



WALLOWA COUNTY ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEM ASSESSMENT

Northeast Oregon Economic
Development District

2023

Table of Contents

- 1. Introduction | p1**
- 2. Methods | p1**
- 3. Wallowa County's Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Landscape | p4**
- 4. Wallowa County's Entrepreneurial Ecosystem (2023 Snapshot) | p5**
 - Financial Capital | p6
 - Business Support | p7
 - Public Policy | p9
 - Markets | p10
 - Human Capital | p12
 - Infrastructure & Place | p13
 - Culture & Social Capital | p15
- 5. Conclusion | p17**

Appreciation

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this assessment!

Wallowa County's Entrepreneurs/Small Business Owners, Wallowa County Chamber of Commerce, Joseph Chamber of Commerce, Blue Mountain Small Business Development Center, Mentor Match Teen Entrepreneur Program, Wallowa County Rotary, Business Oregon-Rural Opportunities Initiative

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1. Introduction

The Northeast Oregon Economic Development District (NEOEDD) has been actively working to better understand the experience of Wallowa County's entrepreneurs as they navigate the process of starting and running a business. It's no secret that entrepreneurship is a dynamic and challenging process. While local organizations are doing their best to provide effective support, it's important to assess current perceptions around entrepreneurship, the challenges entrepreneurs face, and whether they feel they have access to services that help them adequately meet those challenges.

The purpose of this entrepreneurial ecosystem assessment is to both capture a snapshot of the opportunities and challenges faced by entrepreneurs and to identify strategies for NEOEDD and its partners to better meet the needs of those whom they serve. The assessment was developed as a tool, based on direct input from entrepreneurs, to guide Wallowa County business service providers. Accordingly, the assessment has the following goals:

1. To capture a snapshot of the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Wallowa County
2. To identify common challenges experienced by entrepreneurs
3. To identify commonly used resources and knowledge-sharing methods for entrepreneurs
4. To identify gaps that lie between what entrepreneurs need and what they can access
5. To identify opportunities for supporting aspiring and current small businesses in Wallowa County

2. Methods

Definitions

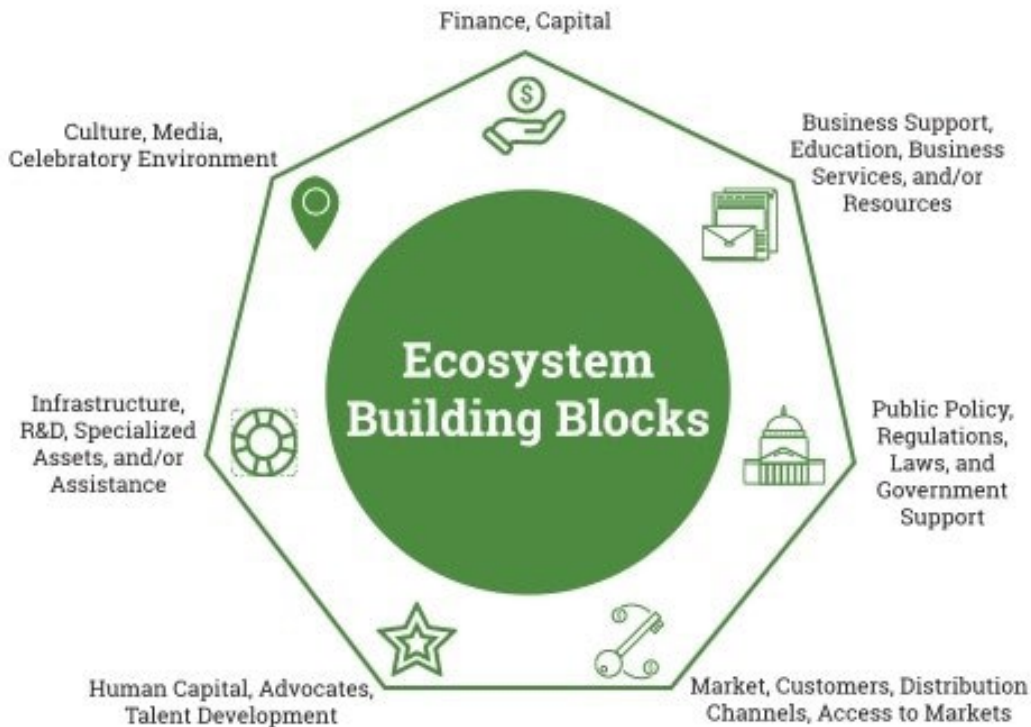
Entrepreneurial Ecosystems

This assessment adopts Business Oregon-Rural Opportunity Initiative's definition of an entrepreneurial ecosystem, which is: the network of individual actors, organizations, institutions, and processes that formally and informally interact to connect, mediate, and govern performance within a given entrepreneurial environment

(www.oregon.gov/biz/programs/ROI/Pages/default.aspx).

