

The background of the entire page is a scenic photograph of a river valley. In the foreground, there's a grassy hillside with a small white church featuring a dark steeple. To the left of the church, there are rows of pink-blossomed trees, likely cherry orchards. Behind the church, there's a large white barn. In the middle ground, a road winds through the valley, and further back, there are more orchards and some buildings. The river flows through the valley, and in the far distance, a bridge and a truck are visible on the riverbank. The sky is a clear, bright blue.

# COLUMBIA GORGE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Hood River, Klickitat, Sherman,  
Skamania, and Wasco Counties

## SUMMARY

Find the full plan at [MCEDD.org](https://mcedd.org)

2022–2027

# INTRODUCTION

Saul Reynoso

**Every five years the region develops the comprehensive economic development strategy (CEDS) as a guide to understanding the regional economy and crafting goals, strategies and actions to create jobs, raise income levels, diversify the economy, and improve the quality of life.**

Economic development planning as implemented through the CEDS successfully serves as a means to engage community leaders, leverage the involvement of the private sector, and establish a strategic blueprint for regional collaboration.

The plan is compiled by Mid-Columbia Economic Development District (MCEDD) and follows the guidelines required by the US Economic Development Administration (EDA). The strategy was developed over seven monthly meetings in 2021 with more than 100 participants throughout the series, including local and tribal governments, regional partners, ports, chambers, legislators, state and federal partners, businesses and individuals.

The strategy also incorporates additional feedback from online surveys and focus groups held with our Latino/a/Hispanic and Native American communities. Throughout this process we explored the themes of **resilience and equitable outcomes** (see sidebar).

## What is Resilience?

The Economic Development Administration (EDA) defines resilience as “the ability to recover quickly from a shock, the ability to withstand a shock, and the ability to avoid the shock altogether. Establishing economic resilience in a local or regional economy requires the ability to anticipate risk, evaluate how that risk can impact key economic assets, and build a responsive capacity.”

For the Columbia Gorge, that means working with partners to develop an economy where businesses and communities are prepared for and have the resources to anticipate, plan for and respond to economic shocks, such as natural disasters, disease outbreaks, or man-made disruptions.

## What are Equitable Outcomes?

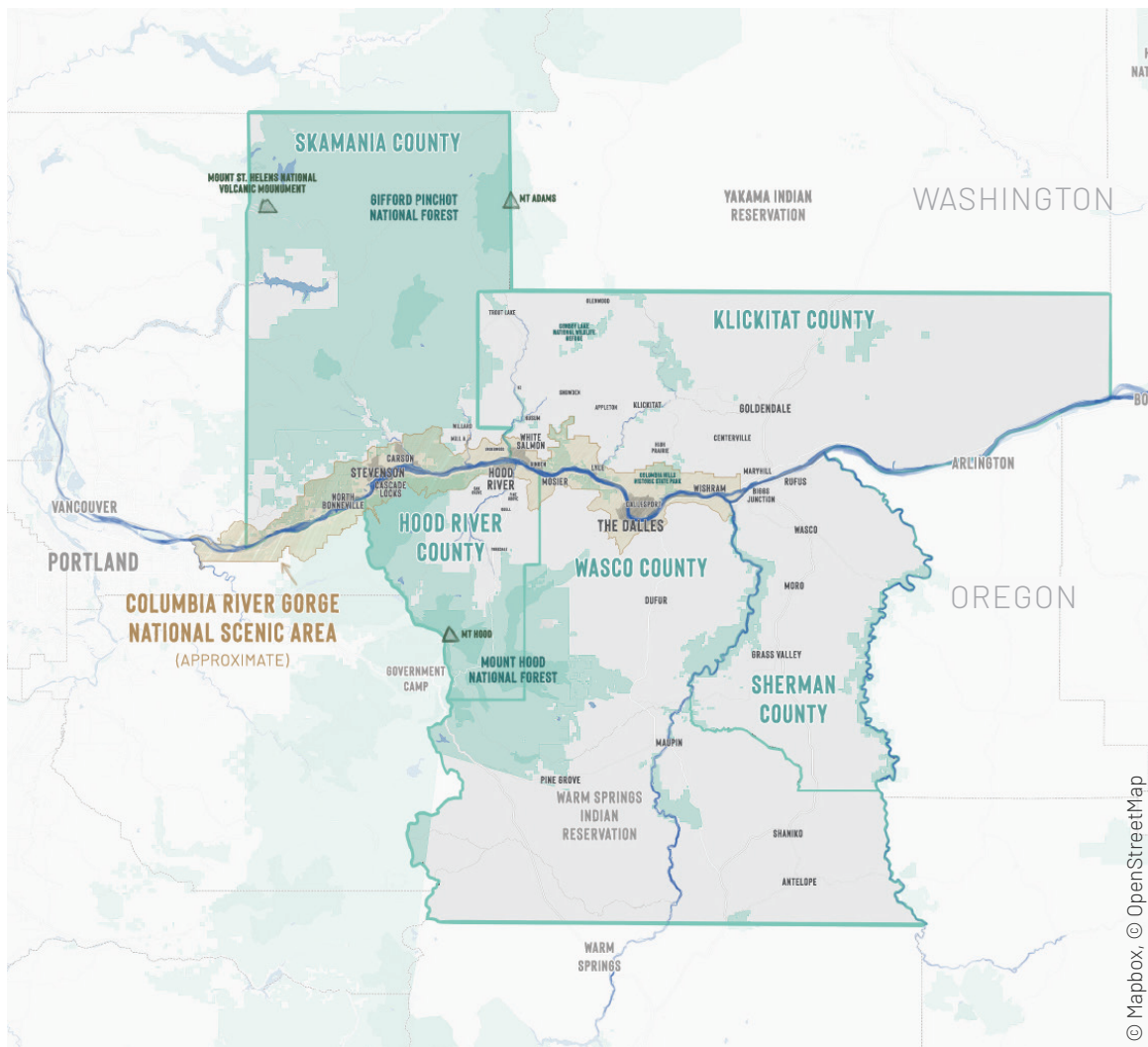
The intention in considering equitable outcomes through this CEDS update is in recognition that not everyone in the region has access to the benefits of a strong regional economy. The CEDS update is an opportunity for MCEDD and regional partners to consider where there are gaps in economic opportunity, barriers to accessing this benefit that may vary by population or community, and ways to support improving outcomes. Considering that COVID-19 job losses were greater for women and people of color, considering equitable outcomes as we recover is even more imperative.

