

Oregon's Intangible Heritage:

Supporting the Preservation of Legacy Businesses



PREPARED BY RESTORE OREGON 2023



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Acknowledgements

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ABOUT RESTORE OREGON

Cover Photo:

Geiser Grand Hotel, Baker City (1889),
Photo by Joe Mabel

The Geiser Grand Hotel is a historic hotel in Baker City that opened in 1889 and was known as “Queen of the Mines” during the 19th-century Gold Rush. The property closed in 1968 and was nearly demolished. Barbara Sidway and her husband Dwight, bought the property in 1993, performed an extensive restoration, and still operate this historic cornerstone of Baker City as a 30-room hotel today.

Founded in 1977, Restore Oregon is a statewide, 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, supported by members/donors, led by a volunteer board, and staffed by professionals who help people save and revitalize historic places. We work on the front lines and behind the scenes to leverage relationships, resources, and creativity to preserve, reuse and pass forward the historic places and spaces that reflect Oregon’s diverse cultural heritage and make our communities inclusive, vibrant, liveable and sustainable.

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Introduction

When asked about what makes Oregon special, non-Oregonians might be forgiven for defaulting to the “quirky” microbreweries, bike shops, and thrift stores that characterize our urban centers or the rugged “lumberjack” aesthetics of smaller towns. While these institutions have cemented themselves as icons of the Pacific Northwest, they don’t tell our full story. In reality, Oregon would not be what it is today without the rich tapestry of historic businesses that dot the map everywhere from our bustling cities to the sleepy towns dotting our coastline to the rugged terrain of Eastern Oregon. This project aims to take a deeper look at the needs of these legacy businesses, with additional focus on those that are BIPOC (Black/Indigenous/People of Color)—owned, and what a more concerted effort to preserve them might look like.

Context

We are [Restore Oregon](#), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to preserving historic places in Oregon. This project represents a natural extension of our [existing work](#) with an emphasis on looking beyond the traditional boundaries of historic preservation by focusing on the people and businesses that lend character to our state's heritage and culture. The project was primarily funded by the [Oregon Cultural Trust](#) as part of Restore Oregon's effort to expand access to preservation resources beyond their traditional emphasis on the built environment. Additional support was received from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Kinsman Foundation, Roundhouse Foundation, and Restore Oregon donors and supporters. The field of preservation is evolving to include intangible resources—like legacy businesses—and we are working toward providing assistance to them before they are lost forever. Doing so will diversify the types of historic resources preserved in the state of Oregon and will extend preservation methods and resources to communities that may have been excluded from these efforts in the past.

Oregon's legacy business base is significant with approximately 30,000 active registrations for businesses older than 20 years. The portion of women- and BIPOC-owned legacy businesses, 20% and 27% respectively, of total reporting businesses is substantial. This report aims to provide useful observations and data-supported ideas to be factored into a state-level legacy business support program. These observations and suggestions will be based on our analysis of existing programs, findings from prior research in the field, and additional findings from our own canvassing of our state's legacy businesses. Our recommendations aim to stay consistent with Restore Oregon's [external goals](#) on racial and social equity within our work. More specifically, we feel that the recommendations outlined in this report will be effective in meeting marginalized groups where they are within the legacy business community, regardless of their familiarity with current grant programs.

Landscape Analysis & Current Programs

The current landscape for historic preservation emphasizes the built environment, with a particular focus on architectural heritage. While these efforts have seen success in architectural preservation, they are not geared toward historically significant businesses—especially excluding those that do not occupy historic buildings.

As discussed by Erin Swicegood, author of *Celebrating Mom & Pop Shops: The Importance of Legacy Business Programs for Conserving Living Heritage*, over the last several decades the growth of suburban big box stores, online retail, and rising rent prices across the nation, have forced historic small businesses to face mounting challenges to maintain a presence in their communities. The U.S. Small Business

Administration recorded 400,000 small business closures throughout the United States in 2019. The Portland, Oregon, metropolitan area alone saw 4,648 small businesses close between 2015 and 2016. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a significant number of small businesses to close over the last three years, though just how many is still uncertain. The effects of the pandemic, including supply chain and labor shortages are ongoing and compound the burden of small business owners struggling to stay afloat. Historic small businesses continue to be lost at an alarming rate around the country and an immediate response is crucial to reduce the loss of these businesses that serve as the cornerstones of many communities.

Legacy business programs are relatively new in the United States, with San Francisco being the first city to implement a program in 2015. It began with a simple registry and expanded into a full program in phases as funding and capacity became available. It is important to note the distinction between a legacy business program, a registry, and an initiative:

- An **initiative** is an educational program designed to raise awareness of legacy businesses.
- A **registry** implies a list of some sort, similar to the National Register, and celebrates participants in a way that is mostly honorific.
- A **program** is the most robust form of legacy business assistance and is frequently administered by a city office because of greater access to funds and staff time.



