

MESO

ELEVATE
EMPOWER
ENTREPRENEURS

ANNUAL REPORT
2024

MESOPDX.ORG



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A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR & CEO

For MESO, 2024 was a year dedicated to deepening our connections with those we serve in Oregon and Southwest Washington.

Through an intensive process led by our team, we reimagined our business development program to better align with the changing needs of the entrepreneurs we serve. We are grateful that some special funding allowed us to launch our first match savings investment account program for Clark County clients. As requested by our clients, we took the first steps to create a continuum to our services by launching our more advanced program aimed at helping entrepreneurs move their businesses to the next level.

Those accomplishments would not have been possible without the support of our funders, sponsors and community partners.

Like many nonprofits across the country, MESO faces unprecedented challenges. Our commitment to those we serve, however, remains unchanged. We look forward to continuing our relationships with like-minded funders, sponsors and other partners as we work together and flourish.



COBI LEWIS

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR & CEO



MESO BOARD OF DIRECTORS

BETH COOKE
CAM TURNER
SHEILA HOLDEN
JILL CHEN
DAVE CONNELL
TYRONE POOLE

MAURICE RAHMING
JAMES GRAHAM
SCOTT BOSSOM
CIRITH ANDERSON
MAYRA ARREOLA

MESO EXECUTIVE TEAM



Top, from left to right: Celina Sanchez - Director of Development and Marketing, Jataune Hall - Director of Special Programs, Mary Lee Alder - Chief Programs Officer.
Bottom from left to right: Cobi Lewis - Executive Director and CEO, Le King - Chief Operations Officer, Jason Hilton - Chief Financial Officer

MESO's six-person leadership team brings to the organization decades of expertise, experience and knowledge in the non-profit and for-profit sectors.

OUR MISSION IS TO ELEVATE THE CULTURAL TAPESTRY OF UNDER-RESOURCED AND EXCLUDED ENTREPRENEURS TO BUILD RESILIENCE AND THRIVING COMMUNITIES THROUGH ACCESS TO CAPITAL, TAILORED BUSINESS ASSISTANCE AND EDUCATION.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2024, MESO continued its mission of empowering entrepreneurs and fostering thriving communities through access to capital, tailored business assistance, and education.

MESO's business advising team provided over 3,500 hours of technical assistance across 21 counties, expanding certain services into eight new counties.

MESO distributed \$3.4 million in loans, with 60% allocated to women. These loans spanned 19 counties across Oregon and Southwest Washington, supporting local economies and stimulating growth.

MESO also distributed \$522,000 in IDA funds to support more than 100 small business owners. The program also expanded IDA access to Marion County.

Education remained a key focus, with 149 classes attended by more than 2,300 individuals.

The Future Leaders program engaged 279 students (elementary through high school age), partnering with five Oregon schools to provide guidance for aspiring young entrepreneurs.

The MESO Makers Market supported 77 vendors, offering a platform for small businesses to reach new customers.

Additionally, MESO strengthened childcare services by supporting 37 Preschool for All providers across 49 sites, creating 581 Pre-K seats.

With continued growth and expanded reach, MESO remains committed to equipping entrepreneurs with the tools and resources they need to build successful businesses.



BUSINESS ADVISING

MESO's Engage clients receive individualized consulting to assess their needs and identify tailored resources, while Empower clients undergo long-term strategic planning. In 2024, MESO's Business advising team provided 3,508 hours of technical assistance to clients in the Engage and Empower programs, a 39% increase in hours spent compared to 2023. Advisors served clients in 21 counties, offering support in multiple languages, including Spanish, Russian, and Ukrainian.



29%

Of total business advising technical assistance hours were spent with Black / African American clients.