Five counties in two states sharing a common workforce, geography, and economic development challenges and opportunities.

This document is only a summary of the strategy for 2022-2027. The full strategy, which also includes data/demographic analysis, action plans, evaluation metrics and appendices, can be found online at [www.mcedd.org](http://www.mcedd.org).

## GEOGRAPHY

MCEDD's region includes five counties bordering the Columbia River Gorge in Oregon and Washington. The region partially encompasses the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. The region is largely rural, although its proximity to the Portland Metro area and abundance of recreational opportunities brings thousands of tourists to the region every year. In total, the area spans 7,289 square miles.



## COVID-19 IMPACTS

**This strategy was developed as the COVID-19 pandemic continued, necessitating all process meetings be virtual and shifting the picture of our economy.**

In early 2021, MCEDD conducted a COVID-19 Economic Needs Assessment to determine local needs and priorities, understand the impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic, and identify opportunities for future collaboration around these issues. Through interviews, community meetings, and survey responses MCEDD identified several priority goals for recovery, as well as strategies to address them (see sidebar).

### RECOVERY PRIORITIES FROM THE COLUMBIA GORGE COVID-19 ECONOMIC NEEDS ASSESSMENT

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**Small Business Support:** Targeted support for small businesses as they recover and grow, with a focus on those most impacted.



**Expanded Broadband Capacity:** Expand broadband capacity throughout the region to meet the needs of rural residents who lack access to high-speed internet.



**Attainable Housing:** Work with partners to develop strategies that address housing availability and affordability for the local workforce.



**Improved Transportation Networks:** Build on the robust Gorge Transit Strategy to improve transportation options and increase access for rural residents.



**Accessible Childcare:** Work with community partners to address local gaps in childcare and create affordable options that support middle-to-low-income earners.



**Workforce Development:** Engage partners in industry, workforce development groups, and higher education to develop training programs that build skills for higher wage jobs.



**Regional Resilience Planning:** Leverage the robust response to the pandemic to build resiliency planning networks to prepare businesses, organizations, and residents for future economic shocks and disruptions.

# SWOT ANALYSIS & ASSET MAPPING

In no particular order

## Strengths / Assets

Scenic Beauty, Recreation, Brand and Tourism Industry  
Central Location  
Regional Collaboration  
Infrastructure  
Natural Resources  
Human Capital & Entrepreneurial Spirit  
Diverse and Growing Industry Sectors  
Culture  
Availability of Transportation Systems/ Modes

## Weaknesses

Regulatory Environment  
Disparities Between States  
Insufficient and Expensive Housing Stock for Rent and Purchase  
Transportation  
Infrastructure  
Education and Skilled Workforce  
Lack of Business Expansion Space  
Preparedness  
High Poverty Rate/ Economic Disparity

