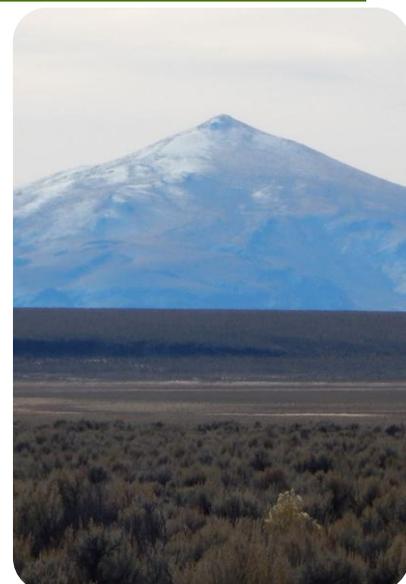


COVID-19 Economic Needs Assessment



Downtown Klamath Falls Photo: [LifeinKlamath](#); Lake County Photo: [Lake County Chamber](#)

April 2021

South Central Oregon Economic Development District (SCOEDD)



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About the Institute for Policy Research and Engagement



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Policy and Management
Institute for Policy
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The Institute for Policy Research & Engagement (IPRE) is a research center affiliated with the School of Planning, Public Policy, and Management at the University of Oregon. It is an interdisciplinary organization that assists Oregon communities by providing planning and technical assistance to help solve local issues and improve Oregon residents' quality of life. The role of IPRE is to link the skills, expertise, and innovation of higher education with the transportation, economic development, and environmental needs of communities and regions in the State of Oregon, thereby providing service to Oregon and learning opportunities to the students involved.

About the Resource Assistance for Rural Environments

Resource Assistance for Rural Environments (RARE) is an AmeriCorps Program serving rural Oregon to strengthen communities, economies, food systems, and the natural environment. Housed at the University of Oregon's IPRE in the School of Planning, Public Policy, and Management, we aim to link the energy, expertise, and innovation of the University of Oregon with rural Oregon communities' most pressing needs.



RARE AmeriCorps's mission is to assist Oregon's natural resource-tied rural communities while providing supported, applied experience to college graduates from across the U.S.

RARE members live in rural communities for 11 months and serve cities, counties, non-governmental organizations, or state agencies to improve rural Oregon's economic and environmental conditions.

About the EDA University Center



U.S. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

The University of Oregon Economic Development Administration University Center (EDAUC) is a partnership between the Institute for Policy Research and Engagement, the U.O. Department of Economics, the Oregon Small Business Development Center Network, and the U.O. faculty. The U.O. Center provides technical assistance to organizations throughout Oregon, with a focus on rural economic development. The UO EDAUC seeks to align local strategies to community needs, specifically regarding building an understanding of the benefits of sustainable practices and providing technical training to capitalize on economic opportunities related to those practices. The UO EDAUC is partially funded through a grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration. Additional EDA funding EDA was provided via the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act

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Derrick DeGroot	County Commissioner	Klamath
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Executive Summary

When the COVID-19 pandemic struck the world in early 2020, local, state, and national healthcare systems and economies suffered. Local hospitals and healthcare facilities were at maximum capacity, and local businesses were ordered to shut down and take extra precautions against the disease. The economic downturn was happening while community members constantly thought of the health of loved ones, friends, and neighbors. There have been ample impacts from the pandemic, and many community members anticipate a long recovery ahead.

The South Central Oregon Economic Development District (SCOEDD) serves as the primary conduit for regional economic development resources for Klamath and Lake Counties in Oregon. It provides the professional staff to support economic development planning on a regional basis and the individual economic development efforts and manages and administers regional loan programs. To assist businesses and community members in Klamath and Lake Counties during the pandemic, SCOEDD embarked on a four-month journey to document the communities' key needs. To do this, SCOEDD, and five other economic development districts (EDDs) across Oregon, completed a COVID-19 economic needs assessment to document the various needs we heard within the community related to COVID-19, the economic downturn, and the wildfires. This report serves as a listening session – SCOEDD interviewed community members who have heard, witnessed, and experienced various economic downturn impacts. We wanted to listen to what they needed and describe potential ways to address some of the needs that surfaced.

Environmental Scan of the Impacts of COVID

The South Central Oregon region experienced similar challenges as many other counties and states across the U.S did when COVID-19 struck. This meant that the pandemic pressured health care systems, presented mental health challenges, hindered local economies, and exacerbated inequities. While

unemployment skyrocketed during the most intense months of COVID-19 – April 2020 – the numbers have thankfully returned to their almost pre-pandemic state. A lot of the concern now, after over a year of fluctuating shutdown orders and pandemic regulations, is centered around the concern for Klamath and Lake Counties' local economies and the health and well-being of community members.

Key Themes of Needs Assessment

A large portion of the needs assessment process focused on the community interviews. SCOEDD conducted 21 interviews with community members, business owners, local government officials, local organization employees and leaders, and others who know the region well; researched vital data; and collected other secondary sources of information and anecdotal stories. SCOEDD identified nine different themes from those interviews and research, encapsulating various surfaced needs within the community because of COVID-19, wildfires, and the associated economic downturn. The themes and needs depict a common voice of the interviewees, data, and other information. While some interviewees may have shared differing opinions, views, and information, the needs assessment results share similar anecdotes that many, or the majority, of interviewees mentioned. We included the themes and needs if the data, accounts, and other information shared a similar perspective. The themes and needs do not necessarily capture specific detail or information shared by certain interviewees. The results also do not encompass all voices that need to be heard, and the data is likely to change as we progress more in COVID-19 recovery. Lastly, the impacts and needs listed under each theme may change in the coming days and months. More information, services, and assistance are distributed every day to aid in COVID-19 recovery efforts. This may mean that months, weeks, or even days after this report is published, some of it may be outdated. The information reflected in the report is from the start of the pandemic (March 2020) through around February-March 2021.

The following themes and needs surfaced during the needs assessment process:

Overview of Themes and Surfaced Needs	
Capacity Challenges	<p>Many single-handed people are doing a lot of different work within the community. They are glad to be doing it, but it has led to burnout and confusion.</p> <p><u>Surfaced Needs:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hire a grant writer who will assist with funding support, both for technical assistance and capacity building purposes. 2. Utilize partnerships to spread out work, specifically during crises. Sharing activities helps alleviate overwork.
Business, Financial, & Technology Literacy (+ The Digital Divide)	<p>Community members stepped up to better understand the technologies people were beginning to use during the pandemic (e.g., Zoom, DocuSign, online marketplaces, etc.). Those with the means embraced the technologies. However, not everyone had/has this luxury – broadband access and affordability remain a consistent issue.</p> <p><u>Surfaced Needs:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase capacity for economic development and business-oriented organizations to work with entrepreneurs and small business owners to better understand their business, financials, and digital components. 2. There should be skill training, university/college partnerships, and solutions to better position individuals within the workforce to take local jobs. 3. There is a significant need to research and invest in broadband. There needs to be a concerted effort around making it accessible, affordable, and redundant.
Business & Community Creativity	<p>There have been significant amounts of business creativity and innovation within the community. Nonprofits have developed creative and online fundraising methods, and businesses pivoted in unique and exciting ways.</p> <p><u>Surfaced Needs:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Highlight and share business and community successes for future learning and preparedness, especially in times of crisis.
Mental Health Focus & Youth Development	<p>The pandemic has been stressful, isolating, and worrisome. Community members have had to worry about their health, all while ensuring their livelihoods – business, work, loved ones, and other opportunities – are also in good shape. School shutdowns and the lack of student-based sports and extracurricular activities have made the situation even more stressful.</p> <p><u>Surfaced Needs:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase access and awareness to mental health services, programming, and support for adults, students, and youth, primarily related to loneliness and isolation. 2. Determine ways to engage students and youth to be a part of community life and events again. The lack of social interaction due to no school and sports have been inhibiting growth and their outlook.
Messaging & Communication Challenges (+Information Overload)	<p>There has been so much information distributed throughout COVID-19, and community members are generally confused. The messages change frequently, and the restrictions, policies, and regulations contain complicated wording. Many have had to interpret communications and are unclear about distributing information to their constituents.</p> <p><u>Surfaced Needs:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Organizations should put themselves in their constituents' shoes to see how they would want information. They should distribute that information through one means (e.g., website, email blast, etc.). 2. The Counties should have the COVID-19 Response Team (a team within the South

