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Members of the Joint Ways and Means Committee on Transportation and Economic Development Oregon State Legislature 900 Court Street NE Salem. OR 97301

Members of the Committee -

I am writing to express concern about the lack of ROI (Rural Opportunity Initiatives) funding in the Governor's proposed budget. I'm sharing these thoughts with you as a concerned citizen, and as a member of the Klamath IDEA eLeadership team.

I was extremely disappointed to hear that the Governor eliminated ROI funding in her proposed budget, despite its inclusion in Business Oregon's Policy Option Package. Klamath County is an ROI community, having received most recently a \$55,000 award to advance entrepreneurial development in our region. In fact, we are one of the original four communities to receive REDI/ROI funding in the program's pilot round two years ago. The work that has been accomplished in our region – and around the state – because of this funding has been significant and impactful. Having said that, the work is not complete. The ROI program was structured to assist communities in executing development efforts incrementally. The pilot program was launched with the intention that communities who were creating impacts from the funding would receive priority for future funding. In this way, ROI would not perpetually subsidize the sustainability of local efforts; rather, it would assist those local efforts in becoming self-sustainable.

The elimination of ROI from the Governor's proposed budget would pull the rug right out from under those efforts, which were carefully and strategically developed based on ROI's original intended strategy. In some of the ROI communities, it is likely that they will not have the ability to continue forward with their efforts if ROI funding is not available. While these communities will adapt and find other ways to move forward, it is frustrating and saddening to know that a couple years' worth of effort and financial capacity – something many of these communities haven't been fortunate to take advantage of for some time – will be left to die on the vine.

In Klamath Falls in particular, we've made significant progress in making sure that entrepreneurial development is seen as a legitimate leg of the economic development stool. We've also finally begun to convince local leaders that someone in the economic development space should be putting forth effort to develop that ecosystem. With the help of ROI, Klamath IDEA has been able to execute on those efforts through a strategic consulting relationship with *Entrepreneurial Ecosystems (e2)*. Through this effort, we have:

- delivered development opportunity profiles for both Klamath and Lake Counties;
- identified and prioritized the entrepreneurial sectors to kickstart;
- opened the Center for Entrepreneurship in downtown Klamath Falls;
- developed a comprehensive plan for addressing needs and gaps in our entrepreneurial ecosystem to find our existing entrepreneurial talent and make sure we're meeting their needs;

- hired an entrepreneur concierge to staff the effort;
- developed, delivered and collected a custom-designed entrepreneur survey to provide specific data we'll need to execute the remaining components of the strategy leading to a robust and vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem

And we have done all of those things without creating an additional layer of bureaucracy. Klamath IDEA is a volunteer-led initiative that leverages the power of ten existing resource providers. None of these providers alone can deliver a fully functional entrepreneurial ecosystem; however, working together, they bring to bear a powerful service delivery model that is already moving the needle. ROI communities across the state can likely share similar success stories, and those significant achievements would be severely impacted – if not crumble altogether – without ROI.

Additionally, it appears that there are other mechanisms in the works that are intended to supplant all the benefits of ROI. As an example, based on the entities named in SB 258, it appears that the intent is to overlay a venture-catalyst entrepreneur-based development model on communities that may or may not benefit from that model. While the sentiment is appreciated and surely those entities are doing good work in some communities, ROI is a more viable model statewide as it gives communities flexibility to adapt their strategies based on their own needs. If a community wishes to deploy a venture catalyst in their community, ROI funding can and should support that model. In fact, two of the current ROI communities have done exactly that with their funding.

It is entirely possible that there is no connection between SB 258 and the elimination of ROI from Business Oregon's budget. Having said that, if ROI isn't necessary to help our rural communities to jumpstart an entrepreneurial ecosystem, then neither is SB 258.

If the intent with this bill is to replace ROI with a "new", "better", or "different" model than ROI, then shame on those who failed to speak directly with ROI communities and the entities deploying ROI funds. And shame on them for believing that entities that exist outside of rural ecosystems are in a better position to address rural ecosystem needs than the rural communities themselves. More to the point, ROI is the right model for Oregon's rural communities, and I am asking you to restore funding for this program regardless of the fate of SB 258.

