March 21, 2023

Co-Chairs and Members of the Committee:

My name is Kat Rutledge. I write to you from rural Southern Oregon, where I have the privilege of serving both as the Director of Klamath IDEA and the Director of the Klamath Community College Small Business Development Center (SBDC).

Business Oregon's Rural Opportunity Initiative (ROI) has been providing funding for a collaborative entrepreneurial ecosystem building project in my home county of Klamath for the last seven years. A group of 22 resource providers, including the SBDC, are working together to connect entrepreneurs to the right resources at the right time!

The ROI Program is not a bureaucratic top-down model, but one that allows communities to decide for themselves how to use entrepreneurship and innovation as a rural economic development model. It requires partnership and local leadership.

ROI has provided Klamath IDEA stable seed money to grow; we've been able to show proof of concept – that entrepreneurship can work. We've leveraged those lottery dollars to garner other funding at the state, county, and city levels as well as from the private sector and two of Oregon's largest private foundations.

Entrepreneurship is a long game, but we are already seeing economic impact. Not only are our engaged entrepreneurs self-reporting growth in sales and jobs, but our efforts to building a celebratory and supportive culture for our entrepreneurs is working on a transformational level.

The indicators are early but the needle is moving!

Klamath County's new business registrations as reported by the Oregon Secretary of State increased from 665 in 2020 to 944 in 2021 and then to 1,027 in 2022.

Our tax base is growing.

Our economy is becoming more diversified!

Our County's population is growing and in the right place. Our 25-39-year-old generational bands are growing instead of shrinking!

The Rural Opportunity Initiative is now supporting 20 of Oregon's rural communities in their efforts to grow entrepreneurs and I for one cannot wait to watch it work in mine and others!

Respectfully submitted,

Kat Rutledge

Director

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JULY 1, 2021 - JUNE 30, 2022

Klamath IDEA

Connecting Entrepreneurs to the Right Resources at the Right Time!

STRATEGIC ACCOMPLISHMENTS

We produced and released four videos on our YouTube channel in support of:

- Culture building
- Community image
- Entrepreneur attraction

4

Pitch Coaches Trained **5**

Entrepreneurs Coached **17**

ENTREPRENEUR ASSISTANCE

28 Qualified Referrals to eResource Partners

22 eResource Partners Engaged

KlamathIDEA.org

565 Soft Referrals to Partners

1,706 Visitors to Website

Concierge Engagement

752 Entrepreneur Interactions

18 Collaboration Statements

DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT

Increased Sales **$294,489**

Business Investments **$102,750**

Jobs Created **8**

Jobs Supported **159**

Klamath IDEA

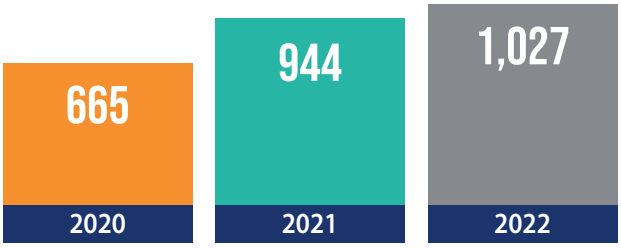
CONNECTING ENTREPRENEURS TO THE RIGHT RESOURCES AT THE RIGHT TIME!

START-UP ACTIVITY

Smart Start-Up Attendance

Data provided by the KCC Small Business Development Center.

Oregon Secretary of State – New Business Registrations



Data provided by the SOS database.

"Stage 1" Proprietor Recovery

Employers with 2-9 employees.

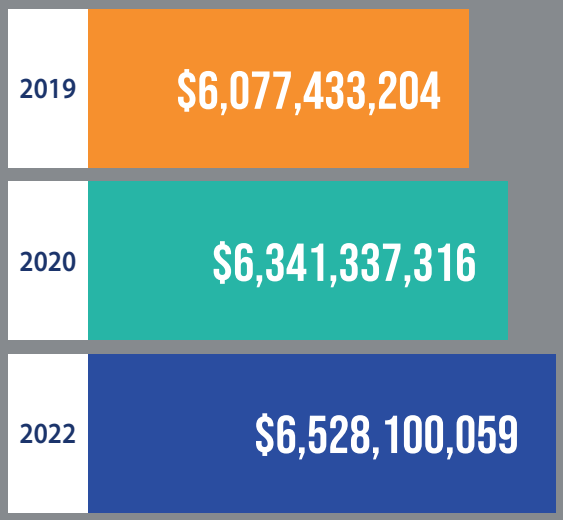
New Businesses in Downtown Klamath Falls

42 new businesses opened downtown between July 1, 2021 and June 30, 2022

Data provided by Klamath Falls Downtown Association – an Oregon Main Street Organization.

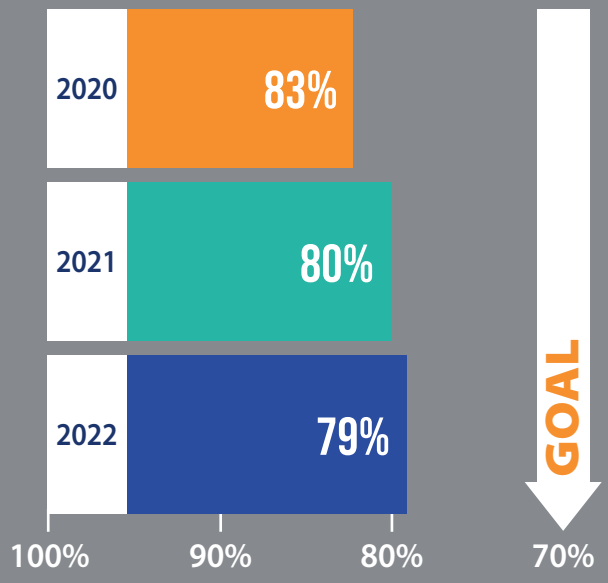
TRANSFORMATIVE INDICATORS

Expanded County Tax Base



Diversified Economy

Percentage of household income concentrated in our top five earnings drivers.



Reduced concentration lowers recession risk.

Earnings are beginning to spread across a variety of sectors.