



# Strategic Plan 2022–2024

*Approved by RDI Board of Directors on March 14, 2022*

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## 2022–2024 RDI Strategic Plan

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## RDI's Guiding Principles

**Mission** | RDI strengthens rural people, places, and economies in the Pacific Northwest.

### Vision

RDI envisions a future when local rural people and community groups are involved, engaged, and at the center of their own development and success. They carry out their own visions and have the skills, influence, resources, and support to work collectively to build equitable and sustainable communities and economies.

### Values & Beliefs

- 1. Rural Is Vital.** Local economies play a significant role in the health of rural places and the overall strength of our states and the nation. Rural people are unique, innovative, and resilient, and valuable rural assets contribute to sustained prosperity and support a healthy natural ecosystem.
- 2. Rural Leaders Are Vital.** Communities thrive because of the passion and commitment of the people who rise to the occasion to create solutions for their own future. Local people are best equipped to identify solutions that support and represent the interest of their own communities—which is crucial to effecting change at the local, state, and federal level.
- 3. Rural Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Is Vital.** Equitable access to opportunity and resources is essential to self-determination, and the richness of people from all cultures, backgrounds, and heritages enables more robust and inclusive solutions to complex challenges. Acknowledging and continually working to dismantle historic and systemic oppression, disinvestment, and marginalization is only a first step toward a vibrant rural future.
- 4. Rural Connections Are Vital.** Collaborative rural participation makes the most of limited resources, scales impact, and is foundational to solving complex issues for enduring community vitality. Building rural networks, partnerships, and collective approaches elevates rural voices and cultivates social, human, intellectual, and political capital.

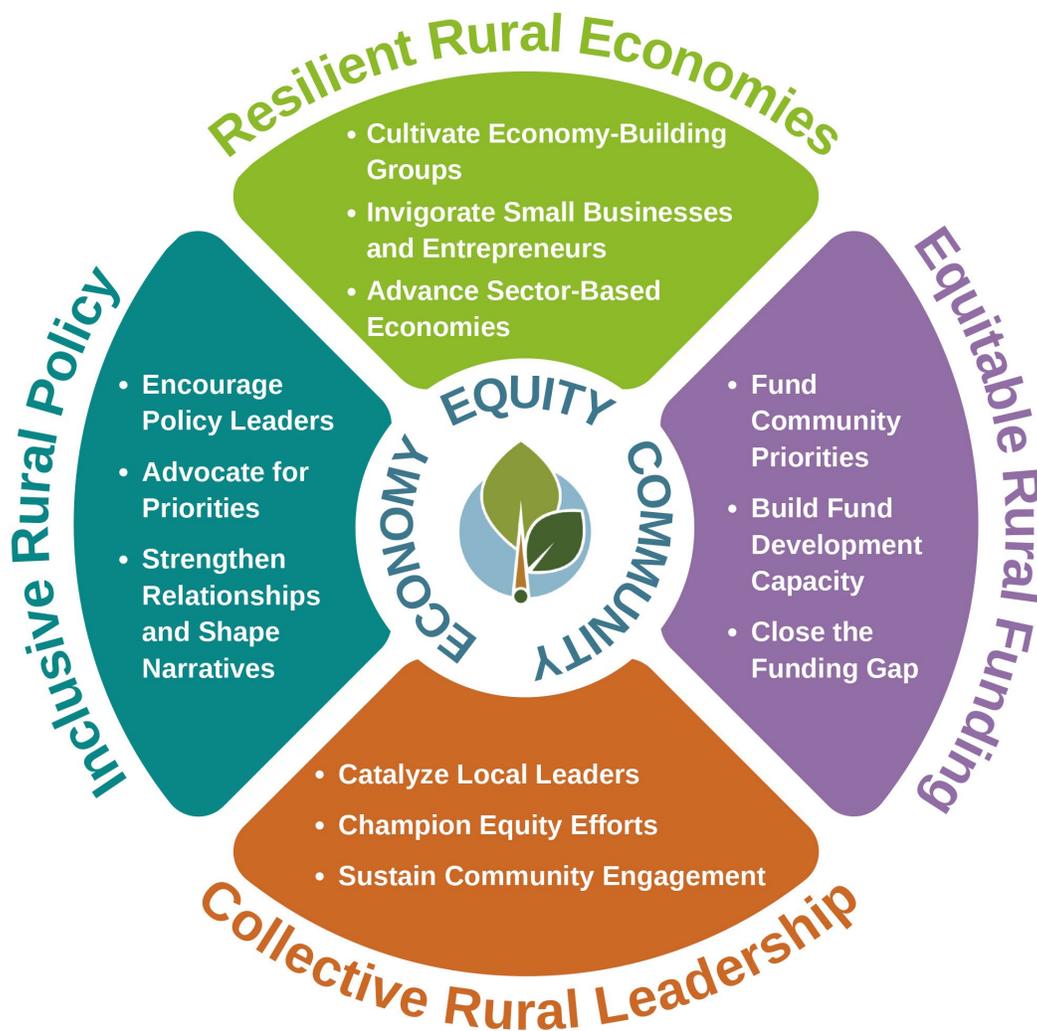
### Commitment to Equity: Race, Place, and Class

RDI recognizes our work is only as successful as our ability to hold ourselves accountable to the rural people and places we serve. As an organization, we are committed to being a learner and champion of rural equity, inclusion, and diversity and understand that is at the intersection of race, place, and class. We intentionally center equity, and stand with others to displace and dismantle historic and systemic oppression, racism, disinvestment, and marginalization.

