

2023 Year-End Report

OREGON OFFICE OF RURAL HEALTH

IMPROVING THE QUALITY, AVAILABILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY OF HEALTH CARE FOR RURAL OREGONIANS



About the Oregon Office of Rural Health

The Oregon Office of Rural Health (ORH) has been the focal point for rural and frontier/remote health in Oregon since 1979. Supported by the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy, the state of Oregon and Oregon Health & Science University, ORH offers assistance to hospitals, clinics and communities to strengthen the rural and frontier/remote health care delivery system.

OUR MISSION *To improve the quality, availability and accessibility of health care for rural Oregonians.*

OUR VISION *To serve as a state leader in providing resources, developing innovative strategies and cultivating collaborative partnerships to support Oregon rural communities in achieving optimal health and well-being.*



ORH's Work Is Aligned Under the Following Service Areas:



FIELD SERVICES

DATA & ANALYSIS

ORH provides data and analysis about rural and frontier/remote health to providers, elected officials, government agencies, educators and members of the public.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

ORH offers technical assistance to rural and frontier/remote communities and health care facilities to strengthen their health care delivery systems.

WORKFORCE SERVICES

PROVIDER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

ORH works with rural practice sites to help them recruit and retain practitioners, and with practitioner candidates to help them find suitable rural and frontier/remote Oregon practice sites.

PROVIDER INCENTIVE PROGRAMS

ORH manages loan repayment, loan forgiveness, tax credits and malpractice subsidy programs to incentivize the recruitment and retention of rural and frontier/remote Oregon providers.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND ADVOCACY

The state legislature has charged ORH with “coordinating” the provision of health care to rural Oregonians and developing legislative proposals to benefit the health of rural Oregonians.

INFORMATION SERVICES

ORH keeps its constituents informed through the annual [Oregon Rural Health Conference](#), the annual [Forum on Aging in Rural Oregon](#), [quarterly newsletters](#) and social media.

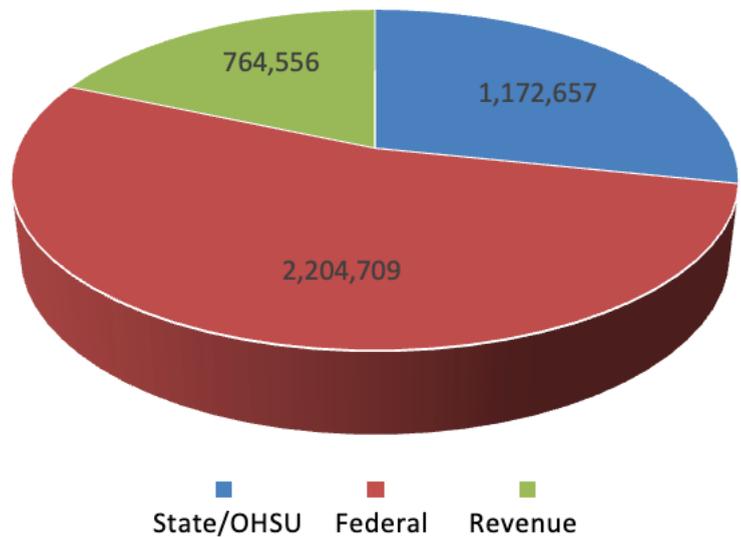
Funding Sources



ORH is funded through the support of multiple federal grants, state general fund, OHSU and various partnerships. Federal grants include the State Office of Rural Health Grant and the Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility Grant provided through the Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA).

State/OHSU Support	\$1,172,657
Federal Grants	\$2,204,709
SORH	\$223,410
Flex	\$822,528
SLRP	\$300,000
SHIP	\$312,264
HRSA Workforce Grant	\$546,507

2023 ORH Budget





Workforce Services

2023 Program Highlights



Health Care Provider Candidate Sourcing

ORH sources candidates through direct outreach to students, residents and practicing providers throughout the country. We work directly with candidates reached through the national nonprofit Rural Recruitment and Retention Network (3RNet) and through the scholarship and loan repayment programs we administer. Focus on meeting the workforce needs of our rural and underserved communities is a priority.