The health and ability of an entrepreneurial ecosystem to support entrepreneurs is determined by the strength of its interconnected components, which are commonly recognized as finance, business support, public policy, markets, human capital, infrastructure/research and development, and culture.

Business Oregon ROI's visual representation of an entrepreneurial ecosystem, with the entrepreneur in the center:



Resource Accessibility

It is also important to understand how entrepreneurs access or connect to the ecosystem building blocks and their resources. These connections are generally initiated and facilitated by ecosystem supporters. There are many factors that affect access, which is why it is important to assess and repair them regularly. Below are examples of factors that could affect the connection between entrepreneur and resources.

Factors Impacting Accessibility:

- Time needed to spend working on business vs. in the business
- Money/income
- Trust
- Capacity
- Incentives
- Broadband
- Education
- Navigational tools
- Communication methods (word-of-mouth, use of plain language, translated materials, advertisement/promotions, business referrals/ cross promotions, storytelling, website content, online platforms/social media, newsletters, flyers, short educational social media videos, and branding)

Life Cycle Stages

The entrepreneurial ecosystem is meant for all entrepreneurs, regardless of the stage of their business. Determining what resources are available for the different business life cycle stages (listed below) will further help ecosystem supporters to better understand who is being supported and what parts of the ecosystem need to be strengthened for a particular business stage.

Life cycle stages and examples:

(Adapted from the Main Street America and Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation's Life Cycle Evaluation worksheet - <https://www.mainstreet.org/blogs/national-main-street-center/2021/04/23/covid-lesson-we-need-to-build-stronger-entrepreneu>)

Development/launch/ startup	Growth/scaling/ established	Maturity/model pivots/ reinvention	Decline/exit/rebirth
business pitch contest, pop ups, SBDC, Fail Fast spaces/place to experiment	façade grant, economic gardening, new forms of capital, workforce development	pop ups (research and development), rethinking markets, exploring new products and line extensions	succession plan, assistance with space reuse, connections with new entrepreneurs, ideation- new uses/functions, reopen under new/refreshed brand

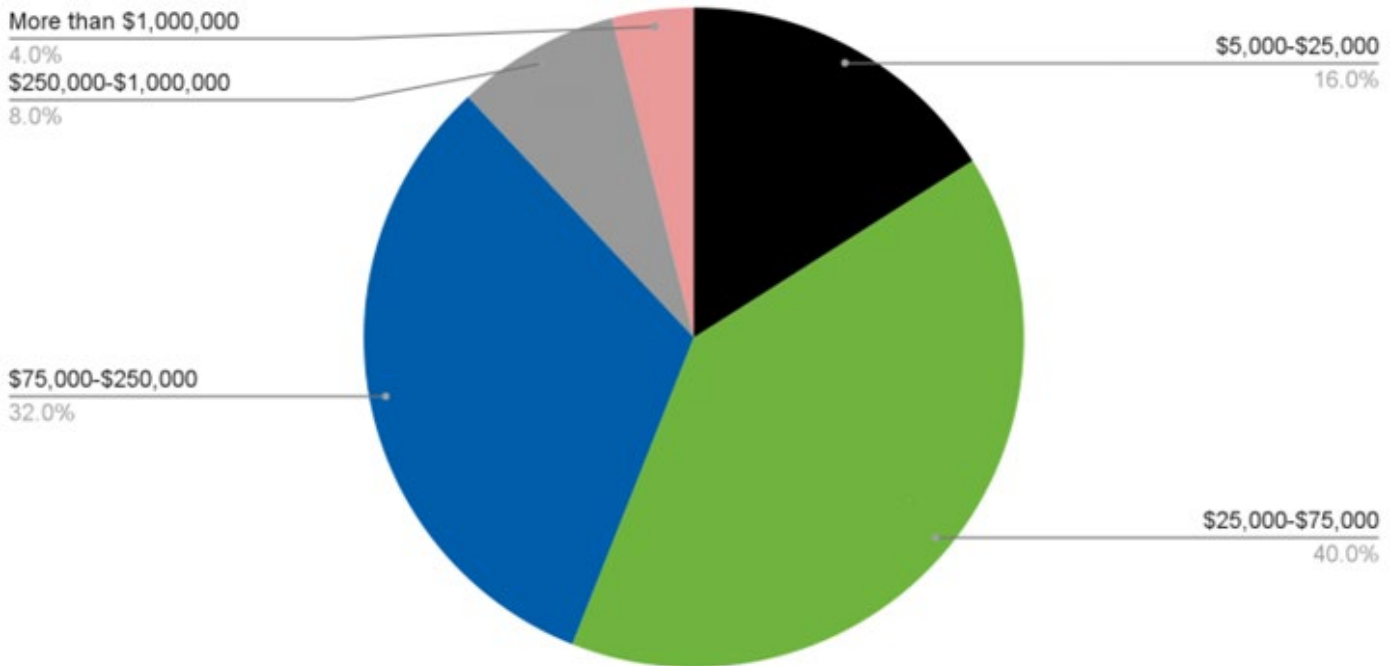
Engagement

In total, 51 Wallowa County entrepreneurs provided input that was used to develop this assessment. Information was gathered through an online survey, in-person interviews, and in-person focus groups. Five local ecosystem supporters also provided input: Wallowa County Chamber of Commerce, Joseph Chamber of Commerce, Blue Mountain Small Business Development Center, Mentor Match Teen Entrepreneur Program, and Wallowa County Rotary.

