



RS EXCHANGE

REGIONAL SOLUTIONS

Monday, February 24th, 2025

Regional Solutions Program Updates

Upcoming Regional Solutions Advisory Committee (RSAC) Meetings:

Upcoming committee meeting dates are below. Additional location & virtual link details will follow closer to the meeting dates.

- [Greater Eastern](#) (Gilliam, Grant, Harney, Malheur, Morrow, Umatilla, & Wheeler Counties): February 27, 1-3pm, [Virtual Link](#)
- [Southern](#) (Jackson and Josephine Counties): March 24, 1-3pm
- [South Coast](#) (Coos, Curry, and Douglas Counties): April 9, 3:30-5:30pm
- [Mid-Valley](#) (Marion, Polk, and Yamhill Counties): April 10, 12:30-3:30pm
- [South Valley/Mid-Coast](#) (Benton, Lane, Lincoln, and Linn Counties): May 21, 10am-12pm

Regional Updates

Southern – Jessica LaBerge

- **In Honor of Bill Thorndike:** It is with a heavy heart that we share the news of Bill Thorndike's passing. Bill was extremely community minded. A long-time supporter of community and economic development, Bill engaged deeply with Regional Solutions and many regional initiatives, and served on the Southern Oregon University's Board of Trustees among many other commitments. Bill was the longest standing Convener in the RS program and championed projects like the [Butte Falls Community Forest](#) and 2020 Wildfire recovery efforts. He will be greatly missed. For more on his incredible legacy: [Longtime community leader & businessman, Bill Thorndike, passes away - KOB-TV NBC5 / KOTI-TV NBC2](#)

South Coast – Jessica LaBerge

This month I'm highlighting the great work done by CCD Business Development Corporation and South Coast Development Council within the region – they have been great collaborators to work with and I wanted to show off some of their successes; below are just a few.

- **CCD Business Development Corp:** Three key highlights showcasing CCD's impact and recent achievements:
 - **Expanding Technical Assistance Support:** Since launching the Technical Assistance Program on July 1, 2021, CCD has successfully secured over \$1 million in funding. This milestone was reached with the recent \$150,000 award from the Business Oregon Economic Equity Investment Plan (EEIP), further strengthening CCD's capacity to support historically marginalized businesses and communities.
 - **Empowering Entrepreneurs:** CCD's Women in Business program continues to thrive, with 1,247 participants in 2024. Additionally, the Abundance Concept Workshop program engaged 180 participants across events hosted in every county, reinforcing CCD's commitment to fostering inclusive economic growth.
 - **Strengthening Community Infrastructure:** CCD has played a pivotal role in securing \$552,000 in foundation grants for the CCSW Community Building project, with an additional \$450,000 pending. This investment is driving community-led development and expanding access to essential resources for residents.

These milestones underscore CCD's dedication to advancing economic equity, strengthening community partnerships, and fostering long-term resilience in Southern Oregon.

- **South Coast Development Council (SCDC):** SCDC continues to drive entrepreneurship and economic development in Coos, Curry, and Douglas counties. Here's a look at some key successes shaping the region's business landscape.
 - **SCDC Secures Critical Funding for Regional Growth:** SCDC was awarded two key grants: the Southwest Oregon Innovation Hub (SOIH) Grant from Business Oregon, which supports entrepreneurship across Coos, Curry, and Douglas counties, and the South Coast Incubator Project (SCIP) Grant, a \$300,000 investment from the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) in partnership with Southwestern Oregon Community and the Cities of Coos Bay and North Bend. These grants are strengthening the region's entrepreneurial ecosystem by developing a business incubator, fostering new businesses, and encouraging collaboration.
 - **South Coast Accelerator (SCA) Opens and Thrives:** In mid-July 2024, SCDC opened the business incubator, called the South Coast Accelerator (SCA), which stands at 82% occupancy with only two offices remaining. The SCA provides office space for early to growth-stage businesses in Tech, Clean Energy, Shipping/Manufacturing, and the Blue Economy, along with entrepreneurship and small business development support programming and referrals.

