

March 31, 2008

2009-2011 OUS Agency Request Budget
Policy Package Proposal
University partners

***Urban and Rural Connected (UR Connected):
An Aspirational Map for Oregon's Future***

Description

UR Connected envisions an "aspirational map" of Oregon that emphasizes interconnection, common purpose, shared dreams, and sustainable, vital communities throughout the state.

Oregon's universities are the cartographers of the map, leading a multi-disciplinary, multi-partner collaboration to change the paradigm of an "urban/rural divide" to recognizing and building urban/rural connections that maximize the future of Oregon communities together in the world.

Connection to Board Goals

The Oregon University System (OUS) is uniquely positioned to assist the entire state in achieving sustainable social, economic, and environmental vitality. Included in its mission, OUS "strives to proactively enhance the representation, inclusion, and engagement of broadly diverse populations through a variety of initiatives. Community engagement and diversity efforts are designed to support all Oregon communities and promote educational opportunities and outreach."

Need for the Package

No matter where we live - in an urban, a suburban, or a rural environment - all Oregonians share common needs and aspirations for a sustainable future: adequate and affordable healthcare and housing, high quality teachers and education for our children, job and career opportunities, economic growth, safe and secure neighborhoods, sustainable food supplies and energy sources, and a healthy and clean environment.

We are not isolated from one another; Oregon's urban and rural communities are interdependent. If one part of our state is not doing well, other parts of the state are affected negatively, e.g. crime related to the development of meth labs has damaged both urban and rural areas. Conversely, the entire state can benefit

positively from development of sustainable, renewable energy sources and bio-fuels.

In a March 4, 2008 Special News Report, *The Portland Tribune* devoted 23 pages to examining the challenges Oregon faces to ensure an adequate skilled workforce to fill the 650,000 jobs that are expected to become available in the state in the next ten years (Jim Redden, *The Portland Tribune*). In an editorial on March 27, 2008, *The Oregonian* observes that “much of Oregon’s wealth is tied up in rural lands, and rural Oregonians play a critical part in husbanding that treasure.”

Through UR Connected, Oregon's universities are uniquely positioned to provide expertise, support and a framework to help communities work with each other in addressing critical issues that define Oregon's future. Issues like:

- What happens to Oregon if our population doubles? How will our natural resources, landscape, and urban/rural relationships be affected?
- What are the ramifications on the entire state of the potential loss of federal timber payments?
- Can we and should we restructure our governance and service delivery systems to better serve all of the state?
- Are there unexplored business and industrial opportunities between urban and rural Oregon?
- How can Oregonians influence decisions about the 50-plus percent of land that is Federally-owned to maximize benefits for urban and rural Oregon?
- How do we ensure an "Oregon Strong" workforce by providing all Oregonians with the education and skills needed for jobs demanded by the growth in new technologies and industries?
- How can we come together to meet energy needs while ensuring a sustainable future for the state's water and natural resources?
- Will we be able to ensure a safe and healthy food supply for all Oregonians in the future?
- How do we provide thriving rural infrastructures to support tourism and recreational activities that are a vital part of Oregon's economy?
- How do we ensure adequate healthcare for all Oregonians?

- How do we retain the integrity of the experience that is Oregon, the essence of what makes Oregon unique, no matter how much the state grows and changes?

UR Connected is a concept unique in the nation and can serve as a model to unite other urban and rural communities. Limited research finds almost an exclusive focus on what **divides** urban and rural communities, but not what **connects** them. Even advocates for greater connection tend to use “urban-rural divide” as common terminology. The goal of UR Connected is to change the paradigm of how we think about urban and rural communities from **divide** to **connect** and to share our experience in doing so broadly throughout the nation. One of the UR Connected partners, the National Policy Consensus Center at Portland State University and its national Board, can provide a national platform for discussion of Oregon’s experience in connecting urban and rural communities.

Benefits and Value of this Approach

Oregon's universities are uniquely positioned to provide a neutral, collaborative framework in which urban and rural Oregonians can share their perspectives and learn from each other. Achieving the "aspirational map" of a whole, vital Oregon may mean reframing political, cultural, and economic boundaries and will certainly require forward-thinking dialogue about difficult and contentious issues. Universities are ideally suited to provide research, outreach, service, forums for civic engagement, and facilitation of on-the-ground projects to help communities address the challenges of the future.

University campuses and offices are spread out across the state in urban and rural communities, and individual entities within the university system work closely with urban and rural partners on an ongoing basis. The proposal for UR Connected will capitalize and build on a strong foundation for connecting rural and urban Oregon that already exists in several OUS institutions and programs.

External Advisory Board. The university partners in UR Connected will be guided by an external Board of Advisors with diverse urban and rural membership, including representatives of entities such as: The Oregon Progress Board, the Association of Oregon Counties, the League of Oregon Cities, Rural Development Initiatives, Inc., Sustainable Northwest, The Ford Family Foundation, the State Board of Higher Education, Association of Oregon Ports, Mercy Corps, the NW Power and Conservation Council, etc., as well as individual citizens who play a leadership role in urban and rural communities. The Advisory Board will help define policy issues, identify research needs, and advise on selection of specific community-based projects to connect urban and rural Oregon.

