

March 3, 2021

Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Subcommittee on Transportation and Economic Development
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: Support of Funding for Technical Assistance in Overlooked Communities and the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) Network

Co-Chair Beyer, Co-Chair Gomberg, and Members of the Committee:

RAIN supports continued funding of Technical Assistance—especially in overlooked communities—under Section 3 of HB 5023 (line item: “Business, Innovation, and Trade”).

RAIN is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that uses a **community-driven**, investigative (*not prescriptive*) approach to provide **technical assistance** to overlooked entrepreneurs in **communities who invite us in**. RAIN’s mission is to partner with communities to catalyze entrepreneurial ecosystems, connect entrepreneurs—*especially the overlooked*—to resources, and contribute to the creation of prosperous economies.

Since 2015, RAIN has been invited into 23 cities (20 of them are rural) across 5 Oregon counties. Most recently, RAIN’s programs expanded to Oregon’s Coast to serve maritime innovators in partnership with Oregon State University’s Hatfield Marine Science Center. **During the COVID pandemic**, RAIN also expanded our Technical Assistance offerings to virtually meet the increased demand, reaching overlooked entrepreneurs and small business owners in **51 cities and 20 counties in Oregon**.

The need for Technical Assistance funding that serves overlooked populations is sizable and growing, especially for rural entrepreneurs, small business owners with 20 or fewer employees, and other historically underserved entrepreneurs.

With the **\$100,000 in CARES Act Technical Assistance funding RAIN received from Business Oregon in 2020**, we were able to quickly deliver **“Digital Marketing Resiliency Kits”** to Oregon entrepreneurs struggling to keep their businesses afloat through the various phases of the COVID shutdown. We provided 1:1 Technical Assistance to **98 entrepreneurs**, teaching them how to pivot to online sales. Ninety-six percent (**96%**) of those who received this Technical Assistance self-identified as a member of at least one of the underserved communities listed in the **Governor’s Equity Framework**.¹

With the **additional \$66,700 in CARES Act Technical Assistance funding RAIN will receive from Business Oregon in 2021**, we will host a **13-week financial accelerator (MONEYmaker)** that’s designed to address financial literacy for small businesses and startups. We already have **73 entrepreneurs** registered for MONEYmaker (**77%** from underserved communities as identified in the **Governor’s Equity Framework**). We expect to have 100 registered for MONEYmaker before we close registration on March 12th.

¹ https://www.oregon.gov/gov/policy/Documents/EquityFrameworkCovid19_2020.pdf

Without the Technical Assistance funds from Business Oregon, RAIN would not have been able to provide either of these programs to these 171 entrepreneurs, most of whom are in underserved communities.

RAIN would like to *especially* encourage funding for the following programs for overlooked startups and small businesses:

- **Technical Assistance** - Technical Assistance for underserved entrepreneurs and communities. The scarcity of community-based technical assistance programs that are tailored to rural and overlooked communities is an ongoing impediment to creating a thriving entrepreneurial economy in Oregon.
- **Funding for the SBDC Network** - RAIN refers close to 30% of the entrepreneurs we serve to the SBDC Network. SBDC programs are critically important to a successful entrepreneurship and innovation ecosystem in Oregon, especially now during the economic crisis created by the pandemic.

RAIN supports a budget that continues to **fund community-based Technical Assistance, including the SBDC Network.**

Sincerely,



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