## Opportunities

Adjusting Tourism, Expanding Arts and Culture  
Connectivity  
Synergy Across State Lines  
Public Transportation  
Leverage Natural Assets  
Workforce Development  
Growth of Value-Added Ag and Ag Tech Businesses  
Quality of Life  
Business/ Talent Attraction

## Threats

Impacts of Continued Population Growth  
Regulations  
Housing Shortage Impacts  
Infrastructure Limitations  
Industry Diversification  
Hazards/ Climate Change/ Resilience  
Education and Workforce  
Water Access and Regulations  
Decision Making

# REGIONAL VISION & GOALS



## VISION

A bi-state Mid-Columbia region with a resilient, thriving, sustainable, rural economy that supports equitable access to diverse business opportunities that act in harmony with the area's unique qualities, values, cultural and natural resources.



## Strong Businesses

### GOAL STATEMENT

Enhance business innovation, retention and expansion, and entrepreneurship through equitable access to support services and capital, diversifying our industry mix, and enhanced coordination to address barriers to growth and sustainability.

### OVERVIEW

Mid-Columbia region has weathered the last several recessions better than the two states as a result of the diversity of businesses in the region. By working to strengthen several diverse industry sectors, our region improves its resiliency towards economic shocks. The future of businesses in the region will only be stronger if we build on our abilities to supporting the development of new businesses through entrepreneurship programs, encourage research and development, foster the growth of existing businesses, focus supports on minority- and women-owned businesses, and continue to diversify our industry sectors. Our key industry sectors include:

#### **Natural Resources and Value-Added Agriculture:**

Crop production (cherries, pears, apples, wheat, and grapes) and processing continues to be one of our largest employers and an essential base industry, although wages are generally low. Forest/wood products, another key base industry, has seen job declines but there is potential for growth from new products and utilization of byproducts. Innovation through value-added products can drive job growth in higher wage areas and bring more value to the region's key agricultural and forest products.

#### **Manufacturing / Beverage Manufacturing:**

Manufacturing growth in the region is very strong, especially in beverage manufacturing, and provides higher-wage job opportunities. Supporting business expansion and entrepreneurship is important to this sector.

**Tech: Unmanned Systems:** The sector includes a focus on unmanned systems as the region is a national leading Unmanned Systems hub driven by a local industry heavy-weight and deep breadth in the local supply chain. The industry is a major job producer with a high average wage and is also the source of much of the innovation in the region. Supporting diversification and continued adaptation in this sector is key.

**Healthcare:** The region has invested heavily in healthcare from our major hospitals to a number of independent practitioners. Healthcare services remains a top employer throughout the region and represents a diversity of jobs types, including many with high wages. Supporting recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and growth as our population ages is crucial to the regional economy.

**Utilities and Renewable Energy:** The region is already an important center for utilities and renewable energy production by virtue of the hydropower facilities along the Columbia River, extensive investment into wind development and employment within our utilities. Our natural potential to participate in a broader range of renewables make our region a center for energy generation. Greater development in this sector also improves our regional resilience.

**Art/Culture/Tourism/Recreation:** Tourism is a primary industry sector by virtue of the number of jobs it provides and growth in the sector, but it does not meet wage goals. This sector encompasses initiatives to invest in the quality of tourism sites and visitor infrastructure, spread visitors around the region, and increase resiliency.



## Strong Businesses Action Strategies

- ✓ Strategy 1: Coordinate marketing efforts to increase awareness of existing business resources, including spaces, lending, technical assistance, and others.
- ✓ Strategy 2: Develop and enhance access to business space.
- ✓ Strategy 3: Further develop and advocate for a local Business Support Network with accessible opportunities for businesses to develop skills and access resources, particularly around innovation and retention, in English and Spanish.
- ✓ Strategy 4: Identify and address barriers and opportunities at the industry-sector level to support industry cluster development with specific focus on target industries listed in the plan.
- ✓ Strategy 5: Attract new businesses.
- ✓ Strategy 6: Increase locally available access to capital for entrepreneurs.
- ✓ Strategy 7: Increase the ease of navigating the financial system.
- ✓ Strategy 8: Increase opportunities for businesses to export products



# Robust Workforce

## GOAL STATEMENT

Cultivate a talented, multicultural workforce through diverse, family-wage career training aligned with industry needs while providing essential infrastructure supports for workforce participation in each community.

## OVERVIEW

The region recognizes the critical role of a qualified workforce in addressing sustained economic growth of the region. In educational attainment, the MCEDD region is keeping pace in the percentage of the population with an Associate's degree, but falls behind in measurements of individuals with a bachelor's degree or higher. The primary avenue to address the need for a skilled workforce is through support to enhance and expand upon existing services, with a long-term vision for developing new resources. Needs include:

**Childcare:** The lack of childcare access and its importance to robust workforce participation became particularly apparent during COVID-19. Developing more capacity in this area and affordable options is crucial to continued economic growth.