ORH reached 1,108 providers during 2023 who had an interest in practicing in Oregon.

Practice Opportunity Sites

ORH provides many recruitment and retention services to rural clinics, federally qualified health centers, hospitals and communities:

- Practice site assessments.
- Assistance with practice profile development.
- Assistance with the development of a recruitment & retention plan.
- Facilitate the marketing of current job opportunities and profiles on 3RNet as well as all ORH social media outlets.
- Promotion of opportunities at medical and dental schools, residencies, and other health professional programs.
- Provide referrals of health professional candidates who have expressed an interest in job opportunities matching Oregon opportunities.

For additional information, contact the ORH Workforce Services team | ruralworkforce@ohsu.edu

Health Care Provider Incentive Programs

Loan Repayment is a financial incentive for clinicians to work in an underserved location in exchange for a service commitment. ORH administered two loan repayment programs in 2023:

Oregon Partnership State Loan Repayment Program (SLRP) - \$372,932 awarded to 6 providers: 1 PA, 1 DO, 3 MDs, and 1 PharmD.

Oregon Health Care Provider Loan Repayment (PILP) - \$4,113,729 awarded to 41 providers: 2 EPHDs, 13 DMDs, 1 ND, 7 NPs, 2 PharmDs, 6 PAs, 3 DOs, and 7 MDs.

Loan forgiveness is an incentive program in which students receive loans during their education, which are forgiven when they complete a service obligation after graduation. Participating institutions are Western University of Health Sciences (CompNW), Pacific University and OHSU.

Primary Care Loan Forgiveness Program (PCLF) was designed to meet workforce needs in rural Oregon for primary care providers. \$434,500 awarded to 8 future providers: 2 DMDs, 2 MDs, 1 DO, 2 PharmDs, and 1 PA.

Scholars for a Healthy Oregon Initiative (SHOI), gives students the opportunity to make a difference in an underserved community in Oregon by offering full tuition and fees at an approved OHSU medical program in exchange for a service obligation upon graduation. \$2,500,000 awarded to 16 future providers: 5 DMDs, 7 DNPs, 2 PAs, and 2 MDs.

ORH supported 24 rural health care facilities in the 2023 Recruitment Academy. The Academy provides training for staff who are responsible for the recruitment of Oregon's health care workforce.



Field Services

2023 Program Highlights



Areas of Unmet Health Care Need (AUHCN) Report

Since 1998, the Oregon Office of Rural Health has published the [Areas of Unmet Health Care Need \(AUHCN\) Report](#).

The report includes nine variables that measure access to primary physical, mental and oral health care. This report can be used by state partners to prioritize financial and technical assistance, and by community health care stakeholders to advocate for their unmet needs. For more on the variables used, see page 12 of the report.

The report provides a total unmet need score for each primary care service area in Oregon. An area's score can be compared to other service areas as well as to overall scores for the state, all urban, all rural and all frontier/remote areas. Additionally, if a score is low, it identifies which of the nine variables are negatively impacting the service area. The report can be used to quantify how well communities are able to access physical, mental and oral primary health care.

For more information, contact Emerson Ong | ong@ohsu.edu.



Small Hospital Improvement Program Grants (SHIP)

The HRSA-funded SHIP grant is available annually to small, rural hospitals with 49 or fewer beds. Hospitals use funding in support of value-based purchasing (VBP), shared savings/accountable care organizations (SS/ACO), and payment bundling programs, and to purchase related health information technology, equipment software, and/or training.

During the FY23 annual grant cycle, \$265,080 in direct funding provided awards of \$11,045 each to 24 hospitals. This represents 77% of Oregon's eligible SHIP facilities. Fifty-four percent of FY23 Oregon SHIP hospitals chose to spend their awards on activities in support of VBP; 33% spent their awards on SS/ACO; and 13% invested their awards in payment bundling programs.

Some highlights of FY23 projects include:

- Antimicrobial stewardship training and process improvement;
- Emergency department operations education;
- Provider practice operations education; and
- Swing bed operations and growth education.

