



# RS EXCHANGE

## REGIONAL SOLUTIONS

Monday, December 11, 2023

Dear Regional Solutions Friends and Partners,

As this full year draws near a close, we wanted to take a brief moment to wish you, your families and your communities a warm and joyful holiday season.

The whole Regional Solutions Team has appreciated the generosity and collaboration offered by local officials, state agency partners, community leaders and everyday Oregonians as we've gotten up to speed and worked together to address challenging problems and advance projects around the state. It has been inspiring to see the innovation and determination brought to these efforts in every corner of Oregon, and we are honored to work alongside you. Thank you for your hard work and collaborative spirit!

We will be taking a break from the Exchange for the rest of the year but will be back in your inbox in January with more project and community updates, and resources and opportunities to share. There is much to do together in the coming year!

Best regards,  
*The Regional Solutions Team*

### **Regional Solutions Team News**

#### **Regional Solutions is Hiring a Metro Regional Coordinator!**

We are excited to announce that we are [recruiting for a Metro Regional Coordinator](#) to join our dynamic team. Embedded in communities, Coordinators are the key implementation arm of the Regional Solutions program, working on behalf of the Governor to solve problems and ensure effective State government support to local partners.

We're seeking energetic and entrepreneurial applicants with connections to the communities in which they'd serve. The Metro Regional Coordinator works with the urban and rural areas of Clackamas, Washington and Multnomah Counties, and is based at the Portland Regional Solutions Center on the PSU Campus. [Applications](#) are due by **January 1, 2024**. Please help us circulate this opportunity widely!

## Regional Updates

### Metro Region – Amelia Porterfield

**Governor Kotek Visits Clackamas County on One Oregon Listening Tour:** Last Thursday, Governor Tina Kotek and First Lady Aimee Kotek Wilson visited Clackamas County to mark the 35th stop of her One Oregon Listening Tour, meeting with Oregonians in Estacada, Oregon City, Gladstone, and Milwaukie.

“Our day in Clackamas County brought a unique perspective on solutions-oriented approaches that can be a model for the entire state,” Governor Kotek said. “The county includes a special combination of urban centers and rural towns. I was able to learn how the region is strengthening community connections, supporting vulnerable individuals and families, and finding creative solutions to address our housing crisis. Every discussion was inspiring and will stimulate important ideas as I move into the second year of my administration.”

After a breakfast meeting with local leaders at the Old Mill Saloon in Estacada, where they discussed the impacts of the 2020 Labor Day fires, access to broadband internet, mental health services, and local infrastructure needs, Governor Kotek and the First Lady visited the Wade Creek Restoration Site, which in October received a State Land Board award for exceptional contributions to thriving Oregon waterways, wetlands, and lands. The restoration project helped build community, adding accessible walking trails and a boardwalk to the adjacent park and public library, an amphitheater and community gathering space, stormwater rain gardens, and a pollinator garden.

Next, they visited A Safe Place Family Justice Center in Oregon City for a conversation with the staff of Clackamas Women’s Services, a local nonprofit that offers a wide range of services for anyone experiencing domestic and sexual violence, from initial crisis to long-term healing. The center connects people with housing resources, assistance in obtaining protective orders, application assistance, and counseling services. The discussion centered around the housing needs of survivors, the positive impact the Governor’s homelessness emergency order was making in the community, the growing number of survivors who have been seeking services, and the need for more bilingual, culturally-specific services to support the Latinx community.



Following lunch with local elected leaders in Oregon City at Bistro Cubano, the Governor and First Lady visited the Two Rivers Homeowners Cooperative in Gladstone to meet with resident leaders of the cooperative and local elected leaders. In 2017, the residents of the manufactured home park were able to purchase the nearly 12-acre site and now own and manage the land through a cooperative agreement. Residents spoke about the process of securing the park for

long-term affordability and housing security.

The day concluded in Milwaukie, where they met with local leaders at Luna's Ice Cream, discussing a variety of topics including housing development in the area, child care needs, transportation, the Kellogg Dam removal project, and more.

