



Equitable Economic Recovery Grants

Progress Report

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Purpose

This summary report provides a 6-month progress review of the four *Equitable Recovery Grants*, as administered by the County's Economic Development Program, through June 30th, 2023. The report includes a summary of each of the grant's unique goals, with updates on the progress to meet those goals, and highlights examples of collaborations and resources that have been leveraged by partner organizations in the process. Finally, the report presents the challenges faced throughout the grant's timeline so far and next steps.

Background

In the Summer of 2021, recognizing the disparate economic impacts of the economic downturn on underserved communities as the result of the pandemic, the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) gave direction for County staff to provide additional support services to small businesses and entrepreneurs. Using American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) funding available through the economic development program and guided by the BCC adopted, nationally recognized ARPA framework, an allocation was made available for enhanced business support services tailored to communities with unequal access to resources and support. In partnership with community-based organizations, these Equitable Recovery Grants continue to provide direct support and technical assistance to underserved communities, including urban unincorporated areas and communities of color, who have been most adversely impacted by the pandemic.

Throughout the implementation of four contracts, the County continues to create new or strengthen existing partnerships with several community-based organizations. These organizations are focused on providing culturally specific services to small businesses recovering from the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly within communities that have been disproportionately impacted such as Black, Indigenous, Latin/a/x/o, immigrant and refugee communities and others.

Overview of the Equitable Economic Recovery Grants

The four organizations that have partnered with the County in administering these grants include Centro Cultural, Professional Business Development Group (PBDG), Micro Enterprise Services of Oregon (MESO), and Adelante Mujeres. The first three organizations have submitted reports reflecting their first six months of services (January 2022-June 2022). Adelante Mujeres' grant will launch in November 2022.

Organization Name	Focus of the Grant	Timeline
<i>Centro Cultural</i>	Provide critical and comprehensive business technical assistance services to businesses and entrepreneurs as they reopen and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic throughout Washington County, Oregon. Offering culturally specific services to the Latina/o/x community and supporting small business owners' access to community wellness.	January 1 st 2022 - June 30 th 2023
<i>Professional Business Development Group (PBDG)</i>	Administer and operate a small business assistance program to assist entrepreneurs and established businesses in the construction sector that have suffered a negative economic impact because of the COVID-19 pandemic to open, reopen, or strengthen their businesses and emerge from the pandemic in a position for success.	January 1 st 2022 - June 30 th 2023
<i>Micro Enterprise Services of Oregon (MESO)</i>	Provide support to new small businesses offering comprehensive technical assistance support and access to capital through the credit building and MESO's loans. More intensive technical assistance is offered to disadvantaged and minority communities, businesses and entrepreneurs that disclose their adjusted gross income as 80% AMI or less and have a business registered or are residents with domicile in Washington County, OR. Prioritizing small businesses in unincorporated urban Washington County.	January 1 st 2022 - June 30 th 2023
<i>Adelante Mujeres</i>	Administer and operate their Advancing Rural and Disadvantaged Latino/a/x Entrepreneurs ("ARDLE") program to provide enhanced small business development services including one-on-one technical assistance, business counseling, access to capital, and access to the market for low-income Latino/a/x microentrepreneurs throughout Washington County, Oregon.	November 1 st , 2022, October 31 st 2023

6-Month Impact Reports

Each of the four grants support the specialized services offered by the partner organization, based on their overarching mission, unique programs, and the communities that they serve. While these grants prioritize specific populations and/or geographic areas, partner organizations continue to leverage other resources that amplify the impact of these funds across the entirety of their programs. By partnering with a variety of community-based organizations that provide tailored services to the diverse business community across Washington County, these grants are addressing gaps in services and programs for small businesses, prioritizing historically marginalized communities that have been disproportionately affected by the negative economic impacts of COVID-19.

In their proposals, each of the four organizations outlined general outcomes that align with the organizations mission, with some linking specific performance goals to these outcomes. It is important to note that aggregate numbers may look different across each of the four organization's mid-way reports, depending on the programmatic area of focus of each of the grants and/or the barriers each organization faces in service provision. The scale of the numbers reported at the mid-way report does not always reflect the extensive effort that is invested by the staff of each organization to meet their long-term goals.

