

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**EDC LOOKS BACK ON 2018**

(Davenport, WA February 15, 2019) When the Lincoln County Economic Development Council looks back on 2018 they see a year like no other. That is true of every year as there are always some consistent activities and always some activities that are unexpected. The following is a snapshot of some of the services and projects the EDC worked on to improve quality of life and economic health in 2018.

The EDC provides assistance to Lincoln County businesses. During the past year thirty-nine businesses were directly assisted with dozens more assisted through channels like tourism promotion and social media. A Social Media Boot Camp benefited businesses looking to increase their online presence and fifty-seven businesses were featured through a 2018 “Shop Local for the Holidays” Facebook campaign.

In addition to business assistance, the EDC works with elected officials and civic groups to improve all aspects of our social and physical infrastructure so that businesses can remain in our rural county and be successful. The following are some capacity building activities the EDC was involved with in 2018:

The top complaint the EDC hears from business owners is not having access to high speed internet. A recent survey conducted by the EDC revealed that 70% of local businesses consider their current internet to be inadequate. Part of the problem is declining service from our only DSL provider and the EDC has been pushing local wireless providers to increase their speeds and expand their service areas to fill the gap – and they are. Watch for a full broadband press release very soon. Also in 2018 the EDC published “Connecting Lincoln County”, an evaluation of local broadband. This was a project administered by the Nat’l Telecommunication & Information Administration with the intent of providing Lincoln County and its communities with the data needed to apply for broadband infrastructure grants and loans.

Another request the EDC often gets is for small business loans. The EDC does not make loans so we need partners that do. The loan officer for the Tri County Economic Development District’s Rural Opportunities Loan Fund (ROLF) will begin holding office hours in WSU Extension’s conference room the second Tuesday of each month from 10:00 to 2:00 starting March 12. If you are unable to secure a small business loan through a local bank ROLF may be the program for you. Tri County’s offices are in Colville and bringing this resource here means business owners don’t have to take time to travel there.

The EDC contracts with Lincoln County to be the Visitor & Convention Bureau and administer their tourism tax. The sole purpose of the contract is to bring tourists and their discretionary income into Lincoln County stores, restaurants, motels, gas stations, and real estate offices through tourism promotion. The EDC has been administering the county's tourism tax since 2010 and will again this year. Our proposal for the 2019 contract can be found at <https://www.facebook.com/lakerooseveltandmore/>. Check out the new commercial for 2019 while you are there.

Federal legislation was passed in December 2017 that included Opportunity Zones – an investment incentive that provides unique tax benefits for long term investment in eligible census tracts. The EDC was allowed to apply for one zone and the census tract that includes Odessa, Harrington and Sprague, a tract that is contiguous with both Spokane and Grant Counties, was eligible and was approved by the Governor last April. This is a recruitment incentive that we have never had before and we are promoting the zone to Spokane County for business development; to Grant County as a potential means to fund the extension of irrigation pipe from the west; and through the Dept. of Commerce site selector property data base. This information has also been shared with all banks and credit unions in the county. Learn more at <http://lincolnedc.org/opportunity-zone/>.

The EDC regularly hosts Mayors meetings that bring together our elected officials so they can learn from one another's challenges and successes. In 2018 a dominant topic of concern was the cost of maintaining municipal water and sewer systems. As a result of those meetings, Lincoln County was selected for a pilot project where mayors and system operators will learn how eliminating redundancy and sharing resources on a countywide basis could save them money and headaches. Safe and sustainable water systems are critical to economic development and the EDC will facilitate the 3-month training process with WA Dept. of Health funding the project and Rural Community Assistance Corp. providing the training.

The EDC hosts and markets a list of Lincoln County's commercial and industrial properties on our website. Additionally, through our partnership with the Dept. of Commerce, we post properties to a national site selector database that is accessible to a global audience. Both lists are a free service to commercial property owners.

These projects float all boats and leverage outside dollars. This is what the EDC's nine volunteer board members and 1.5 full time employees work to deliver. We invite you to stay in touch with us by following us on Facebook and Instagram (lincolncountyedc & lakerooseveltandmore) and through our website [www.LincolnEDC.org](http://www.LincolnEDC.org). You can also reach us directly at 509-368-7085 or [Margie@LincolnEDC.org](mailto:Margie@LincolnEDC.org). We are happy to help.