

News & Risk Management Review

WINTER 2025

S|D|A|O

SPECIAL DISTRICTS
ASSOCIATION OF OREGON

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Next Board of Directors Meeting

February 5th | 12:30pm | Bend, OR

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Awards, Education and Training, Internship Grant, Legislative, Research and Technical Assistance, Scholarship and Grant Fund, and SDAO Advisory Services, LLC

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2025 SDAO ANNUAL CONFERENCE



I am thrilled to invite you to the 2025 SDAO Annual Conference, taking place from February 6-9 at the beautiful Riverhouse on the Deschutes in Bend, Oregon. This year's conference promises to be an engaging and informative event, with a wide variety of sessions, networking opportunities, and special events designed to support and inspire you.

REGISTRATION IS OPEN

Registration for the conference is open and spots are filling quickly. Thanks to the generous support of our sponsors, we have been able to maintain our affordable rates for over a decade. Here are the registration costs:

PRE-CONFERENCE SESSIONS: \$50 PER SESSION
ONE DAY ONLY (FRIDAY OR SATURDAY): \$140
FULL CONFERENCE (THURSDAY EVENING-SUNDAY MORNING): \$230

PRE-CONFERENCE OPPORTUNITIES

We are pleased to offer four pre-conference training sessions this year that will dive deep into specific areas of interest:

SO, YOU WANT TO BE A GENERAL MANAGER?

This is a practical career development workshop for senior executives and emerging leaders in special districts. This action-oriented workshop includes group and panel discussions on the journey, roles, and skill sets of a general manager; identifying general manager opportunities; developing positive relations with the board, staff, and peer agency executives; and leadership best practices.

MASTERING MEDIA INTERACTIONS: ADVANCED COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES

In this course, you will learn practical skills for speaking with journalists in any kind of media scenario and practice skills learned in realistic role play. Topics include preparation, confidence, dynamics, body language and difficult questions. Lou will also cover how to interact with the media when they are calling asking hard questions and wanting information, how to get the word out to the media on the great things your district is doing, and disaster management: what to do when you have a scandal or disaster at your district that will garner state or even national media attention.

» **PUBLIC MEETINGS LAW TRAINING**

This interactive session is for both those governing body members and the staff that support them. We will cover the individual responsibilities of governing body members, how the statutes apply to convening a public meeting, a general overview of executive session provisions, and a look at the grievance process. We'll discuss the application of the law to common scenarios and have time for questions. This session satisfies the new Public Meetings Law training requirement for certain governing body members detailed in ORS 192.700.

» **OCCHOE CYBERSECURITY TABLETOP EXERCISE**

The Oregon Cybersecurity Center of Excellence and the Mark O. Hatfield Cybersecurity and Cyber Defense Policy Center are offering a free cybersecurity tabletop exercise as a pre-conference session. This exercise will offer multiple scenarios, questions, and opportunities for large and small group discussions, and resources for state, local and tribal governments to access.

EDUCATIONAL AND TRAINING SESSIONS

In addition to our pre-conference sessions, we are offering over 20 breakout sessions covering topics relevant to special districts. These trainings are designed to provide you with the latest information, tools, and strategies to help you succeed in your roles.

SPECIAL EVENTS AND NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES

One of the highlights of our conference is the opportunity to connect with peers from across the state. Our networking events are designed to foster collaboration and the sharing of ideas. Don't miss the chance to meet new colleagues and reconnect with old friends.

AWARDS BANQUET

Join us for our annual awards banquet, where we will celebrate the achievements of our members and recognize those who have made significant contributions to our community. This is always a memorable evening filled with inspiration and camaraderie.

I look forward to seeing you in Bend for what promises to be an outstanding conference. Register online today at <https://cvent.me/neIPOX> and secure your spot at this must-attend event!

THANK YOU TO OUR PLATINUM SPONSORS!



SDAO INTERNSHIP

Grant Program

Application Deadline:
5pm on Friday, April 18, 2025

Applications are now being accepted for the 2025 SDAO Internship Grant Program! Essential and critical to Oregon's communities, special districts deliver much-needed services while also supporting their local workforce. In addition, many districts offer summer internships to college-level students in their area who are seeking to learn more about local government careers. SDAO recognizes and supports these efforts by providing matching grants through the SDAO Internship Grant Program.

Through this program, interns must be hired by the district as temporary employees to be in compliance with wage and hour laws relative to compensating student interns. A freshman through junior college-level student will need to be hired to qualify for funding of this grant.

The maximum grant per district is \$3,000; the funding must be matched by the district by 50%. For example, you may be eligible to receive up to \$3,000 on your request for a project that will cost your district \$6,000 or more. You may be eligible to receive up to a maximum of \$2,100 on your request for a project that will cost your



"We are grateful and appreciative of this grant funded opportunity that served the district so well while also providing a key learning and working opportunity for our young student intern."

Chief Travis Hewitt

Halsey-Shedd RFPD



“The Netarts Water District appreciates the financial support of the SDAO that allowed the district to hire an intern to develop and launch the district’s first website.”

Traci Bean

Netarts Water District

district \$4,200. SDAO may not fund all grant requests. This grant is not intended to fund routine maintenance needs or normal staffing requirements.

The SDAO Awards Committee will review each application to determine which projects are eligible to receive funding. Funds will be disbursed by July 1, 2025.

