

Made in the Mid-Willamette Valley

Featuring Polk County Businesses

SEDCOR, the lead economic development agency for Marion and Polk Counties is pleased to offer you a glimpse of the multitude of products and services being manufactured and provided by local area companies. SEDCOR's membership is composed of over 500 business and community leaders who support our mission to enhance and diversify the economy of the Mid-Willamette Valley.



STRATEGIC ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
SEDCOR
Linking industry with our communities.



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Business Description: We are the primary "outreach and engagement" arm of OSU. Extension programs are based in all of the counties. In partnership with Marion and Polk County, we help people apply research-tested information in their daily life, strengthening the local economy, sustaining natural resources and building healthy communities, families and individuals.

Employees: Marion - 17 people, Polk - 12 people.

Business Specialties: We address local needs with educational programs in gardening, family and community health, farming, 4-H youth development, and forestry and natural resources. We provide informal education through workshops, short courses, tours, presentations and educational materials in both print and electronic forms. We specialize in on-farm and forest research that helps businesses stay competitive. We also specialize in training volunteers that serve others - 4-H, Master Gardeners, Master Food Preservers and Master Woodland Managers.

Business History: We are celebrating our 100th birthday. The OSU Extension Service has been in existence since 1911 with the first faculty being placed in Marion County in 1912. An outgrowth of federal legislation including the 1862 Morrill Act, the Hatch Act of 1887 and the 1914 Smith-Lever Act, the partnership and cooperation with Oregon counties enables OSU Extension Service to be the "Front door to OSU". In Marion and Polk County, the Extension Service functions as an integral part of the county. Faculty housed in these offices, in surrounding counties and at the North Willamette Research and Extension Center in Aurora, deliver educational programs to youth, adults, families and businesses.

What is biggest advantage of doing business in the Mid-Willamette Valley: This is the heart of agriculture in Oregon in terms of gross farm sales and crop diversity. Marion, Yamhill and Polk County rank 1st, 9th and 10th in gross sales and grow over 70 different commodities from grass seed, to dairy products, to berries, wine grapes and mint oil. Our agriculture faculty conduct research on farms and share critical information to helping businesses increase efficiency and reduce costs while maintaining environmental health. This area is also home to many higher populated cities. This allows us to train volunteers to help others through a wide diversity of programs in 4-H, Master Gardeners, Master Food Preservers and Master Woodland Managers. There were about 43,000 and 15,000 volunteer hours reported for Marion and Polk County, respectively, which is equal to 21 and 7 additional full time staff.

Essential Business Philosophy: Helping people help themselves. We "engage" people in learning to increase knowledge, change behavior and ultimately improve agriculture and forestry businesses; youth, family and community health; and natural resources. We use a variety of informal teaching methods and rely heavily on "learning by doing".

Best Way to Stay Competitive: Conduct needs assessments with target audiences on a regular basis to detect issues affecting them and how we can best help them. Market services using a variety of methods to reach target audiences. Network with and assess services from other organizations to identify our competitive niche, not duplicate services, and partner with others to leverage efforts for larger impacts. Evaluate the results of our programs to measure impact and identify how to modify our programs. Report impacts to stakeholders that fund our staff and offices.

What is most Challenging in Work: Educating and outreach to stakeholders to maintain or improve funding, and recruiting volunteers to help deliver programs.

Best Business Decision: Create a diverse advisory network of volunteers to provide feedback to me, our office and our stakeholders.

Toughest Business Decision: Making staffing decisions when resources are reduced.

What Trends do you see Happening in your Industry: Large farming operations are impacted by market demands in other parts of the U.S. and other countries. As the U.S. economy rebounds, so will the commodities related to building, like nursery and grass seed. Rising oil prices will affect our ability to compete in transporting products, as well as in growing low value field crops. Rising labor costs will continue to affect our ability to compete with other countries with cheaper labor and fewer environmental regulations. There will continue to be struggles in transferring large farm and woodland operations to younger generations due to our tax system and the lower number of youth wanting to go into these businesses. On the other hand, there is a growing number of women and minorities taking lead roles in managing farms and woodlands.

Small farming operations are increasing in numbers, especially with people wanting to own or lease a few acres to grow and market their products locally. Demand for "buying local" has helped these businesses market their products. Also, the proximity of our farms to Salem and Portland has caused an increase in agriculturally related tourism.

The economy has reduced funding for extra-curricular activities for youth and social services for families. This has increased the pressure to deliver our 4-H, gardening, food preservation, nutrition and financial literacy programs. We see these low-cost programs growing in all parts of the county as we increase our outreach.

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