Survey Highlights

- Almost half of survey participants learned about business resources from flyers, word of mouth, networking, websites and Wallowa County Chamber of Commerce.
- Nearly half of survey participants said they are interested in peer support. Of those that are interested, all would rather meet in person and half said they are open to hybrid (in-person and virtual)
- Location, special guests, and an evening event were identified as things that would make networking events and support services more accessible or attractive.

- Not too overcrowded, easy to hear, comfortable seating, and confidentiality were identified as top characteristics of an accessible and welcoming in-person event
- 43% of surveyed businesses were 0-5 years old, and 40% were more than 11 years old
- 20% of surveyed businesses were classified as restaurant/food and beverage, second highest percentage, 13%, is classified as art.
- Survey Participants Annual Gross Revenue for 2022 (see pie chart below):



3. Wallowa County’s Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Landscape

Wallowa County is a remote, rural region in eastern Oregon, bordered by Baker and Union counties to the west and south and Washington and Idaho to the north and east. The area covers 3,145 square miles, with a significant portion of the land owned by the U.S. Forest Service, including the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, Hells Canyon Wilderness Area, and Eagle Cap Wilderness Area. The region has diverse geology that continues to impact climate, cultures, natural resources, economy, and daily activities. Wallowa County has a small population of 7,433, with a 4.1% increase from 2016 to 2021 (2023 Northeast Oregon Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)). Residents cherish the quality of life and easy access to nature as the region's major assets. The area is predominantly white, with a mostly aged population, attracting many people looking to relocate. One state airport (Joseph, OR) and one municipal airport (Enterprise, OR) serve the County, both of which are general aviation airports, with no scheduled commercial air service available in the region. Oregon Route 82 runs west-east in the County, passing through the downtowns of four cities and ending at Joseph, OR.

The County's economy relies heavily on natural resources, agriculture, and timber, with tourism also serving as a key source of economic activity. Small businesses and self-employed residents play a critical role in the circulation of capital. The region has a seasonal economy with significantly reduced tourism activities and employment during winter. According to the 2023 CEDS, the County has an average annual wage of \$42,339 (2021), 2,688 people in the labor force (2021), and a 4.5% unemployment rate (2023). The report also lists the government sector (24%), education and health services (15%), leisure and hospitality (10%), retail trade (10%), natural resources and mining (7%), and construction (7%) as the top industries by employment.

Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation created several indicators of entrepreneurship. One indicator, Constancy, in particular, Constancy, provided interesting information about Wallowa County. Constancy is defined as:

a measure of employment stability. It is measured as the ratio of the number of people with "stable jobs" – defined as those with positive earnings with the same employer in three consecutive quarters – to the number of people employed at any time during the middle (reference) quarter. [For example], a higher value means that a larger share of jobs held by jobholders are firms 0-1 year old in a specific geographic area are stable. Lower values indicate a lower share of stable jobs (and higher employee turnover). (<https://indicators.kauffman.org/indicator/constancy>)

Out of the 36 counties in Oregon, Wallowa County has the fifth highest (56.43%) share of jobs held at a business that is 0-1 year-old and stable. Wallowa County ranked third highest (73.84%) for the share of jobs held at 6-10 years old stable businesses. However, for businesses that are between 2-5 years old, the County's percentages (22%-29%) and rankings are significantly lower. These findings raise the question about the challenges businesses face at the 2-5 year stage, especially regarding high employee turnover.

4. Wallowa County's Entrepreneurial Ecosystem (2023 Snapshot)

In this section, the seven entrepreneurial ecosystem building blocks mentioned in Section 3 (finance, business support, public policy, markets, human capital, infrastructure/ research and development, and culture) are explored. Each building block is expanded to show the block's description (adoption or modification of Business Oregon-ROI's definitions), existing resources (which may or may not be accessible to entrepreneurs), gaps or challenges that entrepreneurs face, strengths to be leveraged for opportunities, and ratings for existing resources by business life cycle stages.

Financial Capital

Description

Financial Capital includes the various capital and lending options available to businesses, including debt and microenterprise, venture, angel, and private equity.

