

Whatcom County  
Economic Development  
Investments Program

Application for Funding



Satpal Sidhu, Whatcom County Executive

# Whatcom County Economic Development Investment (EDI) Program

*Revolving Loan and Grant Program to Encourage Creation or Retention of Private Sector Jobs*

## Preliminary Information and Application

*Note: The intent of this Program is to be consistent with State law, RCW 82.14.370*

1. **Who is eligible to apply:** Local general or special-purpose governments and higher education.
  - **Port is an eligible applicant**
2. **What projects are covered:** Construction of publicly-owned infrastructure, facilities, and related improvements, which enable or encourage the creation or retention of private sector businesses and jobs in Whatcom County consistent with EDI Program Policy Objectives.
  - **Acquisition and improvements to a publicly owned research station**
3. **What activities are fundable:** New construction, refurbishment, replacement, rehabilitation, renovation or repair. Demolition is allowable if tied to construction. Soft costs allowed within scope of construction budget. No land acquisition except right-of-way included in a construction project.
  - **Improvements and refurbishments which will allow the Whatcom County agriculture sector to:**
    - Stay competitive in times of uncertainty
    - Innovate and create using new technologies
    - Maintain and grow the agriculture base
    - Retaining existing and creating new jobs
4. **What can you use the funds for:** Transportation (roads, bridges, rail), utility services (water, sewer, storm, energy, telecom) and public buildings or structures.
  - **Funding will be used for acquisition and improvement of an existing farm converting it to a publicly owned agriculture research station.**
5. **Other Limitations:** Planning/feasibility only projects are not eligible. Minimum local match is 10% of EDI request. EDI Board will make recommendations to the County Council which makes the final decision.
  - **10% Match to be provided by a Washington State Grant created specifically for acquisition of this research station**

### Preferential Project Types

**First Preference – “JOBS IN HAND PROJECTS”** – These types of projects will allow for the immediate creation and/or retention of jobs by providing public infrastructure that directly supports jobs. A perfect example would be a private business that will build or move into a facility and hire employees if a road is built or if water/sewer lines are extended to the site. These types of proposals would include a commitment by the private sector employer to create jobs and provide private investment.

**Second Preference – “BUILD IT AND JOBS WILL COME PROJECTS”** – These types of projects will

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construct public infrastructure but are not associated with a specific commitment from a private business to locate and/or create jobs. A perfect example would be the construction of roads and utility infrastructure to serve a new business park that would benefit multiple businesses.

**Third Preference – COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT PROJECTS”** – These types of projects generally improve the physical appearance or create community assets to enhance the business climate. Examples would be boardwalk, streetscaping, downtown structures, and other publicly-owned facilities that make a community or region more attractive to existing or future businesses.

- **This is a Community Enhancement Project** which will both stimulate the growth and retain members of our agriculture community.

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## **Preferential Project Terms**

**First Preference – EDI LOAN** – Due to the preferred revolving nature of EDI funds, proposals that are loan only will receive higher scoring. Loan terms and interest rate structure matches the Public Works Trust Fund program. The county will maintain discretion to modify such as including a deferral period.

**Second Preference – LOAN/GRANT COMBINATION** – The preferred combination of grant funds and loan funds is 1/3 grant, 2/3 loan.

- **This project is a Loan/Grant Combination.** \*Specific amounts will be determined pending the negotiated buy/sell agreement.

**Third Preference – EDI GRANT** – Due to the “one-shot” nature of grants, projects of equal scoring requesting a grant only will be scored lower than another similar project requesting a loan/grant mix.

## **Preferential\* Project Amounts (Guidelines)**

**JOBS IN HAND PROJECTS** - \$1,000,000 limit if grant only. \$2,000,000 limit if combination of grant and loan. \$3,000,000 limit if loan only.

**BUILD IT AND JOBS WILL COME PROJECTS** - \$500,000 limit if grant only. \$1,000,000 limit if combination of grant and loan. \$1,500,000 limit if loan only.

**COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT PROJECTS** - \$250,000 limit if grant only. \$500,000 limit if combination of grant and loan. \$750,000 limit if loan only.

\*Based on compelling reasons, the EDI Board and County Council may consider exceptions.

