



March 19, 2025

Co-Chairs Woods and Gomberg
Members of the Transportation and Economic Development Subcommittee
Joint Ways & Means Committee

RE: Support for Technical Assistance Funding for Rural Businesses through Business Oregon

Dear Co-Chairs Woods, Gomberg and members of the subcommittee,

Rural Development Initiatives (RDI) asks the members of the Joint Committee to consider the specific and unique impact of allocating business support resources for rural Oregon communities; specifically, the important role of technical assistance in supporting aspiring entrepreneurs and small business owners.

RDI is a nonprofit rural development organization, born by the Oregon legislature in 1991 to help rural communities recover from downturns in natural resource based economic sectors. For nearly 35 years, RDI has responded to demand from Oregon's small towns to help them address complex problems.

The Governor's Recommended Budget adds \$4.8 million to the Technical Assistance for Underrepresented Business program. This program includes much needed support to rural entrepreneurs and small business owners, and RDI is requesting that this – or even more funding – be approved for this purpose.

The State's investments in small business development and technical support are both timely and important, knowing that Oregon's rural communities still face long-term economic recovery challenges, rising costs of living, and workforce and housing shortages.

RDI has used this funding for service to remote rural places with high economic need, and communities with substantial Latino populations. Since 2023, our work in partnership with Foundry Collective and the Bohemia Food Hub has supported over 350 rural business clients, including 102 new businesses. For example, David and Luis decided to start a business after years of experience in pool cleaning. They joined RDI's business training program marketing materials or a business plan and little knowledge of running a business. Through our training and one-on-one technical assistance, they were able to refine their business idea, access funding (through Business Oregon's EEIP program), purchase equipment, and start their marketing efforts. Their business – LD Hot Tub Guru - now offers pool cleaning services in Lincoln and Tillamook counties. *"RDI has given us the opportunity to break fears and stereotypes as entrepreneurs and show that we are capable of creating jobs and having a positive impact on the cities around us,"* said Luis.

As you consider the Business Oregon budget, we strongly urge you to maintain, and if possible, **increase**, funding for the Business Technical Assistance Program. This vital initiative gives rural Oregonians the opportunity to maximize their economic potential and add to the vibrancy of Oregon's economy.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Amy Hause, Deputy Director

