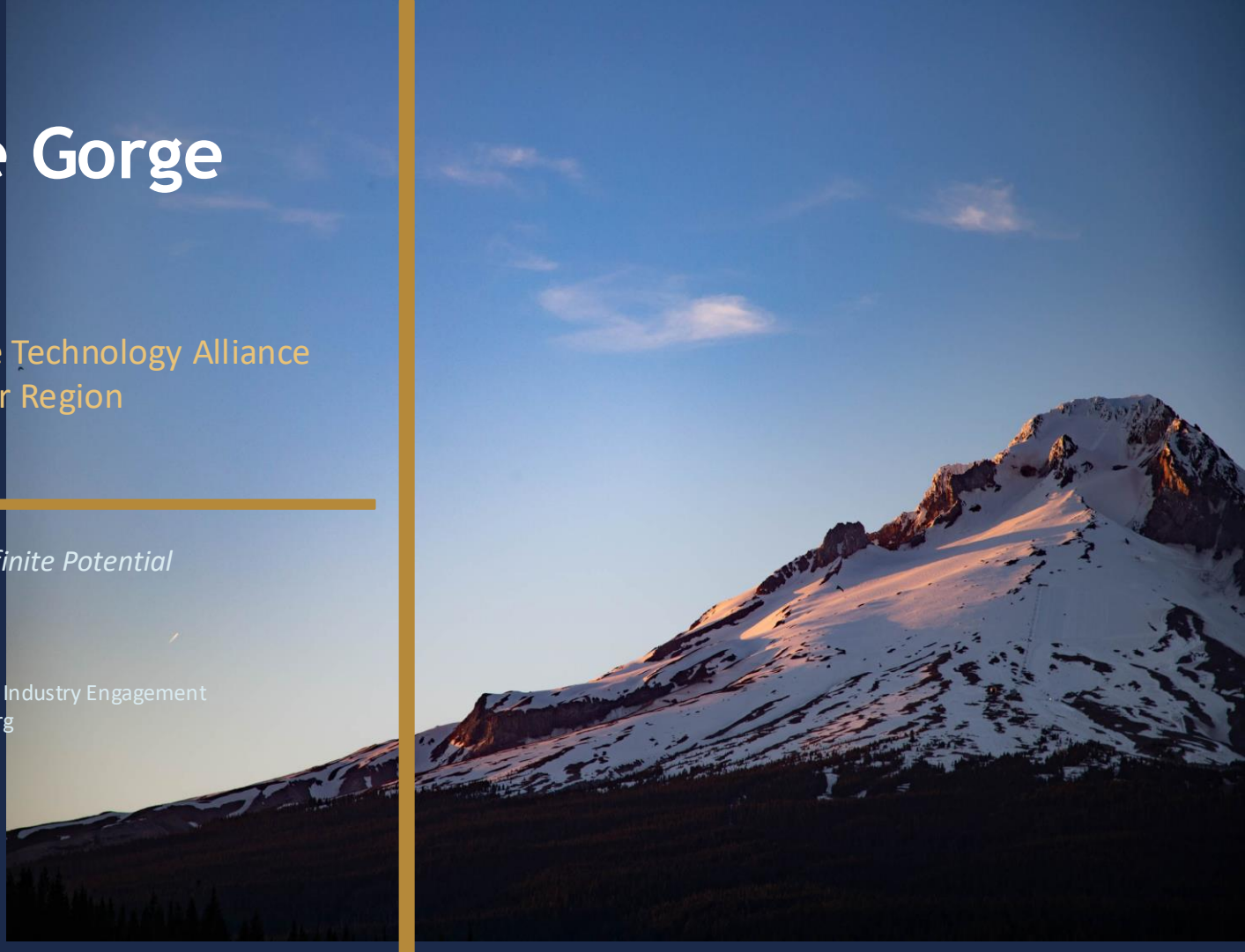


Building the Gorge Economy

How MCEDD & the Gorge Technology Alliance
Create Jobs and Grow Our Region

Three Pillars · One Vision · Infinite Potential

Jason Hartmann · Project Manager, Industry Engagement
Jason@mcedd.org · www.mcedd.org





Mid-Columbia Economic Development District

MISSION

To promote the creation of family-wage jobs, the diversification of the economic base, and the growth, development and retention of business and industry within the five-county district.

