

Business Oregon News

March 2009

Dear OECDD Partner:

Welcome to the first Oregon Economic Community Development Department E-Newsletter. Beginning today, I will communicate our goals, accomplishments and news of business development opportunities monthly to you—our partners across the state.

In this first edition, however, I will offer a lengthier message than usual about some exciting changes we have made at the department to enhance our services to Oregon businesses.

In addition, I want you all to know that the agency's series of budget hearings will commence on March 25 before the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Transportation and Economic Development.

Let me begin by expressing my appreciation for your input and involvement throughout the realignment project at the department. In these difficult economic times, our successful partnerships with regional economic development organizations and businesses throughout the state are more critical than ever. We are proud to work closely with you to enhance Oregon's economy and we appreciate everything you do on behalf of our state's future.

The purpose of this message is to update you on the ongoing progress of our realignment project and to announce the new structure of our Business Innovation and Trade Division, which will be implemented next month.

As you know, the first phase of OECDD's realignment last summer culminated in the conclusion that we needed to separate the two distinct aims of the department: 1) job creation and retention; and 2) local infrastructure development. This goal is reflected in HB 2152, the agency's realignment bill, which proposes creation of an Infrastructure Finance Authority (IFA) and separates community development functions so the agency can better administer the infrastructure programs serving the state. HB 2152 is currently making strong progress through the legislative process with broad awareness and support.

On a parallel path, over the past several months we also have continued to work on the aspects of the realignment that do not require legislative action, with a primary focus on improving the services and programs we deliver in the areas of business development, international trade and innovation. We have collaborated with the OECD Commission and key partners to identify ways to better align staff and programs to meet the needs of businesses in the state and to enhance Oregon's competitive position in the global economy. See organizational chart below.

The commission has identified the need to prioritize resources and focus on key industry areas where Oregon has a competitive advantage, with the goal of achieving maximum return on investment given the department's limited dollars and staff. In keeping with the 2008 Policy Playbook for the Oregon Business Plan, the commission identified five key industry groups as the focus areas for the department's value-added services in business development and support, innovation and international trade; these five key industry groups are:

- Clean technology/renewable energy,
- Natural resources (including agriculture and forest products);
- Manufacturing/metals,
- High technology, and
- Sports apparel/recreation products

The commission believes that such focus will enable better integration of the agency's business development, innovation and international teams for the delivery of coordinated, comprehensive services, including better leverage of the work of the Oregon Innovation Council and other private-sector groups with the agency's suite of direct business and industry services.

Accordingly, a new Global Industry Strategies section of the department has been created to combine the separate functions previously carried out by business development, innovation and international trade staff. This new section will be divided into four industry teams (one of which will address two of the five key industry areas, Manufacturing and High Technology). The teams will develop and implement comprehensive strategic plans for each industry group. The plans will fully integrate the spectrum of services available to businesses and industries, including everything from one-on-one technical assistance through administered financial tools to support for innovation initiatives within the Oregon Innovation Plan. Further, the new team structure will generate increased value for our customers and partners by enabling staff to cultivate greater industry expertise, promoting coordination with the plans and activities of sister departments and regional entities and organizing tactics around tangible, measurable results for these industry groups.

We will continue to have a team of regional business development officers who will serve communities around the state; those regional staff will now have an enhanced ability to connect regional activities with statewide initiatives.

The commission, my executive team and department staff are excited about this opportunity to align our range of services and aggressively pursue a stronger competitive position for Oregon's leading industries.

As the largest economic development organization in the state, we hope to establish a model that raises the bar for what we can accomplish for Oregon businesses and we hope our new structure will reveal new and inspired ways we can work with you, our partners, to deliver outstanding service and results in support of the value and success of Oregon commodities, products and services in the global marketplace.

Sincerely,

Tim McCabe
Director