Multi-University Management Team. UR Connected will link faculty, staff, and projects across the university system through a Management Team comprised of faculty from among the following university partner programs: the Institute for Portland Metropolitan Studies, the Center for Urban Studies, the Population Research Center, and the National Policy Consensus Center (including Oregon Solutions and the Oregon Consensus Program) at Portland State University (PSU); the Rural Studies Program and its successor the proposed Rural Institute, the Institute for Natural Resources, the Extension Service and the Agricultural Experiment Stations at Oregon State University (OSU); the Rural Oregon Institute (ROI) at Eastern Oregon University (EOU), and the Institute for Policy Research and Innovation, the Community Service Center, and the Resource Assistance for Rural Environments (RARE) program at the University of Oregon (UO).

Expertise and involvement from Western Oregon University (WOU), Southern Oregon University (SOU) and Oregon Institute of Technology (OIT) will be utilized on research and projects where these institutions have special expertise, e.g. the Teaching Research Institute at WOU and the Renewable Energy Center at OIT.

Work Proposed to be Done by UR Connected

Long-term research in selected urban neighborhoods and rural communities. University researchers and community members will jointly define a research agenda and work together in a Long Term Neighborhood/Community Research effort loosely modeled after the National Science Foundation's Long Term Ecological Research program. Rural community research will be led by OSU and UO and urban research by PSU. Urban and rural participants will come together to identify shared issues that affect communities in different ways, e.g. economic problems in rural areas might result from a lack of economic activity that provides jobs, while in an urban area it might be more of a mismatch between available jobs and workforce skills, or jobs that don't pay enough to offer a living wage in an urban environment. Components of the program will include (1) long-term tracking and modeling of community social, economic, environmental and institutional indicators; (2) long-term geospatial monitoring of land use, demographic and economic change; and (3) information from qualitative research and formal interviews of community members that explores both economic and social community dynamics and the impacts of public policy changes "on the ground."

Development of a UR Connected web-based portal that provides demographic and economic information for rural communities and urban neighborhoods, and help to communities in understanding and responding to the impacts of particular changes. OSU is developing the "Rural Communities Explorer" and PSU the "Metro Knowledge Network." The

universities will learn from each other and work together to develop a better system that allows mutual learning and linkages between urban neighborhoods and similarly sized rural communities. PSU and OSU have already worked together to create the Oregon Land Use Explorer, a part of the Oregon Explorer digital library being developed by the Institute for Natural Resources and the OSU libraries. The Rural Communities Explorer web portal (www.oregonexplorer.info/rural) will be enhanced to serve as the interactive web-based portal for UR Connected and a parallel or linked portal for urban neighborhoods and communities. Data, tools and content from PSU's Metropolitan Knowledge Network will be integrated and made accessible. All communities in Oregon will have access to interactive maps, reports, scientific information, data, and expertise via "community web pages." UR Connected will also provide a framework for exploring potential linkages with non-university entities, such as the Rural Information Practice and Peer Learning Exchange (RIPPLE) developed by Rural Development Initiatives, Inc.

Building on the 2004 urban-rural public policy Dialogues convened by UO Institute for Policy Research and Innovation, and the 2008 "Toward One Oregon" conference produced by four university partners (OSU, PSU, UO, EOU). The 2004 Dialogues brought together community leaders from throughout Oregon to "explore what the assets of a diverse Oregon are; and how best to mobilize them on behalf of the entire state." The Dialogues identified a set of actions to foster a better understanding and working relationship among all Oregonians. "Toward One Oregon" in November, 2008 will include a conference, a book, and formulation of a research and outreach agenda around urban and rural interdependence. UR Connected will help to integrate urban-rural work by universities into other forums, such as the "Regards to Rural" conference and the work of the Oregon Business Council on defining future education and workforce needs in the Oregon Business Plan every January.

Enhancing the statewide outreach and network capacity of the Resource Assistance for Rural Environments (RARE) Program at the University of Oregon. Through the RARE program, graduate level students from diverse backgrounds (urban and rural) are placed in rural communities. RARE students play a role in the UR Connected network by providing a university link to communities and working directly on issues identified by communities, and by providing a pool of professionals interested in public service who develop a hands-on understanding of and interest in rural Oregon. If appropriate, RARE students will have an opportunity to be part of the UR Connected community-based projects described below.

Opportunity to develop curriculum and internships for students interested in issues that connect urban and rural Oregon, e.g. infrastructure needs and public works, local government administration, natural resources, land use, public health, criminal justice, etc.

Expand OSU Extension’s participation in and service to the Portland Metro area. As part of the UR Connected Management Team, Extension’s Portland Metro Specialist will work with urban partners to create new opportunities that enhance Extension’s presence in the Portland Metro area and provide Extension services that are relevant to urban needs.