Overview of Themes and Surfaced Needs

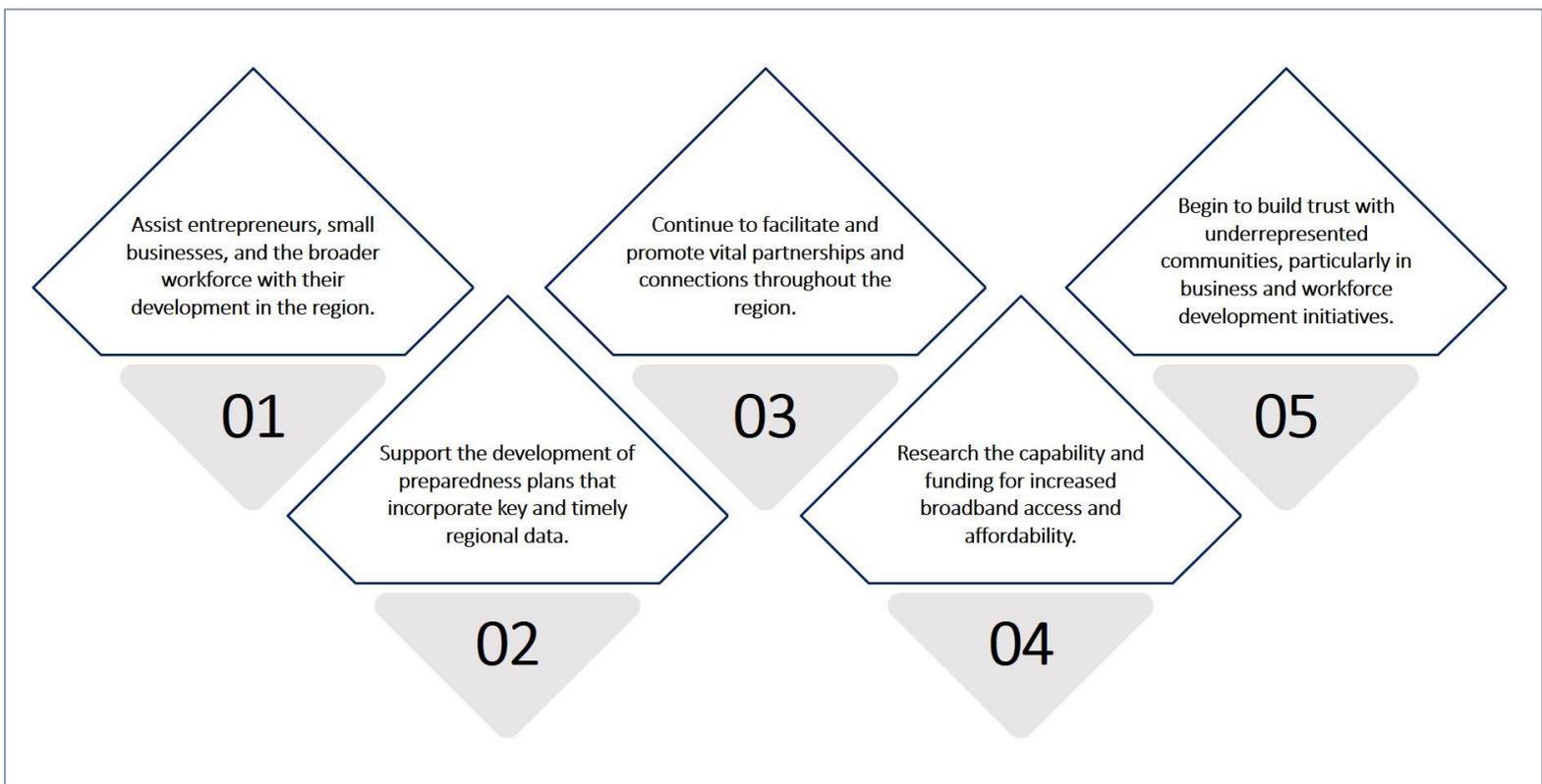
	<p>Central region) set up in case of other emergencies or crises. It does not have to be a pandemic and can be renamed. However, a response team in place would be beneficial when distributing information.</p>
Increased Collaboration & Partnerships	<p>Many organizations and business owners have been able to partner with one another to get money out the door or to assist each other when necessary. The sense of community is powerful, and people have relied on each other for support.</p>
	<p><u>Surfaced Needs:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to highlight and share successes from working with other organizations or community members to achieve goals. 2. Determine ways to utilize and highlight partnerships and connections, whether it consists of business owners, employees, or community members. This network and the links are helpful to achieve goals and implement efforts. 3. Utilize and market the Klamath IDEA, an organization specifically designed to create an entrepreneurship network and ecosystem in Klamath County.
Looking Towards Preparedness	<p>Interviewees expressed an appetite to do a self-reflection of what has happened in the last year so that communities can leverage lessons learned, best practices, what did work, and what did not work in the future. Many also noted determining who was hit hardest to assist them first.</p>
	<p><u>Surfaced Needs:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Investigate current emergency plans and include vital lessons learned from the pandemic in 2020/2021, along with any wildfire plans that need to be updated. 2. Ensure housing challenges are continuously addressed. The pandemic exacerbated an increasing housing crisis. To better prepare for the future, housing issues should be investigated. 3. Research data to focus on which industries and businesses were hit hardest, and decipher a plan to help those organizations and individuals.
Inequities Unveiled & Exacerbated	<p>Throughout the pandemic, those in low-income households have been impacted significantly. This surfaces through a housing crisis, low-wage unemployment rates, and broadband use. Also, the Hispanic and Latino population makes up the second-largest demographic in Klamath and Lake Counties. In the early stages of COVID-19, not many materials were not translated, and there seemed to be a significant gap in trust between government entities and this community.</p>
	<p><u>Surfaced Needs:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Translate vital documents and resources right away, and include other mechanisms for receiving information like mail or phone calls. 2. Determine a way to build trust with Spanish-speaking communities and other people of color throughout Klamath and Lake Counties.
Community Reach and Education	<p>Klamath and Lake counties are fiercely independent – and this is one of their strengths. When COVID-19 struck and people were forced to shut down or slow their business, available resources mostly came from the government. Some business owners and other workers in the community did not want to take this money. Many interviewees noted this challenge – how do you help the people who need it but may not want it?</p>
	<p><u>Surfaced Needs:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Integrate information about vital programs and services that may come from the government into business and financial training. 2. Try to educate community members about economic development and the role of public and private organizations in it.

Outcomes & Opportunities

At the end of the report, SCOEDD lists specific opportunities that can potentially be implemented to address the needs outlined. However, this list intends to provide recommendations. Even though we list certain opportunities in this document, it does not mean they will be implemented. In addition, the list will likely need to be revised in the coming months – either by editing what is currently listed, adding more opportunities to the list, or removing some opportunities that are no longer relevant. SCOEDD will work with our partners, stakeholders, and other community members to determine the feasible

opportunities to support or implement. Before determining opportunity feasibility, SCOEDD will reach out to others who may not have been heard for this report to better understand their needs. To do this, we plan to look for ways to collaborate with the following industries: (1) restaurants and bars, (2) gyms and fitness facilities, (3) education, (4) housing, (5) childcare, and (6) healthcare.

The graph below depicts the high-level overview of the current list of opportunities. The recommended opportunities aim to assist Klamath and Lake Counties as they begin to recover from the pandemic. They are also in SCOEDD's scope to either lead, initiate, or support.



Potential Opportunities to Address Needs

Introduction

At the beginning of March of 2020, the SARS-COV-2 virus, better known as COVID-19, shocked the world after being declared a worldwide pandemic. The results included global travel shutdowns, the closure of borders, and more locally, the shutdown of businesses, events, and already-planned activities with friends, families, and coworkers. What proceeded from the shutdowns and isolation meant healthcare challenges, increased unemployment levels, one of the worst economies seen since The Great Recession in 2007-2009, and a sense of despair. Small businesses around the country, particularly restaurants, bars, gyms, and other businesses that relied on in-person support, faced an intense and progressing crisis.

In Oregon, there has been a lot of variability in unemployment statistics throughout the last year. According to the State of Oregon Employment Department, in April 2020, unemployment skyrocketed to 13.2 percent after steadily decreasing since late 2010. For comparison, Oregon's unemployment rate in March 2020, just one month before, was 3.6 percent. Thankfully, the unemployment rate has been dropping again since then, and growth is anticipated in the coming months. However, it is worth noting that this significant unemployment increase impacted many businesses and livelihoods, particularly those in rural areas or who have relied heavily on the tourism industry. Klamath and Lake Counties have not been immune to COVID-19 impacts. Like Oregon as a whole, April 2020 presented significant challenges in various industries. Klamath and Lake employment, workforce, and other demographic data are shared in the *District Profile* section below. Lastly, one of the first steps in responding to and addressing COVID-19 was when Klamath and Lake Counties distributed the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDL), and other loan and grant funding to local businesses. In total, over \$101M was distributed within the region. For a close look at the distribution of funds, see [Appendix A](#).

To assist with response and recovery, SCOEDD, along with five other economic development districts (EDDs) across Oregon, decided to brainstorm ways to help our communities recover from and become more resilient to COVID-19 impacts and economic downturns. After working with RARE staff, the University of Oregon's Institute for Policy, Research, and Engagement (IPRE), and EDD colleagues and partners, the EDDs decided that the best way to help was to conduct an economic needs assessment. In general, this assessment included gathering critical needs data from both interviews and secondary sources to inform efforts and initiatives that could aid in the districts' recoveries. This assessment intended to interview a small, select group of stakeholders who have seen firsthand some of the needs that surfaced within communities because of COVID, wildfires, and an economic recession. This assessment was not intended to duplicate any efforts, and hopefully, it will help the Klamath and Lake communities recover. Community members and leaders have already done fantastic and valuable work to respond to the pandemic and economic downturn. This report is meant to be one small piece of those greater efforts.

This report comprises background information, an approach and methodology to the report, key themes and needs, future recovery opportunities, and next steps. Although interviewees were from various industries, this report is not intended to be comprehensive. SCOEDD understands that many more voices need to be heard about recovery and preparedness efforts. This assessment is just one step in that long process.

This report's end goal is to share what business owners, economic associations, and community members discussed when asked about COVID-19 impacts and needs. At the end of the report, an *Opportunities* section provides additional detail with potential recommendations and strategies for future recovery efforts. In the long-term, this will feed into economic recovery and preparedness plans, efforts, and activities, particularly for any future natural disasters or economic downturns.

Background and Methods

The development and implementation of the needs assessment took place from mid-December 2020 through March 2021, with most of the process conducting interviews in January and February. SCOEDD began report development starting in early March 2021 and finalized it in early April 2021.

As the RARE members from the EDDs embarked on creating this needs assessment, the first step was to determine a set of interview questions and the stakeholder list to interview. The RARE members first compiled a list of industries to consider interviewing. Then, they formed an interview script to share with the interviewees. Throughout two weeks, the RARE members iterated on a set of interview questions that would be affirmative and future-thinking to ensure that EDDs could address needs and other opportunities in their scope to change. A list of general and broad interview questions is included in [Appendix B](#).

SCOEDD interviewed 21 people from both Klamath and Lake Counties. SCOEDD ensured to interview individuals and groups from the following industries:

- Economic Development Associations and Organizations, including the Small Business Development Center, Business Oregon, Klamath Falls Downtown Association, and East Cascade Works.
- Small business owners.
- Nonprofits and community organizations.
- Klamath Tribal Council Members.
- School board members.
- Community members embedded in agriculture, ranching, and the food system/assistance.
- Those experienced in local health and housing initiatives.

SCOEDD's Executive Director and the RARE Member brainstormed community connections to start, and one of the interview questions asked if anyone else should be interviewed for the assessment. While this list does not include everyone who should be involved, one of the first next steps is to ensure other industry voices are heard. Such industries should consist of restaurant and bar owners, smaller unincorporated town/city community members, other small business owners who were hit particularly hard, tourism-focused enterprises, and childcare providers. There will be an ongoing conversation about needs to ensure recovery efforts are catered and specific. This report was a Listen to Learn session, meaning that SCOEDD listened for opportunities to identify the actions necessary to create positive change¹.

IPRE and SCOEDD supported this report template and worked in tandem with other EDDs to ensure consistency. After each EDD finalized its report, IPRE worked with the RARE members to develop an EDD-specific report, highlighting key themes and needs that all of our districts discussed and heard. This way, we have a report focused on our district, with an accompanying report highlighting similarities throughout Oregon. The EDD-specific report can be used in the future for coordination and partnership activities and to share best practices and lessons learned.

EDD's Role in Economic Development

SCOEDD aims to connect community members and business owners to the right people and resources. We do this primarily through the loan and available grant programs. SCOEDD's services are mostly tied to the following:

- [Business Planning](#) – business plan consulting, demographic and Census Data, and feasibility studies.
- [Capital and Financial Resources](#) – debt-equity, disaster loan assistance, grant funding, loans, and microloans.

¹ The Ford Family Foundation, *Listen to Learn, Community Building Action Center*, <https://www.tfff.org/listen-learn>.

- Economic and Site Development – economic development and revitalization.
- Nonprofit and Social Enterprise – funds development and strategic planning
- Starting a Business – feasibility studies.

SCOEDD also utilizes resources to help community businesses, but we cannot do everything addressed in this report. Economic development is broad, and many aspects feed into business and economic enhancement. However, the focus for SCOEDD remains around supporting the development of the business and entrepreneur ecosystem in Klamath and Lake Counties and directing businesses to the right resources. Many opportunities go hand-in-hand with economic development, such as highlighting Agritourism, pursuing grant opportunities for housing, Main Street connections, and many other activities. While it is not necessarily SCOEDD's primary role to address these items specifically, it is in its purview and can go in tandem with SCOEDD's main priorities and objectives.

