Oregon Watershed Council and Conservation District Spring 2016 Survey Results

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Part 1: Overview and Key Take-Aways

The Network of Oregon Watershed Councils (Network) and Oregon Association of Conservation Districts (OACD) conducted an on-line survey of watershed council ("council") and conservation district ("district") staff in the Spring of 2016 to aid the Network and OACD in focusing products and services offered to the councils and districts.

We heard from key staff of 41 watershed councils from all corners of the state, representing roughly half of all councils as well as staff from 33 conservation districts, representing nearly three-quarters of all districts. Most council respondents were coordinators or Executive Directors; a few were technical staff. Most district respondents were district manager or general managers. While the survey was not intended to contrast council staff and district characteristics and opinions, the survey does help to identify some of their unique challenges. The information should be helpful in identifying ways the Network, OACD, and the Oregon Conservation Partnership can respond to the highest priority needs in the coming months and years.

Key Take-Aways:

- Half of watershed councils represented in the survey are staffed by one-person offices, and a quarter of coordinators/Executive Directors (ED) have been in their job for less than a year. By comparison, district staff members have been in their positions longer and have larger staffs, overall. Many districts have bigger and more diverse budgets, and offer more staff benefits than councils, with some exceptions.

- Fundraising and other organizational duties constitute a large percentage of council coordinator/ED time among watershed councils represented in the survey. While foundations are an important funding source for councils (compared with districts), most councils continue to be highly dependent on OWEB funding.

- A high number of respondents from both councils and districts want to provide urban/community conservation and non-riparian forestry or woodland conservation assistance and information to their constituents.

- More than half of council respondents have found the Annual Fall Gathering "very useful." Councils still value opportunities to meet together with other council staff and see the Network as a solid vehicle for convening. Districts tended to favor the CONNECT conference over the Fall Gathering overall.

- Watershed council respondents value the idea of "just in time" downloadable on-line resources such as templates that staff can access as needed.

- Council respondents value the idea of facilitated information exchange across councils through both in-person and remote modes.

- Both councils and district respondents favor opportunities for sharing of staff expertise such as accounting and GIS including short-term temporary projects.

Part 2: Quantitative Summary

How watershed councils and conservation district staff spend their time:

- **Councils:** The vast majority of watershed council staff spends 10-30% of their time on fundraising and about the same on administration/finance. Some council staff spend as little as 10% and as much as 50-60% of their time on restoration.
- **Districts:** Conservation district staff spend about the same amount of time as councils on administration, fundraising and outreach as watershed councils. Almost two-thirds of districts spend more than half of their time doing restoration activities, compared with just over 50% of watershed councils spending more than half of their staff time on restoration.

How councils and districts are funded: (See Figure 1 below)

- **Councils**: Almost half of councils represented in the survey have funding support from foundations. Nearly all watershed councils receive OWEB grants, and more than 60% holds cooperative or similar agreements with partnering organizations. Just over half receive federal grants. Just over 20% have an Oregon Department of Environmental Quality grant. Eleven percent gets funding from major donors and 20% listed "other sources."
- **Districts**: Districts overall have a more diverse funding portfolio than watersheds. The vast majority of districts also receive OWEB grants (88% compared with councils at 95%) and more than 90% of districts receive state water quality grants. Half receives federal grants and a third is tax supported. Just over half (55%) hold cooperative or similar agreements with partnering organizations. Unlike watershed councils, no conservation district represented in the survey receives foundation or private donor support. Eighteen percent of district respondents listed "other sources."

