



Economic Development Priorities for Coronavirus Economic Recovery



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Wildly Serious About Business



Oregon's economic development community will lead the state's long-term economic recovery. Skilled economic developers execute targeted activities to build diverse, resilient regional economies that bring community wealth, family wage jobs and a strong local tax base. Successful economic development involves creative partnerships, trust relationships with business, effective programs and incentives and support from state and local leadership. The following are essential considerations to support frontline economic recovery work throughout Oregon.

TOOLS

Allow flexibility for local non-discretionary funds. Broaden the potential use of current non-discretionary funds to allow local government to choose how best to responsibly meet dire community needs and tailor solutions.

Protect existing state development resources. We urge lawmakers not to repurpose current programs designed to support growth and sustainability in our communities (Strategic Reserve Fund, Special Public Work Funds), and instead advocate to supplement them. These programs will become even more critical in delivering needed infrastructure to support recruitment and expansion opportunities going forward and our Economic Development Districts must be eligible for these and new funds. We must not sacrifice long-term sustainable growth opportunities. We also urge against raiding well-managed, unrelated state accounts that function effectively (SAIF reserve, Highway Trust Fund).

Maintain current incentive programs. It is more important than ever not to weaken programs like the Strategic Investment Program or Enterprise Zone abatements. Undoubtedly, more communities will experience significant drops in local wages and employment opportunities. Oregon needs to leverage our existing programs to bring sustainable jobs to disadvantaged communities and keep capital flowing to employers looking to invest. Allowances should be made for companies who may be seeing temporary employment reductions related to the pandemic that jeopardize an existing program qualification.

Tax forgiveness for small business grants/loans We applaud efforts to recognize tax challenges for small businesses and adjust filing requirements. Where possible, continue to identify changes to taxation of small businesses when receiving income in the form of grants or loans. This would maximize the impact of local grants to small businesses and allows the state to facilitate support for local programs and small businesses without allocating existing cash.

PROCESSES

Engage additional stakeholders. Rebalance the composition of the Governor's Recovery Taskforce in coming months to reflect executive leadership from economic development and workforce. These professionals bring critical insights that are unique from the insights of industry and business interest groups. Economic Development leadership must advise on regional application of equity lenses and verify key industry needs and partners (ODA, OMEP, Travel Oregon, residential and commercial construction organizations, tech sector and the start-up community).

Ensure local access & distribution of federal funds. A share of CARES Act funds should be directly allocated to local governments so these funds can ensure basic community needs are met, including expansion of existing local programs for small business assistance and supporting local economic development staff. Support distribution of funds for some key programs that could be accessed for recovery efforts, such as CDBG and EDA resources.

Determine needs of local employers. Work with economic development to understand local employers' needs for testing process, personal protective equipment, and other supply chain issues so employee base can safely return to work. This includes facilitating procurement of Oregon made products, for government agencies, through the recovery phase.