



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Experience Mt. Hood and the Gorge Awards \$73,500 in Strategic Investment Funds**

*Recipients will Receive Funding to Support Tourism Assets, Experiences, and Destination Management Across the Region*

Oregon City, OR - Experience Mt. Hood and the Gorge, also known as the Mt. Hood and Columbia River Gorge Regional Destination Management Organization (RDMO), has awarded eight projects with a total of \$73,500 through the organization's Strategic Investment Fund. The funding reflects the organization's commitment to responsibly manage the region's visitor experiences and to support and reflect the needs and benefits to its local communities.

"We are thrilled to offer this funding to continue our support for improving the region's tourism assets," said Lizzie Keenan, regional lead, Experience Mt. Hood and the Gorge. "There's an incredible amount of commitment and creativity from those in the region's tourism industry, and by investing in their projects, we can work together to attract overnight visitors, support off-season travel, showcase our unique culture and attractions, and strengthen our local economy."

The following projects have been awarded Strategic Investment Funds in this year's cycle:

**Bridge of the Gods Trailhead Restroom Project - Port of Cascade Locks**

- Support for the purchase and installation of a prefabricated restroom/shower facility at the newly completed Bridge of the Gods Trailhead parking lot located at a key junction of the Pacific Crest Trail, Gorge Trail #400, and the Cascade Locks Trail System. The parking lot and restrooms/showers will serve the needs of hikers and bikers with a high quality, multifunction facility that will enhance the visitor experience, leverage the committed partnerships of the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD), the Port, the US Forest Service, and Northwest Trail Alliance.

**Place-based Community Mural in Sandy River Delta Restrooms - USDA Forest Service, Columbia River Gorge**

- The project will improve the visitor experience to the Sandy River Delta by addressing vandalism at this important recreation site within the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. The project will engage artists from surrounding communities to create a place-based mural on the interior of the restroom to discourage graffiti and vandalism and foster a positive user experience at this beloved recreation site.

**Gorge Towns to Trails: Mosier to The Dalles - Friends of the Columbia Gorge**

- The project supports Friends and USFS in their commitment to intentional and inclusive engagement on the Mosier to The Dalles Trail Concept development project which includes conducting 6 stakeholder meetings to engage the public in the planning process. The project's study area includes a diversity of communities, including many people who do not speak English

as their first language. These focus groups are intended to provide a comfortable space for dialogue on the project issues, needs, and goals with project staff. The feedback and advice heard during these meetings will inform the discussions of the project's Community Representatives Committee, directly influence project outcomes, and serve to broaden our understanding of the diverse needs of the community and trail users.

#### **Gorge Impact Film Festival - Gorge Impact Film Festival**

- To support the expansion of the Film Festival from a one-day event to a two-day event, which will encourage overnight visitors and support more diverse storytelling perspectives.

#### **Troutdale Arts Festival - Cascadia Arts Association**

- Provide support of additional shuttle services to the festival to alleviate traffic and parking issues and to expand marketing outreach to out-of-state audiences.

#### **The Dalles Public Boat Launch Improvements - Port of The Dalles**

- The funding will be used for immediate and necessary improvements to the public boat launch that provides free access to the Columbia River, as well as to the public restroom facilities located in the same area.

#### **Taste of the Gorge - Columbia Gorge Tourism Alliance**

- Supports the "Taste of the Gorge" campaign, which is an innovative marketing initiative designed to showcase the diverse and rich culinary scene of the Columbia River Gorge, to be launched in the Fall of 2024.

#### **Travel 26 - Sandy Area Chamber of Commerce**

- Support the convening and collaboration efforts to bring tourism businesses along the Hwy 26 corridor together to enhance regional planning and promotion efforts.

The goal of the Strategic Investment Fund is to make one-time investments into regionally impactful projects that address one or more of the five priorities for the region:

- **Care for Community:** Create and/or support ways in which our communities can engage with, advocate for, and understand the benefits from the tourism economy.
- **Destination and Visitor Management:** Leverage and support tools and programs that address high-use/low-use, seasonality, and economic impact needs in the region.
- **Improve Visitor Experiences:** Access funding and partnerships to support partners with improving existing visitor experiences in the region.
- **Leverage Resources through Partnerships:** Expand the work the RDMO can accomplish to meet our goals through partnerships with Travel Oregon, RDMOs, DMOs, associations, and other partners.
- **Regional Alignment:** Maintain and support a strong sense of alignment between Mt. Hood and the Columbia River Gorge in visitor communications.

Funding for Experience Mt. Hood and the Gorge's Strategic Investment Fund comes from the state transient lodging tax made available through the Regional Cooperative Tourism Program administered by Travel Oregon.

#### **About [Experience Mt. Hood and the Gorge](#)**

Experience Mt. Hood and the Gorge, also known as the Mt. Hood and Columbia River Gorge RDMO, is managed through Clackamas County Tourism with regional leadership from The Dalles Area Chamber of Commerce, Visit Hood River, Explore Troutdale, and Mt. Hood Territory. The region is home four distinct

regions: West Columbia River Gorge, Hood River Valley, The Dalles and Mt. Hood Territory. From exploring Mt. Hood, the tallest mountain in Oregon, to the Columbia River Gorge with its awe inspiring views, the region is a place where visitors can experience Oregon's history, culture, local cuisine and wine/beer, and an abundance of year-round adventures. For more information about Experience Mt. Hood and the Gorge, follow us on Facebook (Mt. Hood/Columbia River Gorge Region) and Instagram (@hoodgorge) or visit hood-gorge.com.