To be considered, your completed Internship Grant Program application must be received by

SDAO by **5pm on Friday, April 18, 2025**. Submit your completed application by mail to **SDAO, PO Box 12613, Salem, Oregon 97309**; by e-mail to **sdao@sdao.com**; or by fax to **503-371-4781**. Attach a separate sheet if necessary. Learn more and download the Internship Grant Program application at: **www.sdao.com/internship-grant-program**.



“With Garret’s help, we were able to place 176 new meters in the Ophir area of the district.”

Juli Scott

Nesika Beach Ophir Water District

GET AHEAD OF THE DEADLINE: ENSURE YOUR DISTRICT'S WEBSITE IS ACCESSIBLE

Last spring, the U.S. Department of Justice enacted a rule that requires all state and local governments to make their websites and mobile apps accessible to people with disabilities. This rule is based on the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1, Level AA, which includes 50 success criteria for making websites accessible, and aims to ensure that people with disabilities have equal access to online public services.

For special districts, this rule goes into effect on April 24, 2027. However, this doesn't mean that you should wait to ensure your district's site is accessible because local governments with inaccessible websites can be the target of lawsuits.

KEY RESOURCES FOR ACCESSIBILITY

We encourage all members to utilize the resources offered by our partners at Streamline at www.getstreamline.com/oregon-accessibility-resources. On this page you will find a free tool that offers you an accessibility report for every page of your website. This helps identify areas needing improvement.

They also offer a downloadable ADA checklist to ensure ongoing compliance with WCAG 2.1 AA and DOJ 28 CFR Part 35. This checklist is a comprehensive guide to maintaining accessibility standards.

Additionally, there are resources offered to make your PDF documents accessible and compliant. This includes tips and step-by-step guides for using tools like Adobe Acrobat Pro.

COMMON COMPLIANCE PITFALLS

After reviewing the resources above, don't miss the common compliance pitfalls. Special districts often encounter several common issues that can hinder website accessibility:

- **Non-Accessible PDFs/Documents:** Ensure all documents are accessible by following best practices for PDF accessibility.
- **Lack of Closed Captions:** Add closed captions to all video and audio files to make them accessible to users with hearing impairments.
- **Missing ALT Tags:** Include ALT tags for all images to provide descriptive text for users who rely on screen readers.
- **Poor Color Contrast:** Ensure sufficient color contrast between text and background to improve readability for users with visual impairments.



- **Non-Responsive Design:** Make sure your website is mobile-responsive to provide a good user experience on all devices.

Achieving website accessibility is crucial for ensuring that all community members can access and benefit from your district's online resources. By utilizing the available tools and following best practices, Oregon's special districts can create inclusive and compliant websites.

For more information, we encourage you to visit Streamline's website accessibility resources page found online at www.getstreamline.com/oregon-accessibility-resources. Streamline has put together a wealth of information on this topic. This page includes the Check My District tool, ADA checklist, slides from their recent webinars on accessibility, webinar recordings, and more!



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE



By: Hasina Wittenberg

GOVERNMENT RELATIONS
STRATEGIES INC.

VOTER TURNOUT

During the last three presidential elections, between 80% and 82% of registered voters in Oregon have returned their ballots. Oregon's record all time high voter turnout in a presidential election was set in 2004 when 86.4% of voters cast a ballot in the George Bush vs. John Kerry presidential election.

As of Monday morning prior to the election 46.6%, of voters statewide had returned ballots compared to 2020's Monday turnout rate of 73.1%. By Monday evening turnout had barely improved (55%). As of November 14th, statewide turnout reached 71%.

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

Kamala Harris won the State of Oregon's vote handily with 55%. Trump garnered 41% of the vote. Trump received 39% of the vote in 2016 vs. Clinton.

OREGON CONGRESSIONAL REPRESENTATIVES

Democrats Suzanne Bonamici 69%; Maxine Dexter 68%; and Val Hoyle 52% and Oregon's eastern Oregon Republican Congressman Cliff Bentz won with 64% of the vote.

Oregon's highly consequential 5th Congressional District race has attracted over \$25 million in spending from outside groups ahead of Tuesday's election. The candidates have also raised significant funds for their campaigns, totaling more than \$12 million combined. However, the most significant sums come from independent expenditures: as of Friday, outside groups had spent \$11.2 million to support Lori Chavez-DeRemer or oppose Janelle Bynum. Additionally, outside groups poured \$12.9 million into efforts to aid Bynum—about one-third to support her and two-thirds to counter Chavez-DeRemer. This spending far surpasses the \$12 million combined spent on Chavez-DeRemer and her Democratic opponent, Jamie McLeod-Skinner, in the 2022 election.

The race for Congressional District #5 was too close to officially call election night. Former House Rep. Janelle Bynum (D-Portland), the owner of several McDonald's franchises who has defeated U.S. Congresswoman Lori DeRemer in two previous non congressional elections, lead by 2.3% with 47.82 % of the vote (6,639 votes). Bynum won the seat with 48% of the vote to DeRemer's 45%, a difference of 10,454 votes.

In Congressional District #6's (30% D, 25% R and 38% NAV) rematch between U.S. Congresswoman Andrea Salinas (D-Lake Oswego) and businessman Mike Erickson the results were very better for the incumbent in 2022 (50.1% to 47.7%). Salinas won with 53% of the vote.