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FILLABLE FORM BEGINS HERE

## **Past Performance**

Have you received EDI Program funding in the past? X\_\_\_\_\_; Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

If yes, provide project name and EDI grant/loan awarded: WoodStone \$500,000 Loan; Index Industries \$500,000 Loan/\$200,000 Grant; All American Marine Expansion Project \$2mm Loan/\$1mm Grant; "C" Street Terminal \$2mm Loan/\$1mm Grant

If yes, EDI Program staff and/or the EDI Board may conduct an audit to review performance measures against projected outcomes, such as job creation projections.

Has your jurisdiction received any audit findings from the Washington State Auditor in the past 10 years?  
\_\_\_\_\_ Yes; X\_\_\_\_\_ No. If yes, provide details:

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## THRESHOLD PROJECT CRITERIA

### *Evidence of Planning*

YES	NO	
<u>X</u>	<u>      </u>	Project included on an adopted regional economic strategy (“CEDS” list).
<u>      </u>	<u>X</u>	Project included in the applicant’s Comprehensive Plan.
<u>      </u>	<u>X</u>	Project included in the applicant’s Capital Expenditure Plan or adopted budget.

### COMMENTS:

\*On January 9<sup>th</sup> 2024 the Whatcom County Council updated the County’s CEDS list to include the Agriculture Research Station Project.

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## THRESHOLD PROJECT SCORING

### POINTS

### *Preferential Project Type*

<u>7</u>	<u>      </u> Jobs In Hand	<i>10 points</i>
<u>      </u>	<u>X</u> Build It And Jobs Will Come	<i>5 points</i>
<u>      </u>	<u>X</u> Community Enhancement	<i>2 points</i>

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### Preferential Project Terms

<u>      </u> Loan Only	<i>10 points</i>
<u>X</u> Loan/Grant	<i>5 points</i>
<u>      </u> Grant Only	<i>2 points</i>

### Preferential Project Amounts

<u>      </u> Within Dollar Limits	<i>5 points</i>
<u>X</u> Outside Preferred Dollar Limits	<i>0 points</i>

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\*Note Preferential Project amounts (Guidelines) listed in the application have not been updated for 20 years. Numerous past projects have gained approval even though they did not meet this criterion.

**TOTAL POINTS    To proceed to other parts of the application and to receive EDI Board review, a proposed project must score 10 or more points on the above section.**

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## PROJECT APPLICANT

Applicant Name: The Port of Bellingham

Applicant Address: 1801 Roeder Ave, Bellingham, WA.

Applicant Contact Person: Tyler Schroeder

Applicant Email and Phone Number: Tylers@portofbellingham.com

## PROJECT TITLE

Whatcom County Agriculture Research Station

## PROJECT AMOUNT REQUESTED

\$ 2,899,813.39 EDI TOTAL - (Loan \$ \$933,271.13; Grant \$ \$1,966,542.26)

\$741,060 Local Match (10% of EDI request minimum)

## PROJECT TYPE

☐ Jobs In Hand ☒ Build It And Jobs Will Come ☒ Community Enhancement

## PROJECT TERMS

☐ Loan Only ☒ Grant/Loan ☐ Grant Only If a loan, term requested: 20 @ 1% (years)

PROJECT LOCATION: 6211 Northwest Drive, Ferndale WA

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

(one page limit)

### **Whatcom Ag Research Station (Exhibit A)**

A Whatcom Agricultural Research Station near Lynden will facilitate and expedite research projects between Whatcom County farmers, WSU, USDA, B.C., and private research programs operating at 6211 Northwest Drive (Formally Box Berry Farms). The facility will serve as an end-point for accessing educational information for industry, the future workforce and community as more technology enabled academic programs become available.

The facility will be owned by the Port of Bellingham and is listed in the Whatcom County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy list, as updated by the County Council on Jan. 9, 2024. The facility will be a public facility to serve economic development purposed in the County by providing agricultural research, testing, training and other incubation strategies. The facility will be able a foundation for the expansion,

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retention and creation of the agricultural products and business in Whatcom County. The facility meet the goals of RCW 82.14.370 and the County's EDI policies by increasing agricultural jobs, retain and expand agricultural businesses, and attract new agricultural commodities to the area

The Whatcom County agricultural industries are valued at over \$350 million dollars in annual farm gate value, with 1,483 farms in the milk, raspberry and blueberry industries. Additionally, \$959 million in food processing gross sales with 1,774 jobs. Agriculture is the dominate land use in the Whatcom lowlands. Farmers provide both quality and safe food, open spaces, environmental management, and jobs on the farms and in the numerous support industries.