Wild Carrot Herbals, Enterprise (est. 2000), Photo by Talia Jean Galvin

Established in 2000, Wild Carrot Herbals offers local, handmade, and nature-based products at their retail store in the old Enterpriser Building on Main Street in Enterprise. Built in 1926, it served as the town's Mercantile for decades. Home to three different storefronts, Wild Carrot Herbals inhabits the whole building with manufacturing in one storefront, assembling and shipping orders in the second, and the retail store in the third.

With some exceptions, existing programs are predominantly operated either municipally or at the nonprofit level. Our background research on existing business support programs, available [here](#), assesses the scope of current programs from Oregon, California, and Texas. Ideally, a state-level legacy business program would aim to supplement these programs rather than replacing them outright—many of these programs address niche business needs and would be valuable in minimizing any “blind spots” inherent in a program operating at a larger scale. See below for a few examples of programs that we recommend borrowing from when structuring a comprehensive legacy business program, along with some pros and cons of scaling up these programs for statewide legacy business support:

[Business Oregon](#) - Oregon’s state government currently has infrastructure in place to provide direct support to existing businesses. While not every grant has verbiage that specifically targets legacy businesses, there are a handful of existing grants structured around historic preservation. General business support programs are accessible directly to business owners such as the Restaurant Revitalization Fund (RRR). This program was a one-time federal initiative, but Business Oregon was deemed an appropriate steward for these funds and demonstrated its organizational capacity to administer them. They also offer grant-based commercial rent relief, although the program is on hold pending additional funding at the state level.



M. Crow, Lostine (est. 1906),
Photo by courtesy of M. Crow

M. Crow is a general store in rural Lostine (population 300) that has been in operation since 1906. Wallowa county native, Tyler Hays, purchased the store to keep it from closing in 2012. The Hays and the Crow families were homesteaders of the valley in the late 1800s, and the store has been a fixture of Wallowa County heritage since its earliest days.



Pendleton Woolen Mill, Pendleton (company est. 1863),
Photo courtesy Oregon Historical Society
Research Library, ba014709

Pendleton is a privately held, sixth-generation family-owned business that owns and operates several woolen mills and distribution centers. Its headquarters is based in Portland and its oldest, continuously operating woolen mill was established in Pendleton in 1896.

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ambitious scope of programs meant to fit all Oregon Businesses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is not currently equipped to serve the needs of legacy businesses.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low barrier of entry for individual business owners (certain programs). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not currently have expertise in cultural and historic preservation tools.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a government entity, Business Oregon already has access to a baseline set of data on registered businesses. Eliminates administrative overhead associated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on traditional written grants may deter applicants unfamiliar with the granting process.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structured with 12 Regional Service offices that serve the entire state with local infrastructure, which offers flexibility for a statewide program administered at the local level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The “grant workshop” program meant to assist businesses runs only sporadically and is only available via online live streams.

[State Historic Preservation Office \(SHPO\)](#) - SHPO is another arm of Oregon.gov that maintains a suite of preservation-focused grants. Some are indirectly applicable to legacy businesses, but most are primarily oriented toward nonprofits that utilize grants to fund their projects and municipal governments



aiming to make capital improvements to historic public facilities like government buildings or libraries. A few of their grant programs include Diamonds in the Rough (a capital improvement grant for historic facades), Preserving Oregon (a more general grant for culturally significant public sites), and Oregon Mainstreet (a development grant for Oregon Main Street Network members). All but one grant through SHPO excludes private owners from eligibility. All others require private owners to establish a fiscal sponsorship from a non-profit or municipal partner—a significant barrier especially for BIPOC owners whose businesses are often located in disinvested communities and who may or may not have the resources or capacity to develop those relationships.

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Already operates at the state level, similar to Business Oregon. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aside from the cited example in the “pros” column, most of their grants present significant hurdles to independent businesses accessing them directly.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diamonds in the Rough grant is tailored toward reconstructing the facades of historic buildings. Ostensibly this includes legacy businesses but is not exclusive to them. It can be accessed directly by the business owner. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diamonds in the Rough and Preserving Oregon grants impose a 1:1 funding match. • Requires compliance with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation of Historic Properties.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oregon Main Street (OMS) Program is well-funded and offers capital improvement grants for buildings within National Register-listed historic districts that participate in OMS. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OMS grants are not earmarked specifically for and do not consider legacy businesses-status as a qualification for receiving a grant
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All SHPO grants prioritize National Register membership (some outright require it), which is exclusionary, especially to BIPOC business owners that are already underrepresented on the National Register.