Existing Capital Resources and Activities

Who/What	What's provided
Crowdfunding	Gifts
KIVA	No interest loans
Community Development Financial Institutions	Loans
Banks	Loans
Friends and Family	Gifts, loans
Oregon Art Commission Grant	Grants for Artists
Federal Government	Tax credits, loans, a few grants
State Government	Loans, tax credits, tax-exempt bonds
Northeast Oregon Economic Development District	Gap loans, Individual Development Accounts, assistance with Oregon's Intrastate Offering for crowdfunding





Gaps/Challenges

Wallowa County entrepreneurs face several challenges when finding financing/capital for their businesses. These include the lack of a local bank in some towns, difficulty in finding and applying for financial resources, covering overhead/fixed costs, not qualifying for existing financial resources, lack of collateral or cash flow, overwhelming processes, and some financial resources being too risky. Additionally, some business owners have another job to afford the cost of running their business. To overcome these challenges, small businesses and startups need more opportunities to access funding and grants to support their growth and innovation. These opportunities include access to micro-loans or forgivable funds for viable and vetted new business ideas and innovative and well-prepared entrepreneurs, as well as angel and crowdfunded community capital opportunities that allow for scaling businesses.

Strengths

Some local institutions provide financing options for businesses in the early established and growth stages. Additionally, many entrepreneurs receive financing and support from friends and family.

Rating Existing Financial Resources by Business Life Cycle Stages (3 stars max)

Development/launch/ startup	Growth/scaling/ established	Maturity/model pivots/ reinvention	Decline/exit/rebirth
			

Business Support

Description

Business Support is comprised of the individuals, institutions, and organizations that ease business creation and expansion, including professional services, associations, classes, mentors and incubators, and the resources that these services provide.

Existing Business Support Resources and Activities

Who/What	What's provided
Business advisors	Accountants, attorneys, private business coaches
Postsecondary schools	Business classes/degrees
Blue Mountain Community College Small Business Development Center	One-on-one free advising. Training for small businesses from start-up and financing to growth, expansion and succession planning, classes
Eastern Oregon Workforce Board	Sector partnerships to address worker skill gaps, job training programs, and connecting employers with qualified workers
Reinventing Rural CO.STARTERS CORE and CO.STARTERS Bootcamps	Workshops and classes
Lewis and Clark College Law School Legal Aid Program	Sliding scale business legal aid services
Family, friends, other business owners	Free mentorship and encouragement, referrals for professional services, networking
Online Resources	LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram; CattleFax; Online courses and trainings or informational sites such as Coursera, Udemy, YouTube, blog posts, books and articles
Libraries	Records of information (books, newspapers, magazine, etc.)
Mentor Match Teen Entrepreneur Program (private business)	For-profit business offering program for teens to learn about entrepreneurship & business skills, self-assessment, and promotion
Industry-specific Associations/Groups/Extension Partnership	Industry trend data, referrals, access to pooled services such as insurance, technical assistance programs
Wallowa County Chamber of Commerce (resources for members)	Educational programs and training sessions - such as marketing, finance, and customer service, after-hours networking events
Wallowa Resources	Business renewable energy planning and project development support
USDA Farm Services Center	Agricultural business support programs, including finance and conservation
Northeast Oregon Economic Development District	Workshops, classes, counseling, referrals, networking events, many free services, Wallowa County Regional Main Street Program

Gaps/Challenges

Entrepreneurs face several challenges when planning and developing their business, including a lack of professional services for accounting and grant writing assistance, limited information to create a business plan, inability to specialize in one product while keeping the business afloat, zoom fatigue for trainings and workshops, membership dues for local business-support organizations, and a lack of business skills. Additionally, there is a need for initiatives that connect experienced entrepreneurs with aspiring ones and offer incubation programs for early-stage ventures to foster their development. Lastly, two challenges that were expressed by many entrepreneurs, is the lack of knowledge about available resources and not having enough time to access resources they do know exist.

Strengths

Wallowa County offers a range of strengths to support small businesses, including various resources and services available for businesses at all life cycle phases. Though many ecosystem supporters are collaborating to offer multiple forms of assistance to business owners, relationships between supporters can strengthen and leveraged to bring more awareness to existing resources.

Rating Existing Business Support Resources by Business Life Cycle Stage (3 stars max)

Development/launch/ startup	Growth/scaling/ established	Maturity/model pivots/reinvention	Decline/exit/rebirth
★ ★ ★	★ ★	★ ★	★



Reinventing Rural and NEOEDD hosting Getting Real in Rural
A brief presentation and networking event for entrepreneurs.
(Lostine, OR | Jan 2023)

Public Policy and Regulation

Description

Public Policy consists of the laws and regulations that impact the ability to start and grow a business. This includes local regulation and government support as well as state and national policies.

