

RVBAT Meeting – December 3, 2025

Meeting Purpose

Share project updates and discuss strategies for navigating the current funding landscape.

Key Takeaways

- **Funding Language Shift:** To counter federal DEI pushback, grant applications will reframe "digital equity" as "rural outreach" or "service expansion," focusing on geography and access rather than race.
- **New Library Programs:** The Jackson County Library District launched a resume workshop, telehealth drop-ins, and is developing basic internet courses for Rogue Retreat, driven by new Community Resources Manager Thaddeus.
- **Major Funding Opportunities:** A new \$50B federal grant for rural healthcare is available, and the Jefferson Regional Health Alliance is coordinating a collaborative application.
- **Critical Broadband Gap:** The Warm Springs Reservation has extremely poor internet, needing a fiber optic solution. AGE+ is seeking connections to help address this urgent need.

Topics

Funding & Policy Challenges

- **Federal Grant Landscape:** Ann Marie noted a trend of late-published federal RFPs with extremely short turnaround times (e.g., 2–3 weeks), making it difficult for large organizations like universities to apply.
- **HUD COC Grant Changes:** New HUD rules for Continuums of Care (COCs) are creating significant challenges:
 - **Funding Structure:** Shift from a 90/10 guaranteed/competitive split to 30/70, dramatically increasing competition.
 - **Service Requirements:** Mandates opt-in behavioral health and substance use counseling, replacing low-barrier, supportive services.
 - **Rationale:** Driven by federal misperceptions that homelessness is solely caused by addiction/mental health issues.
- **Strategic Language Shift:** Aaron advised adapting grant vocabulary to avoid federal DEI pushback.
 - **Rationale:** The work of addressing rural access gaps is distinct from the federal definition of DEI.

- **Recommended Terms:** "Rural outreach," "service expansion," "last-mile connectivity."

Project Updates & Collaborations

- **Jackson County Library District (EMolinsky):**
 - **Resume Workshop:** Soft-launched as a drop-in service (20–30 min appts, 2x/week) for resume/job help, combining reference and tech librarian expertise.
 - **Action:** Add cover letter assistance, which is critical for landing interviews.
 - **Telehealth Drop-ins:** Monthly sessions now running at the Talent Library.
 - **Rogue Retreat Partnership:** Developing basic internet courses for Rogue Retreat residents.
 - **Community Connections:** New Community Resources Manager Thaddeus is building partnerships with the Jackson County Continuum of Care.
- **OSU Extension (Victor):**
 - **AI Education Grant:** Submitting a federal grant for an AI education program for educators by Friday.
 - **Goal:** Pilot in rural Oregon, then expand nationally over four years.
 - **Action:** Aaron offered to connect Victor with Oregon's ESDs and the "Grow Your Own Network" to support outreach.
 - **National Collaboration:** Discussing a partnership with the National Digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA) and Microsoft to leverage OSU Extension's national footprint.
 - **Speaking Engagements:** Presenting on an AI panel at NetInclusion (Chicago, Feb) and leading AI workshops for 4-H (Tennessee, next week).
- **AGE+ (Olivia):**
 - **Rural Listening Tour:** Completed an OHA-funded tour to gather feedback from older adults on the State Health Improvement Plan, covering Southern Oregon, Eastern Oregon, Willamette Valley, and the coast.
 - **Key Findings:**
 - Many older adults are unaware of OHA, even while on OHP.
 - Some use phones only for calls, not knowing how to text.
 - High demand for safe, culturally appropriate social spaces.
 - **Digital Navigator Expansion:** Identified potential navigators in Grant County (via Blue Mountain Community College) and Silverton for Q1 training.
 - **Critical Need:** The Warm Springs Reservation has extremely poor broadband, requiring a fiber optic solution. AGE+ is seeking connections to help.

- **T-Mobile (Ryan):**
 - No major broadband updates; tower and satellite work is on track.
 - Shared info on a new \$50B federal grant for rural healthcare, distributed at ~\$200M/state/year.
 - **Action:** Ann Marie offered to connect interested parties with the Jefferson Regional Health Alliance (JRHA), which is coordinating a collaborative application.

Next Steps

- **Ann Marie:** Schedule the next meeting for January 7th.
- **EMolinsky:** Add cover letter assistance to the library's resume workshop.
- **Victor:** Connect with Aaron regarding outreach to Oregon's ESDs and the "Grow Your Own Network" for the AI education program.
- **Olivia:** Share the AGE+ listening tour report when complete.
- **All:** Use "rural outreach" or "service expansion" in grant applications instead of "digital equity."