The lack of ROI funding in the Governor's budget and the simultaneous promotion of efforts such as SB 258 raise the following questions that I would want answered if I held your seat on the committee:

- 1) ROI was a competitive process that was out in the open for all to see. Further, funding decisions were made by individuals who were qualified with an understanding of rural communities and their needs. Why would we replace that with a model that gives regional, nonrural entities full control over who receives what limited dollars will be left by the time they hit the communities?
- 2) Why would we replace an investment model that's gaining traction (ROI) with a new model that places the actual rural communities twice-removed from the funding source?
- 3) ROI was a chance for rural communities to step up and competitively fight for the right to determine their own path. It was a chance for them to tell a story based on their experiences, their needs, and their communities' vision. Why would we replace that with a model that puts a regional, nonrural entity in charge of what's best for our rural communities and how to achieve it?
- 4) ROI is already structured to deliver services to communities in various stages of ecosystem readiness. We fought hard in ROI's beginnings to keep it from becoming a one-size-fits-all, "take it or leave it" model. Why would we go backward with another predetermined model with predetermined funders/recipients?
- 5) Why would we eliminate a program that provides 90% of its budgeted dollars directly to motivated rural communities and potentially replace it with a program that provides waterfall funding through regional entities that likely know little about the communities they are

- attempting to serve and have relatively little stake in those communities' success for the exact same work?
- 6) Why would we replace a functioning model with a plan that further removes rural communities from their own fate? The momentum from ongoing efforts in ROI communities will be set back at least 1-2 years and who knows how many dollars just waiting for these regional entities to get up to speed, prepare a framework for their funding model and deploy the funds. Of the \$750,000 allocated for ROI in its last cycle, \$700,000 made it directly to communities to deploy on their projects. The remaining funds were used for a program orientation and kickoff for representatives from ROI communities, as well as minor administrative expenses to coordinate the program. By its very language, SB 258 removes 50% of the program's funding before it is even allocated out to communities.
- 7) If the venture-catalyst model seemingly being promoted by SB 258 is the best thing for rural communities, why not allow rural communities to compete on a level playing field for ROI dollars to secure funding to deploy that model in their communities, and leave other communities with the flexibility to deploy the funds in the way that best suits their needs?

To better understand the impact of the loss of ROI and the consequences of efforts such as SB 258 on rural entrepreneurial ecosystems, I urge each of you to consult with your local Small Business Development Center and your ROI project lead if you are an ROI community. If you are not an ROI community, find one and consult with them to see what ROI has done for their community and hear why retention of the program is critical to sustaining their entrepreneurial development efforts. I've attached the ROI community brochure for easy access to those communities.

Every consequence of the loss of ROI will directly impact the efforts of these communities to determine their own path to prosperity, and it would be disappointing if you allow ROI to be abandoned without consulting with these resources.

The entities named in SB 258 are surely doing fantastic work on behalf of Oregonians rooting for continued economic success – that's not the issue here. In an ideal world, perhaps a model such as that proposed in SB 258 would serve as a complementary model to ROI. In an ideal world, perhaps multiple entrepreneurial development models would be sponsored by the State of Oregon. Unfortunately, we do not live in an ideal world, and there are budget realities that must be considered as we choose our path forward. Given those realities, if you are faced with a decision of one over the other, ROI is more viable and would provide greater value to Oregonians.

Thank you for your consideration,

W. Darin Rutledge

Klamath IDEA eLeadership Team Member

cc: Sen. Dennis Linthicum, Dist. 28
Rep. E. Werner Reschke, Dist. 56
Rep. Mike McLane, Dist. 55



Rural Opportunities Initiative 2017-19 Participating Communities

Eleven unique projects elevating entrepreneurs and the organizations that support them.





Partners for Rural Innovation of Tillamook County

This community serves Tillamook County, North Coast, and particularly farmers, fishers, harvesters, producers, and processors.

Use of Funds

- ✓ Launch a Recipe-to-Market program in English and Spanish
- ✓ Hire a branding expert to create a regional brand of food products
- ✓ Conduct a study on the feasibility of a food and farm cooperative hub to improve efficiency of product delivery

Entrepreneurial Support

- ✓ Help entrepreneurs launch new, value-added products
- ✓ Support local businesses in growing their market share
- ✓ Find new and more efficient delivery systems for local products
- ✓ Provide additional resources and support services to grow their businesses

Building Collective Capacity

- ✓ Ready the community to perform as a one-stop incubator for local tourism, food, and agricultural businesses
- ✓ Create a cohesive, regional brand that encompasses all types of food products from cod to cheddar, from berries to beef

"Our intent is to build a cooperative source of support for smaller agriculture and food entrepreneurs by capitalizing on the renaissance and recognition happening now in Tillamook County."