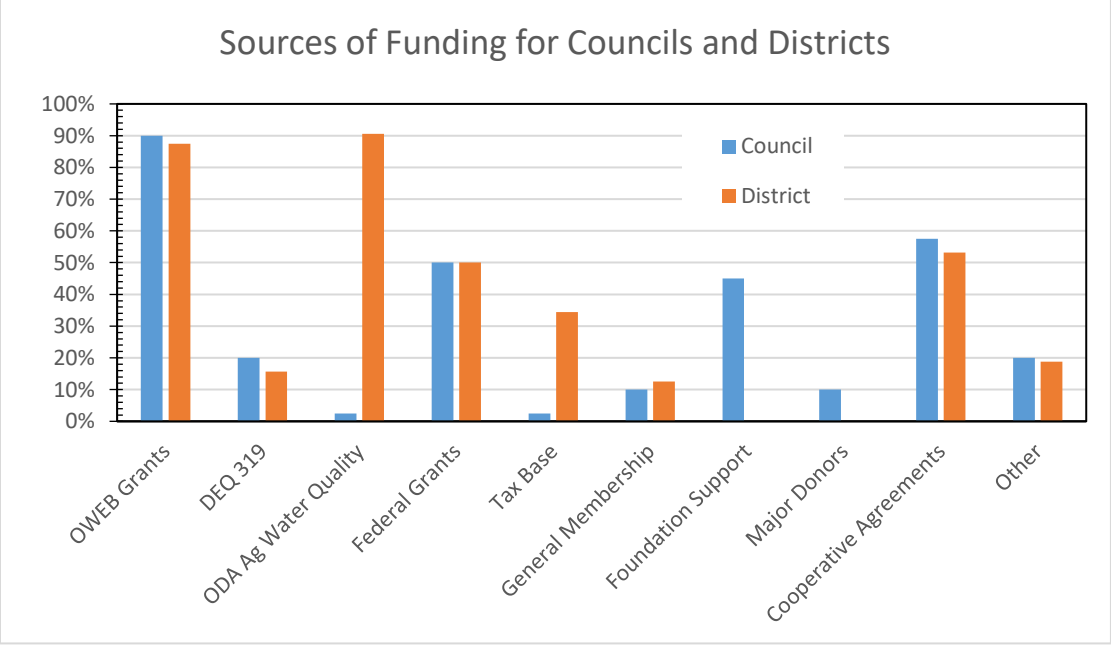

Figure 1: Sources of funding for Councils and Districts

Budgets and staffing (see Figure 2)

- ***Councils have smaller operating budgets than districts.*** Almost two-thirds of the councils

represented in the survey have annual operating budgets under $150,000. Only three councils surveyed have budgets over $400,000. A quarter of conservation districts surveyed have annual operating budgets of more than $1 million. Half of districts have budgets of $200,000 or less; only 16% have budgets less than $200,000. Forty percent of conservation districts have total budgets over $1 million. One district has a budget of more than $10 million.

- ***Many more council coordinators/executive directors are newer to their jobs than are district managers***. A quarter of council coordinators have been in their positions less than year. Almost a third has been in the position more than six years. By contrast, more than half of district managers have served six or more years in their position.

- ***Councils have more part-time paid leaders and more one-person offices than districts***. The majority of council coordinators have at least three-quarter time jobs or more. About 90% of district managers are full time. Close to half of the watershed councils have only one staff person, while only a quarter of conservation districts are one-person offices.