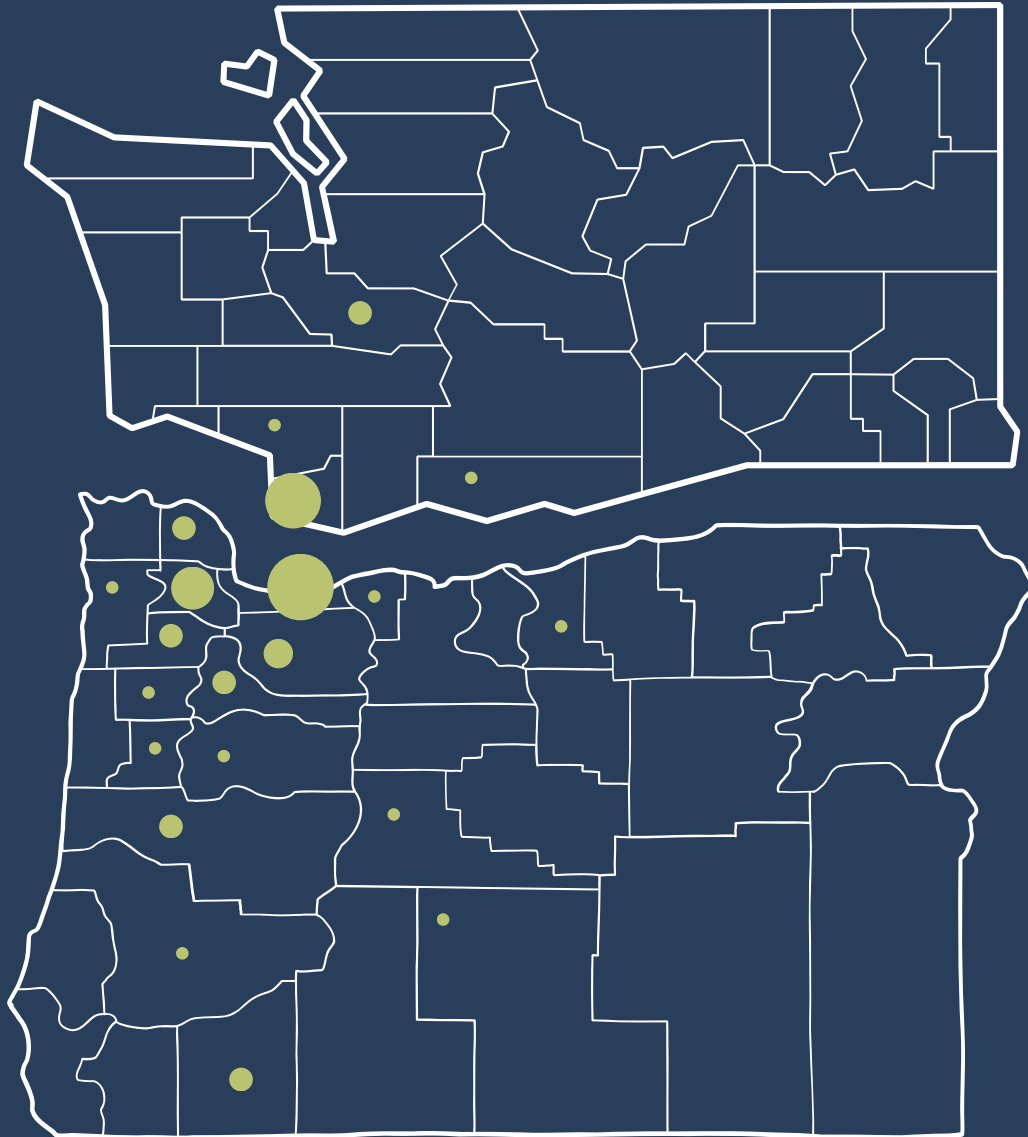
69%

Of total business advising technical assistance hours were spent with female identifying clients.

15%

Of clients served in Engage and Empower programming are Spanish speakers.

BUSINESS ADVISING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE HOURS BY COUNTY



Oregon Counties

Benton, Clackamas, Columbia, Deschutes, Douglas, Gilliam, Harney, Hood River, Jackson, Lane, Linn, Marion, Multnomah, Polk, Tillamook, Washington, and Yamhill.

Washington Counties

Clark, Cowlitz, Klickitat, and Pierce.

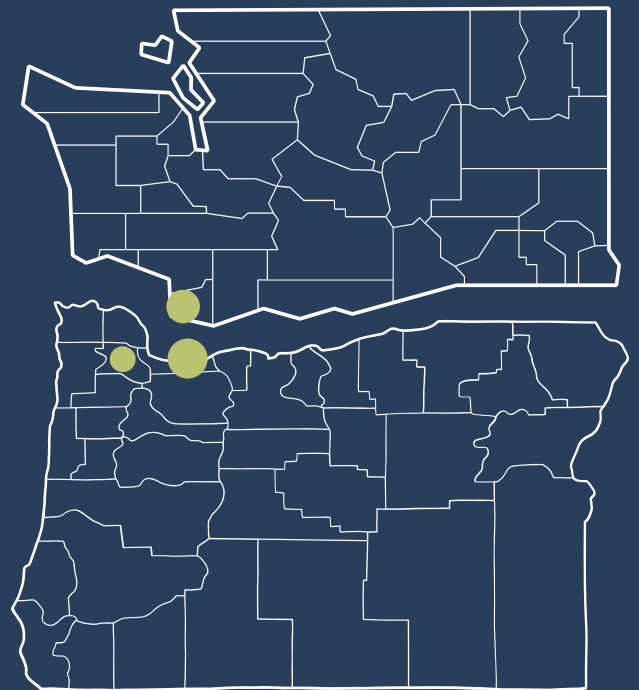
TOP 3

Counties where the most business advising technical hours were provided:

1 Multnomah County, OR
1718.5 TA Hours
49% of total Business Advising hours spent

2 Clark County, WA
708.95 TA Hours
20% of total Business Advising hours spent

3 Washington County, OR
658.39 TA Hours
19% of total Business Advising hours spent



1,401

MESO

Business advising technical assistance hours spent with MESO Empower clients in Oregon and SW Washington.

30%

Of business advising technical assistance hours were provided to Empower clients whose first language is not English.

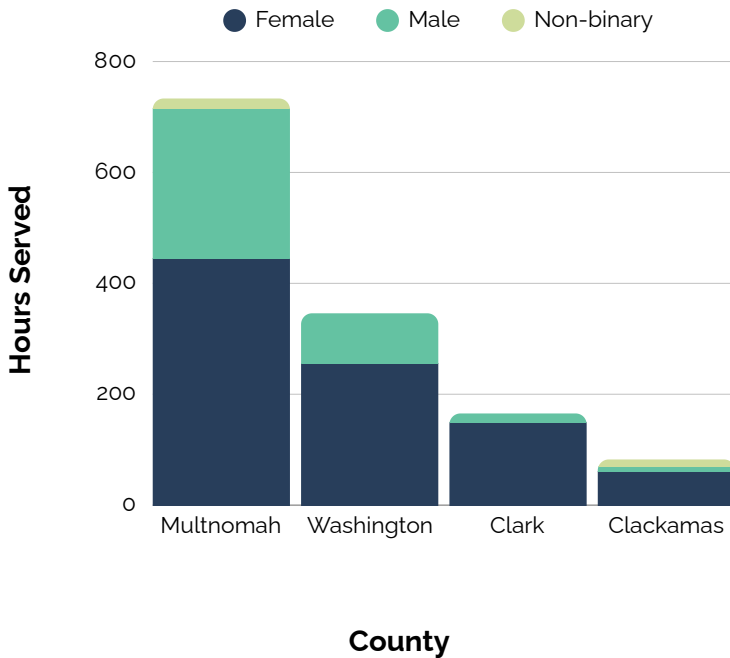
67%

Of total Empower business advising technical hours were spent with female-identifying Empower clients.

