



Strategic Plan

JULY 2023



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Background and History

The Talent Business Alliance has been active since 2005 (formerly the Talent Chamber of Commerce). After a period of volunteer inactivity due to COVID-19, a new board reactivated the organization in the spring of 2022 and is working to support small businesses, local non-profits, and emerging entrepreneurs in Talent, Oregon.

In 2020, Talent lost 60% of its businesses in the Almeda Fire, and the remaining 40% are mostly small businesses that are struggling in the wake of incredible losses from the fire and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Talent Business Alliance is building connections among local business owners and entrepreneurs, supporting their access to financial aid and business grants, increasing the customer base around Talent, and providing technical assistance to support the business community through their recovery.

Vision Statement

The Talent Business Alliance envisions a healthy and livable community where residents and stakeholders are empowered to build sustainable family wealth through small business ownership and a local supportive network.



Our Mission

The Talent Business Alliance supports local businesses and entrepreneurs at every stage of development. We foster a thriving and equitable business environment. We offer technical assistance, networking, marketing, and advocacy to create social and economic opportunities that expand the vitality of the community of Talent.

Core Values

Commitment to serve

Equity

Community-building

Cooperation

Shared (collective, mutual) responsibility for each other's success



Assets and Challenges

Talent, Oregon is a beautiful small town nestled in the Siskiyou and Cascade mountains of southern Oregon. It is a friendly place that has a walkable downtown and is in close proximity and relationship with its neighboring cities of Ashland, Phoenix, and Medford. This close knit community has the opportunity to rebuild and create a new system of business support and development following the Almeda Fire.

The atmosphere of Talent is charming and welcoming, the lighting is beautiful, and it has a reputation for being a safe, family-oriented, connected community that is well networked between its businesses, nonprofits, and residents. There is community support and enthusiasm for local businesses, support for the Arts, and turnout for local events. There is potential for local businesses to develop along with the growing community and to expand community support.

With all its potential, Talent also has some challenges to overcome. Being that it is a small community, it likely needs to attract visitors and people from neighboring communities to sustain a robust, diverse, and balanced business environment. Since the fire, there is a larger than normal need for businesses to reestablish and for the community to develop new, family-sized businesses, but the barriers to starting new businesses are many. There is a lack of storefronts and affordable, commercial spaces to rent. The costs of new building projects have risen and the cost of System Development Charges are too high for both residential and commercial projects to become 'shovel ready.' This has resulted in many vacant lots and the loss of high commercial energy.

Talent is lacking in essential services that would allow its residents to stay in town to do business, rather than driving the short distance to Ashland or Medford. As such, there is a perception that there is not enough foot traffic or the ability to bring people in and keep them. After losing some valuable infrastructure in the fire, Talent is also challenged to provide the connectivity and accessibility that could help not only connect the downtown area, but also to connect the downtown to the businesses and services located along Hwy 99. As Talent builds back, prioritizing the development of mixed-use, affordable commercial and residential spaces, connectivity between different areas of town, and co-marketing Talent as a whole community seem to be popular suggestions for overcoming some of these challenges.

Community Priorities

Talent is a place where citizens, business owners, and emerging entrepreneurs continue to make a difference through participation. Before and after the fire, surveys and listening sessions reflect similar needs from the business community. These highlight the need for businesses, community members, nonprofits, and the maker/artist community to come together to form a support network and ecosystem that fosters collaboration, cooperation, and an environment that focuses on equity and assists businesses as they develop and mature over time.

This includes developing more foot traffic for downtown businesses, especially by bringing more people into town via community events and small festivals. Businesses have also asked for technical assistance to navigate accessing grants and other funding resources, permitting processes, and business growth and development resources. In order to achieve the vision and mission laid out above, TBA has identified these three areas for program development over the next two years.



