

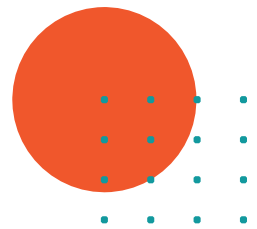


OREGON MAIN STREET

JUNE 2023

Rural Regional Main Street Tier

Supporting Oregon's Rural Main Streets





Acknowledgments

Thank you to the rural champions, ambassadors, and pilot organizations who volunteered their time to be part of this process and partake in interviews, discovery sessions, and many back-and-forth emails. Your efforts in guiding this process, sharing your knowledge, and lived experience, helped the consulting team develop a well-informed strategy rooted from the ground up. Your dedication and innovation are an inspiration to us all.

Thank you to the Oregon Main Street team, Sheri Stuart, and Cam Amabile, who are charting a new path for rural historic districts across the state. Their leadership serves as examples of creative change leaders, creating new opportunities for the state of Oregon, and providing proof of concept for how the Main Street Model can support rural communities nationwide.

Lastly, thank you to the consulting team – Mary Bosch of Marketek Inc, who brings a deep bench of experience and advisement to this process, and Ayrton Bates, who leveled up the professionalism and design of this report and all the tools you'll find within.

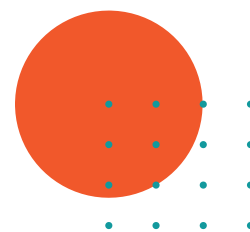
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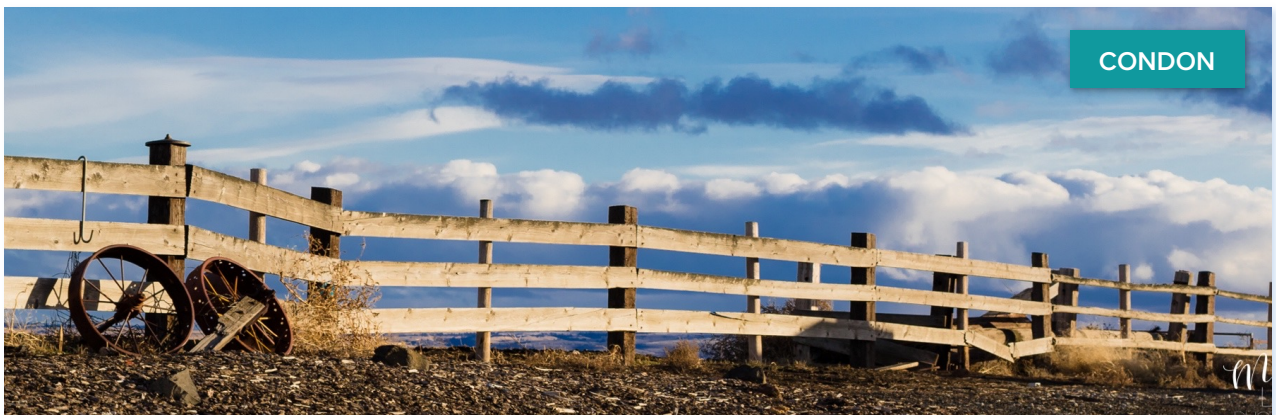
1.0 A Case for Rural Oregon: Background & Scope of Work

In 2022, 161 of Oregon’s 241 cities (67%) had populations less than 5,000¹. In these rural places, downtowns are often the epicenter of community connections and small business economies. Through the years, many of these rural communities have engaged with Oregon Main Street but are challenged to sustain a commitment due to lack of capital and staff, volunteer burn-out, and overall capacity limitations. Yet, a strong desire exists among rural communities to strengthen local economies and breathe life into underutilized historic buildings.

Because of these realities in rural Oregon, Oregon Main Street, Oregon Heritage, and Oregon Parks and Recreation Department sought to develop a framework for a new Rural Regional Main Street (RRMS) Tier of the Oregon Main Street (OMS) Network. The OMS Network provides training and technical services to Oregon communities desiring to strengthen, preserve, and revitalize their historic downtown and traditional commercial neighborhood districts. The purpose of creating a new tier in the OMS Network is to provide a pathway for very small, rural communities to better connect with the services and support offered by Oregon Main Street in a structured way that helps these rural communities build and sustain momentum. The intent is that this new tier will better integrate the existing rural efforts into the Network as well as create a pathway for new rural areas to connect with OMS and access vital resources.

Beginning in 2021, Oregon Main Street explored pilot efforts with several regions within the state including Central Oregon and Northeast Oregon. Building off lessons learned from these pilot efforts, the consultant team was tasked with developing a robust structure for the new RRMS Tier that can be integrated into the existing OMS Network. This includes recommended tier frameworks and structures, application template forms for the Rural Regional Main Street coordinating programs (“Hub” organizations) and local rural communities. Goals, vision, messaging, and marketing tools directed to both “Hub” organizations and rural communities were part of this scope, in addition to reporting and tracking tools to collect data on the region’s progress. Lastly, suggested services OMS might offer, and additional metrics and partnerships for OMS to consider were included in this effort.

The consultant team organized the work in three phases outlined below: Discovery, Strategy Development & Recommendations, and Implementation & Tools to support the new Rural Regional Main Street Tier.



¹ [Oregon Secretary of State Website](https://www.oregon.gov/OS/About/SecretaryofState/SecretaryofStateWebsite.aspx)

2.0 The Discovery Phase

2.1 Methodology & Approach

The RRMS Tier build out kickstarted with introductory meetings between the consultant team and Oregon Main Street (OMS) staff in the spring of 2023. The consultant team and OMS staff discussed existing Rural Regional Main Street (RRMS) pilot efforts taking place in northcentral and northeast Oregon. Demand from communities in southeastern Oregon were also discussed and explored.

The consultant team went on to interview the convener, or Hub organizations, that were responsible for stronger resource flow, coordination, and communication between rural districts in these three regions of the state. Several champions and ambassadors of the rural communities were also interviewed, providing a well-rounded evaluation of the program’s successes, challenges, and opportunities.

Informed by the interview process, the consultant team put together a variety of program structures that provide the most flexibility to participants. Similarities and differences between the varying regions were taken into consideration through the development of the project, ensuring recommended program structures have some parameters, yet remain flexible to a variety of needs across the state. Strategy recommendations around the program’s growth and sustainability at the state level are also included in this report.