Existing Public Policy Resources and Activities

Who/What	What's provided
City	Land use planning and permitting processes, elected officials
County	Land use planning and permitting and taxing processes and authorities
State	Business registration and licensing, taxing processes and regulations, ombudsperson services
Federal	Food safety, labor law, taxation, patents, trademarking, environmental regulation
Industry-specific Associations/Groups/Extension Partnership	Advocacy, lobbying, technical assistance
Wallowa County Chamber of Commerce (resources for members and non-members)	Advocacy and support
Lewis and Clark College Law School Legal Aid Program	Sliding scale business legal aid services
Elected officials, local, state, federal	Advocacy, policymaking, assistance with resolving policy and regulatory issues
Northeast Oregon Economic Development District	Referrals to policy/regulatory bodies and information
Eastern Oregon WorkSource Board	Advocacy and support

Gaps/Challenges

Entrepreneurs face several challenges due to public policy and regulation, including difficulty understanding applicable local/state/federal regulations, state licensing requirements, and city ordinances. Poor communication between cities and business owners regarding rules, regulations, and fees can also create obstacles. Additionally, high and complex taxes can be challenging to navigate for entrepreneurs.

Strengths

The public policy and regulations in Wallowa County provide substantial support for entrepreneurs. Some communities have dedicated funding for economic development, and the newly established Wallowa County Regional Main Street program has the potential to support entrepreneurs through their economic vitality work. Moreover, the City of Enterprise has undergone a Housing Needs Assessment process, while the City of Joseph has recently established a planning committee. The county has several regional documents, including Economic Opportunity Analyses, Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan, Community Wildfire

Protection Plan, and Comprehensive Plan Goals. These provide ecosystem supporters with valuable information and resources for decision-making. There are also attempts to provide navigational tools, such as the Wallowa County Planning Department offering a flowchart to guide business owners through the Land Use permitting and application process.

Rating Existing Public Policy Resources by Business Life Cycle Stage (3 stars max)

Development/launch/ startup	Growth/scaling/ established	Maturity/model pivots/ reinvention	Decline/exit/rebirth
★ ★	★ ★	★	★

Markets

Description

Markets are the domain of consumers interested in a defined set of products and services, and can range from local to global. This also includes access to markets, customers, and distribution channels.

Existing Market Resources and Activities

Who/What	What's provided
Wallowa County Visitor's Guide (Wallowa County Chamber of Commerce)	Annual paid advertising opportunity for promotion of tourism businesses, products and activities to consumers, print and online
Wallowa County Chamber of Commerce (resources for members and non-members)	Business referrals/promotions, buy local initiatives, event postings, tourism promotion, weekly newsletter and business brochures display
Joseph Chamber of Commerce	Marketing assistance, vendor booth space at events, hosting/sponsoring events that engage businesses
Travel Oregon – state agency	Tourism marketing services, coop advertising opportunities, international and domestic markets
Online resources	Social media - LinkedIn, Facebook (online marketplaces), and Instagram. CattleFax (industry trends, data) Proprietary websites.
Greater Hells Canyon Council - Blue Mountains trail	Hikers/cyclists that access the natural environment and business/amenities/towns along the trail
Genuine Wallowa County Provisions	Distributor of products for local entrepreneurs, via online marketplace and other marketing
Community events- farmers' markets/bazaars/festivals	Vending and promotion opportunities
Local bulletin boards	Posting flyers for promotional events, deals, or new product releases
Local newspaper and radio advertisements	Paid advertising, also press releases for new or newsworthy business updates

Wallowa County Chamber of Commerce (resources for members and non-members)	Business referrals/promotions, buy local initiatives, event postings, tourism promotion, weekly newsletter and business brochures display
Trade Shows	Promotion, sales
Word-of-Mouth	Customers, family and friends promoting your products and services to their contacts
Trade associations	Marketing platforms, business to business marketing, publications with advertising opportunities
Google Business and Bing Places	Locational marketing using broadly collected consumer data
Northeast Oregon Economic Development District	Marketing training and classes, marketing plan development and review, referrals

Gaps/Challenges

Entrepreneurs face numerous challenges when accessing local and global markets, customers, and distribution channels. These include limited knowledge of effectively advertising their business and using online platforms or social media, difficulty finding information about community events to sell products/services, and limited local customers in the County to sustain winter operations. In some locations, visitors pass through and do not stop, limiting their opportunity to market to tourists. Many businesses actively seek ways to expand out of the County to overcome these challenges and reach new customers.

Strengths

Wallowa County has several strengths in supporting entrepreneurs accessing local and global markets, customers, and distribution channels. There is a growing trend of supporting local businesses, fostered by initiatives such as the Chamber's Buckskin Bucks program. This benefits entrepreneurs and enhances the overall economic resilience of the region. In addition, the natural environment has brought opportunities for recreational and agricultural tourism, along with niche businesses and markets. These factors offer unique opportunities for entrepreneurs to tap into local and global markets and connect with customers and distribution channels.