## RDI’s Approach

RDI holds the uncompromising belief that answers and priorities, driven by a diversity of local people, benefitting all, and built from a community’s assets, are key to achieving rural community prosperity. RDI’s four areas of focus are interconnected, reinforcing, and centered around our values and in Equity, Community, and Economy.

RDI works within an ecosystem of other support partners and alongside local rural people and groups to strengthen collective leadership, build robust rural economies, elevate rural voices and the issues they care about, and to increase investment and resources that support local efforts and rural priorities.



## Resilient Rural Economies

**Goal |** RDI’s rural economic services help teams of local community leaders understand their economic situation, and appreciate and build upon their natural, economic, and cultural assets and opportunities. Our work results in stronger local efforts and support systems, small business successes, and resilient place-based strategies that address inequities in economic benefit and opportunity.

### Strategies

#### 1. Cultivate Economy-Building Groups

- a. Support the development of motivated and effective local teams, and provide them with innovative economic and community development approaches, skills, tools, resources, support, and motivation to work together to build community vitality.
- b. Support communities to understand their economic history, decades of economic shocks and stresses, and see their diversity and the need for barrier-free strategies to achieve greater equity in their economy.
- c. Work with community teams to co-design and facilitate customized, inclusive, and community-led planning processes that result in impactful visions for their futures, actionable priorities, and structures for implementation.

#### 2. Invigorate Small Businesses and Entrepreneurs

- a. Provide rural Latinos with the training, tools, coaching, and connection to resources needed for the development of small, locally owned enterprises.
- b. Analyze small business and entrepreneurial ecosystems, uplift rural, and particularly women and minority-owned businesses, and strengthen the capacity of community-based organizations to provide services that cultivate, retain, and grow local businesses and entrepreneurs, including impactful support to rural Latinx, Tribal, and other BIPOC entrepreneurs and businesses.
- c. Convene partners and facilitate learning and problem-solving across organizations and communities to promote peer learning, coordination, efficiencies, and create a more robust ecosystem of support for rural communities and businesses.

#### 3. Advance Sector-Based Economies

- a. Work with communities to prioritize sectors with potential for broad community wealth-building, and support the development of market opportunities in response to changing conditions and trends.
- b. Support communities in building more equitable communities through a focus on people struggling economically, resisting extractive relationships, and a triple bottom line approach.
- c. Provide and promote alternative economic models and approaches that increase local ownership and control and focus on building multiple forms of community wealth to enhance resilience.

## Collective Rural Leadership

**Goal |** RDI’s community leadership efforts increase the diversity and number of local people actively involved, connected, and effecting change that benefits rural communities. Our work results in pipelines of engaged and skilled local people who are better prepared to work together and across differences to address complex challenges and build community.

### Strategies

#### 1. Catalyze Local Leaders

- a. Continue to deliver rural community leadership programs to increase the diversity and numbers of skilled, connected, and engaged community members and evolve programs by incorporating new community and leadership development models, inclusivity, and collective action.
- b. Co-design and deliver services that advance the abilities of existing community leaders and organizations to address complex challenges and work collectively for greater impact. Explore multiple methods of tuition and delivery including online, in-community, and immersive workshops.
- c. Continue to champion and advance the field of rural leadership development through peer learning networks and the identification and study of new development and equity models and approaches.

#### 2. Champion Equity Efforts

- a. Identify and support community-based efforts that build power and position for rural BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, women, youth, and other historically underserved or marginalized peoples.
- b. Design and conduct equity assessments to inform community dialogues and facilitate the development of local equity action plans.
- c. Partner with equity experts to develop and deliver rural specific equity trainings and incorporate Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) into all RDI services.

#### 3. Sustain Community Engagement

- a. Build regional, community and funding partnerships that support needed and ongoing access to rural leadership development services for more rural communities.
- b. Evolve RDI’s delivery model to provide shorter and less expensive options that allow for greater accessibility to leadership development programs in more rural places.
- c. Expand the reach of community leadership development by speaking, advising, and advocating on the importance and impact of rural capacity-building approaches; including support of emerging rural leadership programs in other states and countries.

