

# The Columbia Business Alliance

## Contribution Request for Columbia County

**The Columbia Business Alliance's (CBA) mission is to strengthen Columbia County's business ecosystem by helping local businesses start, grow, and succeed in their communities through collaboration, education, resource access, and promotion.**

Columbia County's essential contribution of \$75,000 would support and supplement the costs of the following countywide CBA benefits and services to keep the costs low or at no cost for businesses over the FY2026-2027 year:

### Community Benefits:

- **1-on-1 Business Advising Made Available Across Columbia County:**
  - *1-on-1 advising was a service previously offered through CET's Small Business Resource Center (SBRC), a need unfunded after their dissolution. The County's investment would help us restore this service (used by hundreds of local businesses/entrepreneurs) to the community.*
  - *As clients sign up for advising, we will recognize the County for helping make this service possible. "Business advising is made possible by local investment from community partners like Columbia County government, city of....etc."*
- **Business Classes:** supports capacity to host monthly business classes, start-up Co.Starter "Bootcamps" and trainings, speaker events, and more in each city.
- **Central Hub for Businesses:** we'll help connect business to local resources, services, GRO Loans (up to \$50k at 3%), and Kiva loans (up to \$15k at 0%).
- **Keep it Local Columbia County:** your support helps fund Keep it Local's promotional efforts (newsletter & social media posts), online directory, the Columbia County Wander app, community events board, and seasonal campaigns.
- **Ecosystem Development:** As part of the BRE Project's Countywide Economic Vision, developed after interviewing 75 local businesses as a community in 2024, we plan to continue pursuing solutions to these top challenges and opportunities identified by local business owners, including:
  - **Regulatory Clarity:** Developing concise 1–2 page guides to help businesses navigate common city and county permitting processes.
  - **Workforce Development:** Exploring the creation of a countywide high school internship program in collaboration with PCC OMIC and NW ESD.
  - **Cross-Agency Communication:** Hosting coordination meetings every other month to strengthen alignment among business-support partners.
  - **Revitalization:** Identifying and exploring countywide approaches that support locally led downtown and commercial district efforts.
- **Inter-agency and inter community collaboration and support**

### Additional Benefits to Columbia County Government

- **Increased tax base and other revenues to the county** as new businesses are created and current businesses are retained and/or expand.

- **Creation of additional local employment opportunities**, providing residents an opportunity to work where they live.
- **An improved local economy catalyzes county growth in other areas**, the domino effect.
- **The County's support provides smaller communities an elevated level of service** that they wouldn't otherwise be able to provide to their local business owners.
- **Through decreased administrative overhead costs (realized by being housed within the City of Scappoose) countywide economic development efforts and offerings will be more stable and sustainable** compared to what it would have cost to have CET and county partners provide the same services.
- **By contributing to this shared-cost economic development model, the County will save money, time, and administrative overhead costs** — compared to if it chose to run a countywide economic development department in-house, as similar counties of our size have done.
- **Logo & name recognition:** on the CBA website and monthly newsletter.
- **Sponsorship of Keep it Local:** logo recognition on the website directory, quarterly sponsor recognition posts, quarterly spotlight posts.
- **Invitation to Special Events:** including our Annual Meeting, Small Business Month Appreciation event, "Meet-n-Greet" event(s), and other gatherings.

### **John Gumm Storage Space Request**

In addition to our \$75,000 contribution request, we would also like to request access to a storage room downstairs in the John Gumm Building to house items donated to us by CET. Items like A-frame signs, Keep it Local for the Holidays supplies, brochure holders, Bazaar decorations, and other office supplies are things we are requesting to store. Furthermore, gaining access to this space would be tremendously helpful for us because the building is more central to the county, we do not have enough storage space of our own, and it ultimately supports our ability to serve the county.

Additionally, it is our hope that by being a storage space "tenant" of the building, we will be able to maintain access to the John Gumm Auditorium and downstairs conference room for community events and business classes.

### **Partnership is Critical to Continue this Good Work**

Lastly, it is important to emphasize that these programs are not sustainable long-term without your continued support and partnership. As we know, CET was in process of looking for ways to increase their non-grant revenues substantially to make these services sustainable. Now, hosting these services under the City of Scappoose has provided an opportunity to create this sustainability while also including additional employee benefits, retention capabilities, increased agency shared knowledge and increased team experience; with only minor revenue increases needed compared to what CET was faced with.

Thank you for your partnership and consideration,

Benjamin Burgener, City Manager  
 Laurie Oliver Joseph, Community Development Director  
 Sierra Trass, Economic Development Specialist of the CBA