

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Travel Oregon Invests Millions to Help State Get Visitor Ready New Initiatives Support Tourism Infrastructure, Set Stage for Economic Recovery

PORTLAND, Ore. — March 26, 2021 — As Oregon gears up for economic recovery, tourism is expected to lead the way and Travel Oregon is actively laying the groundwork. The agency, which serves as the state tourism office, has established a multi-million-dollar suite of investments to aid the tourism industry in economic recovery from the pandemic.

The state's tourism commission is awarding up to \$2.3 million through its [Competitive & Recovery Grants Program](#) to fund much needed infrastructure projects across the state, from wayfinding signage to creation of outdoor public spaces for people to sit, eat, drink and patronize businesses safely. Applications are due by 5 p.m., Wednesday, March 31. Local governments, port districts, federally recognized tribes, nonprofits and Oregon-based tour operators, guides and outfitters looking to enhance the visitor experience are encouraged to apply. Awards decisions will be announced April 30. This is Travel Oregon's second major investment in 2021 following a \$913,000 Destination Ready program announced last month which awarded grant funding to 34 projects that are focused on the development, enhancement and stewardship of key visitor experiences that are COVID-19 appropriate.

"Tourism is a vital component of Oregon's economic recovery; Travel Oregon's investments strategically and creatively address needs specific to our state, bolstering small, local businesses and communities that have borne the brunt of the Covid-related impacts," said Todd Davidson, Travel Oregon CEO. "The time to invest is now. More than 80% of Oregonians are making plans to travel sometime in the next six months, and it is essential that we aid communities in being poised to welcome visitors safely."

Recognizing the expected popularity and value of small-group travel as a means to enhance safe travel, Travel Oregon is also funding a new program called "Why Guides" – a guide/outfitter registry to help promote local outdoor recreation services and experiences in communities throughout the state, from fly fishing the Metolius River to wine tasting tours in the Willamette Valley. The Why Guides registry will open in early April on Travel Oregon's industry website.

In a typical year Oregon welcomes more than 1 million visitors that fuel a \$12.8 billion industry. The pandemic hit the tourism industry particularly hard. Last year, of the 178,200 Oregon payroll jobs lost as a result of the pandemic, 81,600 (nearly 47%) were in the leisure and hospitality sector. In 2020, visitor spending in Oregon fell by 58% compared to 2019. Tourism plays a crucial role in Oregon's economy, so much that earlier this week, promoting and enabling safe in-state travel in the future was listed as one of Governor Brown's priorities in the [10-Point Economic Recovery Plan for Oregon](#).

About Travel Oregon The Oregon Tourism Commission, dba Travel Oregon, works to enhance visitors' experiences by providing information, resources and trip planning tools that inspire travel

and consistently convey the exceptional quality of Oregon. The commission aims to improve Oregonians' quality of life by strengthening the state's tourism economy that employs thousands of Oregonians statewide. Visit traveloregon.com to learn more.

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