Salinas raised more than five times as much for her campaign as Erickson with total fundraising above \$5 million, compared to Erickson's \$1 million.

STATE TREASURER

State Treasurer Tobias Read's (Democrat-Beaverton) vacant statewide seat (he ran for Secretary of State) featured former OHSU family physician and co-chair of Ways and Means Elizabeth Steiner (D-Portland) vs Senator Brian Boquist (barred from running for reelection due to the republican walk out) (R-Dallas). Steiner won 49% of the vote after outspending Boquist by a whopping 65:1 ratio.

SECRETARY OF STATE

Democrat Tobias Read won with 54% of the vote against Senator Dennis Linthicum (R-Klamath Falls) who is also barred from running for reelection due to the republican walk out. Read, who raised \$1.8 million, outspent Linthicum by a 12:1 ratio.

ATTORNEY GENERAL

Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum chose not to run for reelection. Former Speaker of the Oregon House, Dan Rayfield (D-Corvallis), won 54% of the vote against former Marion County Prosecutor Will Lathrop having outspent him with \$2.5 million or about forty percent.

REFERRED BY THE LEGISLATURE

During the 2023 Legislative Session legislators referred two measures to the ballot:

Ballot Measure 115 — Amends the Oregon Constitution to give the House of Representatives the power to impeach statewide elected officials of the Executive Branch for the following reasons: malfeasance or corrupt conduct in office, willful neglect of statutory or constitutional duty, or other felony or high crime. The Senate has the power to try any impeachment received from the House.

YES – 64% NO – 36%

Ballot Measure 116 — Amends Oregon’s Constitution to establish an Independent Public Service Compensation Commission that would be responsible for establishing the salaries of state-wide elected officials, judges at the state and circuit level, county district attorneys, and members of the Legislative Assembly.

YES – 47% NO – 53%

Ballot Measure 117 — Establishes “ranked choice voting” as the voting method to determine major political party nomination and elections for the office of President and Vice President of the United States, United States Senator, Congressional Representatives, Governor, Secretary of State, State Treasurer, and Attorney General. The measure allows local governments including cities, counties, school districts and special districts the option to choose to use ranked choice voting. *Note: Supporters spent nearly \$8 million in favor of this measure.

YES – 42% NO – 58%

QUALIFIED TO BALLOT VIA INITIATIVE PETITION

Ballot Measure 118 — Establishes an additional 3% tax on corporations’ sales in Oregon above \$25 million and distributes the additional revenue equally among Oregonians (approximately \$1,600 annually) designed to function as universal basic income. *Note: Opponents spent nearly \$20 million to defeat this measure with proponents spending just under a million dollars.

YES – 22% NO – 78%

Ballot Measure 119 — Unionization of cannabis workers.

YES – 56% NO – 44%

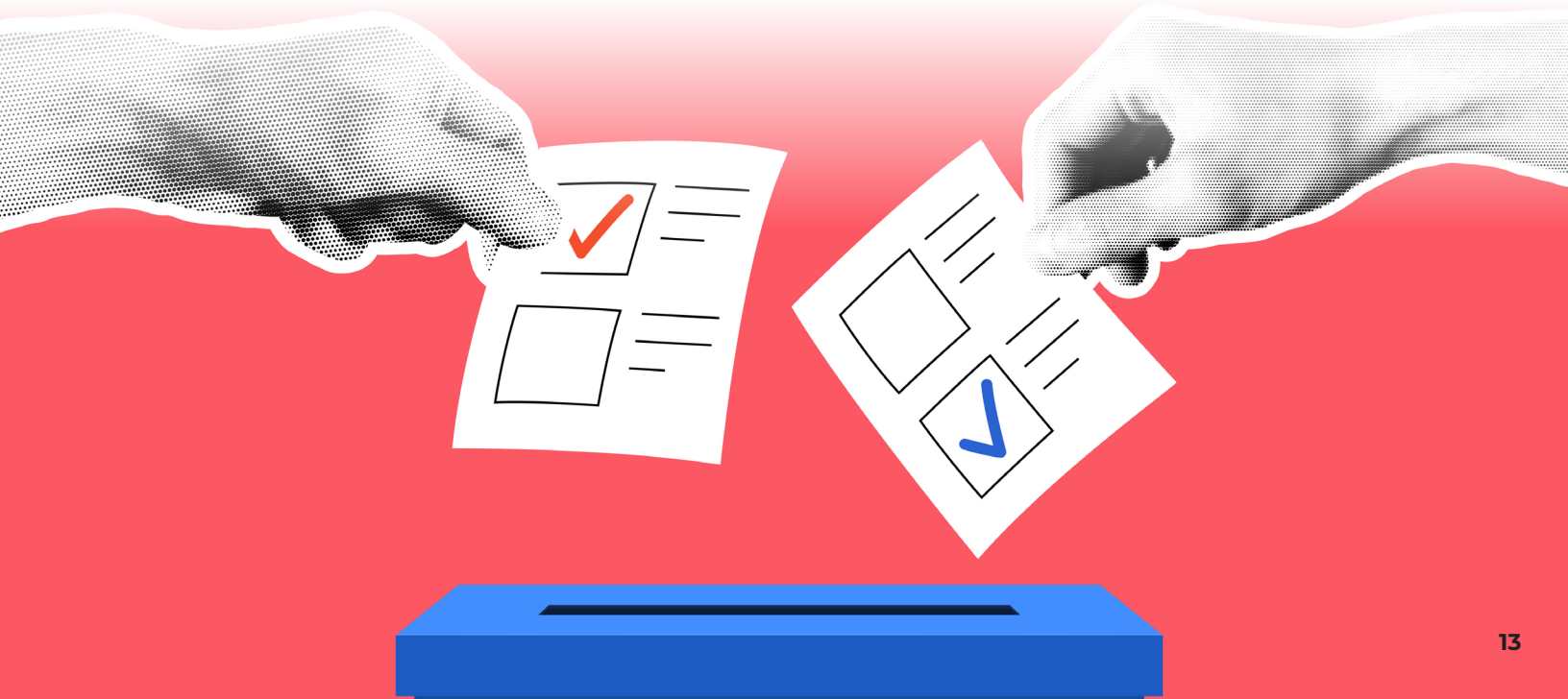
Oregon State Legislative Races - The Oregon Senate and House will have a 3/5 democratic supermajority when it convenes in January 2025. Revenue raising measures require a supermajority and are required to start in the House