Metro – Kathy Hyzy

- **Metro RSAC Goals:** After some good discussion, the Metro RSAC recently voted to approve two region-specific priorities: Workforce Development and Small Business Development & Attrition Prevention. Much of the committee's conversation around workforce development focused on the region's need for more skilled behavioral health providers to serve those working to escape addiction or going through detox. The committee is also interested in finding ways to better support developing small businesses through their critical first five years. They would like to explore how to facilitate connecting small businesses with accelerator programs, as well as ways to remove barriers for small, relatively new businesses that are still getting established. The committee will further refine these two goals in their next meeting.
- **OMSI Site Visit:** I met with OMSI's Executive Director, Erin Graham, for a tour of the latest in the proposed redevelopment for the OMSI District. This vision is many years in the making and will completely refashion the area around OMSI into a walkable, livable neighborhood with new residential and commercial spaces, as well as new parks and the Center for Tribal Nations. They are continuing to work through a long list of easement transfers, swaps, and vacations with a variety of entities and making good progress toward the realignment of Water Avenue. This move will provide much better access to many parcels on the 24-acre site. Hacienda CDC is pursuing LIFT funds for the construction of Tract A, the first of the seven parcels to redevelop and the anticipated site for up to 120 units of affordable housing.

Mid-Valley - Beth Wytoski

- **RSAC:** Our Regional Solutions Advisory Committee is scheduling work sessions to learn more about the recently adopted priority areas. I have been so impressed with the robust discussions and technical questions that have become commonplace during our meetings. At our January session, the committee worked to define the priorities by associating focus areas with each. After considering dozens of areas where there is need, the committee decided to focus our work on six:
 - Long term waste management (April 10, 2025)
 - Wildfire prevention and recovery (June 12, 2025)
 - Workforce, entrepreneurship, and local business development (August 15, 2025)
 - Workforce housing development (October 9, 2025)
 - Natural resource stewardship (January 8, 2026)
 - Water, wastewater & transportation infrastructure capacity building (March 12, 2026)

The committee is eager to learn about current programs and resources as well as challenges, to ensure the work is amplifying rather than duplicative. The next step for the group will be to look statewide at the priorities adopted for each region to see where there are shared interests and opportunities to collaborate and where the mid-valley is unique.

- **Wildfire Recovery:** The Santiam Canyon Long Term Recovery Group held their final all-hands meeting this month. After more than four years of sprinting to help survivors recover their homes and lives, the work is finally starting to shift. While the group's membership, along with the Santiam Hospital, will continue to facilitate and support recovery efforts in the communities along the North Santiam River, regular meetings will no longer be necessary. The work of the LTRG has been instrumental in restoring livability in their fire-ravaged communities - but there is more work to be done. They are now offering a 'Defensible Space Grant' through the Community Wildfire Risk Reduction Project of the Oregon State Fire Marshall. Up to \$2,420 of expenses can be reimbursed for property owners with a primary residence in Mehama, Lyons, Elkhorn, Mill City, Gates, Niagra, Detroit, Idanha, or Marion Forks. Residents are invited to visit: [Defensible Space Grant — Santiam Recovery](#) for more information.
- **Community Visits:** My visits to communities slowed during the holidays and recent harsh weather, but I am filling out calendar appointments so please be encouraged to reach out to schedule time for a check-in. Touring new developments, facilities, and spaces with potential or discussing priority projects are welcome conversations on site. Whether you'd like to share a success story or ask for help, I would be happy to learn about updates and find ways to support the critical work of local governments.

Greater Eastern – Courtney Crowell

- **Eastern Oregon Commissioners Meet with Governor Kotek:** Recently Governor Kotek had the opportunity to meet with a group of county commissioners from Eastern, Central and South Central Oregon while they were in Salem to talk about issues that are important to their regions and legislation they are tracking this session. It was a great opportunity for the Governor to hear directly from elected leaders and there are a number of issues that our office will be following up on as we address some of the concerns. We appreciate the ongoing working relationship with our county partners.