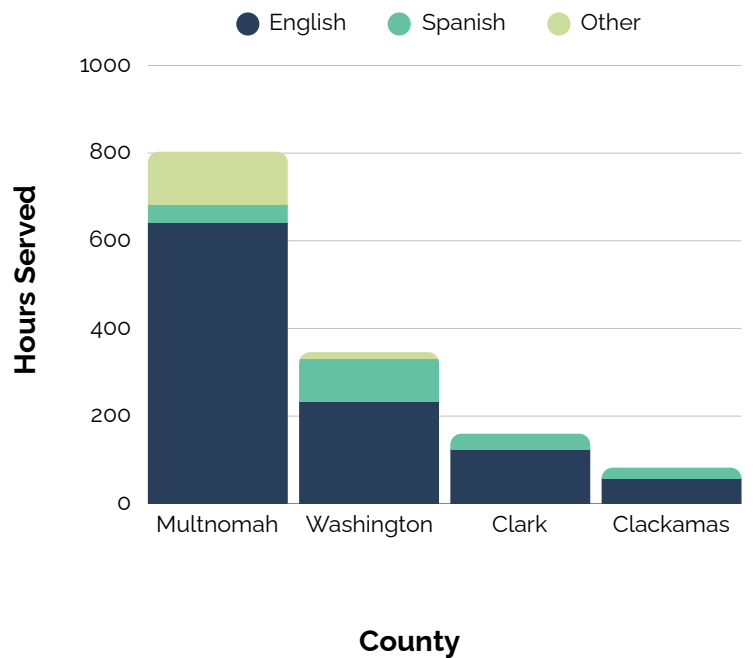
EMPOWER PROGRAM

LONG-TERM COMMITMENT

EMPOWER TA HOURS BY COUNTY AND GENDER



EMPOWER TA HOURS BY COUNTY AND LANGUAGE



2,107

MESO

Business advising technical assistance hours spent with MESO Engage clients in Oregon and SW Washington.

35%

Of business advising technical assistance hours were provided to Engage clients whose first language is not English.

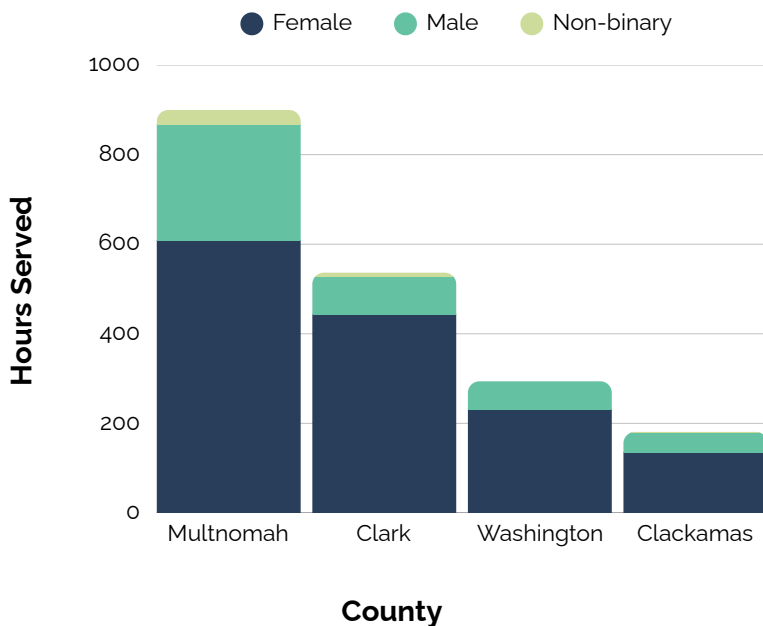
70%

Of total Engage business advising technical assistance hours were spent with female-identifying Engage clients.

