

Promoting a thriving region through service, connectivity, and innovation.

## 2023 in Review

As I reflect on the accomplishments and strides made over the past year, I am excited to welcome you to our annual report. In the following pages, you will discover the profound impact of our collective efforts in service to the region. Our commitment to service, connectivity and innovation has driven us to new heights, and I am honored to share the highlights of our journey with you.



Over the past year, our organization has embraced the strategic priorities outlined in our 2023-2025 Strategic Plan with dedication and enthusiasm, impacting each area of work we do. Through meticulous planning, collaborative efforts, and the commitment of our exceptional team, we have greatly expanded the delivery of technology services as a lower cost alternative for member agencies; deeply improved our relationship with Community Services Consortium by reducing redundancy and improving shared customer experience; and invested in an internal emphasis on training ourselves in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion to better steward our role of engaging everyone throughout our communities. I am excited about the promising future that lies ahead as we continue to implement our strategic plan and work to better serve the region.

The following pages proudly reflect the dedication of the COG's remarkable team to serve the region through collaboration, compassion, diversity/equity/inclusion, integrity and respect. It also highlights the pivotal role played by our valued partners and members. Thank you for being an integral part of our shared commitment to meeting individual and community needs for building a better, more vibrant future for our region.

Keep Smiling!

Ryan Vogt *Executive Director* 



Greetings and welcome to this annual report from an organization that's working every day to improve life in our region, the OCWCOG, or Oregon Cascades West Council of Governments.

The COG is an institution created decades ago by county and city governments, ports and tribes to carry out a broad mission serving Linn, Lincoln and Benton Counties. Elected officials from those entities serve as the COG's Board of Directors,

and it's my honor to serve as board chair. It's our responsibility to set overall organizational policies, work with staff to develop the yearly operating budget, and support the dedicated work of the great people with boots on the ground who are doing everything from delivering services to the homebound to helping communities shape the vision of what they want to look like in the coming decade.

The area we collectively serve, ranging from the rugged Pacific to the magnificent Cascades range, is truly one of the most beautiful places anywhere, and it's populated by some truly amazing people. It's our pleasure to present this report of COG activities.

# Promoting a thriving region through service, connectivity, and innovation.

### 2023-2025 Strategic Plan

#### **COMMUNITY VISIBILITY**

Building on the Mission, Vision, and Values defined in 2022 was a large objective for the agency in 2023. From internal messaging to staff to increased messaging in the communities we serve, the agency worked towards developing a stronger brand and a clear message. We began celebrating a specific value each month of the year and connected with staff at program meetings to discuss how each program area of work feeds our mission. We worked with members to identify common problems and promote regional solutions, and acted as a convener for those throughout the region.

#### **ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE**

In line with our strategic objective of creating efficient, high value operations and processes, the first year of our Strategic Plan saw a variety of system updates and improvements. New software implementations positively impacted a variety of program areas including Meals on Wheels, Ride Line, Finance, Human Resources, and Technology Services.

Additionally, the finance and payroll staff played an important role in implementing the newly adopted salary schedule that was approved in bargaining in October. All employees experienced changes in their pay including cost of living increases, renaming of salary ranges and steps and various retro pay calculations.

# Compassion • Collaboration Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Integrity • Respect

#### PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

Further alignment and systems improvement with Community Services Consortium (CSC) was a large focus of 2023. We aligned administrative tasks, began co-housing in the new OCWCOG Corvallis office, and embarked on systems improvement projects together for both Human Resources and Finance. The finance Enterprise Software solutions project will provide an upgrade to our finance, contracts, human resources and payroll system, and the Human Resources Ceridian DayForce system will allow for streamlined processes across both agencies to better serve staff, concisely store data, and create effective tools for recruiting and onboarding.