OREGON HOUSE

- Current Composition: 35 Democrats and 25 Republicans.
- Supermajority Goal: Democrats were successful in flipping one republican seat to reach a supermajority - 2025 session: 36 D/24 R.
- Key Races: Three Republican seats defended and one lost:
 - ◇ Jeff Helfrich (Hood River) D+ 6.79% won with 51.84% vs 48.05%.
 - ◇ Kevin Mannix (Salem) D+ 1.55% won with 51.83% vs 48%.
 - ◇ Cyrus Javadi (Tillamook) D+ 6.12% won with 52.10% vs 47.72%.
 - ◇ Tracy Cramer lost to Lesly Munoz (Woodburn) D+ 3.38%. Munoz won with 50.30% vs 49.53%. Cramer lost by less than 1% to democratic union organizer Lesly Muñoz by 161 votes after resolving uncured ballots.

OREGON SENATE

- 2024 Composition: 17 Democrats, one short of a supermajority.
- 2025 Makeup: 18 Democrats – 12 Republicans 3/5ths Democratic supermajority due to pick up of the Bend seat.
- Key Races:
 - ◇ Bend (open seat formerly held by Republican Tim Knopp), which is has flipped to Democrat (the district is a D+9% registration edge). Democratic Bend City Councilor and attorney Anthony Broadman won with 59.25% of the vote over republican small business owner Michael Summers.
 - ◇ Lincoln City (Republican Dick Anderson), retained his seat despite almost a D+3% registration advantage and won with 53.77% of the vote.
 - ◇ Gresham (Democrat Chris Gorsek), defended his seat against local insurance agent Raymond Love by twelve (12.07) points in a district with a D+11% registration edge.



OREGON CYBERSECURITY CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

Established by Oregon House Bill 2049 (2023), the OCCoE represents a collaborative effort between Portland State University, Oregon State University and University of Oregon with a joint mission: to bridge the gap between cutting-edge research and real-world applications in cybersecurity across the state of Oregon. Through collaborative educational and workforce development programs, research initiatives, industry outreach programs, and educational workshops, we aim to empower individuals, local governments, regional governments, special districts, tribal governments, educational service districts, public school districts, and other public entities with the knowledge and tools to combat cyber threats and improve their cyber resilience.

OUR MISSION:

- Enhance Cybersecurity: Support the State CISO in tackling the increasing digital threats.
- Innovate: Leverage cutting-edge research and solutions.
- Collaborate: Unite world-renowned experts, industry leaders, and passionate students.

OUR CURRENT PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES:

CYBERSECURITY SERVICES AT ORTSOC

The Oregon Research & Teaching Security Operations Center (ORTSOC) provides low to no-cost managed cybersecurity services to government and educational institutions across the state. ORTSOC also provides a rich environment for research across a plethora of topics in security operations and enterprise security in general.

To learn more and see how your organization can benefit from these services, visit the ORTSOC website at <https://ortsoc.oregonstate.edu/>.

NO-COST CERTIFICATE IN BUILDING CYBER RESILIENCE

Understanding cybersecurity risk is an essential first step in protecting data and ensuring organizational resiliency in the event of a cyber-attack or natural disaster. The Certificate in Building Cyber Resilience is a no-cost, CAE certified, highly collaborative program. Using a cohort-based case study approach, participants will learn about common cyber risks; how to identify, assess, and communicate cyber risk; and how to conduct the first step in mitigating threats through a risk assessment. A technical background isn't required, and technical concepts will be explained through the course of 12 weekly sessions. Learn more at www.pdx.edu/hatfield-school/professional-certificate-building-cyber-resilience.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY

Join us in shaping the future of Oregon's cybersecurity workforce development by participating in our comprehensive Needs Assessment Survey.

- Identify Cybersecurity Gaps: Help us understand the skills and resources that are needed in your organization.
- Influence Cybersecurity Solutions: Your insights will guide the creation of targeted training programs and resources.
- Empower Your Workforce: Contribute to building a stronger, more skilled workforce that meets today's cybersecurity challenges.

Add your voice online at <http://bit.ly/3O1lf8j>.

