



News & Risk Management Review

FALL 2026

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Next Board of Directors Meeting

November 5th | 9am | Joint Meeting With SDIS Board of Trustees | SDAO Office - Salem, OR

November 5th | 1pm | SDAO Office - Salem, OR

Executive Director

Frank Stratton

Services

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

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BY FRANK STRATTON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Thank you to everyone who participated in this year's golf tournament at Chehalem Glenn Golf Course. It was a wonderful opportunity to connect with members, sponsors, and supporters while enjoying a great day together.

While the tournament is always a fun event, its impact extends far beyond the course. The tournament serves as the primary source of funding for the SDAO Scholarship and Grant Fund. Since 2015, every dollar raised through registrations and sponsorships has gone directly toward helping members access valuable training and professional development opportunities.

Thanks to the continued support of our players and sponsors, the Scholarship and Grant Fund awarded more than \$6,000 in scholarships this year. These funds help members attend SDAO educational programs as well as qualifying training opportunities offered by other organizations.

We encourage districts to take advantage of this resource whenever financial assistance is needed for training. Applications are reviewed each month, and the process is simple and accessible. To learn more or apply, visit [**SDAO Scholarship and Grant Fund**](#).

On behalf of SDAO, thank you again to everyone who helped make this year's tournament such a success. Your participation directly supports the growth and development of special district professionals across Oregon. We appreciate your support and look forward to seeing you on the course again next year.

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— 2026 SDAO MEMBER SCHOLARSHIP —

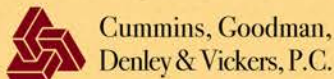
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2027 SDAO
ANNUAL CONFERENCE
SUNKIVER, OREGON

Save the Date: 2027 SDAO ANNUAL CONFERENCE

FEBRUARY 4-7 | SUNRIVER

Mark your calendar for the 2027 SDAO Annual Conference! We will have over 20 training and educational sessions, networking opportunities, our ever-popular exhibitor trade show, awards banquet, and more! The annual conference is also our member districts' opportunity to send a representative to vote at the caucus meeting and Annual Business Meeting.

DATES

February 4: Pre-Conference Sessions and Alliance Meetings

February 5-7: Annual Conference

LOCATION

Sunriver Resort

17600 Center Dr | Sunriver, Oregon

REGISTRATION RATES

Estimated registration rates include:

Pre-Conference: \$150 Full Day, \$75 Half-Day

One Day Only (Friday or Saturday): \$195

Full Conference (Thursday Evening-Sunday Morning): \$295

HOTEL INFORMATION

Lodge Village Guestroom: \$125/night + tax and resort fee

Lodge Village Suite: \$199/night + tax and resort fee

Tennis Village Condo: \$189/night + tax and resort fee

Room block rates expire on January 13, 2027.

Rooms, suites, and condominiums can be reserved by utilizing our personalized booking link that will be available this fall at www.sdao.com/annual-conference.

IMPORTANT! Please take note of Sunriver Resort's cancellation policy. Rooms must be cancelled at least 14 days from the reservation date, or you will be responsible for the entire amount of the stay.

If you choose to book a condominium or house, the reservation must be cancelled at least 60 days from the reservation date, or you will be responsible for the entire amount of the stay.

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Registration information and an agenda will be sent to all members, agents, and affiliates by December 2nd.

QUESTIONS

Please contact SDAO Member Services at memberservices@sdao.com or 800-285-5461.

CONNECTING DISTRICTS WITH PROFESSIONAL SERVICES



As a special district leader, you are often asked to do more with limited resources. Whether you're seeking help with strategic planning, conducting a financial audit, managing an election, updating technology systems, or improving public outreach, finding reliable professional services can take time and effort.

That's where the SDAO Vendor Solutions Network can help.

The Vendor Solutions Network was created to connect SDAO members with trusted consultants and service providers who understand the unique needs of Oregon's special districts. Participating vendors offer a wide range of professional services and provide exclusive discounts, special pricing, or added-value benefits available only to SDAO members.

ACCESS TRUSTED EXPERTISE

The network includes organizations with experience serving public agencies and helping districts address governance, financial, operational, and technology-related challenges. Services available through the network include:

STRATEGIC PLANNING

- Financial audits and accounting services
- Public relations and communications
- Information technology and cybersecurity
- Human resources and organizational consulting
- And more

By using the Vendor Solutions Network, districts can connect with experienced professionals while taking advantage of member-only savings.

HOW IT WORKS

Getting started is simple:

1. Review the list of participating vendors and the services they provide.
2. Explore the discounts and benefits available to SDAO members.
3. Contact the vendor directly to learn more about how their services can support your district's goals.

IMPORTANT NOTE

While SDAO requires participating vendors to provide references for their experience and professional qualifications, participation in the Vendor Solutions Network does not constitute an endorsement from SDAO. Districts should evaluate each vendor and determine which services best meet their individual needs.

Ready to explore available discounts and services? Visit the **SDAO Vendor Solutions Network** and discover resources designed to help your district operate more effectively while maximizing the value of your SDAO membership.

