



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SWWDC, CREDC, CEDC Receive Governor's Best Practices Award

Integration of workforce and economic development deemed model of success

Today, Washington Governor Chris Gregoire announced that Southwest Washington Workforce Development Council (SWWDC), the Columbia River Economic Development Council (CREDC) and the Cowlitz Economic Development Council (CEDC), were selected as a 2008 Economic Development and Workforce Best Practices award winner. The three agencies together were recognized at the Governor's Economic and Workforce Development Conference as a model of success in economic development.

The agencies received one of five awards given statewide for their leadership and accomplishment in the integration of local workforce and economic development efforts. Specifically, they were recognized for creating a cohesive partnership that improves and administers effective economic and workforce development services in the Southwest Washington region.

The leaders of the SWWDC, CREDC and CEDC joined forces to match the needs of employers with the skills of the workforce. Working together, they provide avenues for youth and adults to prepare for careers and become more self-sufficient while providing Southwest Washington industries with a skilled and responsive workforce.

The partnership between economic and workforce development began in SW Washington with the collocation of the SWWDC and CREDC over six years ago. It further solidified last year when they, along with the CEDC, restructured and invested jointly to provide staff that is literally shared by the SWWDC and each EDC.

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“We’ve been able to do amazing things working together, sharing staff and resources and aligning our workforce and economic development efforts,” said Lisa Nisenfeld, SWWDC Executive Director. “These partnerships have allowed our communities to offer a unified voice to businesses that links and leverages all community resources to meet the businesses’ needs.”

The power in these partnerships can be clearly seen in the support provided United Natural Foods Inc. (UNFI) in Clark County and Cameron Family Glass Packaging in Cowlitz County.

United Natural Foods Inc. (UNFI), a distributor of natural and organic foods, wanted to create a one-of-a-kind facility with an exceptional quality of work life. Specifically, local UNFI leadership wanted to tap into the vast skills and abilities of returning US service members. The SWWDC/CREDC team connected UNFI to WorkSource, Clark County’s one-stop employment center, which provided easy and supportive access to these individuals. In fact, UNFI was honored by the Commissioner of Washington’s Employment Security Department for their efforts in hiring and supporting veterans.

With Cameron Family Glass, SWWDC and CEDC worked together to help bring 90 new jobs to the Port of Kalama in Cowlitz County. The shared staff between the two organizations provided a seamless coordination of services that helped Cameron Family Glass choose Cowlitz County over other locations. As a result, the company was able to utilize programs at WorkSource and Lower Columbia College to successfully recruit and train an experienced workforce that would fit into the culture they wanted to create.

“The early involvement of workforce with the Cameron Family Glass project made them know and understand that their needs were being addressed far beyond the property, site, and building. This community was ready and able to partner with them for success,” said Ted Sprague, President, CEDC.

“These types of solutions don’t just happen,” said Bart Phillips, Director, CREDC. “We have taken steps to increase the likelihood that when any of our partners are engaged with businesses, they are able to respond more efficiently and capably to deliver the results for the employer needs.”

The innovative partnerships have garnered attention and praise from others in government and industry:

- The partnership has been cited as a model of Workforce Development services by Senators Cantwell and Murray at national conferences.
- WDC Executive Director asked to testify before Senate Committee
- WDC Executive Director and CEDC President asked to speak at Spring WEDA Conference on Best Practices for Workforce Development

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About the SWWDC

The SWWDC provides leadership and resources to increase economic development with a trained and productive workforce in Clark, Cowlitz, and Wahkiakum Counties. By creating partnerships in the private and public sectors, the SWWDC provides a system supporting employers and residents of the tri-county area. In assisting employers recruit and retain employees and helping individuals find employment and progress in their careers, the area is better able to respond to the rapidly changing economy. SWWDC is led by a diverse board of representatives from business, labor, community-based organizations and government agencies.

About CREDC

Serving Clark County since 1982, CREDC is a proactive, results-oriented public/private partnership working with over 180 associates to assist businesses to relocate or expand in Clark County. It is charged with promoting job creation and investment while maintaining the county's exceptional environment and high quality of life. The CREDC serves as a "one-stop shop" specializing in site location and acquisition, business data and demographics, and process facilitation. CREDC achieves its goals through visionary thinking and strategic relationships. It continually delivers quick and efficient business relocations and expansions.

About CEDC

Serving Cowlitz County since 1979, CEDC is a proactive, results-oriented public/private partnership working with over 260 associates to assist businesses to relocate or expand in Cowlitz County. CEDC promotes job creation and investment while maintaining the county's exceptional environment and high quality of life. CEDC offers businesses one point of contact for serving their needs in site location and acquisition, business data and demographics, and process facilitation. Through visionary thinking and strategic relationships, CEDC delivers quick and efficient business relocations and expansions.

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