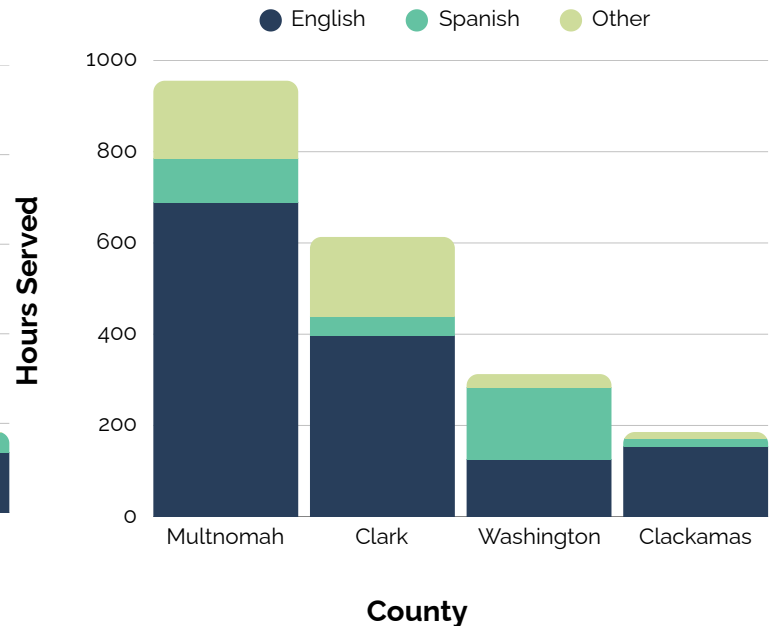
ENGAGE PROGRAM

SHORT-TERM INTRODUCTORY PROGRAM

ENGAGE TA HOURS BY COUNTY AND GENDER



ENGAGE TA HOURS BY COUNTY AND LANGUAGE





LENDING

MESO's lending department facilitated \$3.4 million in loans to entrepreneurs, with 60% going to women. The majority of all loan recipients were in Multnomah County and represented industries such as service, food and beverage, and health and beauty.

Credit 101 provides education about basic credit knowledge and the importance of higher credit scores, with an offer to establish a \$100-\$200 credit builder loan. In 2024, the program helped individuals improve their credit knowledge and scores, with 40% of participants identifying as Black or African American and 67% of participants identifying as women.



\$3.4M

In loans provided across 19 counties in Oregon and Washington.

60%

Of loans were provided to women.

170

Loans paid in full.

+14%

Increase in loan dollar amounts given since 2023.

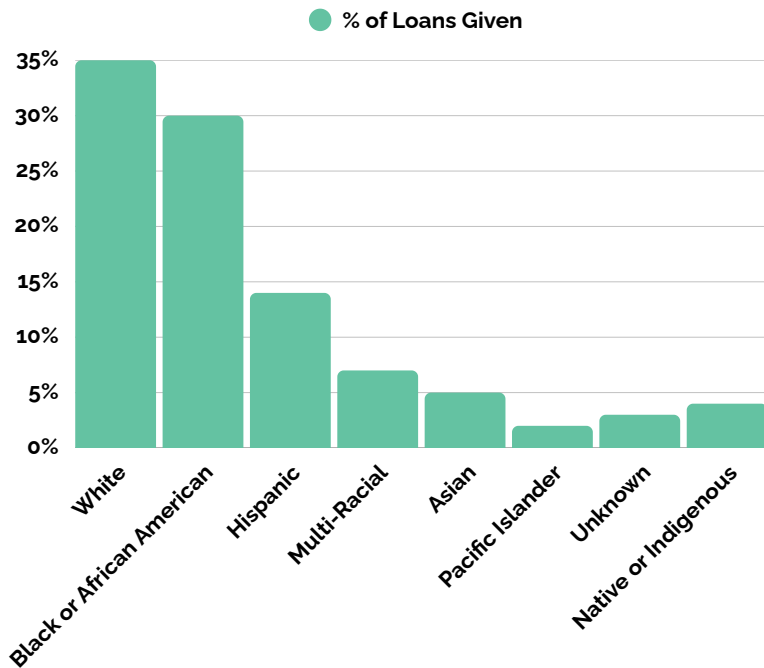
\$30,612

Is the average loan size (non-Credit 101), with loans ranging from **\$2.5K to \$339K**.

