



# **Snoqualmie Valley Micro-business Incubator Feasibility Study**

**February 2025**

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## Executive Summary

On behalf of the City of Carnation, A Supportive Community For All completed the Snoqualmie Valley Micro-business Incubator Feasibility Study in partnership with Cloudbreak Collective. The project was funded by the Washington State Department of Commerce and overseen by the Community Economic Revitalization Board (CERB) to assess the community's economic needs and opportunities. The hypothesis was that a micro-business incubator could be a useful tool to address entrepreneur needs in our region, specifically among local artisans, creatives, and small business owners.

**Methodology:** Between May and December 2024, we undertook a series of targeted activities to gather insights about community needs. These activities included in-person and virtual interviews, focus groups, an online survey, and outreach at farmers markets and other local community events in the Snoqualmie Valley. We convened an advisory committee comprised of community members representing local businesses and nonprofits throughout the Valley. This group provided insight and guidance throughout the study process.

**Key Insights:** The findings confirm a demand for shared retail and meeting spaces, affordable resources, and tailored support for local small businesses and entrepreneurs. The proposed incubator aims to foster economic growth, build community resilience, and enhance equitable opportunities.

**Challenges for Businesses:** Identified challenges include high operational costs, scarcity of affordable retail and workspace, limited access to business community and mentorship, and feelings of isolation among entrepreneurs.

**Proposed Solution:** To address challenges for local small businesses, this report proposes a versatile incubator that offers retail and meeting space, business support, networking opportunities, and community-focused events.

**Feasibility:** This project's success hinges on identifying an appropriate location, securing a capable host organization, and obtaining sustainable funding, requiring a significant seed funding investment estimated at \$175,000. There is demand for an incubator with

community interest in flexible and accessible spaces, business support services, and opportunities for local entrepreneurs.

### Recommendations:

- ❖ Secure seed funding to launch the initiative.
- ❖ Contract a Program Strategy Consultant and Grant Writer to support programmatic components, including (1) vetting partner organizations, (2) additional research and outreach, and (3) development of a comprehensive business plan to sustain long-term impact.
- ❖ Partner with a qualified host organization to ensure operational expertise.

By advancing these efforts, the Snoqualmie Valley Micro-business Incubator can serve as a cornerstone for innovation, inclusion, and economic opportunity in the region.



“There’s a lot that’s homegrown here. It’s of great value, and income inequality is a huge issue. So I feel like in the model of whatever’s created, there needs to be a place for everyone of any income. As a working artist, to fit in and not ever feel like you’re being priced out by somebody who can afford a much higher studio rent.”

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT,  
OCTOBER 25, 2024

## Our Team

**Laura Fletcher** served as the consultant, writer, and research strategist for this project, leading research design, data analysis, and strategic development to ensure it accurately reflected community needs and economic opportunities. Laura is the Managing Director at Evergreen Business Capital Community Finance, where she oversees strategic initiatives to expand access to capital for under-represented entrepreneurs. Previously, Laura was a consultant at Cloudbreak Collective, supporting mission-driven organizations with financial strategy and impact evaluation. She holds a Master of Business Administration from Seattle University and a Bachelor of Arts in Politics from Whitman College. She is committed to economic empowerment, financial inclusion, and fostering equitable opportunities for small businesses and communities.

**Malia Pownall** is the Partnerships and Outreach Manager at A Supportive Community For All and led the community engagement and outreach components of this project. Malia has participated in a variety of qualitative and quantitative research projects that contribute to the bodies of work on best practices for outdoor educators' approach with diverse audiences, evaluation design to improve outcomes for environmental education programs, and understanding ways that justice is considered in municipal climate adaptation planning. Throughout her work, Malia remains passionate about community wellbeing and creating inclusive opportunities for those most impacted by structural inequities. Malia holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Environmental Biology from Christopher Newport University and a Master of Science in Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation from Virginia Tech.



## Acknowledgments

We express our deepest appreciation to all the individuals who shared their voices, experiences, and perspectives throughout the process and extend a special thank you to the Advisory Committee for their time, expertise, and commitment to this initiative. Your leadership and thoughtful contributions have played a crucial role in grounding this work in the realities and aspirations of local entrepreneurs:

- ❖ Will Fenholt, Business Owner and Independent Artist
- ❖ Morgan Henley, Business Owner of Morgan Henley Presents
- ❖ Deb Landers, North Bend Art & Industry Chair
- ❖ Karla Russell, Empower Youth Network

We would like to extend our gratitude to the staff at A Supportive Community For All, Cloudbreak Collective, and the City of Carnation for their invaluable support throughout this project. Specifically, thank you to Jody Miesel, Executive Director of A Supportive Community for All, and Rhonda Ender, Carnation City Manager, for their invaluable support, insights, and guidance throughout this project.

We hope this project serves as a foundation for fostering economic opportunities, strengthening community ties, and supporting the incredible talent and creativity that define the Snoqualmie Valley.

– Laura Fletcher & Malia Pownall