



# Bringing Ideas and Industries Together

Portland Expo Center  
FY 2021 – 22 Report

# Portland's gathering place once again

The Portland Expo Center's location on the Columbia River has been an important place of gathering and trade for the Tribes of the Lower Columbia for centuries. Since the early 1920s we have continued the tradition of welcoming people from across the region as the West Coast's largest multi-purpose facility.

In 2021, while still under COVID-19 guidelines, we had the opportunity to once again to host large-scale public events (albeit with a much smaller team). Through persistence and dedication to serve the public and our partners we were able to welcome back several events including the Pacific Northwest's Sportsmen's Show and the Columbia Empire Volleyball Association Regional Tournament.

Additionally, we continued our community partnerships through COVID-19 Testing and Vaccination efforts with the Oregon Health Authority and as Portland Public School's AP Testing site.

As we continue to build back, we are more optimistic than ever that we can create new and enduring opportunities for Oregonians to gather for generations to come.

"What the pandemic showed us is that there is an intense need for youth sports space in our region. We partnered with the Expo Center throughout the entire pandemic to provide space for our athletes to safely engage with their teammates leading up to the return of live sporting events. Our 2022 regional tournament was back in full force and we look forward to continuing that trend."

**Cody March,**  
**Columbia Empire**  
**Volleyball Association**

"At a time when there were so many unknowns, it felt rewarding to offer our venue as a place where people could receive life-saving care. We've been a community gathering place for over a century now and operating as a testing and vaccination site felt like a natural extension of our mission."

**Matthew P. Rotchford,**  
**Executive Director**

## All for Oregon

As we saw our staff, their families, and our broader community impacted by COVID-19, we were proud to be able to offer our building a place where people from across the region could access essential services. As a drive-through community testing and vaccination site for OHSU and the Oregon Health Authority, we saw between 50 and over 60,000 people were served between the OHSU and OHA COVID operations.

## Economic Impact FY 21-22

Total spending:	\$22.9 M
Total jobs:	160
Total earnings:	\$9.8 M
Total tax revenues:	\$1.1M

## Looking to the future

In-person events were revived in 2022 with events like the Sportsmen's Show drawing over 30,000 people and other favorites like RV, boat and car shows returning to their pre-COVID numbers. With plans to pivot to more sporting events and community-centric events like Chess for Success, we envision a future that invites more inclusiveness when Oregonians gather together.



### Event Highlights

**66**

Number  
of Events

**290,000**

Total  
Attendance

## Return of the big top to the Expo Center

While there were many different examples of resilience and revival this year, it was with great joy as Portland welcomed back Cirque du Soleil after a five-year hiatus. Alegría welcomed thousands of people to the grand chapiteau and the magic of the production reminded us of the unique privilege of enjoying art together. Cirque's six week residency resulted in over \$7 million in economic impact through local spending at restaurants, hotels and the number of jobs created. The Expo Center's ability to host a wide range of events (including Cirque) highlights Expo's role as an essential cultural campus and economic engine for the region.



# From the Director

The Portland Expo Center is a gathering place for consumer shows and lively cultural experiences that draw visitors from across the region and beyond. We are proud to serve as Oregon's premier multi-purpose community-centered event space.

In 2021, at a time of great local, national, and global uncertainty, we made the difficult decision to reduce our operational costs to preserve this community asset for years to come. We used the time to improve our buildings to ensure a safe environment for visitors when events could return. At the same time, we rose to face the challenges and restrictions imposed by the pandemic with optimism — finding new ways to host events in compliance with the state's safety guidelines, including a COVID-safe drive-in movie event.

As Oregonians began to return to our public community spaces, we hosted events like the Boat, RV, and Sportsmen's shows, the Chess for Success tournament for students, and a successful New Year's Eve concert. The highlight of the year was bringing "Alegría" by Cirque du Soleil to Portland for a much-needed joyful return to the Expo Center. For the first time since 2017, thousands of guests enjoyed the awe-inspiring experience of seeing this big-top show with their families.

As we look to the future, we're thrilled to build on this recovery and continue to be a place where everyone can enjoy their favorite event in a space where all are welcome.

Matthew P. Rotchford  
Portland Expo Center Executive Director



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