



GROW LANE COUNTY: A CROSS-SECTOR PARTNERSHIP

Jared Pruch, Upper Willamette Soil & Water Conservation District

UPPER WILLAMETTE SWCD

Central & eastern Lane County

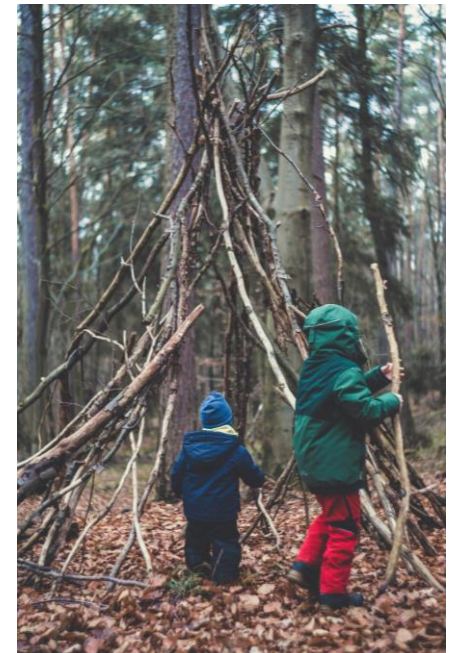
Tax Based Approved in 2020

\$2.3 million annually from tax base

10 employees & growing

Programs

- Water Quality
- Farms, Food & Soil
- Forest Health & Resilience
- Neighborhood Sustainability
- Watershed Restoration
- Environmental Education
- Collaboration



DISTRICT GRANT PROGRAM

- **Goals:**
 - Create public conservation benefits that advance District strategies & priorities.
 - Use local revenue to leverage federal, state and private funds to build regional capacity and amplify conservation efforts.
 - Make grant funding available in an equitable manner to a diverse range of applicant organizations.
 - Support programs & projects that benefit District residents in both rural and urban areas of our geographic boundary.
 - Communicate the impacts of the grant program to the general public in a transparent manner.
- ~\$1.2 million awarded in FY24 (49 awards)
- Oversight by Program & Grant Committee
- Grant management staff hired in 2023