We organized and shared options around six key success factors:



- 1 Secure a strong and well-resourced hub organization that can provide administrative backbone support



- 2 Designate rural champions, or ambassadors, from each participating rural district as a key component of communication and resource flow into the rural districts



- 3 Share resources between neighboring rural commercial districts



- 4 Communicate and share rural-specific resources statewide, supporting all rural communities that join the network



- 5 Strengthen individual brands and assets of rural communities while working together for regional promotion and economic growth



- 6 Grow the RRMS tier through flexibility and adaptability tailored to local circumstances and capacity

Based on these key factors, the consultant team developed implementation tools targeted to both the Hub organizations and the rural communities they serve. The consultant team explored existing application processes and data collection tools currently used in the OMS network. The team merged the RRMS tier into the existing OMS network structure and qualifications to ensure the programs sync together as one and provided recommendations for services that OMS may provide to support these 6 key factors.

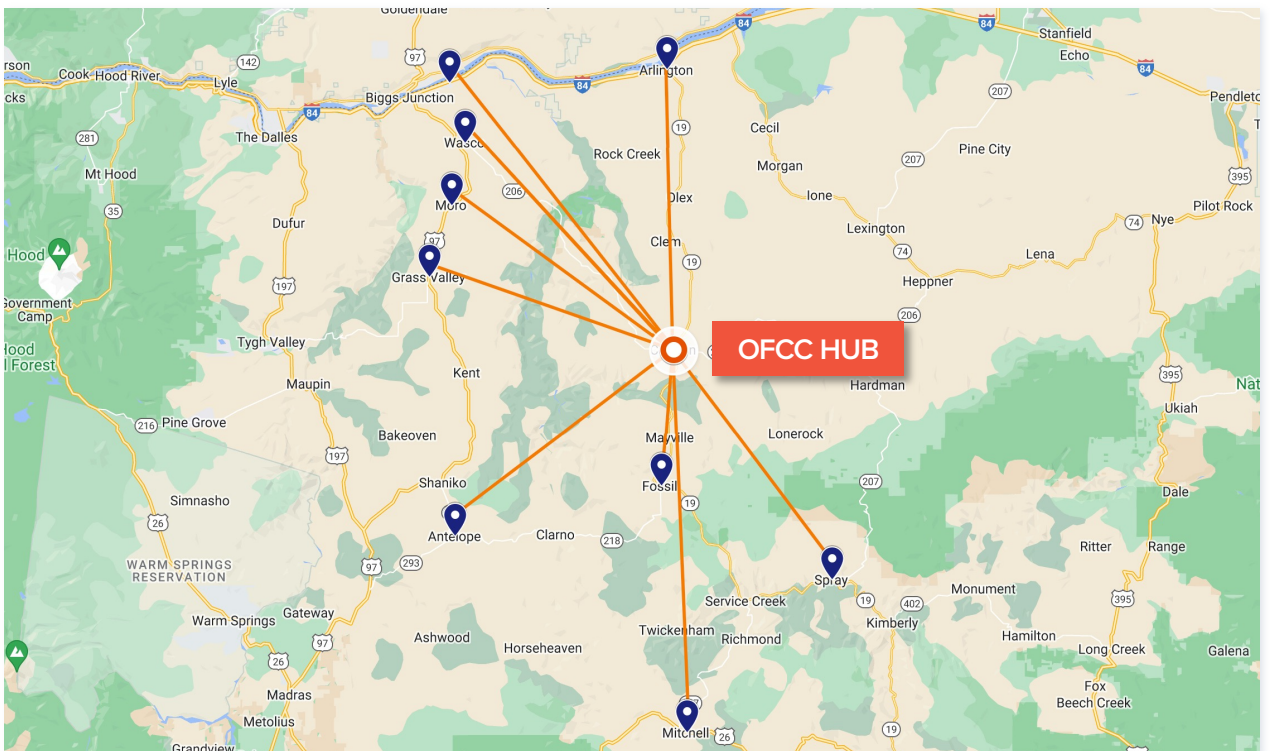


2.2 Rural Regional Pilot Programs

Oregon Frontier Chamber of Commerce

Through a series of conversations and connections OMS partnered with the Oregon Frontier Chamber of Commerce (OFCC) in 2021. The OFCC is based in Condon, a city in northcentral Oregon. The OFCC acted as the Hub organization, allowing for stronger resource flow, coordination, and communication into the tri-county rural regions of Gilliam, Sherman, and Wheeler Counties. When the program initially launched, OFCC reached out to the rural towns of Condon, Fossil, and Spray in Wheeler County. Very quickly, the number of participating communities grew to eight by October, including Condon and Arlington in Gilliam County, Rufus, Moro, and Wasco in Sherman County, and Mitchell, Fossil, and Spray in Wheeler County. In April 2023, the City of Antelope was brought under the fold of the RRMS Pilot Program, bringing a total of nine communities under the purview of the OFCC Rural Regional Hub organization. Grass Valley was in the exploration process and may be brought on later in 2023 as a tenth community.

The OFCC fundraised through Business Oregon to develop an ‘ambassador’ team, made up of paid ambassadors or champions from each rural community. This allowed the Chamber to act as an administrator and communication channel, disseminating key information and resources with a designated rural ambassador in each town. By doing so, the rural towns were able to develop programs and make decisions from the ground up while the Chamber was able to provide administrative support by fundraising sponsorship and grant dollars, to providing guidance on the Main Street Model. OFCC sustained the funding through the Ford Family Foundation after Business Oregon funds were dispersed, allowing for longevity of the Rural Ambassador program.



2.0 THE DISCOVERY PHASE



Initial successes of the first pilot showcase a breadth of support offered through the OFCC Regional Hub. These successes include:

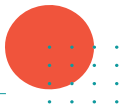
- ★ Walking tours of rural downtown districts
- ★ Community-led monthly meetings
- ★ Shared regional promotion of commercial vacancies through a targeted business recruitment campaign
- ★ Development of a regional website and regional community calendar for enhanced coordination between districts
- ★ Added bandwidth and capacity for events (i.e.. providing graphic designers to rural communities for event organizing)
- ★ Increased flow of state funding to rural communities
- ★ Creation of a master plan and visioning for Arlington

Through engagements between Oregon Main Street, the Oregon Frontier Chamber of Commerce, and supporters of downtown Arlington, it became evident that community visioning would help move the dial. The City Council in Arlington acted on the engagement and momentum that came from the meeting, and upon a recommendation and guidance from the OFCC, it was decided that the next best steps would be to hire an architect to create a “Master Plan” and Visioning for Arlington. This example showcases the ability that a neutral Hub organization has in bringing public and private sector parties together to work toward common goals.

In 2022, the Spray General Store and Hotel Moro both worked with the OFCC to submit grant applications for the OMS Revitalization Grant to update their historic buildings. Awarded funds added up to \$250,000 in state funds invested in these rural downtowns, a substantial amount for these rural communities. Demand for these dollars is high, and in 2023, 16 businesses from this rural region put in pre-applications to the OFCC for the Revitalization Grant. The OFCC, in their role as Hub, was able to coordinate between applicants to put forth the strongest applications that would minimize competition within the region. Three applications were submitted and 2 were selected, bringing yet another \$262,000 of state investment to the region, this time in support of the Lone Elk Market in Spray, and The Times-Journal in Condon. The 11 projects that did not move forward were supported in other ways including Business Oregon Rural Opportunity Initiative (ROI) Funding to support engineering and conceptual architecture designs, helping to move these projects along while bringing even more investments to these rural communities.