Enhancement of regional services provided by the Rural Oregon Institute (ROI) of Eastern Oregon University. The federal government is providing some money to ROI to encourage urban-rural linkages, small business opportunities in renewable energy and value-added agriculture, and bio-science research. UR Connected would enhance this work and help ROI expand regional services.

Community-based projects. A primary responsibility of the UR Connected Advisory Board will be to assist in identifying and selecting community-based demonstration projects that are statewide and address key needs, issues, and opportunities to connect urban and rural Oregon. Ideas for projects include: looking at why incentives in the “Butler Bill” passed by the legislature to encourage businesses to locate in rural Oregon have not been widely used – what are the impediments and how can they be addressed?; re-institute the “Community Oregon” urban/rural exchange that came out of the American Leadership Forum; look at the impact of fuel costs on Ports and Oregon’s overall transportation system – who are the “winners” and “losers” between truck, rail and water?; feasibility of moving more state and/or corporate office/services into rural Oregon, e.g. the ODS call center in La Grande and the Human Resources building in Condon; long-range planning for urban and rural water needs; educating a statewide population with a changing demographic – how do we effectively assimilate and address language and cultural differences? Why do people move to Oregon? Why do they stay? Why do they leave? What if we thought of the state in “regional terms” and organized services, agencies, etc. in that way? These are just a few examples of questions that have been raised as the concept of UR Connected has been developed. An example of a project being undertaken now is a food systems sustainability assessment being conducted jointly by the Institute of Portland Metropolitan Studies, the Extension Service, and the Oregon Consensus Program, working with urban and rural stakeholders.

In selecting and overseeing projects, the Advisory Board will be supported by the knowledge and experience of Oregon Solutions and the Oregon Consensus Program in administering community-based projects. The Institute for Natural Resources and the OSU Extension Service will provide access to the best available scientific information needed to support these projects, and the Institute for Portland Metropolitan Studies, the Center for Urban Studies, and the Population Research Center at PSU will provide expertise, research and data to support projects.

Performance Indicators

Inputs/Process

- Formation of Management Team
- Formation of Board of Advisors
- Recruitment of faculty affiliates
- Leverage of federal, private, and foundation dollars for research and community-based projects
- Recruitment of community partners for engaged research and community-based projects

Potential Outputs

- Number of collaborative projects completed
- Number of community web pages developed
- Number of hits to UR Connected web site
- Number of attendees at UR Connected conferences, dialogues and symposia
- Number of publications on urban and rural issues in Oregon
- Number of presentations at national and international events

Potential Outcomes

- Strength of urban-rural network linkages (measure in network analysis)
- New urban-rural business opportunities created
- Rural Oregon Per Capita Income (PCI) as a percentage of statewide PCI
- Calculate return on investment – state dollars spent, local value returned
- Use analysis of variance to track changes in means on shifts in values toward rural/urban connections in rural, suburban, and urban Oregon over a 5-10 year period.

Budget Request

The total biennial budget envisioned for UR Connected is \$4 million (\$1.75 million state, \$1.8 million federal, \$ 450,000 foundation). The budget described here is the state general fund portion only.

The UR Connected Management Team will be staffed by a part-time professional faculty position and part-time support staff position to oversee project budgets, convene meetings, prepare reports, handle communications (newsletter, publications), staff the Advisory Board, develop and maintain the website, organize the biennial conference and other symposia. **(\$150,000)**

Biennial urban-rural conference and other dialogues and symposia – **(\$50,000)**

Funding to help support a Director of the Rural Institute at Oregon State University which is being proposed to strengthen the existing Rural Studies Program funded by the Sustainable Rural Communities Initiative. Administrative infrastructure will ensure continued OSU participation in UR Connected activities such as curriculum development, research, symposia, and selection of community-based projects. **(\$250,000)**

UR Connected curriculum and internship development **(\$50,000)**

RARE graduate students assigned to UR Connected projects **(\$50,000)**

OSU Extension Portland Metro Services **(\$100,000)**

Funding for data management, including a database developer and data manager to support PSU's participation in the interactive web-based portal for UR Connected and ensure that data in the Metropolitan Knowledge Network are kept up to date. Shared by the Institute for Metropolitan Studies and the Population Research Center at PSU. **(\$250,000)**

Enhance the Rural Communities Explorer web portal (www.oregonexplorer.info/rural) to serve as the interactive web-based portal for UR Connected. **(\$150,000)**

Community-based projects connecting urban and rural Oregon selected by the UR Connected Advisory Board and administered by Oregon Solutions and the Oregon Consensus Program **(\$400,000)**

Support for regional services and development of small business urban-rural partnerships by Eastern Oregon University **(\$100,000)**

Specialized UR Connected projects involving SOU, WOU and OIT **(\$200,000)**

Total Request: \$1.75 million general fund