

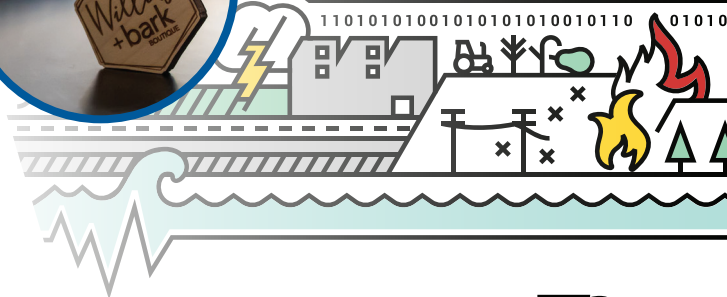
ECONOMIC RESILIENCY

Business Spotlight

Traci Griffiths opened Willow + Bark Boutique in 2019 with the goal of providing excellent customer service to everyone who comes through the door. The boutique offers a variety of clothing styles and sizes, jewelry, accessories, shoes, and gifts for women from all of walks of life. **In this Spotlight, we learn about how she got started and how she dealt with the pandemic.**

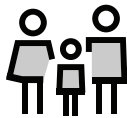


Willow + bark BOUTIQUE



Not my first rodeo...

I had my own business in Gresham before moving to the Gorge. When I moved back to The Dalles I saw a need for a local women's clothing store. My parents had a department store when I was growing up in The Dalles and I worked for them. This was back when The Dalles had a thriving downtown community. When I moved back, I wanted to be part of building that community back up again.



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Pandemic

I already had a website and Instagram in place for marketing, but the online traffic picked up during the shutdown. I offered curbside pickup and did some deliveries. I applied for some grants and the Paycheck Protection Program, but I have always been very careful with budgeting and make sure I have cash in reserve. I work with some great vendors that were sensitive to the situation. I also have a great core group of customers and I have to give a huge thank you to those that stepped up to help me.



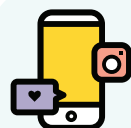
Starting up

I sought a loan from my local bank but I was denied because I hadn't started the business yet. I ended up getting personal loan from family and got started on a shoestring budget. After starting the business, I was able to get a loan from MCEDD that allowed me to move into a larger location on the main drag downtown. I met with advisor from the Small Business Development Center (SBDC). I had already drafted a business plan and they helped me fine tune it and walked me through a 5-year financial outlook.



Recommendation to people wanting to start a business...

People should really look at where they want to open a business and make sure that there is a desire and need for that type of business. If there isn't, the business won't succeed. I have people come in and thank me for being here, which supports my original thought that there was a need for a women's clothing store in The Dalles.



Most important online tool:

Instagram is really where it's at — that's where most of our marketing takes place.

If I had some free time...

I love to paddle board, but I never have enough time.



"I want everyone to feel comfortable shopping in my store. It is a friendly place and easy to shop in. No pressure, no restrictions, everyone is welcome."

Learn more about this business:

willowandbarkboutique.com

Facebook: [willowandbarkb](https://www.facebook.com/willowandbarkb)

Instagram: [willowandbarkb](https://www.instagram.com/willowandbarkb)



MCEDD.org/ready

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