

Randy G. Cox CEO/Executive Director
Klamath County Economic Development Association
205 Riverside Drive, Suite E
Klamath Falls, OR 97601

3/12/2025

Joint Committee on Ways and Means
RE: Business Oregon Funding - Regional Innovation Hub Initiative (Klamath & Lake)
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means,

I am writing to express my strong support for the Governor's recommended funding of Business Oregon's 2025-2027 budget, in particular, full funding for the South Central Oregon Regional Innovation Hub (representing both Klamath and Lake Counties). As an integral part of the 10-Year Innovation Plan released by Business Oregon in 2021 and implemented by the Oregon Innovation Council (Oregon InC), this initiative is an exciting opportunity to advance economic growth and technological innovation in our region.

The launch of the Klamath and Lake Counties regional hub aligns perfectly with our community's long-term goals of fostering a diversified economy, enhancing local job opportunities, and building the infrastructure necessary for sustainable innovation. With its focus on creating a thriving innovation ecosystem, this initiative will help Klamath and Lake Counties tap into their unique assets and potential, while fostering a robust, interconnected network of businesses, entrepreneurs, and local leaders.

Klamath and Lake Counties face specific challenges—rural geography, limited access to funding, and a historically underserved economy. However, we also possess immense potential to thrive in emerging sectors such as renewable energy, ag-tech, and small-scale manufacturing. By supporting the funding of our regional innovation hub, we can overcome barriers to growth and bring new opportunities to our communities.

Key priorities for our region in sustaining our innovation hub include:

1. **Building Capacity for Innovation:** Developing resources and infrastructure that support new business ventures and innovation, from startup accelerators to coworking spaces.
2. **Collaboration Across Sectors:** Facilitating partnerships between local businesses, academic institutions, government, and regional economic development agencies to create cross-sector innovation.
3. **Fostering Talent Development:** Investing in workforce development programs that build the necessary skills for innovation-driven industries, particularly in technology and advanced manufacturing.

4. **Attracting Investment:** Providing incentives and networking opportunities that can attract private capital and investors to our region.

We believe that the full funding provided through the Regional Innovation Hub initiative will help build upon a foundation for the future success of our region, while also helping to meet the broader goals set forth in Oregon's 10-Year Innovation Plan. Klamath and Lake Counties are ready to embrace the challenges and opportunities this initiative will bring, and we are committed to collaborating with local stakeholders to create an ecosystem that is inclusive, sustainable, and forward-thinking.

Thank you for considering this important project for our communities. I look forward to the opportunity to work together to advance this initiative and contribute to the economic vitality of Klamath and Lake Counties.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Randy G. Cox". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "R".

Randy G. Cox

randy@teamklamath.com