**Pre-K to Grade 12:** The pre-K-12 system in the region is the primary provider for basic skills development. Strong math and literacy skills developed at an early age can set the trajectory for lifelong success.

**Basic Skills Training:** Basic skill requirements and the workforce quality for entry level positions needs improvement. With a constantly evolving economy, talent in the region must be able to rapidly adjust to new occupations using transferable skills sets. The region seeks to match the needs of businesses with available skills trainings, and to provide training that focuses on our minority communities.

**Higher Education:** Local community colleges are responsive to industry's needs with cornerstone programs which have supported the region's economic development initiatives. These programs will continue to play a vital role in workforce adaptation.

**Quality Workplaces:** With a very low regional unemployment rate, the tight labor market is creating competition for qualified workers. Thus, quality of the workplace becomes paramount for employers to retain and provide growth opportunities for skilled workers.

**Bi-State Workforce:** As a bi-state area, we share a common workforce and require collective training opportunities and a regional system in Oregon and Washington.



## **Robust Workforce Action Strategies**

- ✓ Strategy 1: Enhance workforce tools to support area employers.
- ✓ Strategy 2: Enhance training opportunities to connect residents with local job opportunities.
- ✓ Strategy 3: Provide career training and services that specifically address bilingual and indigenous workforce needs.
- ✓ Strategy 4: Address childcare needs of employers and workers.
- ✓ Strategy 5: Support strong pre-K to 12 programs throughout the region.
- ✓ Strategy 6: Improve incumbent worker skills; support retooling and upgrading skills.



# Resilient Infrastructure

## GOAL STATEMENT

Ensure communities and businesses of the Gorge have reliable, resilient access to infrastructure, including attainable housing, high-capacity broadband, sustainable sources of energy, and emergency services, among others, to support future population demands and economic opportunities.

## OVERVIEW

Infrastructure, including attainable housing, high-capacity broadband, sustainable sources of energy, and emergency services, among others, is critical to meeting our current needs and supporting future growth driven by our expanding regional economy. Some of these systems have reached or exceeded capacity, while others are facing compliance issues that challenge their operations. Some systems have seen significant investment by local communities to plan for the future. Each of these key infrastructure areas will require innovative approaches to dealing with capacity and resource constraints to build on assets. Below are strategies focusing on each of the key infrastructure areas that incorporate the following principles:

### **Seek to better understand existing conditions:**

Understanding key infrastructure needs, gaps in availability, examples of strategies that have made systems stronger, and barriers to moving projects forward is critical to providing the infrastructure foundation needed to support the region moving forward.

### **Plan for and facilitate investment in key infrastructure projects:**

The successful development of key infrastructure projects supports the regional economy, increases community resilience, and provides opportunities to prepare for the future.

**Support project readiness:** To meet infrastructure needs in the region, communities will need to match their own resources with outside investment through state and federal programs as well as private funding resources. To achieve this, communities must have the capacity to move from feasibility through planning to increase access to these resources.

## There are five Action Plans within Resilient Infrastructure:



**Water/Wastewater**



**Housing**



**Broadband**



**Energy**



**Transportation**

## Water/ Wastewater Action Strategies

- ✓ Strategy 1: Plan for and facilitate investment in water and wastewater projects that enhance the Gorge community, economy, resiliency, and address growing demand.
- ✓ Strategy 2: Support innovative products and practices in the region to foster continued access to water resources as snow melt and precipitation reduces.
- ✓ Strategy 3: Increase access to state and federal resources to support infrastructure development

## Housing Action Strategies

- ✓ Strategy 1: Increase awareness and understanding of housing market conditions in the Gorge.
- ✓ Strategy 2: Develop innovative strategies to support increasing attainable housing production in the Gorge.
- ✓ Strategy 3: Enhance communication and coordination across the region to support housing development.

## Broadband Action Strategies

- ✓ Strategy 1: Support addressing middle and last mile telecommunications infrastructure gaps.
- ✓ Strategy 2: Support investments into a fully redundant network.
- ✓ Strategy 3: Advocate for and pursue funding through federal and state funding programs.
- ✓ Strategy 4: Increase adoption and use of existing broadband infrastructure.

## Energy Action Strategies

- ✓ Strategy 1: Leverage state requirements for 100% renewable energy generation to support investment in our region and increase resiliency of our local energy system.
- ✓ Strategy 2: Support investments that keep critical facilities and communities powered during disruptive events.
- ✓ Strategy 3: Encourage investment in energy conservation for homes and businesses to reduce costs, reduce grid constraints, and increase regional competitiveness.
- ✓ Strategy 4: Support the needs of the Native American community to connect the in-lieu sites to electricity and/or supplies of propane for heat.

