

Meeting Notes Washington Oregon Community Networking Group

Date	September 21, 2026
Meeting Type	Virtual Networking and Business Opportunity Meeting
Facilitator	Ryan Taylor, Golden Gift Consulting
Facilitation Team	Cedric Austin, Barbara “Barbi” Alexander, George Frost, Daniel Seydel, and Veronica Ybarra
Meeting Length	Approximately 1 hour 36 minutes, including post-meeting networking

AI-generated draft notes based on the meeting transcript.

Agenda Overview

Ryan Taylor welcomed participants and described the group as a community-based organization serving Washington and Oregon. The monthly meeting provides a welcoming space for small businesses, public agencies, general contractors, and community partners to learn about opportunities, build relationships, and expand their networks.

Ryan explained that the first part of the meeting would focus on business opportunities and events, followed by facilitated networking. For the first time, participants were also invited to remain after the formal meeting for additional introductions and informal networking.

- Interstate Bridge Replacement opportunities and contractor outreach
- Washington and Oregon solicitations, events, and training opportunities
- Business readiness and technical-assistance resources
- Hoffman University and project-specific small-business outreach
- Facilitated discussion about experiences on public projects
- Post-meeting business introductions and resource sharing

Business Opportunity Updates

Interstate Bridge Replacement Program

Ryan reported that the Interstate Bridge Replacement Program request for qualifications remained active. General contractors were assembling teams, and small businesses were encouraged to connect with firms pursuing the work.

Columbia River Constructors Outreach

Ryan highlighted Columbia River Constructors, a joint venture led by Kiewit with Atkinson and Taylor Bros. The team had recently held a subcontractor outreach event and shared a recording, project overview, presentation, questions and answers, contact information, and a subcontractor portal. The materials were to be placed in the meeting chat and distributed by email.

Ryan noted that the team was seeking firms in many trades and encouraged businesses to review the materials and contact the joint venture about possible participation.

Washington Saves Plan

Ryan presented a Washington Saves Governing Board request for proposals involving investment-management services and administration of the broader investment program. He noted that the solicitation included separate roles for service delivery and program administration and may be relevant to small firms

that provide investment-management services. Participants were directed to the OMWBE website for the opportunity and solicitation documents.

Port of Seattle Opportunities

Two Port of Seattle solicitations were discussed:

- Medical claims administration services for firms with experience in the healthcare or benefits field.
- An indefinite delivery, indefinite quantity contract for PeopleSoft services, including enterprise systems used for human resources, recruiting, accounting, time, and labor functions. Firms without all required qualifications were encouraged to consider appropriate partnerships.

Forecasted Washington Opportunities

Ryan revisited a list of forecasted solicitations expected during 2026 and 2027. He emphasized that early awareness gives businesses time to research the work, assess readiness, identify partners, and build relationships before a solicitation is released. The presentation was to be shared after the meeting.

Events and Training Opportunities

Sound Transit Contractor Onboarding

Ryan shared a Sound Transit session for new and prospective contractors, prime contractors, consultants, and subconsultants:

- October 1, 2026
- 10:00–11:00 a.m.
- Tabor 100 building

The session was recommended for businesses interested in understanding how to work with Sound Transit.

Oregon Department of Transportation Training

Ryan reviewed several Oregon Department of Transportation training and compliance opportunities. Businesses entering Oregon from Washington were encouraged to attend, connect with ODOT staff and experienced firms, and confirm state-specific licensing and credential requirements before pursuing work.

Construction Inspector Training

- ADA curb ramp inspector and contractor training, October 26–29, 2026, in person
- Erosion and sediment control manager training, November 3, 2026
- Environmental construction inspector training, December 7–11, 2026
- General construction inspector training, December 7–11, 2026

Regional Compliance Training

- Region 1, Portland metro: October 29, 2026
- Region 2, Mid-Willamette Valley: November 17, 2026
- Region 3, Southern Oregon: November 10, 2026
- Region 4: November 5, 2026
- Region 5: November 9, 2026

Regional Contracting Forum

Cedric Austin described the Western Washington Regional Contracting Forum as the state's largest contracting conference, with a 27-year history and attendance commonly ranging from approximately 1,500 to 2,000 people. The free event was scheduled for 9:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m. at the casino in Auburn. Major state agencies, counties, and other public entities were expected to attend, with opportunities covering goods and services as well as public works and construction.