In this report, there will be a decent amount said outside of economic development's exact role. However, it is all still connected. After all, the agriculture producer who slows down vegetable production will impact the economy. Those displaced during the pandemic and/or wildfires are not contributing to the economy either. It may not be SCOEDD's direct role to address those needs and challenges head-on, but it is worth highlighting to showcase the broader economic ecosystem at play and determine ways to support solutions.

Organization of this Plan

The remainder of this report is organized as follows:

- **District Profile Section** | Shares Klamath and Lake Counties' demographics and employment trends, and the COVID-19 impact.
- **Key Themes Section** | Depicts the overarching themes and needs that have surfaced because of the pandemic in Klamath and Lake Counties.
- **Opportunities Section** | Showcases the possible next steps for SCOEDD, partners, and community members as we all look for ways to recover and become more prepared for economic downturns like the one the pandemic caused.

This report includes an appendix:

- **Appendix A:** Federal, State, and Local Small Business CARES Funding
- **Appendix B:** Interview Questions
- **Appendix C:** Unemployment Information
- **Appendix D:** Community Resilience Estimates
- **Appendix E:** Oregon's Percent Change in Unemployment

District Profile

SCOEDD serves as the primary conduit for regional economic development resources for Klamath and Lake Counties in Oregon. It provides the professional staff to support economic development planning on a regional basis and Lake County and Klamath County's economic development efforts. SCOEDD also manages and administers regional loan programs and has operated revolving loan funds (RLFs) since 2002. Primary funding has been received through the United States Economic Development Administration and the United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development, matching funding from regional investment boards, state grants, counties, and others. All RLFs were designed to assist small businesses with job-creating projects in the region.

The South Central Oregon region is made up of the Oregon counties of Klamath and Lake. The counties are located in southern Oregon along the eastern border of the Cascade Mountain Range and bordering northern California. Klamath County (6,151 square miles and 3.93 million acres) and Lake County (8,340 square miles and 5.34 million acres) are the third and fourth largest Oregon counties. Together, these Counties cover over 14,490 square miles, with an average of 1 person per square mile in Lake County and ten people per square mile in Klamath County².

There has been insignificant population growth in the region since 2010, and in Lake County, there was even a slight decrease of 0.2 percent³. Around the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a minor movement in and out of the counties. Portland State University released preliminary population estimates by county in 2019 and 2020. Overall, Oregon's population increased by 31,655 residents. In Klamath County, 2019 estimates were 68,190 residents, and in 2020 there were 68,075 residents, meaning that 115 people left the County between 2019 and 2020. In Lake County, 2019 estimates were 8,080 residents, and in 2020 there were 8,075 residents, meaning that five people left the County between 2019 and 2020⁴. There are still data to measure since COVID happened. Therefore, the estimates and numbers may have already changed.

Each town in Klamath and Lake Counties is different in terms of demographics and workforce trends. The graphics to the right and below explain some of the demographics in the incorporated towns in Klamath and Lake Counties, including Malin, Merrill, Bonanza, Chiloquin, Klamath Falls, Altamont (adjacent to Klamath Falls), Paisley, and Lakeview. As you can see, the region's population is predominately older and White, with a growing Hispanic population – currently 13.1 percent in Klamath County and 8.2 percent in Lake County⁵. The Klamath Tribes make up the demographics for American Indian/Alaska Natives in the region, as this has been their home for thousands of years.

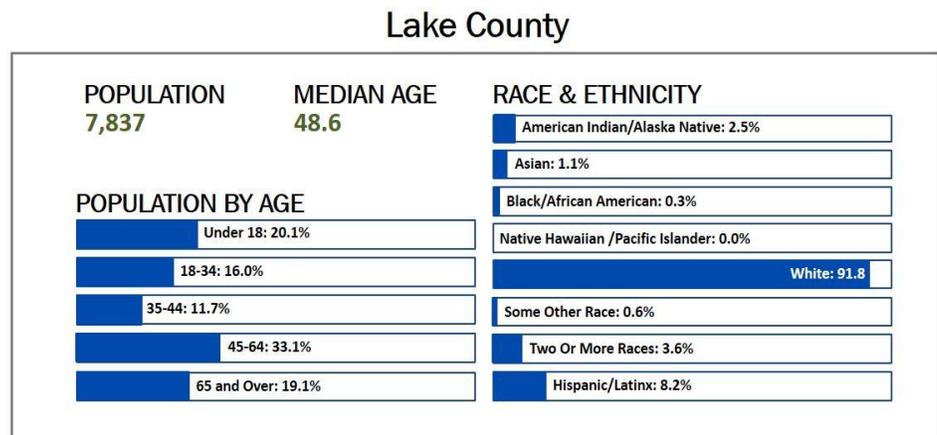


Figure 1: Lake County Demographics

² South Central Economic Development District (SCOEDD), *Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy* (Klamath Falls, Oregon: SCOEDD, 2019), 4.

³ South Central Economic Development District (SCOEDD), *Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy* (Klamath Falls, Oregon: SCOEDD, 2019), 5.

⁴ Portland State University, *Population Estimates for Oregon and Counties*, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1qidjr2n3mo31flfh35yoYCqWTsu41RaS/view>.

⁵ "Economic Profile System," Headwaters Economics, 2018 Census Data, <https://headwaterseconomics.org/apps/economic-profile-system/41035+41037>

According to Headwaters Economics, in 2018, 54.3 percent of Klamath County residents work full-time, and 17.1 percent worked part-time. The percentages mean that roughly around 28.6 percent of Klamath County residents did not work. In Lake County, 49.5 percent of residents worked full-time, and 17.9 percent worked part-time. The percentages mean that roughly around 32.7 percent of Lake County residents did not work. The biggest job industries in Klamath County include

Klamath County

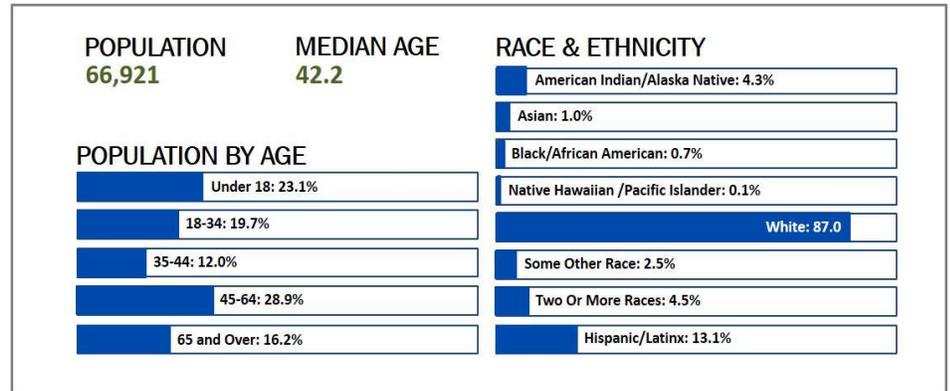


Figure 2: Klamath County Demographics

Government (including higher education), Health Care and Social Assistance, and Retail Trade. In Lake County, the biggest job industries include Government, Farm work, and Retail Trade⁶. COVID did impact specific industries.

According to the State of Oregon Employment Department via QualityInfo, in December 2020, most

unemployment claims came from those working in Farming, Fishing, and Forestry (Lake) and Food Preparation and Serving Related (Klamath). In March 2021, this has shifted; most unemployment claims came from those working in Production (Lake) and Construction and Extraction (Klamath). See the graphic to the right for more information about unemployment claims in Lake and Klamath Counties in December⁷. To see a larger graph of the occupations, please see

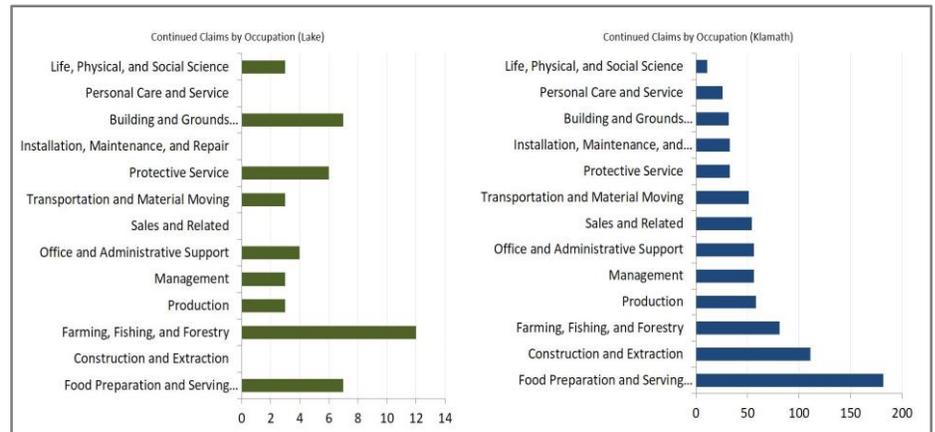


Figure 3: Unemployment Claims by Occupation (data as of December 2020)

[Appendix C](#). The change from December 2020 to March 2021 shows that the pandemic has impacted different occupations throughout its lifetime.

In Klamath and Lake Counties, there were many initial unemployment claims (notably in April 2020). In Lake County in April 2020, the unemployment rate was 9.0 percent, and in Klamath County, it was 15.6 percent. Most of those claims were found in the accommodation and food services sector. Bars and restaurants were among the first and hardest hit businesses throughout Klamath and Lake Counties. Simultaneously, health care and social assistance and manufacturing trailed them. Thankfully, those numbers have altered since last year. As of March 2021, Klamath County is at a 7.0 percent unemployment rate, and Lake County is at a 5.6 percent unemployment rate⁸. While the downward trajectory is good news, and there is hope for the future, there is minimal understanding of the current COVID-19 and economic downturn needs within specific districts and how their communities, mainly those rural and frontier, can recover.

There is a plethora of impacts in Oregon and its counties. With those in mind, SCOEDD interviewed 21 people to gauge what their immediate and longer-term needs are so that we can move out of response and into recovery.

⁶ "Economic Profile System," Headwaters Economics, 2018 Census Data, <https://headwaterseconomics.org/apps/economic-profile-system/41035+41037>

⁷ "COVID-19 Website," State of Oregon Employment Department and QualityInfo, 2020, <https://www.qualityinfo.org/>.

⁸ "COVID-19 Website," State of Oregon Employment Department and QualityInfo, 2020, <https://www.qualityinfo.org/>.

Key Themes

Every single interviewee noted that "we did the best we could with the knowledge we had." All of the key themes and needs listed in this section considered that statement. Klamath County, Lake County, Oregon, the U.S., and countries worldwide had never been through something at this scale before, and most were not adequately prepared to dive right into a response.

While there was some variability in interviewee responses, the themes and needs below are aggregated, which means that this section depicts what most interviewees said. Some interviews deviated from the aggregate or noted one-off statements or ideas that were not included. This section is the common voice of 21 people.

The most common themes included: capacity challenges; business, financial, and technology literacy (while taking into account the digital divide); business and community creativity; mental health focus and youth engagement; messaging and communication challenges (while also acknowledging information overload); increased collaboration and partnership; and looking towards preparedness. Two overarching themes intersected with almost all other themes and needs: inequities unveiled and exacerbated and community reach and education. The following section below describes each of the themes and their related needs in more detail.