NW CYBER CAMPS

NW Cyber Camps provide high school students with a comprehensive introduction to the rapidly growing field of cybersecurity. With hands-on learning experiences, industry guest speakers, and expert instructors, NW Cyber Camps is a valuable experience for participants with no prior cybersecurity experience.

OCCoE plans to expand these camps to increase the number of students, locations and audiences to include K-12 students, teachers and tribes. If you are interested in collaborating to achieve this goal, please reach out to nwcybercamp@pdx.edu.

CYBERSECURITY TABLETOP EXERCISE AND PANEL DISCUSSION

OCCoE will be at the 2025 SDAO Annual Conference! We will have a pre-conference cybersecurity tabletop exercise session on **Thursday, February 6th from 10am-4pm**. This is a free session! Be sure to register soon.

We will also be hosting a panel discussion session on **Friday, February 7th from 10:30am-12pm**. We hope to see you there.

Register for both online at <https://cvent.me/8ev0W0>.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

- Visit our website at occoe.org
- Sign up for our email list at <https://bit.ly/4gFD0BI>
- Reach out to us at occoe@pdx.edu





FEDERAL COURT **VACATES** **DOL OVERTIME** RULE: WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOUR DISTRICT

In a significant legal development, the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Texas has vacated the Department of Labor's (DOL) 2024 final overtime rule. This decision, issued on November 15, 2024, has important implications for employee classifications and salary thresholds.

BACKGROUND

The 2024 final rule aimed to increase the minimum salary threshold for employees to be classified as exempt from overtime under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). Initially effective from July 1, 2024, with further increases planned for January 1, 2025, the rule also included provisions for automatic updates every three years.

KEY CHANGES

The rule proposed raising the minimum salary threshold for executive, administrative, and professional (EAP) employees from \$684 per week to \$844 per week, with a future increase to \$1,128 per week. For highly compensated employees (HCE), the threshold was set to increase from \$107,432 per year to \$132,964 per year, and then to \$151,164 per year.

However, the court found that these increases improperly shifted the focus from job duties to salary levels, which is not consistent with the FLSA's intent. As a result, the 2024 rule has been invalidated, and the 2019 rule remains in effect.

IMPACT

This ruling means that the planned salary threshold increases will not take place. We will continue to follow the 2019 rule, which sets the minimum salary threshold for EAP employees at \$684 per week and for HCE at \$107,432 per year.

For those who have already adjusted salaries in anticipation of the 2024 rule, this may present challenges. It is recommended to review current employee classifications and compensation structures to ensure compliance with the 2019 rule.

NEXT STEPS

While this ruling provides some relief, it's important to stay informed about any further legal developments or potential appeals. We will continue to monitor the situation and provide updates as needed.

If you have any questions, please reach out to HR Answers at info@hranswers.com, SDAO at hr@sdao.com, or your legal counsel.

SAVE THE DATE!

SDAO

LEGISLATIVE RECEPTION

MARCH 12, 2025 | 4:30 - 6:30 PM

@ SALEM CONVENTION CENTER

MEET WITH LEGISLATORS & THEIR STAFF!

Congratulations

TO OUR RECENT ACADEMY
CERTIFICATE RECIPIENTS!



SHAHLA HOCKENSMITH
BOARD LEADERSHIP ACADEMY



COLBY RILEY
BOARD LEADERSHIP ACADEMY



ALMA BAXTER
BOARD LEADERSHIP ACADEMY



2025 TRAINING SCHEDULE

Mark your calendar for this year's regional trainings. Please note, dates and locations are subject to change.

RISK MANAGEMENT TRAINING

3/18 - Ontario

3/19 - Pendleton

7/29 - Bend

7/30 - The Dalles

9/18 - Eugene

10/21 - Medford

10/22 - Coos Bay

12/9 - Seaside

12/10 - Tigard

HR Training

5/6 - Pendleton

5/8 - Redmond

5/13 - Klamath Falls

5/14 - Roseburg

5/21 - Newport

5/22 - Salem

Board Member Training

8/5 - Pendleton

8/6 - Hood River

8/20 - Klamath Falls

8/26 - Redmond

9/16 - Eugene

9/23 - Astoria

9/24 - Salem

CONSULTANT PROCUREMENT SUPPORT

SDAO's Consultant Procurement Support includes a range of potential services that can be tailored to meet the individual needs of each district and project. These services can be scaled to meet the unique needs of the district from offering limited guidance and suggestions, to providing full-service (beginning to end) consultant procurement support.

Consultant Procurement Support available from SDAO's Consulting Services Program include:

1. Identification of applicable state procurement requirements given the nature of the service (e.g., engineering, professional services, materials, service contracts, or construction) and anticipated project budget
2. Coordination with funding agencies such as Business Oregon to identify and integrate special funding requirements (e.g., state, and federal mandatory language) into procurement documents
3. Preparation of a request for proposals (RFP) including coordination with district staff to draft a project scope of work and review of the draft RFP by the district board, legal counsel, and staff
4. Identification of criteria and weighting factors for evaluation and scoring of proposals to provide a documented basis for consultant selection
5. Contacting prospective consultants to increase awareness, generate interest, and stimulate competition in the project from potentially interested consultants
6. Administering the consultant procurement process including activities such as coordination with the district board to obtain approval of the process and RFP, advertising, tracking questions from consultants and district answers, issuing addenda to the RFP, and receiving proposals
7. Coordination of the district's consultant selection process including distribution of proposals to the evaluation committee, facilitation of a meeting of the evaluation committee, and tabulate scoring by committee members to identify a recommended consultant
8. Providing support, including coordination with district counsel, for negotiation of a professional services agreement between the district and selected consultant
9. Post-selection debriefings with consultants who request feedback from the district's evaluation committee
10. Maintenance of public records related to the solicitation and procurement process and transfer of public records to the district for retention

In this role, SDAO's consultants function as an extension of the district's staff to provide support that is otherwise unavailable from the district or to free-up the district's existing staff to work on other higher priority assignments.