—Partners for Rural Innovation of **Tillamook County**

- Oregon State University Extension
- Oregon State University Open Campus
- Small Business Development Center (SBDC)
- Visit Tillamook Coast
- Economic Development Council (EDC)
- Tillamook Bay Community College



2 Woodburn Downtown Association

This community serves Woodburn, Hubbard, Gervais, and particularly Latino and Russian entrepreneurs.

Use of Funds

- ✓ Gather small business service providers to determine gaps in resources and available opportunities
- ✓ Develop broad-based multilingual technical assistance and resource tools offered through partner organizations
- ✓ Launch a Pilot Program to provide curated and customized financial and technical resources to up to five (5) qualifying businesses

Entrepreneurial Support

- ✓ Create refreshed and expanded multilingual business education resources via a variety of distribution channels
- ✓ Provide workshops on personal financial literacy; business bookkeeping and management; capital development and loan programs
- ✓ Offer one-on-one assistance to an expanded number of entrepreneurs

Building Collective Capacity

- ✓ Provide cross-training to local and regional partners on the services offered by each
- ✓ Provide a complete, tested, and documented cross-cultural, multilingual, collaborative business support program model that can be replicated in other communities
- ✓ Increase the number of available business support resources available in multilingual formats; share these resources with other service providers locally, regionally, and statewide

"This program will help guide entrepreneurs through the existing maze of programs, processes, and regulations to help their businesses thrive."

—Woodburn Downtown Association

- Woodburn Area Chamber of Commerce
- Microenterprise Resources, Initiatives & Training (MERIT)
- CAPACES Leadership Institute (CLI)
- City of Woodburn
- Advanced Economic Solutions, Inc.
- Chemeketa Community College Woodburn Center
- Chemeketa Community College Small Business Development Center (SBDC)



3 City of Independence

This community serves Independence, and particularly existing businesses eager to scale, new and Latino entrepreneurs, and student populations.

Use of Funds

- ✓ Hire a bilingual, culturally-representative staff member to facilitate Latinxoriented entrepreneurship programming
- ✓ Provide professional development opportunities to increase the capacity of local partners to work with entrepreneurs
- ✓ Host a series of events to celebrate and inspire entrepreneurs of all ages
- ✓ Hire a Community Catalyst to facilitate communication between project partners

Entrepreneurial Support

- ✓ Expand services available at IndyCommons, the downtown co-working space, and informal incubator
- ✓ Offer culturally-tailored services for Independence's Spanish-speaking entrepreneurs
- ✓ Formalize partnerships to provide a more intentional pipeline for preentrepreneurs to move into programs for "launch ready" entrepreneurs
- ✓ Develop a self-sustaining Community Advisor Network of local and regional entrepreneurs and subject matter experts (attorney, insurance, accounting, etc.) to provide consulting to local business owners

Building Collective Capacity

- ✓ Increase capacity of municipal staff to work with and support entrepreneurs
- ✓ Link entrepreneur-based economic development with broader goals of downtown development, community engagement, and inclusivity
- ✓ Support expansion of Latinx-specific services throughout Polk, Yamhill, and Marion counties
- ✓ Expand professional networks of all partners so they can serve as community connectors and facilitate networking, referrals, and resource-sharing

"This project ensures that the many stakeholders are leveraging each other's strengths instead of stepping on each other's toes. Together, we are creating an integrated ecosystem to allow entrepreneurs to drive their own training process, learn from each other, and seamlessly connect to appropriate resources"

—City of Independence

- Chemeketa Community College Small Business Development Center (SBDC)
- Independence Downtown Association
- Monmouth/Independence Chamber of Commerce
- IndyCommons
- Community Services Consortium
- Microenterprise Resources, Initiatives & Training (MERIT)
- Strategic Economic Development Corporation (SEDCOR)



4 Eight Cities (led by City of Monroe)

This community serves Adair Village, Brownsville, Halsey, Harrisburg, Lebanon, Monroe, Philomath, Sweet Home, and particularly entrepreneurs seeking to start and scale high-growth, traded-sector startups; and municipal staff members to sustain this work.