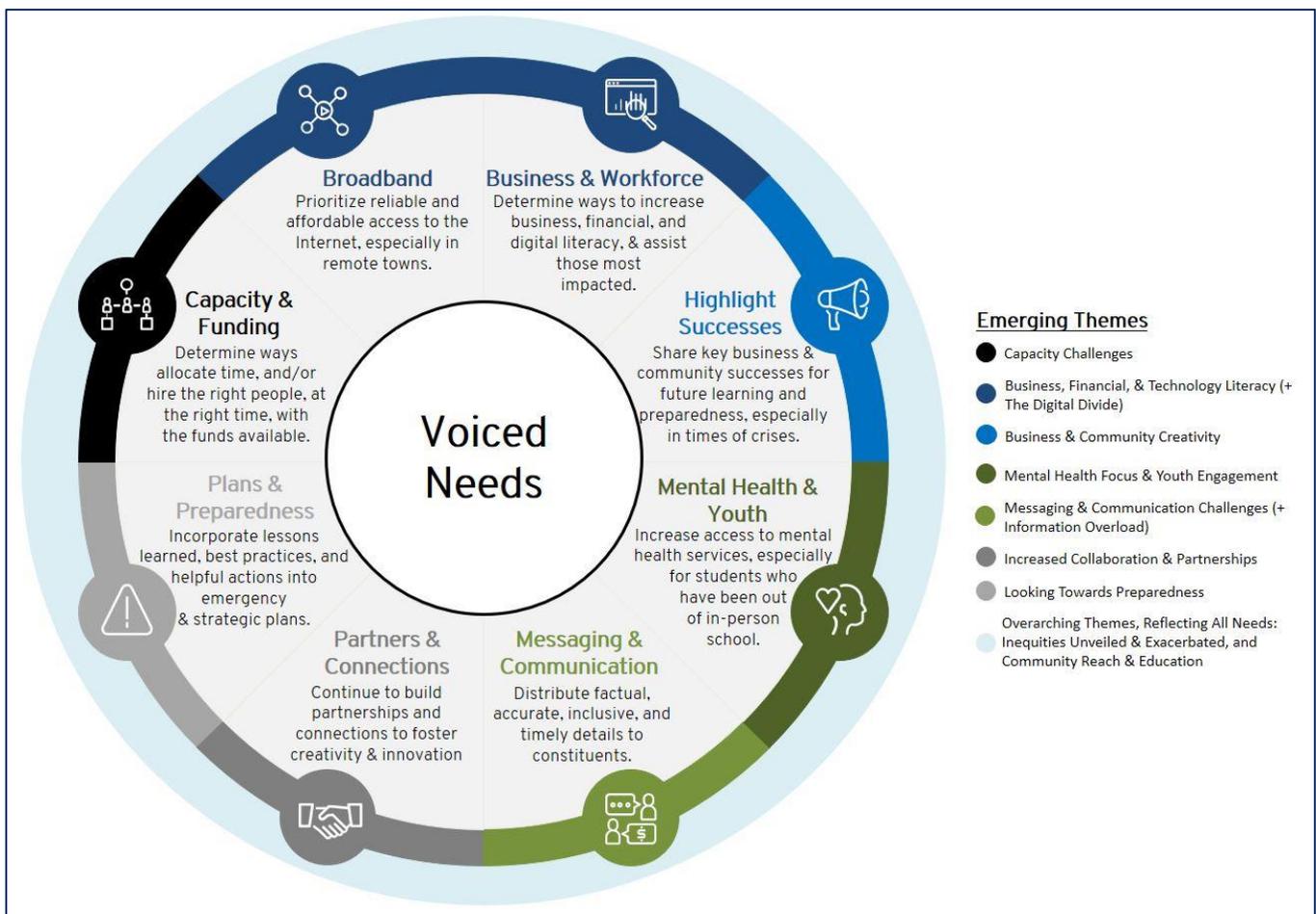


Figure 4: Overview of Needs & Accompanying Themes

Themes, Needs, and Information in More Detail

The tables below describe each of the themes SCOEDD heard and broke it out by accompanying needs, data, and other information from both interviews and secondary data. This section intends to break down what we heard in the community and aggregates all the answers within the interviews, coupled with secondary data and information. Please note that while we provided data, there is likely more data available or coming available. SCOEDD can include data later in action plans or if we pursue potential opportunities. This section can be a living document, and data will be incorporated as such, especially as we begin to build out the next steps. Lastly, interview answers varied slightly, and there are some interview answers not included in this detail.

THEME CAPACITY CHALLENGES	
<p>During the interviews, we heard a lot about capacity challenges. There were a lot of single-handed people doing a lot of different work. They were glad to be doing it – they knew they had to come together for their community, but it was stressful and confusing. It also brought up some future challenges around workforce development and succession planning. There are not enough hours in a day for one person to wear multiple hats while also documenting their daily operations and knowledge for another. Capacity challenges have led to organizational and job burnout.</p>	
<p><u>Surfaced Needs:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hire a grant writer who will assist with funding support, both for technical assistance and capacity building purposes. 2. Utilize partnerships to spread out work, specifically during crises. Sharing activities helps alleviate the burden of overwork. 	
 QUOTES	<p>Regarding general capacity challenges, 19 out of the 21 interviewees noted capacity in some way – most of the interviewees shared that those running organizations are a one-person team and have to wear an abundance of hats. Thankfully, healthcare in Klamath Falls did have the capacity, which enabled them to pivot and assist people during a pandemic.</p>
 DATA	<p>There are limited data points depicting capacity challenges at this time. Most of the information received has been through the interview process or other secondary information.</p> <p>Many interviewees noted the highly anticipated House Bill 2345 that is in the State of Oregon legislator. If passed, the bill would require the Oregon Business Development Department to distribute money in an Oregon Rural Capacity Fund to Oregon's Economic Development Districts to assist rural jurisdictions in applying for and administering grants and other forms of funding available from any source. This would assist rural communities when applying and receiving money from Oregon to implement vital services and programs.</p>
 INFORMATION /ANECDOTES	<p>Our region's Small Business Development Center (SBDC) must cover a 14,000+ square mile radius when providing support and services. There are only a couple of full-time employees and a couple of part-time business advisors. There is so much work to be done, but there is not enough staff to do it. Additionally, those who do work at the SBDC must work excessive hours to complete their work.</p> <p>Interviewees in agriculture or food-related industries shared how beneficial a grant writer would be – it is hard to work 40-80+ hours on your farm or ranch each week (depending on the season) while also applying for needed grants.</p>

THEME | BUSINESS, FINANCIAL, & TECHNOLOGY LITERACY (+ THE DIGITAL DIVIDE)

Community members stepped up to better understand the technologies people were beginning to use. People began to learn about Zoom, DocuSign, and other online marketplaces. While not everyone had (or has) this luxury, those with the means jumped in. Many interviewees noted that while they want in-person events and collaborations to happen again, we should continue this momentum when it makes sense. One of the biggest things we heard is businesses that were already doing well before the pandemic fared better than those that were not. None of the interviewees were saying that COVID-19 did not impact these businesses in some capacity. However, it showed that business, financial, and digital literacy are essential before and during crises. Though, almost all interviewees noted that this excludes restaurants/bars and other businesses that had to shut down. Lastly, we heard a lot about broadband issues and ensuring quality access to the internet at home. The pandemic highlighted many challenges with reliable internet for school and work. Many communities had to find innovative ways to provide some internet assistance. While some have access to internet capabilities, it can be slow, diminishing productivity and quick access to vital resources or information.

Surfaced Needs:

1. Increase capacity for economic development and local business-oriented organizations to work with entrepreneurs and small business owners to better understand their business, financials, and other digital components to running a business.
2. There should be skill training, university and college partnerships, and more solutions to better position individuals within the workforce to take local jobs.
3. There is a significant need to research and invest in broadband. Broadband is a continued issue, and there needs to be a concerted effort around making it accessible, affordable, and redundant.

 <p>QUOTES</p>	<p>"Students received iPads this year to aid them in schoolwork. Providing technology is not frowned upon, but many students had nothing to connect the iPad to [no Wi-Fi]."</p> <p>"[Related to broadband] Lack of redundancy paralyzes Lake County several times a year. Just two weeks ago, someone cut through the cable from Klamath falls, and it was down for two days, absolutely crippling businesses, private users, etc. There have been times when it has affected EMS/Fire and law enforcement. It is usually down 3-4 times a year."</p>
 <p>DATA</p>	<p>The East Cascades Region (Crook, Deschutes, Gilliam, Hood River, Jefferson, Klamath, Lake, Sherman, Wasco, and Wheeler Counties) has over 4,000 job vacancies⁹. While this is a large area, it is worth noting that there are opportunities for training, development, and education to fill local vacancies.</p> <p>According to Oregon's Statewide Broadband Assessment and Best Practices Study, prepared for the Oregon Business Development Department¹⁰, 54 percent of census blocks can provide Basic Broadband (25/3 Mbps) or Future Ready broadband (100/100 Mbps). The census blocks that Basic Broadband covers are 27.6 percent of the Oregon population, and the Future Ready census blocks cover 67.4 percent of the population. With these numbers, it seems 95 percent of Oregon's population live in areas with the minimum Basic Broadband service level. However, it is not known how comprehensively each census block is serviced. There are areas (many rural) at risk of being left behind because they do not have the quality of broadband they need. Lack of broadband, in return, has negative local economic and community impacts.</p>
 <p>INFORMATION / ANECDOTES</p>	<p>It is important to note that we did not hear from the people significantly impacted by the lack of broadband. The next step should be convening community members and determining the best actions to address those who need broadband.</p>

⁹ "Oregon Job Vacancy Survey," State of Oregon Employment Department, 2020, 17, <https://www.qualityinfo.org/documents/10182/90519/Quarterly+Job+Vacancies+Snapshots+%E2%80%93+Fall+2020?version=1.0>.
¹⁰ "Statewide Broadband Assessment and Best Practices Study," Oregon Broadband Office, 2020, 5, <http://www.oregon4biz.com/assets/docs/SNGStudy2020.pdf>.

THEME | BUSINESS & COMMUNITY CREATIVITY

Many interviewees talked about innovation and creativity in their line of work. Nonprofits have come up with creative fundraising methods, and businesses have pivoted in unique and exciting ways. Business owners noted that their supply chains had been intensely disrupted. This disruption then led to new partnerships or product diversification. They hope to take these lessons and continue forward with this thinking.

Surfaced Needs:

1. Highlight and share business and community successes for future learning and preparedness, especially in times of crisis.

 QUOTES

"Analogy: if you are driving a car on the race track and you know you are going around the corner, it doesn't work if your foot is off the accelerator and can be even more dangerous. That is where we are at now - we have to keep our foot on the accelerator and continue forward with creative and innovative thinking. If there is one thing to say to small business owners, it's to keep going even after we recover; try new things from time to time and have a mindset that your business can grow, even incrementally."