2.0 THE DISCOVERY PHASE



Lastly, because of OFCC's participation in the OMS Network, they were eligible to participate in the inaugural Open Door Pitch contest at the 2022 Oregon Main Street Conference. They were selected as one of five contestants to pitch their idea and were then selected by the audience at-large, receiving \$5,000 for their 'Open for Business' project idea. The 'Open for Business' project promoted regional commercial storefront vacancies in all the participating rural commercial districts. The OFCC used posters and an aggressive marketing campaign to highlight available businesses and commercial properties. They are now seeing a significant response from the effort, with the sale of 2 local businesses – one which was on the market for 3 years and the other on the market for 2 years. Another business is now in transition and the County is investing in an assessment program to support upper story redevelopment on Condon's Main Street. This example highlights the potential to grow tried and true Main Street programs at a regional scale, while also bringing in additional investments to rural downtowns across the state.

2022 OMS CONFERENCE PITCH CONTEST
AWARD WINNING PROJECT

Challenges for the OFCC included finding qualified contractors to do renovation work, expressing the value of Main Street work to the masses, and simplifying grant administration processes, allowing more time to be spent working directly with businesses and residents on the ground. Overarchingly, the largest challenge of all comes down to the capacity needs of the hub organization. In this case, the OFCC has an energetic and committed staff member leading the charge, but burnout is a large risk factor. If leadership changes occur, the effort could lose momentum.





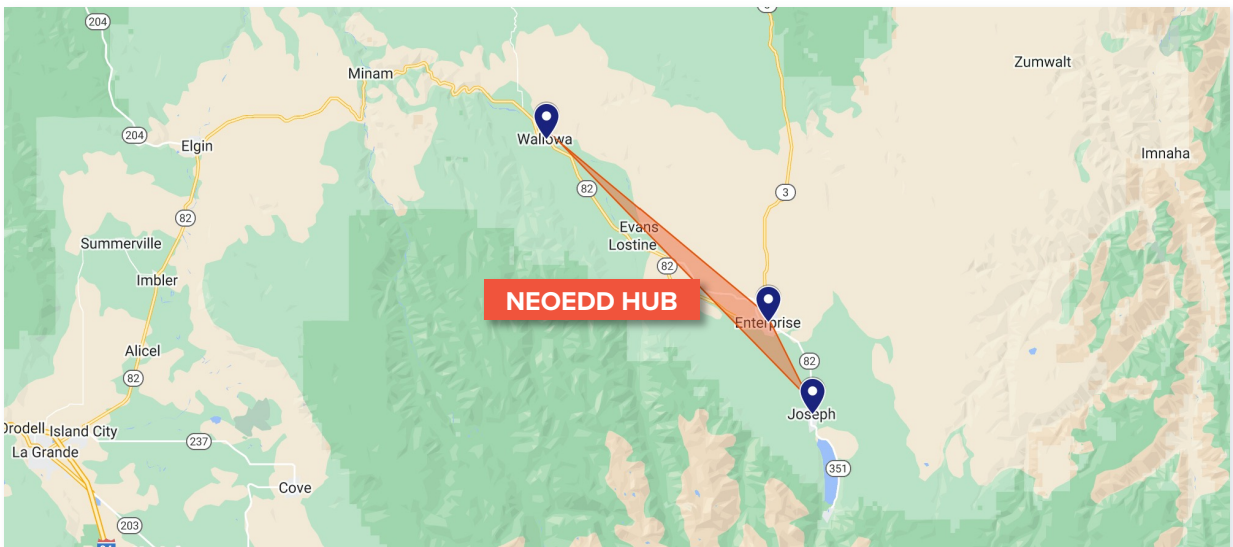
Northeast Oregon Economic Development District

A second pilot effort took place in the Northeast region of the state through the Northeast Oregon Economic Development District (NEOEDD). In this region, the structure of the pilot looked slightly different with the added capacity of a Resource Assistance in Rural Environments (RARE) participant, who managed the launch of the RRMS pilot program within Wallowa County. These two pilot efforts looked very different from each other in geographic scope and staff capacity, highlighting the need for flexibility depending on the region's assets, and the mission of the Rural Regional Hub Organization.

NEOEDD worked with the towns of Wallowa, Enterprise, and Joseph in Wallowa County. Each district was required to develop a 'main street committee,' to do the boots-on-the-ground organizing. These committees allowed for ground up programming and decision-making, like the ambassador program in Northcentral Oregon. The City of Joseph already had a city-appointed taskforce, where Wallowa and Enterprise were starting from scratch, showcasing varying starting points for these rural districts.

NEOEDD provided administrative support to all the communities through grant writing and management, facilitating group meetings, supporting individual and regionally coordinated strategic plans, and spearheading a regional advisory board to support the communities and their work. At the time of interviews, the roles of the advisory board were still in conception, though the advisory board was involved in reviewing strategic plans and advocating for the regional program. All three communities worked with the NEOEDD Hub to complete 'Connected Communities' applications. This expanded their capacity, access to Main Street resources, and allowed them entrance into the overarching OMS network.

The main challenge and concern of the NEOEDD is funding sustainability of the program. With their RARE participant leaving in 2023 and no funding source for the ongoing work of this program, the future is uncertain for the RRMS Tier in northeast Oregon. Many of the communities don't have the ability or funds to 'pay to play.' The NEOEDD did apply for USDA rural business development funds but was unsuccessful at obtaining funding this time around, leaving a question mark in their ability to continue the program in 2024.