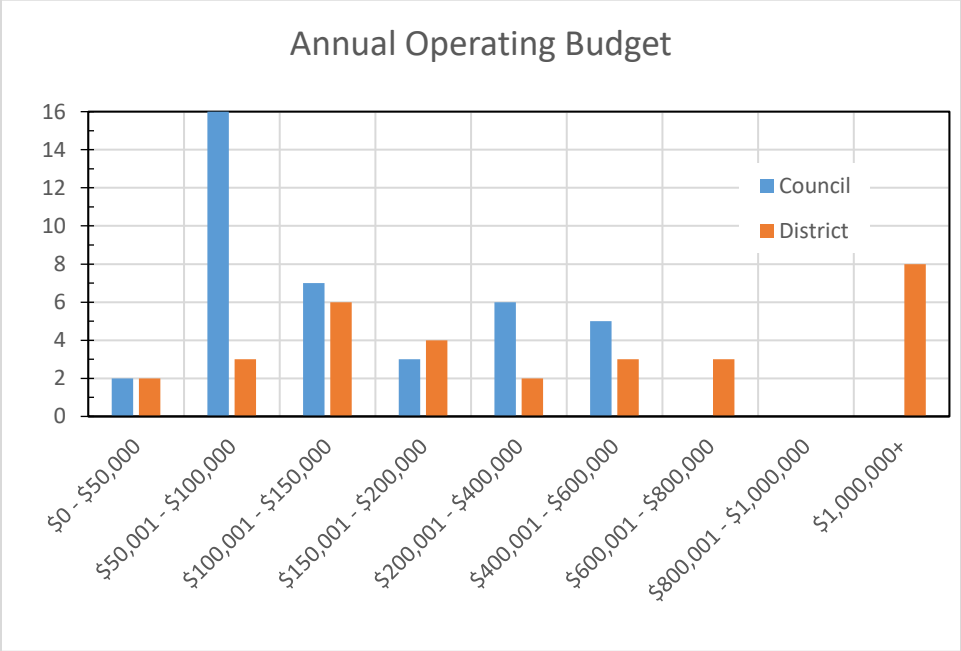

Figure 2: Annual Operating Budgets of Councils and Districts by number of respondents

What councils and district staff earn: Respondents were asked to list the annual gross salary for various full-time equivalent staff positions, rounded to the nearest $5,000.

Watershed councils:

- The executive director/coordinators/manager annual salaries averaged $53,400 and ranged from $25,000 to $90,000.
- Fiscal staff leads averaged $34,900 and ranged from $15,000 to $60,000.
- Program manager salaries averaged $44,600 and ranged from $25,000 to $60,000.
- Field technicians averaged $29,180 and ranged from $14,280 to $40,000.
- Office manager salaries averaged $25,000 and ranged from $10,000 to $30,000.
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Conservation districts:

- The executive director/coordinators/manager annual salaries average is $54,700 for full-time equivalent and widely ranged from $20,000 to $105,000.
- Fiscal leads averaged $47,500 and ranged from $ 15,600 to $85,000.
- Program manager salaries averaged $55,000 and ranged from $40,000 to $75,000.
- Program staff average $48,500 and ranged from $42,000 to $59,000.
- Field technicians averaged $33,500 ranged from $8,000 to $65,000.
- Office manager salaries averaged $30,800 and ranged from $8000 to 47,000.

Employee benefits:

- **Councils:** The most common benefits for council staff are mileage reimbursement, flexible hours, paid holidays and professional development, with 60% or more of respondents indicating that their organizations provided these benefits. Half of respondents said that their organizations provided health coverage, paid vacation, and sick/paid leave. Less than a third said their organizations provide dental, paid time off (PTO), retirement, family leave, vision coverage, and alternative medical care. Only a tiny percentage (3%) provided disability insurance or paid or unpaid sabbaticals.
- **Districts:** Across most categories, a higher percentage of employees of conservation districts receive benefits with the exception of professional development and flexible work hours (see Table 1 below for comparison).

Table 1. Percent and number of council and district respondents who receive various types of staff benefits

	Councils		Districts	
Benefit type	Percent	#	Percent	#
Mileage reimbursements	87%	32	87%	27
Flexible hours	81%	30	77%	24
Paid holidays	70%	26	94%	29
Professional development	62%	23	45%	14
Health coverage	54%	20	61%	19
Paid vacation	51%	19	80%	25
Sick/Paid leave	51%	19	80%	25
Dental coverage	30%	11	48%	15
Paid time off (instead of vacation/sick leave)	30%	11	29%	9
Retirement	30%	11	55%	17
Maternity/Family leave	24%	9	48%	15
Vision coverage	22%	8	42%	13
Alternative care (chiropractic, naturopathic, etc.)	11%	4	29%	9
No benefits	11%	4	3%	1
Cafeteria plan (flexible spending accounts)	8%	3	16%	5

Life insurance	5%	2	25%	8
Disability insurance (long or short-term)	3%	1	13%	4
Unpaid sabbaticals/time off	3%	1	0%	0
Paid sabbaticals	0%	0	3%	1

Figure 3: Employee benefits offered by Councils and Districts

<u>Services provided to constituents</u>: (see Table 2).

