

Regional Housing Council Pilot Proposal

January 11, 2021 version for review

Executive Summary

The Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council (COIC) and our Housing for All (H4A) partners propose the formation of a Regional Housing Council (RHC) in order to build a regional collaborative governance approach to Central Oregon's homelessness, housing affordability and housing production crises. The RHC's purpose is to leverage existing housing partners and resources in order to share information, build and monitor regional priorities, develop coordinated programs to meet needs, support project implementation, and inform funding decisions. The RHC will have a wide range of representative seats aimed at achieving geographic and demographic diversity, and stakeholder and sector interest diversity. This degree of representation will support crucial objectives for system-level coordination and equity in meeting housing and homelessness needs. In order to assure the relevance and effectiveness of the RHC, we seek state support and the identification of specific ways that the RHC can engage in state processes.

THE NEED

Oregon is experiencing a statewide housing crisis impacting economic development, equity, transportation, public health, household finance, community livability, youth readiness to learn, graduation rates, and many other dimensions. There are system-level barriers to addressing the crisis; housing organizations and agencies can at times operate in uncoordinated silos, making it difficult to address the population's multi-faceted and intersectional housing needs. State policies and programs can be disconnected from local and regional needs; without a nexus between the state and local decision-makers, there will be limitations in accessing and understanding shared information on housing issues, priority needs, and the impacts of policy and funding decisions.

THE SOLUTION

The RHC will provide system-level, regional coordination and support. By offering a space for prioritizing coordinated solutions and inter-agency cooperation, RHCs will be positioned to make significant strides in regional information sharing and data development, strategic planning, program creation, policy development, and project implementation and monitoring. As a centralized entity for regional data and information, RHCs are able to offer local solutions based in current and comprehensive data, inform local and state funding decisions, and speak to the feasibility of proposed state policies and programs. For high effectiveness and synergy between the bottom and the top, the RHC will expand on the existing H4A membership to include key regional decision-makers (i.e. elected officials and lead agency administrators), and will be endowed with a clear role by the State of Oregon to engage in decisions and processes conducted by Oregon Housing and Community Services and the Department of Land Conservation and Development.

NEXT STEPS/REQUEST

COIC has completed extensive vetting of the RHC concept with local partners and leaders. We now request review and feedback from Oregon Housing and Community Services and the Housing Stability Council, and the Department of Land Conservation and Development and the Land Conservation and Development Commission. The key question is, how RHCs will be included in the appropriate data gathering, planning, and decision-making processes conducted by the State. COIC proposes that a two-year RHC pilot be stood up in Central Oregon; with assessment and potential extension of a statewide model. COIC anticipates preparing a proposal to the Central Oregon Health Council for 2-year start-up funding.

Overview

The Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council (COIC) and our Housing for All partners (<https://www.coic.org/h4a/>) propose the formation of a Regional Housing Council (RHC) to better meet and address housing and homelessness needs in Central Oregon. The RHC would be a representative body of community leaders, elected officials, housing stakeholders, and housing organizations to sync and maximize the existing housing and homelessness systems. The RHC would draw from shared knowledge and resources to identify regional needs and priorities; these needs and priorities would be collaboratively and systematically addressed to fill gaps in the network of service provision to help prevent and alleviate homelessness and increase housing availability and affordability. The regional nature of the RHC also permits an economies of scale model to increase the capacity and efficiencies of smaller communities.

The RHC is designed to address housing needs across the communities in our regional housing market as well as engage with the State to provide local context and data for state-level decisions. The combination of the internal and external roles allow the RHC to serve as the nexus between the top-down and the bottom-up, and will provide a means for state and federal partners to efficiently engage with local communities, and for regions to pool needs and priorities and communicate them to senior government partners.

THE FULL PICTURE: *Statewide Opportunity and Next Steps*

COIC is proposing that the RHC model be considered for adoption statewide and organized by appropriate housing market regions. The function would be relatively similar to Area Commissions on Transportation, which provide a similar function vis-à-vis statewide transportation policy and funding decisions. Staffing would be provided by the appropriate local entity (e.g. economic development districts, councils of government, etc.) for each housing market region.

The Central Oregon RHC will pilot this proposed model for two years prior to statewide implementation. We request the following of our state partners:

1. Formally endorse Regional Housing Councils as a means of engaging regions in the implementation of the Statewide Housing Plan, related housing legislation, and creating priorities for funding programs.
2. Identify specific ways to incorporate Regional Housing Councils into state systems and processes for regional data gathering, planning, policy-making, and funding priorities.
3. Identify means of state funding (matched to local funding) to support Regional Housing Council functions, including meeting facilitation, staffing, communications, data gathering, and planning after the pilot period is concluded.