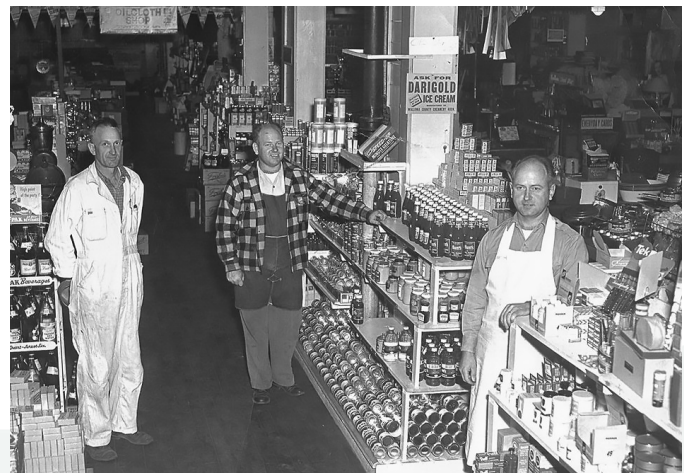


Dean's Beauty Shop, Portland (1957),
Photo courtesy of the Dean Family

Since 1956, Dean's Beauty Salon and Barber Shop has transitioned through three generations of Dean family ownership and established itself as a “sanctuary” or gathering space for the local African American community. It is indicative of the larger history of Black-owned small businesses in Portland, which historically developed along N Williams Avenue and NE Martin Luther King Jr Boulevard and which were decimated by urban renewal, transportation developments, and gentrification between the 1960s and the present.

[Historic Parkrose](#) - Historic Parkrose is part of a program template created by Prosper Portland, referred to as a Neighborhood Prosperity Initiative. The program designates an entire geographical area as a historic business district based on its historic significance (in this case, the Parkrose neighborhood of Portland) without making National Register of Historic Places designation a requirement for inclusion. They have the infrastructure for direct assistance via small business grants, but they also have technical infrastructure to provide marketing and advisory support to struggling legacy businesses.

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most accessible template for a program by virtue of making a catch-all designation for a historic district. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prosper Portland and similar economic development agencies in other communities only have resources to offer within hyper-local geographic boundaries, which are exclusionary.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program itself is not opt-in; the marketing element of Historic Parkrose’s support has a blanket benefit for area businesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redevelopment agencies were often established as part of racially biased city planning programs like Urban Renewal that decimated BIPOC communities. Systemic discrimination and lack of trust with such agencies can negate the necessary relationship building required to administer a legacy business program.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grant support directed specifically at businesses owners. 	



[San Francisco, CA Legacy Business Program](#) - San Francisco's municipal program is a quality template for some of the services a statewide program would ideally offer. Municipal government workers are [incentivized to patronize legacy businesses](#) through their Compliant Supplier program. There is also a rolling deadline grant for immediate financial relief in instances of vandalism. Legacy businesses that register with the city also receive marketing and business assistance services beyond the scope of typical "shop local" campaigns. Landlords of registered San Francisco legacy businesses may apply for the Rent Stabilization Grant each year with the caveat that they must offer a new lease of 10+ years or extend an existing lease to 10+ years.

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simplified enrollment process for qualifying legacy businesses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hyper-localized program structure may not scale efficiently to a statewide program.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliant supplier program would scale excellently at the state level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low-barrier emergency relief grants work well at the municipal level but may be costly and difficult to approve as quickly at the statewide level.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rent Stabilization Grants are an effective anti-displacement tool that bring certainty and long-term support to businesses being pushed out by rapid gentrification. 	





Jake's Famous Crawfish Restaurant, Portland (est. 1892), Photo by Visitor7, via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0

Jake's Famous Crawfish is a seafood restaurant in downtown Portland, founded in 1892 by Jacob "Jake" Lewis Freiman. Since the opening of the Whitney and Gray Building in 1910, the lower level has housed Jake's, Portland's second oldest continuously operating restaurant.

Research, Outreach, and Findings

Prior to the outreach phase of this study, we began with a [commissioned study from Marketek, Inc.](#) aimed at mapping the current landscape and demographics of legacy business owners. The Marketek study was intended to document Oregon's legacy businesses to understand the scale of their presence, their contribution to Oregon's economy, and potential economic impact if lost through closure or relocation. For the purposes of the study (and by Restore Oregon's own definition), a legacy business is defined as one in operation for 20 years or more.

In May of 2022, Marketek researched numerous public and private data sources for the initial search including the Oregon Secretary of State's Office, the Census Bureau, Small Business Administration, Dun & Bradstreet, Business Oregon and the Oregon Employment Department. While no data set is perfect in terms of accuracy, coverage and timeliness, InfoUSA (now Data Axle) was identified as the most comprehensive business data source including all the data categories desired to portray the current status of Oregon's legacy businesses.