UPCOMING TRAININGS & EVENTS

SDAO TRAININGS AND EVENTS

REGIONAL TRAINING SUMMIT | OCTOBER 13-14 | NEWPORT

This summit offers all three of our traditional regional training formats in one comprehensive event. Each summit will feature the same two-day program, offered at four locations across the state, giving you the flexibility to attend where most convenient for you.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING

The summit will bring education focused on a variety of topics. These include:

Day One - Board member topics, providing insights and tools to strengthen governance and leadership

Day Two - Human resources, legal, and risk management topics, giving participants practical guidance to support effective operations and compliance

[LEARN MORE!](#)

OTHER TRAININGS AND EVENTS

Oregon PRIMA Annual Fall Conference | September 30-October 2 | Newport

Join Oregon PRIMA at the Best Western Agate Beach in Newport, Oregon, from September 30th to October 2nd for three days of education, networking, and fun. Whether you are new to risk management or an experienced practitioner, the conference will offer practical, engaging sessions to help you navigate today's evolving risks. Topics include creating a culture of civility, volunteer risk management, abuse prevention, critical building systems, and other emerging public-sector risk issues. **[Learn more and register!](#)**

NSDA WEBINAR: ESSENTIAL HR TOOLS FOR SMALLER DISTRICTS | NOVEMBER 12

Smaller districts face unique workforce challenges. Learn practical HR tools and strategies to support recruitment, retention, compliance, and employee management – even with limited staff and resources.

CYBERSECURITY SUMMIT & TABLETOP EXERCISE | NOVEMBER 12 | PENDLETON

Are you ready to prepare your team for today's evolving cyber threats? Join the State of Oregon Enterprise Information Services Cybersecurity Services (EIS CSS) team and LBL Cybersecurity for an engaging Cybersecurity Summit and Tabletop Exercise, designed to enhance your organization's ability to respond to potential cyber incidents effectively and collaboratively.

These interactive sessions are tailored for teams across your organization, including IT, leadership, business operations, communications, and risk management. Together, participants navigate realistic scenarios to strengthen preparedness and response during a cyber incident.



**ANNUAL
REPORTING AND
AUDIT SEASON
HAS ARRIVED**

BY: OREGON SECRETARY
OF STATE

Most local governments have a fiscal year that ends on June 30, and since that has passed, we are now officially in the annual reporting and audit season! Oregon's local governments are required to file annual financial reports with the Oregon Secretary of State (ORS 297.405 - 297.990). This helps ensure that Oregonians have transparency into how their local governments are managing public resources. Our office has already begun to receive these reports and we're available to answer questions. Here is some information you need to know.

NEW WEBSITE

Our website has a new look! We are very excited about our new site, which is designed to improve useability so Oregonians can better access the trove of information we have across Secretary of State divisions. You can find relevant information about Municipal Audit Law, answers to common questions, and important resources. Please visit the new site and make sure to use current forms and instructions for all filings.

Along with the new website, municipal filing fees can now be paid online using an electronic check option. Making your payment online this year can be a convenient option that would also save you from writing a check and paying postage.

DUE DATES

September 30, 2026: Reports in Lieu of Audit are due within 90 days of a local government's fiscal year-end. Governments that (1) don't spend more than \$250,000 a year, (2) have adequate fidelity bond coverage, and (3) file on time may be eligible to file a Report in Lieu of Audit. A complete filing can be done online and includes the following:

- Report in Lieu of Audit, and
- Filing fee.

December 31, 2026: Audit reports and Agreed-Upon Procedures (AUP) reports are due within 180 days of a local government's fiscal year-end. A complete filing includes all of the following items submitted online:

- Audit report or AUP report with financial statements,
- Summary of Revenues and Expenditures (SRE),
- Filing fee,
- If applicable, a copy of audit deficiencies communicated, and
- If applicable, adopted Plan of Action addressing the audit deficiencies.

EXTENSION REQUESTS

While it is the law for municipalities to file annual financial reports with the Secretary of State, in recent years more municipalities are filing late or not at all. This is harming Oregonians ability to have transparency into the finances of local governments. We understand that a variety of factors may contribute to making timely filing a challenge. Audit filers may request an extension of time to file their financial report "for good cause shown" (ORS 297.465). Extension requests must be filed on or before the municipality's filing due date, typically December 31.

There is not an extension provision for municipalities filing Agreed-Upon Procedures or Reports in Lieu of Audit; these must be filed on time for the audit exemption to apply (ORS 297.435)

QUESTIONS

If you have questions, please consult our website and FAQs or contact us directly.

Find Municipal Reports and forms:

<https://sos.oregon.gov/audits/muniaudits/Pages/default.aspx>

Legislative Update

By: Hasina Wittenberg, Government Affairs Director

Transportation funding, tax reform, wildfire costs, and ballot measure activity are all shaping conversations that will likely carry into the 2027 legislative session. Below is a brief update on these key developments, along with important dates to keep on your radar.

TRANSPORTATION

The Oregon Department of Transportation faces an approximately \$200 million budget gap for the 2027-2029 biennium. Without new revenue or redirected funds, the agency has identified the need to eliminate 548 positions (roughly 11% of its workforce), including significant cuts to maintenance crews, DMV operations, and project delivery.

At the same time, the I-5 Rose Quarter Improvement Project continues to face financial challenges. Internal estimates for the project have climbed past \$3 billion, with some figures reaching \$3.3-3.6 billion. This leaves a funding gap that could exceed \$3 billion. To date, only about \$480 million has been secured, and the projected completion date has slipped to 2036.

Leadership at ODOT also remains in transition. The national search for a permanent director continues after a finalist fell through earlier this year. Chris Warner remains interim director following his appointment in June.

TAX REFORM

Tax reform is expected to be a significant topic of discussion heading into the 2027 legislative session. Gov. Tina Kotek has indicated that tax reform will likely be on the table, provided any changes remain "revenue neutral."

The Governor has signaled openness to eliminating less effective tax breaks in order to fund more productive ones. In addition to discussions around tax expenditures, changes to the state's Corporate Activities Tax appear likely to be part of the broader conversation.

