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## **Business Oregon Announces Investments in Rural Oregon Communities to Spur Entrepreneurship**

This week Business Oregon announced funding to 11 rural communities to build capacity for entrepreneurship-based economic development, to create and support entrepreneurs and small businesses. The grants will provide \$634,642 in funding from the agency's Rural Opportunities Initiative (ROI). The ROI program unifies and strengthens existing business development resources to build rural prosperity through capacity-building grants.

"Oregon's many rural communities are each unique with their own assets, opportunities, and challenges," said Business Oregon director Chris Harder. "Working with these Oregon communities to support their local entrepreneurship strategies, and help them work together to maximize their impact can ultimately help increase rural prosperity."

Business Oregon solicited applications from rural communities and received 41 applications spread throughout 22 Oregon counties, which were narrowed down to 11 finalists through three rounds of review by a selection committee. The selection committee included representatives from foundations, local economic development partners, education institutions, and other organizations vested in rural entrepreneurial development. One member was Kathleen Flanagan, Senior Program Officer with the Ford Family Foundation.

"The Ford Family Foundation was pleased to participate in the Rural Opportunity Initiative selection process," said Flanagan. "As a foundation dedicated to rural community vitality, we appreciate Business Oregon's strategic priority on economic development in non-metro parts of our state, and look forward to more opportunities to collaborate around ways to promote an environment that supports rural entrepreneurship and employment."

Applicants were prioritized based on their ability to demonstrate broad commitment and meaningful support from existing local economic development and small business support organizations, and their ability to build the capacity of existing local economic development and small business support organizations, as well as, grow their collective ongoing efforts to strengthen the entrepreneurial ecosystem. The grants then provide seed funding and capacity building support for these communities.

Final ROI awardees include:

- Partners for Rural Innovation of Tillamook County (Tillamook, OR): \$45,000
- High Desert Partnership (Hines, OR): \$44,400
- Eight Cities, being led by City of Monroe (Adair Village, Brownsville, Halsey, Harrisburg, Lebanon, Monroe, Philomath, and Sweet Home, OR): \$70,000
- Klamath IDEA (Klamath Falls, OR): \$55,000
- Woodburn Downtown Association (Woodburn, OR): \$45,000
- Southwestern Oregon Community College (Coos Bay, OR): \$50,000
- City of Independence (Independence, OR): \$70,000
- City of Veneta (Veneta, OR): \$30,000
- Warm Springs Community Action Team (Warm Springs, OR): \$73,242
- Euvalcree (Ontario, OR): \$80,000
- Baker City Hatch, being led by Northeast Oregon Economic Development District (Baker City, OR):\$72,000

Selection committee members included representatives from: The Ford Family Foundation, CRAFT3, Rural Development Initiative, Oregon Native American Chamber, Small Business Development Center Network, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Oregon Main Street, Oregon State University Extension, University of Oregon, and Business Oregon.

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**Business Oregon**, the state's economic development agency, invests in Oregon businesses, communities, and people to promote a globally competitive, diverse, and inclusive economy. Learn more at [www.oregon4biz.com](http://www.oregon4biz.com)

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