This investment in research and education will create infrastructure that would provide farmers and collaborating scientists the tools to innovate and adapt to changing pressures in this unique and economically important agricultural region. It will also serve as an exhibit illustrating the genetic and technology advances on local farms and provide opportunities for hands-on experiences for students in the County.

Purposes of the Research Station include:

- Educational opportunity for:
  - Farmers
  - Agronomy and Research communities
  - FFA chapters and school science programs
  - Urban communities – illustrate the dynamics of genetic and technological advancements in ag
- Opportunity to advance crop genetics
- Opportunity to develop effective crop protection tools
- Soil Health research
- Demonstrations of state-of-the-art farming and processing equipment
- Market opportunities for food produced – sales, food banks, etc.

The Station will be managed through the Raspberry Commission and will be operating by a board of Whatcom farmers and community members operating under the direction of a local ag entity. Capital funds are being raised for the purchase of land and equipment. Operating funds will be generated in rent for research plots and farmland, commodity commission support, and in-kind support from local farms. Washington State University has also committed to provide salary and benefits for a coordinator of to staff the station. An example of WSU commitments to the Agricultural sector and in the state are the WSU Puyallup Research and Extension Center, <https://puyallup.wsu.edu/> and the Northwestern WA Research and Extension Center in Mt. Vernon <https://mtvernon.wsu.edu/>

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## BASIC PROJECT INFORMATION

1. Complete the public project budget and status of funds below. If EDI funds are approved is funding 100% complete? ☐ Yes ☒ No

Please explain:

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<u>Funding Source</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Planned/Applied For</u>		<u>Secured</u>	
Federal Dollars	\$0	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
State Dollars	\$741,080	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Local Dollars	\$	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
EDI Funding	\$2,749,813	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
TOTAL	\$3,490,893.39				

2. Describe the amount of outside (private) funding committed to the project (eg. Plant and equipment).

WA Red Raspberry Commission has committed to partner on the development of the Ag Research Center. WRRC will support land rents for the plant breeder and support of the establishment of the research station

3. Describe the public infrastructure being proposed. Include engineering estimates and a site map detailing the proposed improvements as Attachments A and B.

The Port of Bellingham will acquire the Boxx Berry Farm at 6211 Northwest Drive. This proposal is to acquire approximately 58.81 acres, which includes a 3,000 sq. ft facility that includes research space, restrooms, workspace, storage areas and a processing kitchen. The facility also includes office space, meeting space and additional storage and covered outdoor space. There is also a 2,450 sq. ft processing facility and office space that is modernized, multi-use facility currently being utilized as a WSDA permitted processing facility and can potential for many other agricultural uses for research and development. A 4,000 sq. ft steel ag building is located on site for equipment and material storage that is fully powered and includes two walk-in coolers and potential office space. Another 3,000 sq ft storage building is located on site and a 1000,000-gallon water storage tank, fire-suppression system and municipal-grade fire hydrant.

4. Describe how these improvements will enhance or encourage community vitality and stimulate other private development in the area.

This investment in research and education will create infrastructure that would provide farmers and collaborating scientists the tools to innovate and adapt to changing pressures in this unique and economically important agricultural region. This investment in research and education will create infrastructure that would provide farmers and collaborating scientists the tools to innovate and adapt to changing pressures in this unique and economically important agricultural region. It will also serve as an exhibit illustrating the genetic and technology advances on local farms and provide opportunities for hands-on experiences for students in the County.

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5. List all permits and environmental reviews required for the public project and detail their status (completed, in-process, etc.)

	In Process	Date Completed
Preliminary Engineering	_____	_____
Environmental Review	_____	_____
Design Engineering	_____	_____
Right-of-Way	_____	_____
Construction Permits	_____	_____
Environmental Permits	_____	_____
Bid Documents	_____	_____
Award Construction Contract	_____	_____
Begin Construction	_____	_____
Project Operational	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

6. Are any other public jurisdictions involved in this project? If so, in what way?

Washington State University, WA Blueberry Commission, WA Raspberry Commission

7. Who will maintain the public facility/infrastructure to be completed with EDI funds? Will this project impact utility rates within the jurisdiction?

The Port of Bellingham will own the public facility and the Research Station operations will be managed by a Board of Whatcom farmers and community members operating under the direction of a local ag entity. Operating funds will be generated in rent for research plots and farmland, commodity commission support, and in-kind support from local farms and support from WSU. No utility rates will be impacted within the jurisdiction

8. Will this project directly generate a revenue stream that could be used to repay an EDI loan? Will this project spur indirect revenues that could be used to repay an EDI loan? If no to either question – why?