WILDFIRE

Wildfire costs continue to place substantial pressure on the state's budget. Oregon's 2026 wildfire season has already cost the state more than \$150 million, with Oregon Department of Forestry officials estimating total emergency fire costs at approximately \$166 million as of early August.



Of that amount, roughly \$111 million is expected to come from the state General Fund, while about \$55 million is anticipated in eventual federal reimbursements. Given the growing frequency and cost of wildfire response efforts, it is likely that wildfire funding and long-term preparedness strategies will remain a major policy discussion moving forward.

BALLOT MEASURES

For the first time in 124 years, Oregon will have no statewide citizen initiatives on the November 2026 general election ballot.

Initiative Petition 28, the measure that would have effectively banned hunting, fishing, and many agricultural practices by expanding animal cruelty laws, failed signature verification after two rounds of sampling by the Secretary of State's office. Petitioners submitted roughly 143,000 signatures but fell short of the 117,173 valid signatures required.

Interestingly, while that effort did not qualify, a separate constitutional initiative aimed at protecting hunting and fishing rights continues to advance.

Another developing issue is a new effort to allow grocery store liquor sales. The proposal has cleared an early procedural step and is targeting the 2028 ballot.

At the local level, Portland's Community Budgeting for All initiative and Eugene's Clean Energy Fund have both qualified for the November ballot. These measures reflect a continued trend of local governments pursuing policy changes through the ballot process when statewide efforts stall.

KEY LEGISLATIVE DATES

As we prepare for the 2027 legislative session, please keep the following dates in mind:

- **November 3, 2026:** General Election
- **December 1, 2026:** Deadline for Legislative Counsel (LC) to return drafted bills
- **December 1-3, 2026:** Legislative Days
- **December 11, 2026:** Deadline to file bills for the 2027 legislative session

SDAO will continue tracking these developments and advocating on issues that matter to special districts.



2026 GOVERNMENT ETHICS LAW GUIDE

By: Oregon Government Ethics Commission

The 2026 updated Government Ethics Law Guide (the Guide) looks and reads differently than the previous versions. We hope that you find these changes helpful in your understanding of the Oregon Government Ethics Law in Chapter 244 (Ethics Law). This version of the Guide:

1. Provides more plain language explanations of the law.
2. Uses more examples of how the law applies to real life scenarios.
3. Meets accessibility standards set for in WCAG A & AA 2.1.

Ethics Law has seen legislative and rule changes since the last version of the Guide. OGE's jurisdiction was expanded, there were legislative changes to our case process, and many of our [Ethics Law resources and handouts](#) were updated. Some of the changes to specific areas of the law include:

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

- Added household members (HB 2930, 2025)
- Voting on adopting budgets (SB 983, 2025)
- Updated [Conflicts of Interest Quick Reference](#)

PROHIBITED USE OF OFFICE

- Post-secondary teaching exception (HB 2932, 2025)
- Food & beverages from public bodies exception (HB 4161, 2026)
- Merchandise from public bodies (HB 4161, 2026)
- And additional OGE's guidance on private employment
- Updated [Am I Associated with a Business? Quick Reference](#) (also applies to Conflicts of Interest)

GIFTS

- Security and alarm systems exception (HB 4017, 2026)
- Additional guidance on anonymous gifts
- Updated [Is it a Gift? Flowchart](#)

We encourage you to review the [Government Ethics Law Guide](#) to get further guidance on these updates and others. The guide holds the authority of the Commission's interpretation, the same way a Commission Advisory Opinion would. This authority makes this guide a powerful resource.



Special Districts Consulting Services Program

By Shanta Carter, Consulting Services Manager

Every special district faces challenges. Whether it's navigating leadership transitions, developing strategic priorities, strengthening governance practices, or addressing organizational concerns, SDAO's Consulting Services team is here to help.

Since 2007, the Consulting Services Program has served as a trusted resource for Oregon's special districts by providing practical, experienced guidance tailored to each district's unique needs. Our goal is simple: help districts strengthen governance, improve operations, reduce risk, and plan confidently for the future.

Many members are surprised to learn the breadth of services available through the program.

Consulting Services can assist with:

- Organizational Assessments
- Strategic Planning
- Board Roles and Responsibilities Training
- Public Meetings Law Training
- Board Practices Assessments
- Management and Executive Recruitments
- Executive Performance Evaluations
- Succession Planning
- Employee Handbook Development
- Policy and Procedure Reviews
- Facilitation and Special Projects
- General Governance and Operational Guidance

One service that continues to see increased interest is Organizational Assessments. These assessments provide districts with an independent review of operations, governance practices, roles and responsibilities, communication processes, and organizational effectiveness. District leaders often tell us that the assessment process not only identifies opportunities for improvement but also confirms strengths and highlights what's working well.

One of the most impactful services we provide is employee handbook development and review. While handbooks are often viewed as a routine administrative document, they are actually one of the most important tools for establishing clear expectations, supporting supervisors, promoting consistency, and reducing organizational risk. Employee handbooks help districts communicate workplace policies, clarify benefits and leave practices, and provide guidance on everything from workplace conduct to performance expectations.

Over time, employment laws change, workplace practices evolve, and policies become outdated. A handbook that has not been reviewed in several years may no longer reflect current regulations or district operations. Consulting Services can assist districts with developing new employee handbooks, updating existing policies, identifying gaps, and ensuring consistency between board-adopted policies and day-to-day practices. These reviews help districts create a stronger foundation for both employees and leadership while supporting compliance and reducing confusion when workplace issues arise.