Recognizing where each of these organizations are in their journey is essential and that their work involves supporting vulnerable human beings in their paths to create new businesses or sustain existing ones. All this effort relies on in-depth personal interaction between staff and entrepreneurs, which is complex and dependent on the unique professional and cultural skills of staff.

Centro Cultural

Through the Equitable Economic Recovery Grant, Centro Cultural continues to provide comprehensive business technical assistance services to businesses and entrepreneurs throughout Washington County via the Business Development Program operated by Centro de Prosperidad. This program reflects the organization's goals to promote economic empowerment for women and BIPOC small entrepreneurs and families seeking living wage careers, in combination with comprehensive community health services.

To help businesses reopen and recover from the COVID-19 Pandemic, Centro de Prosperidad's services have adapted to:

- Restructure businesses for relaunching with licenses, permits, and certifications, evaluating and renegotiating contracts,
- Provide comprehensive business technical assistance for developing or relaunching marketing strategies, business management systems and skills, financial management systems and skills, workforce systems, and tracking procedures
- Partner with Lewis and Clark Small Business Legal Clinic so that clients can receive, along with the transactional and technical assistance from Prosperidad, advice of their legal responsibilities, the impact of nonpayments, and bankruptcy on leases.

Centro de Prosperidad's team reports leveraging \$72,000 dollars from various partnerships through the Equitable Economic Recovery Grant. The program includes culturally specific resources available to the Latina/o/x community by offering services such as:

- Setting up business frameworks and assisting in creating business plans.
- Providing business, workforce, and financial management systems and technical assistance skills.
- Assisting clients with developing and/or relaunching marketing strategies.
- Accessing loans and finance opportunities.
- Gaining certifications and licenses and bidding on contracts.
- Expanding their financial, English, and computer literacy.
- Assessing strategic growth.
- Supporting business owner access to community wellness services.

Centro de Prosperidad also supports small business owners facing systemic barriers and discrimination in accessing government benefits and general health services. Staff are trained in government benefits enrollment, food security, transitional housing support, and mental and emotional support, and can offer enrollment assistance for clients to access SNAP, Veterans, and SSI Benefits, Oregon Health Plan, and Low-Income Trimet Fare Program.

Between January 1st and June 30th 2022, Centro de Prosperidad has serviced the following Washington County small businesses and entrepreneurs with the support of the Equitable Economic Recovery Grant and other leveraged funding.

- 423 businesses with relevant business updates and resources including their proprietary guidebooks in English and Spanish.
- 107 businesses looking for assistance to start or grow a small business including
 - 32 small businesses that were relaunched, relocated, or created.
 - 36 additional jobs were created, and 47 jobs were retained by those 107 small businesses.
 - \$135,000 dollars were accessed for small business financing.

Category Grant Goal	Performance
Setting up business frameworks and assisting in creating business plans	128
Providing business management systems and technical assistance skills	38
Providing financial management systems and technical assistance skills	15
Providing workforce systems technical assistance	16
Assisting clients with developing and/or relaunching marketing strategies	22
Assisting clients with accessing loans and finance opportunities	25
Assisting clients with gaining certifications and licenses	18
Assisting clients with bidding on contracts	9
Assisting clients with expanding their financial, English, and computer literacy	22
Assisting clients with assessing strategic growth	3
Supporting business owner access to community wellness	2

Some highlights from Prosperidad’s programs are shared below:

- A childcare center in Hillsboro was able to purchase property on contract from the landlord. This purchase also provided the ability to make a similar investment in

Cornelius. They are now working on launching a childcare facility in a second property.

- Three small businesses were able to secure construction projects at the Bienestar Nuevo Amanecer housing project.

Micro Enterprise Services of Oregon (MESO)

Through the Equitable Economic Recovery Grant, MESO continues to expand its services in Washington County, aligning with the mission of the organization to offer access to low barrier credit building opportunities, business development education, matched savings, and affordable equitable capital to underserved communities. The goal of the grant is to help existing small businesses in Washington County prepare to emerge from the pandemic positioned for future success and growth, focusing on business facing systemic barriers to support.