### **Mid-Valley Region - Beth Wytoski**

- **Western Oregon University** - During a recent campus visit in Monmouth, I learned about some incredible higher education work going on in our region. First, WOU has worked very hard to recover student enrollment and is now growing. What's more is that despite nationwide college enrollment declines, WOU began making investments in faculty, programs, and connections that developed a trajectory supportive of our workforce needs and the demographics of our high school graduates. In related news, WOU is very close to becoming Oregon's first public university to qualify as a Hispanic Serving Institution, a designation established in 1992, that reflects a commitment to welcoming and celebrating diversity. The designation could open the door for grants from the U.S. Department of Education, the National Science Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture as well as potentially increasing student enrollment and tuition dollars. The Latinx population is the fastest growing demographic in Oregon and serving these students to set them up for success in our economy is critical. If Western achieves this designation, it will join six other HSIs including four community colleges: Blue Mountain, Chemeketa, Columbia Gorge, and Treasure Valley as well as two private universities: Mount Angel Seminary and Warner Pacific University.
- **Celebrating Success** - The City of Woodburn is leveraging multiple funds and programs to move the community forward. A \$750k award from Business Oregon helped to replace the AWARE food bank lost to arson. Another \$1.5M grant helped purchase the Family Resource Center in which multiple non-profits are co-located and operating. Do it Best Corp, a lumber and hardware retail chain with major distribution in Woodburn earned a \$720k investment toward a \$35M expansion focusing on job creation and retention components. City leaders are moving forward with momentum to identify all funding opportunities for their community center project that will meet many, many needs of the residents and will include local and state investment. And they recently got an additional \$45k to support entrepreneurship programming and the creation of a resource directory which you can explore here: [Explore North Marion Business - Home \(nmc-works.com\)](https://nmc-works.com). Great work, programs, and partnerships yield great results.

### **North Coast Region – Nate Stice**

- **Columbia Memorial Hospital Expansion Project:** The Team convened a conversation with Columbia Memorial Hospital to discuss their \$175 million expansion project. The project is set to kick off in June 2024. It will replace the current hospital and provide space for CMH expansion into new services line and needed space for growth to grow into. The planned design includes total new construction of approximately 180,000 square feet and a critically needed expansion of the CMH Emergency Department. Other expanded areas include operating rooms, patient rooms, laboratory, radiology services, a new chapel and dining facilities. The Federal Emergency Management Agency selected the project for a \$20 million dollar Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) earlier this year, and the

meeting focused on finding funding opportunities to meet the \$6 million local match. The team is exploring public options through Business Oregon and the Oregon Department of Emergency Management. The team is very grateful to Senator Weber and Representative Javadi for joining the meeting to discuss legislative options. The Oregon Community Foundation's Eva Miller also joined to learn more about the project.

In addition to funding opportunities, the team discussed helped think through regulatory barriers and processes that CMH will need to work through in year or so. ODOT team members Mark Bernard will help to coordinate engagement with ODOT on traffic impacts to Highway 30, and we were joined by Dana Selovor of the Oregon Health Authority to discuss their processes. The team flagged the potential need to engage in NEPA review given the FEMA funding and discussed how the team can help with other permitting issues around wetlands and other issues.

The team also had the opportunity to tour a scale mock up of room in the facility modeled by the design team. Thanks for CMH for hosting us for the day, and for engaging us on this exciting project.



*(CMH CEO Erick Thorsen pictured above presenting on the hospital expansion)*

### **Southern Region – Jessica LaBerge**

- **Rogue Valley Childcare Presentation:** Regional Solutions attended a virtual event presenting the data on current childcare crisis across the Rogue Valley and proposed strategies to change the current reality for children, families and the early learning workforce in Jackson and Josephine counties.

SOELS identifies the underserved children in their region, evaluates the needs of those children and families, and then works to ensure that programs and services reach them and effectively meet their needs. Hubs are building outcomes-focused collaborations across K-12 schools, early education, health, human services, and business sectors. Southern Oregon Early Learning Services Hub is a system-builder committed to changing that. Recognizing the need to begin at birth, the many organizations that make up the Hub are working together to reach 3 common goals:

1. Children grow up in stable, healthy attached families.
2. Children enter Kindergarten ready to learn.
3. We have an aligned, effective, and coordinated system for supporting children and families.

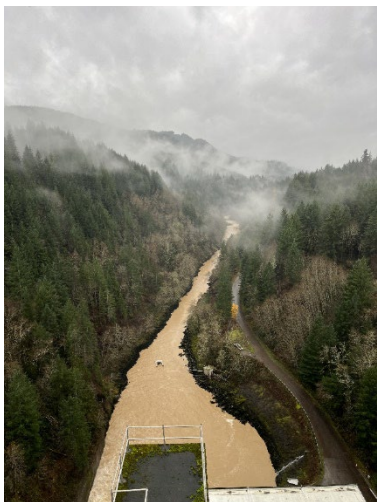
## **Greater Eastern Region – Courtney Crowell**