FARMS, FOOD & SOIL GRANTS



Farmers Market grant



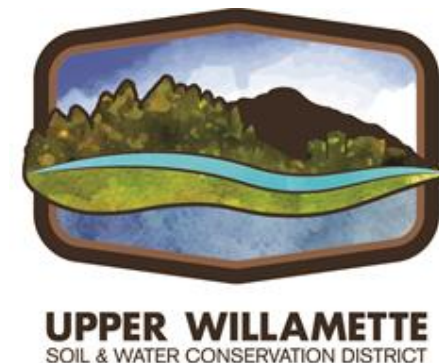
Farm & Ranch Disaster Relief mini-grant



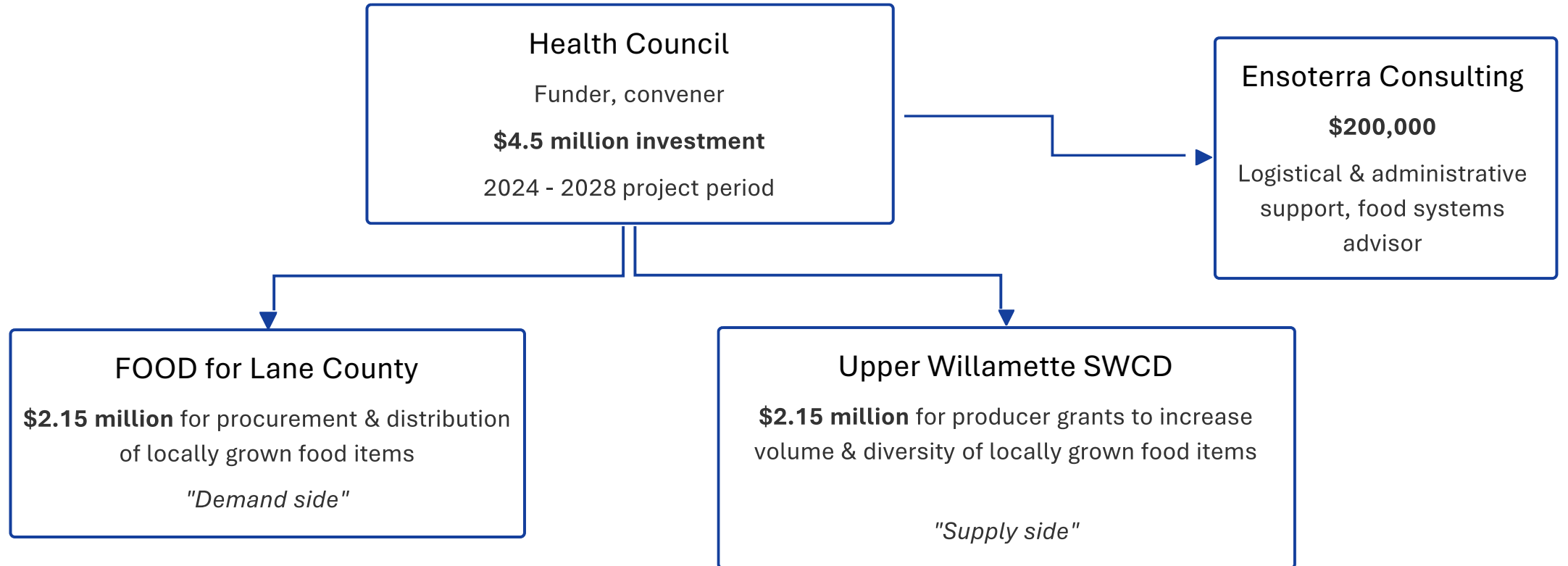
Community Gardens

GENESIS OF GROW LANE COUNTY

- **Lane Community Health Council mission:** To improve and invest in the health and well-being of our community members.
- Funding priorities determined annually, aligned with social determinants of health (nonmedical factors that influence health outcomes – access to safe housing, nutritious food, economic stability, clean water, etc.).
- Rising rates of food insecurity (49% in 2018 > 68% in 2023) identified as a priority in 2023.
- Key partners identified: FOOD for Lane County (anti-hunger) and Upper Willamette SWCD (agriculture).



PARTNERSHIP STRUCTURE



Goal: To improve access to affordable, fresh, locally grown and culturally preferred foods.

DISTRICT ROLE: PRODUCER GRANTS

- **Goals**

- Promote practices that increase soil health and water quality on farms and ranches;
 - Help producers improve the efficiency and productivity of their operations; and
 - Increase the diversity and volume of locally grown food products in Lane County.
- Eligible expenses reflect District strategic plan priorities: water quality & conservation, soil health & nutrient management, climate adaptation, regenerative agriculture, helping farmers connect to market opportunities.



2024 PILOT



- Launched June 2024, awards made in July.
- Funded projects should benefit natural resource conservation activities on agricultural operations, including but not limited to implementing or sustaining practices that sequester carbon, manage nutrients, benefit ecosystem health, promote water quality and water conservation, support soil health, and reduce invasive species.
- Maximum of \$10,000 / award, paid in two installments.
- 25% match requirement (cash or in-kind).
- Offered in 2024 to farms that hold forward contracting agreements with FOOD for Lane County.

PRACTICES



- Cover cropping
- Reduced tillage
- Composting / mulching



- Water efficiency upgrades
- Alternative & renewable energy
- Climate and heat adaptation



- Reducing weed pressure
- Riparian buffer plantings
- Integrated pest management

LESSONS LEARNED SO FAR...

- Many producers are already actively involved in addressing food insecurity in their community.
- Pairing financial assistance for conservation practices with a guaranteed market (FOOD for Lane County) is particularly helpful to beginning farmers & ranchers.
- June is a bad time of year to administer a farmer grant program!
- Translation services are essential to create access for non-English speaking producers.
- Health care and social service partners share many of the natural resource concerns that are priorities for our District.



WHAT'S NEXT FOR GROW LANE COUNTY

2025 Producer Grant Cycle

- AmeriCorps RARE Member hired to add capacity
- Soliciting producer feedback (timing, structure)
- Planned pool of ~\$350,000

Expanding local partnerships

- Tribes & Indigenous community
- Farmers markets
- K-12, higher education, Extension
- Culturally specific organizations

Learning from peer initiatives

- Columbia Gorge Food Security Coalition
- High Desert Farm & Food Alliance
- Oregon Community Food Systems Network
- OFB Oregon Producers Feeding Oregon Communities

Long term sustainability (next 4-5 years)

- How to pair / leverage this local funding resource with state or federal programs
- Collaboration with funder colleagues

QUESTIONS?

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UPPER WILLAMETTE
SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

