

Education

Post Graduate Courses,
Economics, Columbia
University

M.S. Mineral Economics,
Pennsylvania State University

B.S. Earth Sciences, Adelphi
University

Years at ECONorthwest: 25

Years in Industry: 45

Areas of Expertise

Market Research

Business Economics

Strategic Analysis

Household Behavioral
Research

Robert Whelan, Project Director & Senior Economist

Robert is a Project Director who joined ECONorthwest in 1996. He specializes in market research, strategic planning, financial feasibility analysis, and economic forecasting. He has successfully used his skills to advise Indian tribes, local governments, nonprofit organizations, and businesses on strategies, new developments, expansions, and social/economic assessments. He analyzes a wide range of industries, including retailing, tourism, electronics, energy, construction, casino gaming, agriculture, food stores, film and video production, manufacturing, and mining. Before joining ECONorthwest, Robert was a Mineral Economist for the State of Oregon. He has also worked as a Director of Strategic Planning for a major northwest corporation, as a Manager of Market Research for a multinational materials company, and as a Senior Economist for a division of the Chase Manhattan Bank.

REPRESENTATIVE PROJECTS

Robert has served as Project Director or Manager on the following projects, unless otherwise noted:

- **Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde-OR (ongoing)** On call economic advisor to the Executive committee of the Spirit Mountain Casino providing forecasts and analyses of matters affecting the casino, its restaurants, and the Tribes.
- **SF Proper Hotel EB5 RFE Response— San Francisco, CA (Ongoing).** For a major developer, calculating the job impacts from the development, operations, and net new visitor increases in San Francisco.
- **Redlands hotel feasibility-Redlands CA (2022).** Conducted a hotel market analysis using competitor hotel and consumer segment data to ascertain the viability of a proposed boutique hotel in Redlands, CA.

- **Portland Bureau of Transportation-OR (2022).** Conducted a market analysis on a policy of offering free space on City streets for outdoor dining affected business at restaurants. Used cell phone data to determine the impact of the policy on restaurants. Analysis revealed that restaurants that took advantage of the outdoor dining policy did not, in total, garner more business than restaurants that were opened, but only offered indoor dining. The observation appeared to be the result of an economic phenomenon called the voltage effect. Further analysis estimated the value to a restaurant in the future of having access to outdoor dining space occupying one City parking space is about \$1,700 a year.
- **Upscale residential development market viability study (2021).** San Dimas, CA. In a city with no comparable developments, used a Prism Profile analysis to estimate the viability of a proposed, but speculative, upscale housing development. Analysis broke out the entire residential area by the consumer profiles of several dozen household segment types, going beyond the traditional demographic analysis usually done.
- **Effect of historical horse race slot machines on the Oregon Lottery and Oregon tribal casino-OR (2021).** Using a complex set of spending and consumer behaviour data, the effect of the introduction of a new form of gaming on the Oregon Lottery and Tribes was calculated. The report was used to encourage the Governor to hold back on the introduction of this new form of gaming.
- **Eugene Emeralds OR Baseball Park Impact—Eugene, OR (2021).** Analysis calculated the economic impacts of a new venue on Land County and also forecast the spillover effects of increased tourism on Eugene hotels and tax revenues along with a market analysis of major music touring events.
- **Grand Ronde Casino Feasibility—Wood Village, OR (2021).** Completed a market and financial feasibility of a major resort casino. From that, he wrote an extensive community and economic impact report for the Grand Ronde Tribe.
- **White Oak Limestone Mining Prospect—Blakely, GA (2021).** Used data from drill hole cores and a geologic analysis, determined the economic feasibility of developing an agricultural limestone mine in southwest Georgia to serve peanut and cotton farms in the region.
- **Ironworkers Local 29 Cost of Living Forecast—Portland, OR (2020).** Calculated the true cost of living for union families in the various metro area for their contract negotiations.
- **Chehalem Cultural Center Impacts—Newberg, OR (2020).** Conducted a financial feasibility, visitor economic impact, and market size analysis for a proposed new performing arts theater in Newberg, Oregon, at the Chehalem Cultural Center.

