

Having a shared vision can get Oregon through rough patch

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The global economic crisis has reduced state revenues, forcing state budget writers to make tough decisions about Oregon's investment in human services, corrections, transportation, and education. Demand for these public services increases during hard times.

Three success factors can provide help to Oregon's policymakers during these difficult times: 1) a shared vision, 2) shared data and 3) collaboration.

No matter what our politics, if we can agree on a shared vision of Oregon's economic, social and environmental well-being, we can coordinate our actions and create a bright future.

In 1989, Oregon became the first state to articulate a 20-year strategic vision — Oregon Shines. Updated in 1997, Oregon Shines II recognized how economic, social and environmental factors interrelate, and told us what overall well-being looks like:

-Quality jobs for all Oregonians. Oregon's economy is robust, unemployment is low, educational levels are high and per capita incomes in Oregon exceed the national average.

-Oregon's communities are engaged, caring and safe. Oregonians are healthy. They sustain strong, caring communities that welcome and value diverse populations. Oregonians give high marks to state and local governments for trust, service and value.

-Oregon's environment is healthy and sustainable. While communities continue to develop to serve Oregon's growing population, its natural environment remains healthy, clean and inviting.

Nearly 20 years ago, the original Oregon Shines showed the need for collaborative partnerships among people, organizations and governments in order to achieve big benchmark goals. That need still exists.

We must renew our commitment to a shared vision for our state. In 1989, Oregon Shines I helped the state focus and pull out of a deep recession. In 2009, Oregon Shines III will help Oregonians and their leaders re-engage and refocus on what's needed to get through hard times.

Shared data shed light on our progress and provide clues on how to course-correct along the way. Oregon Benchmarks show quantitative evidence of our progress toward the Oregon Shines vision.

Every two years, we send Oregon to the doctor's office and the benchmarks are the lab results. They tell us how we are doing in the economy, education, civic engagement, social support, public safety and the environment. In between those formal reports, we update benchmarks and their grades on the Progress Board Web site for citizens, teachers, students, reporters, grant writers, planners and policymakers.

Counties can see how they are doing, too. Anyone can view customized county slide shows, county comparison maps and county data tables for per capita income, high school and

college completion, teen pregnancy, home ownership and other important benchmark measures.

Benchmark data enable us to reflect on facts. Do we like the results? Are we OK with how Oregon compares to other states? Are we happy with our past performance and self-imposed targets?

Finally, collaboration is what makes benchmark progress possible. The benchmarks are high-level measures that transcend politics and organization. No single entity can take sole blame or exclusive credit. Too many factors affect the outcomes.

Our children and grand-children deserve economic, social and environmental well-being, too. The Oregon Shines vision and benchmark data provide a common language to help us all build a better future for ourselves and future generations.

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