2.0 THE DISCOVERY PHASE



Interest in Southern Douglas County

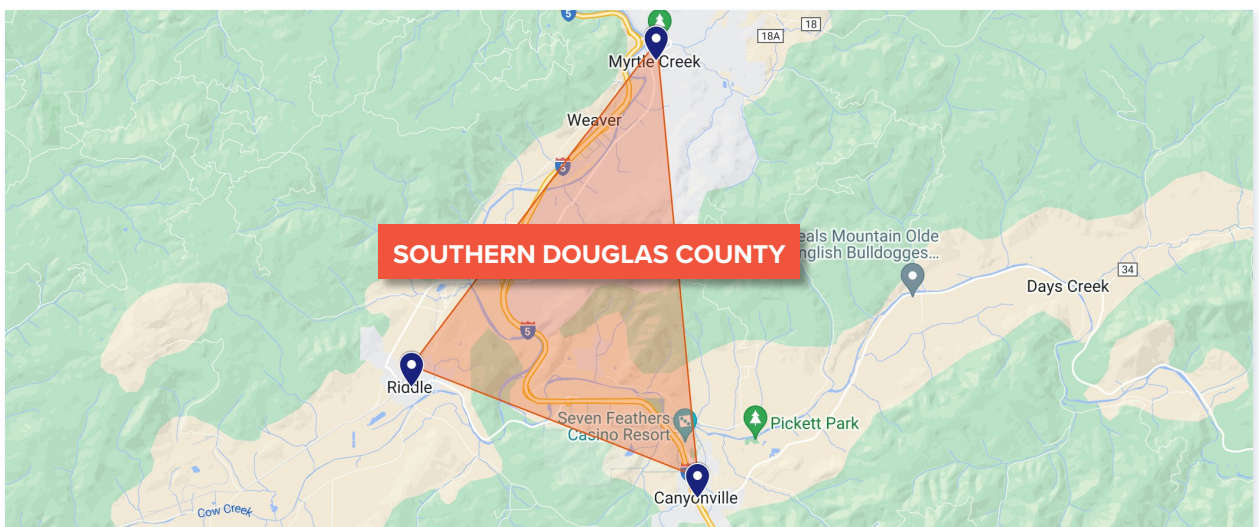
The demand for the program is evident as other rural communities have stepped forward expressing interest in participating with their rural neighbors. Conversations have begun in Southern Douglas County in the Southwestern end of the state between the towns of Myrtle Creek, Canyonville, and Riddle. OMS is exploring options for how they might support this group of rural historic districts, which has a different structure from the first two pilot regions. This again reiterates the need for flexibility and adaptable structures that align with assets in various communities.

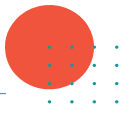


In southern Douglas County, the three communities each have enthusiastic champions interested in bringing the Main Street model to their towns, but there is no single organization at this time that has stepped forward as the 'Hub.' Some of these communities had Main Street organizations in the past with fits and starts and are now exploring what it might be like to work together considering their proximity to I-5 and the similarity in their downtown districts.

The group identified many opportunities to share resources:

- + Fundraise for architectural and programming support
- + Coordinate between local and regional events and vendors
- + Collaborate regionally on marketing, tourism, and business recruitment programming
- + Increase capacity to support housing redevelopments in rural downtowns
- + Share the administrative burden of grant management and metric tracking
- + Bring fresh eyes and enthusiasm to each other's districts through programs like walking tours of neighboring towns, or downtown 'audits'



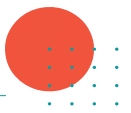


Interest in Southern Douglas County Continued

In this specific case, there is no paid staff member leading the charge, creating a different dynamic than the previously mentioned pilots. Based on interview discussions, there seems to be appetite in working together as a regional coalition to share knowledge, resources and heighten coordination while mitigating burnout. While the desire to work together is evident, there seems to be some hesitancy or uncertainty from smaller, less resourced communities regarding funding equitability if one of the three communities raised enough funds for a staff person. The ideal situation would be to find funders who would put money towards all the towns working together in a regional context, so those less resourced towns don't get left out of the mix.

Other challenges that arose include the ability to find qualified contractors to do redevelopment work, fundraising for programs, sustainable hiring and staffing, communicating impact to government officials, and garnering volunteers and people power. In this case, the lack of staff creates another challenge in the way of not having administrative support and a shared communication channel for the work, which is vital to the rural regional program's success.





2.2 Key Success Factors

Overall, the opportunities the Rural Regional Main Street Tier offer are vast and truly important in the effort to bolster rural downtowns across the state. Through the interview process, six key success factors arose that were shared between all the three regions:



SUCCESS FACTOR 1

Secure a strong and well-resourced hub organization that can provide administrative backbone support

A strong Hub with staff that can coordinate regional grant and funding efforts, business development, and regional marketing is crucial, allowing rural volunteers to focus on the projects that feed their needs. Ways in which Hub organizations can support rural communities to increase their own capacity:

- Provide grant writing and management support
- Coordinate funding opportunities
- Communicate impact to funders
- Help to manage metrics, data, and tracking measures
- Provide guidance on the Main Street model and 4-point approach

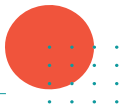


SUCCESS FACTOR 2

Designate rural champions, or ambassadors, from each participating rural district as a key component to communication and resource flow into rural districts

As stated in our interview with the Oregon Frontier Chamber of Commerce, the Chamber oversees a territory of 3500 square miles. Without a team of ambassadors or rural champions, it would be impossible for one person in one office to effectively work with each community in the ways they deserve to be nurtured and cultivated. The NEOEDD pilot also focused on cultivating Main Street committees of champions in each town they served, allowing for decision making and programming to feel authentic to each district. While the Southern Douglas County example does not have a designated regional Hub currently, the coalition of local rural champions is critical to fundraising for staff down the line that might support the regional effort.





SUCCESS FACTOR 3

Share resources between neighboring rural commercial districts

As one interviewee mentioned, “rather than invite tourists, we need to communicate and share resources with each other.” The interview process highlighted the need for regional community calendars and vendor lists, regional contractor lists for public space and building redevelopment, and business assistance services and business retention/recruitment programs coordinated regionally. This also pertains to the ability to coordinate rather than compete on all things from funding requests to event planning and marketing, given the limited staff capacity in rural districts.



SUCCESS FACTOR 4

Communicate and share rural-specific resources statewide, supporting all rural communities that join the network

Interviewees highlighted the need to share best practices with other rural communities around the state. While some interviewees are participating in the weekly Mondays on Main calls, there remain nuances that would benefit from rural-specific coordination calls and engagements. A platform similar to Mondays on Main focused on rural strategies and issues would be largely beneficial to Hub organizations in the program.





SUCCESS FACTOR 5

Strengthen individual brands and assets of rural communities while working together for regional promotion and economic growth

While each community has their own assets and stories, the histories of the region are shared. There is a strong potential to strengthen each community's individual brand while working together to create a regional draw for the tourism tipping point. This expanded beyond marketing and tourism and was discussed on a business recruitment level as well, inviting new businesses to explore rural regions of the state through targeted campaigns.



SUCCESS FACTOR 6

Grow the RRMS tier through flexibility and adaptability tailored to local circumstances and capacity

While all three examples outlined show very different structures depending on local circumstance and capacity, the goals remain the same. A place-based approach that focuses on the assets and organizational strengths of each region will ensure the RRMS Tier is most supportive of rural communities and their diversity across the state.



3.0 Strategy Recommendations

3.1 Vision & Goals of the RRMS Tier

VISION

Oregon's strong and enduring network of rural communities are empowered to use the Main Street Approach™ to address their needs and create solutions for their local downtown revitalization goals.