## Transportation Action Strategies

- ✓ Strategy 1: Coordinate transportation priorities and investments and align planning efforts among regional partners to support the Mid-Columbia's economies and communities.
- ✓ Strategy 2: Support enhancements to regional air, water and rail infrastructure for cargo and passenger transport (locals and visitors).
- ✓ Strategy 3: Improve safety for all users of regional and local transportation networks.
- ✓ Strategy 4: Increase capacity of regional transportation network with efficient and accessible bi-state transit options.
- ✓ Strategy 5: Increase equitable access to transit options among underserved populations, including to Native American in-lieu sites.
- ✓ Strategy 6: Provide safe and complete facilities for bicyclists and pedestrians.
- ✓ Strategy 7: Invest in resiliency for the region to mitigate, adapt and plan for extreme weather, natural and human-caused disasters.



# Powerful Regional Collaboration

## GOAL STATEMENT

Effectively collaborate and advocate as a bi-state region to leverage the economic assets of the Columbia River Gorge to reach our goals for strong businesses, a robust workforce, and resilient infrastructure.

## OVERVIEW

A culture of collaboration and strong existing networks were identified as regional strengths in the SWOT analysis. This goal presents opportunities to build on those strengths to help the region meet the three prior goals noted in the CEDS: **strong businesses, a robust workforce, and resilient infrastructure**. Working together as partners to advocate for the region will increase our success, allow us to reach higher, and bring additional resources into our communities to support addressing key challenges and leveraging opportunities.

## Powerful Regional Collaboration Action Strategies

- ✓ Strategy 1: Strengthen information gathering and sharing to advocate for community projects and policy issues.
- ✓ Strategy 2: Build on existing collaborative groups.
- ✓ Strategy 3: Increase capacity for a regional advocacy role.

## UPDATED 2025 Regional Priority Rank (Oregon)

Rank	Sponsor	Project	Reasoning
1	Columbia Gorge Education Service District	<p><b><u>Columbia Gorge Early Learning Center</u></b>  The Columbia Gorge Early Learning and Climate Resiliency Center aims to tackle the region’s severe childcare shortage by creating 200 new childcare slots for children aged 0-5, along with after-school care for older students. Housed in the renovated Chenoweth Middle School, the facility will also serve as a practicum site for early childhood educators, addressing persistent workforce shortages in this field. In addition to providing high-quality, affordable childcare to families of all income levels, the center will prioritize sustainability, integrating climate resiliency features into its design. The total cost of the project is \$22 million, with \$2.2 million secured so far. An additional \$500,000 EPA grant for asbestos removal has been approved, and the project is pursuing significant state, federal, and philanthropic funding. This facility will become a central hub in the Gorge’s network of early learning centers, serving as a model for addressing childcare and climate resiliency challenges in tandem.</p>	Childcare needs (costs, lack of access) is a priority strategy in the CEDS. Addresses support for workforce participation.
2	Sherman and Gilliam Counties, City of Hood River	<p><b><u>Housing</u></b>  <u>City of Hood River Affordable Housing:</u> Begin acquisition of land and other resources for affordable housing, plus infrastructure support and other financial incentives for developers of housing units serving 120% AMI and below. Total project cost estimate: \$10M to start</p> <p><u>Sherman and Gilliam Workforce Housing:</u> The housing stock in Sherman and Gilliam County is lacking the quantity and quality necessary for new employees to find a place to live in the County. Sherman County has created four incentive programs to encourage the construction of new housing or the rehabilitation of existing housing. Both Counties continue to look for creative ideas that would solve the housing issues. Gilliam County is particularly interested in adding many units in Arlington to serve the newly proposed Amazon facility.</p> <p><u>Sherman Senior Housing:</u> The County is working to explore additional opportunities for a senior living facility in Moro to support aging in place in the County. A parcel of land has been identified near the existing facility.</p>	Addressing the lack of available and affordable is a priority issue in the CEDS.
3	Cities of Sherman County	<p><b><u>Significant Sewer Projects in Each Sherman County City</u></b>  <u>City of Wasco:</u> The sewer line running underneath Clark Street is collapsing and needs to be replaced immediately. \$320,000 total cost.  <u>City of Grass Valley:</u> The City continues to move towards construction of a municipal wastewater system. \$2M in FY24 Congressionally Directed Spending will cover a portion of project costs and other sources are still being explored. \$6 million total cost.  <u>City of Rufus:</u> The existing wastewater treatment plant requires upgrades to meet the future needs of the city. With the anticipated influx of workers for the John Day Dam construction and the proposed hydro facility across the river, the city anticipates a significant need for housing. The current system is insufficient for the expected demands.  <u>City of Moro:</u> The desired sewer upgrade would significantly reduce the number of crossings under Highway 97, consolidating six existing crossings into two larger, strategically located crossings. This project would also replace the aging terracotta wastewater pipes beneath Highway 97, ensuring modern infrastructure is in place while minimizing disruptions to traffic flow through the city.</p>	Water/wastewater is a key infrastructure need outlined in the CEDS. Opens opportunities for business and housing development. Adds resiliency to the region.
4	Wasco County	<p><b><u>Columbia Gorge Resolution Center</u></b>  Community partners from Wasco, Hood River, and Sherman Counties formed the Columbia Gorge Resolution Center (CGRC) Advisory Council to address critical mental and behavioral health challenges in the region by establishing a regional facility and programs for individuals experiencing acute and sub-acute mental/behavioral health crises, substance use disorders, and dual diagnoses. Since August 2023, the CGRC has been revitalized with new facilities and programs, including a 16-bed Secure Residential Treatment Facility (SRTF), a 16-bed Residential Treatment Facility (RTF), a 16-bed Substance Use Disorder Facility, a 10-recliner Crisis Stabilization unit, a consumer drop-in center, and psychosocial rehab services, at an estimated cost of \$50.4M. Progress continues with \$12.5M allocated from the Oregon Lottery and House Bill 4022, and OHA committing an additional \$4.5M for the SRTF. However, challenges remain, including funding gaps, IMD Rule restrictions on facility placement, and inflation concerns. The goal is to begin construction in 2025, prioritizing the substance use facility to gain momentum. The CGRC will serve the region's most vulnerable residents and provide critical bed space for the entire state.</p>	Workforce supports, job creation.

