

Balance of State Community Hub  
**Oregon Housing and Community Services**  
Special Achievement

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HFA Name: Oregon Housing and Community Services

Topic/initiative: **Balance of State Community Hub**

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### **Are innovative**

The Balance of State (BoS) Community Hub represents a groundbreaking, provider-centered approach to solving a long-standing challenge in rural homelessness response: connecting service providers across vast, geographically isolated communities to collectively build social and human capital supporting their critically needed work efforts.

Developed in partnership with Civic Roundtable—a government operations platform originally incubated at the Harvard Innovation Labs and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)—this online community platform combines the functionalities of social media, such as LinkedIn and Reddit, with open-source resource sharing to enable real-time communication and collaboration across 26 rural counties comprising Oregon’s Balance of State Continuum of Care.

This capacity building initiative is among the first in the US and first in Oregon to implement a purpose-built, virtual government operations platform facilitating dedicated centralized communication and collaboration of housing and homelessness service providers, regardless of distance. The BoS Community Hub is dynamic, accessible, customizable, and was designed in partnership with nearly 30 BoS service providers via 1-on-1 listening sessions to meet the specific needs of their workflows and constraints they face.

Its features include 14 community spaces specific to scopes of work, such as youth, veterans, Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS), with each space including discussion boards, user-built resource libraries, integrated community calendars, real-time alerts, member directories for peer-to-peer collaboration, and much more. The hub also provides accessibility and functional technology for providers, such as video conferencing capabilities for smaller organizations; dedicated search engines with peer-reviewed and compliant external sources linked, such as National Alliance to End Homelessness and HUD Exchange, to cut through the noise of standard search engines like Google; automatic transcriptions of uploaded video and audio resources in the library, which become searchable, time-stamped text documents; along with regular, ongoing learning and training workshops hosted on the hub, such as the monthly HMIS cohort whose meetings are recorded, transcribed, searchable, and all resources shared automatically uploaded to the HMIS & Data Community Space’s library.

Rather than relying on static email lists, siloed SharePoint folders, or inconsistent meeting attendance—the hub is centralized, supports retention of institutional knowledge, provides analytics on engagement and attendance, allows for communications management, and supports multi-directional engagement from government-to-provider and provider-to-provider.

### **Respond to an important state need**

Oregon’s rural communities face unique challenges in addressing homelessness, including long distances between service providers, limited staffing, labor loss, and underfunded infrastructure. Traditional communication or collaboration tools often fail to meet the needs of organizations operating in such complex and resource-constrained environments.

The BoS Community Hub directly addresses these issues by providing a centralized, easily accessible space where local partners can stay informed, collaborate, and reduce duplicative efforts allowing focus of the most valuable asset in supporting people experiencing homelessness—service providers’ time.

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By improving system integration and streamlining communication across the BoS region, Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS) is helping to ensure that rural Oregonians—many of whom reside in underrepresented and underserved areas—receive consistent, coordinated support in their path to stable housing. Additionally, the hub serves a larger equity objective through delivering effective services to those historically excluded from robust homelessness interventions.

### **Achieve intended results**

Since launching in December of 2024, the BoS Community Hub has:

- Onboarded more than 200 rural housing and service providers across 26 counties, representing 85 community organizations and five Tribal organizations
- Enabled faster dissemination of critical updates about funding, grant opportunities, and state-level policy changes, with more than 350 resources hosted on the platform
- Created a reliable communication pipeline that preserves time for providers, allowing more focus on direct service delivery versus searching siloed email chains and static documents
- Generated more than 400 discussion posts to support strong peer engagement and reduce reliance on top-down communication
- Launched and activated 14 tailored community spaces, including those for domestic violence providers, youth services, shelter operators, funding opportunities, and homelessness prevention, each developed through listening sessions with local partners
- Enabled real-time meetings and office hours directly on the platform, including automated video transcripts and recordings, streamlining knowledge sharing and reducing coordination overhead
- Highlighted and amplified local success stories—like Yamhill County reaching functional zero\* for unsheltered families, a major achievement shared and featured in the monthly community spotlight, which included interviews and expanded context to foster peer learning across regions

### **Provide benefits that outweigh costs**

OHCS' investment in the Civic Roundtable platform has delivered a high-impact, cost-effective solution to a complex statewide issue. By leveraging technology originally funded through Harvard and MIT grants, OHCS was able to implement a fully developed, scalable solution without the burden of building a custom system from scratch. Civic Roundtable provided extensive hands-on support in training, onboarding, and configuration—ensuring the platform met the specific needs of BoS users from day one. Civic Roundtable is specifically designed to deploy in days, meaning no hidden costs, fees, or delays during software implementation.

The hub continuously adapts as new partners and use cases emerge, making it a foundational technology for Oregon state, county, and municipal governments. The return on investment includes streamlined workflows, improved regional collaboration, enhanced equity in information access, and a measurable reduction in time spent managing scattered communication threads allowing providers to cut through the “meta-work”—the work of doing the work.

Lastly, the hub is an investment in Oregon. It's built to provide value for years to come along with secure tools enabling service providers to optimize their most valuable resource—their time and energy.

\*Functional zero is a milestone indicating a community has measurably ended homelessness for a population. When it's achieved and maintained, homelessness is rare and brief for that population.