- **Lake Owyhee Road Access Fee Workgroup:** Rep. Owens has a bill (HB 3122) that would have Oregon Parks and Recreation Department work with U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, BLM and Malheur County on a plan to install an access fee along the road to Owyhee Reservoir in Malheur County. After conversations with Rep. Owens, Malheur County economic development and the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, I agreed to help convene all the parties and see if we can make some progress on this issue. We'll continue to follow this legislation throughout the session, however Regional Solutions will begin to convene the group prior to the end of session to see if we can make some progress.

Northeast – Courtney Crowell

- **Northeast Oregon Regional Solutions Advisory Committee (RSAC):** The Northeast Oregon RSAC met this week to continue talking about the regional priorities and how they might want to drill down to identify strategies and tactics associated with each priority. During this meeting we focused on the two locally identified priorities—Stewardship Economy and Workforce Development. Nils Christofferson from Wallowa Resources gave an incredible presentation on Stewardship Economy. We had a good conversation about the key elements of successful stewardship economy and began to identify some areas that the committee might like to highlight. The committee also heard from the Eastern Oregon Workforce Board’s executive director about the work they are doing related to workforce development, and we had a good conversation about some of the short term and long-term strategies that could be employed to address the workforce challenges in the region. I will be compiling the notes from the conversation and asking the advisory committee members to keep thinking about how they want to refine these ideas.
- **NOVA Meeting:** I attended the quarterly meeting of the NOVA group which includes the cities of Malheur County including Nyssa, Ontario, Vale and Adrian. We heard updates on the Oregon Food Bank’s Ontario Community Food Center which is being built near a new affordable housing development in Ontario. The Oregon Food Bank received a congressionally designated spending grant from HUD a few years ago and is currently working on design and permitting and will be moving forward with construction soon. They still have a funding gap but are hopeful to get the project complete in the coming years. We also heard from the childcare resource and referral director for Malheur, Baker and Wallowa Counties about the work they are pursuing around a childcare business accelerator program. They are hoping to model this off a successful program in Central Oregon and are looking for two cohorts (one for English speakers and one for Spanish speakers) of in-home childcare providers who would take this program to learn more about the business side of childcare to help make their businesses successful.

South Central – Amelia Porterfield

- **Wolf OR-158:** OR158 is an adult male gray wolf that was GPS radio-collared southeast of Halfway, OR in March 2024. The wolf dispersed into central and southern Oregon and visited California, and since December 24, 2024, his movements have been localized in Deschutes, Crook, Lake and Klamath Counties. On January 30, 2025, ODFW investigated and confirmed the death of a 5-day-old calf in Lake County, triggering the designation of an Area of Depredating Wolves and the preparation of an Area-Specific Wolf Conflict Deterrence Plan to assist livestock producers and landowners manage potential conflict. Following subsequent depredation of cattle, Lake County declared an emergency and asked for support from ODFW. Since wolves in this area were relisted on the Federal Endangered Species List on February 10, 2022, all management related to harassment and take of wolves is regulated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), not ODFW. The state is working with relevant federal agencies to encourage the use of the best available tools and continued staffing to assist producers in protecting their livestock, and ODFW just released additional information regarding this wolf and encourages landowners and producers to take the precautions recommended in this [statement](#).

- **Oregon Institute of Technology incorporates Student Learning into New Dorm:** Oregon Institute of Technology (Oregon Tech) is focusing on the student experience and incorporating hands-on learning into the construction of its new \$35 million mass timber residence hall at the Klamath Falls campus. The 86,170-square-foot, four-story building will house 517 students, addressing the university's growing need for additional on-campus housing. Construction is expected to be completed in December 2025. The vision for this new residence hall was directed by a steering committee at Oregon Tech, which included students. The concept is to provide a dynamic and enriched community experience through a high-quality, long-lasting building that feeds curiosity and is a place to retreat and relax. With these qualities in mind, the facility is designed to showcase mass timber construction—a renewable building material that significantly reduces the building's carbon footprint while supporting Oregon Tech's commitment to sustainability. In mid-February, students in the College of Engineering, Technology, and Management participated in Mass Timber Days, where they received hands-on training from the architects and construction management team at the construction site. These activities provide practical experience, preparing students for careers in architecture, engineering, and construction.