## UPDATED 2025 Regional Priority Rank (Oregon)

5	City of Hood River	<b><u>Hood River Elevated Sewer Line</u></b> The existing elevated sewer main on the south side of the interstate is very old, exposed and there is no means to divert or stop the flow if there is a break on the main, with potentially catastrophic environmental costs. This project will install a lift station and re-route the sewer line. Total project cost estimate: \$8.4M with \$7.8M still needed.	Water/wastewater is a key infrastructure need outlined in the CEDS. Addresses key business needs. Adds resiliency to the region.
6	Gilliam County	<b><u>Broadband</u></b> Gilliam County is currently working with a contractor to obtain BEAD funding for broadband infrastructure to all homes in the County. The grant application will be submitted in 2025. Total cost TBD.	Broadband is a key infrastructure need outlined in the CEDS. Opens opportunities for development.
7	Port of Hood River	<b><u>Lot 1/Waterfront Transportation Improvements</u></b> Lot 1 is the largest remaining light industrial property in Hood River. A significant infrastructure investment- specifically, water, sewer, and public streets - is necessary to prepare the site for industrial development to meet long term job creation and economic development goals of the community. The focus will be construction of roundabout at North Second Street and Riverside Drive. Total cost: est. \$10 million.	Addresses opportunities for key industry sectors.
8	City of Maupin	<b><u>Water System Improvements</u></b> The City's water source is a spring feeding into the system via a single, 40-year-old above-ground 6" pipe. The Water System Master Plan (2022) estimates the total cost of improvements at \$10 million. Priority actions include replacing the aging, above-ground main transmission line from the springs to the main reservoir, which is vulnerable to hazards like rock damage or freezing. Additionally, critical line replacements in a vulnerable neighborhood along the Lower Deschutes aim to improve fire protection. Estimated cost: \$3.2 million, with funding being sought from the Safe Drinking Water RLF and USDA Rural Development. The cracked reservoir is the most critical piece to fix. Currently, the reservoir can only be filled halfway due to leaking and structural instability. This issue poses serious risks during fire season as the pump must be manually controlled.	Water/wastewater is a key infrastructure need outlined in the CEDS. Adds resiliency to the region.
9	City of Mosier	<b><u>Mosier Center</u></b> The City of Mosier and Mosier Fire District are partnering to construct a 10,000 sq. ft. joint-use facility in downtown Mosier. This building will serve as a City Hall, fire station, community center with kitchen and food pantry, and a designated cooling shelter. The project has been scaled down to cut costs to \$6.5 million. \$6M has been raised but a shortfall of approximately \$500,000 remains. Concerns about the Fire District potentially withdrawing are driving urgency to secure the remaining funds.	Main Street building enhancement; supporting critical services and resiliency.
10	Cities of Moro and Rufus	<b><u>Municipal Well Improvements</u></b> <u>City of Moro New Primary Municipal Well:</u> Moro completed a Water System Master Plan in 2024. Proposed system-wide upgrades include a new primary municipal well, a well pump station, a 400,000-gallon reservoir, reservoir transmission lines, water meters, hydrants, GIS development, and water line replacements. A backup water source would help to ensure clean/adequate water supplies for sanitation, and fire suppression efforts during a natural hazard/grid down scenario. A new well will facilitate future commercial and residential growth. <u>City of Rufus Well #3 Upgrades:</u> Rufus' primary well has been underperforming for years even with consistent maintenance. Unsure about water levels or well future capabilities. With expected residential growth, improvements are needed.	Water/wastewater is a key infrastructure need outlined in the CEDS. Adds resiliency to the region.