"All the innovation that is coming out from businesses is positive. Small business owners were forced to think more creatively and take more risks - this creates a lot more innovative solutions. A lot that is going to stick around even after the pandemic."

"Eastern Oregon Coordinator for The Ford Family Foundation noted that some nonprofits came together to fundraise or shifted fundraisers online (GoFundMe, Facebook, etc.). These haven't been done before and are quite helpful."

 DATA

There are limited data points depicting business creativity and innovation at this time. Most of the information received has been through the interview process or other secondary information.

 INFORMATION / ANECDOTES

A small business owner noted that one of the manufactures for a part of his outdoor, fire-starting company is based in China. When COVID-19 surfaced, this partnership had to pause since the supply chain was profoundly disrupted. Instead, he formed a partnership with a U.S. manufacturer and now has partnerships with both manufacturers, helping his business productivity and efficiency.

A community member (and an interviewee) in Lake County noted that she had a sister who works with motorcycles. She used the material she would make the motorcycle attire with and instead used it for masks. The interviewee and her organization then provided the masks to community members and essential workers.

Project Lioness is a quilting club in Chiloquin, Oregon, and used some of their material for mask making and distribution.

Nonprofits also helped some businesses and community members with grant funding – making the application much more streamlined and more accessible.

The Alger Community Theater in Lakeview had to shut down completely. To make up their revenue, they sold concessions outside, and they implemented Curb-Side Cravings, where every other Friday, those in Lakeview could pick up popcorn, candy, and other snacks. They had musicians play outside the theater, and one time they even implemented a car show. All so that people could feel a sense of community and normalcy while still adhering to restrictions and guidelines.

The Klamath Tribes were still able to employ many of their Tribal members during the pandemic. Because of this effort and funding, they were able to keep their members safe and stable.

THEME | MENTAL HEALTH FOCUS & YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

This pandemic has been stressful, isolating, and worrisome. Community members worry about their health, all while ensuring their livelihoods – businesses, work, homes, and loved ones – are also in good shape. School shutdowns and the lack of student-based sports have made the situation even more stressful. Teachers have had to pivot their teaching and lesson planning completely. Plus, students and youth have not been able to be with friends or socially interact with the community. Klamath and Lake community members have pivoted in many ways and adapted as best they could, but this has taken a toll.

Both in K-12 and at OregonTech, students have had enormous amounts of stress. They are no longer able to be with friends or conduct regular activities. Nearly all interviewees noted that the community needs to prioritize mental health assistance in a non-stigmatized and healthy way for all ages.

Surfaced Needs:

1. Increase access and awareness to mental health services, programming, and support for adults, students, and youth, primarily related to loneliness and isolation.
2. Determine ways to engage students and youth to be a part of community life and events again. The lack of social interaction due to no school and sports have been inhibiting growth and their outlook.

QUOTES

"One of my family members is failing fourth grade right now and has not had any problems in the past. How can students fail fourth grade? We have to look for solutions to help the children in our communities."

"...there is the challenge of mental health and the trauma side of all of this. There is so much stress and uncertainty, and it is exacerbated because of the recent wildfires."

DATA

Estimates from a CDC survey on mental health have shown significant increases throughout the pandemic in anxiety disorder symptoms, symptoms of depressive disorder, and symptoms of both anxiety disorder and depressive disorder. While this survey was done via the household pulse survey, without any doctors present, it shows that people are well aware of the impacts of COVID-19 on their minds and bodies. Oregon's statistics consist of the following:

- April 23, 2020 – May 5, 2020: 31.5 percent of Oregonians felt anxiety disorder symptoms; 22.5 percent felt symptoms of depressive disorder, and 36.8 percent felt both.
- In the middle of the pandemic, from October 14, 2020 – October 26, 2020: 36.6 percent of Oregonians felt anxiety disorder symptoms, 26.9 percent felt symptoms of depressive disorder, and 41.4 percent felt both.
- The latest dataset, from February 17, 2021 – March 1, 2021: 35.5 percent of Oregonians felt symptoms of anxiety disorder, 29.7 percent felt symptoms of depressive disorder, and 41.2 percent felt symptoms of both.

Oregon has been in the upper quartiles for almost all rankings. Unfortunately, this data is not available at county-wide levels yet¹¹.

Calls to crisis therapists in Klamath County have increased by over 200 percent, and many crisis therapists are riding with Klamath County deputies to co-respond to calls¹².

INFORMATION /ANECDOTES

Many community members have seen the degradation of fellow friends and neighbors. They have anecdotally shared that it is apparent that depression and suicide rates are up from what they were pre-pandemic and that children and youth are fearful for the future.

¹¹ "Anxiety & Depression Household Pulse Survey," National Center for Health Statistics CDC, <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/covid19/pulse/mental-health.htm>.

¹² "Healthy Klamath Meeting – Suicide Prevention Update," Healthy Klamath, March 25, 2021, Patty Card.

THEME | MESSAGING & COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES (+ INFO OVERLOAD)

There has been so much information distributed throughout COVID-19, and community members are generally confused. It changes frequently, and the restrictions, policies, and regulations are complicated at times. Business owners and other community members have had to interpret news and information quickly and balance that with all of their other activities. Messaging has also been intensely different depending on where community members and business owners receive it.

Specifically, in Klamath County, the health community and local elected and government officials had different messaging surrounding COVID-19. While this was later resolved, the mixed communications were confusing to many small business owners and community members, especially when it came to information distribution to constituents. The local hospital messaged one distinct voice, saying that health needs to be prioritized and reopening was dangerous. Local leaders said that the community needed to reopen to boost the degrading economy. Interviewees who mentioned this did not think either was necessarily wrong, but this mixed-messaging hindered understanding in the situation.

Surfaced Needs:

1. Organizations should put themselves in their constituents' shoes to see how they would want information. They should distribute that information through one means (e.g., website, email blast, etc.).
2. The Counties should have the COVID-19 Response Team (a team within the South Central region) set up in case of other emergencies or crises. It does not have to be a pandemic and can be renamed. However, a response team in place would be beneficial when distributing information.

 QUOTES	<p>"There has been plenty of information, but there is way too much information."</p> <p>"Honestly, I have regulation fatigue. It is hard to keep up with all the changes."</p> <p>"I get 400-500 emails daily, which consist of nearly every government agency information."</p>
 DATA	<p>There are limited data points depicting messaging and communication at this time. Most of the information received has been through the interview process or other secondary information.</p>
 INFORMATION / ANECDOTES	<p>Arguably one of the most effective communication mechanisms in the region has been Chamber Chatter – the Facebook Live event from the Chamber of Commerce in Lake County. Every one of the Lake County interviewees and five others in Klamath County mentioned this event, mainly as it related to the question: "Has it been difficult to find information? Is there a centralized place that has been your go-to for finding resources/information?" Many interviewees expressed wanting it to continue, not only for COVID-19 items but for regular news and updates within the community. After it was on Facebook Live, it would also go on the local radio and newspaper.</p> <p>The Regional Solutions Team out of the State of Oregon set up a COVID-19 Response Team. This team, comprising 70+ people, would meet weekly when the pandemic started and now meet every other week. Many organizations, particularly those in economic development such as the Small Business Development Center, East Cascades Works, and others, actively participated/participate in its meetings and share vital information.</p> <p>Six interviewees noted the Oregon Health Authority has their go-to for information.</p>

THEME | INCREASED COLLABORATION & PARTNERSHIPS

Interviewees shared a lot about partnerships, networks, and collaborations. Many organizations and business owners have been able to partner with one another to get money out the door or to assist each other when necessary. The sense of community is powerful, and people have relied on each other for support.

Surfaced Needs:

1. Continue to highlight and share successes from working with other organizations or community members to achieve goals.
2. Determine ways to utilize and highlight successful partnerships and connections, whether it consists of business owners, employees, or community members. This network and the links are helpful to achieve goals and implement efforts.
3. Utilize and market the Klamath IDEA, an organization specifically designed to create an entrepreneurship network and ecosystem in Klamath County.

 QUOTES	<p>"COVID allowed many organizations, especially nonprofits and community builders, to plan and utilize the time to think into the future strategically. We emphasized strategic planning as we knew that this would end at some point."</p> <p>"All the communities care so much about one another."</p> <p>"There has been a new level of gratitude and willingness to be flexible/aware of those closest to us and our surroundings."</p> <p>"Other economic development and business-focused organizations like SCOEDD, SBDC, etc., have been beneficial during this time. It has let people know that they need to know about these organizations to get the resources and information they need to help their business in general, but also during crises."</p> <p>'Klamath and Lake have many small businesses, not too many big box stores. This helps with connectivity and relationships - people care about the people helping to run the economy. Rural connectivity and connection is the best thing we have.'</p>
 DATA	<p>As noted in the introduction, the community received over \$101M through various loans and grants (see Appendix A for more details). Because of this collaboration between organizations in the community, people could weather the COVID-19 storm better than they would have without support funding.</p>
 INFORMATION / ANECDOTES	<p>The Small Business Development Center, SCOEDD, Business Oregon, and Klamath IDEA came together and distributed over three million dollars in grants to small businesses. Together, they were able to review hundreds of applications, help with questions, and push money out the door.</p>

THEME | LOOKING TOWARDS PREPAREDNESS

There is an appetite to do a self-reflection of what has happened in the last year so that communities can leverage lessons learned, best practices, what did work, and what did not work in the future. There was brainstorming around ensuring to update emergency plans and including the time to think strategically. The common question interviewees noted was, "what can we leverage from the last year in future years to prepare ourselves for disasters – either natural or economic downturns?" There were also recommendations from a handful of interviewees that noted the need to utilize data to determine who got hit hardest by COVID-19 and plan for ways to address the people in immediate need.

Surfaced Needs:

1. Investigate current emergency plans and include vital lessons learned from the pandemic, along with any wildfire plans that need to be updated.
2. Ensure housing challenges are continuously addressed. The pandemic exacerbated an increasing housing crisis, particularly for those who rent. There is not a lot of housing in Klamath and Lake, which was highlighted when people feared for their homes/properties during the pandemic. To better prepare for the future, housing issues should be investigated.
3. Research data to focus on which industries and businesses were hit hardest, and decipher a plan to help those organizations and individuals.

 QUOTES

"There should be a community self-reflection - look at numbers of businesses and people unemployed and financials. Ask ourselves, "what do we see? How bad was it?" Take the time to figure it out and write down what went right and wrong, and learn."

"Try to help the community be more proactive – supplies on hand, food, and medicine, and things that you need so that when something happens, you are ready."

"The closure of community services, especially City Halls and government, is just not acceptable in emergencies. Public services should be the last to shut down. Public offices and servants should have to at least use the same standards as private businesses. It does make one think that we rural communities need to review our Emergency Preparedness Plans - command centers are vital connection points."

