



RS EXCHANGE REGIONAL SOLUTIONS

Monday, January 26th, 2026

Upcoming RSAC Meetings

Metro (Clackamas, Multnomah, and Washington Counties)

Friday, January 30th from 11:00am-1:00pm

World Trade Center Portland; Roundup Conference Room

[Virtual Link](#)

South Central (Klamath and Lake Counties)

Tuesday, February 17th from 9:00am-11:00am

[Virtual Link](#)

Mid-Valley (Marion, Polk, and Yamhill Counties)

Thursday, March 12th from 1:30-3:30pm

Chemeketa Community College (Salem); Building 9, Room 128

[Virtual Link](#)

Southern (Jackson and Josephine Counties)

Wednesday, March 25th from 12:00-2:00pm

Location TBD—will be announced in future Exchange

[Virtual Link](#)

South Valley/Mid-Coast (Benton, Lane, Lincoln, and Linn Counties)

Thursday, March 26th from 1:00-3:00pm

Corvallis/Albany location TBD—will be announced in future Exchange

[Virtual Link](#)

Regional Updates

South Valley/Mid-Coast – Courtney Flathers

Isovolta: Last week Business Oregon’s Regional Development Officer and I were joined on a tour of Isovolta Group’s Harrisburg facility by Lane Workforce Partnership, Willamette Workforce Partnership, Collaborative EDO, and Oregon Cascades West Council of Governments. Isovolta is a global manufacturer of aircraft technical and decorative laminates, supplying materials to the major aircraft manufacturers (Airbus, Boeing, Embraer, etc.) and directly to airlines around the world. Business Oregon convened this meeting with regional workforce partners to support Isovolta in sustaining and growing its workforce to meet current and anticipated growth in the industry. The meeting resulted in several new ideas for the company to consider and connections to existing resources in several nearby counties from which the company draws its workforce, including hiring events, recruitment opportunities, leadership training, and transportation resources available through the COG.



North Central – Nate Stice

Columbia River Gorge Commission Approves Permanent Amendments to Support Disaster Recovery: The Columbia River Gorge Commission unanimously approved permanent amendments to the National Scenic Area Management Plan to strengthen disaster recovery for communities like Rowena impacted by recent wildfires. These changes modernize rebuilding rules by allowing one-for-one replacement of homes and structures, extending the rebuilding window to ten years, and providing flexibility for temporary housing and storage solutions. They also incorporate expedited cultural resource reviews to respect tribal input while streamlining recovery efforts. The amendments now await concurrence from

the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, which is required for them to take effect.

Regional Solutions helped advocate for these changes as part of broader recovery efforts, working closely with Wasco County leadership and other local stakeholders. Our team facilitated communication and delivered the Governor’s letter of support—cited by local leaders as critical in moving the process forward.

Regional Solutions Presentation to The Dalles Community Affairs:

On January 8, 2026, Regional Solutions joined The Dalles Area Chamber’s *Community Affairs* forum to share updates on how the team supports local priorities across Hood River, Sherman, and Wasco counties. The weekly forum brings together business and community leaders to discuss issues shaping the region.

During the session, Regional Solutions Coordinator Nate Stice outlined how the team helps communities move projects forward by connecting local leaders with state agency resources and problem-solving support. Topics included the Governor’s Prosperity Roadmap, Rowena Fire recovery efforts, and other local priorities such as housing and infrastructure.

Mid-Valley – Beth Wytoski

The Mid-Valley region has been competitive in grant applications and several of our governing bodies are benefitting from funding programs.

- The City of Dayton will receive a wetlands technical assistance award to help fund a Local Wetland Inventory (LWI); and
- The City of Silverton will receive a housing infrastructure support award to help fund design work for a planned development; and
- The City of Aurora will receive a brownfield redevelopment award to complete an environmental site assessment; and
- The City of Salem will receive a safe drinking water award to progress post-fire recovery in the North Santiam Watershed; and
- Cycle Yamhill County will receive Community-Initiated Projects funding to construct the Panther Creek Trail Network; and
- The Idanha-Detroit Rural Fire Protection District will receive Community-Initiated Projects funding to construct a new fire station to expand current service levels; and
- Marion County will receive Community-Initiated Projects funding for sewer system improvements to serve Mill City and Gates; and
- The City of Dallas will receive Community-Initiated Projects funding to construct a water reservoir tank and help with the LaCreole Node sewer project.