- **Councils:** Almost all watershed councils provide fish and riparian habitat and restoration services for local constituents, and almost 90% provides invasive species or vegetation management services. Almost all councils conduct some kind of education and outreach. Two-thirds provides upland wildlife habitat restoration and about half provide urban or community conservation services. About a quarter provides grazing or hay land conservation and the same percentage provides non-riparian forestry or woodland conservation.
- **Districts**: Like watershed councils, about 90% of conservation districts provide fish and riparian habitat and restoration and invasive species or vegetation management. Likewise, 90% provide outreach services and educational services assistance in invasive species or vegetation management. Almost half provide crop, orchard or nursery land conservation, and over 70% provide grazing or hay land conservation assistance/services.

<u>What councils and districts WANT to provide to constituents</u>: (in order by highest % of respondents)

Watershed councils: -urban/community conservation (31%)
-non-riparian forestry or woodland conservation (25%)

-upland wildlife habitat restoration (16%)
-crop, orchard or nursery land conservation (16%)
-estuary conservation (11%)

Conservation districts: -urban/community conservation (33%)
-easements or property management (22%)
-upland wildlife habitat restoration (18%)
-crop, orchard, or nursery land conservation (16%)
-non-riparian forestry or woodland conservation (15%)
-Invasive species or vegetation management (9%)

Table 2. Services provided and desired to provide by Councils and Districts, by number of respondents

	# Councils Providing	# Councils Want to Provide	# Districts Providing	# Districts Want to Provide
Fish & Riparian Habitat and Restoration	36	2	29	2
Upland Wildlife Habitat Restoration	24	6	23	6
Non-riparian Forestry or Woodland Conservation	8	9	20	5
Estuary Conservation	5	4	4	4
Crop, Orchard, or Nursery Land Conservation	4	6	15	6
Grazing or Hay Land Conservation	9	3	23	3
Animal Feeding or Boarding Assistance	0	0	5	3
Urban or Community Conservation	18	12	13	10
Invasive Species or Vegetation Management	34	3	28	3
Easements or Property Management	3	5	9	7
Educational Services	36	2	28	2
Outreach Services	36	2	28	2

Useful services and resources:

Councils: A solid majority of watershed council respondents have attended an annual Fall Gathering and find it useful or very useful. While 40% has not been to a CONNECT conference, the majority of those who have attended find it useful or very useful. While just over half of respondents have not received direct assistance with capacity issues or transitions from the Network, among those that have received assistance, three-quarters find it useful or very useful. A few find it not useful. The Atlas of Accomplishments was used by two-thirds of respondents and opinions about the Atlas are mixed. Over half of respondents believe the Network website is useful. Opinions about the new coordinator handbook are also diverse, with a majority considering it useful or very useful. See Table 3 below.

Table 3. Usefulness of various services and resources - Watershed Council respondents

	not useful	somewhat useful	useful	very useful	no experience with service/resource
Network/OACD Annual Fall Gathering	0%	11%	24%	58%	8%
CONNECT conference	0%	11%	21%	29%	40%
Direct assistance with capacity issues or transitions	5%	5%	11%	24%	54%
Issue-specific workshops	0%	5%	32%	21%	41%
The New Coordinator Handbook	3%	13%	21%	21%	42%
NOWC / OACD Website	3%	19%	53%	18%	8%
Atlas of Accomplishments	0%	26%	23%	18%	32%
Local project tour grants	0%	5%	14%	14%	68%
Watershed management camps	5%	5%	8%	11%	71%
Facilitation/mediation	0%	2%	11%	5%	82%
Youth watershed summit	8%	3%	8%	3%	78%

Districts: District respondents are less enthusiastic about the annual Fall Gathering than watershed councils; only 9% said it is very useful (compared with 58% of council respondents). The CONNECT conference was rated higher by district respondents. Many more (16%) didn't find the partnership website useful at all. Some find the new coordinator handbook useful or very useful, while issue-specific workshops seem less useful. Direct assistance is moderately useful, by comparison.