 DATA

The U.S. Census Bureau's Community Resilience Estimates calculates individuals and households' capacity to absorb, endure, and recover from the health, social, and economic impacts of a disaster, such as a hurricane or pandemic. They provided a Thematic Risk Factor (R.F.) percentage. Lake County has 23% residents with 0 R.F., 46% of residents with 1-2 R.F., and 30% of residents with 3+ R.F. Klamath County has 21% residents with 0 R.F., 52% of residents with 1-2 R.F., and 30% of residents with 3+ R.F. Vulnerabilities within a community partly determine resilience to a disaster. To measure these vulnerabilities, Census developed a risk index as a weighted aggregate of the risk factors. The risk factors (the R.F.) are binary components that add up to 11 possible risks. Therefore, those with 3+ R.F. are highly vulnerable to disasters. This means that Klamath and Lake have 76% and 82% of its residents with at least one risk. The community should prepare even for the slightest at-risk population¹³. Click [here](#) for a table view or see [Appendix D](#).

 INFORMATION / ANECDOTES

Interviewees indicated that there should be ways to build capacity for the local emergency planners or managers.

Interviewees also wanted to include data – which industries, organizations, and community members are not faring well? Why? What can be done? Answers to questions like these can help the community better understand where it should invest resources.

¹³ "Community Resilience Estimates Dashboard," US Census Bureau, <https://uscensus.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/f8fc348e4c99498baf18af09d4401553>.

THEME | INEQUITIES UNVEILED & EXACERBATED

Broadband and access to working computers and mobile phones were necessary for school, funding, and other essential activities. Low-income families who did not have the means to purchase fast and reliable internet or hardware faced many more extreme challenges than those who could purchase such mechanisms. The lack of broadband applied to more remote towns and those who are low-income workers. It created a divide to resources that were already present before COVID-19 but now expanded even further.

The Hispanic and Latinx populations make up the second-largest demographic in Klamath and Lake Counties. The first round of PPP and EIDL funding was not translated initially. Many interviewees brought up that there seemed to be a lack of trust between the communities and the local governments. Even if documentation was translated, like in later rounds and business grants, those in the migrant population were confused and avoidant because they were unsure of what steps to take or what they needed to provide for assistance and funding.

Surfaced Needs:

1. Translate vital documents and resources right away, and include other mechanisms for receiving information like mail or phone calls.
2. Determine a way to build trust with the Hispanic/Latino communities and other people of color throughout Klamath and Lake Counties.

QUOTES

"In the first round of PPP and EIDL, we completely missed our community's ever-growing Hispanic community because nothing was translated."

"Additionally, in early rounds of funding (PPP and EIDL), the State didn't translate any of the content or instructions. For a State emphasizing so much on inclusivity and equity, we missed the mark. Our Hispanic community missed out on a very short window of time to apply for funding."

"There is a steep language barrier in some of the Hispanic communities, which is challenging, especially in technical areas."

DATA

Oregon is not faring well when it comes to low-wage employment rates. According to Opportunity Insights and their Economic Tracker, employment rates among workers in the bottom wage quartile (low-wage - <\$27K) decreased by **50.7 percent**. See a visual chart depicting this information below in [Appendix E](#). While all workers – high-, middle-, and low-wage – had a decrease in employment rates, there is a significant gap among low-wage workers. Currently, no data are available for a county-wide comparison, but this does show that those without the same means as middle- and high-wage workers will likely take longer to recover¹⁴. For further context, though, Klamath County has 7,439 households that make under \$25K. This makes up 26.7 percent of the total households in Klamath. Lake County has 1,152 households that make under \$25K. This makes up 32.7 percent of the total households in Lake County¹⁵.

The Hispanic and Latinx population is 13.1 percent in Klamath County and 8.2 percent in Lake County. These percentages keep going up as well, and many households significantly contribute to the region's economy¹⁶.

INFORMATION / ANECDOTES

Aside from translation, interviewees also noted that there is likely a deep distrust in government entities, organizations, and even other community members among the Hispanic/Latino population and other communities of color in Klamath and Lake Counties. Therefore, while translation is needed, there is also a need to build trust to sustain and grow the community.

¹⁴ "Economic Tracker," Opportunity Insights, Oregon Data, <https://www.tracktherecovery.org/>.

¹⁵ "Economic Profile System," Headwaters Economics, 2018 Census Data, <https://headwaterseconomics.org/apps/economic-profile-system/41035+41037>

¹⁶ "Economic Profile System," Headwaters Economics, 2018 Census Data, <https://headwaterseconomics.org/apps/economic-profile-system/41035+41037>

THEME | COMMUNITY REACH & EDUCATION

Klamath and Lake Counties are fiercely independent. It is one of their strengths. With that said, most people make it a point to start businesses or contribute to work that goes directly back to the community and their families. They are not used to or willing to take money from the government. However, when COVID-19 struck, and people were forced to shut down, or at the very least, slow their business, many people needed help, and some of the only money circulating was from the government. A common question we heard from interviewees was, "how do you help the people in this tragic and chaotic time when they do not necessarily want that help?" The Small Business Development Center was one of the first organizations to tackle this challenge. It is the bridge between the Small Business Administration (SBA) and the local businesses. However, there are still people and organizations out there that could have used help that did not take it. There is no perfect solution for this, but it is something to keep in mind for future education and training purposes.

Surfaced Needs:

1. Integrate information about vital programs and services that may come from the government into business and financial training.
2. Start educating community members about economic development and the role of public and private organizations in it.

 QUOTES	<p>"How do we help people who don't understand the system and processes (i.e., policies and regulations from the national and state level)? How do you work with them and help them navigate all the moving pieces? There is real distrust of government here; plus, rural folks like to take care of themselves and be fiercely independent! People don't want a government "handout" or don't trust the resources provided by them. However, we want to get money out to help people during this chaotic time."</p>
 DATA	<p>There are limited data depicting community reach and education at this time. Most of the information received has been through the interview process or other secondary information.</p>
 INFORMATION / ANECDOTES	<p>With many working in business and economic development, there is an acknowledgment that many parts of our system are integrated into daily decisions making – government or not. One of the following steps should be how to address this complicated theme, as some of them noted that just educating via classes does not always work.</p>

Emerging Opportunities

There are potential ways to mitigate some of COVID-19's impacts and needs, and SCOEDD can either lead, implement, or support such efforts. While some needs and themes are out of scope for SCOEDD (and possibly our partners), it is worth noting actionable and tangible opportunities to assist with recovery and preparedness in the future. More details are listed in the section below.



Opportunities: Efforts, Initiatives, & Programs to Aid Recovery

The following recommendations intend to describe tangible actions and efforts that can help address some of the key themes and needs that surfaced in the economic needs assessment project. They depict **possible** opportunities that SCOEDD can either lead or support as our region looks to recovery, and later, resiliency. Just because an opportunity is listed does not mean it can and will be implemented. As a next step, SCOEDD, partners, and other stakeholders will determine if any of the following opportunities are feasible by compiling and finalizing an action plan that will share potential future efforts.

Opportunities <i>What will guide our efforts in recovery?</i>	Implementation <i>How can the opportunities potentially be implemented?</i>
Assist entrepreneurs, small businesses, and the broader workforce with their development in the region.	<p>(1) Support the current and ongoing entrepreneur ecosystem development in partnership with Klamath IDEA, the Small Business Development Corporation, OregonTech, the Klamath Falls Downtown Association, and other key partners. Additionally, SCOEDD supports startups and existing businesses with our loan programs and as one of the Klamath IDEA Resources Providers.</p> <p>(2) Create and provide economic development 101 presentations to community members and business owners. The training that SCOEDD can host will showcase key economic and industry indicators in the region while also sharing information about the CEDS. This way, individuals and business owners will better understand SCOEDD's role and the importance of economic development in the region.</p> <p>(3) Determine the best ways to provide support and/or funding for business, financial, and digital literacy training for entrepreneurs, small business owners, or those trying to pivot in their jobs/careers. This type of training is currently in the Small Business Development Center purview, but SCOEDD can potentially promote and support efforts.</p>
Support the development of preparedness plans that incorporate key and timely regional data.	<p>(1) Survey industries that have been significantly impacted by COVID-19, wildfires, and the economic downturn. Such industries can include restaurants, bars, gyms, and other small businesses that were completely shut down during the pandemic. The survey will ask key needs and impact questions to help determine specific and tangible activities that will need to be done to assist these industries.</p> <p>(2) Create a recovery dashboard that tracks vital economic, demographic, and workforce data. This dashboard can be used to track employment by industry, labor participation, job posting trends, unemployment, public transportation use, small business operations, consumer spending, stimulus data (bankruptcies, PPP, EIDL, grant funding, etc.), and more. This live data can help the region best understand their economies and make decisions on priority recovery efforts. For an example of a recovery dashboard, find the Capital District Regional Planning Commission of New York's dashboard here.</p> <p>(3) Spearhead the development of a Toolkit: Economic Recovery & Resiliency to ensure resources can be efficiently deployed during emergency planning efforts. The Toolkit aims to track what happened during the COVID-19 pandemic, wildfires, and the economic downturn, and share actionable ways to prepare the region for future disasters – natural or economic. The effort can be led by a</p>

	<p>steering committee comprising various leaders across industries and organizations to enable collaboration and partnerships. It can also utilize solidified emergency plans and other strategic plans for insight and guidance. SCOEDD can facilitate conversations, workshops, and the development of the Toolkit. Utilize resources: (1) Recovery and Resiliency Report, (2) Recovery Planning, (3) Capturing Lessons Learned, (4) Building Economics Part I, and (5) Building Economics Part II. Also, be sure to inform those hardest hit of some of the vital funds coming out via the American Rescue Plan Act. One example is the Small Business Administration, rolling out a \$28.6B Restaurant Revitalization Fund (RRF) to provide restaurants and bars with grants equal to their pandemic-related revenue loss. Additionally, the U.S. Department of Agriculture is dedicating \$6B to help smaller-scale and socially disadvantaged farmers who were hurt by the pandemic, along with producers of organic food and other specialty crops.</p>
<p>Continue to facilitate and promote vital partnerships and connections throughout the region.</p>	<p>(1) Develop a page on the SCOEDD website to showcase partners, connections, and helpful organizations in the region. Promote the SCOEDD brand as a connector so that when individuals and businesses go to the website, they can find the resources and organizations they need. It can also house a guide that shares the differing organizations in Klamath and Lake Counties to better understand their roles, responsibilities, and resources.</p> <p>(2) Depending on funding allotments in the recently passed Coronavirus Relief Package and American Rescue Plan, create a focused economic development coalition to help facilitate those funding and stimulus allotments to grants, loans, and other financial mechanisms. SCOEDD, along with other partners as appropriate and necessary, can lead the coalition's convening and organization.</p>
<p>Research the capability and funding for increased broadband access and affordability.</p>	<p>(1) Potentially hire a consultant, through grant funding, to better understand Klamath and Lake Counties' infrastructure and grid. Finalize action steps after research and a preliminary investigation. This will be done after determining what is completed or feasible at a statewide level.</p> <p>(2) Convene a steering committee (partnering with Business Oregon's Oregon Broadband Advisory Council and the Rural Broadband Capacity Program) to implement specific Broadband projects in more remote and frontier towns. This way, community members can access the internet at an affordable cost, and there could be ways to address redundancy problems in more remote areas.</p>
<p>Begin to build trust with underrepresented communities in the Counties, particularly in business and workforce development initiatives.</p>	<p>(1) Continue active participation in the Regional Equity in Recovery Council. This Regional Solutions Team Council convenes partners from all across the region. There are helpful and vital resources and information sharing in the meeting that can be leveraged in all of SCOEDD's efforts and activities going forward.</p> <p>(2) Lake County's Chamber of Commerce implemented Chamber Chatter, designed to provide vital details about the news, COVID, and other information in Lakeview and surrounding towns in Lake County. This live news event was streamed on Facebook Live and later put on the local radio and news stations. Importantly, this information was then translated into Spanish and was thoughtfully integrated into the expanding Hispanic population in Lake County. SCOEDD should help promote and implement a similar program in Klamath County, as the Hispanic population is the second-largest population in the region.</p>

Conclusion

Significant impacts and needs are circulating within Klamath and Lake Counties because of the pandemic. While the communities have seen new and better economic growth compared to a year ago, we still need to take steps to address some of the most pressing needs that have surfaced or been exacerbated in our communities.