Congratulations to our regional leaders working hard to leverage programs and resources to advance the goals of your communities!

Launch Mid-Valley is a regional collaboration to help launch start-ups and support business growth opportunities. The initiative is led by SEDCOR to support entrepreneurs and build partnerships between local governments and business leaders. Launch Mid-Valley was recently awarded a Business Oregon grant that funds this work across industry sectors to support the growing innovation network. Coffee Clubs have been launched to facilitate networking and resource connection and will be held in Salem, Dallas, Independence, Newberg, Silverton, and McMinnville in the coming weeks. Please [click here](#) to learn more and RSVP.

Senator Merkley recently held town hall events in Polk, Marion, and Yamhill counties. Local leaders gathered before the public events and asked questions about several topics including tax law changes, state funding, immigration enforcement, the Senator's priorities, and more. I attended one event and was happy to connect with leaders from cities, counties, and school districts to be a part of discussions that showed common concerns across party lines and discussed differences respectfully.

South Coast – Jessica LaBerge

Hardin Optical Business Outreach: RS recently met with Hardin Optical, a Bandon-based company, to learn more about their history, operations, and future plans. The visit included discussions on staffing and upcoming projects, as well as an informative tour of their facility. Founded in 1976, Hardin Optical is a family-owned business that has grown to approximately 100 employees. Their vision is to become the U.S. supplier of choice for mission-critical optics. Over the past 50 years, the company has evolved from producing internal components for telescopes and night vision goggles to leading the industry in infrared optics for microscopes and long-range surveillance systems. Hardin Optical has a strong track record of delivering precision optical components for military and defense applications. Currently, two key customers receive tens of



thousands of components each month, on time and with zero rejections. The facility tour was both impressive and insightful. A big thank you to the Hardin Optical team for sharing their time and expertise with us!

Southern – Jessica LaBerge

Pipeline to Progress Conference: RS attended the *Pipeline to Progress: Building the Healthcare Workforce* conference, a thought-provoking and collaborative event aimed at advancing the healthcare workforce across Oregon, with a particular focus on the Rogue Valley. Organizers emphasized that healthcare workforce development is among the most pressing economic and community challenges facing the region. The industry's projected growth is significant, healthcare is expected to account for 13% of all regional job openings over the next decade, creating more than 20,000 positions. The conference provided opportunities to network, exchange ideas, explore innovations, and engage in critical discussions about what regional collaboration could look like.

The keynote address was delivered by Dr. Shereef Elnahal, President of OHSU. Prior to joining OHSU, Dr. Elnahal served as Under Secretary for Health at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, appointed by President Biden. He shared forward-thinking strategies to strengthen rural healthcare access through partnerships and creative solutions. Two panel sessions further explored innovative workforce strategies and reinforced the importance of a collaborative model. Special thanks to the Ashland Chamber of Commerce for hosting, the event sponsors, and Southern Oregon University for providing an excellent venue to foster new connections and partnerships.

Eastern – Courtney Crowell

Rural DMV Implementation: Wallowa Commissioner Lisa Collier and I met with DMV officials to learn more about the implementation of the rural DMV bill that passed last session. The bill requires Oregon DMV to give local preference to rural customers scheduling a drive test. DMV has implemented the bill and rural customers can schedule their tests in three different ways:

1. At their local DMV office through the lobby check-in kiosk. The kiosk will only display and allow scheduling of drive test appointments for the office the customer is physically at.
2. Scheduling with an employee at the DMV office.
3. Calling Customer Assistance at 503-945-5000. Customer Assistance will verify the customer lives in one of the 20 counties before making the appointment.

The good news is that this is already being used by local communities with 10 local tests just in Wallowa County this month using this new system and getting their test scheduled. We also discussed the additional outreach that ODOT is doing to high schools to encourage teen driving safety courses across Eastern Oregon. Commissioner Collier brought this issue up at an Eastern Oregon counties meeting with the Governor last February and while it took a legislative bill to solve this problem, in less than a year we have seen tremendous progress.

Harney County Groundwater Visit: Regional Solutions had the opportunity to join the Governor's Natural Resource team on a trip to Harney County to discuss the recent Oregon Water Resources Commission decision around groundwater rules in the Harney Basin and the upcoming implementation of those rules. We were able to join a community meeting with irrigators, meet with High Desert Partnership and Oregon Solutions on an upcoming project, the Burns Paiute Tribe and a conversation with the Tribe, Harney County and the cities of Burns and Hines. There are a lot of moving parts and Regional Solutions will be playing a key role in the implementation of these rules and the collaboration between agencies, governments, and the community.