Marketek used Data Axle to bulk download of 29,167 businesses/entities with a founding date later than 2002. The data was then screened to focus on private businesses. Out of the estimated 230,500 private businesses in Oregon (according to Data Axle), 12.65% can be classified as "legacy" based on tenure of 20+ years. After

some category exclusions of the legacy dataset, Marketek narrowed the dataset to 25,016 businesses classified as “legacy.” Demographics of Oregon’s legacy business landscape include the following:

- Within the legacy business market, 69% have been founded in the last 20-50 years, 24% are aged 51-100 years and 7% are older than 100 years. In this latter category are companies ranging from the well-known Pendleton Mills and Jake’s Seafood Grill to ones focused on real estate, health care, farming and financial services.
- 45% of legacy businesses are in the Portland Metro area and the next largest grouping is in Eugene (10%), Salem (8%) and Bend-Redmond (6%). 601 legacy businesses, or 2.4% were not listed as affiliated with a Metro Area.
- The largest sector of legacy businesses was Services (40.2%) followed by Retail Trade (21.2%). There were also sizeable Construction (9.1%) and Manufacturing (8.1%) groupings.
- Those chief executives who identify as female comprise 20% of legacy business executives, while males landed at 60% of executives; 20% had no gender identified.
- To augment the Data Axle data, Marketek contacted Business Oregon’s Certification Office for Business Inclusion and Diversity (COBID). The Office provided a current list of existing certified women- and minority-owned businesses totaling over 5,000 businesses.
- By ethnicity (denoted by traditional census categories), 67% of chief executives identify as white, 2.8% as Asian, 2% as Hispanic (under “Other” category), and 0.4% as African American

Joe Brown’s Carmel Corn, Portland (est. 1932), Photo by Another Believer, via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0

Joe Brown’s Carmel Corn was established in 1932 by George Brown and his son Joe, originally operating as a single store in downtown Portland. World War II halted production until 1960 when George’s daughter Betty Brown and her husband Gordon Kalk opened a single store in the newly built Lloyd Center. The current owner, David Ferguson, acquired Joe Brown’s in 2019 and has added a new location on Martin Luther King Blvd since the announcement of the Lloyd Center’s imminent closure in 2022.



Chief Executive by Ethnicity	Count	%
White	12,918	67%
Black or African American	78	0.4%
Asian	536	2.8%
American Indian or Alaska Native	9	0.0%
Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander	26	0.1%
Other	1,332	6.9%
Uncoded	4,387	22.7%
*Total	19,286	100%

*Totals do not add up to 25,016 as this table only looks at chief executives. Some businesses in the database did not identify a chief executive, or any executive.

From this dataset, we utilized Oregon.gov’s Open Data Portal to compile a detailed [index of legacy businesses](#) meeting our criteria of 20 years in operation in order to perform targeted outreach to compile survey data. Working from this dataset, we performed targeted statewide outreach to disseminate our survey through several methods:

1. Distribution to the [Oregon Main Street](#) Network (a subsidiary of Main Street America, which has been helping revitalize older and historic commercial districts for more than 35 years) of which there are 103 participating communities statewide;
2. Distribution to the [National Association of Minority Contractors \(NMAC\)-Oregon](#) a nonprofit community-based organization with approximately 113 members whose mission is to advocate and support design and construction-related businesses owned by People of Color;
3. Direct emailing and/or messaging via a designated Restore Oregon– Legacy Business Initiative Facebook page to a sampling of businesses within each of six geographic regions of Oregon: the Northeast, Southeast, Northwest, and Southwest quadrants, Central Oregon (greater-Bend), and the Coast.

A map of the survey questions is [available here](#). The raw response data from the survey is also available in the appendices at the end of this report. The questions were written with a few considerations in mind:

- We would like to understand the breakdown of renting versus ownership among legacy businesses. This helps us to step beyond the immediately available public data. If findings demonstrated a strong skew toward either option, that might suggest uniquely problematic market conditions for the underrepresented group.
- To what extent are legacy businesses engaging with currently available resources? We already know of existing programs in the preservation and business support field, but having concrete numbers on legacy business engagement with these programs would paint a clearer picture of their accessibility to these businesses.
- In cases where a legacy business was actively seeking out assistance via existing programs but failed to receive the desired support, what possible barriers may have prevented the desired outcome? The survey questions around this topic are intended to look for any weak links in the existing application process or potential barriers that would be uniquely challenging for legacy businesses.



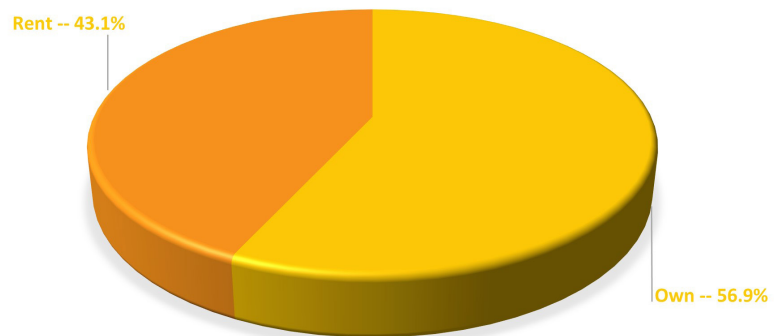
Cameo Theatre, Newberg (est. 1937),
Photo courtesy of Brian Francis

The 490-seat Cameo Theatre was opened on August 20, 1937 with Marion Davies in "Ever Since Eve." Ted Francis purchased the Cameo Theatre in 1940 and since then it has been independently owned and operated by the Francis Family.