Next Steps

SCOEDD and other EDDs across Oregon already presented initial findings with each other. This way, we all have a better sense and idea of our common themes and needs and potential ways to communicate and collaborate going forward. Additionally, SCOEDD plans to complete the following after the distribution of this finalized report:

1. Both district-specific and EDD-specific reports will be utilized to compile economic recovery plans. Greater Portland, Inc. has developed a plan like this, and other EDDs will likely follow. This way, Oregon will have collective plans based on the specific nuisances and information for its regions.
2. SCOEDD will internally brainstorm priority areas and action plans based on the *Opportunities* section. Once the team discusses the potential opportunities' priorities and feasibility, we will coordinate and share with Board Members, partners, and other stakeholders in our network. After this, we will determine actions, next steps, and timelines for any effort, activity, project, or initiative we will begin to pilot.
3. SCOEDD will begin reaching out to industries that were not heard from while compiling this report. That way, we have a better idea of specific needs for various industries and businesses.

Since this report is intended only to highlight what we heard within the Klamath and Lake communities, this report will not lay out specific steps to address all needs right away. SCOEDD needs to discuss outcomes with vital partners and stakeholders in the coming months to determine the best course of action.

Appendix

Below includes documents and other resources referenced throughout the report.

Appendix A | Federal, State, And Local Small Business CARES Funding

Please see below for the various funding that was distributed within Klamath and Lake Counties during the pandemic. For a clearer and larger version, please click [here](#).

Federal, State and Local Small Business CARES Funding

South Central Region (as of 12/31/21)

		Zip 97601	Klamath County Zip Other	KLAMATH County	LAKE County	Southcentral Region
EIDL ADVANCE	EIDL ADVANCES ISSUED	234	407	641	79	720
	EIDL ADVANCE - AVERAGE	\$ 3,158.12	\$ 2,916.46	\$ 3,004.68	\$ 3,569.62	\$ 3,066.67
	EIDL ADVANCE - TOTAL \$	\$ 739,000.00	\$ 1,187,000.00	\$ 1,926,000.00	\$ 282,000.00	\$ 2,208,000.00
EIDL LOAN	EIDLs ISSUED	175	306	481	51	532
	EIDL - MINIMUM	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00
	EIDL - MAXIMUM	\$ 496,200.00	\$ 31,257.90	\$ 496,200.00	\$ 150,000.00	\$ 496,200.00
	EIDL - AVERAGE	\$ 49,168.00	\$ 7,442.08	\$ 52,893.97	\$ 44,145.10	\$ 52,055.26
	EIDL - TOTAL \$	\$ 8,604,400.00	\$ 2,277,277.62	\$ 25,442,000.00	\$ 2,251,400.00	\$ 27,693,400.00
PPP (First Draw)	PPP LOANS ISSUED	319	497	816	121	937
	PPP LOANS ISSUED (Nonprofits)	15	13	28	4	32
	JOBS REPORTED	2,696	4,711	7,407	1,035	8,442
	PPP LOAN - MINIMUM	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 673.96	\$ 673.96
	PPP LOAN - MAXIMUM	\$ 2,514,131.88	\$ 1,325,000.00	\$ 2,514,131.88	\$ 5,142,110.21	\$ 5,142,110.21
	PPP LOAN - AVERAGE	\$ 71,329.81	\$ 72,943.44	\$ 72,312.62	\$ 80,237.82	\$ 73,336.04
	PPP LOAN - TOTAL \$	\$ 22,754,208.69	\$ 36,252,888.83	\$ 59,007,097.52	\$ 9,708,776.43	\$ 68,715,873.95
SCOEDD Business Oregon Funding Rounds 1-4	Grants Awarded	167	233	400	35	435
	Minimum Grant	\$ 2,500.00	\$ 2,500.00	\$ 2,500.00	\$ 2,500.00	\$ 2,500.00
	Maximum Grant	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 48,000.00	\$ 48,000.00	\$ 22,000.00	\$ 48,000.00
	Average Grant	\$ 3,902.72	\$ 4,131.97	\$ 4,036.26	\$ 3,863.27	\$ 4,022.34
	Jobs Supported	511	580	1,091	159	1,250
	Total Grant \$ Awarded	\$ 651,754.08	\$ 962,750.00	\$ 1,614,504.08	\$ 135,214.50	\$ 1,749,718.58
SCOEDD County Distribution from DAS	Grants Awarded	62	54	116	38	154
	Minimum Grant	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,500.00	\$ 2,000.00
	Maximum Grant	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 20,000.00
	Average Grant	\$ 8,741.94	\$ 10,018.52	\$ 9,336.21	\$ 14,407.89	\$ 10,587.66
	Total Grant \$ Awarded	\$ 542,000.00	\$ 541,000.00	\$ 1,083,000.00	\$ 547,500.00	\$ 1,630,500.00
TOTAL CARES \$ DEPLOYED IN SOUTH CENTRAL		\$ 33,291,362.77	\$ 41,220,916.45	\$ 89,072,601.60	\$ 12,924,890.93	\$ 101,997,492.53
		Zip 97601	Klamath County Zip Other	KLAMATH County	LAKE County	Southcentral Region



*These numbers do not include the CRF funds deployed through the Counties or the City; Round 5 of Business Oregon's grants; or the EDA Emergency Loan Funds deployed by SCOEDD.



PPP Data by Lender

South Central Region (as of 12/31/21)

Lender	Loans Funded	Loans to Nonprofits	Average Loan Size	Smallest Loan	Largest Loan	Total Loan \$ Funded	Jobs Reported
Umpqua Bank	198	14	\$ 73,892.93	\$ 1,700.00	\$ 816,300.00	\$ 14,630,800.00	2412
Washington Federal Bank, National Association	168	0	\$ 116,811.00	\$ 673.96	\$ 5,142,110.21	\$ 19,624,248.45	1560
Pacific Crest Federal Credit Union	112	4	\$ 40,844.21	\$ 1,041.66	\$ 808,330.00	\$ 4,574,551.21	592
U.S. Bank, National Association	101	7	\$ 68,202.44	\$ 1,287.00	\$ 1,077,110.00	\$ 6,888,446.75	817
First Interstate Bank	86	1	\$ 48,169.77	\$ 1,800.00	\$ 709,620.00	\$ 4,142,600.14	624
Celtic Bank Corporation	29	0	\$ 21,678.36	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 240,875.34	\$ 628,672.33	46
Rogue CU	28	0	\$ 19,313.13	\$ 1,038.95	\$ 79,902.50	\$ 540,767.75	0
People's Bank of Commerce	27	1	\$ 99,874.07	\$ 2,100.00	\$ 1,325,000.00	\$ 2,696,600.00	204
Wells Fargo Bank, National Association	24	1	\$ 55,769.71	\$ 5,417.00	\$ 831,015.00	\$ 1,338,473.00	0
First Community CU	21	0	\$ 71,198.29	\$ 2,700.00	\$ 755,259.00	\$ 1,495,164.00	208
JPMorgan Chase Bank, National Association	18	0	\$ 60,169.89	\$ 2,260.00	\$ 509,434.00	\$ 1,083,058.00	134
Cross River Bank	11	0	\$ 29,588.23	\$ 3,500.00	\$ 83,790.00	\$ 325,470.50	96
Kabbage, Inc.	10	1	\$ 64,074.60	\$ 1,667.00	\$ 456,562.00	\$ 640,746.00	39
ReadyCap Lending, LLC	10	0	\$ 64,170.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 206,000.00	\$ 641,700.00	137
WebBank	9	1	\$ 28,754.00	\$ 3,250.00	\$ 200,957.00	\$ 258,786.00	85
Bank of Eastern Oregon	6	0	\$ 58,142.17	\$ 2,380.00	\$ 199,262.00	\$ 348,853.00	45
Columbia State Bank	5	0	\$ 50,353.05	\$ 18,033.00	\$ 68,016.02	\$ 251,765.24	0
Intuit Financing Inc.	5	0	\$ 21,852.80	\$ 2,252.00	\$ 38,855.00	\$ 109,264.00	18
City National Bank	4	0	\$ 528,500.00	\$ 65,900.00	\$ 1,026,900.00	\$ 2,114,000.00	604
KeyBank National Association	4	0	\$ 59,137.00	\$ 12,255.00	\$ 102,115.00	\$ 236,548.00	15
Bank of Hope	3	0	\$ 31,666.67	\$ 14,500.00	\$ 55,700.00	\$ 95,000.00	24
Mid Oregon FCU	3	0	\$ 27,500.00	\$ 5,625.00	\$ 40,000.00	\$ 82,500.00	17
Plumas Bank	3	0	\$ 16,079.00	\$ 10,639.00	\$ 25,098.00	\$ 48,237.00	0
TOTALS	937	32	\$ 73,336.04	\$ 673.96	\$ 5,142,110.21	\$ 68,715,873.95	8442