Additional Washington Events

- Port of Seattle Goods and Services Vendor Day: September 29, 2026, 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Pier 69 in Seattle.
- OMWBE convening and listening session: October 28, 2026, for businesses to discuss contracting and certification barriers. Cedric said further location information would be provided.
- North Puget Sound Contracting Conference: November 6, 2026, in Lynnwood.
- Meet the Bigs: November 19, 2026, described as a major contracting conference in Eastern Washington.
- WaTech IT Industry Forum: September 23, 2026, at the Marriott in downtown Tacoma.
- Monthly Hoffman Construction vendor connection sessions following Sound Transit onboarding meetings.

Oregon Events

Gloria Coleman and Mel Jones shared Oregon-area events, including the NAMC trade show, an OAME golf tournament on October 23, an October 9 small-business event at the University of Oregon featuring gubernatorial candidate Christine Drazan, and the OAME holiday event on December 4. Gloria offered to continue sharing Oregon event information with the group.

Guest Presentation Business Resources and Readiness

Gloria Coleman

Gloria thanked Ryan for creating a bi-state networking space and presented resources intended to help businesses find appropriate support without becoming overwhelmed. She shared separate Oregon and Washington resource directories and encouraged businesses to explore organizations before committing to paid memberships.

Resources highlighted included:

- Construction Diversity and Equity Fund technical assistance for COBID-certified firms through Multnomah County.
- Accelerate Women programs and coaching resources for women business owners.
- Technical-assistance programs that help firms strengthen administrative capacity.
- Free business assessments covering areas such as human resources, marketing, finance, capture planning, proposal support, customer relationship management, reporting, and prompt-payment documentation.
- An RFP application designed to help businesses evaluate and manage proposal readiness.

Gloria stressed that businesses pursuing large opportunities such as IBR need strong internal systems and an honest understanding of their readiness. Good documentation, reliable administrative practices, and organized follow-up can protect both the business and its partners. She also noted that visual tools can help adult learners understand how each business affects the larger project ecosystem.

Hoffman University and Project Outreach

Marine Stormwater and Sewer Series

Daniel Seydel reported that Hoffman University had completed a three-part marine, stormwater, and sewer series featuring project-team members associated with Port of Seattle and King County work. Projects discussed included the Port of Seattle industrial wastewater treatment plant at Terminal 91, King County West Point, and the Mouth of Duwamish project.

Mel Jones said the wastewater-treatment opportunities represented approximately \$2 billion in work. He explained that Hoffman University sessions are designed more like project-specific pre-bid briefings than

general classes. Participants receive information about opportunities, schedules, and requirements needed to compete successfully.

Operations and Maintenance Facility Vendor Connections

Daniel explained that the monthly vendor connection session follows Sound Transit's first-Thursday contractor onboarding. The additional hour creates an open-door opportunity for firms to learn about Hoffman projects and build relationships. Mel noted that the related Sound Transit Operations and Maintenance Facility work represented close to another \$1 billion in opportunity.

Daniel emphasized that the program's goal is contract participation. Firms are expected to build relationships, remain accountable, and put forward the effort needed to compete. Contact information and the Hoffman University YouTube channel were to be shared in the chat, and the event flyer was to be distributed after the meeting.

Small Business Introduction KCD Trucking

Kelly introduced KCD Trucking, which provides street sweeping, dump trucking, water trucking, and snow plowing. KCD Solutions also provides trailer and office cleaning. Kelly described the nonprofit Pay It Forward, created to help people enter construction, obtain employment, and start businesses. He credited Hoffman University with strengthening his estimating, bidding, and overall business practices.