Use of Funds

- ✓ Hire a full-time Venture Catalyst to help entrepreneurs across the community launch and grow their businesses
- ✓ Conduct research to determine the unique challenges and opportunities of local entrepreneurs
- ✓ Train city staff across all partners to continue and sustain the work initiated by the Venture Catalyst

Entrepreneurial Support

- ✓ Increase access to, and support from, the Venture Catalyst by moving the position from part-time to full-time
- ✓ Identify local potential angel investors to contribute to innovative ideas and new businesses
- ✓ Offer events that provide the opportunity to network with other local businesses, government officials, potential investors, and community leaders

Building Collective Capacity

- ✓ Identify and address current gaps in entrepreneurial and small business services
- ✓ Position the region as a place where people can start and scale high-growth, traded-sector businesses
- ✓ Sustain the initiative's work by training municipal staff at each partnering community, further increasing a favorable climate and culture for entrepreneurs

"We will connect entrepreneurial support services across rural areas of Benton and Linn counties to increase access to people (mentors and support staff), programs (networking events, meetups, seminars), and capital."

—Eight Cities

- RAIN Oregon
- Linn-Benton Community College Small Business Development Center (LBCC SBDC)
- Brownsville Chamber of Commerce
- Harrisburg Redevelopment Agency
- Tri-County Chamber of Commerce
- Lebanon Chamber of Commerce
- Sweet Home Chamber of Commerce
- Governor's Regional Solutions Team
- Center for Rural Entrepreneurship
- Hatch Oregon
- Corvallis-Benton Economic Development Corporation

5 City of Veneta

This community serves Veneta, Alvadore, Crow, Elmira, Lorane, Noti, Walton, and particularly home-based and main street/downtown businesses.

Use of Funds

- ✓ Gather community feedback and case studies to determine the feasibility of, and plan for, a popup retail district
- ✓ Launch and market a popup retail district
- ✓ Bolster the services available at the Small Business Assistance Center
- ✓ Expand professional development workshops and speakers series
- ✓ Increase marketing for annual local Business Showcase event
- ✓ Maximize **Oregon/By Design workshop** through a community reflection or action planning event

Entrepreneurial Support

- ✓ Provide low-cost entry into the brick and mortar retail market by increasing available low-risk storefront stock
- ✓ Increase number of workshops, mentor hours, and networking opportunities to help entrepreneurs build skills and relationships
- ✓ Increase availability of no-cost rental space and equipment for local businesses

Building Collective Capacity

- ✓ Enhance ability of local business service providers to offer regional and statewide expertise
- ✓ Train additional community leaders to provide business; development support
- ✓ Engage residents in placemaking activities that support economic development through local environmental stewardship
- ✓ Expand marketing to increase awareness and utilization of existing business support services

"This work elevates the Fern Ridge community as a place to do business, while fostering a culture that promotes entrepreneurship as an economic development model and as a lifestyle."

—City of Veneta

- Business Connect Committee
- Rural Development Initiatives (RDI)
- Small Business Assistance Center (SBDC)
- Veneta's Economic Development Committee
- Regional Accelerator and Innovation Network (RAIN)
- Lane County Economic Development
- Veneta and Fern Ridge Chamber of Commerce



6 Southwestern Oregon Community College

This community serves Coos, Curry, and western Douglas counties.

Use of Funds

- ✓ Renovate the Southwestern Innovation Center, which will house the REEF (Rural Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Framework) project
- ✓ Launch the REEF to facilitate co-location of business development services
- ✓ Leverage additional funding to sustain its operations

Entrepreneurial Support

- ✓ Offer below-market physical and virtual co-working and incubation spaces
- ✓ Provide support services ranging from basic business tools to financial management to social media marketing
- ✓ Create highly-tailored, niche business development tracks including food production, manufacturing, recreation management

Building Collective Capacity

- ✓ Increase access to the variety of available regional business support services
- ✓ Assemble business support agencies in one place to offer sequential and comprehensive services to entrepreneurs and small business at all stages of business development
- ✓ Capitalize on the local community college partnership to provide a pipeline of young entrepreneurs and an eager, well-trained workforce of welders, computer technicians, chefs, and more

"The Innovation Center at Southwestern will bring together our region's small business development center and other business and economic development services under the same roof to support entrepreneurs in launching or growing their business."