6

Counties
Served

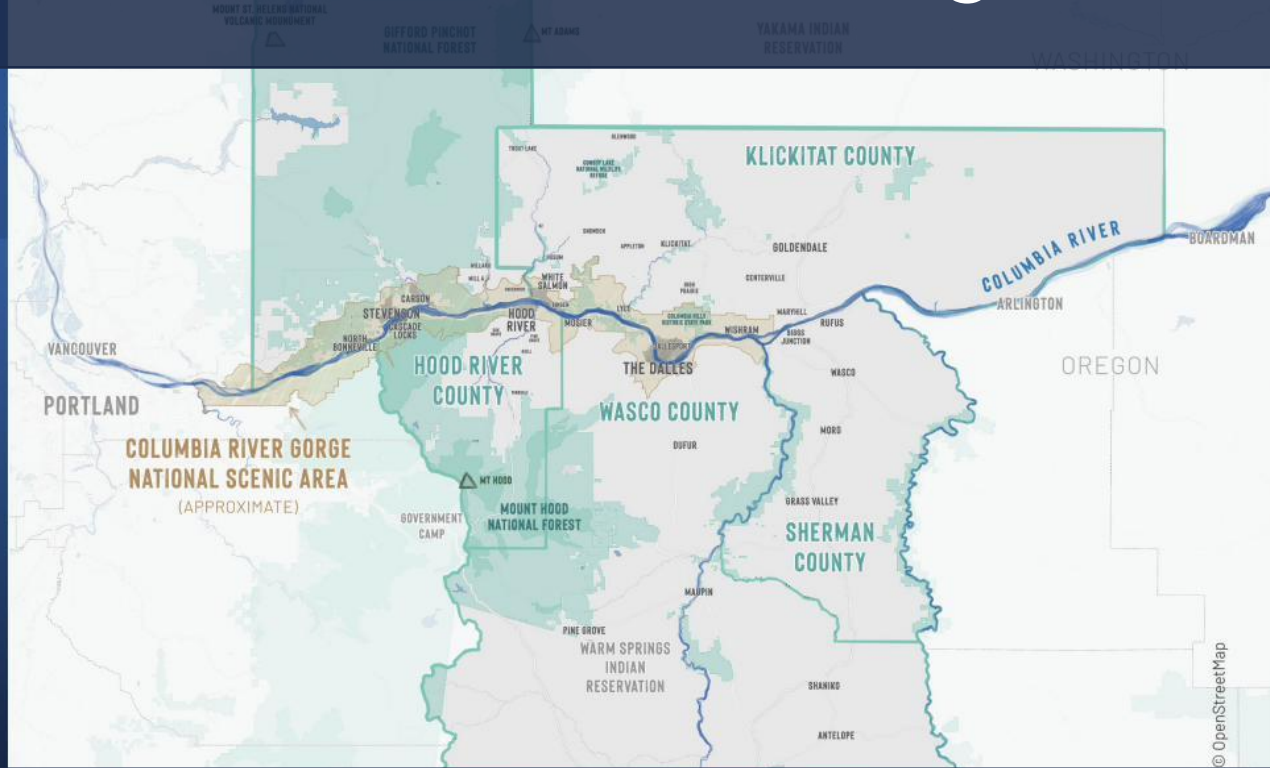
2

States
(OR & WA)

89K+

Residents

Our Home: The Columbia River Gorge



Skamania County, WA · Klickitat County, WA · Hood River County, OR · Wasco County, OR · Sherman County, OR · Gilliam County, OR

Mid-Columbia Economic Development District

MCEDD drives regional economic strategy — connecting businesses, attracting investment, and building the infrastructure for a thriving five-county economy.

Gorge Technology Alliance

GTA supports, connects and develops the technology community of the Columbia River Gorge — with a clear focus on building lasting economic capacity.