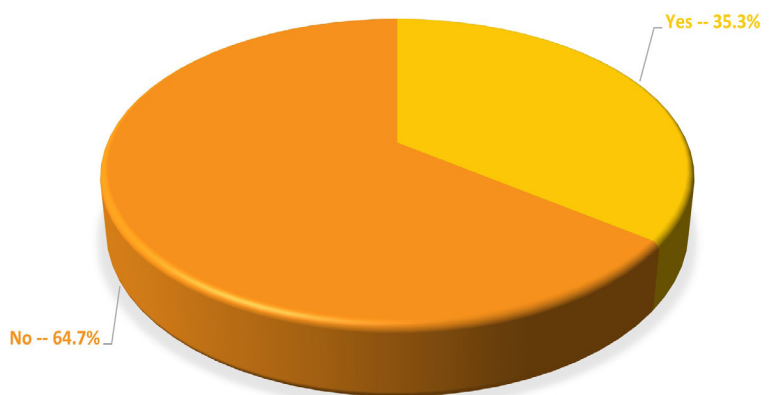
The survey itself was built with a questionnaire tool, [SurveyLegend](#). We selected this platform for its question logic settings that allowed us to route respondents to specific subcategories of questions based on their answers regarding renting versus ownership, whether they'd engaged with existing programs, and what the outcome was for those that had attempted to engage with existing programs in the past. This process was intended to give us the most accurate "pulse check" of the current landscape of legacy businesses. Findings were helpful in clarifying our initial questions:

- In breaking down renters versus owners, we found a fairly even split of both with a slight skew toward owners.
- We were surprised to find that 64% of respondents had never applied for any form of business assistance. This suggests that existing resources are underutilized by current legacy business owners.
- The responses regarding barriers to accessing assistance were a little more varied and are explored in more detail in the recommendations section.

DO YOU RENT OR OWN YOUR PLACE OF BUSINESS?



HAVE YOU EVER APPLIED FOR ANY KIND OF ASSISTANCE TO HELP YOUR BUSINESS, FINANCIAL OR OTHERWISE?



Current market conditions present a gauntlet of challenges to legacy business owners that rent their place of business as opposed to those who own their place of business. Our research, along with the groundwork laid by earlier work in the field, supports the creation of a two-pronged approach aimed at the differing needs of renters and owners. Renters grapple with steadily climbing commercial rents, while owners reckon with costly upkeep that may represent a threat to the financial health of their business. While resources aimed at addressing these challenges do exist, they are currently scattered across a network of non-profit, municipal, and state offerings. The primary benefit of a state-led approach is simplifying this process for businesses.

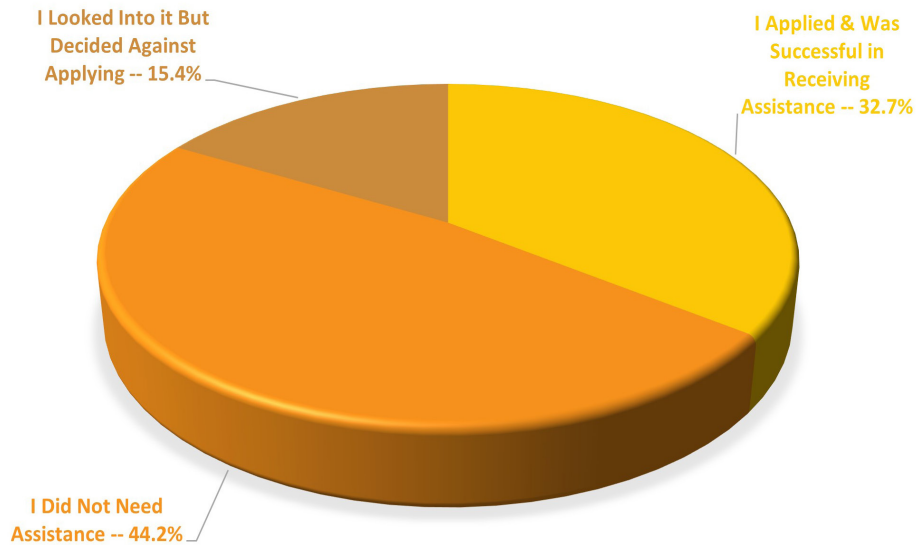
For renters, financial support is often structured in the form of direct one-time payments or grants, which does little to address the fundamental challenge of commercial rents outpacing revenue. In more direct terms, the price of a slice of pizza is only so elastic, while the market rent for a storefront in a historic downtown district may be significantly more volatile year-over-year. Direct cash payments may cover next month's rent, but the cost of business continually outpacing revenue will remain an issue. This is where we must take inspiration

from related programs such as San Francisco's Legacy Business Project and their policy of negotiating directly with property owners. Ideally, a legacy business program would focus on this by attempting to secure leasing concessions such as reduced monthly rent or leniency for past-due balances in exchange for subsidies to the property owners.