Districts often invest significant time and resources into strategic planning, infrastructure, and service delivery, but a current employee handbook is an equally important investment in organizational health. A well-designed handbook helps create consistency, improve communication, and provide clarity for everyone within the organization.

Strategic Planning is another growing area of interest. As districts face changing service demands, financial pressures, and workforce challenges, developing a clear vision and actionable roadmap has never been more important. Our consultants facilitate planning sessions that help boards and staff align priorities, identify goals, and create practical implementation strategies.

MEET OUR NEWEST SENIOR CONSULTANT: CARRIE PAK



Please join us in welcoming Carrie Pak to the Consulting Services team. Carrie joined SDAO in July as a Senior Consultant and brings decades of leadership, engineering, utility management, and public sector experience to our members.

Carrie's background includes executive and management leadership roles with the City of Gresham, Clean Water Services, and Tualatin Valley Water District, along with experience in private consulting engineering. Throughout her career, she has led large organizations, managed complex infrastructure and utility programs, overseen budgets, developed rates and system development charges, and worked collaboratively with governing bodies, community stakeholders, and staff teams.

Her expertise in organizational management, strategic planning, public utility operations, regulatory compliance, and leadership development makes her an outstanding resource for our members. We are excited to have Carrie on the team and look forward to the knowledge and perspective she brings to districts across Oregon.

OUT AND ABOUT WITH CONSULTING SERVICES

Hopefully, many of you had the opportunity to attend one of SDAO's Regional Trainings this year. These events continue to provide valuable opportunities for district staff, board members, and community leaders to connect, learn, and share ideas while strengthening governance and district operations.

The Consulting Services team has also enjoyed spending time in the field. This year, we participated in district Safety and Wellness Fairs hosted by Springfield Utility Board and Willamalane Park and Recreation District. These events provided a great opportunity to connect directly with district employees and learn more about the important work happening in communities throughout Oregon. One of the best parts of our job is meeting the people who make special districts successful every day.

Looking ahead, we're excited to attend the Oregon Recreation and Park Association (ORPA) Conference this September. The Consulting Services team will be presenting Public Meetings Law training and looks forward to connecting with district leaders from across the state. Whether we're conducting an organizational assessment, facilitating a strategic planning session, providing board training, or staffing a conference booth, our goal remains the same: supporting Oregon's special districts through practical guidance, education, and partnership.

DON'T FORGET: YOUR FIRST EIGHT HOURS ARE FREE

Districts enrolled in the SDIS Property/Casualty Program receive up to eight hours of complimentary consulting services each year. Whether you have a quick governance question, need guidance on an upcoming challenge, or want to explore a larger project, we're here to help.

Sometimes all it takes is a conversation to identify resources, share best practices, or connect your district with the right solution.

We encourage members to reach out early and often. If you're facing a challenge, planning for the future, or simply wondering whether Consulting Services can help, the answer is probably yes.

CONTACT THE CONSULTING SERVICES TEAM:

Email: consultingservices@sdao.com or visit <https://www.sdao.com/consulting-services-program> to learn more about the services we provide.



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

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Services

- Background Checks
- Claims Administration
- Drug-Free Workplace
- Risk Management
- Pre-Loss Legal
- Public Safety EAP
- Safety and Security Grant Program
- SDIS Insurance Programs

