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December 16, 2025

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SMALL BUSINESS ENTREPRENEURS RECEIVE \$903,000 INVESTMENT

Thriving Entrepreneurs Grants from Oregon Community Foundation Power Development, Support Rural and Underrepresented Innovators

Breaking into business has never been easy. Forty-two new grants distributed this month from Oregon Community Foundation's Thriving Entrepreneurs program aim to smooth the path for rural and underrepresented innovators and small business owners.

The program, in its fifth year, has awarded just over \$3.5 million to nonprofit organizations that support entrepreneurs of all ages with capital, connections, curriculum, coaching and more. This year, 79% of grants went to organizations that are based in rural communities or that serve them.

"Oregonians are bursting with business ideas. Yet to get to the market, they often need help developing business plans, accessing funding and building capacity," said Jocelyn Beh, Economic Vitality and Housing Program Officer for Oregon Community Foundation. "They're already doing the hard work of building Oregon's economy. They just need a boost from organizations like the ones supported by Thriving Entrepreneurs."

2025 Grantees Include Organizations Supporting Food Innovators

Food and beverage industry leaders — including former Stumptown Coffee Roasters and Dutch Bros. Coffee CEO Joth Ricci, an OCF Board member — last week [called for more investment](#) in the state's culinary future. Several Thriving Entrepreneurs grants went to nonprofits that support farms or restaurateurs, or that help food businesses launch, build markets or scale.

One such grantee, Ecotrust's Resilient Food Futures program, supports businesses across Oregon. Their signature event, Local Link, connects small food businesses with institutional buyers such as school districts and hospitals.

"Local Link has truly changed the direction of my small business," said Lucy De León, owner of Salsas Locas. "We're proudly serving 18 school districts with tamales,

enchiladas, breakfast items, and now pozole. As a Latina-owned business, this program opened real doors for us. It helped us grow, hire locally and work with Oregon producers who care about quality as much as we do.”

Another Thriving Entrepreneurs grant supports the Heppner Community Foundation, which serves remote south Morrow County. The foundation manages a business innovation hub, commercial kitchen and retail store, among other services. Some entrepreneurs there hope to bring a farmer’s market back to the area.

Focus on Building Networks

Beh said this year’s grants include a focus on building networks for small business owners.

For example, Coalición Forteleza in the Rogue Valley will launch a Latino Entrepreneurship Network and Be BLAC will continue to sustain its network of Black businesses and leaders in the Salem area.

“Being new to Salem, I struggled to find belonging in the entrepreneurial community and real connections to build meaningful relationships,” said Janique Crenshaw, owner of Janique Crenshaw Illustrations. “Through BE BLAC, I’ve not only found a community of like-minded business leaders in which to thrive but have learned valuable information and connected with resources I would otherwise have never known.”

See a [full list of grantees](#), on the OCF website.

About Oregon Community Foundation Since 1973, Oregon Community Foundation has worked to improve the lives of all Oregonians through the power of philanthropy. In 2024, OCF distributed more than \$211 million in grants and scholarships in every county in Oregon in partnership with donors and volunteers. Individuals, families, businesses and organizations can work with OCF to create charitable funds to support causes important to them. To learn more, visit oregoncf.org.

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