Priority Program Areas

Technical Assistance + Business Development Support

- 1. Develop Grants / Capital Resources and Services**
 - a. Resources on where / how to access grants + loans
 - b. Assist with writing grant proposals / business plans
 - c. Offer proposal / business plan review
 - d. Low-interest loans/ community development \$
- 2. Host Workshops / Class**
- 3. Create Resource Database / Contact List**
- 4. Offer one-on-one support through the permit process**
- 5. Develop a Mentor Network**

Business Network Development

- 1. Continue building out the Business Network / Mixers**
 - a. Recruit more hosts
 - b. Could be more curated with activities, speakers, Q & A sessions, workshops
 - c. Culminate in a larger Annual event
 - d. Hold networking event for land / commercial space owners + business owners / entrepreneurs
- 2. Develop a local Business Directory, including:**
 - a. Service providers (plumbers, electricians, contractors, etc)
 - b. Storefronts
 - c. Vacant lots / commercial spaces
- 3. Visit other “Not Your Grandmother’s Chambers” and Business Networks to look at models and potential cross-pollination / cooperation**
- 4. Local business highlights → Up the social media game / Ad space in TNR**
- 5. Do surveys / research as needed**

Priority Program Areas continued

Community Event Coordination

1. **Continue Boost & Amplify grant program**
2. **Hire Event Coordinator / Point person for cohesive organizing and advance planning**
3. **Create communication loops for community events**
 - a. Community Event Calendar
 - b. Facebook pages
 - c. Flyers
 - d. Talent News & Review

In addition to the need for developing a robust network, supplying business development support and technical assistance, and increasing foot traffic and community engagement via events, there was a clear need for more communication and connection between the City of Talent and Jackson County and the business community. Currently there is no liaison between these entities and yet, there exist a number of challenges to overcome and processes to navigate that could benefit from relationship development and advocacy. TBA is uniquely positioned to be able to play this role.

Priorities for Advocacy and Relationship Development between the Business Community and the City of Talent and Jackson County

More connection between businesses and city staff

Clear communication + efficient procedures from the city about zoning / building rules

- TBA can lobby for better process / policies
- Work with the City on System Development Charges

Encouragement of mixed-use commercial / residential / affordable spaces

Hwy 99 corridor feels disconnected from the rest of town, 99 businesses not as connected as downtown businesses

- Make 99 more walkable, create a draw on 99 to get people downtown → synergy
- Upsize downtown → Review zoning in downtown, connect downtown & 99

Better signage to lead people into town ex: “Talent, we’re full of it!”

Incentives for business owners to come to Talent

- More retail shops + services, including hotel / motel
- Rebuild w/ small to midsize family businesses

Up until this point, TBA has been almost 100 percent volunteer run, only benefitting from a small amount of administrative staff support in the past year. During the strategic planning process it became clear that in addition to building up outward-facing programs and an advocacy role for the organization, that TBA also needed to build some internal organizational infrastructure in order to be able to benefit and assist the local business community for many years to come.

Priorities for Organizational Development

Funding for Staff / Contractors

1. **Administrative Coordinator**
2. **Event Assistant / Specialist / Network Manager**
3. **Event Coordinator (contracted for specific events)**
4. **Business Technical Assistant Specialist**
5. **Organization Leadership and Development**

Board of Directors Development

1. **Review Bylaws**
2. **Re-elect existing board members**
3. **Recruit new board members**

Communication Systems

1. **Newsletter for Talent businesses to keep folks informed**
2. **Work with Talent News and Review → expanded events list, local business feature?**
3. **Recruit / incentivize business owners to fill gaps / needs, utilize vacant lots**

Potential Future Endeavors

1. **Develop a kiosk downtown and/ or some community bulletin boards**
2. **Downtown Directory w/ Map + Wayfinding signs**
3. **Create and Support Coworking Spaces**
4. **Develop an Incubator Hub**
5. **Talent Branding**
6. **Buy Local/ "Talent Bucks" Campaign**
7. **Beautification Projects**



TALENT BUSINESS ALLIANCE

"Helping Talent Businesses Shine"

www.TalentBusinessAlliance.org