Wild Carrot Herbals: Regional Solutions had the opportunity to tour Wild Carrot Herbals in Enterprise recently. This is a great woman-owned, organic skincare and wellness company that has products in over 750 stores across the country and 19 employees in Enterprise. Business Oregon has recently gotten them a grant to add an elevator to their building that will allow them to order additional supplies in bulk and use their basement for storage.

Resources and Opportunities

Drinking Water Source Protection Fund Webinar on February 5th

Join Oregon Health Authority and Department of Environmental Quality staff on **Thursday, February 5 at 11:00 a.m.** for a free informational webinar on Oregon Health Authority's [Drinking Water Source Protection Fund](#) (DWSPF) grant program. On the webinar, you can learn how to:

- Protect your drinking water sources from contamination risks
- Fund projects that safeguard your aquifer, spring, or surface water intake
- Get one-on-one technical support from DEQ and OHA staff
- Hear about successfully funded drinking water protection projects from a water system perspective
- Learn best practices to streamline project administration

The DWSPF is designed for the protection of drinking water sources, which include watersheds above a public water supply surface water intake and/or the delineated portion of the aquifer supplying water to public water supply wells or springs. The program will be accepting applications from **January 22 to March 12, 2026**, making now a great time to start thinking about any drinking water source protection issues you'd like to address. Publicly and privately owned community and nonprofit non-community water systems are eligible to apply for DWSPF funding.

Register for the webinar with this link: [Drinking Water Source Protection Fund Webinar](#)

For more details about the program, see the [DWSP Application](#).

Business Oregon's Rural Capacity Assistance Program (RCAP)

Rural communities across Oregon face unique challenges when planning, funding, and delivering critical infrastructure projects. Limited staff capacity, complex regulations, and resource constraints can make it hard to fully leverage available funding. To provide training and technical assistance, Business Oregon is offering a **series of free webinars** designed to help rural communities plan, fund, and manage infrastructure projects successfully. The RCAP Training Series is an independent, free series of webinar trainings focused on supporting rural communities. The agency has identified five key focus areas to help rural communities succeed. Each one offers practical tools and expert guidance to navigate complex requirements and keep your projects

moving forward. These key areas include:

- Project Management
- National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Documentation & Coordination
- Labor Standards
- Build America, Buy America (BABA) and American Iron and Steel (AIS) Explained
- Financial Readiness

These training sessions start in February and continue through June 2026. They are designed for local leaders, project managers, finance staff, compliance officers, and anyone working on infrastructure projects.

[Register and explore key areas here.](#)

Lane Arts Council Community Arts Grants

Lane Arts Council's Community Arts Grants strive to ensure diverse, accessible arts experiences and opportunities for Eugene artists, participants, and audiences. Grant Applications are NOW OPEN for the 2026-2027 grant cycle and will be accepted until 5:00 pm on April 10th, 2026. Three types of grants are available:

- **Community Arts Artist Grants** provide financial support to individual artists, performers, and creatives of all types demonstrating benefit to the Eugene community.
- **Community Arts Operating Grants** provide operating support to Eugene's small and mid-sized 501(c)(3) arts organizations.
- **Community Arts Project Grants** provide support to projects that emphasize accessibility to underserved audiences and provide programming that takes place in the City of Eugene.

More details and the application links for each grant are listed on their [website](#).

Apply to Serve on a State Board or Commission

Are you looking for a way to serve your community while having an impact on issues important to you? Consider applying to serve on one of the Governor's boards or commissions!

By serving on a state board or commission, you can:

- Contribute to state government and serve your fellow Oregonians
- Be part of statewide decision-making

- Participate in developing a wide variety of important governmental policies
- Have an impact on issues important to you and your community
- Learn more about state government and how it works

Members of Governor Kotek's boards and commissions are vital participants in statewide decision-making and have the opportunity to participate in developing a wide variety of important governmental policies. To learn more about the board system and how to apply, please visit [Governor of Oregon : Boards & Commissions : State of Oregon](#). If you have any questions, please reach out to the Executive Appointments Office via email at executive.appointments@oregon.gov.