Rating Existing Market Resources by Business Life Cycle Stage (3 stars max)

Development/launch/ startup	Growth/scaling/ established	Maturity/model pivots/ reinvention	Decline/exit/rebirth
★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★

Human Capital

Description

Human Capital reflects the quality and quantity of the workforce and the institutions/advocates that educate and train the individuals who comprise it. For this assessment, we also include in this definition entrepreneurs' and workforce's access to basic amenities that would allow them to focus more on their business or continue be active in the workforce, such as childcare, housing, and healthcare.

Existing Human Capital Resources and Activities

Who/What	What's provided
Online Resources	LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram. Online trainings or informational sites such as Coursera, Udemy, blog posts, online courses and trainings, books, and articles
Mentor Match Teen Entrepreneur Program (private business)	Support and teach teens about entrepreneurship and business skills
Childcare Resource and Referral - Malheur County Education Service District	Support childhood care providers with licensing or professional development
Wallowa Resources	Workforce housing, natural resources internships for highschoolers
Rural Engagement & Vitality Center	Fosters a talent pipeline that leads to opportunities for students to live and work in eastern Oregon after graduation
Soroptimist, Wallowa County Rotary Chapter, Fraternal Organizations (Elks, Philanthropic Educational Organization-PEO, etc.)	Scholarship program for trade training programs, colleges, and technical schools
Eastern Oregon Coordinated Care Organization	Assistance with Oregon Health Plan
Center for Wellness	Mental health care services
WorkSource Oregon	State employer support services, unemployment claims, job training resources, job postings, labor market information
Eastern Oregon Workforce Board	Regional employer support services, job training services
Training and Employment Consortium	Job Training Resources
Community Connection of Northeast Oregon	Support for individual household needs related to shelter/housing, utility bills, food access, and public and medical appointment transportation
Wallowa County Veterans Services	Resources and referrals for veterans to access VA services and other local support resources
Hospital and clinics	Health care services
Wallowa County Chamber of Commerce (resources for members and non-members)	Networking events, workshops, presentations, etc.; job postings; Group Health Insurance
Northeast Oregon Economic Development District	Individual Development Accounts to fund post-secondary education and training, and to purchase a vehicle needed to get to work or access childcare

Gaps/Challenges

Entrepreneurs in Wallowa County face challenges in the quality and quantity of the workforce and institutions that educate and train individuals. Major challenges include difficulty attracting and retaining qualified employees, lack of local talent, and lack of funds to pay staff. Entrepreneurs need more skills to grow, especially in accounting/finance, computer science/tech, and leadership/management. Initiatives connecting experienced and aspiring entrepreneurs and early-stage ventures are essential. Lack of affordable housing, childcare, public transportation, and navigating health insurance pose additional challenges that must be addressed. The current and future labor force requires more training and education opportunities to strengthen the workforce development system.

Strengths

Wallowa County's entrepreneurial ecosystem has several strengths related to human capital. Community organizations provide opportunities, such as networking events, for entrepreneurs to connect with each other and access resources. The youth entrepreneurship program is another positive aspect of the ecosystem. Post-secondary schools are embracing online classes and distance learning, an important resource for entrepreneurs in the region.

Rating Existing Human Capital Resources by Business Life Cycle Stage (3 stars max)

Development/launch/ startup	Growth/scaling/ established	Maturity/model pivots/ reinvention	Decline/exit/ rebirth
★ ★ ★	★ ★	★	★

Infrastructure & Place

Description

Infrastructure consists of the physical, digital, and intellectual resources that facilitate business growth, innovation, and commerce. This also includes research and development, specialized assets, or specialized assistance unique to a particular industry. For this assessment we also include Main Street America's entrepreneurial ecosystem building block that is called Place. As Main Street America puts it, by emphasizing Place we are acknowledging that the external environment in which a business operates is extremely important relative to overall success. In addition, much of the programming and real estate components that serve to assist entrepreneurs and small businesses tend to have a spatial element, commonly centered in a downtown, where commerce, civic functions, housing, and recreation converge. Main Street America examples of place includes:

- Real Estate — unique buildings (e.g., breweries); move-in ready spaces; affordable start-up spaces, diversity of housing.

- Business launch support spaces — maker spaces, incubators/accelerators, shared-use food kitchens, night kitchens, mobile retail/food trucks, co-work spaces; entrepreneur hub centers
- Programming — pitch contests, pop-up programming, soup events
- Third Spaces — breweries, coffee houses, libraries – places that allow for entrepreneurs, remote workers, and small businesses to interact and accidental collisions.

