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Film office head takes final curtain call

Veronica Rinard helped rebuild ailing industry

Portland Business Journal - by [Shelley Strom](#) Business Journal staff writer

Now that state legislators have given a green light to a rebate program intended to boost filmmaking, a key industry official is stepping down.

Veronica Rinard exited her role last month as executive director of the **Oregon Film & Video Office**. Her departure comes just weeks following passage of the Greenlight Oregon Labor Rebate, which rebates 6.2 percent of wages paid by film and video producers. Rebates are available to qualified producers that spend at least \$1 million in Oregon.

"I feel like we're in a good position, with the incentive programs in place. Establishing incentives has been my highest goal," said Rinard.

Rinard will take the reins Aug. 8 as cultural tourism manager at the **Portland Oregon Visitors Association**.

Film and video production, according to a study commissioned by the Film and Video Office in 2002, generated \$836 million statewide in 2000. The industry, which includes television and cable broadcasting, supports the equivalent of more than 11,000 full-time positions.

The office is charged with expanding that segment of the economy. Located in downtown Portland, it runs with a staff of four people on a small budget expected to be around \$840,000 during the next biennium.

During Rinard's tenure, a handful of major feature-length films have been shot entirely or in part in Oregon, including "The Hunted," "What the Bleep Do We Know?," "Elephant" and "Thumbsucker." Lower-profile films continuously are shot here.

In 2004, the office established a presence in Hollywood, Calif., with a half-time staffer who personally calls on producers.

Rinard hasn't limited her focus to recruiting feature-length films. She has led the office in efforts to create a climate friendly to filmmaking -- for both "indigenous" firms and out-of-town producers.

For instance, the office in recent years has made a practice of holding seminars on film finance, marketing and distribution.

However, "increasingly, incentives are what recruitment is about," she said.

Passage of the rebate happened two years after legislators established the Oregon Production Investment fund, which offers a 10 percent rebate on production expenditures in Oregon.

"Our incentives still are not as competitive as some offered by other states. We need to continue to look at how to build programs to keep Oregon competitive," she said.

Rinard is lauded for accomplishments made during the 14 years she spent at the agency, which she led since 2001.

"As a small-business owner, I know Veronica has been very good for the local film business," said David Cress, executive producer at Portland-based movie and television production agency Food Chain Films.

Cress cited Rinard's leadership as key in an effort to streamline city of Portland and Multnomah County rules related to production.

"I used to think of this as being one of the more difficult places to do production. But it is not anymore," he said. "The indigenous film economy is interdependent upon outside producers coming to town. When they come here they employ local crews and use local rental houses and caterers. They help keep the [local production] community alive," Cress said.

Work tied to the more than \$800 million in production-related revenue cited in the 2002 study largely goes unnoticed.

"We already do a significant amount of film and video production. It just doesn't get attention because it is not work that is as visible as a full-length feature film. But the industry is working every day," said Film and Video Office Board President Gordon Sondland, principal at The Aspen Cos., a Portland-based real estate and hospitality finance firm.

Gov. Ted Kulongoski said economic development departments in states across the country have "over the past five to seven years realized this industry is a tremendous asset, not only for the economy and the number of well-paying jobs associated with it, but it also is a facilitator of having a viable arts community."

Since becoming governor in 2001, Kulongoski said he's added the film industry to his list of economic development initiatives.

"I have gone to Hollywood and talked to all the studios to tell them what Oregon has done to make itself an easy place for film production," he said.

Oregon has a long history with film and video producers. Decades ago, its natural settings attracted a small but steady stream of productions. Kulongoski cited "Paint Your Wagon," starring Lee Marvin and Clint Eastwood, as well as a string of spaghetti westerns.

By the 1980s, the state came as close as it ever has to being a hotbed for film and video.

Television movies, along with a smattering of other programs, routinely were shot here.

Aggressive incentives established by British Columbia changed that.

The board of the Oregon Film and Video Office is conducting a nationwide search for Rinard's replacement.

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