

# OFFICE HOURS REPORT

## COOS, CURRY & DOUGLAS COUNTIES

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. There is a lack of funding for mental health services.<sup>[1]</sup>
2. Organizations are unable to hire and retain qualified staff.<sup>[2]</sup>
3. Access to available services is limited within communities.<sup>[3]</sup>
4. Organizations have the desire to collaborate but are held back by funding.<sup>[4]</sup>
5. The conditions of grants are too limiting and dissuade organizations.<sup>[5]</sup>
6. Organizations would like to meet with OHA but require more transparency.<sup>[6]</sup>

### OFFICE HOURS

OPAL hosted a virtual Office Hours session on November 2nd, 2023. Eight grantees of RFGP 5250 from Coos, Curry & Douglas Counties were invited to attend (see accompanying Summary Report for full list of invitees). The session lasted one hour, and five organizations attended. The report summarizes the findings from grantee partners during that session.

### ATTENDEES

[Alternative Youth Activities](#) (Coos County)

[Bay Area First Step](#) (Coos County)

[Douglas County Children's Center, Inc.](#) (Douglas CARES) (Douglas County)

[Southwest Oregon Children's Foundation](#) (Curry County)

[Western Oregon Advanced Health, LLC](#) (Advanced Health CCO) (Coos County)

### THEMES

1. [Regional health services are limited by a lack of funding.](#) Organizations have the desire to innovate existing systems to meet the needs of their communities. However, they are unable to follow through on their plans due to not having the funds necessary to develop new programs and facilities.
  - 1.1. Development of facilities, specifically **youth respite centers** and **sobering centers**, has been placed on hold because organizations cannot find the necessary funding. These proposed facilities have the potential to increase regional capacity to serve a wider population and would introduce more specialized treatment options.
  - 1.2. Western Oregon Advanced Health, LLC. identified that respite centers for youth are a key need within Coos County. A youth respite center in this county would act as a step-down program to transition youth into long term care and offer families a reprieve. Likewise, sobering centers would act as short-term transitional services into longer term treatment.
2. [Many organizations end up competing with each other to recruit the qualified staff in the region.](#) Coos, Curry, and Douglas County providers have experienced an overall increase in regional need for

mental health services, and a relative shortage of qualified staff. For these reasons, organizations struggle to recruit and retain the staff needed to maintain their programs.

- 2.1. Smaller organizations are unable to compete with organizations that have higher budgets. Therefore, smaller organizations are unable to hire and retain adequate staffing. Many organizations within these communities simply do not have the capacity to provide salaries that incentivize staff retention.
- 2.2. Funding shortages also prevent organizations from effectively or fairly compensating their staff who work in the high stress environment of mental health services, which negatively impacts retention rates of employees.

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*"We just do not have the staff that's willing to put themselves in tough, tough work environments, day in, day out for the wages that they would be receiving for those services."*

—Western Oregon Advanced Health, LLC (Coos County)

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3. [Access to services is limited within communities.](#) Coos, Curry, and Douglas County organizations struggle to ensure their services are accessible for everyone who is eligible within their communities. Having access to all available resources is key for those individuals that need them.
  - 3.1. Even in cases where there are services available to the community, organizations struggle with making them accessible. For instance, Bay Area First Step (Coos County) explained that the region had recently moved forward with its **affordable housing** supply. However, access to this housing has not improved for many individuals who may still be unhoused or face barriers. Thus, even though resources may be present, organizations may still struggle to make these resources available and act in their full capacity.
  - 3.2. A crucial gap in access identified by two organizations is the lack of **translation services** in this region. Douglas CARES (Douglas County) discussed that they felt their organization could be more inclusive through translating fliers, but they did not have the resources necessary to complete the translation project. Western Oregon Advanced Health, LLC (Coos County) noted that they were able to apply for grants to pay for translation services, but this knowledge was not well known to others. Making translation services widely accessible to organizations could help increase the overall accessibility and reach of resources within their communities.
4. [The desire for collaboration between organizations is strong, but is held back by a low volume of funding opportunities.](#) Many organizations across this region share similar goals and work with similar populations but are forced to compete for resources. This competition reduces organizational capacity to serve the community and to work together to support those in need. There is potential for organizations to achieve progress as a group, but they may need support in achieving this.
  - 4.1. Funding that encourages partnerships between a wide range of organizations has made an impact in increasing regional collaboration. Bay Area First Step (Coos County) discussed how Measure

110 gave organizations that previously needed to compete the opportunity to work together, build relationships, and fulfill their mission to “serve the people.”

- 4.2. Alternative Youth Activities (Coos County) noted that while organizations may collaborate very well, they are still unable to make progress with a lack of funding. So, while the potential is there to work on a collaborative project for their community, they are held back by resource limitations.
- 4.3. Encouraging collaboration may still prove challenging in some communities, as feelings of animosity from previous competition for resources may still linger. Western Oregon Advanced Health, LLC (Coos County) discussed that having external support in this effort could be beneficial to reframe relationships between organizations. They also mentioned that aid could be helpful in guiding new collaborative partners through developing effective and productive practices.
5. [Conditions of grants are limiting and dissuade organizations from applying.](#) Many organizations stated that they have avoided certain funding opportunities because they did not feel the terms of funding would fit their needs and goals.
  - 5.1. One of the main themes of this discussion was that the time commitments outlined in grant rewards were too intense. Organizations feel that the 30-year repayment timelines for loans were too long and actively discouraged best practice. They discussed how these commitments locked them in tough spots and stopped or even reversed progress, preventing organizations from properly serving their communities.
  - 5.2. The organizations also felt that many of these grants were too specific in what was acceptable for funding to be used for, which limited their capacity to effectively use the funding within their communities.
6. [Organizations in this county are open to meeting with the Oregon Health Authority.](#) They have the desire to communicate their needs and possibly access resources to help their communities.
  - 6.1. Organizations stated that the meetings established by OHA should be as transparent as possible. The meeting invitation should include the stated purposes and intended outcomes of the session.
  - 6.2. It would also be beneficial if these meetings were open to multiple parties that would be impacted by any decisions, including developers and community partners.
  - 6.3. There was interest in the possibility of hybrid meetings where individuals have the choice of attending in person or online.

## NEEDS OF ORGANIZATIONS

1. [Increased funding available for the development and maintenance of mental health services.](#)
  - 1.1. More funding opportunities to encourage innovation within treatment facilities and to continue to support the growing needs of mental health services.
2. [Increased funding available for employment, training, and retention of competent staff.](#)
  - 2.1. Increasing salaries and training costs accommodated for within provided funding.

3. [Aid in increasing the accessibility of services, including translation.](#)
  - 3.1. Expanding access to translation services, and advertising services more widely. Additionally, to provide organizations with support in increasing overall accessibility of current services.
4. [Increased funding and support to facilitate productive collaboration between organizations.](#)
  - 4.1. Collaboration between organizations is easier to achieve when competition for funding is not a concern. Organizations may also need support in transitioning into a more collaborative space.
5. [More agency and flexibility given to organizations over the conditions of grants.](#)
  - 5.1. Many grants available have strict terms for how funding is to be used as well as long time commitments. These discourage organizations from accepting opportunities, and ultimately hinder progress for communities.
6. [Heightened transparency within future meetings with OHA.](#)
  - 6.1. Organizations want to meet with OHA but require that there be more transparency provided prior to the meetings and for meetings to be open to community members impacted by decisions associated with meetings.

## IMMEDIATE OPPORTUNITIES

Western Oregon Advanced Health, LLC (Coos County) is nearing completion of an outpatient Sobering Center in their community and requires additional funding to complete the project.