Please email us for more information at sdaoconsultingservices@sdao.com. We look forward to hearing from you.

*Providing reasonable, stable rates, and
broad coverage to Oregon's public entities*

SDIS Board of Trustees

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David Lindelien, Lane Transit District
- Emeritus:** Ted Kunze, Canby Fire District No. 62

Next SDIS Board of Trustees Meeting

February 5 | Bend, OR | 2pm

STAY SAFE ON *winter* ROADS: ESSENTIAL TIPS AND PREPARATIONS

BY: NIKI FISHER, SDAO

Winter weather is here. On average, winter weather contributes to over 540,000 vehicle accidents in the United States. While the best way to stay safe in hazardous weather conditions is to stay indoors, that isn't always an option. By taking steps now, you can help ensure your safety on the road this winter.

No one wants their vehicle to break down in freezing weather. Before heading out, check these key items to ensure your vehicle is ready:

- Radiator fluid levels (make sure it is designed for low temperatures)
- Windshield wiper fluid (labeled anti-freeze or de-icer)
- Tire pressure (check regularly, especially in the cold)
- Battery strength (ensure it can withstand winter conditions)

In addition to preparing your vehicle, it is essential to equip your car with an emergency kit to ensure you are ready for unexpected situations. The emergency kit should include jumper cables, flashlights, water, snacks, gloves, and an extra blanket. During the winter months, you should always be dressed and prepared to deal with the weather. You never know when something can happen.

If you don't have a lot of experience driving in the snow or ice, here are tips to get you there safely:

- Plan your route so you can avoid dangerous intersections. Let others know your route and anticipated arrival time. Go online to Oregon Trip Check to look at road conditions before heading out and consider postponing if the roads are not clear.
- Slow down and leave about twice the usual following distance. It takes more time to stop when conditions are bad.
- When you stop at a light, ensure there is a larger gap between you and the car in front of you, so if you are rear-ended, it doesn't set off a chain reaction.
- Get comfortable with your anti-lock brakes. They provide the shortest braking distance and provide your ability to steer. Maintain firm pressure while they pulse.
- In the case of oversteering (car is turning more than you want), turn in the direction the rear of the car is sliding to get traction again.
- Avoid quick turns or motions with the throttle and brake.

By taking the time to prepare your vehicle and understanding how to handle winter driving conditions, you can help ensure a safer journey. Remember, the best way to avoid accidents is to stay alert and drive with caution in winter weather.

IS JOB DESCRIPTION ACCURACY ACTUALLY IMPORTANT?

BY: LAURIE GRENYA, HR ANSWERS

Job descriptions might seem like the unsung heroes of HR, often overlooked but crucial for a balanced, functioning team. They are essential for setting clear expectations and ensuring smooth operations within an organization.

WHY ACCURACY MATTERS

Accurate job descriptions are vital for several reasons:

- 1. Hiring the Right Candidates:** Vague descriptions can lead to hiring mismatches, where candidates misunderstand the role's requirements. Conversely, overly detailed descriptions might deter potential applicants who feel they need to meet every criterion.
- 2. Legal Protection:** Inaccurate job descriptions can expose a company to legal risks. For instance, if a role's requirements are not clearly defined, it becomes challenging to defend against discrimination claims or justify terminations.
- 3. Employee Engagement:** Clear job descriptions act as a psychological contract between the employer and employee. When employees understand their roles and responsibilities, they are more likely to feel confident, capable, and engaged.

BALANCING DETAIL AND CLARITY

Creating effective job descriptions involves striking a balance between being too vague and overly detailed. Here are some tips:

- **Include Essential Information:** Start with the job title, a brief summary, key responsibilities, necessary qualifications, and any preferred but not required skills.
- **Be Clear and Realistic:** Clearly outline what is non-negotiable and what is nice to have. Avoid describing every single task but provide a realistic picture of the day-to-day responsibilities.
- **Avoid Jargon:** Use straightforward language to ensure the description is understandable to a broad audience.

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

Accurate job descriptions serve as a protective measure for organizations. They provide a clear outline of expectations, which is crucial in defending against legal claims. For example, if a job description specifies "excellent customer service skills" but does not mention sales targets, terminating an employee for not meeting sales targets could lead to legal complications.

CONCLUSION

Accurate job descriptions are a win-win for both employers and employees. They help in hiring the right people, setting clear expectations, and protecting the company from legal risks. Regularly reviewing and updating job descriptions ensures they remain relevant and effective.

WINTERTIME TUNE UP!