## UPDATED 2025 Regional Priority Rank (Oregon)

11	Hood River County	<p><b><u>County Courthouse, Public Safety and Administration Building Replacement</u></b></p> <p>Hood River County seeks to secure funds for the replacement of its courthouse and administrative facilities. Hood River County's courthouse remains one of the lowest ranked/highest need courthouses in the State of Oregon as a result of the 2009 Courthouse Facilities Assessment with an overall ranking at that time of 2.64, ranking it 46th out of 48 courthouses statewide. The facility was characterized as "expecting to suffer severe structural and non-structural damage in the design earthquake." This facility provides the location for statutorily required public services. Hood River County is one of the smallest counties in the state and has one of the state's lowest overall permanent property tax rates at \$1.42/1000, and an overall debt limit below current cost estimates making self funding such facilities infeasible. The project is in the planning phase which will be completed by June 2025. Alternative funding opportunities will be put in place in 2026. Formal design and construction documents would be prepared in 2027, followed by bids and construction. A 24-month construction window is anticipated with additional time required for temporary relocation of services, and a bond election. The funding request anticipates early 2029 will be mid-point of construction. Funding sought: \$85,826,843</p>	Key resiliency project.
12	Gilliam County	<p><b><u>Expansion of Condon Early Learning Center</u></b></p> <p>This project would be important to offer more childcare spots in the County. Currently construction bids have been requested. The total project is estimated at \$2.9 million with \$1.7 contributed by Gilliam County.</p>	Childcare needs (costs, lack of access) is a priority strategy in the CEDS. Addresses support for workforce participation.
13	Port of Hood River	<p><b><u>Ken Jernstedt Airfield Terminal Building/ Emergency Operations Center</u></b></p> <p>Construction of a multi-use, public-facing terminal building that would serve as an emergency operations center for Hood River County. With an increase in mid-Columbia region fires and winter storm events, a public building that can provide support for emergency management officials is a top priority for the Airport. Updated project cost for the structure in over \$5 million.</p>	Key resiliency project.