Specifically, MESO is growing their capacity to provide more intensive services to businesses with domiciles registered in unincorporated Washington County and that self-report their adjusted gross income as 80% MFI or less - both communities that face barriers in accessing service to support. To grow access to their programs, MESO's technical experts have been focused on the following tasks:

- Conducting outreach to unincorporated urban areas of Washington County by providing networking opportunities virtually through classes and workshops to engage disadvantaged and minority communities in their services.
- Engaging in partnerships with other small business support organizations.
- Providing intensive technical assistance to businesses and entrepreneurs by offering:
 - On-site support at MESO's offices in Beaverton.
 - Remote support including one-on-one meetings, workshops, and classes conducted through video calls.
 - Educational programs in various fields such as business building series, digital media series, festivals and marketplace, and tax preparation for small businesses.
- Connecting qualifying businesses to an Individual Development Account savings program that teaches participants how to save money for the businesses, as well as provide financial assistance and support in improving credit scores.
- Assisting businesses with constructing and implementing the marketing strategies, including but not limited to helping with designing and making flyers, creating forms for clients, providing social media help, and designing websites.
- Providing businesses with market research that includes determining the target market, market size and competition of the business.

As of June 30th, MESO supported 104 businesses overall across Washington County, including through this grant, leveraging additional resources and partnerships as they grow their presence in the area. MESO reports that they are on track to meet the program goal

tied to the Equitable Economic Recovery grant specifically, which is to identify and provide technical assistance to 30 new unduplicated clients in unincorporated Washington County. So far, the Washington County Business Development Team, based in Beaverton, has reached five new businesses in unincorporated areas and report that 5 are in the pipeline for income and address verification. The team anticipates reaching this goal as they expand services and partnerships with other organizations.

Client Story

- Citlali Rodriguez is the proud owner of My little house childcare LLC. She restarted her business journey this year after going through personal financial issues. Since contacting MESO she shared her commitment to establishing her business stronger than before, so she attended several MESO classes including the six-week small business building series. She also developed a basic business plan and is now working on her record keeping. MESO was able to leverage the staff experience and had Ester Horta, Preschool for All Navigator at MESO, sit in on a few of her planning and strategies meetings.

Professional Business Development Group (PBDG)

PBDG specializes in serving Minority and Women Owned Businesses in the construction industry, an industry that has the capacity to provide livable wages and create prosperity. Through this grant, staff are focused on supporting businesses that fall in those categories and that have suffered a negative economic impact because of the COVID-19 pandemic to open, reopen, or strengthen their businesses and emerge from the pandemic in a position for success.

As a result of this partnership, PBDG has launched its Build Program, hiring staff to assist entrepreneurs and established businesses at any stage of growth. Moving forward, PBDG anticipates this new program to be foundational to all its services, with the Build Program serving as a “home base” for businesses to access a variety of services. The Build Program offers the following services:

- Facilitating mentorship and networking opportunities.
- Providing businesses with construction specific resource navigation (e.g., bonding, insurance, certification, legal, grant, loan).
- Providing businesses with one-on-one advising, business plan development, loan and grant application support and funding.
- Offering registration, licensing, and certification services.
- Supporting in bids on jobs.
- Access to classes and workshops that have robust and tailored business training curriculum including:
 - Foundations of Running a Construction Business
 - Finding Government Contracting Opportunities
 - Oregon Buys
 - Tax preparation

- ETO Contractor Development Pathway
- COBID Certification
- Pre-Construction and Capability Statements, Contract Review Class
- Understanding the Financials of a New Project
- Request for Information (RFI) Course

Between January 1st and June 30th, 2022, PBDG's Build Program has serviced the following Washington County small businesses and entrepreneurs. The performance goal of this grant, as set by PBDG, is for their staff to provide culturally specific services to support between 15 to 45 entrepreneurs in the construction trade in Washington County. This does not include all the PBDG members who live or operate a business throughout Washington County.