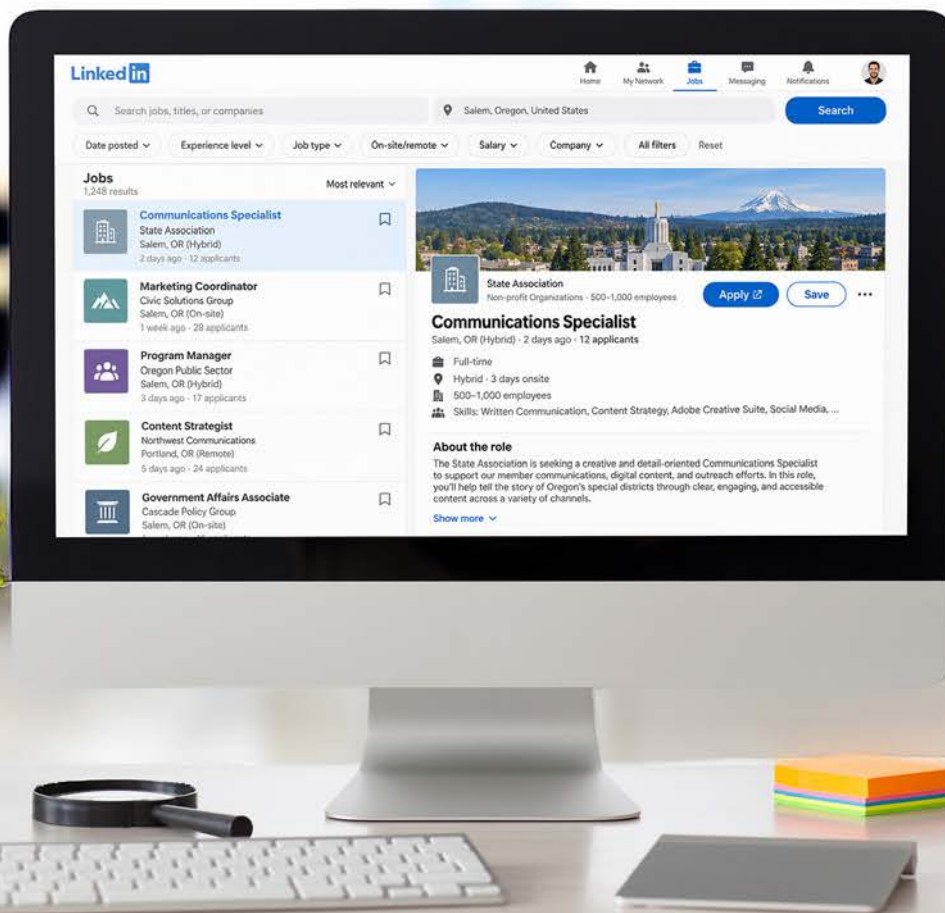
Next SDIS Board of Trustees Meeting

November 4th | 1pm | SDAO Office - Salem, OR

November 5th | 9am | Joint Meeting With SDIS Board of Trustees | SDAO Office - Salem, OR

Why Current Job Descriptions Matter:

More Than Just a Hiring Tool



WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOUR ORGANIZATION REVIEWED ITS JOB DESCRIPTIONS?

For many districts, job descriptions are created when a position is filled and then rarely revisited. But as responsibilities shift, technology changes, and departments evolve, those documents can quickly become outdated. What is often viewed as a hiring tool is actually one of the most important employment documents an organization maintains.

Current job descriptions do much more than support recruitment. They help establish clear expectations, support compliance with employment laws, guide performance management, and provide a foundation for workforce planning. When job descriptions no longer reflect the work being performed, they can create unnecessary legal and operational challenges.

A FOUNDATION FOR COMPLIANCE AND EMPLOYMENT DECISIONS

One of the most important functions of a job description is identifying the position's essential functions, or the primary duties the job exists to perform. Accurate descriptions help organizations establish legitimate job expectations and support employment decisions when questions arise about performance, discipline, accommodations, or leave.

Because job descriptions are frequently reviewed during disputes or legal proceedings, maintaining accurate records helps demonstrate that the organization has clearly and thoughtfully defined job expectations.

SUPPORTING PERFORMANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Employees perform best when they understand what is expected of them. Job descriptions provide a common reference point for supervisors and employees alike, making performance discussions more objective and consistent.

A CURRENT JOB DESCRIPTION CAN HELP:

- Establish clear performance expectations
- Support meaningful performance evaluations
- Document responsibilities for coaching and corrective action
- Reduce misunderstandings about assigned duties

When responsibilities have changed but the job description has not, organizations may find it difficult to hold employees accountable for duties that were never formally documented.

AN IMPORTANT TOOL FOR PAY EQUITY

Accurate job descriptions also support compensation decisions and compliance with pay equity laws, including Oregon's Equal Pay Act.



Employers often rely on job descriptions when evaluating positions for compensation purposes. Without current documentation, it can be more challenging to justify compensation decisions, conduct salary studies, or review position classifications.

RECRUITING THE RIGHT PEOPLE

While job descriptions serve many purposes, they remain an essential recruiting tool. They form the basis for job postings, minimum qualifications, interview questions, and candidate evaluations.

When job descriptions accurately reflect the position, applicants have a better understanding of the role and hiring managers are more likely to identify candidates whose skills and experience align with the organization's needs.

A VALUABLE WORKFORCE PLANNING RESOURCE

Regularly reviewing job descriptions can also provide insight into how work is being distributed across the organization. The review process often uncovers opportunities to improve efficiency, address gaps in service, and plan for future staffing needs.

Organizations may identify redundant or overlapping responsibilities, training and development needs, succession planning priorities, and opportunities for restructuring or realignment. As districts grow and technology continues to evolve, periodic reviews help ensure positions remain aligned with organizational goals.

KEEPING JOB DESCRIPTIONS CURRENT

Maintaining job descriptions should be a shared responsibility. Employees should communicate significant changes in their duties, supervisors should periodically review positions under their oversight, and Human Resources should help ensure consistency, legal compliance, and appropriate classification practices.

As a general best practice, organizations should review job descriptions annually, often in conjunction with the performance evaluation process. Additional reviews may be warranted when major changes occur, such as organizational restructuring, implementation of new technology, significant changes in duties, or accommodation and return-to-work situations.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Job descriptions are far more than hiring documents. They support compliance, performance management, compensation practices, leave administration, and workforce planning. By treating them as living documents and reviewing them regularly, organizations can reduce risk, improve accountability, and create a stronger foundation for effective people management.

If a job description no longer reflects the work being performed, it's probably time for an update. The effort required to keep these documents current is small compared to the problems they can help prevent.

For assistance with your job descriptions, please reach out to ***hr@sdao.com*** or ***HR Answers at info@hranswers.com***.

Cybersecurity Starts with the Basics:

A Practical Self-Assessment
for Public Agencies



By:
Jason Jantzi, Senior Risk Management Consultant – Public Safety
Special Districts Association of Oregon (SDAO)

Public agencies continue to face increasing cyber threats. While highly publicized ransomware attacks often make the headlines, many successful cyber incidents begin with much simpler vulnerabilities, such as weak passwords, unpatched software, phishing emails, or inadequate employee training. According to a cybersecurity checklist developed for local governments, one of the biggest challenges organizations face is knowing where to begin. The checklist helps organizations evaluate their cybersecurity posture, identify gaps, and prioritize practical improvements

For many, cybersecurity can feel overwhelming. Limited staffing, competing operational priorities, aging technology, and constrained budgets often push cybersecurity projects down the priority list. However, meaningful risk reduction does not always require large investments or complex technology. A strong cybersecurity program is often built on basic administrative controls, consistent maintenance practices, and informed employees.