Existing Infrastructure & Place Resources and Activities

Who/What	What's provided
Industry-specific associations/groups/extension partnership	Information/intellectual/R&D resources and specialize assistance
Online resources	LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram. CattleFax. Online trainings or informational sites such as Coursera, Udemy, blog posts, online courses and trainings, books and articles
Wallowa County Chamber of Commerce (resources for members and non-members)	Buy local initiatives, such as Buckskin Bucks Program
Family and friends	Support, information, labor, space, stories
Google Business	Popular platform for online presence
Natural environment	Opportunities and limitations to business ventures and types of markets that can be accessed, sense of place or placemaking opportunities
Existing and available structures	Vacant and available places to rent or purchase
Real estate agencies	Assist with access to rent or purchase spaces
Developers	Create spaces
Contractors (different trades)	Help create and maintain spaces
Internet service providers	Internet/broadband
Libraries	Records of information (books, newspapers, magazines, etc.), place to work/study
Community centers/rooms/kitchens	Space to partially operate business, meeting place for support groups, trainings, presentation
Breweries and cafes	Spaces for remote work and interactions
Wallowa Resources/Working Homes LLC	Workforce housing
Northeast Oregon Economic Development District	Information/intellectual/R&D resources, Wallowa County Regional Main Street Program; broadband advocacy (NEO Broadband Action Team Lead

Gaps/Challenges

Entrepreneurs in Wallowa County face several challenges related to the infrastructure of the entrepreneurial ecosystem. These include the lack of a local place to conduct a background check, business seasonality in a tourism-driven economy, a lack of affordable and available storefronts (many are old and very expensive to update), supply chain issues, increased supply chain prices, and no local USDA meat processing center. Additionally, some businesses must

seek out of the County for services and supplies. There is also a need for initiatives that connect experienced entrepreneurs with aspiring ones and offer incubation programs for early-stage ventures to foster their development. Furthermore, there is a need for adequate subsidized co-working spaces that can facilitate collaboration and reduce costs for entrepreneurs, and improved access to high-speed internet and technology resources to boost digital entrepreneurship and innovation is necessary.

Strengths

Wallowa County has several strengths in the infrastructure and place building block. Tourists visit the area's beautiful landscapes, providing opportunities for businesses in hospitality, outdoor recreation, and creative sectors. The county has been improving its broadband access, with the Wallowa County Broadband Action Team working to expand resources further. Working Homes LLC, a newly formed nonprofit organization, is working to address the workforce housing shortage in the county. The Regional Main Street Program and the Main Street Revitalization Grant awards have also helped six property owners in the county, with two of the properties providing additional space for entrepreneurs and one providing a unit for workforce housing.

Rating Existing Infrastructure & Place Resources by Business Life Cycle Stage (3 stars max)

Development/launch/startup	Growth/scaling/established	Maturity/model pivots/reinvention	Decline/exit/rebirth
★	★★	★★	★★

Culture & Social Capital

Description

Culture consists of the individual and collective values and attitudes that contribute to supporting local entrepreneurship. Culture includes risk tolerance, commitment to innovation, eagerness to celebrate success and outlets (media) through which progress can be celebrated. This also includes how entrepreneurs are portrayed, thought of, and how they view themselves. For this assessment, we also include social capital, or the interpersonal networks and common civic values which influence the infrastructure and economy of a particular society (Oxford English Dictionary 2006).

Existing Culture & Social Capital Resources and Activities

Who/What	What's provided
Industry-specific associations/groups/extension Partnership	Events
Online resources	Social media - LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram; CattleFax
Rural and Eastern Oregon	Values, identities

Wallowa County Chamber of Commerce (resources for members and non-members)	Networking events, workshops, presentations, etc.; advocacy and support; business referrals; buy local initiatives; job and event postings
Joseph Chamber of Commerce	Business promotions advertisements, hosting or sponsoring events that engages businesses
Wallowa County Rotary Chapter	Scholarship program for local teens attending trade programs
Mentor Match Teen Entrepreneur Program (private business)	Support and teach teens about entrepreneurship and business skills
Community/local organization events	Networking
Greater Hells Canyon Council - Blue Mountains trail	Celebrate natural environment and business/amenities associated along the trail
Community events- Farmers' Markets/Bazaars/Festivals	Selling and networking opportunities
Family and friends	Support, information, stories
Northeast Oregon Economic Development District	Opportunity for entrepreneurs to provide input/feedback on services that will improve the relevance of our programs/services, presentations, business referrals, Wallowa County Regional Main Street Program

Gaps/Challenges

Entrepreneurial ecosystem culture in Wallowa County faces several challenges, including the need for more readily available information or a comprehensive list of other businesses in the county, which makes some entrepreneurs feel isolated and hinders their ability to build relationships with others. Additionally, some entrepreneurs feel that some community members are concerned about attracting too many visitors that may change the small and quiet feel of the town. Some entrepreneurs feel that their voices need to be heard and wish to be part of the decision-making process in the county. There are some entrepreneurs that want to grow their business but are challenged by the lack of energy to expand. Lastly, the perceptions of a few partners are that the county has many nonprofits that bridge community gaps and partners would like to see more for-profit businesses playing a role in addressing gaps.