Category Grant Goal	Performance
Providing navigation services	13
Offering classes and workshops	52
Hosting networking events	27
Connecting clients to resources and BID opportunities	190
Providing consultation and certification support through advising and referrals	13

Of the 13 businesses that PBDG business advisors have supported through navigation services, 5 businesses filled out their mid-way survey. Some testimonials from entrepreneurs that were engaged with this work include:

"PBDG has helped continue to stay in business by providing resource that has helped survive critical issues that has come up since COVID and they continue as DBE firm."

"PBDG has helped connect me with key resources as well as helping point my energy to the key areas that need improvement for our success. "

"Construction business is difficult to manage and establish as such PBDG has helped me find competent resources to navigate with complicated issues."

Adelante Mujeres

Beginning in November 2022, Adelante Mujeres the Equitable Economic Recovery grant will support the Advancing Rural and Disadvantaged Latino/a/x Entrepreneurs ("ARDLE") program that provides enhanced small business development services including one-on-one technical assistance, business counseling, access to capital, and access to the market for low-income Latino/a/x microentrepreneurs throughout Washington County. The goal of the project is to better serve Oregon's rural communities and its low-income Latino/a/x individuals by providing opportunities to access diverse markets and the tools needed to sustain their business.

The ARDLE program includes:

- Access to the training programs and culturally specific one-on-one business coaching that Adelante Mujeres currently offers such as:
 - Empresas Small Business Course and Specialty Workshops
 - The Food-Based Business Course
 - The Retail Business and Farmers Market Incubators.
- A focus on startups and existing businesses in diverse industries with special outreach to Food-Based, Construction, Landscaping, Janitorial, Retail, Agricultural, and Child-Care industries.
- Culturally specific and bilingual programming to ensure Latino/a/x microbusinesses are sustainable and profitable.
- Increased market access for low-income and Latino/a/x businesses owners to sustain or establish their businesses.
- Specialized business coaching and technical assistance for low-income Latino/a/x business owners to reopen, recover, and sustain their business amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Through this grant, the program has identified the following deliverables to support:

- 65 disadvantaged entrepreneurs will graduate from Adelante’s Empresas Small Business Courses.
- 15 disadvantaged entrepreneurs will participate in the Food Business Incubator program and have access to a fully licensed, affordable shared-use commercial kitchen space.
- 6 disadvantaged entrepreneurs will participate in the Retail Business Incubator program and have access to vendor space in its storefront Casa Qui.
- 30 Latino/a/x entrepreneurs will receive access to culturally responsive technical assistance.
- 75 Latino/a/x entrepreneurs will be assisted in individual coaching and technical assistance to reopen, recovery and sustain their business.
- 6 Latino/a/x entrepreneurs will gain access to capital through the IDA matching savings account, KivaZip crowdfunding loan, or other partner referrals.
- 70 Latino/a/x owned small businesses will be preserved.

Collaborations and Resources Leveraged

During the first two quarters of the grant, the following collaborations have been initiated or relaunched. In addition, various resources have been leveraged by partner organizations in operating their programs.

- Lewis and Clark Small Business Legal Clinic (SBLC) continues to expand its partnerships with each of the Equitable Economic Recovery Grant partner organizations. SBLC also receives ARPA funds through the Economic Development Program at Washington County. Services offered by the SBLC are tailored to the

needs of each service population and has enabled clients to access essential legal services that would otherwise not be available to them.