Proposed Functions

The proposed functions of the Regional Housing Council are as follows:

1. COLLABORATE TO GATHER AND DISSEMINATE DATA

- a. Act as an overall central entity for data gathering and information dissemination by collecting and centralizing existing data sources via a website, email newsletter, etc.
- b. Identify and address priority unmet data needs:
 - i. Identify systemic data gaps and develop partnerships to fill gaps. *E.g. creating a shared data system for law enforcement, homelessness service providers, and health care (from the H4A 2021 work plan).*
 - ii. Engage with the state's Regional Housing Needs Analysis. If ultimately implemented by the state, we propose that Regional Housing Councils serve as a regional Steering Committee and manage regional engagement with the RHNAs and subsequent housing unit allocation process. This would involve a regular system of data gathering and needs assessment in order to provide

additional information appropriate for each region, including contextual information that is not possible through a standardized statewide methodology. *For example:*

1. Provide local knowledge regarding population growth dynamics, local priorities for housing provision (e.g. regional goals regarding provision of housing for homeless populations, low income populations, “missing middle” housing, etc. – as well as local and regional context regarding the potential impacts of different types of housing development), and local understanding of the dynamics of different policy interventions.
2. Gather qualitative data on the diverse experiences of those who are most affected by the housing crisis.
3. Use the above information to work with the state to create locally-relevant housing production strategies – acknowledging that barriers to development and type of housing needed are not necessarily identical in cities across a region, nor from region to region in Oregon. Recognizing and understanding this will help focus limited resources on best addressing the barriers in each community.
4. Partner with the State to address data source limitations which have had the effect of separating Crook and Jefferson counties from being included in a housing market region with Deschutes County – this does not reflect the real-world regional housing market condition.

2. IDENTIFY AND ADDRESS SYSTEM GAPS AND NEEDS THROUGH COLLABORATION

- a. Identify existing programs to meet priority needs and support the programs by:
 - i. Identifying resources and support resource development
 - ii. Providing a space for dialogue, planning, and execution of a seamless program
- b. Generate new projects and programs to meet priority needs by:
 - i. Defining the need and potential solutions
 - ii. Identifying and facilitating key partners to shape the project or program
 - iii. Identifying resources and supporting resource development
 - iv. Monitoring projects from planning through implementation and evaluating against established benchmarks.
- c. Build a high-level Regional Housing Strategy or Framework rooted in data and collaborative priorities.

3. CENTRALIZE INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

- a. Map the housing services and organizations within the region
- b. Research and disseminate best practices in policy and program development
- c. Act as a one-stop-shop for organizational referrals and connections to:
 - i. local service providers,
 - ii. data needs,
 - iii. information,
 - iv. topical and regional expertise,
 - v. and collaborative impact needs.

4. PROMOTE EDUCATION & ADVOCACY

- a. Conduct outreach and campaigns for public and stakeholder awareness and education
- b. Coordinate symposiums, webinars, and events to advocate for housing and shared knowledge
- c. Coordinate community events for public engagement and input on housing-related issues
- d. Evaluate local, regional, and state policies and initiatives for endorsement
- e. Communicate housing needs and interests to legislators and elected officials

5. COMMIT TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION (DEI)

Prioritize DEI and transparency in the RHC Charter. The DEI policy will be foundational and active in the membership seats and recruitment process, in selecting projects, and in funding decisions.

Pilot Geography

The Central Oregon RHC will work within the Central Oregon housing market, including Crook, Deschutes and Jefferson counties and the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs (if the Tribes wish to participate).

Membership and Participation

The Area Commissions on Transportation provide a useful and successful model in ensuring that local governments, tribes, authorities, and other partners are represented in regional funding and needs prioritization under the Oregon Department of Transportation purview. The RHCs would have a similar role and composition:

- Geographic/communities: including local elected representatives and/or senior administrative staffs from local jurisdictions.
- OHCS and DLCD
- Regional Solutions coordinator
- Appointed issue area representatives – community action agencies, housing authorities, builders/developers, rental owners and tenant groups, public health, Coordinated Care Organizations (CCOs), public safety, schools, public land managers, Continuum of Care and Coordinated Entry, employers, land use groups, etc. (see Central Oregon’s Housing for All membership for a potential model).
- Ex officio members would include state and federal legislators and staffs.

In addition, each RHC could form a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) to assist in data gathering and needs assessment, program/policy review, and to build and oversee any pilot projects.

Staffing

Staff services will be provided by the Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council and may also include contract services for technical analysis. Staff services would include:

- Supporting meetings by building packets and hosting and facilitating meetings
- Managing correspondence and outreach
- Program development and project management for priority needs
- Grant writing, resource development, and grant administration when needed
- Technical assistance to smaller jurisdictions, as desired
- Track progress on action items
- Contractor procurement and management
- Data and information collection
- Research
- Program outcomes reporting

Budget

The initial RHC budget is estimated to be a baseline of \$100,000 per biennium (\$50,000/year) not including contracting costs. COIC proposes that a two-year pilot be funded by local funding sources with costs thereafter shared with the State of Oregon.

Expected Outcomes

The RHC will

1. Serve as the nexus between bottom-up (local) and top-down (state and federal) policy and program development
2. Yield information and direction for the model to be replicated across the state.
3. Identify and collect contextual and additional data beyond that used in the state RHNA to establish regional housing and homelessness trends, obstacles, and opportunities.
4. Improve regional elected official and other decision-maker awareness of housing and homelessness issues, the impacts of the housing crisis, and promising solutions.
5. Build integrated (multi-agency, multi-issue), collaborative approaches to serving regional housing and homelessness needs and opportunities.
6. Create collaborative regional priorities, leading to the development of a broader Regional Housing Strategy that could inform local project proposals.
7. Help small urban and rural communities identify housing and homelessness needs and resources to achieve housing goals through regional economies of scale.
8. Energize private market strategies to meet identified housing needs.