Telehealth

ORH understands the importance telehealth contributes to health care access in rural Oregon. For this reason, ORH partners with the [Northwest Regional Telehealth Resource Center](#) to stay up-to-date on telehealth policy, reimbursements, and advancements that assist rural health care facilities with their telehealth efforts. Also, ORH provides technical assistance to rural health facilities that have questions about telehealth.

In addition, telehealth in rural areas is significantly impacted by available broadband and speed. ORH Program Manager Stepha Dragoon was appointed to the Oregon Broadband Advisory Council in 2022 to provide expertise on these issues for rural communities.

For more information, visit our website or contact Stepha Dragoon | dragoon@ohsu.edu.

Rural Health Clinic Programming and Technical Assistance

The 119 Oregon Rural Health Clinics (RHCs) are crucial to health care access in rural and remote communities. ORH continues to support RHC's needs with a robust program of activities. The 2023 RHC program work included compliance, professional development, quality improvement, leadership networking, scholarships, and technical assistance, including the following:

- The RHC Compliance Cohort is an eight-month educational compliance program that brings RHC leaders together to prepare their clinics for recertification and maintain ongoing compliance.
- Membership to the Oregon Medical Group Management Association, scholarships to the Certified Rural Health Clinic Professional course, and scholarships to attend the National Association of Rural Health Clinics (NARHC) Institute are examples of professional development scholarships awarded to Oregon RHCs.
- An RHC Workshop, which is embedded in the [Oregon Rural Health Conference](#)
- The state re-certifies RHCs approximately every seven years. ORH offers free, in-person mock surveys to assist clinics to prepare for the unannounced state survey inspection.
- Quarterly RHC networking calls allow leaders to network with colleagues around the state about current events, challenges, and more.
- The RHC Patient Experience: The Value of the Survey is a short video series clinics used to educate and train staff on the patient experience survey. For the RHC Patient Experience Series with Angie Charlet, [visit this link](#).
- ORH emails a bi-weekly RHC Newsletter that covers the latest RHC news, Oregon-specific updates, resources, and more. Register for the newsletter [here](#).

RHC Innovation Grants

Innovation is vital to meeting rural and frontier/remote health care needs. RHC practice innovation grants have supported innovative projects that seek to improve operations, increase revenue, and improve workflows in the RHC. In 2023, ORH awarded two RHCs Innovation Grants. Grants have supported clinic projects focused on the following:

- Initiation of community health worker-led smoking cessation support/education groups;
- Improved patient health outcomes through enhanced data reporting;
- Best practice RHC certified billing/coding education and training to clinic staff to improve compliance, increase revenue and sustainability;
- Improving patient access to community health workers (CHW) by increasing the number of CHWs; and
- Building a robust case management program and improving patient care through training and education of CHWs and case managers.

New in 2024, this grant program is rolling into the Rural Population Health Incubator grant program. More information on this grant [here](#).

For more information on clinic-related technical assistance, visit the [ORH website](#) or contact Rondyann Gerst | gerst@ohsu.edu.

Critical Access Hospital Programming and Support

ORH continues to support training and staff development for Oregon's Critical Access Hospitals (CAHs). From quality to leadership, investing in staff and programs improves CAHs' ability to offer high-quality care to their communities.

The following programs, scholarships, and grants were offered to CAHs in FY23:

- Building on the growth of the Oregon CAH Quality Network (OCQN), ORH hosted monthly networking sessions and two in-person regional site visits, which brought 21 CAH quality professionals from eight CAHs together to learn and share best practices.
- Awarded memberships to the National Association of Healthcare Quality (NAHQ) to 16 CAH staff members.

Support for Emergency Medical Services (EMS)

- Supported nine CAHs to participate in Intensive Quality Improvement Cohorts (IQICs) and participation in the Center for Stewardship in Medicine focused on antimicrobial stewardship efforts.
- Provided scholarships to enroll two CEOs and five CNOs in the National Rural Health Association's (NRHA) Rural Hospital Leadership Certification Program.
- Provided scholarships to six CAH representatives to attend the NRHA CAH and RHC Conference in Kansas City, MO.
- Ten attendees from five CAHs engaged in the Turning Data into Action program, through which they identified and completed quality improvement projects using the PDSA cycle and process improvement techniques taught at the workshop.
- Offered an in-person Quality Improvement Workshop. 47 staff from 19 CAHs attended the workshop, which provided education and best practices on CAH quality and reporting.
- Thirty-eight staff from six CAHs participated in the Patient & Family Engagement (PFE) virtual cohort that focused on the care transition process between the hospital and primary care setting.
- Provided 12 webinars, which offered best practices focused on CAH financial and operational improvements. Webinar recordings are available [here](#).
- Provided one grant to a CAH to focus on training their Board of Trustees.