#### **DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION**

At OCWCOG, we believe fostering an inclusive environment is not only the right thing to do, it is pivotal to our success in promoting a thriving region. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) isn't just a buzzword at the agency, it is a strategic priority and a value defined by our incredible staff. In 2023, we began collaborating with our contractor, MGT, to gain a stronger understanding of where we are on our DEI journey. Through their expertise and our staff's insights, we have taken a deep dive into our current practices, identifying areas where we are excelling and pinpointing opportunities for growth. Our work with MGT is helping us create a stronger environment where everyone is welcomed, supported, and given the resources needed to thrive. Through a collaborative effort, we've conducted thorough assessments, engaging staff at every level to understand their experiences and perspectives. This work has been done in partnership with CSC, and together we are not just identifying gaps, but creating actionable strategies to address them. Our commitment to DEI is an ongoing journey of improvement and learning as we strive to build a workplace culture that embraces diversity, ensures equity, and celebrates inclusion.

#### **EXPANSION AND INNOVATION**

2023 brought us the purchase of our new Corvallis office location, allowing us to have a permanent footprint in Benton County. The office houses staff dedicated to Senior and Disability Services, Community Service Programs, the Corvallis Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO), and the Benton County Veteran Service Office. Like our other offices in Linn and Lincoln Counties, the new location is poised to become a hub of resources, information, and assistance that caters to the diverse needs of veterans, seniors, individuals, and families throughout the region.



The new Corvallis building is located at located at 1121 NW Ninth Street.

# **Senior & Disability Services**

The Senior and Disability Services (SDS) department is committed to providing services and support to keep older adults and people with disabilities independent, safe, secure, and healthy in our communities.

#### AGING AND DISABILITY RESOURCE CONNECTION

The Aging and Disability Resource Connection (ADRC) is a free service that offers the public a single point of entry to access resources, information, and assistance on issues affecting older adults and people with disabilities regardless of their income.



65 Years+

**Help with Tasks** 

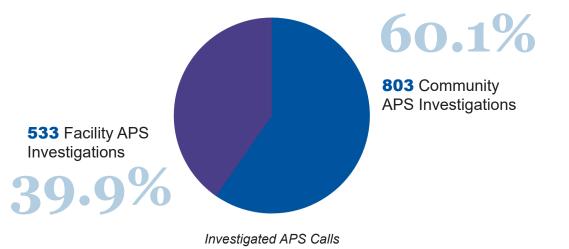
**Total Consumers** 



Out of the individuals who were served by the ADRC, **3,009** or **62%** were over the age of 65, and **3,222** or **66%** reported a disability or difficulty doing daily tasks.

#### ADULT PROTECTIVE SERVICES

Adult Protective Services (APS) workers within the Senior and Disability Services department respond to allegations of abuse and/or neglect of older adults and adults with physical disabilities. APS received **3,739** calls regarding concerns of abuse in Linn, Benton and Lincoln Counties in 2023. Of those calls, **1,336** resulted in investigations by APS staff. Of those investigations, **803** were related to concerns in the community, and were **533** facility investigations.



**OCW COG** 

#### HOUSING SERVICES

Senior and Disability Services hired two new positions, a Housing Navigator and a Housing Coordinator, to support Long Term Care Services and eligible individuals in the region with intensive case management. These positions help address housing risks and issues throughout the region. Since the creation of these positions in August, 92 connections have been made with individuals.



Housing Services have secured longterm housing for 4 individuals.



Housing Services have helped 2 clients be placed in longterm care settings.

#### ADULT FOSTER HOMES

Adult Foster Homes (AFH) are single-family homes that offer 24 hour care. These unique residences provide individuals with support with activities of daily living like bathing and dressing, while still allowing them to live in the comfort of a home like setting. Senior and Disability Services licenses Adult Foster Homes that are designated as providing services to older adults and people with physical disabilities in the region.



#### **ELIGIBILITY SERVICES**

The OCWCOG Eligibility Unit received approximately **10,362** new applications for medical and nonmedical services in 2023. OCWCOG served an average of **28,321** individuals with active medical cases across the region, accounting for 27% of all active medical cases in the district. An average of **12,475** consumers were eligible to receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits in 2023.