Strengths

Wallowa County's entrepreneurial ecosystem culture boasts several strengths, including a supportive and collaborative community that fosters a sense of belonging, resource-sharing between businesses in and out of the same industry, the helpfulness of word-of-mouth in a rural area, sweat equity from family and friends, a lot of innovative individuals, and a growing trend of supporting local businesses. Additionally, the region's support for entrepreneurship is evident in the City of Joseph's art district and the emphasis on supporting entrepreneurs in arts, music, and culture throughout the region.

Rating Existing Resources by Business Life Cycle Stage (3 stars max)

Development/launch/ startup	Growth/scaling/ established	Maturity/model pivots/ reinvention	Decline/exit/rebirth
★ ★	★ ★	★ ★	★ ★

5. Conclusion

Wallowa County’s entrepreneurial ecosystem has many supporters and resources in each of the seven building blocks. However, it was found that the quantity and quality of the resources are not spread evenly across building blocks and business life cycle stages. For example, there are few local resources that assist entrepreneurs in navigating policy and regulation. And for startups, there are fewer financing options compared to the other stages. The assessment also revealed that there is considerable need for assisting entrepreneurs in understanding and navigating certain policies and regulations. In general, though more resources are needed across all building blocks and stages, there is a greater need for ecosystem supporters to provide more resources for entrepreneurs in the startup and exiting/rebirth stages.

This assessment also revealed that entrepreneurs have issues with accessing existing resources. Most entrepreneurs reported that they are not aware of the existing resources, and it is hard for them to know where to look and who to talk to for support. In other words, entrepreneurs’ connection to existing resources has been disrupted. As mentioned in the Methods section, there are many factors that could affect access, and finding out which factor is causing issues will allow partners to strengthen connections between entrepreneurs and resources. Entrepreneurs identified some factors that impacted resource accessibility, such as the time available to spend on your business versus in your business and several communication methods. Examples of addressing accessibility issues include fostering ecosystem supporter collaborations, leveraging community assets, maintaining a free one-stop platform to find resources, and committing to regular inventory and sharing of resources.

This assessment revealed many opportunities that ecosystem supporters can pursue to help strengthen the entrepreneurial ecosystem. The opportunities in the following table were determined by participating entrepreneurs, partners, and NEOEDD. This assessment is only a snapshot of the ecosystem and will serve as a base for future resource inventories or assessments and a starting point for developing strategies.

Identified Resource Opportunities per Ecosystem Building Block

Ecosystem Building Blocks	Resource Opportunities
Financial Capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free directory of available business financing options • Expand funding options, especially for startups, such as exploring more crowdfunding and angel investment opportunities • Develop and maintain a directory of available business financing options • Storytelling/testimonials • Short educational videos on social media about financing a business • Rebrand and advertise current financing options
Business Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More ecosystem supporter collaboration to improve resource accessibility • Record and post trainings and enable discussion boards • Short educational videos on social media • Free complete directory of all businesses within the County • Free one-stop online platform that advertises local services and resources (like yellow pages) • More business planning support across all life cycle stages • Training topics requested by participating entrepreneurs: technology awareness and assistance, social media support, digital literacy, advanced business, “critical numbers” for businesses, understanding wholesale markup, resources for start-up businesses, effective advertising and marketing, customer service, industry-specific topics • Increase capacity for existing programs/organizations to provide more resources • Improve awareness of one-on-one business counseling • Encourage consultants/ecosystem supporters to visit businesses so the entrepreneur doesn’t have to leave their business • Offer hybrid meetings/workshops/trainings • Entrepreneurs are willing to travel 30-70 miles for support, offer support/classes in different parts of the County • Have multiple dates/times for in-person or virtual classes/presentations/events • Hold most of the classes/presentations/events in early spring and fall months • Invite special guests to provide training or presentation • More inclusive meetings/events – provide introductions and do not use abbreviations
Public Policy & Regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Periodically host presentations and workshops on general and industry specific policy and regulation information and best practices • Periodically share information via social media and newsletters
Markets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free, user-friendly, complete directory of all businesses within the County • Effective advertising and marketing training • Local business cross-promotional events

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand NEOEDD newsletter to include a “resources for business” section or business promotions
Human Capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free, universal place for all job listings in the County (collaborate with WorkSource Oregon) • More mentorship opportunities • Workforce skills and etiquette training in local schools • Establish shared co-working spaces to facilitate collaboration and reduce costs for entrepreneurs • Support efforts around housing, childcare, and healthcare to help attract and retain entrepreneur and employees
Infrastructure & Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small business study hall - free, entrepreneur-led meeting that focuses on one topic per meeting and is offered at varying times • System to connect business owners with affordable vacant storefronts and list which ones are move-in ready • Launch new and list existing support spaces – shared commercial kitchens, mobile retail/food trucks hub, co-work spaces, makers space • Programming, especially for businesses in the startup/launch stage—pitch contests, pop-up programming, soup events
Culture & Social Capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young professional's organization/group • Celebrate entrepreneurs through events, media, referrals