



Historical Timeline

CEV & 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 eight year partnership with the 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. 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.



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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."



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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.

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.



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Co-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 Council 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 in Whatcom County: 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.

During the recession achieved the following impacts by year end in Whatcom County for business development advising: counseled 383 clients; saved/created 194 jobs; created \$7,455,779 in new investments; involved 3,841 counseling hours.

During the recession achieved the following impacts by year end in Washington state for economic gardening research: 274 businesses supported; 330 jobs saved/created with research and advising support; \$7,462,706 created in new investments; 4,838 hours saved economic development providers.

2010

Received funding from the Washington State Department of Commerce to create and implement a special export initiative, JustWaEx, to begin January 2011. All businesses in Washington state can receive the free export assistance. In addition to the export business counseling, the services include match-making activities connecting foreign buyers directly with Washington state producers, with special emphasis on Canada. Targeted industry sectors include manufacturing, fresh agricultural products, forest products, and information/communication technology.

The Center for Economic Vitality and the City of Tacoma hosted the 8th Annual International Economic Gardening Conference in Bellingham, Washington in June 2010. Ninety-two practitioners and speakers from the United States, Canada and Japan shared ideas about ways to stabilize and grow local businesses. The conference began with a dinner and networking event at the Squalicum Boathouse, followed by a sunset cruise on Bellingham Bay



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Co-created and co-implemented the Social Media Conference NW, Evolving Marketing Conversations (SMCNW 2010) in March 2010. SMCNW 2010 was a collaborative partnership between the Center for Economic Vitality and TAG (Technology Alliance Group for NW Washington). The social media learning experience was held at McIntyre Hall in Mt Vernon and targeted small to medium business owners. For the first time, a Social Media Rockstars contest was held and an event day blog. The 286 attendees and speakers came from California, Indiana, Minnesota, Missouri, Oregon, Washington D.C., Wyoming, Vancouver, B.C., Canada, and Washington state.

During the recession achieved the following impacts by year end in Whatcom County for business development advising: counseled 421 businesses; saved/created 200 jobs; created \$13,581,836 in new investments; involved 3,517 counseling and business research hours.

During the recession achieved the following impacts by year end in Washington state for economic gardening research: 422 businesses supported; 143 jobs saved/created with research and advising support; \$5,536,197 created in new investments; 2,586 hours saved economic development providers.