- **PNW Sportsmen’s Show Economic Impact Analysis—Portland, OR (2020).** Updated an economic and visitor impact analysis of the Pacific Northwest Sportsmen’s show at the Portland Expo Center.
- **Restore Oregon—Oregon (2020).** Conducted research on the CO2 reductions achieved through renovating historic buildings as opposed to tearing down and replacing them. Estimated the economic value of the reduced emissions.
- **International Marine Mammal Project and Perkins Coie Law Firm—Mystic, CT (2020).** Reviewed the financial history and risks associated with the importation of five beluga whales to the Mystic Aquarium.
- **California Department of Parks and Recreation—Sacramento, California (2020).** Developed a hotel market forecast model and built a financial *pro forma* that determined the financial feasibility of the state developing a hotel in the historic Old Sacramento District.
- **Northwest Innovation Works—Kalama, WA (2020).** Conducted an economic, jobs, and local tax impact study for a proposed \$2.5 BN industrial plant in Kalama, Washington.
- **Plumbing and Mechanical Contractors Association and UA290—Oregon and SW Washington (2020).** Conducted a series of interviews with union contractors and members to identify opportunities for increased market penetration and barriers towards that goal.
- **OCHIN Workforce Availability and Wages Analysis—Portland, OR (2019).** Conducted an analysis of workforce availability, cost of living, and wages for cities throughout the U.S. to help assist a nonprofit healthcare organization in identifying places to locate a new office.
- **Analysis of the Market for Organic Hazelnuts—Statewide, Oregon (2019).** Estimated the international market for organic hazelnuts and assessing the demand for and financial feasibility of developing certified organic processing capacity.
- **Waterfront Park Landmark—Portland, OR (2019).** Provided a visitor impact and city tax forecast for a proposed event/tourist venue at Portland’s Waterfront Park
- **Grand Ronde RV Park Feasibility—Grand Ronde, OR (2019).** Conducted a feasibility study and financial projection for an RV park at Spirit Mountain Casino.
- **EB5 Jobs Forecast, Lancaster, CA (2019).** For purposes of gaining U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) approvals for an EB-5 investment, conducted a job creation analysis for a new hotel proposed for a suburb of Los Angeles, California.
- **Q Thomas PDX Clean Energy Tax Petition—Portland, OR (2019).** Forecast the tax revenues that a ballot initiative would raise in the city if passed and if applied only to businesses earning 500K revenue in Portland and 1B nationally.

- **Timbisha Hotel Market Feasibility Update—Furnace Creek, CA (2019).** Updated a Death Valley hotel feasibility study for the Timbisha Shoshone Tribe.
- **Las Vegas Paiute Indian Colony—Las Vegas, Nevada (2019).** Conducted market feasibility and conceptual analyses for recreational marijuana retailing, cultivation, and entertainment businesses, as well as a smoking lounge.
- **DCF of Big League Gum Royalties—Portland, OR (2019).** The analysis projected revenues, expenses, and cash flows several years into the future for the royalties from Big League Gum to estimate the fair value of the private firm.
- **Oregon Tribal Gaming Alliance—Portland, OR (2019).** Calculated the size of the gaming industry in Oregon and the impacts and market share of the industry held by Oregon’s Indian tribes.
- **City of John Day Economic Development Strategy—John Day, OR (2019).** Prepared a market and economic feasibility study of a proposed commercial indoor hydroponic farm for the City of John Day
- **Pembina Pipeline Corp./Jordan Cove—Calgary, Alberta (2019).** Updated numerous economic studies for a proposed LNG plant in Coos Bay, OR.
- **Impact of New Soda Ash Terminal—Longview and Vancouver, WA (2019).** Forecast the jobs and economic impacts of a proposed soda ash transshipment (rail to oceangoing vessel) facility being considered by a Turkish multinational.
- **EB-5 for EB-5 Global/William & Dame—Portland, OR (2016–2019).** For purposes of gaining U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) approvals under the EB-5 immigrant investment program, conducted numerous job creation and related research studies for hotel and office development projects in Portland, Los Angeles, and San Francisco.
- **Port Hudson Financial Review—Port Townsend, WA (2018).** Reviewed a proposed lease of Port Hudson by the NW Maritime Center for the Port of Port Townsend.
- **Cow Creek Economic and Fiscal Impact Reports—Douglas County, OR (2018).** Updated economic and fiscal impact reports for the Cow Creek Tribe of Douglas County. These reports describe the Tribe’s economic impacts arising through its business operations, tribal government facilities, the Tribe’s employees, and its charitable donations. Also, matched employee and tribal membership roles with the Douglas County Assessor database to determine how much property taxes Cow Creek tribal members and employees paid in 2017.