As part of my work with fire districts and public safety organizations across Oregon, I have seen firsthand how common these threats have become. In the past month alone, I personally received six phishing emails that originated from compromised email accounts belonging to member districts. These attacks are especially concerning because they often come from legitimate, trusted email addresses. When a district account is compromised, cybercriminals can use existing relationships and professional credibility to make malicious messages appear legitimate.

The risks extend far beyond unwanted emails. In one recent case, a public safety organization's compromised email account disrupted communications related to a claims matter. The issue had to be identified and corrected before critical claims and injury management support could continue. Fortunately, the situation was resolved, but it demonstrates how a cyber incident can quickly affect routine operations, delay important communications, and consume valuable staff time during an already challenging event. Cybersecurity failures do not only impact information technology systems. They can directly affect daily business operations and organizational response capabilities.

The checklist recommends beginning with a review of several core protective measures:

- Employee cybersecurity policies and awareness training
- Multi factor authentication (MFA) for critical systems
- Email filtering and anti-spam protections
- Data loss prevention and monitoring
- Software patch management
- Intrusion prevention capabilities
- Change management procedures for technology systems
- Secure mobile device strategies
- Web content filtering to block risky websites

Public agencies should also consider how effectively they detect and respond to potential threats. Regular security scanning, vulnerability assessments, and monitoring of network activity can help identify problems before they become serious incidents. Finding and correcting weaknesses early is often far less costly and disruptive than recovering from a successful cyberattack.

Equally important is the ability to recover from an incident. Backups, documented recovery procedures, and incident response plans help ensure that critical public services can continue if systems are compromised. Agencies that depend on computer aided dispatch systems, records management systems, payroll platforms, financial software, or electronic communications should understand how those services would be restored after a cyber event.

In addition to technical safeguards and recovery planning, districts should take advantage of available cybersecurity partnerships and information sharing networks. Oregon local governments now have an opportunity to join the Multi State Information Sharing and Analysis Center (MS-ISAC) at no cost through state funded membership support. MS-ISAC provides cyber threat intelligence, alerts, best practices, and incident response resources that help organizations better understand emerging risks and strengthen their defenses. Participation also supports statewide cyber resilience by allowing threat information, response lessons learned, and recovery insights to be shared among local, state, and federal partners. The more organizations that participate, the stronger Oregon's collective ability to prevent, detect, respond to, and recover from cyber incidents. Additional information is available through the [**MS-ISAC website**](#).

A RISK MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVE

From a risk management standpoint, cybersecurity should be viewed in the same manner as vehicle safety, employee wellness, driver training, or facility maintenance. The objective is not to eliminate every possible threat. Rather, it is to identify vulnerabilities, prioritize improvements, and continuously strengthen defenses over time.

One practical approach is to have leadership teams, technology staff, and key stakeholders score their organization against fundamental cybersecurity controls and identify areas where improvements are needed. Agencies often discover that a few targeted actions, such as implementing MFA, improving employee training, strengthening email filtering, or enhancing software patching practices, can significantly reduce risk exposure.

QUESTIONS FOR LEADERSHIP

Consider discussing the following questions at a management or board meeting:

- Are employees receiving periodic cybersecurity awareness training?
- Is multi-factor authentication enabled for critical systems?
- Are software updates and security patches applied consistently?
- Do we have reliable backups of critical information?
- Can we quickly identify and respond to suspicious network activity?
- Is there a documented cyber incident response and recovery plan?
- Have we recently assessed our cybersecurity vulnerabilities?

Cybersecurity is not solely an information technology issue. It is an organizational resilience issue that can affect emergency response capabilities, financial operations, employee information, claims administration, and public trust. Agencies that make steady progress on basic cybersecurity practices are often best positioned to continue serving their communities when an incident occurs.

The phishing emails I recently received from compromised district accounts underscore a simple reality: cyber threats are already operating within our professional networks. The good

news is that many of the most effective defenses are also practical. Employee awareness, strong authentication, routine system maintenance, and a culture of healthy skepticism toward unexpected email requests can go a long way toward preventing a significant incident.

Cybersecurity is no longer a concern reserved for large cities or major corporations. Every public agency, regardless of size, manages information and systems that are valuable to cybercriminals. Taking time to assess vulnerabilities and strengthen foundational cybersecurity practices today may prevent a much more serious operational disruption tomorrow.

Districts interested in expanding their cybersecurity knowledge may find value in educational resources from cybersecurity providers, industry associations, government agencies, and other sources. As one example, VC3, SDAO's cybersecurity services provider, maintains free online resources that address cybersecurity issues relevant to local governments and public entities. These resources include a cybersecurity newsletter with information on emerging threats, risk reduction strategies, and industry trends, available through the [**VC3 News Center**](#). Additional articles, checklists, white papers, and planning materials are available through the [**VC3 Guides Library**](#). Organizations are encouraged to evaluate a variety of resources and select those that best meet their needs.

Cyber threats continue to evolve, but many successful attacks still exploit basic weaknesses in systems, processes, and human behavior. Investing in employee awareness, strong security practices, and ongoing education remains one of the most effective ways districts can reduce risk and protect the critical services their communities depend on. SDAO members should also consider enrolling in Oregon's state funded MS-ISAC membership program to gain access to cyber threat intelligence and resources that can strengthen both organizational and statewide resilience.

Source: Adapted from VC3's [**Cybersecurity Checklist for Municipalities: Where to Begin?**](#)



CYBERSECURITY CHECKLIST FOR MUNICIPALITIES

WHERE TO BEGIN?