- Centro Cultural continues to leverage a multitude of partnerships to strengthen the pathways in accessing capital for its clients including with OregonSaves, Bank on Oregon, and by participating in the Financial Empowerment Network (FEN). The Centro team shares that by focusing on access to capital *“we are ensuring we are building stronger ties to these sources of funds. We have engaged several Latino serving organizations to identify approaches, best practices, and a deeper understanding of the Latino Microenterprise spectrum. We strongly desire the growth of a Latino Microenterprise Development Program learning community.”*
- Through the ARDLE program, Adelante Mujeres will increase access to specialized and enhanced services through the Oregon Small Business Development Center Network (“OSBDCN”) and through the Portland Community College (“PCC”) Small Business Development Center (“SBDC”) We Are Stronger Together program. This collaboration enables consistency across curriculum for technical service staff at different partner organizations.
- MESO is working closely with local jurisdictions such as the City of Cornelius through the implementation of a CBDG grant, the City of Tigard through its Opportunity Café and other initiatives, and with the City of Beaverton in servicing microenterprise businesses. Through these partnerships MESO is working to understand the gaps in services for unincorporated urban Washington County and thereby building more partnerships throughout the ecosystem which will enable them to grow their presence county-wide.
- PBDG operates the Build Program in part by leveraging an ongoing Business Oregon Technical Assistance Grant. PBDG is also working in partnership with the City of Tigard to conduct outreach to Minority and Women owned businesses in the construction industry and continues to refer clients to partner organizations such as the SBDC. PBDG also connects clients with contracting opportunities, leveraging a strong professional network. For example, they partner with larger contractors such as TriMet and facilitate the relationships as they begin.

“We were at a meet and greet and TriMet’s new diversity member was there. My PBDG mentor asked the question “how will you make a difference?” and then facilitated the conversation so that we could give key feedback. I felt like I had a real supporter in that moment.”

Business or Entrepreneur Engagement Strategies

Each organization continues to identify opportunities for outreach to their service populations as well as collaborate with other small business technical assistance providers to ensure their clients’ needs are met. Below are some examples of business or entrepreneur engagement strategies, as presented by each partner organization:

- A critical component to the success of Centro Cultural’s long-standing programs is by providing culturally specific services to entrepreneurs, ensuring avenues for meaningful engagement.

- For example, Centro Cultural works with the Programa Consular de Emprendimiento para Mexicanas en el Exterior (PCEME 2022), which specifically gives women entrepreneurs online access to business planning and coaching tools in the Spanish language with a cultural lens.
- As MESO's grant specifically prioritizes historically marginalized communities, clients must self-report that they meet CDBG criteria of <80% of MFI and live or own a business in unincorporated Washington County. In addition, the team shares that 80% of their clients are Latino. To service these priority populations, MESO's team is focused on creative partnerships to conduct outreach.
 - For example, MESO has hosted an in-person informational session in partnership with the Washington County Chamber of Commerce's ¡Conéctate! Program. They also tabled at the Oregon Association of Minority Entrepreneurs (OAME) Annual Trade Show and taught a virtual marketing class with Adelante Mujeres. They continue to host informational sessions and participate in networking events, including the Washington County Small Business Support Network Quarterly meetings.
- Having launched the BUILD program recently, PBDG is focused partners closely with local jurisdictions such as the City of Tigard to expand their reach to the MWEB and construction businesses. They have been focused on hosting regular networking events across Washington County including their quarterly events through April 2023.

Challenges

Each organization shared some of the challenges they are facing in implementing the Equitable Economic Recovery Grants:

- While some of the partner organizations have an established presence across Washington County, others are newer to the area, presenting challenges in implementing the grants as they scale their programs with their target populations locally.
- This includes finding creative methods for outreach, technology to be able to accurately map eligibility of clients, when necessary, and by ensuring that there is adequate capacity to provide culturally specific or specialized services.
- In addition, as many of these grants have supported the formation of new programming, it has required the hiring and onboarding of new staff, ensuring that staff has access to appropriate training and skills development opportunities to serve the need of the organization's clients.
- Finally, partners report that staff retention continues to be one of the biggest challenges in operating non-profit business support organizations across Washington County as they struggle to offer competitive wages.

Next Steps

During this stage in the pandemic recovery, the Equitable Economic Recovery Grants are providing partner organizations who offer tailored and/or culturally specific services to marginalized and underserved communities with the resources to sustain and grow their programs. By investing in partner organizations specialized programs, the County can support technical experts in reaching and serving more small businesses and entrepreneurs in the long term.

Recognizing the unique challenges faced by small business support organizations at this stage, the Economic Development Program will continue to support these partner organizations through not only funding capacity building opportunities to enhance or strengthen their ongoing work, but also by connecting them with the larger network of organizations across the County through the Washington County Small Business Support Network (WCSBSN) to ensure we are facilitating a robust, thriving small business community.