-Southwestern Oregon Community College

- South Coast Development Council (SCDC)
- Small Business Development Center (SBDC)
- Southwestern Oregon Community College (SWOCC)
- Government Contract Assistance Program (GCAP)
- Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians
- Coquille Economic Development Corporation

7 Klamath IDEA

This community serves South Central Oregon.

Use of Funds

- ✓ Hire and onboard a part-time Entrepreneur Concierge to assist with outreach
 to entrepreneurs, data collection and evaluation, and connecting them to
 appropriate resources
- ✓ Launch a Klamath IDEA website to assist entrepreneurs and small business owners in locating nearby resources

Entrepreneurial Support

- ✓ Understand the specific needs of entrepreneurs and connect them to appropriate support services
- ✓ Increase one-on-one support provided to entrepreneurs
- ✓ Increase engagement opportunities to affect the overall ecosystem through involvement in Klamath IDEA's eLeadership Team
- ✓ Offer Klamath IDEA Talks to bring local entrepreneurs together to discuss relevant topics

Building Collective Capacity

- ✓ Craft a three-year, entrepreneurship-based economic development strategy that will be scaled to serve neighboring and outlying communities
- ✓ Diversify and increase earned income through IDEA Talks and the 2018 Rural Business and Innovation Summit; earned income will help sustain Klamath IDEA and the work of its partners

"Klamath IDEA and its partners are creating a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem to increase opportunities for wealth and prosperity in South Central Oregon."

—Klamath IDEA

- Klamath Community College (KCC)
 Foundation
- Klamath Community College Small Business Development Center (SBDC)
- South Central Oregon EDD
- Oregon Tech
- Klamath County Chamber of Commerce
- Klamath Falls Downtown Association



Warm Springs Community Action Team

This community serves Warm Springs, including people from the Warm Springs Indian Reservation and Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs in Jefferson and Wasco counties, particularly aspiring and current businesses on the Warm Springs Indian Reservation, Native American artists, and food production businesses.

Use of Funds

- ✓ Open a new storefront, gallery, and maker space to showcase tribal member artwork from the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs
- ✓ Develop e-commerce on the existing Tananáwit (a formal community and newly-formed nonprofit organization of Warm Springs artists) website
- ✓ Launch a small business incubator and accompanying commercial kitchen
- ✓ Expand marketing and design roadside signage to attract highway visitors
- ✓ Support the launch or expansion of 15 new businesses

Entrepreneurial Support

- ✓ Provide culturally-specific resources such as the *Indianpreneurship* curriculum
- ✓ Develop new avenues for sales for tribal member artwork
- ✓ Offer ideally-located spaces from which to operate
- ✓ Increase small business mentorship opportunities
- ✓ Provide Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) at a 5:1 match

Building Collective Capacity

- ✓ Work more deeply with tribal administrators, the Tribal Council and business owners to build a new "entrepreneurial zone" in the community to redefine the business culture
- ✓ Decrease institutional barriers to establishing a business, especially for Native American entrepreneurs

"Warm Springs' population is almost entirely Native, and community members have access to just a fraction of the jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities necessary to sustain our town and reservation. This project will spur the creation of vital jobs in our community, while addressing longstanding barriers that disproportionately affect our small business owners and budding entrepreneurs."

> -Warm Springs Community **Action Team**

- Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs Tribal Council
- Oregon IDA Initiative
- Warm Springs Tribal Ventures
- Warm Springs Public Utilities Department
- Warm Springs Tribal Credit Enterprise (WSTCE)
- Warm Springs Chamber of Commerce
- Tananáwit



9 High Desert Partnership

This community serves Harney County, Hines, Burns, and particularly frontier communities, new entrepreneurs, 20-30 year-old audience, natural resource- and tourism-focused businesses.