You know cybersecurity is important. You hear about ransomware, viruses, and cyberattacks nearly every day. And you sense that your current cybersecurity defenses may not defend you in case the worst happens. Yet, you keep putting off improving your cybersecurity. Why? Often, it's difficult to know where you should begin.

As a way to start building a plan, use this cybersecurity checklist to rate your municipality. Rank each item on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 as the best. If you don't know how your organization ranks for a particular item, just identify it as "zero." Then, use this list to identify and work on correcting the lowest-rated and "zero" items.

PROTECT

Proactively identify weaknesses in your IT infrastructure and alert your city to security-related issues.



Employee policies and training

Periodic training helps teach employees how to detect and avoid common cyber threats.



Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA)

MFA may require that you input a code sent to your phone as an extra layer of protection.



Antispam / email filtering

Basic antispam and email filtering tools prevent many potential phishing email messages from reaching employees' inboxes.



Malware protection

Special tools can detect and filter out malware.



Data loss prevention

Monitor for unauthorized or suspicious access to data.



Software patching

Do you regularly apply patches to your software?



Intrusion prevention

Tools which work with your firewall to detect and often automatically prevent attacks related to specific vulnerabilities.



Change control policies and procedures

Includes logging and understanding the repercussions of all changes made to your security equipment and applications.



Mobile strategy

May involve issuing work-only devices to employees or providing secure access to sensitive and confidential data if they use a personal device.



Web content filtering

Special tools can place restrictions on what internet content employees can access.

DETECT



Security scanning

Regular security scans of your systems help identify vulnerabilities and holes that you can then fix.



Dark Web monitoring

IT professionals can monitor the Dark Web in case account credentials (such as administrative passwords) appear on the black market.



Intrusion detection services

Watches for suspicious network traffic.



Managed detection and response (MDR)

Looks for security threats across your servers, computers, and entire IT network.



Endpoint detection and response (EDR)

Focusing on "endpoint devices" (such as a server or computer), EDR looks for security threats already inside your devices.



Security Information and Event Management

Identify the most important and critical security alerts received from different systems.



Data backup and disaster recovery

Do you back up your data both onsite and offsite? Do you test your data backup?



Offsite log retention

Used for evidence related to cyber incidents.



Incident response planning

Developing a plan detailing how you respond to a cyberattack will help you react to an incident with "muscle memory" - like a fire drill.



Cyber liability insurance

Improving your security foundation will help you lower cyber liability insurance premiums.

TOTAL SCORE



0-30: Extreme risk of a cyberattack

31-60: Need better cybersecurity foundation

61-80: Opportunity to shore up some gaps

80+: You're on the right path!

SCORE

VC3 partners with over 1100 municipalities across the United States to improve their IT and reduce their cybersecurity risks. A strategic technology partner can work with you to ensure that you do not suffer severe consequences from ransomware or another cyberattack. We can assess your cybersecurity risks, outline what you need to secure your IT assets, and help you build a budget and roadmap to get there.

CONTACT US TODAY TO SCHEDULE A FREE CYBERSECURITY CONSULTATION.

VC3.com





2026-2027 SAFETY & SECURITY GRANT

SDIS members are eligible to apply for a matching grant to help fund expenses related to projects that mitigate exposures to safety and security threats.

The SDIS Safety & Security Grant Program assists members with funding of projects that lead to reduced exposure in high-level claims categories. It is our goal to eliminate or lower risk to the SDIS insurance program by supporting members' proactive approaches to preventing loss.

WHAT IS THE FOCUS OF THIS YEAR'S PROGRAM?

The 2026-2027 matching grant program will focus on projects that mitigate property loss and enhance security at your district.

WHAT DOES "MATCHING GRANT" MEAN?

This is a 50/50 matching grant program, which means the cost of the project will be split equally between your district and SDIS, up to a maximum of \$2,500

WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY "A MAXIMUM OF \$2,500"?

If your district is planning a \$5,000 project, you can apply to receive a maximum of \$2,500 from SDIS.

APPLICATION DEADLINE:
NOON ON WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2026

HOW ARE PROJECTS SELECTED FOR A GRANT?

The SDIS Safety & Security Grant Committee will review each application and award matching grants to applicants that meet the eligibility requirements by order of priority and on a first come, first served basis.

THE COMMITTEE WILL CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING IN DETERMINING GRANT RECIPIENTS:

PRIORITY FOR FUNDING

Applicants who did not receive an SDIS Safety & Security Grant in the 2025-2026 grant year will be given priority over those who received one during that time. All other applicants will then be considered in the order received.

ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

Your district may apply for any new project that supports the focus of this year's program. A great example is preventing water loss during winter storms – SDIS pays out a significant number of claims each year related to these losses.

Other examples of eligible projects include, but are not limited to:

- Leak Detection Equipment
- Heat Tape
- Equipment for Winter Storm Damage Prevention
- Alarms
- Window Film
- Securing Valuables
- Cybersecurity Equipment
- Security Systems
- Fencing
- Lighting
- Cameras

Expenses must be incurred after July 1, 2026. Routine maintenance to existing facilities, subscription based or recurring payment services, and normal business expenses will not be considered.