For property owners, one-time payments may be significantly more helpful - research has shown that the pandemic precipitated [an uptick in deferred maintenance projects](#), which is likely to have compounded pre-existing maintenance concerns for businesses that are already at least 20 years old by nature of their legacy status. Existing grant programs may do well to address these immediate near-term needs, but streamlining this process would be beneficial for both renters and owners.

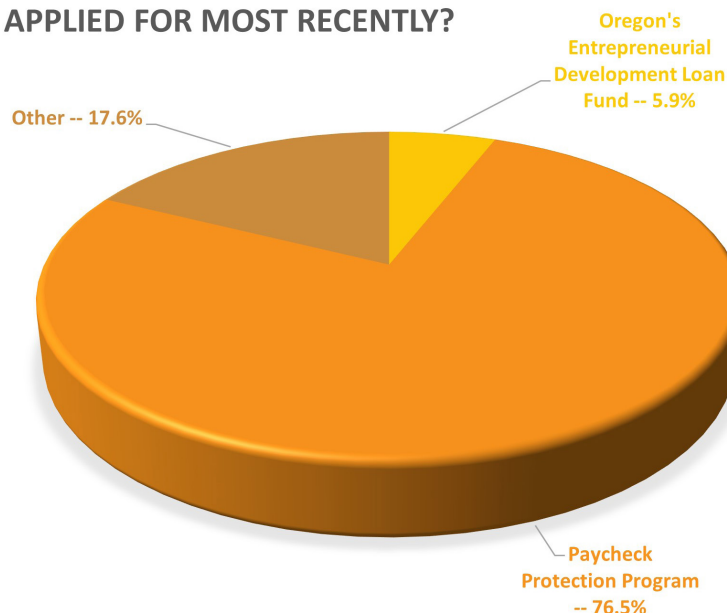
Our current relief infrastructure emphasizes grant-based programs, which make up the majority of offerings by Business Oregon. These programs often have stringent granting criteria—in fact, a combined 23% of the respondents that expressed a need for financial assistance indicated that they either found themselves rejected from grant-based assistance or opted against applying altogether.

TELL US A LITTLE MORE ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH SMALL BUSINESS PROGRAMS:



Of those that were successful, over three quarters indicated that the most recent support they'd engaged with was 2020's Paycheck Protection Program (PPP). This suggests that barriers within the granting process have rendered traditional grant-based programs inaccessible to a portion of business owners. Given the disproportionate representation of PPP in our dataset, it is highly likely that many of our respondents would not have otherwise been able or willing to engage with other support programs if not for the uncharacteristically low barrier-of-entry presented by PPP.

WHAT IS THE NAME OF THE PROGRAM YOU APPLIED FOR MOST RECENTLY?



Additionally, racial bias—both personal and institutional, conscious, and unconscious—is a systemic issue that affects the development of grant programs at all levels, thus resulting in barriers to entry and inequitable award decisions. According to a study by the [Bridgespan Group](#), a nonprofit dedicated to addressing structural racism in philanthropy, there are four consistent barriers to the BIPOC community that represent the ways unconscious bias can work its way into institutional processes:

1. Getting Connected: BIPOC have inequitable access to networks that enable connections to the philanthropic community,
2. Building Rapport: Interpersonal bias can manifest as mistrust and micro-aggressions, which inhibit relationship-building,
3. Securing Support: Funders often lack understanding of culturally relevant approaches, leading them to over-rely on specific forms of evaluation strategies that are familiar to them,
4. Sustaining Relationships: Grant renewal processes can be arduous if mistrust remains, and funding may stop if the funder has a white-centric view that defines strategic priorities and progress measurement.

According to the Bridgespan Group study, trauma brought on by these barriers and inequities pushes many People of Color to avoid seeking the resources they need, further silencing their presence, roles, and value in our communities.

The result of systemic racism is that People of Color receive less money than whites, and philanthropy ends up reinforcing the very social ills it often aims to overcome. For example, while efforts have improved in the past 10 years, [only 25 percent of family foundations](#) use formal diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) goals or strategies to guide their giving. Further compounding the obstacles faced by BIPOC business owners is the economic crisis resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. It disproportionately affected Black and Latino businesses and accentuated funding access issues and business development challenges. According to a nationwide study by JPMorgan Chase, only six percent of small businesses in majority-Black communities and 11 percent of small businesses in majority-Latinx communities have more than 14 days' worth of cash on hand in case of emergencies, compared to 65 percent of businesses in majority-white communities. Addressing systemic racism, providing access to emergency funds, technical assistance, and business coaching to underserved communities of color will help preserve diverse local economies. Done correctly, an important long-range goal of legacy business programs should include their use as an effective tool to help prevent displacement, support succession, and promote intergenerational equity.

