Oregon Story Board was founded to create community among the digital storytelling industries: film, animation and visual effects, game development and digital content creation.

It seeks to catalyze the creation of “what’s next” when storytelling and technology come together.

However, OSB is supported by the Portland Development Commission, and this year that support took a unique turn. When state funding changes prevented OSB from hiring a permanent director, PDC stepped in on a contractual basis to fill the gap. As PDC’s manager of the Portland Film Office and with previous experience in production management at LAIKA, I saw working with OSB as a natural fit that's consistent with PDC’s commitment to advancing the film and digital media sectors.

The year brought growth and other changes as well. OSB moved into new office space, completed its second business accelerator class and embarked on a partnership with Clackamas Community College with rich potential for job creation.
Even the new office is a partnership with PDC, which owns the building at 411 N.W. Flanders St. and built out the OSB workspace. The ground-floor space will support the emerging media/tech sector with industry-specific programming, meetups and speakers to bring the community together. The goal is to create a cluster around this entrepreneurial development.

OSB’s new space offers additional opportunities for community interaction. New programming begins in January thanks to a grant from Microsoft. OSB, with Clackamas Community College and Intel Corp., is one of only five organizations nationwide to receive the Microsoft HoloLens grant which will augment trade-based education with HoloLens technology.

Students enrolled in Clackamas Community College’s digital media communications course will design an augmented reality classroom experience on the Hololens platform, developing new skills needed for the next wave of augmented reality and virtual reality technology.

The class will tap into Portland’s existing talent pool, already rich with animation, visual effects and game development expertise. It will also provide students with the foundation for design and development in the new immersive landscape.

The HoloLens grant lends proof of concept to OSB’s commitment to “what’s next.” OSB convened a group of industry professionals to hammer out the grant application that beat academic powerhouses from around the country. Similarly, the HoloLens classes represent innovative workforce development for an emerging industry sector.

Augmented and virtual reality are expected to be a $150 billion dollar industry in 2016. Portland could be at the epicenter of that development. We have the talent and a new academic curriculum. Our local animation and visual effects and game development industries will foster many early adopters, who will need to hire the workers we’re developing right here in the Portland region.

Oregon Story Board will continue to build community and connectivity around the augmented and virtual reality landscape while seeking new opportunities to
support emerging technology in the digital storytelling sector.

Classes begin Jan. 4. For more information on the class, contact Andy Mingo, andym@clackamas.edu. The classes start Jan. 4.