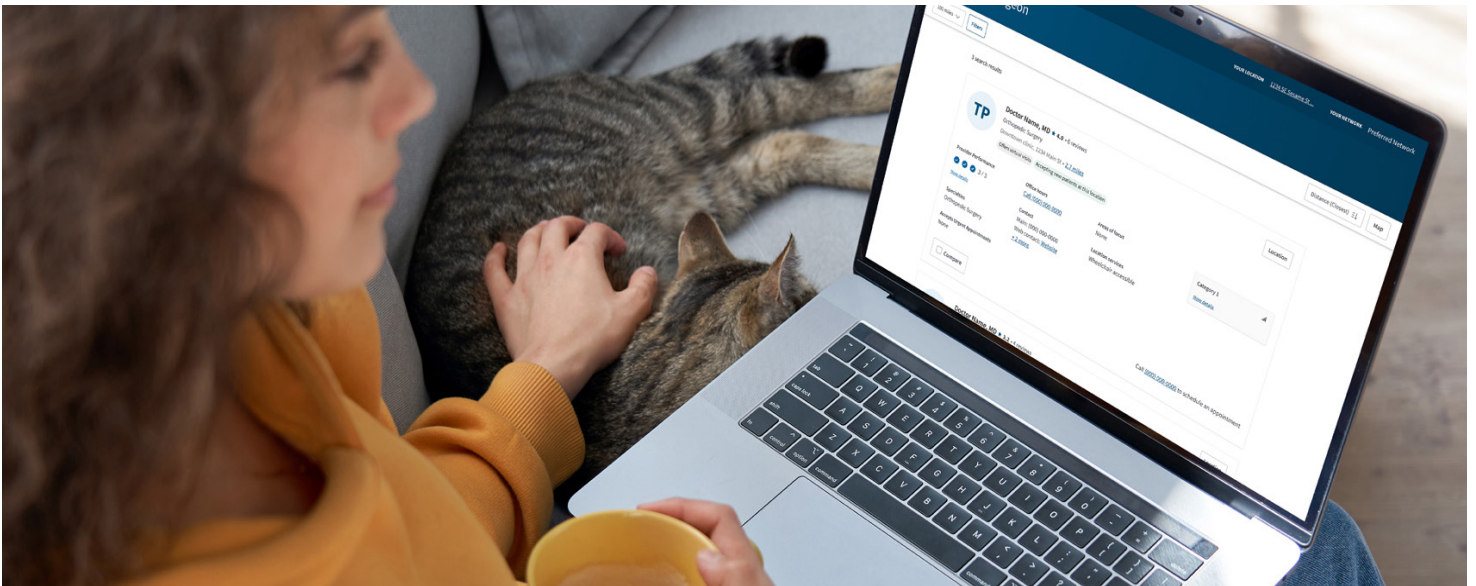
OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

The purpose of this program is to reduce risk exposures by assisting our members to complete safety and security related projects. Your district must have insurance coverage for the risk exposure you are trying to mitigate. For example, if you do not have property coverage through SDIS, a project that prevents burglary would not be considered. **Since SDIS no longer provides workers' compensation insurance, unfortunately, we cannot accept grant applications for employee safety exposures.**

HOW CAN WE APPLY?

Fill out and return the application for your district by mail to *SDAO, PO Box 12613, Salem, Oregon 97309* or email to ***memberservices@sdao.com by noon on Wednesday, November 18, 2026.*** You can download a copy of the application on our website:

www.sdao.com/safety-security-grant-program



Find top-rated doctors in your network

Whether you're looking for a primary care doctor or specialist, you deserve clear information to guide your decisions. Our provider search tool shows performance ratings for physicians in your network, so you can choose with confidence.

Provider Performance



Performance at a glance

In your search results, you'll see ratings ranging from 1 to 3 next to many physicians. These ratings reflect a provider's quality, cost efficiency and adherence to evidence-based care practices, with higher numbers indicating better performance.

3/3: Highest rating (shown first)

2/3: Mid-level rating

Not rated: Not enough data or provider type not rated

1/3: Baseline rating (shown last)



Who's rated

The ratings apply to primary care physicians (MDs and DOs) who practice family medicine, general practice, geriatric medicine, internal medicine, pediatrics and preventive medicine. The ratings also apply to some specialist physicians.



Customize your search

Higher-rated providers appear first in your search results, but you can filter your results by other criteria that matter to you, including distance, gender, language, accepting new patients and more.



Ready to try it out?

To see how providers stack up, sign in to your regence.com account on the app or online. Select **Find care** and then search for a primary care physician or specialist.





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Email: memberservices@sdao.com
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Toll-Free: 800-285-5461
Email: underwriting@sdao.com
Fax: 503-371-4781

RISK MANAGEMENT
Toll-Free: 800-285-5461
Email: riskmanagement@sdao.com
Fax: 503-371-4781

REPORT AN SDIS P/C CLAIM
Toll-Free: 800-305-1736
Email: claims@sdao.com
Fax: 503-620-9817

MEMBER CALENDAR

October 1	OR-PRIMA Annual Fall Conference
October 2	OR-PRIMA Annual Fall Conference
October 7	Water Under Fire: How Oregon Districts Can Secure OT Systems Against Nationwide Cyber Attacks
October 13	SDAO Regional Training Summit - Newport
October 14	SDAO Regional Training Summit - Newport
November 4	SDIS Board of Trustees Meeting
November 5	SDAO Board of Directors and SDIS Board of Trustees Joint Meeting
November 5	SDAO Board of Directors Meeting
November 11	Veterans' Day - Offices Closed
November 12	Free Cybersecurity Summits & Tabletop Exercises
November 12	NSDA Webinar: Essential HR Tools for Smaller Districts
November 26	Thanksgiving - Offices Closed
November 27	Thanksgiving - Offices Closed
December 25	Christmas Day - Offices Closed