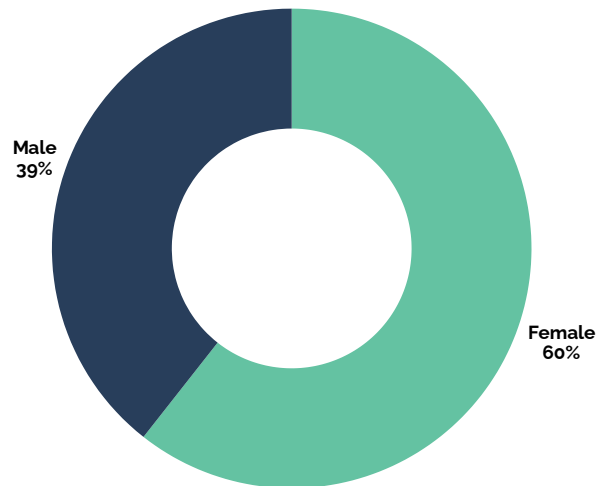
LENDING DEMOGRAPHICS

PROVIDING A PATHWAY TO CREDIT BUILDING AND LOANS WITH FAVORABLE INTEREST RATES

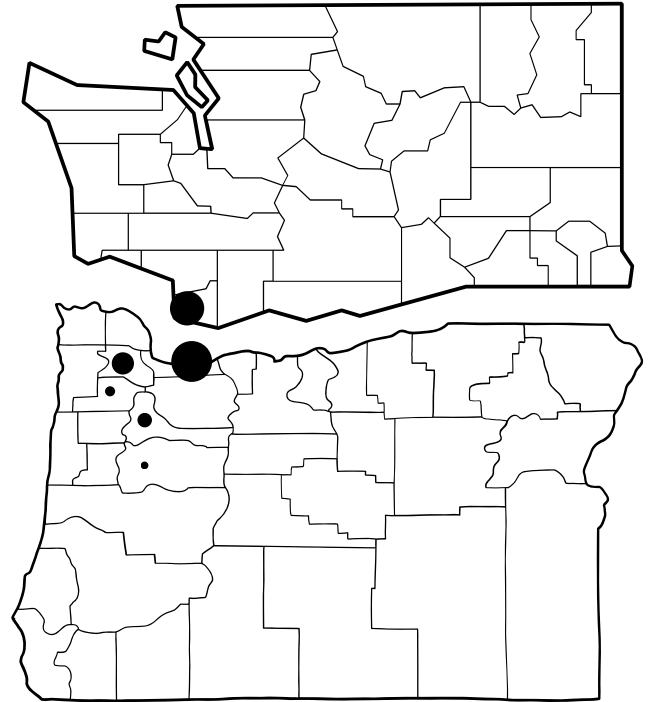
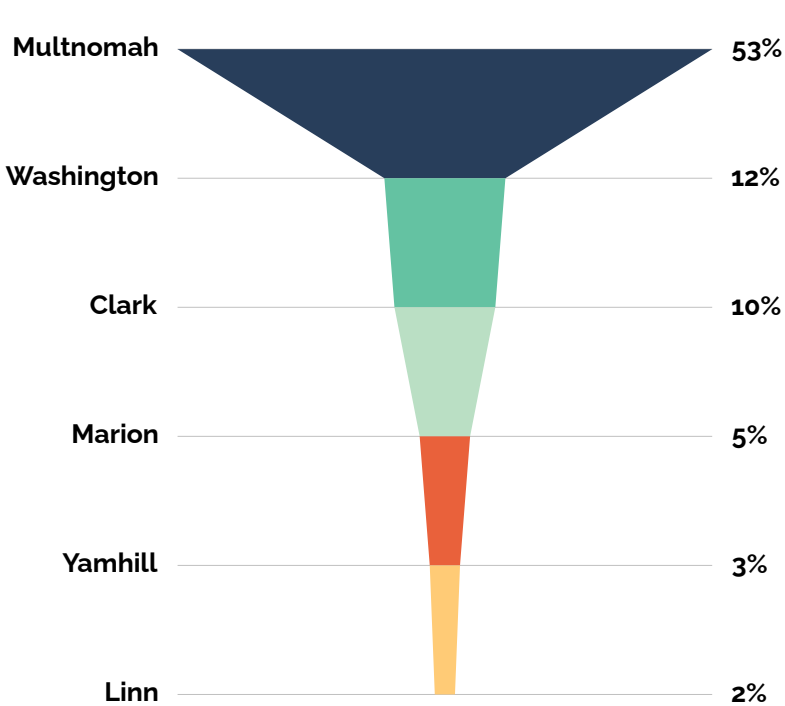
LENDING RECIPIENTS BY RACE



LENDING RECIPIENTS BY GENDER

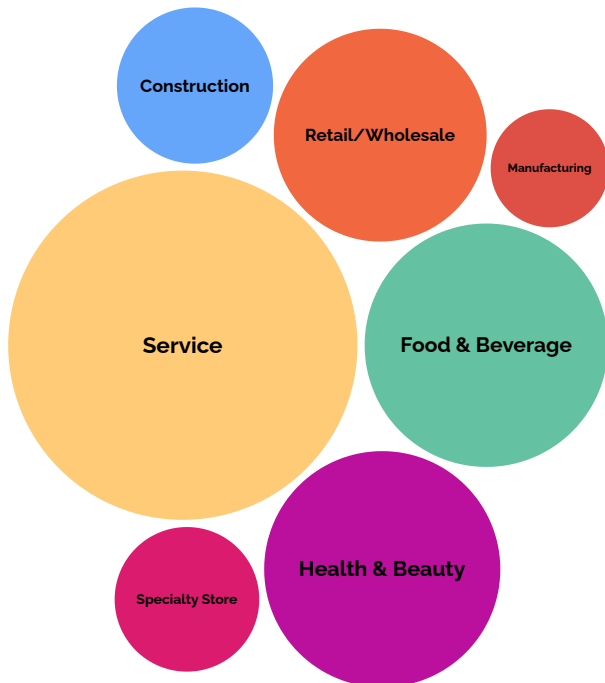


LOAN RECIPIENTS BY COUNTY

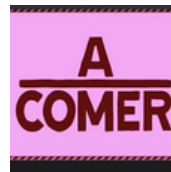


LOAN RECIPIENTS BY INDUSTRY

LOAN RECIPIENTS BY INDUSTRY



MESO CLIENT TESTIMONIAL



"Working with Collin and MESO has been a life-changing experience for me and my family."

[MESO] helps us understand how to build a strong foundation for a family business and strategize on how best to grow and sustain our business over the long term. They opened a lot of doors for us and we wouldn't be where we are now without their constant support."

Erik Martinez, owner of A Comer



MESO

FUTURE LEADERS

MESO's Future Leaders Program partnered with local organizations to offer entrepreneurship programs to youth in grades three through twelve and young adults ages 18-24. The program served 279 students across various schools and programs, providing entrepreneurship and financial literacy education. In 2024, in collaboration with Brown and Carter Management Group, the Building Leaders and Zealous Entrepreneurs (BLAZE) program supported five young adults in developing and realizing their business ideas.



891

Future Leaders program hours served.



279

Students engaged.