Table 4. Usefulness of various services and resources - district respondents

	not useful	somewhat useful	useful	very useful	N/A
NOWC / OACD Annual Gathering	6%	28%	53%	9%	3%
CONNECT conference	0%	13%	13%	71%	3%
Direct assistance with capacity issues or transitions	6%	13%	28%	9%	44%
Issue-specific workshops	0%	13%	31%	9%	47%

The New Coordinator Handbook	3%	13%	21%	21%	42%
NOWC / OACD Website	16%	35%	29%	3%	16%
Atlas of Accomplishments	3%	13%	9%	0%	75%
Local project tour grants	6%	9%	11%	0%	72%
Watershed management camps	5%	5%	8%	11%	71%
Facilitation/mediation	9%	13%	9%	0%	69%
Youth watershed summit	3%	0%	6%	0%	90%

Priority services and resources

Councils: Council respondents place a high priority on *receiving regular updates* (all rated that service a moderate or high priority, with 87% considering it a high priority), as well as *legislative and administrative advocacy* (89% rated them moderate to high), *website resources* (100% rated them moderate to high) and *biennial gatherings* (87% rated them moderate to high). *Facilitation and mediation* rated as a lower priority overall but more than half of council respondents still rated that service as a moderate or high priority.

Table 5. Priorities of various services among watershed council respondents

	Not a priority	Low priority	Moderate priority	High priority
Regular updates about funding opportunities, important policy changes, etc.	0%	0%	13%	87%
Legislative & administrative advocacy	0%	11%	37%	53%
Website resources	0%	0%	68%	32%
Biennial gatherings	3%	11%	41%	46%
Issue-specific workshops	0%	14%	51%	35%
Facilitation/mediation	14%	30%	46%	11%
Direct assistance with capacity issues or transitions	8%	16%	40%	37%

Districts: District respondents have similar priorities as watershed councils, however they show a wider diversity of opinion regarding website resources and biennial gatherings. Fewer district respondents consider

facilitation and mediation assistance and direct assistance with capacity a priority than watershed councils.

Table 6. Priorities of various services among District respondents

	Not a priority	Low priority	Moderate priority	High priority
Regular updates about funding opportunities, important policy changes, etc.	0%	0%	31%	69%
Legislative & administrative advocacy	0%	3%	38%	59%
Website resources	6%	32%	48%	13%
Biennial gatherings	3%	19%	53%	25%
Issue-specific workshops	6 %	13%	44%	38%
Facilitation/mediation	34%	28%	31%	6%
Direct assistance with capacity issues or transitions	19%	22%	34%	25%

<u>Usefulness of the various update topics</u>:

Councils: While many topics are considered useful, by far, the most useful topic was *opportunities for funding or assistance* (all respondents), followed by *agency rulemaking* and *technical resources/training for non-profits*. *Relevant news stories* were listed by a bit more than half of respondents as useful. *Legislative updates* are also considered highly useful.

Other topics of interest listed by watershed council respondents:

- Unique opportunities that Councils or Districts can take advantage of to increase organizational capacity.
- Discounts on equipment- I have bought gear at pro-deal discounts - very useful
- I like getting NOWC updates. I don't want NOWC getting completely lost in the partnership. But if there are things the partnership can send that are distinct and different from NOWC updates - then this is useful. One more email to read is otherwise not useful
- Grant writing workshops

Districts: Like councils, the most favored topic is opportunities for funding or assistance, following by legislative updates. Less favored is new stories and nonprofit technical training. Moderately favored was agency rulemaking, workgroups and stakeholder processes, new partnership services, and new agency services. See Table 7 below.