Together: Building the Gorge's Next Economic Chapter

A History of Gorge UAS / RS Industry

1998

Insitu Group successfully crosses the Atlantic with a sUAS

2005

MCEDD works with industry leaders to create the GTA

2008

Insitu Group is acquired by Boeing, injecting cash and spinning off new startups in the industry

2009

ScanEagle enables Navy Seals in daring rescue of Captain Richard Phillips, captain of Maersk Alabama

2017

Gorge UAS and Remote Sensing industry grows to ~2000 jobs, over \$1B in combined annual revenue

Today

Time to reinvent — UAS/RS jobs now are about 1,000 while housing and cost of living outpace industry growth



Every era brought reinvention. Our next chapter is being written now.

The Challenge — and the Opportunity

The Pivot Problem

End of wars in Iraq & Afghanistan changed UAV requirements. Key Gorge employers were unprepared for VTOL competition — causing a major business slowdown.

The Need to Reinvent

The Gorge tech industry diversified from UAS to Remote Sensing— new markets, new products, new talent pipelines. Inaction is not an option for rural economic vitality.

The Opportunity

The Gorge has unique assets: aviation heritage, open airspace, expert workforce, and strong community will. MCEDD + GTA are leading the reinvention.

The GTA's Three Pillars

Three integrated programs. One unified mission: grow the Gorge economy.

01 Business Support

Helping Gorge tech companies connect, grow, and compete — locally and globally.

02 Tech Community Support

Building a vibrant, connected technology community through networking, events, and resources.

03 STEM Education Support

Investing in the next generation of Gorge innovators through scholarships, robotics, and STEM programs.

PILLAR ONE

Business Support

Connecting Gorge businesses with the resources, partners, and markets they need to grow and compete.



Pillar 1: Business Support

Jobs Board

Curated listings for local tech jobs — keeping talent in the Gorge

Business Connections

Linking Gorge companies with partners, customers, and capital

Industry Networking

Regular events that build relationships and open doors

Cluster Development

MCEDD's ICAP program builds the UAS/Remote Sensing industry cluster

Grant Access

Helping businesses navigate and access public and private funding



The Gorge will be recognized as the world leader for UAS and Remote Sensing innovation.

