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Dec. 9, 2024

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OREGON SMALL BUSINESS INNOVATIONS RECEIVE \$907,500 INVESTMENT

Thriving Entrepreneurs Grants from Oregon Community Foundation Seed Economic Development Throughout the State

Purple sea urchins are invading the Oregon coast, threatening fragile kelp forests. Yet coastal communities have found this environmental challenge also represents an economic opportunity. Now, a new grant from Oregon Community Foundation will help expand the capacity of a seafood processing facility in Newport to, among other services, get more of the invasive creatures onto dinner plates.

The nonprofit Central Coast Food Web provides shared facilities, equipment, guidance and support in acquiring business licenses and certifications for small businesses, including Oo-Nee Sea Ranch, a purple urchin harvesting operation on the southern Oregon coast.

“Our goal is to help fishing operations like Oo-nee build enough processing and retail capacity and do the research and development needed to become self-sufficient,” says Jim King, Executive Director of the Central Coast Food Web. “This economic development supports the community at the same time we’re building our fishing industry workforce throughout the coast.”

The \$25,000 grant will also allow King's organization to support at least 10 more fishing and farming small business owners.

The new funding for Central Coast Food Web is one of 39 grants across the state from Oregon Community Foundation’s Thriving Entrepreneurs Program. The statewide funder has distributed a total of \$907,500 to nonprofits that support innovative economic development throughout Oregon. The program provides flexible funding for organizations that support entrepreneurs, especially women, people of color and people living in under-resourced rural communities or working in under-resourced sectors.

The [full list of grants](#) demonstrates the geographic and economic breadth of the small business investments.

Other Thriving Entrepreneurs grantees include:

Nixyáawii Community Financial Services

Nixyáawii Community Financial Services received support for a series of economic summits and fashion shows. The nonprofit provides loans, coaching, training and technical assistance to artists and other entrepreneurs on the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation.

“Our approach to hosting 3 regional economic summits and fashion shows has tripled our small business client list and small business directory. Our artists and creatives on the Umatilla Indian Reservation didn’t necessarily see themselves as entrepreneurs because it is just part of their heritage. Our NW Native Fashion Show has provided a platform for them to find confidence. We see it as a small business ecosystem.”

Black United Fund of Oregon, Inc.

The mission of the Black United Fund of Oregon is to assist in the social and economic development of Oregon's underserved communities and to contribute to a broader understanding of ethnic and culturally diverse groups. The organization supports entrepreneurs like Nicole Rose, the founder of Ella Dean, a natural haircare brand for those with textured hair as the first Emerging Entrepreneur.

“I have only been in the Emerging Entrepreneur Program for 5 months and my business has grown tremendously,” Rose says. “The Black United Fund of Oregon has made my business feel important and a part of the Portland community.”

“Thanks to the Black United Fund, I’ve got a 5-year plan,” adds Lestarya Molloy, Founder and CEO of Fridie Outdoors. “I know what I’m doing. I am so appreciative for the resources and funding to be able to continue with what we started.”

Over the next year, the nonprofit will provide equitable social, economic and educational opportunities to more than 500 entrepreneurs who face disproportionate barriers to accessing resources, capital and mentorship.

High Desert Partnership

Eastern Oregon’s High Desert Partnership manages six collaboratives with local ranchers, small businesses, the Burns Paiute Tribe and others in Harney County, one of Oregon’s most rural and economically distressed regions, to address our community’s most pressing needs. The new Thriving Entrepreneurs grant from Oregon Community Foundation will support a food systems coordinator to run the farmers' market and provide direct technical assistance to 10 new clients.

In June 2024, the High Desert Partnership launched the first-ever, all local farm-to-table meal for 20 community members. Eight food providers included local producers of beef, pork, vegetables, garlic and eggs, along with a sourdough bread baker and a flower grower. Many thought it was not even possible to create an entire meal like this with food grown entirely in Harney County. It was successful because the food coordinator was able to help the growers work together.

Plaza de Nuestra Comunidad

Plaza de Nuestra Comunidad provides Latino/x and immigrant business owners and entrepreneurs with technical assistance, workshops and a 12-week, Spanish-language business class. Owning a business creates financial security for families. These new businesses help preserve and carve out space for Latino/x culture in Lane County. Plaza will provide grants to help businesses scale-up their services.

The nonprofit's Cambios Business Program provides classes for budding entrepreneurs like Carlos and his college-aged son, Yosef. Each had their own individual dreams of business ownership. Carlos started a jewelry-making business, crafting gold chains with techniques that have been passed down through generations. Yosef, a student at the University of Oregon, built on his love of photography to create his own professional photography business. Together, Carlos and Yosef were thankful for the valuable information they learned, and the Plaza team was honored to be a part of such a special intergenerational experience.

About

Since 1973, **Oregon Community Foundation** has worked to improve the lives of all Oregonians through the power of philanthropy. In partnership with donors and volunteers, OCF strengthens communities in every county in Oregon through grantmaking, scholarships and research. In 2023, OCF distributed \$225 million in grants and scholarships. Individuals, families, businesses and organizations can work with OCF to create charitable funds to support causes important to them. To learn more, please visit oregoncf.org.

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