For more information on quality improvement assistance, contact Stacie Rothwell | rothwels@ohsu.edu.



ORH continues to support rural and frontier/remote EMS. In 2023, ORH provided funding to support the training and retention of rural volunteer EMS service personnel and technical and financial assistance to support the operations of EMS agencies.

Volunteers provide EMS in much of rural Oregon. Their service requires time off from work and away from their families and great personal expense for training. For this reason, ORH offers a yearly opportunity to apply for funding to support the training and retention of rural volunteer EMS service personnel through its [Helping EMS in Rural Oregon](#) (HERO) program. Through HERO, ORH awarded eight training grants in FY23, totaling \$20,000. Additionally, ORH provided scholarships to six EMS agencies to attend the virtual National Rural EMS Conference.

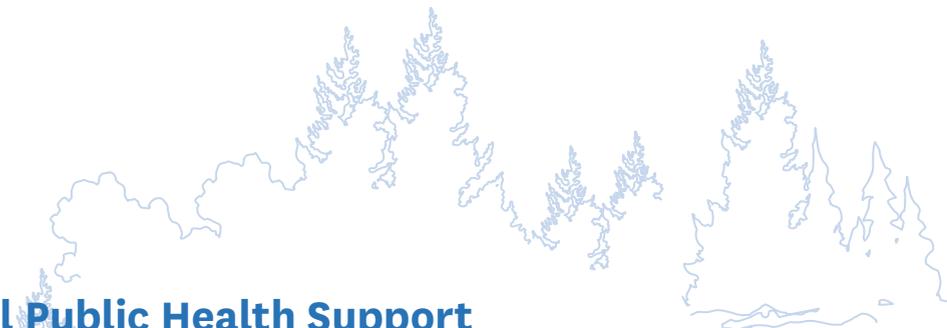
ORH also offers CAH-EMS Partnered Improvement Grants to support the coordination of pre-hospital and hospital care. In FY23, ORH awarded two \$6,000 grants. One grant focused on training Critical Access Hospital (CAH) and EMS partner staff on basic life support in obstetrics, and the other focused on improving coordination between the CAH emergency department and EMS providers.

Additionally, ORH was able to provide a rare opportunity for equipment grants to EMS agencies in FY23 and awarded three agencies a total of nearly \$41,000. Further, in partnership with the Roundhouse Foundation, ORH provided an additional \$100,000 in equipment grants to six agencies.

Finally, ORH supported two CAH and EMS agency-partnered simulation events, which provided a realistic trauma scenario, which CAH and EMS staff worked through to identify areas of success and areas for improvements.

Technical assistance is a hallmark of ORH's work. In FY23, it provided 50 technical assistance encounters to rural and frontier agencies.

Contact Sarah Andersen | ansarah@ohsu.edu for more information on ORH's EMS programming.



Rural Public Health Support

Public health is a critical element of the health care infrastructure throughout our state. Public health departments in rural areas, in particular, have a pivotal role in assuring access to health information, resources, and health care in our rural communities. As such, ORH developed and implemented strategies to better support rural public health departments in FY23.

ORH partnered with the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) to create a public health track for a second year at its Annual Oregon Rural Health Conference. Sessions focused on strategies to maximize funding, approaches to partnering with other rural health care organizations, addressing the social determinants of health and equity in rural communities, and more. Through this partnership, ORH supported staff from 15 Oregon rural public health agencies to attend the conference.