A Thriving Ecosystem of Partners, Industry-led

Industry

Insitu / Boeing

Overwatch Imaging

Google

Aerovel / Airbus

Sagetech

Trillium

SightLine

30+ contributors in the region

Academia

Columbia Gorge
Community College

Government

MCEDD

Cities and Counties of the
Region

Oregon UAS Accelerator

Oregon Dept. of Aviation

WA Dept. of Transportation

Pendleton UAS Test Range

Capital / Partners

Business Oregon

WA Dept. of Commerce

USDA RBDG

Oregon Entrepreneurs Network

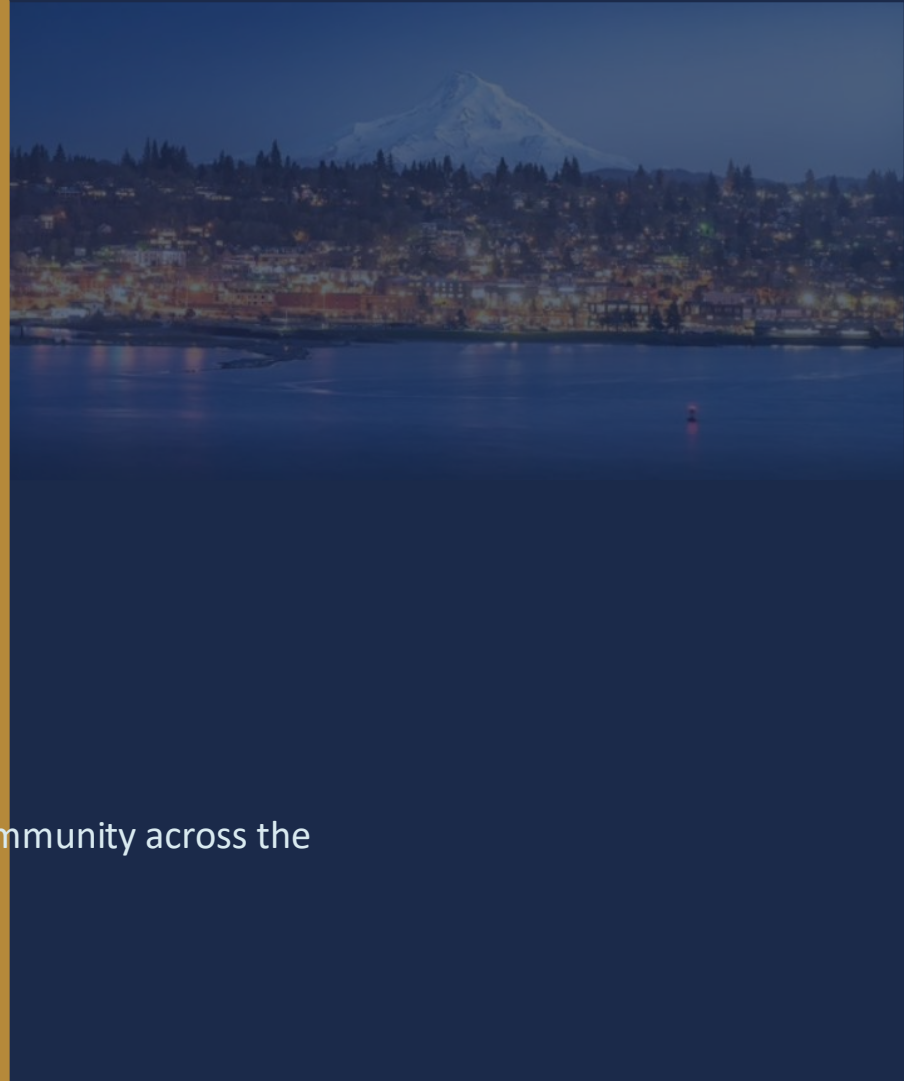
Various dilutive and non-
dilutive funders

An industry-led cluster — powered by shared goals, shared resources, and shared success.

P I L L A R T W O

Tech Community Support

Building a vibrant, connected, and resilient technology community across the Columbia River Gorge.



Pillar 2: Tech Community Support

Networking & Educational Events

Regular meetups and workshops connect Gorge tech professionals — sparking collaboration, partnerships, and career opportunities.

Tech Jobs Board

GTA's jobs board keeps high-skill talent in the Gorge by making local tech opportunities visible to local job seekers.

Regional Visibility

Representing the Gorge tech community to state and national audiences — positioning the region as a serious player in the innovation economy.

GTA Advisory Committee & Community Leadership — professionals from across the Gorge driving our tech future