Resources and Opportunities

- **Governor Kotek & OHCS Launch MIRL Program to Build More Housing, Lower Costs:** Last week, Governor Tina Kotek and Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS) announced the launch of Oregon's [Moderate Income Revolving Loan \(MIRL\)](#) program. The program will provide zero interest loans to cities and counties for new housing units that do not have enough financing to start construction.

The funding is a tool cities and counties can use to boost housing construction, reducing housing prices and providing homeownership opportunities for moderate-income Oregonians. Housing built under this program must rent or sell to families making lower than 120% of the Area Median Income (AMI) during the lifespan of the loan, typically ten years. The fund is repaid with a fee in-lieu of property taxes, at no additional cost to the owner, which allows the state to repeatedly lend out the funds.

The MIRL program is part of a suite of tools in the Governor's 2024 [housing package](#), Senate Bill 1537, which allocated \$75 million to the MIRL Fund. The bill also established the Housing Infrastructure Support Fund and the [Housing Accountability and Production Office](#). The Governor's 2025-2027 [budget](#) continues to build on that progress to increase Oregon's housing supply in every part of the state.

For more information about the MIRL, visit the [OHCS website](#) or reach out to your local Regional Solutions Coordinator.

- **USDA Business Builder Grant Programs to Strengthen Local & Regional Food Systems:**

Requests for applications have launched for three new Business Builder grant programs, funded by the Northwest and Rocky Mountain USDA Regional Food Business Center. In the Northwest and Rocky Mountain region, these grants are designed to empower small- and mid-sized farm and food businesses, helping them scale, enter new markets, and expand their impact. The program also extends to essential partners—aggregators, processors, distributors, and more—who play a critical role in bringing local food to market.

- [The Diverse Markets Business Builder Grant](#) is designed to build and expand local and regional non-commodity markets for climate resilient grains, pulses, and pseudocereals—offering between \$3,000 and \$50,000 in funding. In order to be eligible, farms, ranches and non-farm food businesses must be growing, producing, processing and/or supporting the aggregation, distribution and marketing of grain, pulse and/or pseudocereal products within local and regional value chains. Entities must have been in operation for a minimum of two years at the time of application. **Applications are due March 1, 2025.**
- [The Enhancing Local and Regional Meat Supply Chain Business Builder Grant](#) is designed to expand the capacity of meat, seafood and poultry businesses that provide important services to small or mid-scale meat and/or poultry producers and brands. Prioritized applicants are those who serve and enhance multiple small- or mid-sized meat and/or poultry producers such as: meat brands or cooperatives that source from multiple meat producers, processors doing further processing for multiple producers, processors serving a geographic or demographic need, cold storage facilities and local/regional distributors, and retail meat shops. Grants offered are between \$3,000 and \$50,000. **Applications are due March 7, 2025.**
- [The Connecting and Scaling Food Entrepreneurs Business Builder Grant](#) is designed to expand the capacity of facilities that incubate and support multiple small, value-added food businesses by providing access to commercial kitchen space, business development support, and other assistance such as guidance on product formulation, packaging and exploring new product lines. Grant funds are intended to be used for businesses to expand services to more businesses so that market access, sales and quality food offerings are elevated across the region. Grants offered are between \$20,000 and \$35,000. **Applications are due April 1, 2025.**

From 2024 to 2027, the Northwest and Rocky Mountain USDA Regional Food Business Center is offering \$6.75 million in grants across a six-state region. The Center is a node for the region's small and mid-tier food and farm businesses and local and regional food sector development initiatives by supporting cross-regional collaboration, providing and analyzing relevant and timely data, and serving as a gateway for USDA programs and other third-party funding opportunities. Over one quarter of the Center's resources will be invested in farms, ranches or food businesses who need capital to launch and expand their businesses.

- **Governor's Office Hiring Two Resilience Positions – Applications Due March 10th:**

Two limited duration positions have opened within the governor's office to lead development of the first Plan for a Resilient Oregon: a project manager and a project coordinator. Please share the opportunities with anyone who might be interested!

- Resilience Plan Manager (REQ-175128)
Internal candidates can apply [here](#).
External candidates can apply [here](#).
- Resilience Plan Coordinator (REQ-175135)
Internal candidates can apply [here](#).
External candidates can apply [here](#).