## 2025 Regional Priority Rank (Washington)

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Sponsor</i>	<i>Project</i>	<i>Reasoning</i>
1	Hood River-White Salmon Bridge Authority	<p><b><u>Hood River-White Salmon Bridge Replacement Project</u></b></p> <p>The Hood River-White Salmon Bridge, now over 100 years old, is structurally obsolete, seismically deficient, and slated for closure by 2040. A replacement is critical to ensure safe, efficient, and multi-modal transportation of people and goods across the Columbia River, connecting the communities of Bingen and White Salmon, Washington with Hood River, Oregon. The project is making significant progress, with design advancing to 15% completion at the end of 2024. Final design is expected to be completed in 2026.</p>	Core transportation connection. Resilience issue. Impact to key industry sectors.
2	Port of Skamania	<p><b><u>Cascades Business Park</u></b></p> <p>Cascades Business Park is one of the few large remaining industrial sites in the Columbia River Gorge NSA within a one-hour drive of Portland. A market and feasibility study done in 2021 concluded that the business park could employ 379 people with an average salary of \$56,000. Commercial/light industrial buildings are needed to provide local employment. Roadway through industrial park will be completed and dedicated to the City of North Bonneville in 2024. The 2023-25 WA State Capital Budget includes \$1 million for infrastructure extensions to building construction sites. Funds are needed to construct commercial/industrial buildings.</p>	Opens development in an otherwise severely land-constrained county. Addresses opportunities for key industry sectors.
3	Klickitat County	<p><b><u>Goldendale Pumped Storage Hydro</u></b></p> <p>Project is a proposed \$2 billion+ pumped-hydro energy storage project. Using existing pumping infrastructure from an old aluminum smelting facility, the closed-loop system would include three variable-speed reversible pump-turbines for a total generating capacity of 1200 MW and a total pumping capacity of 1552 MW. The project would provide a range of services to the grid to support reliability and resilience in addition to specifically balancing variable wind generation. Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) released the Final Environmental Impact Statement in February 2024. The project is in final design and engineering with construction estimated to start in 2027.</p>	Key industry sector impact and potential to open huge economic development opportunities regionally. Adds resiliency to the region.
4	Skamania County	<p><b><u>Bridge Replacements</u></b></p> <p>Skamania County has 6 bridges on County roads with structural concerns and load ratings. Some may be able to be repaired and some may need to be completely replaced. The project is to cover full engineering reviews to provide guidance on what it will take to repair these bridges and remove the load ratings. \$500,000 needed for the engineering reviews now, more TBD depending on outcomes.</p>	Core transportation connections. Resilience issue. Impact to key industry sectors.
5	Port of Klickitat	<p><b><u>Industrial Park Development</u></b></p> <p>Dallesport Industrial Park Lot 38/39 Development: Seeking funds to complete a 10,000 sq ft light industrial building space.</p> <p>Bingen Point Business Park: Task 1 is to fill Lots 1-9 to provide 5 additional acres of shovel ready condition property for development. \$6.2 million needed (estimate). Task 2 is construction of a 15,000 sq. ft. flex building. \$4.4 million needed (estimate). Task 3 is construction of street and public utility improvements on Maple Street for targeted properties.</p>	Addresses opportunities for key industry sectors and encourages development in an economically distressed area.
6	Cities of Bingen and White Salmon	<p><b><u>Publicly Owned Treatment Works Plant Improvement</u></b></p> <p>The City of Bingen has a Publicly Owned Treatment Works (POTW) that serves both the City of Bingen and the City of White Salmon for a total service population of 3,342 people. The POTW was last rehabbed and updated in 1996 and its aging components are progressively failing and improvements are necessary to keep the plant functional. Phase 1 includes upgrades to the Power Distribution System, Control System, UV Disinfection System, Dewatering System, Headworks, and Effluent Pumping Station. Phase 2 includes upgrades to the WAS Pumps, RAS Pumps, Digester Building Improvements, Oxidation Ditch Rotors, Oxidation Ditch Mixers, Clarifier Mechanism, Plant Drain Pumps, Effluent Pump Station Replacement, and Operations Building Improvements. Upgrades would allow the plant to maintain existing service, and service increased population. \$12M needed.</p>	Water/wastewater is a key infrastructure need outlined in the CEDS. Opens opportunities for development. Adds resiliency to the region.

## 2025 Regional Priority Rank (Washington)

7	Port of Skamania	<p><b><u>Army Corp Building Renovations/ Upgrades</u></b></p> <p>The Port is acquiring industrial zoned property from USACE in the City of North Bonneville. This is a rare property within a CGNSA urban area and zoned industrial. It includes a 45 year old 5,000 sq.ft. commercial/light industrial building on a 1.56 acre lot. The building has been vacant and flooded for several years so it requires an extensive renovation to return it to usable condition for local economic development.</p>	<p>Opens development in an otherwise severely land-constrained county.</p> <p>Addresses opportunities for key industry sectors.</p>
8	Klickitat County and City of Goldendale	<p><b><u>Youth/Early Childcare Center</u></b></p> <p>Repurpose an existing facility to become a new home for the youth center and expand the services to include early childcare. The cost estimate factors in anticipated building improvements that could be needed. Planning is already funded via grant and City funds.</p>	<p>Childcare needs (costs, lack of access) is a priority strategy in the CEDS.</p> <p>Addresses support for workforce participation.</p>
9	Skamania PUD	<p><b><u>Underwood Water System Generators</u></b></p> <p>The Underwood Water System serves 1,000 people in the rural community of Underwood, Washington. The water system uses a series of three booster pump stations that lack standby generators for backup power during outages, which happen regularly due to weather, fires, and planned substation maintenance. Without power, the pump stations cannot move water into the reservoirs for customer use. This project includes procurement and installation of three generators and transfer switches. Installation of these generators will help ensure a reliable supply of water when the area experiences power outages and increase resiliency. Project cost: \$675,000.</p>	<p>Water/wastewater is a key infrastructure need outlined in the CEDS. Adds resiliency to the region.</p>
10	City of North Bonneville	<p><b><u>City of North Bonneville Lift Station Replacement</u></b></p> <p>The City's lift station #3 continues to need constant maintenance and patching to function without the funds for complete replacement. Lift station #4 is also in need of upgrades, but priority is on #3. Continues to be high priority. The City is working on water and sewer rate studies.</p>	<p>Water/wastewater is a key infrastructure need outlined in the CEDS. Adds resiliency to the region.</p>

View the full strategy, which  
also includes data/demographic  
analysis, action plans, evaluation  
metrics and appendices online  
at [www.mcedd.org](http://www.mcedd.org).



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