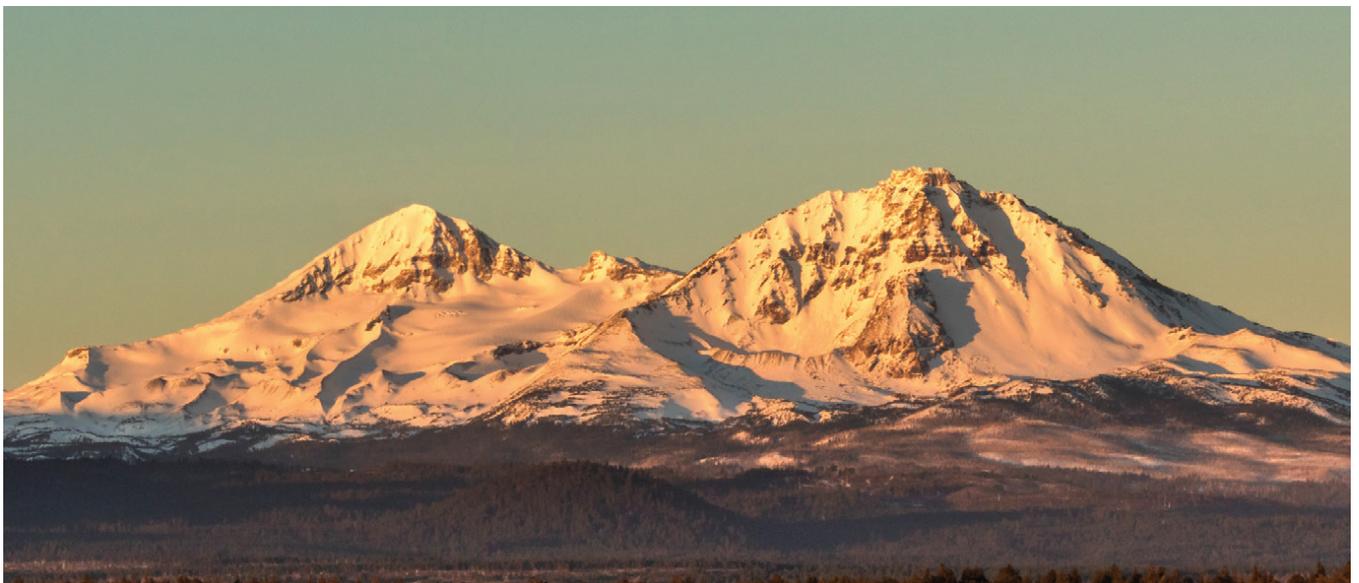
ORH also partnered with OHA to support the training and certification of community health workers (CHWs) in rural communities. Through this project, ORH has enrolled 24 students to train as CHWs across the state, who will work at rural clinics, hospitals, and public health departments to support the health and health care of vulnerable populations in rural areas.

In a larger project, ORH and the Coalition of Local Health Officials (CLHO) were awarded a three-year, \$1.5 million HRSA Rural Public Health Workforce Network grant to build a network of recruiters, educators, and employers who can expand and cross-train the rural public health care workforce. This project, called “Healthy Rural Oregon,” is focused on the following:

- Recruiting, cross-training, and supporting new and currently certified CHWs in Crook, Deschutes, Jefferson, Wheeler, Wasco, Klamath, and Lane Counties; and
- Recruiting, cross-training, and supporting new and currently certified EMTs in Community Paramedicine in Malheur County.

By the end of the three-year cycle, we will have trained/cross-trained 127 CHWs and 40 community paramedics.

Contact Sarah Andersen | ansarah@ohsu.edu for more information on ORH’s public health programming.



Policy Development & Advocacy

The Oregon Office of Rural Health is mandated by the Oregon Legislature to “coordinate statewide efforts for providing health care in rural areas” and “develop enabling legislation to facilitate further development of rural health care delivery systems.”

The obstacles facing health care delivery in rural communities are as diverse as the communities themselves, and include economic, cultural and social differences. In some cases, the isolation of living in remote areas can be an impediment to health. The COVID-19 pandemic and Public Health Emergency only added to those challenges.

ORH worked with the Oregon Legislature, the Oregon Health Authority (OHA), the Oregon Rural Health Association (ORHA), and other partners to support rural health facilities and providers during these challenging times. ORH remained focused on addressing health care workforce shortages in rural Oregon. The Oregon Legislature continued funding for the Oregon Health Care Provider Incentive Program (OHCPIP) and Rural Provider Tax Credit. The OHCPIP funded loan repayment, loan forgiveness and the Rural Medical Practitioners Insurance Subsidy Program.