#### LONG TERM CARE SERVICES AND SUPPORTS

OCWCOG staff provide case management for Long Term Services and Supports (LTSS) throughout the region. OCWCOG managed **2,811** cases and assisted a total of **2,641** residents in Linn, Benton, and Lincoln Counties with care services in 2023. Of these services, 1,694 received in-home care, 240 received care in a nursing facility, and 707 received Community Based Care via an Adult Foster Home, assisted living facility, or residential care.





Out of the 2,381 new service requests processed by staff, 1,738 were from Linn and Benton Counties, and 643 were from Lincoln County.

### **OREGON PROJECT INDEPENDENCE**

Oregon Project Independence (OPI) is a program providing assistance that supports daily activities of living which can be provided by home care workers or in-home care agencies. Examples of in-home assistance includes help with dressing, meal preparations, bathing, shopping, and housekeeping. OPI is an alternative to Medicaid and offers up to 20 hours a month of in-home assistance. There were **170** case managed consumers in Oregon Project Independence in 2023.

#### **MONEY MANAGEMENT**

The Money Management Program (MMP) provides free assistance with personal money management tasks through specially trained volunteers. Services are offered free of charge to eligible individuals and includes Bill Pay, where clients receive assistance with budgeting and check writing, and a Representative Payee program, where a designated representative can make payments on behalf of an incapable beneficiary.



#### CONSUMER SUCCESS STORY

A consumer came to OCWCOG inquiring about Money Management services. They were struggling to make ends meet and voiced their extreme stress as bills stacked up, calls were coming daily threatening collections, and shut off notices were being received. The situation was causing significant stress and anxiety, and also led to increased feelings of isolation. Within 3 months of working with the Money Management Program, the consumer was able to reduce their expenses, allowing them to save over \$200 a month. MMP also aided this consumer in connecting with multiple other services offered within the agency including Meals on Wheels, where they are able to dine and meet with other community members at a local meal site.

#### SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

OCWCOG's Senior and Disability Services administers the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as the Food Stamp Program, for Linn, Benton, and Lincoln Counties on behalf of the State of Oregon to eligible, low-income individuals and families.



12,475In 2023, an average of 12,475 consumers were SNAPTOTAL SNAPrecipients. Of that number, 9,570 were from Linn and BentonRECIPIENTSCounties, and 2,905 were from Lincoln County.

#### WILDFIRE EVACUATION PLANNING ENGAGEMENT

Senior and Disability Services participated in collaborative efforts with Aging and People with Disability Services (APD), the Office of Resilience and Emergency Management (OREM), and local County Emergency Managers to participate in any wildfire evacuation efforts that may arise in across the region. This year, teams made advance contact to Long Term Care Service consumers identified in various evacuation zones and took part in Linn County's Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) update. As a result of these collaboration efforts, staff was invited to co-present at the FEMA Region 10 Client Ready Workshop to share how they supported evacuation efforts and post shelter transitions during the 2020 fire season.

#### **MEALS ON WHEELS**

Meals on Wheels (MOW) serves fresh, hot, nutritionally balanced meals to older adults, adults with disabilities, and spouses/life partners who often live alone and have limited resources or ability to care for themselves. Along with a nutritionally balanced meal, MOW provides a daily safety check and social connection, assisting limited-income, low mobility clients to remain safe and independent in their own home for as long as possible.









There are **11** meal sites located throughout Linn, Benton, and Lincoln Counties.

**Linn County** - Albany, Lebanon, Mill City, Brownsville, Sweet Home

Benton County - Corvallis

**Lincoln County** - Lincoln City, Newport, Siletz, Toledo, Waldport

#### ADVISORY COUNCILS

Supporting community partners and leveraging local resources is a major component of the Older Americans Act (OAA). The Senior and Disability Services Advisory Councils work throughout the region with a focus to serve the most vulnerable and under served.



The Senior and Disability Services Advisory Councils dispersed **\$165,000** in OAA funds to **13** local agencies. The agencies selected work to improve the quality of life for seniors and people with disabilities by providing programs to promote healthy aging, reduce isolation and loneliness, and increase health and overall wellbeing.