5

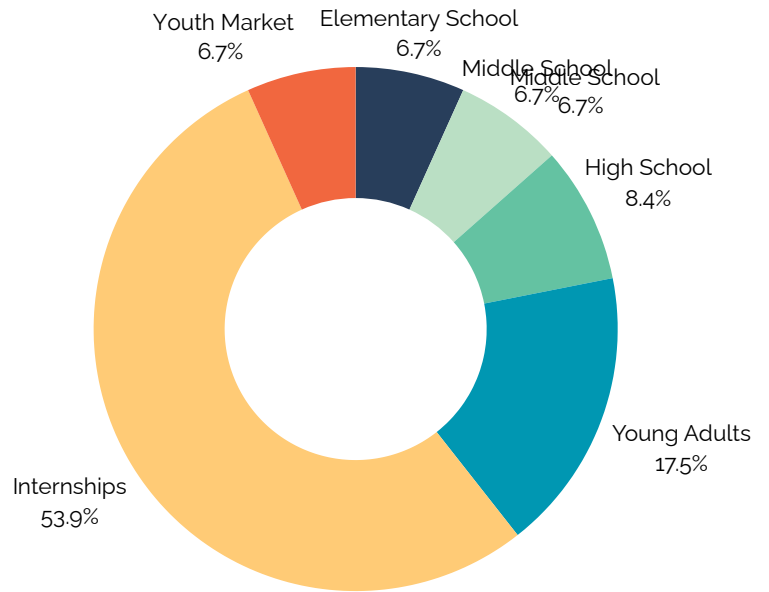
Schools participated.

MESO

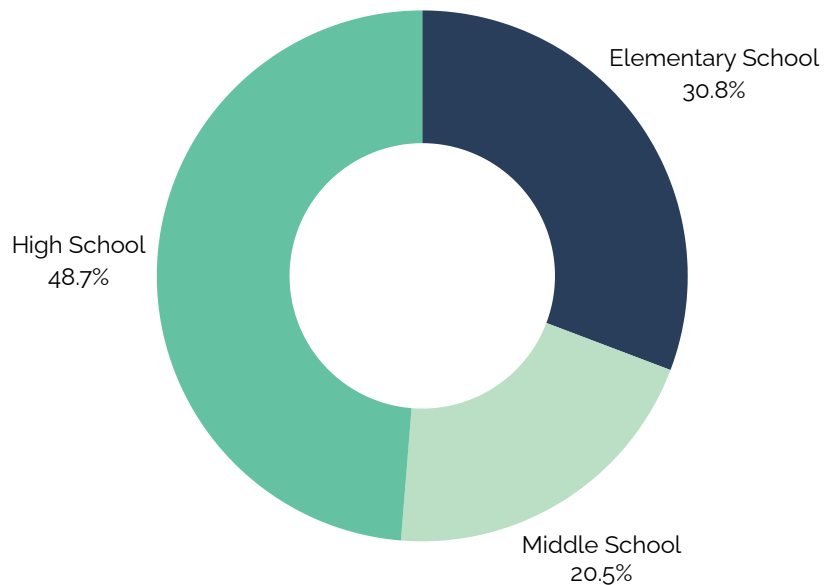
FUTURE LEADERS

ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND FINANCIAL LITERACY PROGRAMMING FOR YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS.

FUTURE LEADERS SERVICE HOURS BY PROGRAM (%)



FUTURE LEADERS SERVICE HOURS BY SCHOOL LEVEL (%)



FUTURE LEADERS PARTNERS

- B.E.A.M (Black Educational Achievement Movement)
- SEI (Self Enhancement Inc)
- Portland State University Summer Institute
- Dream Big City Portland



SCHOOLS SERVED

- Kairos PDX
- HOLLA School
- McDaniel High School
- POIC + RAHS
- Portland State University





EDUCATION

MESO's Education program facilitated 149 classes in 2024, attracting a diverse range of attendees, many of whom had little or no prior connection to MESO. Serving over 2,300 attendees, with 621 unique participants, MESO's educational offerings continue to empower entrepreneurs with essential knowledge and skills. In 2024, MESO introduced several new class subjects, including Pricing Strategies for Small Businesses, Leveraging AI for Small Business, Vision Boards for Small Business Success, and more.

Through networking, referrals and outreach, 52 unique instructors were selected by MESO's Education department to teach classes, workshops and series, in both English and Spanish.

Since January 2024, MESO's Education department has partnered with several community partners to plan, teach, and host MESO classes. Partners include, but are not limited to Adelante Mujeres, OnPoint Community Credit Union, Rational Unicorn, Brown and Carter, and SCORE.



149

Classes hosted by MESO.



2,380

Students / attendees.



52

Specialized Instructors.

MESO

EDUCATION

ACCESSIBLE CLASSES FOR SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS IN ENGLISH AND SPANISH

MESO CLASSES

Business Building Class Series
Foundations
Business Model
Financial Model
Marketing Model

4 Virtual Classes \$100

Financial Planning Class Series

4 Virtual Classes \$100

Virtual Class \$25 @6PM

Grant Writing for Entrepreneurs

educate@mesopdx.org

Leveraging AI for Small Businesses

\$25 Virtual Class

Clase virtual \$25 @8 AM-10 AM

Taxes para Pequeñas Empresas

educate@mesopdx.org

Su Marca

\$25 Clase Virtual

educate@mesopdx.org



INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT ACCOUNTS (IDA)

In 2024, MESO secured \$608,500 in IDA match funds for small businesses, along with an additional \$30,000 from Community Foundation for Southwest Washington. Over the year, \$522,000 were distributed, directly supporting the growth and sustainability of local entrepreneurs. This marks a 61% increase in distributed funds since 2023.