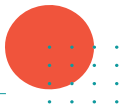
Other notes on vision:

- Every rural community committed to the Main Street model is connected to a regional main street Hub organization.
- Rural Main Street communities benefit from the collective knowledge and learning of their rural peers.

GOALS

- 1 Increase and sustain the use of the Main Street 4-point Approach™ in Oregon's rural communities through flexible structures that are effective and productive.
- 2 Grow rural capacity (volunteers, funding, know-how) at the local and regional levels to implement the Main Street Approach™ and preserve and enhance Oregon's rural historic downtowns, improving rural access to public and private resources.
- 3 Foster collaboration between rural communities within a regional context to identify and address individual and shared challenges and opportunities, demonstrating the collective impact of the Rural Regional Main Street program - stronger together.



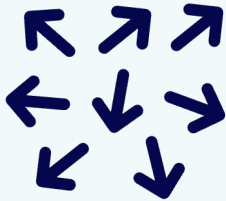


3.2 Statewide Rural Regional Main Street Tier Structure Options

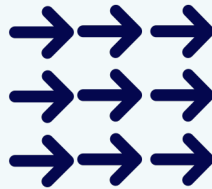
A Collective Impact Model

The Hub, or backbone organization, serves as the coordinating body that brings together diverse rural community members from neighboring towns around the effort to achieve a common goal: rural regional vitality.

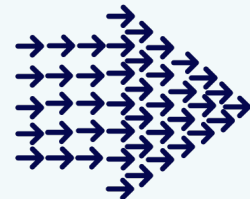
The Hub function is modeled around a collective impact approach. Collective impact is a network of community members or organizations who learn together, align goals, and integrate actions to achieve collective change. Benefits include stronger and deeper impact, avoiding duplication of efforts, and leveraging the strengths and assets of each participating organization. Participants of collective impact models gain more 'muscle' to leverage government grants and advocate for change. This model supports rural communities' interests in strengthening individual assets while working together on a shared regional agenda.



Individual Impact
in Rural Communities

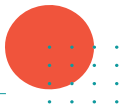


Coordinated Impact
With Alignment



Collective Impact
With Collaborative Action

3.0 STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS



It starts with a Regional Hub

The Hub, or backbone organization, serves as the coordinating body that brings together diverse rural community members from neighboring towns around the effort to achieve a common goal: rural regional vitality.

To support sustained efforts, it is recommended that Hub organizations commit to a paid staff member and participate in the Oregon Main Street program at a rural equivalent to the 'Designated Main Street' level ([see OMS tiers](#)).

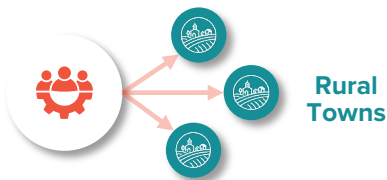


Getting started, the Hub will promote the program to communities within the region to grow local rural interest in the RRMS program. The Hub will then organize an orientation to the program for rural towns and manage the application process.

In collaboration with OMS, the Hub organization will define and build out the structure of a regional Main Street program that works for them in their geographic region. Below are three initial structure options based on past pilot programs. Flexibility and adaptability are needed in the initial roll out of this program. As such, additional options may arise as the program develops, guided by need.

Structure 1

Regional Group
or County
Government

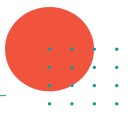


The Hub may be housed and/or affiliated with an existing organization where downtown economic vitality is tied to its mission. This may be a regional group (ex: economic development district, chamber of commerce) or a county government that has a strong economic development function.

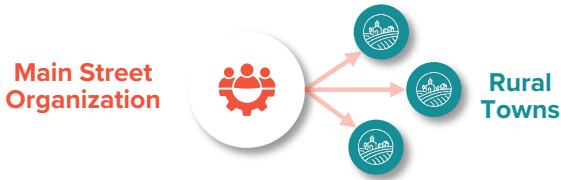


This model is reflective of both the Oregon Frontier Chamber of Commerce (OFCC) and Northeast Oregon Economic Development District (NEOEDD) Hub organizations' pilot programs. The OFCC, based in Condon operates within Gilliam, Sherman, and Wheeler Counties. Within 2 years, they expanded to support 9 rural downtowns. NEOEDD operates within one county and currently supports 3 rural historic districts within Wallowa County.

3.0 STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS



Structure 2

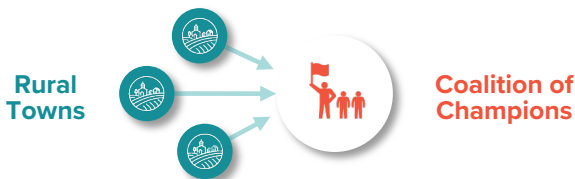


An existing Designated or Accredited Main Street organization may become a Hub for surrounding rural towns. Leveraging an existing organization gives a lot more power and capacity out of the gate.



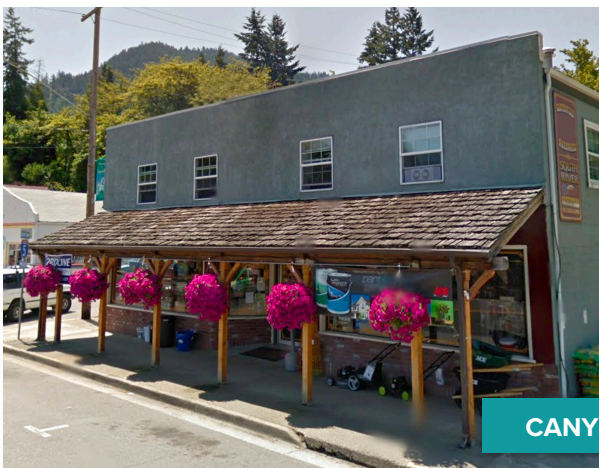
This model assumes an existing strong Main Street organization can partner with and support rural communities in the surrounding vicinity. One example of this could be Astoria Downtown Historic District Association with the neighboring community of Warrenton.

Structure 3



Downtown champions from neighboring rural towns may form a coalition and could evolve to become a brand-new Hub organization. Opposite from the other 2 structures, you'll notice the arrows point inward towards the coalition rather than outward towards the rural districts and towns. In this example, rural communities come together as a team working on a common agenda. It is recommended to align with existing structures, though this option provides flexibility while a Hub organization emerges or develops over time.

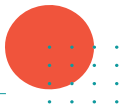
This model is currently being explored in Southern Douglas County in the towns of Myrtle Creek, Canyonville, and Riddle.