# **Community Service Programs**

#### **STAND BY ME**

Stand By Me (\$BM) is a financial empowerment program with a proven coaching model that helps provide financial stability to individuals and families. There are four primary outcomes: budgeting, reducing debt, improving credit scores, and building savings.





\$54,458

REDUCED

**TOTAL DEBT** 

Partnership

WITH CASA

**LATINOS** 

Coaches held workshops across the region on the basics of financial wellness, credit, business ownership, and more.

Clients work to build savings for various life events such as college, retirement, the purchase of a home, a safety net and more.

Coaches work with clients to reduce their overall debt and increase their credit score, improving their financial health and wellbeing.

Stand By Me partnered with Casa Latinos to offer bilingual coaching thanks to a Samaritan Social Accountability Grant and the Benton Community Foundation.

#### **BEHAVIORAL ACTIVATION**

In 2023, OCWCOG added Get Activated, a behavioral activation group for homebound seniors, to Community Service Programs in partnership with the Older Adult Behavioral Health Initiative (OAHBI). As an evidence-based depression treatment approach, behavioral activation has been found effective for the alleviation of overt depressive symptoms. In a clinical setting, behavioral activation is considered a 3rd wave treatment, utilized after medication and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) have been attempted and failed to provide adequate support. The six-week courses are delivered via videoconferencing by both OCWCOG staff and Older Adult Behavioral Health Initiative specialists in a virtual group setting to ensure professional, real-time sessions with group camaraderie, as well as individualized follow-up coaching.





The Roundhouse Foundation awarded OCWCOG's Community Services Programs **\$21,000** in August to support its Behavioral Activation courses to rural senior residents.

## **AmeriCorps Seniors Programs** IMPROVING LIVES AND STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES

#### SENIOR COMPANION PROGRAM

Senior Companion volunteers provide assistance and friendship to older adults who have difficulty with daily living tasks, such as shopping or paying bills. Through this program, volunteers keep seniors independent longer and provide respite to family caregivers.

In 2023, **19** volunteers provided **7,441** hours of direct one-to-one service to older adults.

Companionship Care Plans provide respite care, phone chats, and socialization for older adults across the region.

**17** TRANSPORTATION CARE PLANS

COMPANIONSHIP CARE PLANS

Transportation Care Plans provide rides to homebound seniors to assist them in completing important tasks such as grocery shopping and doctor appointments.

#### FOSTER GRANDPARENT PROGRAM

OCWCOG partners with the Corporation for National and Community Service to run the Foster Grandparent program for the region. This program is intergenerational, providing volunteers aged 55 and over the opportunity to help children ranging from 3 to 18 years old gain the academic confidence necessary to excel.



**IMPACTED** 

Volunteers served in **9** different cities across the region.

Volunteer hours provided over **\$230,000** worth of service.

Foster Grandparents serve in schools, libraries, after school programs, and nonprofits.



#### 9/11 DAY OF NATIONAL SERVICE

AmeriCorps Seniors staff, along with **OCWCOG Community Services** staff and volunteers hosted its first September 11th National Day of Service and Remembrance this year. This year the group decided to host a community park clean up, in honor of the lives and service of those we lost over 20 years ago. Pictured are OCWCOG staff and volunteers at the Jackson Frazier Wetland in Corvallis.



#### SENIOR HEALTH INSURANCE BENEFITS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The Senior Health Insurance Benefits Assistance Program (SHIBA) is administered by OCWCOG on behalf of the State of Oregon. This program educates local residents on Medicare benefit elections. SHIBA counselors provide free one-on-one counseling services and are certified by the State.





MEDICARE **101 SEMINARS**  Medicare 101 seminars are designed for anyone who is new to Medicare. They are also helpful for current beneficiaries who would like a better understanding of their Medicare benefits and options.

<sup>66</sup> Working together, SHIBA volunteers helped me navigate what I thought would be impossible on my own. They were professional and comfortable to talk to, and listened to my concerns and guided me. I am now signed up and ready to have care well before my birthday month. \*\*

- Ken

### OMMUNITY OUTREACH

AmeriCorps staff and volunteers attended **27** outreach events to share program and volunteer information across the region. Outreach included presentations and tabling events at Samaritan Village, the Newport 60+ Center, Corvallis Community Center, fairs and festivals, Newport Rotary, and the Oregon Veteran's Home in Lebanon.



