

HB 3110
RURAL SUPPORT NETWORK
Oregon Rural Capacity Concept
March 2019

OVERVIEW

NEED

Oregon has 140 communities with a population of 1,000 people or less. These small, very small, and frontier communities often struggle with capacity. Far too often, these small communities, school districts and special districts are unable to identify and apply for funding resources due to a lack of community planning, grant writing and grant management expertise. Oregon's eleven federally-designated economic development districts have long standing relationships with these small communities through their work on community economic development needs assessment, strategic planning and work with the Governor's Regional Solutions teams. All of Oregon's economic development districts have community planning, grant writing and grant management expertise. However, the amount of direct, community-specific support by the districts has historically been limited by district staffing capacity.

SOLUTION

Expand Oregon's Economic Development Districts current capacity to reach out and identify immediate community needs, identify potential funding opportunities, provide grant writing services and manage grants as needed. Districts would guide small communities (including small school districts and special districts) to the appropriate program to meet their needs. This could mean their grant writer helps the community with a USDA or other agency application, or connect with one of the nonprofits, philanthropic organizations, or other partners that assist with community development or capacity building. Opportunities for collaborative applications for funding would also be identified, potentially enhancing the competitiveness of a project request.

OVERSIGHT

Recommended is a single contract with the Oregon Association of Economic Development Districts which would be responsible for management, reporting and documentation of the rural support work done by each district. One district would be assigned as fiscal agent. An Advisory/Oversight Committee would include:

- 2 House Representatives
- 2 Senate Representatives
- 1 League of Cities Representative
- 1 Association of Oregon Counties Representative
- 1 Small Districts Association of Oregon Representative
- 1 At-Large Member (which could be filled by a philanthropic organization with a rural focus such as The Ford Family Foundation, Oregon Community Foundation, etc)