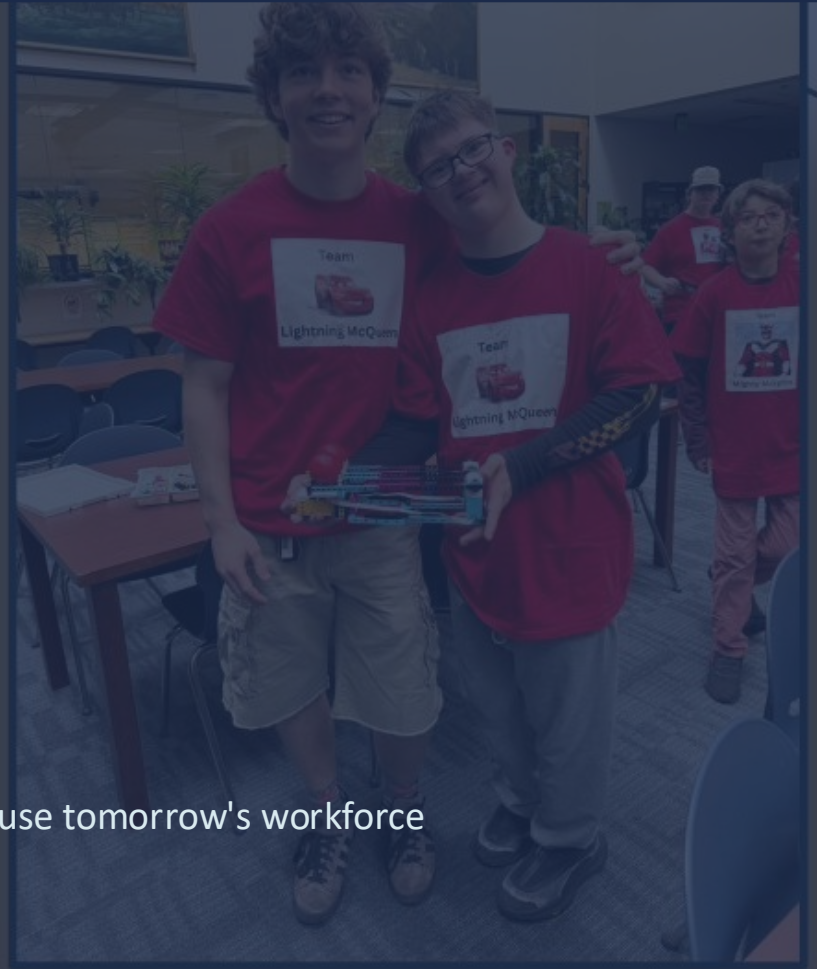
Innovation Cluster Advisory Committee:

- Dan Fuller, Principal, Clarify Consulting
- Calder Hughes, President & Co-Founder, Flighthouse Engineering
- Lella Kaneda, CEO & Co-Founder, Stealth Mode
- Ryan O'Connor, Trillium Engineering
- Jennifer Player, VP Aviation Regulatory Affairs, Skydio
- Mark Zanmiller, Experienced UAS Professional

PILLAR THREE

STEM Education Support

Investing in the next generation of Gorge innovators — because tomorrow's workforce starts in today's classrooms.



Pillar 3: STEM Education – The Columbia Gorge STEM Hub

The Columbia Gorge STEM Hub is one of 13 regional STEM Hubs across Oregon. Our mission is to ensure all Gorge youth are STEM-literate & future-ready. We accomplish our goals through a **Collective Impact model**, partnering with schools/districts, community-based organizations and STEM industry leaders to increase access to quality STEM learning experiences for youth.



www.gorgestem.org



Robotics Funding Partnership: Collective Impact

Competitive Robotics Program — Since Fall 2023

\$47,000+

In sponsorships raised

556

Students reached

12

Schools participating

\$10,000

Annual funding from GTA to
STEM Hub's robotics
programs

GTA's robotics funding helps ensure no student is left out due to financial barriers.

The Virtuous Cycle: Business Investment in STEM Education

Thank you!

Overwatch Imaging

\$10,000 sponsorship to support 2026 -27 school year



Want to get involved too?

Overwatch Imaging: \$10,000 STEM Sponsor

When Gorge businesses invest in STEM education, they are investing in their own future workforce.



GTA connects tech businesses with STEM Hub sponsorship opportunities



Companies like Overwatch Imaging invest in local students



Students gain hands-on robotics and engineering experience



Graduates enter the local workforce — filling critical tech talent gaps



Local businesses grow with a skilled, local talent pipeline

What's Next for the Columbia River Gorge?

MCEDD awarded Rural Opportunities Initiative grant from Business Oregon — fueling innovation across the region

MCEDD designated a Regional Innovation Hub by Business Oregon — validating the Gorge as a serious player

MCEDD continues to explore opportunities and partnerships to sustain and grow its support ecosystem for startups

GTA + MCEDD aligned on talent pipeline: STEM Hub graduates → GTA jobs board → Cluster companies

GTA's Value Proposition

For Businesses

Partner with the GTA to promote the region, access resources, find talent, and help shape Gorge innovation

For the Community

Support STEM education, sponsor robotics teams, and grow the technology ecosystem

For Partners

Work with MCEDD to leverage state and federal funding, build programs, and expand our regional impact