- **Tampa Transit Sales Tax Measure—Tampa, FL (2018).** Evaluated the burden by household income classes of the sales tax measure on the November 2018 ballot that would pay for transit by adding a 1% consumer tax on goods in Hillsborough County, Florida.
- **Multnomah Athletic Club—Portland, OR (2018).** Provided a series of research studies that determined the magnitude of a generation gap for the historic membership club and identified specific consumer clusters apt to join the club. The information was used by the club for long-term strategic planning.
- **Blumm, Inc. Charter School Economic and Market Feasibility Study—Fruitland and Middleton, ID (2018).** Provided the economic and market research that an Idaho educational nonprofit needed for a USDA rural development grant application.
- **Portland General Electric Economic Impacts and Research—Portland, OR (2018).** Did an economic impact analysis of a major electric utility showing its impacts on Oregon, as well as accounting for all taxes the utility stimulates in the economy. In addition to a technical report, an illustrated short piece was produced to facilitate the utility’s community engagement efforts.
- **Yakama Agribusiness—Toppenish, WA (2018).** A series of research projects was conducted to assist the Yakama Indians to decide which farm products to grow on Tribal lands that would be brought into production. An ongoing follow-up project will find the rate of return of three different farming/livestock operations that best suit Yakama’s skillsets and marketing advantages.
- **Tulalip Indian Tribe Amazon HQ—Marysville, WA (2017).** Provided the Tulalip Tribe with all of the hard economic and community data needed for them to submit a second headquarters proposal to Amazon. The data and descriptions of such showed the Tribal property had the infrastructure in place, and neighboring communities had the resources to support a second company HQ.
- **Inflation Outlook Study—Seattle, WA (2017).** For the Iron Workers District Council of the Pacific Northwest, ECONorthwest prepared a report entitled, “Iron Workers Cost of Living Study,” that addresses the inflation outlook confronting members of the Iron Workers Local 86, which covers the Seattle Metro Area. This report included an overview of the national economy and U.S. inflation forecast, the outlook for construction starts for the Seattle Metro Area, an analysis of differences between the national and regional costs of living, and a forecast to 2020 of the Seattle Consumer Price Index and costs of living for typical construction workers.

- **Economic Effects of Water Service Disruptions—Portland, OR (2017).** ECONorthwest analyzed how citywide boil water notices affect the Portland Metro economy. We looked at how rapidly businesses are able to respond to these notices.
- **Hotel/Motel Market Analysis and Feasibility Study—Cave Junction, OR (2017).** Conducted market analysis and economic feasibility study for Hotel/Motel Lodging.
- **Measuring the Cost of Administering Marsy’s Law Idaho—Statewide, ID (2017).** The state director of Marsy’s Law for Idaho (a victims’ rights initiative) needed an economic consultant to quantify the cost to municipalities to implement Marsy’s Law in Idaho. This work included testimony to the Idaho legislature.
- **OTGA Gaming in Oregon 2014–2015—Salem, OR (2016).** Calculated the size and economic impacts of tribal gaming in Oregon.
- **Burns Paiute Casino Location Analysis—Burns, OR (2016).** For the Burns Paiute Tribe assessed a location on exit 371 on I-84 for a potential casino.
- **Port of Centralia Development Impacts—Centralia, WA (2016).** Determined the tax and economic impacts of a department store and other retail developments to be built on port land in Centralia.
- **ROI Study Clearwater Casino—Suquamish, WA (2016).** Conducted an ROI study for new projects, including an RV park, an indoor waterpark, an apartment complex, and a childcare facility.
- **Saipan Five-Star Hotel EB5—Saipan, North Mariana Islands (2016).** Researched and prepared an economic and job creation report in support of a new EB5 project, a five-star resort hotel in Saipan.
- **Ironworkers Union Alaska Cost of Living—Various, AK (2016).** Calculated the change in the cost of living in Anchorage and Fairbanks, Alaska, overtime for a labor union going into negotiations for a new contract.
- **Cow Creek Tribe 2016 Impact and Tax Study—Douglas County, OR (2016).** Conducted an economic impact analysis of the Cow Creek Tribe, its employees, and its businesses.
- **Recreational Marijuana Outlook in Oregon—Ashland, OR (2016).** Wrote a report on the outlook of the supply and demand of recreational marijuana in Oregon.
- **CSI Marijuana Feasibility Studies—Various, NV (2016).** Conducted market and feasibility studies on two tribes in Nevada for Cascade Strategic Investments.
- **Tacoma Methanol Plant Economics—Tacoma, WA (2016).** Conducted an economic impact and tax forecast for a proposed methanol manufacturing plant.