- **Walla Walla Basin Water Tour:** This week Regional Solutions had the opportunity to take a tour of the Walla Walla basin to learn about the work of the Walla Walla 2050 Water Strategy that has been developed over the past four years. Regional Solutions, Senators Wyden and Merkley staff, and Rep. Bobby Levy all braved the snow and ice last week to join the Oregon Water Resources Department, the Walla Walla Irrigation District and CTUIR to see various projects around Milton-Freewater that are a part of the 2050 strategy. This bi-state basin has serious management challenges and provides many opportunities for collaborative efforts in the future. Washington State passed legislation last year that would allow the two states to work together on water management in the basin and would allow Washington funds to be used for projects on the Oregon side of the basin. Similar legislation was introduced in Oregon last session but it was not successful. Sen. Hansell is going to be introducing the same legislation in the February session and this would help to move the efforts in the basin forward.
- **Oregon Food Bank Community Food Center Project in Ontario:** Regional Solutions has been working with the architects for the Community Food Center Project in Ontario that is part of the Oregon Food Bank system. Oregon Food Bank received \$5 million in HUD funding from Congressionally Directed Spending and has run into some challenges with environmental review. We were able to bring the architects and the HUD together to help explain the process for the environmental review and talk about next steps. Our team will continue to help make connections and help the project make progress on the regulatory needs moving forward.
- **Wallowa County Housing Project Funding Roundtable:** HUD worked with Wallowa County to organize a meeting this week to bring funding partners together to learn about a series of housing projects that Wallowa County is working on. It was an incredible group of people that assembled in Enterprise including HUD, EPA, DEQ, DLCD, Business Oregon, offices of Sen. Wyden, Sen. Merkley, Congressman Bentz, Habitat for Humanity, Housing Oregon, NE Oregon Housing Authority and more. Wallowa county partners shared three different housing projects they are working on, and the needs associated with each project and each roundtable participant shared the resources that might be available for those projects. There were some incredible connections made and opportunities discussed. Our Regional Solutions team will stay engaged with Wallowa County to help see what opportunities might come to fruition.
- **Highway 20 Wildlife Crossing Project:** Regional Solutions participated in a technical discussion with the Burns Paiute Tribe, ODFW and ODOT around the Highway 20 wildlife crossing project. Our office shared with the group that the Governor has officially designated this as an Oregon Solutions project and that we are in the final stages of appointing conveners for the project and then will begin the outreach to set the stakeholder table and get the project kicked off. The technical team is working on identifying potential wildlife crossing locations between Juntura and Harper and then starting to discuss the feasibility at each site. ODOT plans to do a site visit in the new year to begin to get the technical information together for the collaborative group to consider.

- **Project Path Opens in Hermiston:** This week the transitional shelter facility, Project Path, opened in Hermiston. This is an incredible project that the city of Hermiston has been working on with various partners throughout the past few years. The shelter is designed to provide Practical Assistance through Transitional Housing. The intent is to bring together services to assist individuals and families facing homelessness with the objective of moving them into and through transitional housing to permanent housing. Project PATH is one of eight pilot projects selected by the state to develop services for the homeless. Each pilot project is receiving \$1 million from the state to develop the program. Another project partner, Stepping Stones Alliance, has also received an additional \$1.1 million in private and state funds for the project. Congratulations to everyone for the grand opening of this important project!

### **South Valley/Mid-Coast – Courtney Flathers**

- **Willamette Valley Broadband Event:** Last week I attended the Willamette Valley Broadband Event hosted by Alyrica at the Knife River Training Center in Albany. The event brought together state and local leaders, internet service providers, and industry experts with the goal of establishing strategic partnerships and developing innovative broadband buildout solutions to close the digital divide in the Willamette Valley. Several themes emerged from the discussion, including the importance of ensuring affordability remains a central focus, the need to expand the workforce that will be needed to deploy the federal funds coming to the state to support broadband expansion, and the importance of timely broadband deployment.
- **Willamette Valley Project Injunction:** Regional Solutions team members have been closely tracking the impacts of the drawdowns implemented by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) at Green Peter Dam (Linn County) and Lookout Point Dam (Lane County) because of a 2021 federal court injunction. Among other impacts, these drawdowns have contributed to significant drinking water concerns for several communities in the southern Willamette Valley including Sweet Home, Lebanon, and Lowell. I have been working to improve communication and information-sharing across multiple levels of government, including USACE staff, Congressional delegation staff, state legislators, state agency staff, and local government leaders. I have also been exploring state and federal resources that exist to support cities who have had significant increases in their water treatment needs and identifying where gaps exist in this kind of scenario.



This week I toured the Green Peter and Foster Dams with USACE and Congressional delegation staff to better understand the impact of the drawdowns as well as anticipated measures USACE is proposing to take in the future as part of the forthcoming Willamette Valley System (WVS) Environmental Impact Statement and a new Biological Opinion that is expected to be issued following the end of the injunction in December 2024. The Green Peter reservoir (picture 1) has risen 150 feet from drawdown levels with the heavy amount of rain the region received in the last week.

