, collaboration, and networking.
- Participated in 13 networking events, connecting 815 businesses with potential partners, clients, and resources.
- Strengthened the local ecosystem with 10 active hub partners.

These programs are not just beneficial; they are essential. Small businesses drive our rural economies – rural regions such as ours are far less likely to be selected for major business expansion or attraction efforts. However, entrepreneurs face unique barriers—geographic isolation, limited access to capital, and fewer business development resources compared to urban areas. The funding for Regional Innovation Hubs allows us to bridge these gaps, equipping small business owners with the training, advising, and community support they need to thrive.

When small rural businesses succeed, our communities succeed. New and stronger businesses mean more jobs, increased economic activity, and long-term stability. Without continued investment, we risk losing the momentum we have built and leaving our small business owners without critical support.

I urge the committee to fully fund Business Oregon's budget, particularly its investments in the Regional Innovation Hubs, the SBIR Matching Grant, and the Commercialization Gap Fund. These programs are key to fostering economic growth, supporting entrepreneurship, and ensuring that even Oregon's most rural communities have the resources to thrive.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tanya Rasley', is written over a white background.

Tanya Rasley
Entrepreneurship Program Manager
South Coast Development Council / Southwest Oregon Innovation Hub