- **Kalama Methanol Plant Impacts— Kalama, WA (2015).** Conducted an economic impact analysis using IMPLAN that estimated the impacts of constructing and operating a new methanol plant in Kalama, Washington.
- **Cost of Living Analysis for Iron Workers in Oregon and Washington—OR & WA (2013).** Analyzed the need for more aggressive cost of living provisions for a construction union engaged in labor negotiations.
- **Jordan Cove Export Terminal— Coos Bay, OR (2011).** Measured the static and dynamic economic impacts of a proposed natural gas liquefaction plant in Oregon.
- **City Casino Impact Analysis— La Center, WA (2006).** Assisted a city with the determination of impacts from a large tribal casino-retail development. The analysis was then used to aid the city in its negotiations for suitable mitigation measures.
- **Analysis of Bar and Restaurant Performance with Video Poker— Salem, OR (2003).** Provided ongoing work for the Oregon Lottery regarding market developments and the economics of video lottery retailers.
- **Market Feasibility of a Movie Theater & Pearl District Housing— Portland, OR (2003).** Given two building options for a property in the Pearl District of Portland, determined the market feasibility for a movie theater versus building of starter condominium housing. Researched employed cluster analysis and demographic data to determine the viability of a theater and the absorption rate for housing.
- **Aerospace Composite Manufacturing Company Acquisition— Various (2002).** Conducted a financial and market analysis of two aerospace composite manufacturers being considered for acquisition.
- **Tribal Economic Impact Study— North Bend, OR (2001).** For a Northwest Tribe, determined the economic and fiscal revenue impacts on a county from the Tribal government and its business operations, which include a farm, housing authority, health clinic, assisted living center, hotel, and casino. Through the analysis, it was found that the Tribe has substantial positive impacts on County employment, retail sales, tourism, and local taxes.
- **TriMet Forecasting Services— Portland, OR (2000).** Produced the semi-annual economic forecast commentary on the national, state, and City of Portland economies for TriMet.

- **Fiber Optic SONET Feasibility Study—Coos Bay, OR (2000).** Conducted a market feasibility study of a proposed fiber-optic communications network for a major Oregon Indian tribe. In addition, developed the key basic strategies necessary to maximize the economic development stimulus from the network, as this would benefit the Tribe while creating high-wage jobs in the community.
- **Feasibility Study of Stillaguamish Tribe Native Plant Nursery—Arlington, WA (1999).** Wrote feasibility analyses for native plant nurseries on behalf of two Indian tribes.
- **Local Impact Analysis of the Proposed Hood River Casino—Warm Springs, OR (1997).** Determined the best mix for financial success for a commercial visitor’s center and retail complex proposed by a major Oregon Indian Tribe. The research focused on the likely demand for campground space, gasoline, convenience store items, gift shop products, and travel assistance.
- **Economic Impacts of a Natural Gas Pipeline—Coos County, OR (1997).** Conducted a market demand forecast for a planned natural gas distribution system that was to be built on the Oregon coast.
- **Analysis of the Nonprofit Sector in Oregon—Portland, OR (1996).** Produced the first complete study of the nonprofit sector of the Oregon economy. This groundbreaking report showed that the nonprofit industry is the largest private employer in Oregon.
- **Hotel Studies—Various locations and years.** Conducted studies for several hotel projects, including forecasts of operating conditions and costs, financial feasibilities, and the testing of various scenarios of the market and operating conditions.
- **Competitive Industry Analysis—Portland, OR (1996).** Completed an extensive study of the competitiveness of the metals industry in the Portland metropolitan area. Through interviews with key industry leaders, recommendations were made to the City government on ways they can facilitate the competitiveness of the metals industry and aid in its continuation as a growing source of family-wage jobs.
- **Film and Video Economic Impact Studies—OR & WA (Various).** Produced several economic impact studies for the film industries of Washington and Oregon. For the Oregon Film & Video Office, the value of various proposed legislative initiatives was calculated.

Other Projects

- Analyzed the potential outcomes and competitive responses a regional business would likely face during a transition from being a regional monopoly to becoming an oligopoly with a comparable, single competitor.

- Constructed a set of financial, econometric, and operation models of a semiconductor-recycling refinery. Working with Charles River Associates and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the results were incorporated into a business plan for the project.
- Conducted a market feasibility study for a living-history Indian village for a northern California tribe that would offer visitors the opportunity to experience what it would have been like to live in a village 500 years ago. The village concept centered on the need for an experiential learning environment where visitors would stay overnight in traditional Indian dwellings.
- Wrote a groundbreaking report on the cost of methamphetamine addiction on the residents of a metropolitan county, which calculated the cost to the general public of the hidden “meth tax” on society.
- Conducted a revealed and stated preference survey for a Washington tribe. The findings were used to develop a business expansion plan and to identify topics for focus groups.
- Built an integrated model of the casino industry using economic, demographic, traffic, and consumer survey data. The model forecasts revenues and attendance and has been used to assess the revenue potential of casino sites in Washington, Oregon, California, and Idaho.
- In 1995, built a sophisticated system of construction models for the Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Industries. Highly praised by both industry and government, it was the first construction-based forecast of aggregate demand ever developed for a state. Other researchers around the world have since adopted the forecast methodology.
- For a private developer conducted a market feasibility study for a major mixed-use development near a Portland hospital. Work included an analysis of the rental and condominium markets, the feasibility of retail development at the site by comparing the stock of retail space with the local retail demand of residents, employees, and visitors, and a vacancy/rent assessment of office space.