



Oregon Local Health Department Cross-Jurisdictional Sharing

Mini Case Study: Environmental Health Specialist Sharing

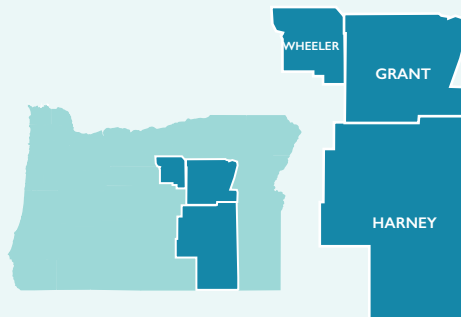
Cross-jurisdictional sharing (CJS) is helping to expand Oregon's public health system. Through utilizing CJS, local public health agencies are able to provide better public health services to more of their community members. This series of mini case studies highlights the design and implementation of cross-jurisdictional sharing between some of Oregon's local public health agencies. Local public health agencies can use these mini case studies, along with other tools provided in the AIMHI Modernization roadmap, to increase capacity and efficiency in their public health services.

Project Overview

The health department in Grant County has contractual agreements with both Harney and Wheeler Counties to share an environmental health specialist who provides regulatory environmental inspection services across all three counties. This sharing arrangement began in July, 2008 and is ongoing. The Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) includes responsibilities for each county within the arrangement. The IGA was written by contract specialists from both counties in consultation with each county's legal counsel.

The services provided by Grant County to Harney and Wheeler Counties are food services and restaurant, pool, and lodging inspections. The associated fees from inspections performed in any county go to Grant County to continue to support the inspection program. The Environmental Health Specialist reports to each county's public health office and with each county's Health Officer when applicable.

Environmental Health Specialist Sharing



Agreement type: Service-related
Type of contract: Intergovernmental agreement
Modernization Foundational Program/
Capability: Environmental Health

Funding structure:

- + Grant county collects the fees associated with performing Environmental Health services in Harney and Wheeler Counties

Population served:*

- + Wheeler: 1,400
- + Grant: 7,158
- + Harney: 7,292
- + Total: 15,850

Motivation for Sharing

Both Grant and Wheeler Counties identified motivations for beginning this sharing arrangement, including:

- + Grant County was able to increase their environmental health specialist's FTE by spreading the stewardship of responsibilities to a greater portion of the state of Oregon; and
- + for the smaller counties, sparse populations negate the need for a full-time environmental health specialist, as there are few places that need to be inspected, making hiring and paying for a full-time employee a challenge.
- + continual and open communication across all counties involved so that everyone in the partnership participates in decision making and is aware if there is an emergency;
- + support from local county commissioners and the local public health authority;
- + development of a contractual agreement that clearly specifies the responsibilities of the environmental health inspector within each county and how finances will be divided; and
- + hiring an environmental health specialist who is comfortable working in all the communities being served.

Challenges & Solutions to Sharing

Challenge: The three counties in this sharing arrangement cover a large geographic area, and with the populations and inspection sites often substantial distances from each other, travel for the environmental health specialist has been difficult.

- ➡ Solution: In some cases the environmental health specialist will do an overnight stay in order to complete inspections for a given geographic area.

Benefits of Sharing

The ability for Grant County to give their environmental health specialist full-time employment was identified as a mutually beneficial aspect of this sharing arrangement. This benefit also eliminated the need for Harney and Wheeler Counties to hire part-time health specialists.

Essential Elements for Sharing

The counties identified several important elements for sharing, including:

- + all the counties involved should have a need for environmental health inspections but a limited work load, so that one environmental health inspector would have a full-time work load working across several counties;

Moving Forward

The counties in this sharing arrangement agree that sharing environmental health services and an environmental health specialist will continue because it is mutually beneficial and is the most financially feasible way to provide these services to all of the communities in these counties.

*United States Census Bureau / American FactFinder. "Annual Estimates of the Resident Population: April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2016". 2016 Population Estimates Program. Web. March 2017. <http://factfinder2.census.gov>.