These two positions will report to the State Resilience Officer, with a small team at OHCS and DAS for support, and a big group of CBOs and community advisors (paid) to develop a statewide strategy for disaster resilience. The goal is to produce a people-centered strategy for disaster resilience that prioritizes the strategies and needs of communities already in recovery from climate-driven emergencies, or that face disparate impacts from disasters. The resulting plan will help inform the state's budget and legislative work going forward.

Competitive candidates will have strong project management skills; knowledge of land use, emergency management, or climate planning; familiarity with public procurement/grant tracking; a commitment to justice and the well-being of people; and collaborative leadership skills. They can live and work anywhere in Oregon, with some travel for community events. The positions are grant funded and will run from April 2025 through the end of December 2026.

- **Oregon Consensus Hiring Senior Project Manager & Project Associate:**

Oregon Consensus is recruiting for two open positions. Oregon Consensus, a sister program of Regional Solutions that is housed in the National Policy Consensus Center at PSU, is a dynamic, dedicated, creative team of collaborative governance experts, thought partners, and practitioners serving Oregon and the Pacific Northwest. The program offers services and resources that support communities and governments in agreement-seeking collaborative problem-solving efforts on Oregon's complex policy issues.

- The [Project Associate](#) position will receive applications through **March 14** aiming toward a start in **late April or early May**.
- The [Senior Project Manager](#) position will receive applications through **May 1** aiming toward a start in **June**.

View this [FAQ](#) for more information.

- **ODF Clarifies Requirements to Appeal Wildfire Hazard & WUI Designations**

Earlier today, the Oregon Department of Forestry clarified that property owners may still file their intent to appeal designations made by recently released wildfire hazard maps after Governor Kotek [last week announced](#) that Forestry officials are to hold on referring any appeals to the Office of Administrative Hearings until after the legislative session. Updated maps were issued January 7 and notifications were mailed to owners of properties designated as high hazard and within the wildland-urban interface. The updated maps and mailing initiated a 60-day period to file the intent to appeal.

The pause on appeals will allow the Legislature to deliberate potential changes to wildfire hazard map policy. However, if there is no change in law this session, ODF will resume the appeals process after the session concludes at the end of June. **Those that wish to appeal must file their form by March 10 to preserve an ability to appeal the designations.** A full case does not need to be developed to file the appeal form.

No research or preparation of an appeal case needs to happen prior to filing an appeal form. Here's what's required for property owners to register their intent to appeal:

- File the [appeal form](#) with the Oregon Department of Forestry online **by 5 p.m. March 10**, or mail the form postmarked by March 10.
- Include the required information of property owner name, mailing address, property address or tax lot number of the tax lot designations to be appealed.
- Check one or both boxes to appeal designation in a specific hazard zone, or the wildland-urban interface.
- In the box that asks for more information, just write "further information will be provided."

If your property is in a trust or LLC, you must be represented by an attorney during a hearing with the Office of Administrative Hearings, but you do not need to consult an attorney prior to filing your appeal form with the Oregon Department of Forestry.

The statewide wildfire hazard and wildland-urban interface maps are available on Oregon State University's [Wildfire Risk Explorer](#) website. Generally, the process for appeals follows:

- A property owner files the [appeal form](#) with the Oregon Department of Forestry.
- A Forestry official will contact the property owner to discuss their appeal case (after the conclusion of the session).
- The case will be referred to the Office of Administrative Hearings.
- A hearing with an Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) will be scheduled. Under certain circumstances, an attorney may need to represent the property owner at a hearing, but consulting an attorney isn't necessary to file the appeal form.
- All issues for an appeals case must be determined prior to the date of a hearing, but not before filing the appeal form.
- The ALJ will make a determination on the requested appeal.

The wildfire hazard map's purposes are to:

- Educate Oregon residents and property owners about the level of hazard where they live.
- Assist in prioritizing fire adaptation and mitigation resources for the most vulnerable locations.
- Identify where defensible space standards and home hardening codes will apply.

Find more information on ODF's [wildfire hazard web page](#).