Table 7. Usefulness of various topics to councils and districts

		Not Useful	Somewhat useful	Useful	Very useful	No Response
Agency Rulemaking	councils	0%	13%	33%	50%	5%
	SWCD	0%	19%	41%	38%	3%
Workgroups & Stakeholder Processes	councils	0%	5%	45%	45%	5%
	SWCD	0%	19%	44%	34%	3%
Legislative Updates	councils	0%	10%	35%	50%	5%
	SWCD	0%	9%	44%	44%	3%
News Stories	councils	0%	40%	50%	5%	5%
	SWCD	13%	28%	44%	13%	3%
Funding Opportunities	councils	0%	0%	20%	75%	5%
	SWCD	0%	6%	28%	63%	3%
Non-Profit Technical Resources & Training	councils	0%	3%	38%	55%	5%
	SWCD	3%	13%	38%	44%	3%
New Partnership Services	councils	0%	8%	50%	35%	8%
	SWCD	0%	19%	47%	31%	3%
New Agency Services	councils	3%	15%	45%	33%	5%
	SWCD	0%	19%	50%	28%	3%

Part 3: Qualitative Summary

Respondents were asked to suggest additional resources and services the Network and OACD should provide. Watershed council responses are grouped in the following categories and are included in the exact words of the respondent.

A. Creating efficiencies/pooling resources/shared repository of resources and templates
B. Direct technical assistance
C. Shared staff benefits
D. Networking opportunities
E. Legislative and Advocacy
F. Fundraising
G. Other

Watershed Councils:

A. Creating efficiencies/pooling resources/shared repository of resources and templates

- Basic administrative/operational services, templates, documents that are relevant to each of our organizations (e.g., policy and procedures handbooks, summary data for staffing compensation - like what you've asked for in this survey, other basic operational/organizational support).
- Some means of helping connect people in need of these resources to people that have

them. So each council / district isn't consistently re-inventing the wheel on these things within each office. It's highly inefficient and risky (if people do a poor job or just end up not being able to get a policy in place due to lack of capacity or skill) to have each office trying to work on that on their own.

- Leadership in setting up shared or pooled resources for councils, such as group insurance, group legal services, group motor pool discounts, connections with DAS surplus inventory, and anything (services, equipment, supplies) that could be better served and cost less under a group format using the power of numbers (60 councils in Oregon plus districts) to achieve better bargaining and "purchasing power".
- I often hear of the need for a "library of resources" - policies, templates, contracts, budgets, staff evaluation forms, etc. All of these things that all of us have to do.
- The other idea a small group of us recently discussed is some means of connecting people that either need some staff time (e.g. "Part-time restoration tech needed - can fund up to 20 hours / wk.", or "short-term need for GIS skills, total 40 hours over 3 months") and groups that have staff that they'd be willing to (or need to) share their time (e.g. "have fiscal manager that can contribute 10 hrs. / week to a council / district"). Right now this is done when individual Coordinators or District Managers call each other and discuss options / ideas, so it's based on each individual's network. There could be a better way to connect the dots for this type of partnership /staff sharing, etc.
- Shared insurance packages, connections with university staff for project advice on specific tasks
- Sharing more information online. Possibly using a Google Drive, listserv, or cloud-based storage site for Watershed Councils to share information. My thoughts were some sort of file system – could be very generic and broad. An information resource that would take little of NOWC time, but a good place to store files regarding FAQ's, match, budgeting, templates, board development, etc. It could potentially help inform people of other problems, issues, and help save time for busy OWEB staff if WC staff can find answers on their own through these shared resources.
- The partnership should address means for each watershed association or council to become more self-sustaining by state-wide pooling and leveraging resources for funding opportunities-especially from the private sector. The partnership should leverage technical solutions deals in electronics, spatial data platforms etc. that aid individual watershed associations or councils. The partnership could become a hub for all kinds of natural resources training opportunities, conferences and workshops. The partnership could become a hub for long-term natural resource data-sets.

B. Direct technical assistance

- Direct assistance with capacity issues for councils that do not receive capacity support from OWEB that are high functioning. "Highly functioning" could be gauged or measured by the size of the organization's operational or annual budget.