Yes – The Port of Bellingham intends to lease the land for research projects, and lease the agricultural lands back to in the interim until the research station grows to full capacity.

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9. What other revenue sources are available for this project and have they been considered. This includes forming a Local Improvement District (LID or ULID), issuing Councilmatic Bonds, Revenue Bonds, or other source(s).

The Washington State legislature, with the support of Senator Shewmake allocated \$764,000 through the local community project funds for support of the project in State Capital Budget of 2023.

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10. Describe the private development project that will be supported by this public facility project. If there is a committed private sector partner include Contingency Agreement (Attachment C).

No direct private development will be supported by this public facility but the agricultural sector as a whole will be supported through the investment in research and education to provide farmers and collaborating scientist the tools to support an ever changing pressures in the economically important ag sector.

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11. Explain why the private development requires the proposed public improvement(s).

Answered in question above.

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12. What is the status of the associated private development review and permits. List all permits required and give the current status (applied for, being reviewed, issued).

	In Process	Date Completed
Environmental Review	_____	_____
Construction Permits	_____	_____
Environmental Permits	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

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13. Describe the type of industry or economic activity the public development will attract. What is the strategy to attract industry to the project site?

The Purpose of the Research Station is to provide educational opportunities for farmers, agronomy and research communities, advance crop genetics, develop effective crop protection tools, research soil health, demonstrate state of the art farming and processing equipment and market value-add commodities that will attract economic activity to the community through the advancement of the ag sector.

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14. List the number of projected jobs, by type, to be retained and/or created by the private entity.

Occupation	Current Jobs Retained** (In FTEs)	# Of Jobs Created Year 1 (In FTEs)	# Of Jobs Created by Year 5 (In FTEs)	Hourly Wage of current or new position	Local Occupational Hourly Wages***
Mgmt./Admin*					N/A
Technical/Prof					
Office/Clerical					
Production					
Sales					
Skilled Crafts					
Others					
Totals				N/A	N/A

\* Indicate Management positions in annual salary.

\*\* Retained jobs are defined as jobs that would otherwise be lost from the county without this project.

\*\*\* This column will be populated with data from the state before application is distributed and revised annually.

- Projected annual gross payroll for all job classifications \$\_\_\_\_\_
  - Describe fringe benefits the company offers to regular full time employees?  
( health insurance, retirement plans, etc.)
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15. How does this project support the economy of Whatcom County and how does it fit into a county-wide economic development strategy?

The goals of the CEDS list are to build upon and strengthen Whatcom County's economic base, in which agricultural is a very large part of that. The Whatcom County agricultural industries are valued at over \$350 million dollars in annual farm gate value, with 1,483 farms in the milk, raspberry and blueberry industries. Additionally, \$959 million in food processing gross sales with 1,774 jobs. This project will cultivate, retain and expand, support small farmers, and build the County rural economic foundation.

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16. What will the effect of this project be on the natural environment – does the project address any issues related to public health, pollution, or quality of life?

This farm will be connected to the Soil Health Initiative being advanced by WA State University and Washington State Department of Agriculture. The Research Station will be able to educate farmers on techniques that promote environmental stewardship and strategies addressing the challenge of climate change.

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17. Does this project address any existing issues related to public safety and/or does it increase public safety in the future or address a potential future public safety issue?

N/A

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18. Describe specific quantifiable measures of the outcomes, other than purely jobs, that will demonstrate project success. Describe how you will measure this and explain what you expect to show as progress toward the outcome.

The main measurable will be reviewing the agricultural industries economic statistics to ensure ongoing growth and retention in agriculture sector. An example of that data can be found in the 2021 WSU Washington State, Northwest Washington, and Whatcom County Agriculture Statistics:

[https://s3.wp.wsu.edu/uploads/sites/2093/2022/01/WCC\\_FoodSystemsBenedict\\_2022.pdf](https://s3.wp.wsu.edu/uploads/sites/2093/2022/01/WCC_FoodSystemsBenedict_2022.pdf)

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## **Whatcom County Economic Development Investment (EDI) Program**

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### **Application for Funding – Certification**

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THE INFORMATION GIVEN IN THIS APPLICATION TO WHATCOM COUNTY FOR INVESTMENTS IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IS TRUE AND CORRECT TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEF.

Signature of Responsible Public Official: \_\_\_\_\_



Date 4/22/2025