Facilitated Networking Discussion

Topic: Experiences working on public projects

Participants were invited to discuss what went well, what could have gone better, lessons learned, and ways small businesses, general contractors, and public organizations could improve future project performance.

Team Alignment and Reputation

Daniel Seydel reflected on a construction-management contract in which a highly qualified team member did not share the organization's ethical expectations. Because the individual represented the company independently, the situation harmed the firm's reputation and future opportunities. Daniel advised businesses to examine the values and conduct of employees and partners, set clear client expectations, align assignments with individual strengths, and reinforce those expectations whenever new people join the team.

Documentation and Strategic Escalation

Regina Glenn emphasized documenting conversations, directions, change-order work, and payment issues. After a verbal conversation, businesses should send a confirmation email that records their understanding and the date. Documentation becomes especially important if a project manager leaves or if an advocate later needs evidence to help resolve the issue.

Regina also advised businesses to use internal complaint and escalation processes strategically before taking concerns public. Premature public complaints may reduce an advocate's ability to resolve the issue internally. She encouraged firms to acknowledge and support effective advocates and programs so owners and primes understand their value.

Cash Flow Payment Delays and Retainage

Kelly described how slow payment cycles, retainage, and unresolved change orders can threaten a small business. He recalled waiting nine months for payment while supporting an employee working 40–50 hours each week. He encouraged firms to preserve cash when payments arrive so they can withstand future delays.

Regina and George Frost added that a line of credit can provide essential working capital when savings are insufficient. Firms may need to establish banking or alternative-lender relationships early or use a signed

contract to support an application. George noted that delayed owner payments can flow down through general contractors to subcontractors, particularly when contracts contain pay-if-paid or pay-when-paid provisions.

Capacity Capability and Partnerships

Cedric Austin distinguished capability from capacity. He cautioned that one firm's failure may reinforce unfair assumptions about all small businesses. Businesses should make the most of opportunities by understanding the work, demonstrating both technical ability and operational capacity, and building relationships with purchasers.

Barbi Alexander agreed that firms should be truthful about capacity and ask for help when needed. Overselling can contribute to persistent misconceptions about small-business performance. She encouraged strategic partnerships between firms with related or complementary services so they can respond to expanded scopes, share opportunities, and deliver successfully.

Language Access and Technical Assistance

Nafiso, representing the Somali Independent Business Alliance, discussed the need for funding, technical assistance, language access, and clearer regulatory information for very small businesses. Language barriers can contribute to missed endorsements, expired registrations, penalties, and business closures. She suggested that businesses receive a clear information package when obtaining a business license and invited continued collaboration on removing these barriers.

Cedric offered to connect her with the African Chamber of Commerce of the Pacific Northwest. Katrina also offered to help develop a resource packet for the community.

Key Themes and Discussion Highlights

- Businesses should evaluate capability and capacity separately and avoid accepting work beyond what they can deliver.
- The conduct of employees and partners can strengthen or damage a firm's reputation.
- Written documentation is essential for directions, change orders, disputes, and payment issues.
- Cash reserves and lines of credit can help businesses manage delayed payments and retainage.
- Strategic partnerships allow firms to expand capacity, respond to changing scopes, and share opportunity.
- Strong administrative systems and readiness assessments improve performance on public projects.
- Language-access support and practical technical assistance remain important for very small businesses.

Formal Meeting Follow Up and Next Steps

- Review the IBR RFQ and Columbia River Constructors outreach materials.
- Use the joint venture's subcontractor portal and contact information to explore teaming opportunities.
- Review the Washington Saves and Port of Seattle solicitations.
- Attend relevant Washington and Oregon events and training sessions.
- Use the business-readiness resources and assessments shared by Gloria Coleman.
- Document project directions, change-order work, and payment communications in writing.
- Assess cash-flow needs early and explore an appropriate line of credit before a crisis occurs.
- Develop trusted strategic partners before additional capacity is urgently needed.