CANYONVILLE



3.0 STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS



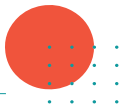
Engaging Rural Historic Districts

Getting started, the Hub will promote the program to communities within the region to grow local rural interest in the RRMS program. The Hub will then organize an orientation to the program for rural towns and manage the application process to onboard rural historic districts.

Rural districts lead the charge of revitalization within their historic commercial district. They must identify a Main Street district, form an organizing team of 3-5 people, designate a community ambassador, and meet the requirements of a Connected Community at a minimum.

It is recommended that rural historic districts join on as ‘Connected Communities,’ with the ability to stay flexible on a case-by-case basis ([see OMS tiers](#)). This allows for rural communities to begin learning more about the 4-point approach and organize around one specific project or activity while being supported by the Hub organization. These initial projects could be collaborative in nature through partnerships with neighboring rural communities connected to the Hub organization.



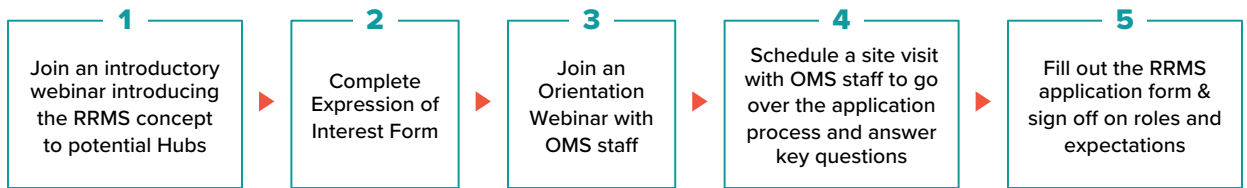


3.3 Application Process

Two separate processes are recommended for applications. One process designed for Hub organizations & Coalitions, and one process designed for rural districts.

Application Process for Hub Organizations and Coalitions

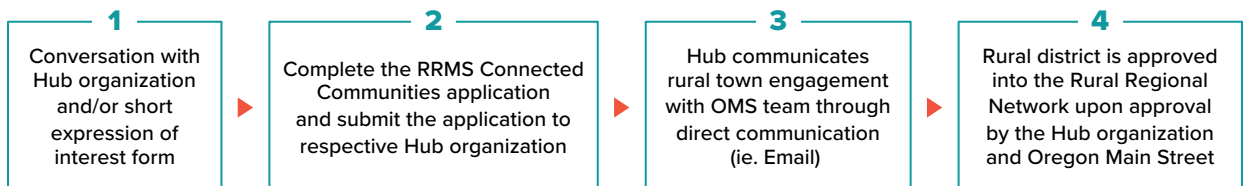
The following is a checklist for hub organizations/coalitions to engage with the program. These hubs would be joining at the 'RRMS Designated Communities' level, allowing organizations to build their organizational base, but with the requirement of having some paid staff support in place to coordinate between the rural districts.



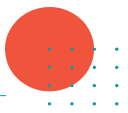
More details on what could be covered on each step can be found in Appendix A.

Application Process for Rural Towns

The following process is kept simple for rural towns who are likely all volunteer. It requires rural communities to have conversations with the Hub organizations and come to shared agreements and understanding of roles before joining the RRMS program. These towns will be joining as 'RRMS Connected Communities.'



More details on what could be covered at each step can be found in Appendix B.



3.4 Tracking & Metrics

It is recommended that Hub organizations and rural districts both contribute to tracking and metrics. Since Hub organizations are required to have some form of staff support, quarterly tracking for their overarching region is required. Rural districts made up of volunteers are expected to collect metrics and stories annually with support from the Hub.

Rural District Expectations

Share successes, challenges, and growth opportunities with the hub organizations by the annual deadline of January 31 annually. Be advocates in sharing back rural reinvestment statistics with their individual rural communities. Tracking tools model the existing Connected Communities annual tracking requirements with few tweaks to reflect the rural regional model.

Hub Organization Expectations

Work with the rural communities to ensure deadlines are met. Lead the quantitative data collection (i.e. Reinvestment statistics). Tracking tools model the existing quarterly tracking requirements with a few tweaks to reflect the rural regional model.

The Hub organization may support rural communities' capacity to collect statistical quantitative data overtime, shifting the ownership and building capacity and leadership within local rural historic districts. It is recommended that Hub organizations organize annual stories according to the 4-points and share them back from a regional perspective. This can then become a learning opportunity for the rural townships about the 4-point approach and can be used to highlight impact to funders and partners.



3.5 Recommended OMS Services

The following section is organized to highlight funding opportunities and state and regional partnership opportunities that would support the 6 key success factors that arose through the discovery process.



SUCCESS FACTOR 1

Secure a strong and well-resourced hub organization that can provide administrative backbone support

Sustainable funding for the Hub organization to provide this admin support came up as the biggest challenge for all pilot organizations. Therefore, we provided a list of ideas on how OMS may be able to support capacity building and funding for Hub organizations.



POSSIBLE OMS SERVICES

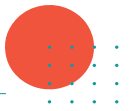
1. Grant Writing and Grant Management Support

- + Provide grant writing consultants or heightened support for grant writing and management at least in the first year of the program for the Hub Organization and rural partners.
- + Partner with nonprofits like RDI that offer grant writing and grant management workshops to bring the know-how to rural communities in the Rural Regional Tier.



It is important to note that all existing Heritage Program grants already offer the following, and will continue to offer these services in support of grants through Oregon Heritage:

- Webinars on how to complete grant applications. These recordings are available to the public and highlight how to apply for, and manage, Heritage Program grants.
- If applications are completed in advance, Oregon Heritage staff will review and provide feedback to strengthen applications.



SUCCESS FACTOR 1 CONTINUED

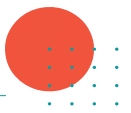


POSSIBLE OMS SERVICES

2. Capacity Building & Funding Resources for Hub Organizations

- + Provide education on legislative funding to Hub organizations, and how they may advocate for funds to continue programming.
- + Use the collective impact model to leverage foundation funding. The Oregon Community Foundation for rural staffing, the Murdoch Foundation, Meyer Memorial Trust, The Reser Foundation, The Ford Family Foundation, The Collins Foundation for rural capacity building. The Kauffman Foundation and Northwest Area Foundation also support rural organizations dedicated to expanding economic opportunities.
- + Consider potential partnerships and funding opportunities specifically designed to build the capacity of non-profit organizations through Rural LISC, Enterprise Community Partner's PNW office, and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).
- + Explore USDA Funding. [Rural Community Development Initiative Grants](#) and [Rural Business Development Grants](#) could be avenues to explore at the federal level. Funds could be obtained through OMS to provide RARE support, provide funds for Rural Ambassadors or matching staff dollars to Hub organizations across the state.