MESO processed 97 IDA withdrawal requests and welcomed 54 new businesses into the program, bringing the total number of small business owners with IDAs to 114. IDA participants have reported increased asset value, accelerated purchase timelines, and greater confidence in managing their businesses.

Serving five counties in Oregon, MESO expanded its IDA offerings to Marion County, addressing a critical gap in access to this impactful financial resource.



\$522K

in IDA Matching grant funds were distributed to small businesses.



54

New business were enrolled into the IDA program.



65%

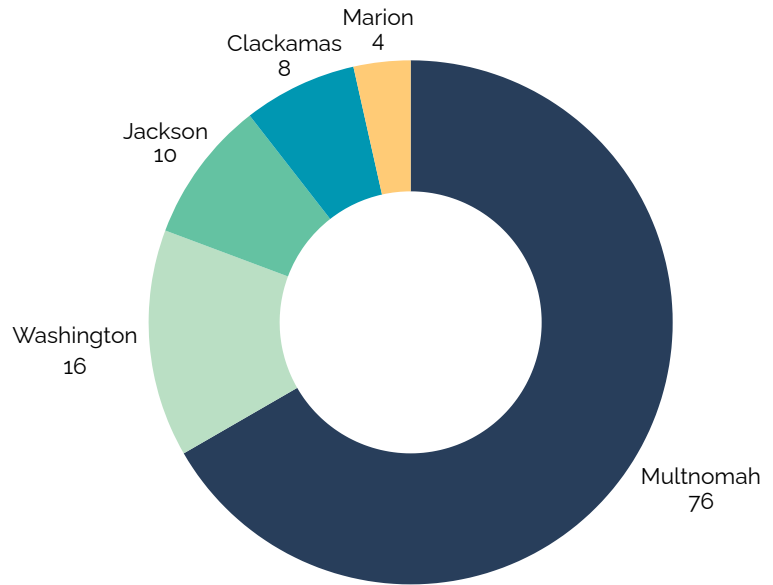
Of IDA participants were female and non-binary entrepreneurs.

MESO

IDA

INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT ACCOUNT

NUMBER OF IDA PARTICIPANTS BY COUNTY



MESO CLIENT TESTIMONIAL



"IDA has pushed me to another level within my company that would have taken me another 6 to 8 months to accomplish.

The savings program is truly a blessing to a company who knows where they want to go."

Dijenaire Frazier, DC Ringz



CHILDCARE

MESO helps childcare providers navigate financial planning, business sustainability, and other critical functions, ensuring they can offer high-quality, accessible childcare. In 2024, MESO supported 37 Preschool for All (PFA) providers across 49 pilot sites, creating 581 Pre-K seats for families in Multnomah County.

Additionally, MESO has partnered with BuildUp Oregon to help childcare providers secure critical funding for facility improvements and expansion. Since April 2024, MESO has assisted in awarding nearly \$11 million in grants and \$4 million in loans, creating and preserving over 1,100 child care seats in Multnomah County. Learn more about BuildUp Oregon at builduporegon.org.



MESO MAKERS MARKET

EMPOWERED BY ONPOINT COMMUNITY CREDIT UNION

The MESO makers market has significantly enriched the lives of vendors, clients, and the broader community. By fostering an inclusive environment, MESO has empowered vendors to thrive by providing them with opportunities to showcase their unique products and services.



Federally insured by NCUA.

**376 Northeast Sumner Street,
Portland, Oregon 97212
Open Tuesday-Saturday, 11AM-5PM**



77

Different vendors showcased their product.

6

Community events were hosted at the MESO Makers Market.

81%

Of vendors identified as female or non-binary in 2024.

MESO CLIENT STORIES

EASTERN LASH ARTISTRY, @EASTERNLASHARTISTRY



Kristina Frolova is a proud Slavic bilingual, woman- entrepreneur and the owner of Eastern Lash Artistry, a business she founded in 2022 with a mission to provide unparalleled luxury lash extension and skin therapy services.

Kristina faced significant challenges in her startup journey, especially following an unfortunate incident in early 2023 when the salon she rented was vandalized and robbed, including her station.

Realizing the need to adapt and strengthen her business to thrive in uncertain times, Kristina turned to MESO for support. Since becoming a MESO client in December 2023, she received immediate assistance. She began meeting with her business advisor regularly, completed her business plan, and learned about budgeting and credit, enrolling in the Credit 101 program. Despite the robbery setback, she managed to establish revenue and clientele at her new location.

Kristina's journey exemplifies resilience, determination, and the spirit of entrepreneurship. MESO in Vancouver is proud to have played a role in Kristina's journey, providing unwavering support every step of the way.

MESO CLIENT STORIES

BAON KAINAN, @BAONKAINAN

1



Geraldine is the co-owner of Baon Kainan, a beloved Portland food truck sharing Filipino-American culture through its acclaimed cuisine. Alongside her husband, Chef Ethan Leung, she has built a loyal following with exceptional food and service. Their family-run business shares their cultural heritage through the lens of food, making Baon Kainan a standout in the local culinary scene.

Baon Kainan is deeply rooted in community, contributing to Portland's Filipino-owned business scene. Their success earned recognition from the James Beard Foundation and a spot on Eater PDX's 38 Essential Restaurants.

Since joining MESO's Empower program in 2023, Geraldine has worked on business planning, financial projections, and skill development. With MESO's support, she secured an IDA savings program to purchase a catering van and received a Prosper Portland grant to invest in business growth. She credits MESO for helping strengthen Baon Kainan's foundation, unlocking new opportunities, and championing their success in the community.