Post Meeting Networking Session

After the formal meeting adjourned, approximately 23 participants remained for introductions and informal networking. George Frost was credited with suggesting the extended format. Participants shared business capabilities, resources, and partnership interests.

Business Introductions

- Katrina, Artistic Resumes and Cover Letters, introduced her consulting firm and noted that the company is being renamed.
- LaShunte Portrey and Karen Fassio introduced CollectiveLogik, a new change-technology advisory firm. Their work helps leaders and organizations address the people side of large technology and infrastructure transformations.
- Angela Smith introduced Concrete Rose Construction, formerly Minority Construction Group. The firm provides general contracting and professional services and has approximately seven years of experience.
- KyVail Davis introduced A and K Environmental Consulting and Staffing. The firm provides construction safety training, including OSHA 10 and OSHA 30, and seeks to prepare and place new safety professionals.
- Mouhamed Diop introduced Evergreen Safety Signals, a certified traffic-control company providing flaggers, traffic-control supervisors, and equipment rentals. The company has worked with multiple general contractors and employs more than 10 people.
- Ato Apiafi introduced his architecture practice and recommended The One Page Marketing Plan as a resource for service businesses.
- Patrick Hughes introduced Hughes Group, a Tacoma-area veteran-owned firm involved in government contracting, construction support, and small general contracting. He emphasized joint ventures, teaming, and mutual support among small businesses.
- Daniel Seydel introduced Platinum Group, which provides coaching and technical assistance to small firms and helps connect them with larger companies.
- John Ozkurt introduced Horizon IoT, a Seattle technology firm holding a DES RFID asset and inventory management contract and City of Seattle awards in several IT categories. The firm has developed partnerships with major technology companies while continuing outreach to end users.

Resources Shared During Networking

MRSC Rosters

Theresa Gonzales described MRSC Rosters as a one-stop resource connecting businesses with Washington local governments, including cities, counties, ports, public utility districts, school districts, and libraries. MRSC manages public works, consultant, and vendor rosters covering construction, consulting, IT, software, photography, catering, asbestos abatement, and other services.

Theresa shared information about a free webinar with Washington APEX Accelerators. She also noted that eligible OMWBE-certified and Public Works Small Business Enterprise firms may receive a free MRSC business membership through current OMWBE support.

WSDOT and Tabor 100 Technical Assistance

Barbi introduced herself as the Economic Opportunities and Compliance Lead for the IBR Program. Because IBR was in active solicitation, she limited discussion of that procurement but shared other WSDOT resources. Washington APEX is leading a WSDOT capacity-building mentorship program that was recruiting participants. Tabor 100 also offers support services, and qualifying businesses may receive up to \$7,500 in assistance, with additional support possible when justified.

Ryan noted that he, Veronica Ybarra, Gloria Coleman, and George Frost serve as consultants through the Tabor 100 program.

Somali Independent Business Alliance

Shekinah described SIBA's technical-assistance services, including virtual and in-person drop-in support for business-license renewals, Unique Entity Identifiers, Employer Identification Numbers, financial statements, and funding searches. She also mentioned funding support for eligible truck drivers and offered to help businesses understand requirements and apply.

Additional Resources

- Evergreen BizLink, a location-based tool that identifies business resources by ZIP code and need.
- City of Seattle and other agency rosters as entry points for small and certified firms.
- Vendor Connect and the IBR website for business visibility and project information.
- Traffic-control technology and partnership possibilities discussed by Patrick Hughes and Daniel Seydel.

George encouraged businesses to use rosters not only to become visible to agencies but also to assess whether their experience, capacity, and qualifications are ready for public opportunities.

Closing

Ryan thanked participants for contributing practical experience, resources, and connections. He recognized Veronica Ybarra and other Golden Gift team members for their support and thanked those who remained for the extended networking session. The group planned to reconvene at its October monthly meeting.