C. Shared staff benefits

- We should organize an opt-in pool for health and/or other benefits, and see if insurers would offer a group plan based on aggregate demographics of member orgs. Then orgs could opt to join a group offer, or pursue individual org benefits (which is challenging as until recently we didn't have the FTE to qualify as a group, and even with 3.5 or 4 it's a small group that doesn't warrant advantageous rates).

D. Networking opportunities

- Help facilitate time to meet with colleagues -- share resources, ideas, etc.

- A forum for regional networking / gatherings is another service that people have expressed to me (in the Willamette) they would like to see more of again (though I know there was poor response to regional gatherings, but I think WCs would like an opportunity for WC only regional gatherings).
- Networking with other Councils--like the gatherings--are very useful. Annual is the ideal interval.
- The annual meeting is a good opportunity to see what other councils are doing, how they are succeeding, etc.

E. Legislative and Advocacy

- Not just "Legislative & administrative advocacy" - but communicating back to councils / districts what is going on in the legislature. I see these as 2 different but related services. Even if NOWC / OACD are not advocating one way or another for something, letting us know what is going on and what to pay attention to is really important.
- The Partnership's advocacy for restoration funding with the legislature is the highest priority. This is more than councils can do individually, and is critical to sustaining our organizations.

F. Fundraising

- Another important role of the partnership is the connection with agencies and funders - and letting us know any trends, concerns, priorities of the funders.

- Consulting and/or contractual services (via external sources) to address administrative and fundraising gaps. Example, I would love to contact NOWC and submit a request for communications/marketing expertise to help fill a gap for which we have no staff. Hiring a contractor on a temporary basis would be extremely helpful. Non-profit Association of Oregon and Willamette Valley Development Officers both have such an arrangement with sole proprietors.

G. Other

- It would be nice to see more NOWC activity on the East side of the state.
- ODA regularly visits (quarterly) the SWCDs in their regions, and put on workshops, or provide valuable trainings, it would be nice to see NOWC supply this to Watershed Councils. We have never had a NOWC rep to one of our meetings, or participate in any of our educational or outreach activities.
- Job resources
- Our particular council has struggled over the past 5 years, primarily with turnover that resulted in failed projects, which then led to a lack of confidence with historic partners. This is very difficult for new staff, which leads to more turnover. The political climate in [our watershed] is particularly harsh and our neutral role has often been compared to straddling a fault line during an earthquake - on either side you may be safe, but nobody wants to be in the middle. Legislative and administrative advocacy is a constant here, so much that I have listed it as a low priority. We don't need another 15 years bogged down in legislative issues, we need a hard and fast agreement.

Conservation Districts:

District respondents offered many of the same types of recommendations as councils:

- A template database and other template platforms that can be customized by individual Districts that would be useful for landowner tracking, accomplishments and other planning/project management activities. An assessment of existing qualifications for district Board members with respect to barriers to increasing the diversity, equity and inclusion make up of Board members. Facilitation of legislation that would give districts to drop "Soil and Water" from their name. Proactive response to existing or new legislation or programmatic changes that influence district workload or operations (e.g., 2300A NPDES Permits; Landscape Contractor Board license requirements specific to landscape practices such as rain gardens; coordinated response to noxious weed regulations). Support identifying Soil and Water Conservation District requirements for contracting (e.g., soliciting bids, extensions, insurance requirements).
- Evolve the annual conference into an "Oregon Conservation Congress" that includes all federal, state, local, and regional conservation entities. Let's bring everyone into the tent. It would be a very big deal and I would hope OWEB et al. would support it.
- I would emphasize that annual training for all positions is most valuable. As someone with a technical education who works in education and outreach, I have found training most useful when time is dedicated to education and outreach. We have offered substantial technical topic training every year. Offering more Engagement and Outreach would be helpful.
- Guidance on setting up Information Technology and information security policy. Database support to improve info sharing. Salary survey assistance to improve equity. Timely legislative updates. Communication and outreach to better inform partners.
- Improving communication with our USDA Partners.
- Consistent communications with your members through emails, OACD website etc. There never are notices of OACD board meetings sent out, requests to the membership for feedback on current state legislative issues and/or even any information about these issues. OACD's website could be a very useful tool, similar to NOWC website, instead it is filled with outdated information and looks to be neglected most of the time. A resolution process for OACD members to bring the issues and topics of value/concern to the forefront. This would help direct the OACD board actions and would allow for bottom up feedback and input instead of top down or no communications at all.
- The Partnership might consider facilitating sharing of staff resources between SWCDs and/or watershed councils to help assure that well-qualified people can be retained and can contribute to the success of their organizations. Accounting is an example where one or more organizations may be able to share one person.
- Be a go to source when a situation arises for a district/council to see what other districts or councils are doing to address the situation they are presently dealing with.

