

## **Historical Timeline**

SBDC Directors: Tom Dorr (present), Lynn Tryznka, Fred Lewis, and Max King

### **1983**

Started the SBDC in the College of Business and Economics at Western Washington University as an outreach program to give back to the business community. Services offered included one-to-one counseling and research services. Research assistants were WWU students that participated with secondary market and industry research, financial statement and proforma analysis, demographics studies, budget planning, business plan development, marketing planning and strategies.

### **1996**

Tom Dorr became the director of the SBDC in September 1996.

### **1997**

Started the Whatcom Business Conference, held at the Bellingham Cruise Terminal and train station in conjunction with the Business EXPO in September 1997.

### **1998**

Began a unique partnership with Washington State Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and provided counseling statewide to 400 individuals with disabilities motivated to re-enter the workforce through self-employment over an eight year relationship. SBDC counselors were specifically trained to work with DVR counselors and their customers to provide assistance in feasibility analysis and business plan development. Twenty-five percent of the clients involved became entrepreneurs.

### **1999**

Partnered with Whatcom Community College to plan and implement the annual Whatcom Business Conference.

Moved the SBDC office from the WWU campus to the Bellingham Towers in support of downtown revitalization efforts and new funding from the City of Bellingham. The

SBDC was the first WWU program to move off campus.

Small Business Conference moved to Whatcom Community College in conjunction with the Whatcom County Expo.

## **2000**

Started a Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) Program in partnership with the Economic Development Council (EDC) in Bellingham to serve Whatcom County. The program was modeled after other programs in the State, with manufacturing and technology companies being the primary focus.

## **2001**

Started working with entrepreneurs from the Lummi, Nooksack, Samish, Swinomish, Sauk-Suiattle, Stillaguamish, Tulalip and the Upper Skagit tribes to identify mentors for Native American owned businesses with the Native American Entrepreneurial Outreach Program. This was funded through a two year grant from the Small Business Administration. We also worked with Northwest Indian College to offer a regular series of workshops for Native American clients interested in starting their own businesses.

## **2002**

Began the SBDC BusinessLINC Roundtable Program in partnership with the Small Business Association. Each roundtable program provided a monthly forum for owners and managers to discuss problems and sensitive matters in a confidential environment with others who understand the issues particular to their industry. Some of Whatcom County's most successful businesses were involved in the following roundtables: retail, construction, business services, consumer services, and manufacturing.

## **2003**

With new funding from the Economic Development Administration, began offering start-up, retention and expansion support to rural communities with the Rural Outreach Program. We also expanded Native American outreach services with technical assistance. SBDC satellite offices are started in: Birch Bay, Blaine, Everson/Nooksack, Ferndale, Lynden, Mt. Baker Foothills, Point Roberts, and Sumas.

Instrumental in implementing the Whatcom Business Survey, a project headed by WWU's College of Business and Economics' Center for Economic and Business Research.

Created a business plan for Washington State Parks Commission, Cama Beach State Park Project and helped to secure over \$6.5 million in new legislative funding.

SBDC, Bellingham nominee, Larry Wickkiser, owner of Airporter Shuttle and Bellaire Charters, named SBA's 2003 Small Business Person of the Year by the Seattle District Office of the U.S. Small Business Administration.

Achieved the following impacts by year end: counseled 481 clients; saved/created 415 jobs; created \$14,140,364 in new investments; involved 4,634 counseling hours.

## **2005**

Began ground-breaking initiative in Whatcom County with the Whatcom Alliance for Health Care Access (WAHA) to coordinate a community-wide physician recruitment and retention program and helped increase access to healthcare.

With help from a USDA Grant, partnered with Whatcom County Agricultural Preservation Committee and Farm Friends to research the feasibility and optimal direction for a value-added production of dairy products and produced a “Feasibility Workbook for Specialty Cheese Production.”

Achieved the following impacts by year end: counseled 448 clients; saved/created 478 jobs; created \$19,115,308 in new investments; involved 4,022 counseling hours.

## **2006**

With funding from the Economic Development Administration, began assisting the Nooksack, Lummi, Swinomish, and Upper Skagit tribes to develop sustainable businesses with the Native American Entrepreneurial Outreach Program. Besides the development of numerous customized business education presentations, the SBDC has also provided research to support the tribes’ economic development activities.

Undertook a primary survey with the Center for Economic and Business Research for the Border Policy Research Institute to research the impacts of cross-border companies. Information will be used to develop policies and strategies to support businesses on both sides of the border.

Contracted with the City of Bellingham to conduct quarterly, ongoing research pertaining to the experience and satisfaction of Permit Center customers. This feedback tool has been used to drive continual process improvement and significant process changes within the Permit Center.

Achieved the following impacts by year end: counseled 376 clients; saved/created 510 jobs; created \$27,072,805 in new investments; involved 3,338 counseling hours.

## **2007**

With new funding from the Washington State legislature, expanded the economic gardening services of our Research Center to other Washington SBDCs.

Tom Dorr was named recipient of the *Ron Battles Excellence Award* by the Washington Small Business Development Center Network in April 2007. The award was presented in honor of

Dorr's more than 12 years of dedication and excellent service to businesses in Whatcom County.

Won *Gold MarCom Award* for 2006 Annual Report.

Contracted with The Washington State Parks & Recreation Commission, through an interagency agreement to perform three major projects. The first was an update of the business plan for a new State park (Cama Beach). The second was a data mining project to analyze the patterns of decreased return visitors to State parks. The SBDC also coordinated the updating of selected marketing collateral, specifically focusing on the vacation homes home throughout the state by the Parks Commission.

Achieved the following impacts by year end: counseled 436 clients; saved/created 750 jobs; created \$23,960,658 in new investments; involved 3,911 counseling hours.

## **2008**

In July, economic gardening services of the Research Center were extended to under served Economic Development Councils in Washington.

Created and implemented the Social Media Conference NW, the New-Word-of-Mouth Marketing with TAG (Technology Alliance Group) and Whatcom Community College. A first of its kind to have content targeted at small-to-medium businesses, attracted attendees from New Hampshire, Nebraska, Michigan, Texas, South Dakota, North Dakota, Oregon, & Wyoming. Over 250 people attended with both the conference and the keynote dinner selling out!

Began teaching MBA 597, "The SBDC Experience" at WWU. The course is designed to give graduate students training in, exposure to, and experience with business research and analysis.

Served as a subcontractor on an extensive Passenger Ferry Service feasibility study with the Whatcom County of Governments. The assessment of a passenger ferry between Bellingham and Friday Harbor included a business plan, financial projections, identification of strategic partnerships, operational considerations, and the integration of customer feedback.

Achieved the following impacts by year end: counseled 486 clients; saved/created 440 jobs; created \$20,974,461 in new investments; involved 4,237 counseling hours.

## **2009**

Changed name to the Center for Economic Vitality.

Disassociated from the Washington State University Small Business Development Network, January 1, 2009.