



MicroEnterprise Resources Initiatives and Trainings

MERIT is a microbusiness development organization that empowers individuals to increase self-sufficiency and build personal assets. The MERIT mission is to help people explore, launch and grow successful small businesses through training and support.

MERIT was created in 2003 by three AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers, Rich and Becky Abel and Rob Anderson. Bill Goldsmith, an early advocate for microenterprise in Oregon, invited key local leaders in economic development to be sponsors for the original VISTA volunteers who created MERIT. Goldsmith brought together the Chemeketa Small Business Development Center (SBDC), Polk Community Development Corporation, Salem-Keizer Community Development Corporation, Catholic Community Services and West Valley Housing Authority.

The program became a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization in 2007, and hired its second director, Forrest Peck. Since then the organization has grown its presence in Yamhill County, Polk County and Marion County. Additionally, it has expanded to provide services to Spanish speakers. The Board of Directors has grown to include new members not connected to the original founding partners. MERIT continues to be financially self-supporting, and relies upon Chemeketa Community College for in-kind support for facilities use and IT support. The Chemeketa role in establishing MERIT is the secret sauce that made it all work.

Since its inception MERIT has been working to empower people to increase income and build financial assets through self-employment. Over 650 people and more than 250 businesses have been helped. Collaboration is the DNA that created MERIT, and the organization continues to leverage its resources with other organizations to address community needs. These are the same principles that lead to the creation of MERIT more than 10 years ago.

WWW.MERITNW.org

MERIT is located at 626 High St NE Salem Oregon Suite 202 503-584-7314