Other comments (as written):

Watershed councils:

- I appreciate the Partnership's work to give Councils and Districts a collective voice and to recognize that there's a human and organizational network -- no council or district is an island. Thanks!!
- Creating a conservation community is important, but difficult with time being such a valued asset.
- I think it's best for the Network to do a few things really well rather than many things sorta well. For the salary and benefits survey component of this, I think it would be wise to integrate the data with the River Network Salary Surveys because we all work in the same sector and it would provide a better data set.
- Thank you for all your hard work, and good luck with your new Director.
- You guys do a great job. Each council is different, it's hard to fund every good project out there. Thanks for your support and hard work.

- We have enjoyed working with the NOWC and hope to continue.
- Our questions about FTE (and my responses) are a bit misleading. An opportunity to comment in that section would be useful. We contract for PM services (getting about 25-30 hours / wk.) and contract for fiscal services. So these are not true FTE for us but are part of our budget. Also we are 1.5 FTE - you didn't give an option for fractions in that question so I rounded up. My responses regarding FTE and percent of budget dedicated to certain areas only reflect our staff (1.5 FTE).
- Regarding the health benefits section; the question did not allow partial contributions. We currently offer a small stipend -$160 /month.

Conservation Districts:

- Information needs to be reviewed and vetted for geographic and programmatic relevance.
- How about information about what the organizations (NOWC and OACD) are doing, such as meetings, activities, work products, representatives, etc. (activity reports), There is a black hole of information in this regard.
- HR updates i.e. changes in laws, processes, new forms, etc.
- I am the new Fiscal Officer for this District and have only been working for two months. I use the websites quite frequently for information that I need to use and find it very useful.
- The OCP is all about leadership! We need a proactive, responsive and forward-thinking OCP to provide meaningful and timely support to districts and councils so they remain sustainable into the future and produce outcomes with impact. I would like to see more work done to get statewide feedback from stakeholders/landowners on what they need to be successful stewards of the land and water. We need to fully assess how we are doing in our communities and make changes to better address issues of importance. Thanks for the opportunity to comment! I look forward to seeing the results of the survey.
- Why wasn't the OACD communications plan ever sent out to all the SWCDs? Why hasn't OACD been following it?
- I think that the behavioral changes that are needed in the Conservation arena are slow in coming. In cases where forced by economic reasons collaboration is working because it already was in place. In areas where competition for conservation dollars existed little change has occurred. I suggest that in the state there are "Haves" and "Have nots" meaning the Districts that have tax bases are doing well and the Districts that do not tax bases are struggling. This is a situation where the District has little control over population and voting views against any tax. I think all Districts are viewed equally where they are not due to these circumstances. I believe that funding for Districts should come from legislative funds as we are considered part of the Government Structure. ODA/OACD should lead this effort.
- I am struck by the difference in composition between the two boards. OACD is populated by board directors while NOWC is populated by watershed coordinators/executive directors. This presents some potential to appeal to a wider cross-section of people in SWCDs and councils, but only if these very different governing bodies can find more common ground. Also, the friction and stridency at the OACD board level is a cancer that continues to erode member confidence. I wish I had a better solution than "let it get worse so that members will be motivated to act" but I don't.