MESO CLIENT STORIES

INSPIRED BOLDNESS, @INSPIRED_BOLDNESS



Melissa Ballard is the owner and primary care provider at Inspired Boldness, a life coaching and mental health nutrition service. A native Portlander, Melissa graduated from Grant High School before heading to the University of Oregon, where she earned a dual major bachelor's degree in journalism and Ethnic Studies. Drawn to helping others, Melissa returned to Portland to pursue a master's degree in social work at Portland State University. Currently a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) and Certified Mental Health Integrative Provider (CMHIP), she provides a unique perspective and a commitment to social justice in her work.

Melissa came to MESO in February 2022; her business advisor recommended the Digital Media workshop series as a strong starting point. After successfully completing the course, she and her business advisor worked together on creating additional revenue streams for the business, as well as enrolling Melissa into the Empower program.

Since joining the Empower program in July 2023, Melissa has attended 17 MESO workshops, expanding her skills and knowledge to the point of publishing her first set of branded journals and daily planners to Amazon in February 2024. She has completed 15 live presentations at different organizations around Oregon; Melissa has also attained her LCSW Supervisory permit, allowing her to take contracts to assist new social workers on their path to certification. Most importantly, Melissa has started to recognize the value of her time and is on a path to increase her prices for speaking engagements, to help subsidize the lower rates she charges for counseling. Melissa plans to continue working with MESO to grow her clientele for counseling and presentations, with plans to develop a fully recorded, licensed curriculum to provide to clients and organizations as a means of generating passive income.



SPONSORS, FUNDERS, AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS

MESO's work to help entrepreneurs follow their small business dreams wouldn't be possible without our sponsors, funders and community partners. MESO appreciates the support we received in 2024 and want to sincerely thank the community for supporting MESO.

SPONSORS AND SUPPORTERS

- 1803 Fund
- Aspen Institute
- Ayton Family Foundation
- Bank of America
- Boeing
- Buchalter
- Business Oregon (State of Oregon)
- Business Oregon EEIP
- Business Oregon TA 2024-25
- City of Beaverton
- City of Beaverton CDBG
- City of Cornelius
- City of Gresham
- City of Gresham CDBG
- City of Gresham Community Enhancement
- City of Hillsboro
- City of Portland
- City of Portland - Prosper Portland
- City of Portland - Reimagine Oregon
- City of Vancouver CDBG
- City of Vancouver, Washington
- Clackamas County
- Collins Foundation
- Community Development Financial Institution
- Community Foundation of SW Washington
- Craft 3
- First Citizens Bank
- Full Potential - Mark Holloway
- JP Chase
- KeyBank
- Killian Pacific
- Marie Lamfrom Charitable Foundation
- Meyer - Justice Oregon
- Meyer Memorial Trust
- Moda Health
- Multnomah County
- Neighborhood Partnerships
- Niemeyer Foundation
- Northwest Area Foundation
- Northwest Business Development Association
- One App
- OnPoint Community Credit Union
- Oregon Community Foundation
- Oregon Community Foundation - Community Building
- Oregon Community Foundation - Thriving Entrepreneurs
- Pacific West Bank
- PNC Bank
- Point West Credit Union
- Port of Portland
- Portland General Electric Foundation
- Prosper Portland
- Reser Family Foundation
- SEED Initiative
- Seeding Justice
- Small Business Administration - MicroLoan
- Small Business Administration - PRIME
- Spirit Mountain
- The Standard
- Trail Blazers Foundation
- U.S. Bank
- U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA)
- Umpqua Bank
- United Fund Advisors
- US Bank
- Washington County
- Washington State Microenterprise Association
- Wells Fargo
- Zidell Family Foundation



MESO ANNUAL GALA

Celebrating 20 Years of Empowering Entrepreneurs

AUGUST 20, 2025

4-6pm: Sip and shop 6:30-8pm: Main Event

CASTAWAY PORTLAND

1900 NW 18th Ave Portland, OR 97209

CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF EMPOWERING ENTREPRENEURS

It's time to gather in support of the individuals and businesses served by MESO. This year is particularly special as we celebrate 20 years of empowering entrepreneurs and transforming communities. We invite you to save the date and join us on Wednesday, August 20th at Castaway Portland to celebrate 20 years of shattering the invisible barriers of success. Together, let's help raise \$300,000 to support the MESO community and our clients.

THE POWER OF YOUR SPONSORSHIP

Your sponsorship is more than just a contribution—it's an investment in dreams, resilience, and transformation. It will help us honor our journey while enabling us to create lasting change in the lives of those we serve. Together, we can open doors to opportunities, foster hope, and empower individuals and communities to thrive.

By becoming a sponsor, you're not just supporting an event—you're becoming part of a movement. A movement that sustains vital initiatives, amplifies voices, and builds bridges to economic equity and empowerment. Your support makes all the difference.

For sponsorship opportunities, contact csanchez@mesopdx.org

CONTACT MESO

WEBSITE: www.mesopdx.org

PHONE: [503-841-3351](tel:503-841-3351)

EMAIL: meso@mesopdx.org

INSTAGRAM: [@mesopdx](https://www.instagram.com/mesopdx)

PRESS AND MEDIA CONTACT: sbasalyga@mesopdx.org

DONATE TO MESO

Visit our website at www.mesopdx.org to donate or scan the QR code