Primary Recommendations

Business Oregon's Regional Service Area infrastructure, consistent funding, and ability to expand its resources through state funding provide an ideal platform to launch a statewide legacy business support program with the following recommendations:

1. Establish a Legacy Business Resource Center housed within each of Business Oregon's 12 Regional Service Areas to provide resources and funding to 20+ year old businesses,
2. Dedicate staff to serve as Regional Legacy Business Advocates responsible for direct assistance to legacy business owners and integration with Business Oregon's current small business resources,
3. Dedicate a Legacy Business Program Director at Business Oregon responsible for interfacing with current small business assistance programs at the state level,
4. Structure Legacy Business Resource Center with two-pronged approach—one to support business owners who rent their place of business and the second to support business owners who own their place of business,
5. Develop a strategy and toolkit for local governments to augment Business Oregon's legacy business services,
6. Prioritize racially equitable funding practices through education, adopting active antiracist policies, procedures, outreach, grant guidelines, and metrics, and consistent relationship-building.



BIPOC-Specific Recommendations

It is recommended that any future legacy business assistance programs address the structural barriers of systemic racism by working toward the following solutions:

1. Analyze and diversify applicant pool by reaching out to DEI experts and use resources like [CHANGE Philanthropy](#), an organization dedicated to integrating diversity, inclusion, and social justice into philanthropic practice,

2. Issues of race and identity are deeply personal and constantly evolving, and thus require dedicated, ongoing learning (trainings) and honest reflection to dismantle biases. Funder should consider giving grantees multiyear unrestricted funding, soliciting and acting on grantee feedback, and offering responsive and adaptive non-monetary support,
3. Historic underfunding of BIPOC organizations and businesses often results in lack of capacity, yet most funders require proof of capacity to award grants and measure effectiveness. Funder must prioritize the owners and businesses closest to the communities that have been historically disinvested,
4. Simply stated, treat BIPOC business owners as partners by listening to them and establishing shared goals. This includes reducing unrealistic metrics and reporting demands. Metrics should be indicative of the grantee's goals and consistent communication is key to mutual success.



Program Recommendations for Renters

Based on the market conditions outlined above, we propose the following recommendations for a program serving renters:

1. Address existing barriers of entry to the granting process, with the express purpose of reducing barriers for BIPOC business owners. This alone will render business grants significantly more accessible to both renters and owners,
2. Move away from traditional written grants and develop a more streamlined application process via questionnaire,
3. Standardize the practice of simplified grant outlines: each publicly listed grant should be accompanied by descriptions covering the basic premise of the grant: who qualifies, what might disqualify an applicant from receiving the grant, amount(s) of funding available, and steps that can be taken to become eligible for specific programs. Descriptions should be written in accessible language with a consistent formatting between different grants, regardless of source,
4. Offer the option for direct contact with a Regional Legacy Business Advocate to address questions,
5. Train Regional Legacy Business Advocates to analyze the needs of business owners and determine whether they are best served by an existing local program and/or within Business Oregon's suite of small business services,
 - If the needs of the renter are the result of a temporary budgetary shortfall or a non-urgent need for technical assistance—such as creating a website or learning to advertise online—the resource center team should assist the business owner in engaging with a local resource like [Historic Parkrose](#),
 - If the needs are more systemic (such as rent increases threatening the viability of the business), the business owner should have the opportunity to work one-on-one with a Legacy Business Advocate. The advocate will work directly with the landlord as an intermediary for the business owner. The advocate will identify grants that may be applicable to the renter's particular circumstances and will act as steward of funds earmarked for stabilizing commercial rent should they be able to come to an agreement with the landlord. This is modeled after the [Small Business Office of San Francisco's Rent Stabilization Grant](#).



1. Create grant programs that support the physical restoration, repair, and maintenance of buildings and structures that house legacy businesses, regardless of historic status or designation. Advocates will work directly with renter and their landlord to determine the best approach to address physical restoration, repair, and maintenance projects.

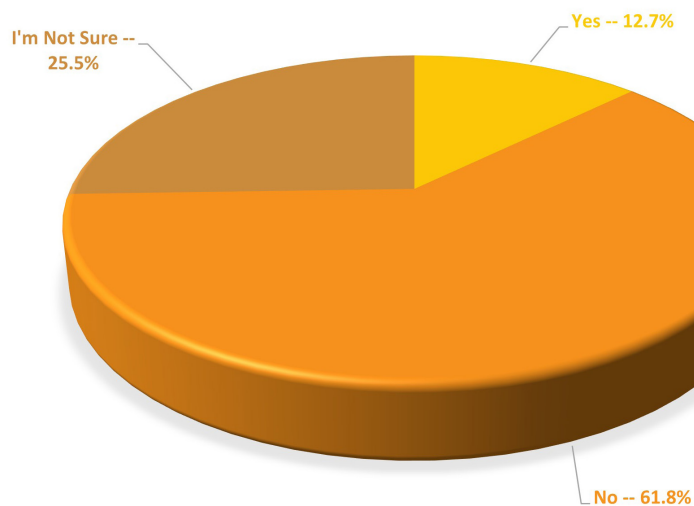
Program Recommendations for Owners

We recommend the following for a program serving legacy business owners who own their place of business:

1. Address existing barriers of entry to the granting process, with the express purpose of reducing barriers for BIPOC business owners,
2. Move away from traditional written grants and develop a more streamlined application process via questionnaire,
3. Standardize practice for simplified grant outlines: each publicly listed grant should be accompanied by descriptions covering the basic premise of the grant: who qualifies, what might disqualify an applicant from receiving the grant, amount(s) of funding available, and steps that can be taken to become eligible for specific programs. These descriptions should be written in accessible language with a consistent formatting between different grants, regardless of source,
4. Train Regional Legacy Business Advocates to analyze the needs of business owners and determine whether they are best served by an existing local program and/or within Business Oregon's suite of small business services.
5. Offer both direct, in-person assistance with an advocate and a comprehensive web portal for self-service,
6. The advocate (or a web portal) should walk the owner through a questionnaire. Based on answers, the advocate will help identify eligible grants and discuss the pros and cons of pursuing a National Register of Historic Places designation,
 - Aim to consolidate business-facing grant offerings under Business Oregon. Leave traditional historic preservation grants meant to be distributed to nonprofits and municipalities under the purview of SHPO. As it currently stands, some business-oriented grants are offered by both organizations and this overlap may muddy the granting process for business owners,

- Survey data shows a large majority of business owners who own their place of business are either not listed in the National Register of Historic Places or are unsure and are thus not eligible to pursue grant funding based on that designation. In order to facilitate listing, it is recommended that staff be trained on the process of listing a historic property in the National Register of Historic Places and that the program earmark grant dollars for eligible owners to pursue listing (most National Register nominations are written by professionals and cost between \$5,000 and \$15,000 on average).

IS YOUR BUSINESS ON THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES?




1. Create additional grant programs that support the physical restoration, repair, and maintenance of buildings and structures that house legacy businesses, regardless of historic status or designation. Advocates will work directly with renter and their landlord to determine the best approach to address physical restoration, repair, and maintenance projects.



Conclusions & Next Steps

The most immediate challenge for legacy business owners lies in the inflexibility of the granting process and the challenges inherent to navigating these resources. The current business support landscape disempowers businesses from advocating for themselves and places a heavy burden on third party organizations to disburse funds already earmarked to assist businesses. Where resources may already exist for business support, the actual process for accessing these resources is disjointed and onerous from the perspective of the business owner.



Historic preservation-related grants and the process for business-owners to qualify and apply for them are inaccessible to an even greater degree, as they are housed in a sector of government the general population is unfamiliar with. Additionally, historic preservation-related grants typically do not offer specialized support of legacy businesses, nor do they prioritize BIPOC or women-owned resources. In the face of these systemic issues, economic strains associated with the COVID-19 pandemic continue to cause closures of Oregon's legacy businesses; the full scale of its effects is unknown and immediate action is required to curb the loss of these cultural resources unique to Oregon.

Next steps include:

1. Dedicating state funds to complete an implementation plan for a statewide Legacy Business Resource Center within Business Oregon with specific focus on:
 - a. Building an equity framework,
 - b. Performing outreach and soliciting feedback from legacy business owners,
 - c. Identifying the needs of non-English speakers,
 - d. Creating simple, streamlined granting processes with a two-pronged approach for renters and owners,
 - e. Prioritizing long-range protection by creating multi-layered, multi-year support,
 - f. Establishing regular program evaluations w/business owners as stakeholders.
2. Earmarking state funds to establish the program, fund grant programs, and staff Regional Service Areas with Legacy Business Advocates,
3. Designating funds for the Legacy Business Resource Center to hire historic preservation consultants or staff to provide training on legacy business needs, preservation grants, and BIPOC and women-owned historic resources,
4. Analyzing the program at regular increments,
5. Providing regular, on-going equity and resources training to all levels of staff,
6. Adjusting program offerings and structure based on deep analysis every 5 years.

Historic preservation, both in law and practice, has long prioritized saving grand architecture over protecting more vernacular structures, historic infrastructure and landscapes, or less tangible pieces of cultural heritage such as legacy businesses. Historic preservationists and the organizations that serve businesses are at a crucial crossroads with limited time to work together to provide resources that will have far-reaching consequences for Oregon's intangible heritage. The State of Oregon must act quickly to ensure that all future Oregonians will have access to a diverse economy and equitably preserved historic resources. Implementation of a statewide Legacy Business Resource Center under Business Oregon will help make Oregon's historic record more inclusive by prioritizing preservation of culturally significant resources regardless of architectural style or pedigree.

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Appendix

[Appendices Folder](#)



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