SUCCESS FACTOR 1 CONTINUED



POSSIBLE OMS SERVICES

3. Programming Assistance

- + Connect Hubs with other State and regional partners to bring business technical assistance to rural regions: legal, business contracting, creative fundraising for small business, business development courses, business models, etc.
- + Support Hub organizations as they fundraise for design development and architectural drawings from local governments or funders. Explore partnerships with SHPO to expand this offering, as it is a high-ticket item that many rural districts are interested in.
- + Provide guidance to Hub organizations around how to put together programs in exchange for local government administrative fees from their respective county and city governments. Hub organizations could aggregate and administer mission-aligned grants or program funds from County governments in support of the rural towns they are partnered with.

Example: Gilliam County Small Business Grant Program Administered by the OFCC Hub

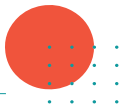
In 2022, the Gilliam County Small Business Grant program had a significant impact on the local community by providing support to 14 small businesses. Through the allocation of \$117,500 in funding, the program facilitated business expansion, retention, new business start-ups, and offered valuable business technical assistance.

In 2023, the program continued to make an impact. In just the first quarter, it provided 6 businesses with a total funding amount of \$86,005.00. This swift action further solidified the program's commitment to supporting the growth and success of local businesses.

Moreover, the program demonstrated its dedication to the community by reallocating an additional \$75,000 to the grant pool in August 2023. This decision not only highlighted the program's flexibility but also provided increased opportunities for businesses to receive essential funding.

The program was administered by the Oregon Frontier Chamber of Commerce to businesses within Gilliam County, highlighting the impact and importance of a Rural Regional Hub organization and rural ambassadors.





SUCCESS FACTOR 2

Designate rural champions, or ambassadors, from each participating rural district as a key component to communication and resource flow into rural districts

We learned through the interview process that Ambassadors are doing a lot of heavy lifting, creating some concern of burn out. The suggested services provide options for how OMS may be able to help offset such risks.



POSSIBLE OMS SERVICES

1. Building Capacity for Rural Ambassadors

- + The Rural Opportunity Initiative (ROI) program through Business Oregon is one funding source that seeded the Frontier Chamber's Rural Ambassador program. It is focused on empowering local leaders to strengthen their local rural economies and local entrepreneurship. If funding were obtained through OMS at the state level, funds could be disseminated to Hub organizations to attract and fund Ambassadors.
- + Similarly, exploring foundation partnerships to pass through funding to Hubs to pay for Ambassadors may lead to less volunteer burn out and strong rural Ambassador support.



SUCCESS FACTOR 3

Share resources between neighboring rural commercial districts

Even in the initial pilot phases of the Rural Regional Main Street Tier, this collaboration between districts is already proving valuable. We suggest OMS provide resources to strengthen this resource sharing and communication in a regional context.



POSSIBLE OMS SERVICES

1. Programming Services

- + Provide training for downtown audits of neighboring districts, fostering collaboration and exploration of regional assets.
- + Provide training and examples of how neighboring districts might work together to promote regional assets (ie. Community calendars, websites). Business retention and recruitment campaigns could be a follow-up training, though regional promotion and marketing was widely requested by all interviewees.



SUCCESS FACTOR 4

Communicate and share rural-specific resources statewide, supporting all rural communities that join the network

Beyond the regional info sharing, communicating best practices across the state in a rural specific context was a popular idea with interviewees. Many are benefiting from Mornings on Main, though find some conversations are not tailored to their lived experience in their rural communities. This will also support rural folks looking for vetted contractors or looking for best practices on how to approach rural-specific housing and/or business development.

POSSIBLE OMS SERVICES

1. Coordination Services

- + Offer Rural Regional gatherings modeled around Mornings on Main. This could be annual or biannual to start.
- + Promote Restore Oregon's existing contractor lists to help rural communities looking for vetted contractors for public space and/or private redevelopment projects.
- + Bring housing organizations into the fold, especially in support of rural historic downtowns. Several interviewees highlighted housing as the underlying cause for not being able to keep talent within their neighborhoods, from employees at downtown establishments, to business owners, to school teachers. Housing programs in downtown areas will contribute to a more thriving commercial corridor, and business growth in rural downtowns.
 - Grants to restore rural housing stock
 - Pilot projects for housing in rural OR
 - Transitional housing to attract/keep workers and staff

Example: Housing Project Receives OMS Funding in Enterprise

A recent 2023 Oregon Main Street Revitalization Grant, in the amount of \$79,979, was awarded to the Red Rooster Café in Enterprise. Funds will support the creation of a basement apartment to help with worker retention. NEOEDD, the Rural Regional Hub organization, worked closely with the business owner to put together the application for funding.



RED ROOSTER CAFÉ | ENTERPRISE



SUCCESS FACTOR 5

Strengthen individual brands and assets of rural communities while working together for regional promotion and economic growth

It is unanimously understood that individual towns have their own assets and flare, but when working together, each town can elevate their assets to a broader audience.



POSSIBLE OMS SERVICES

1. Building State and Regional connections

- + Connect Hubs with tourism organizations that can help promote regional tourism and marketing like Travel Oregon, EOVA, or other regional tourism organizations.



SUCCESS FACTOR 6

Grow the RRMS tier through flexibility and adaptability tailored to local circumstances and capacity

As outlined in the pilot examples, a regional tier can be supportive of many different structures, depending on the assets and existing organizations within each region.



POSSIBLE OMS SERVICES

1. Program Evaluation

- + Provide regular check-ins with Hub organizations to ensure the program is meeting the needs of the rural regional historic districts, staying flexible to the possibility of adapting the program to meet current needs.



3.6 Growing the Rural Regional Main Street Tier

Given the novelty of this program across the country, we suggest using the recommended framework for the first few years to work out any kinks. Going through this process will highlight areas for growth and areas for troubleshooting. It is recommended to discuss this program with Main Street America (MSA) to see how and if Hub organizations may grow into Accredited Main Street Organizations in the future.

It is possible that rural communities over time may also gain strength and grow out of the ‘RRMS Connected Communities’ tier. As rural communities grow, there could be a desire to move up the tiers of the existing Oregon Main Street network to access additional resources while still being a part of the hub. Because it will be individualized to the community, this could be explored on a case-by-case basis, like the structure of Joseph in Northeast Oregon.

Example: Rural Main Street Growth in Joseph, OR

The Northeast Oregon Economic Development District piloted a Rural Regional program in Wallowa County. The City of Joseph, one of their three rural communities, had an existing Main Street task force appointed by the city. NEOEDD provided admin support to the city, allowing them to become a ‘Connected Community’ in the overarching and existing statewide OMS Network, expanding the city’s access to training resources and Main Street tools.