Use of Funds

- ✓ Create BizMap, which will identify current strengths and opportunities for Harney County's entrepreneurial ecosystem
- ✓ Launch BizStim, a series of interactive programs to stimulate interest in starting a new business
- ✓ Develop BizPlan to ready entrepreneurs for entry into a start-up incubator
- ✓ Hire a BizHarney project Coordinator to oversee all project aspects

Entrepreneurial Support

- ✓ Identify, then address knowledge gaps for entrepreneurs through expanded resources
- ✓ Inspire and motivate entrepreneurs to launch businesses through increased access to support services
- ✓ Assist in turning concepts into comprehensive action plans

Building Collective Capacity

- ✓ Assemble a multi-partner team to lead interviews, evaluations, and assessments via BizMap; results shared regionally and statewide
- ✓ Engage new and existing partners to offer a circuit of new professional development opportunities for entrepreneurs

"Excellent incubators exist but there is a need for early-stage motivation and support. The BizHarney project strengthens the region's entrepreneurial ecosystem to support the launch of sustainable business start-ups in Harney County."

—High Desert Partnership

- Harney County Court
- Harney County Economic Development
- Harney County Restoration Collaborative
- Harney Basic Wetlands Initiative
- Wildfire Collaborative
- Youth Initiative
- · Gregory Smith and Co.

10 Northeast Oregon Economic Development District (Hatch Baker City)

This community serves Baker, Union, and Wallowa counties, and particularly women, Spanish-speakers, and other underserved populations.

Use of Funds

- ✓ Hire NEOEDD staff located in the "HatchLab" to increase the accessibility of an IDA program, loan funds, and business service programs
- ✓ Hire a Spanish-speaking, on-site facilitator to deliver the Empresas Program
- ✓ Host wider variety of events to engage new populations and community at large
- ✓ Develop signage to attract aspiring entrepreneurs to HatchLab's prime Main Street location

Entrepreneurial Support

- ✓ Build number of culturally-congruent support services available to underserved populations including women, individuals of color, and Spanish speakers
- ✓ Ensure that business service providers become more visible, accessible, and beneficial
- ✓ Offer a collaborative space to hold meetings, access services, receive training, and more

Building Collective Capacity

- ✓ Further develop a visible center for entrepreneurship on Main Street to support a local culture of entrepreneurism
- ✓ Connect local resources to one another and to larger regional or statewide networks and organizations

"We are diversifying and increasing the number and type of entrepreneurs accessing our services by ramping up our capacity and local collaboration."

—Northeast Oregon Economic
Development District (Hatch Baker City)

- Baker City Chamber of Commerce
- Baker City Downtown Association?
- Baker Technical Institute
- City of Baker City
- Community Bank and Guyer Associates CPAs
- Small Business Development Center (SBDC)
- Oregon Native American Chamber (ONAC)

11 Euvalcree

This community serves Malheur County, Ontario, western Treasure Valley, and particularly freight owner-operators and Latinx-owned businesses.

Use of Funds

- ✓ Establish operating systems, policies and procedures of new trucking cooperative (from dispatch software to legal review of membership agreements)
- ✓ Build the capacity of the organization and leadership
- ✓ Hire a project coordinator to ensure the above work's success

Entrepreneurial Support

- ✓ Create mentoring opportunities for those entering the freight industry
- ✓ Provide competitive advantage, economies of scale, and job security to freight owner-operators, all of whom are small business owners
- ✓ Develop solutions in response to growth barriers identified by Latinx-owned businesses
- ✓ Increase internal infrastructure of Euvalcree to provide additional support to small businesses across all industries

Building Collective Capacity

- ✓ Strengthen transportation infrastructure within the regional agricultural industry
- ✓ Build local capacity to shift ownership of the industry from distant brokers to resident businesses
- ✓ Provide professional development opportunities to the cooperative's board members and major partnering agencies
- ✓ Assess the ecosystem of Latinx-owned businesses in Malheur County and sharing these findings with regional and statewide partners

"This project will keep money circulating in the local economy while solving ecosystem barriers including a chronic shortage of drivers and the control of the industry by distant brokers unresponsive to local supply and demand forces."

-Euvalcree

- Western Treasure Valley Truckers Cooperative
- Northwest Cooperative Development Center
- Treasure Valley Community College
- Snake River Economic Development Association
- Small Business Development Center (SBDC)
- Center for Business, Workforce and Community Learning