**BY JENS JENSEN,
DIRECTOR OF PC CLAIMS**

Winter is here! Hopefully, you have cleaned and unplugged the gutters from the fall and cleared out the defensive space around the building. Defensive spaces are good for wildfire defense, but they also help prevent trees from hitting the building during ice or windstorms.

With the cold and wet weather outside, it's time to move inside and check the building for any places where the cold can get in. Consider using expandable foam insulation for cracks where cold air billows in and heat escapes. Also, insulate any exposed pipes or use heat tape for pipes in cold areas.

This is a good time to change the batteries in the thermostat if applicable. Most furnaces and heat sources won't turn on without a signal from the thermostat. While checking those batteries, make sure the settings are correct so the heat will come on and warm the colder areas during low temperatures.

Even with all these precautions, accidents and damage can still happen. It's a good idea to know where the water turnoffs are for the building, just in case.

Winters are generally tough in Oregon, but hopefully, following these tips will help things run smoothly until the warmer temperatures of spring return.



SUCCESSION PLANNING FOR SPECIAL DISTRICTS

BY: SHANTA CARTER, CONSULTING
SERVICES MANAGER

Succession planning is a vital process for any organization, focusing on identifying and developing future leaders who can take over key roles as they become vacant. This process ensures the continuity of leadership, minimizes disruption, and secures long-term organizational success. Whether due to retirement, resignation, or unforeseen circumstances, effective succession planning prepares businesses to handle transitions smoothly while retaining talent and expertise.

WHAT CAN SUCCESSION PLANNING DO FOR YOUR DISTRICT?

- **Ensure business continuity** - one of the most significant reasons for succession planning is the uninterrupted operation of the organization. When key leaders or executives leave, their absence can create a leadership vacuum that affects decision-making and disrupts operations. Succession planning ensures that there are prepared and capable individuals ready to step into those roles, maintaining stability and continuity in the organization's activities.
- **Mitigate risk and uncertainty** - succession planning helps mitigate the risks associated with sudden departures, whether voluntary or due to unforeseen events such as illness or accidents. Without a plan in place, organizations may struggle to fill crucial positions in a timely manner, leading to decreased morale, loss of productivity, and potential business setbacks. By identifying potential successors in advance, companies reduce the impact of such uncertainties.
- **Retain knowledge and expertise** - key personnel, especially in leadership positions, often carry years of valuable knowledge and experience that are critical to the company's operations. Without proper succession planning, this knowledge may be lost when they leave. By proactively grooming internal talent to take over leadership roles, companies can ensure that critical skills and institutional knowledge are transferred, preserving the organization's intellectual capital.

- **Develop future leaders** - succession planning goes beyond just filling leadership positions; it is also an essential tool for developing the next generation of leaders. By identifying potential leaders early and providing them with mentorship, training, and growth opportunities, businesses can create a pipeline of talent ready to step up when needed. This investment in employee development builds morale and shows employees that the organization is committed to their career growth, leading to higher retention rates.
- **Improve employee engagement and retention** - employees are more likely to stay with a company if they believe there is room for growth and opportunities for advancement. A clear succession plan demonstrates to employees that they have the chance to rise within the organization. As a result, this can increase job satisfaction and engagement, which can ultimately improve employee retention. When employees see that leadership is proactive about their career development, they are more likely to stay and contribute positively.
- **Enhance organizational resilience** - a strong succession plan makes an organization more adaptable and resilient to change. Whether the company faces a sudden leadership transition or long-term growth challenges, having a prepared pool of potential leaders ensures that the organization can adjust quickly to new circumstances. It also helps in strategic planning and decision-making, knowing that leadership transitions will be smoother.
- **Strengthen organizational culture** - succession planning also plays a significant role in maintaining a company's culture. Leaders often shape the organization's values, mission, and work environment. By ensuring that individuals who align with the company's values and culture are ready to step into leadership roles, succession planning helps preserve the essence of the organization. It reinforces the vision and purpose of the company, maintaining consistency as leadership evolves.
- **Attract top talent** - organizations that are known for having solid succession plans are more likely to attract top-tier talent. High-potential candidates are drawn to companies that offer long-term career growth and opportunities to advance into leadership positions. By demonstrating a commitment to developing internal talent, organizations create an attractive work environment that appeals to ambitious and skilled professionals.
- **Support strategic growth** - succession planning is not just about replacing leaders but also about aligning future leaders with the company's strategic goals. As organizations grow, they may need different leadership styles or skills to address new challenges. A well-crafted succession plan ensures that the leaders stepping into critical roles are equipped to handle these evolving needs and drive the company's growth forward.
- **Promote a positive reputation** - companies with a well-structured succession plan are seen as stable and responsible. This positively impacts their reputation, not just with employees but with investors, customers, and other stakeholders. It demonstrates that the organization is forward-thinking, values continuity, and is committed to its long-term success.

Succession planning is more than just filling vacancies; it is a proactive strategy that fosters stability, growth, and resilience. By identifying and nurturing future leaders, you can ensure a seamless leadership transition, retain key talent, and promote a positive work environment. A strong succession plan is an investment in the organization's future, ensuring that it remains competitive and prepared for any challenges that may arise.

Let us know how we can assist you on your succession planning journey. Please visit www.sdao.com/consulting-services-program to learn more about the services we provide or email us at sdaoconsultingservices@sdao.com.

