

Rural Capacity Funding through SOREDI (April 1, 2022 -December 31, 2023)

The Rogue Valley Council of Governments (RVCOG) worked with local jurisdictions using the SOREDI funds designated for both cities with populations under 2,500 and cities with populations under 35,000. Below are a selection of stories about how the funding was immensely beneficial in allowing RVCOG to conduct active community outreach and collaboration, research specific grants, and then follow up with grant applications and eventual awards. Without the SOREDI funding, none of these projects would have been possible.

The projects below, all made possible by the availability of SOREDI funding, add up to over one million dollars in grant funding.

Cities with Populations under 2,500 (Business Oregon Funding)

Butte Falls

When the Oregon State Fire Marshal (OSFM) announced their Community Wildfire Risk Reduction (CWRR) grant, RVCOG immediately implemented their SOREDI funding to reach out to the town of Butte Falls. With a population of 450 residents, the town of Butte Falls is located in forested terrain that is considered very high wildfire risk. In 2020, the Obenchain Fire came dangerously close to reaching Butte Falls, and it was decided that a wildfire mitigation was a high priority. With the town already set to receive Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) funds in 2024 for fuel reduction, RVCOG and Butte Falls decided that a mechanism to conduct maintenance after initial fuel reduction efforts would be pivotal to long-term wildfire mitigation. To this end, RVCOG used SOREDI funding to create an application for the CWRR grant in order for the town to purchase a commercial chipper and a tow trailer that will facilitate maintenance of the fuel reduction levels created by the FEMA grant project. The application was submitted and the town was awarded \$50,000 to purchase the needed equipment.

Rogue River

The City of Rogue River, which is situated along the banks of the river bearing the same name, has a population of 2,407. It is an idyllic small town but unfortunately like many similar towns in the Rogue Valley it is at incredibly high risk for wildfire. One of the major hazards is Wards Creek, a tributary of the Rogue River that runs through the town. Much like Bear Creek, which was the wick that ignited the Almeda Fires that razed nearby Talent and Phoenix, Wards Creek is full of dangerous tinder like blackberries and aged trees. RVCOG's Natural Resource Department, using SOREDI funds, was able to reach out to the city and offer to create a preliminary wildfire implementation plan for Wards Creek, which could then be used as a baseline document to apply for wildfire reduction grants. Collaborating with the city, RVCOG leveraged SOREDI funds and created a robust planning document that the city is actively using to pursue wildfire reduction funds from entities such as FEMA, OSFM, and the Bureau of Land Management.

Cities with Populations under 35,000 (The Ford Family Foundation Funding)

Jacksonville

The City of Jacksonville has a population of 2,785 and boasts a nationally renowned historic downtown. It is also located in dense forested hills that make the city a high risk location for wildfire. When OSFM was working on awarding the city a \$500,000 grant for fuel reduction in its vast Forest Park, the city requested that RVCOG assist

with finalizing the grant award and preparing for implementation of the grant. Using SOREDI funds, RVCOG was able to meet with OSFM and the Jacksonville Fire Chief to finalize the funding agreement, outline the budget and scheduling, and prepare the project for implementation. The project has been an incredible success for Jacksonville.

Also in Jacksonville, RVCOG worked with the Fire Chief to convert part of their newly refurbished fire station into an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) that will function as a local base of operations in times of emergency. RVCOG used SOREDI funds to reach out to the Oregon Emergency Management (OEM) agency and request State Homeland Security Grant Program (SHSP) funding. RVCOG completed the application, submitted, and the city was awarded \$18,000 towards completing the EOC.

Finally, the city of Jacksonville was interested in converting park of their downtown core into a pedestrian-only plaza that could also be a site to host events. RVCOG's Land Use Planning department and Community Development department worked with the city to procure a Transportation and Growth Management (TGM) grant from the Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD) to prepare a plan that could be used to then procure a contractor. After working with DLCD on the grant application and project rollout, the city was awarded \$50,000 to create the TGM plan.

Phoenix

The City of Phoenix, with a population of 4,538 was hard hit by the Almeda Fire in 2020. The small city is situated along the Bear Creek greenway, from which the fire spread into the city and caused massive amounts of destruction. When OSFM announced the CWRR grant, the entire Rogue Valley knew that it was a golden opportunity to receive wildfire mitigation funding that could be used to prevent another disaster. RVCOG was asked to assist the City of Phoenix with preparing an application, and to work with the Regional Wildfire Coordinator. Because of the SOREDI funds, RVCOG was able to comply. An application was researched, prepared, and then submitted to OSFM. The result was that the City of Phoenix received \$247,600 in funding to procure heavy duty fuel maintenance equipment as well as funds for procuring a fuel reductions contractor to remove high risk fuels from the greenway and create a much needed buffer zone from wildfire.

Talent

With a population of 6,282, Talent is in a very similar situation to Phoenix in that it is situated along the Bear Creek greenway, making it at extreme risk for wildfire. This was proven true during the Almeda Fire, which ravaged the city in 2020. OSFM announcing the CWRR grant was a golden opportunity in increase the city's wildfire resilience but there was no capacity within the city to write the grant. Leveraging SOREDI funds, RVCOG was able to assist Talent in researching, writing, and submitting the grant. As a result the City of Talent received \$184,000 to procure heavy duty fuel maintenance equipment as well as funds for procuring a fuel reductions contractor to remove high risk fuels from the greenway and create a much needed buffer zone from wildfire.

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