4.0 Implementation Process & Tools

4.1 Roll Out Calendar

Because of the program’s novelty, it is recommended that OMS support Hub organizations to launch as a ‘cohort,’ creating camaraderie for the RRMS program across the state and providing more peer-to-peer support networks. Below is an example of how this may be rolled out starting in 2023.

2023	
November	Introductory Webinar Introducing the RRMS Concept to Potential Hubs
2024	
December	Call for Interest
January	Intake for Expression of Interest Forms
February	Orientation Webinar for cohort
March	Site visits & Kick Off to go over application process, introduce concepts, answer key questions.
April	Applications due for Hub organizations
June	1 st Rural Regional Rodeo Modeled around Mondays on Main but for RRMS Tier participants
2025	
January	2 nd Rural Regional Rodeo Evaluate rural regional gatherings and explore frequency with participants



The following marketing materials, application forms, and tracking tools were created to support the implementation of the Rural Regional Main Street program.

Tools can be accessed on the OMS website or by contacting:
Sheri Stuart, State Coordinator, at sheri.stuart@opr.oregon.gov

Tools for Hub Organizations

1. Marketing Flyer

A flyer to promote the RRMS program to interested Hub organizations and Coalitions.

2. Expression of Interest Form

A form that potential Hub organizations and Coalitions may submit to OMS, expressing interest in the RRMS program.

3. RRMS Designated Application Form

An application form for Hub organizations and Coalitions to complete once committed to joining the RRMS program.

4. Quarterly Tracking Tools

An excel form reflecting the current OMS quarterly tracking tools, with small tweaks to fit the rural regional program.

Tools for Rural Main Streets

1. Marketing Flyer

A flyer to promote the RRMS program to rural communities interested in revitalizing their downtowns.

2. Expression of Interest Form

A form that potential rural communities may submit to Hub organizations, expressing interest in the RRMS program.

3. RRMS Connected Communities Application Form

An application form for rural communities to complete once committed to joining the RRMS program under a regional Hub organization.

4. Annual Tracking Tools

A word document to be completed annually by rural downtown communities in partnership with their respective Hub organization.

Appendix A

The following page outlines what types of questions and vetting may occur in each step of the process along the way between Oregon Main Street staff and Hub organizations.

Step 1. Introductory Webinar introducing RRMS Concepts to Potential Hubs

- Goals and vision of the RRMS tier
- Background of the program. Introduce pilot programs (OFCC, NEOEDD)
- Share successes, potential opportunities, challenges
- Answer initial questions

Step 2. Complete short expression of interest form

- Contact info of applicant
- Location/region
- Who is currently involved and interested in spearheading this model (could be one or several organizations/champions/gov't partners)?
- What goals would you like to accomplish in your rural regional area?
- Which rural communities are involved or want to be involved?
- What resources, people or financial, is your organization able to commit?

Step 3. Orientation Webinar (via Zoom) with OMS staff - Orientation webinar to bring on cohorts of Hubs

- Explanation of the 4-point approach. How it works, a short training, etc.
- Are there projects (like regional tourism or marketing) that may be low-hanging fruit as a first project that can be done collaboratively?
- Expectations of OMS team vs. hubs vs. rural communities
- OMS services & supports
- Structure options that Hubs can explore and select

Step 4. Site Visit between OMS staff and rural region

- Some strategic planning support for the hub so they can lead the communities through the strategic planning process.
- Explore more deeply: regional goals, strategic objectives, regional opportunities
- What does the hub want to get out of it? What is the landscape now and where do they want to go?
- Finalize structure option best suited for the applicant

Step 5. Complete Application Form

- Hubs may complete the Affiliate+ Main Street Application but may join at the Designated level or other levels as appropriate.

Appendix B

The following steps outline what types of questions and vetting may occur in each step of the process along the way between Hub organizations and rural communities.

Step 1. Conversation with Hub and/or short expression of interest form. Collect the following:

- Name of rural community
- Contact info of applicant(s)/ambassador
- Outline some goals & outcomes
- Do you have a Main Street boundary already identified or do you need assistance?
- Do you have a committee of 3-5 champions for your rural historic district or might you need assistance?
- Outline roles and expectations of Hub organizations and rural Main Street communities.

Step 2. Complete the Connected RRMS Communities application form.

Step 3. Communicate rural township engagement with OMS team.

- Via email during intake process
- New towns can be formally added (or removed) during the annual report tracking process

Step 4. Coordinate a site visit with the OMS team

- Hub organizations will coordinate with OMS for a regional site visit to do a walking tour of each community connected to the Hub.
- Hub organizations will coordinate a meeting with leadership in each community.
- It is recommended that the timing of this stay flexible. In the OFCC pilot, this worked well after a few communities were accepted into the hub. In the NEOEDD pilot, site visits and walking tours were conducted in each potential town, followed by community meetings in each town before they were accepted as part of the Hub structure. This will depend on how much trust, communication, and coordination is already at play between the Hub and the rural districts and can be decided on a case-by-case basis.

Consultant Team



Saira Siddiqui, Project Lead, Chief Strategist

SAIRA Creative Consulting
Buffalo, NY. Portland, OR.

SAIRA Creative Consulting uses art, culture, and creativity to connect people to each other and their neighborhoods. Principal, Saira Siddiqui has a decade of experience in varying roles from Main Street Manager in rural and urban settings, to providing technical assistance and funding opportunities to nonprofit organizations and small businesses through her experience as a program manager at the nation's largest nonprofit community development financial institution. SAIRA Creative Consulting supports neighborhood planning efforts with a key focus on commercial district development, community engagement, and placemaking.



Mary Bosch, Strategic Thought-Partner

Marketek, Principal
Portland, OR

Mary Bosch is Principal with Marketek, a planning and economic development firm and has over 30 years of experience with every facet of community economic development – from the perspective of the entrepreneur to the developer and marketing professional. She specializes in rural revitalization. In the downtown/neighborhood redevelopment arena, Mary has conducted assignments for nearly 300 communities in 19 states on various aspects of economic and downtown development including market studies, business development training, visitor attraction plans, economic roadmaps, downtown master plans and more. Through her economic assignments throughout the nation, Mary has acquired a proven and time-tested understanding of what it takes to rebuild a community's commercial and economic base.



Ayrton Bates, Design & Brand Identity Collaborator

Portland, OR

Mr. Ayrton Bates has over 10 years of experience, including 9 years as a consultant at The Clearing in Washington, DC, where he has honed his skills in developing and refining unique brand identities for a diverse range of clients, including federal agencies, state and local governments, and nonprofits. He has a strong background in conducting market research and analyzing consumer behavior to develop effective brand strategies that meet each client's unique needs. His experience includes leading agency-wide rebranding efforts, advising and supporting government and community leaders in increasing coordination and implementing strategies, and designing and facilitating the process for defining brand purpose, visual identities, and communication and marketing strategies.