#### RSVP TAX AID VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

In April, OCWCOG hosted the annual Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) Tax Aide Volunteer Recognition Event in honor of our AARP volunteers who prepared 2022 taxes free of charge. Volunteers prepared **876** returns which was an estimated **\$282,948** dollar value of tax returns generated in Linn and Benton Counties.

#### STAFF ATTENDED NATIONAL AMERICORPS CONFERENCE

Staff participated in the National AmeriCorps Convention in Washington D.C. the week of May 22nd, 2023. Alicia Lucke, OCWCOG Community Services Program Manager, led a conference workshop on federal match requirements with two fellow National Senior Corps Association Board members.





# STAFF EDUCATES DURING HILL VISITS

Staff met with Senator Wyden's office to share how volunteers are making a difference in the region. Over **400** OCWCOG volunteers serve through various programs, such as Meals on Wheels, Stand By Me, SHIBA, Tax Aide, Foster Grandparents, Senior Companions, and more.

#### FUNDS RECEIVED FOR DURABLE MEDICAL EQUIPMENT PROGRAM

The Siletz Tribal Charitable Contribution Fund (STCCF) awarded OCWCOG's Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) **\$2,350** in August to support its Durable Medical Equipment (DME) program for senior residents of Linn, Benton, and Lincoln Counties. These funds are used to support homebound residents who are unable to pay for the much-needed fall prevention equipment. The grant funds specifically focused on equipment needed to safely navigate the restroom, as these types of DME are typically not covered by Medicare.

# **Community & Economic Development**

#### **CASCADES WEST BUSINESS LENDING**

Cascades West Business Lending (CWBL) efforts aim to encourage new employment opportunities and promote a stable and diversified economy in the region.





CWBL was awarded **\$1 million** from the Business Oregon Community Lender Loan Loss Reserve Program (CLLLRP). As new loans are funded, they are enrolled in the program. If an enrolled loan defaults, after OCWCOG has completed its standard liquidation process, any remaining principal loss can be recouped by the program. This program will assist us in getting much needed capital into the hands of small businesses that may not qualify for conventional lending.



In 2023, CWBL funded **3** new loans for small businesses in the region totaling **\$336,500**. Each new loan was enrolled in the new Loan Loss Reserve Program. Loans were funded for Jake's Handyman Solutions, Albany Lock and Key Solutions and All Star Auto.

#### **BUSINESS OREGON/FORD FAMILY FOUNDATION GRANT WRAP UP**

OCWCOG wrapped up the Business Oregon and Ford Family Foundation grant in 2023. This work included staying in touch with **27** rural communities, hearing about their needs, prospecting for grants and attending Regional Solutions Team meetings both in person and remotely. Thanks to this work, rural communities were seen, heard, and aided with over **\$185,000** in grant funds.



#### **BROADBAND FEASIBILITY GRANT**

OCWCOG in collaboration with our contractor, Solarity, completed a Broadband Strategic Plan for Linn, Benton, and Lincoln Counties in 2023. Task forces were formed for each county, which will be critical in assisting with grant applications. A Digital Equity Webinar geared towards community leaders, non-profit organizations, and community and economic development leaders was held in June.



**\$24.9 Million** IN GRANT FUNDS AWARDED Benton and Lincoln Counties received a **\$24.9 million** USDA Reconnect grant OCWCOG supported with Pioneer's application. This will help bring broadband to underserved areas.

#### **CASCADES WEST ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT**

OCWCOG provides staffing for the Cascades West Economic Development District (CWEDD), which creates, adopts, and works to implement the priorities of the Region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). CWEDD includes Linn, Benton, Lincoln, and Lane Counties.



THREE YEAR EDA GRANT UPDATE



CHILDCARE WORKING GROUP Staff submitted the 3 year Economic Development Administration (EDA) grant update, which was approved in April. This included a three-year scope of work, a staffing plan, and other documents.