At the federal level, ORH works with the National Rural Health Association (NRHA) and the National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health (NOSORH) to support rural Oregon health care delivery through federal financial support.

Oregon Rural Health Conference

ORH celebrated 40 years of Oregon Rural Health Conferences in 2023, with 73 speakers presenting 40 sessions to 325 attendees, leading off with Diane Hall, Director of the CDC's new Office of Rural Health. The Oregon Rural Health Conference is the largest gathering in Oregon dedicated to finding rural solutions to rural challenges.

Conference presentations and information can be found on the [ORH website](#).

Forum on Aging in Rural Oregon

ORH was pleased to host the 2023 Forum on Aging in Rural Oregon (Forum) in person in Seaside, OR., May 15-17, 2023. The Forum brought together elder care professionals, caregivers, clinical providers, community members, policymakers, and philanthropists to make rural communities the best places to age. Session topics included behavioral health, climate resilience, sexual health, health literacy and more. The 2023 event attracted nearly 150 attendees.

Beginning in 2024, the Forum on Aging will transition to become the Forum on Rural Population Health & Health Equity. This will allow ORH to focus more expansively and inclusively on population health and health equity issues that are important to our rural communities. ORH maintains a strong commitment to rural older adults and will emphasize presentations that address this topic through a specialized aging track.

Visit the [Forum on Aging](#) website for past Forum presentations and agendas. Visit the new website for information on the [Forum on Rural Population Health & Health Equity](#), which will be held virtually June 12-13, 2024. For more information, contact Stepha Dragoon | dragoon@ohsu.edu.

Elder Service Innovation Grants

ORH is dedicated to assisting rural Oregonians to age in place. In FY23, it offered \$40,524 in [Elder Service Innovation grants](#) to six agencies to assist their efforts to innovatively address aging solutions in rural communities. Projects included a memory café, services to support rural veterans, digital literacy classes, health and wellness support, and system navigation training.

For more information, visit our website or contact Stepha Dragoon | dragoon@ohsu.edu.

Rural Population Health Grants

ORH offered its second year of the Rural Population Health Grant Program to support innovative programs that address a specific population health need for an identified rural population in 2023. Awards of up to \$10,000 were awarded to each of four organizations. Projects focused on:

- Referral desks to assist with patient navigation and referrals;
- A care coordination program in a primary care setting;
- An outdoor fitness trail; and
- A parent support and education program.

In addition, the Roundhouse Foundation partnered with ORH to provide additional funding for three grantees.

Beginning in 2024, the Elder Service Innovation Grant, the Rural Population Health Grant and the RHC Innovation Grant programs will merge to become the [Rural Population Health Incubator Program](#) (the Incubator). The Incubator will disburse up to \$10,000 in grant funds to support population health programs led by Oregon rural hospitals, clinics and/or community-based nonprofit organizations. Through the Incubator, ORH will provide fuller support to grantees as they navigate the challenges of implementing and sustaining population health programs.

For more information, contact Stepha Dragoon | dragoon@ohsu.edu.

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OPPORTUNITY 
Just knock.

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The Oregon Office of Rural Health has been a partner of Oregon Health & Science University since 1989.



ORH Partners



STATE

Oregon Area Health Education Centers (AHEC)
Oregon Association of Hospitals and Health Systems (OAHS)
Oregon Center for Nursing (OCN)
Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS)
Oregon Health Authority (OHA)
Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU)
Oregon Health Care Workforce Institute (OHWI)
Oregon Medical Association (OMA)
Oregon Nursing Association (ONA)
Oregon Primary Care Association (OPCA)
Oregon Rural Health Association (ORHA)
Oregon Rural Practice-based Research Network (ORPRN)
Pacific University
Telehealth Alliance of Oregon (TAO)
Western University of Health Sciences –Comp NW



NATIONAL

Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)
Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP)
National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health (NOSORH)
National Rural Health Association (NRHA)
National Rural Recruitment and Retention Network (3RNet)