## Resources and Opportunities

- **2024 Deadline for Business Oregon's Safe Drinking Water Revolving Loan Fund:** The 2024 deadline for submitting a Safe Drinking Water Revolving Loan Fund (SDWRLF) Letter of Interest for agency review is **January 15, 2024** in order to be considered for program funding in the 2024 calendar year, including funding through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law General Supplemental.

All water systems interested in applying for SDWRLF funding must first submit a Letter of Interest (LOI). An LOI should be submitted online when a project concept is expected to move forward to construction within the next 6 months to 2 years. It is highly recommended that a prospective applicant consults with a Business Oregon [Regional Development Officer \(RDO\)](#) prior to submitting an LOI.

Additional information about LOIs can be found at the [Safe Drinking Water Revolving Loan Fund LOI Web Page](#).

- **Grants to Support Water Systems in Small and Rural Communities:** The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced the availability of up to \$30.7 million in grant funding for technical assistance and training to support small drinking water and wastewater systems, including those in rural communities. This grant provides funding to organizations that work side-by-side with water systems by giving them the necessary tools and training to ensure communities have safe drinking water and effective wastewater treatment systems.

EPA is seeking applications to fund grant projects that will benefit small and rural communities. Eligible applicants for this competitive agreement are nonprofit organizations, nonprofit private universities and colleges, and public institutions of higher education. EPA expects to award three to nine cooperative agreements totaling up to \$30.7 million in federal funds. The training and technical assistance is provided to:

- Small public water systems to achieve and maintain compliance with the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA);
- Small public water systems on a wide range of managerial and/or financial topics to achieve and maintain compliance with the SDWA;
- Small publicly-owned wastewater systems, communities served by onsite-decentralized wastewater systems to help improve water quality; or
- Private well owners to help improve water quality.

**Questions about applying for EPA funding for training and technical assistance must be received by January 18, 2024 and applications must be received by 11:59 p.m. EST on February 2, 2024.** EPA expects to award these cooperative agreements by summer of 2024 and encourages all eligible organizations who have an interest in these projects to apply.

This grant will be competed through a Request for Application process. The funding opportunity will remain open for 60 days on [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov). For more information on the grant visit EPA's website on [Training and Technical Assistance for Small Systems Funding](#).

**Food & Beverage Processing and Co-Packing Survey:** The Oregon Department of Agriculture and Community Co-Pack are collaborating to conduct an all-encompassing survey to gain insights into the state of processing and contract manufacturing within Oregon's food & beverage industry. The survey will remain open until the end of the year and is available in [English](#) and in [Spanish](#).

In the wake of significant shifts and challenges facing the food & beverage sector, mainly due to the global pandemic, the Food & Beverage Processing and Co-Packing Survey have been strategically designed to identify emerging trends, current challenges, and potential areas of growth and support for Oregon food processors.

The Food & Beverage Processing and Co-Packing Survey aims to explore several key aspects, including:

- The impact of the pandemic on day-to-day operations and supply chains.
- The current challenges that processors and manufacturers encounter in the ever-changing landscape.
- Identifying potential areas of innovation and growth in the food & beverage sector.
- Identify new opportunities to connect food co-packers to food makers where connections have not been established.
- Understanding the unique needs and aspirations of food & beverage makers in Oregon.

For further information, please contact Erick Garman, Oregon Department of Agriculture: [erick.garman@oda.oregon.gov](mailto:erick.garman@oda.oregon.gov), 503-329-9799

- **Oregon Community Foundation Community Grants Program:** Celebrating 50 years of Oregonians helping Oregonians, OCF is doing remarkable work across the state. They leverage philanthropic donations to advance projects ranging from providing hoteling and sheltering for vulnerable residents to college scholarships and major infrastructure projects. Their efforts are helping to close Oregon's opportunity gap which supports the development of thriving communities. The Community Grants Program just opened their 2024 application, which will close January 8, 2024. With a narrow window to apply, please check out [2024 Community Grants Program » Oregon Community Foundation \(oregoncf.org\)](#) to understand the criteria and process including focus areas for the grants. The spring cycle, open now, is for operational support while the fall cycle will be for funding capacity building. Small businesses may be able to find resources through OCF. Information for those programs can be found at: [Resources for Small Businesses » Oregon Community Foundation \(oregoncf.org\)](#). Additional programs are listed at [Grants » Oregon Community Foundation \(oregoncf.org\)](#).