Staff helped market the Growing Childcare Program to our region. This program provides training for in-home childcare and offers grants up to \$15,000.



PHASE 2 INNOVATION HUBS OCWCOG was selected as the backbone organization to apply for and administer the Phase 2 Business Oregon Innovation Hub. This positions the Economic Development District (EDD) to add traded sector business and entrepreneurship as a focus to our next Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS).



OCWCOG received **\$1 million** in brownfield funds to support a variety of projects in the region. These funds will help clean up land contaminated by hazardous substances, making them usable for the community. The grant funds received will support **20** Phase 1 and **11** Phase 2 environmental assessments, **4** clean-up plans, and **4** site reuse plans.

#### **METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATIONS**

The Albany Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (AAMPO) and Corvallis Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) coordinate together to deliver projects that benefit the members of both Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs). While some projects are specifically completed in one community, we have seen the reach impacts the region as a whole.



BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN PLAN



REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN



2024-2027 IMPROVEMENT PLANS



CARBON REDUCTION PROGRAM AAMPO completed a regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, which is the first of it's kind. Robust public engagement, including the use of online mapping software (wikimapping) helped inform the projects listed in the final plan.

AAMPO adopted the federally required 2043 Regional Transportation Plan, which helps to identify potential improvements to the transportation system that will meet the growing demand over the next 20 years.

CAMPO and AAMPO submitted their 2024-2027 Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Programs (MTIP) for review and approval by ODOT. These plans provide transparency on projects in the region being funded with federal dollars.

CAMPO staff drafted two successful grant applications for the Carbon Reduction Program, totaling **\$1.5 million** in funding. Funds will purchase an electric bike lane sweeper and complete preliminary engineering for the Corvallis to Albany shared path.

#### **CASCADES WEST RIDE LINE**

Cascades West Ride Line is the region's Non-Emergent Medical Transportation (NEMT) which provides rides to non-emergeny medical appointments for eligible Oregon Health Plan (OHP) and Medicaid clients. Ride Line has **23** contracted providers who provided an average of **550** trips per week in 2023.









#### **MOBILITY HUBS**

Staff in collaboration with a design consultant successfully won a **\$3 million** grant to fund the construction of mobility hubs at Oregon State University and Linn Benton Community College. Mobility Hubs serve as connection points for the first and last mile journeys, such as biking home from the bus, as well as linking local and regional bus services. The application was the highest ranked in the state within the competitive Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund discretionary programs.

#### **HUMAN SERVICES COORDINATED PLANS**

OCWCOG partnered with Linn, Benton and Lincoln Counties to prepare Human Services Coordinated Plans for each county. While the plans are required to access rural transit funding, they also provide strategic direction for investments over a five year planning horizon. These plans were developed in collaboration with Senior and Disability Services staff and the Confederated Tribe of Siletz Indians.



#### VANPOOL, CARPOOL & GET THERE

OCWCOG coordinates the regional Transportation Options Program, which supports people who commute to work via means other than driving alone in a vehicle and encourages more trips taken by foot, bike or bus.



May Bike Month had **16** participants log **396** trips traveling nearly 3,000 miles and saving over 2,400 pounds of CO2 from being released into the environment.



Staff worked with local organizations and community groups to advertise and apply for Innovative Mobility Program (IMP) grants. These grants are focused on serving non-motorized needs of low income and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities.

#### **CASCADES WEST TRAINING CENTER**

Cascades West Training Center offers nationally certified training to OCWCOG's Regional transportation providers. Classes include Red Cross Adult CPR/First Aid and Blood Borne Pathogen Certification, National Safety Council Defensive Driving Certification, Passenger Assistance Safety and Sensitivity (PASS) Certification.

# **60** FIRST AID/CPR CERTIFICATIONS





#### CASCADES WEST RIDE

Cascades West Ride (CW Ride) provides trip planning and a real time information app which connects public transportation options and saves transit partners approximately 900 hours annually.







CW Ride received a national award in 2023 from the National Association of Regional Councils for the contribution made to the region.

### Oregon Cascades West Council of Governments

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