** Banks with less than 2 loans are hidden in the sheet for viewability.



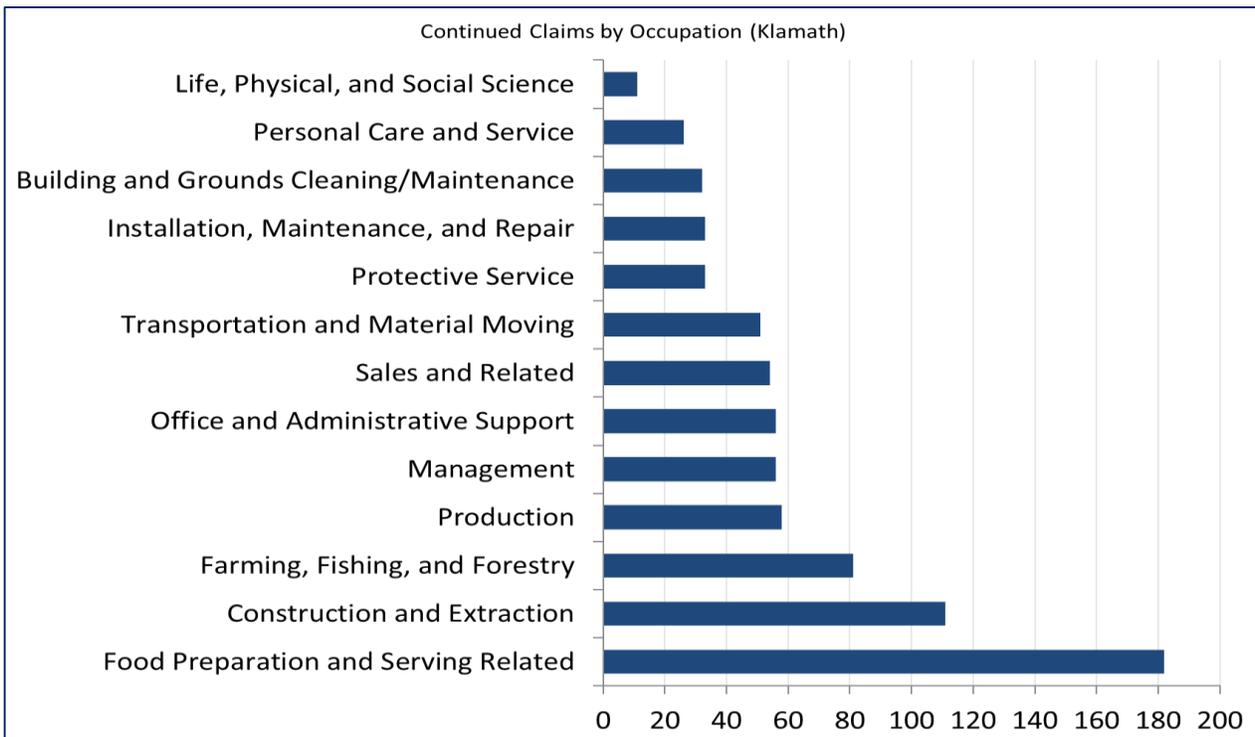
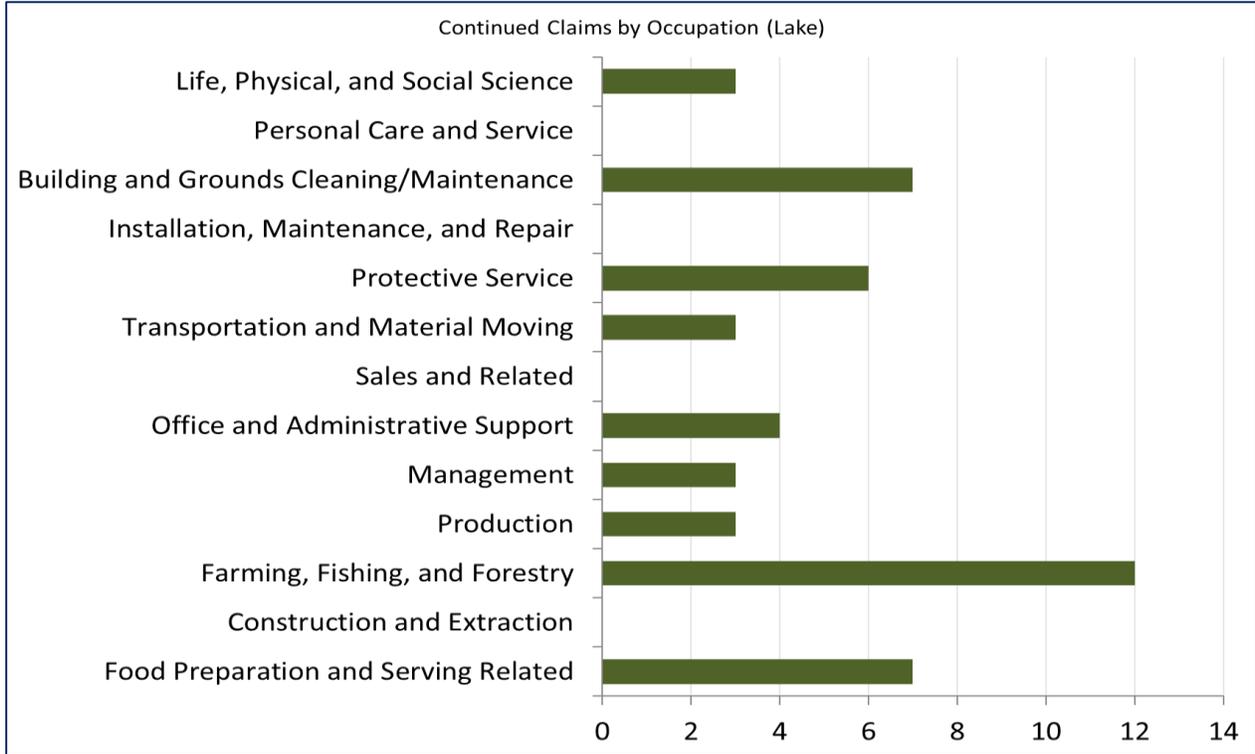
Appendix B | Interview Questions

Interview questions varied by industry and interviewee because we tried to cater interview questions to the work the interviewee provides to the community. However, below were the general questions we asked everyone.

1. What positive and negative impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic and related shutdown orders are you seeing in your community and/or your organization? How do you think we could leverage these impacts into opportunities for the next six months to a year? (Note: feel free to answer this question for both community AND your organization, or you can answer it for one – whatever you choose).
2. What resources or knowledge would have helped minimize economic impacts and operational disruptions due to COVID-19?
 - What solutions/ideas do you have that could be used to address the resource and knowledge gap?
3. What local resources or strategies have been most beneficial in responding or adapting to COVID-19? Where have you found them, or how have you engaged in them? (focus on communication tools/platforms, health data, guidelines, social media, online/google business tools, and grants)
 - Has it been challenging to find information? Is there a centralized place that has been your go-to for finding resources/information?
4. Where do you want the community and the local economy to be in the next six months, one year, two years? (e.g., implementing a new strategy, building up a certain industry, boosting tourism, etc.).
 - What do you think are the key strategies that are needed to achieve this vision?
 - Which of those strategies is the highest priority for you or your organization? What resources - internally within your organization or otherwise - are you aware of that could be mobilized to deliver these strategies?
5. What are some assets and/or challenges (e.g., physical infrastructure, skills, services, network) revealed during this pandemic? How can the region leverage or address those in the future?
6. What opportunities do you believe exist for future engagement with SCOEDD?
7. What questions are we not asking you that you feel are important for us to understand or address?
8. Who else should we be talking to and interviewing that can provide input into COVID-19, wildfire, and other economic disruption impacts and needs?
9. What do you love about your community?
10. Any specific industry questions catered to the interviewee.

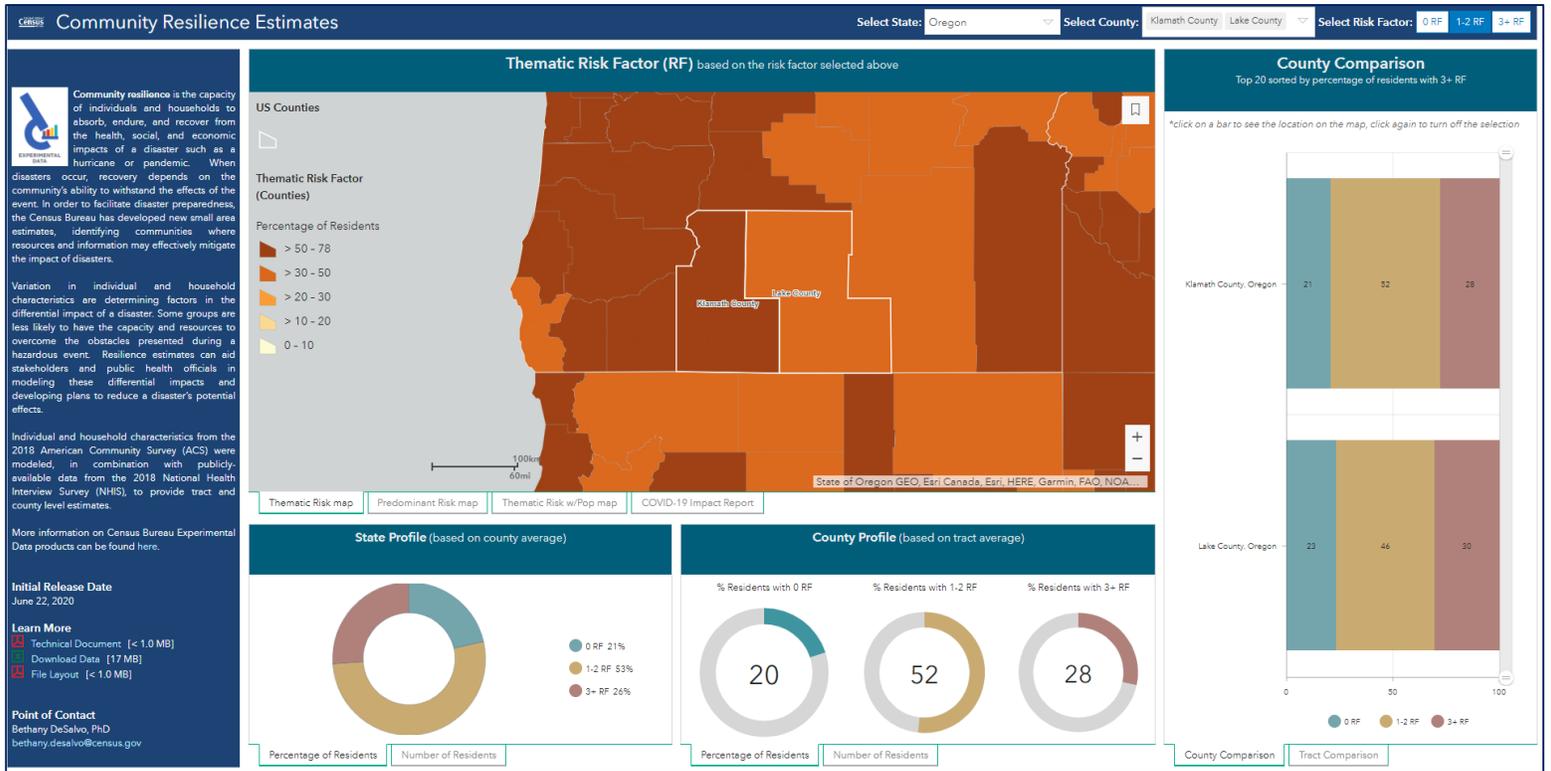
Appendix C | Unemployment Information

The information below shares the graphs depicting the unemployment information in greater detail. Lake County experienced most unemployment claims in the Farming, Fishing, and Forestry industry, and Klamath County experienced most unemployment claims in the Food Preparation and Serving related occupations. All detail is from December 2020, and information may have been updated since then.



Appendix D | Community Resilience Estimates

Below shares the graph depicting the thematic risk factors in community resilience estimates. This data, provided by the U.S. Census via the America Community Survey, convey the various risk factors impacting disaster preparedness.



Appendix E | Oregon's Percent Change in Employment

Below shares the graph depicting the change in employment in high-wage, middle-wage, and low-wage workers pre-, during the pandemic. Note the significant gap with low-wage workers, highlighting critical inequities.