LIABILITY AND PROPERTY *Coverage Update*

We would like to extend our sincere gratitude for your continued support and participation in the SDIS Trust. Thanks to your efforts and those of your agent, we have once again successfully completed the renewal of your property and casualty coverage.

Last year, we observed a notable increase in claims costs across general liability (GL), auto liability (AL), auto physical damage (APD), and property coverages. Additionally, we faced substantial increases in reinsurance premiums, a trend we anticipated would continue due to our claims activity and industry-wide loss patterns.

Given these circumstances, we advised members to expect a 15-20% average contribution increase; however, we successfully limited it to 15.5%.

Reinsurance costs are vital as they protect against high-dollar claims. When reinsurance carriers encounter large claims globally, the impact is felt here in Oregon. Consequently, natural disasters in other regions can have local repercussions for us.

Over the past five years, our combined expenses for claims and reinsurance have nearly doubled, outpacing your organization's contribution increases. Despite the average 15.5% increase, our rates remain lower than many in the private market. Our long-term goal is to provide first-class service and greater rate stability compared to the private insurance market. This increase ensures the continued health of the Trust's assets relative to costs. Once claims and reinsurance costs stabilize, so will contribution changes.

We encourage you to meet with your agents to review your schedules and ensure all necessary photos are uploaded to the insurance portal. Accurate contributions are essential for maintaining the Trust's stability.

For assistance with risk mitigation techniques, please contact our Risk Management team at **riskmanagement@sdao.com**. Even small improvements can significantly impact the Trust's overall claims experience.

Feel free to reach out with any questions. We are here to support you.

Know your behavioral health options



If you or your loved one is facing a behavioral health challenge—from anxiety and depression to eating disorders or substance use—we want to make it easy to get care. You can find in-network providers at [regence.com](https://www.regence.com). (Some services aren't available on all plans.)

Help is available. No referral is needed.

Thoughts of suicide? Call 988—National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline—available 24/7.

In-person care

Go to [regence.com](https://www.regence.com) to find a doctor and look for these in-network options:

- Private practitioners with a variety of expertise, such as psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, licensed counselors and more
- Inpatient care
- Outpatient programs

Virtual care

- **AbleTo Therapy+** for an 8-week series of one-on-one therapy with digital support between sessions for ages 18 and up: [AbleTo.com](https://www.ableto.com) or 1-866-287-1802
- **Charlie Health** for an Intensive Outpatient Program treating ages 11 to 34 with behavioral health needs: [charliehealth.com](https://www.charliehealth.com)
- **Equip** offers holistic support for eating disorders through virtual family-based treatment (FBT). A five-person care team includes a therapist, family member, peer mentor, medical provider and dietitian. For members of all ages, as well as their families: [equip.health](https://www.equip.health)
- **NOCD** provides online therapy for people with OCD and related disorders through live video sessions with a licensed, specialized therapist. For ages 5 years and up: [nocd.com](https://www.nocd.com)
- **Talkspace** offers convenient access to therapy for individuals and teens ages 13 and up, as well as psychiatry and medication management for those 18 and older. Licensed providers can address a range of mental health needs, from everyday stress to diagnosed conditions: [talkspace.com](https://www.talkspace.com)

Substance use disorder

- **Boulder Care** for virtual outpatient treatment: [boulder.care](https://www.boulder.care) or 1-866-901-4860
- **Hazelden Betty Ford** for inpatient and outpatient services. Virtual care is also available: [hazeldenbettyford.org](https://www.hazeldenbettyford.org) or 1-877-859-2124

Provider matching

- **Headway** offers thousands of in-network therapists across diverse races, genders, ethnicities and specialties. Members can schedule care within 48 hours via one-click, online booking or get care through a referral: [headway.co](https://www.headway.co)

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

Ask your HR team if your plan includes EAP. It quickly puts professional support in your hands without additional cost to you. Get a range of services to support your mental health, emotional well-being and life-balance needs.

Customer Service is here for you



Need more help finding the right care? Our compassionate team is ready to help. Just give us a call at the number on the back of your member ID card.



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Resource information is current as of November 2024.

Boulder Care is a separate company that provides substance abuse and addiction treatment services. AbleTo and Talkspace are separate companies that provide mental health telehealth services.

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MEMBER CALENDAR

<i>January 1</i>	New Year Holiday SDAO Closed
<i>January 2</i>	SDAO First Thursday Webinar
<i>January 20</i>	Martin Luther King, Jr. Day SDAO Closed
<i>February 5</i>	SDAO Board Meeting BEND
<i>February 5</i>	SDIS Board of Trustees Meeting BEND
<i>February 6</i>	SDAO First Thursday Webinar
<i>February 6</i>	SDAO Annual Conference: Pre-Conference BEND
<i>February 7</i>	HR Alliance Meeting BEND
<i>February 7</i>	Finance Alliance Meeting BEND
<i>February 7-9</i>	SDAO Annual Conference BEND
<i>February 17</i>	Presidents' Day SDAO Closed
<i>March 6</i>	SDAO First Thursday Webinar
<i>March 12</i>	SDAO Legislative Reception SALEM
<i>March 18</i>	Risk Management Regional Training ONTARIO
<i>March 19</i>	Risk Management Regional Training PENDLETON
<i>March 26</i>	SDIS/PACE Low Pressure Boiler Training REEDSPORT