## Equitable Rural Funding

**Goal |** RDI aspires to close the gap and reach resource equity for rural communities to ensure that local groups, organizations, and priorities have the needed support and funding to succeed in building and maintaining the human, social, and physical infrastructure needed to reach community vitality. Our work results in increased funding for community priorities, more local people skilled at fund development and more accessible rural funding sources and investments.

### Strategies:

#### 1. Fund Community Priorities

- a. Assist community leaders in leveraging local funds and attaining more outside investment and funding.
- b. Help match communities and projects with state, federal, and philanthropic funding opportunities.
- c. Connect communities with technical assistance and financial resources that support prioritized community-led initiatives.

#### 2. Build Fund Development Capacity

- a. Build the capacity of rural people and organizations to successfully attract and leverage multiple sources of funding and create and implement local funding plans through grant writing and fund development workshops, support, and coaching.
- b. Prioritize assistance to rural BIPOC and underrepresented or marginalized groups and efforts to strengthen their organizational structures and increase funding.
- c. Encourage communities to explore creative funding models for priorities, businesses, and innovation.

#### 3. Close the Funding Gap

- a. Promote state and federal policy investments that more strongly represent rural community and business needs and interests.
- b. Advocate for more rural funding and cleaner, easier funding processes.
- c. Encourage more philanthropy into rural.
  - Support increased local philanthropy and the development of community funds/trusts to maintain local ownership, sustain local efforts, and provide leverage for additional resources.
  - Elevate rural opportunities and issues with philanthropic organizations and assist funders in developing rural funding strategies.
  - Support the development of a shared philanthropic rural action fund.

## **Inclusive Rural Policy**

**Goal |** RDI is a trusted public policy resource focused on rural development issues in the Pacific Northwest. Our policy work educates, activates, and supports rural community leaders and volunteers to affect systems change. Our work results in a representative pipeline of rural leaders who are participating in governance and policies at local, state, and national levels and strengthens networks of rural leaders across our region and the nation.

### **Strategies**

#### **1. Encourage Policy Leaders**

- a. Deliver local civic engagement training focused on increasing understanding of local government. Include policy concepts in all RDI programs to generate interest in systems change processes. Utilize and activate RDI’s existing networks to identify policy-curious emerging leaders.
- b. Develop and implement advanced training for state and federal advocacy activities.
- c. Collaborate with key, trusted power-building organizations in rural places to ensure voices, interests, and emerging leadership of marginalized rural populations are centered in rural public policy.

#### **2. Advocate for Priorities**

- a. Track policy, testify with and on behalf of rural, and participate in coalitions to provide rural perspective, advance rurally-advantageous policy, coordinate advocacy efforts—including for funding, policies, or capacity building—and demonstrate allyship with underrepresented groups.
- b. Increase political and rural influence in Oregon, and build a foundation for expansion into Washington and Idaho.
- c. Organize rural lobby days to raise awareness of rural among urban thought leaders and provide an opportunity for rural people to experience state advocacy firsthand.

#### **3. Strengthen Relationships and Shape Narratives**

- a. Encourage network interaction and increase reach by representing diverse rural interests, providing opportunities for peer learning, and regularly communicating relevant legislative information and resources via social media, online networking groups, and events.
- b. Host webinars and other events to uplift current rural issues and offset simplified views of rural by amplifying rich and complex narratives of rural people and places.
- c. Hold biennial Regards to Rural conference to strengthen relationships and networks, celebrate success, and promote development models that enhance the economic, social and natural vibrancy of rural communities.

## Sustainable Rural Organization

**Goal |** Revitalizing rural communities is a long game and RDI is dedicated to strengthening our staff, our financial position, and our impact in order to reach the goal of vitality for the rural Pacific Northwest. Our efforts result in an increase in unrestricted financial reserves, and the recognition from others as a premier Rural Hub Organization and from our staff as one of the best nonprofits to work for in our region.

### Strategies:

#### 1. Foster an Inclusive and Innovative Organizational Environment

- a. Grow the Diversity and Talents of Rurally Focused Staff and Board
  - Provide professional development opportunities to build the skills needed for excellence across all RDI staff and board roles and teams.
  - Expand the representational diversity of RDI staff and board with a special emphasis on reaching into Idaho and Washington and the inclusion of rural Latinx and Tribal peoples.
  - Strengthen the connections between RDI’s staff and our board, partner organizations, and community leaders.
- b. Develop Innovative and Efficient Systems and Processes
  - Strengthen and utilize the database to better manage programs, networks, members, and fund development.
  - Maximize the use of technology and innovation to enhance efficacy, increase engagement, lower costs, and decrease the environmental impacts of our internal communication, file management, and collaborative delivery approaches.
  - Strive to find and create economies of scale and greener alternatives in our travel, service delivery, and internal work culture.
- c. Provide Unique and Innovative Employee Benefits
  - Attend to the wellbeing and unique needs of staff and prevent burnout using individualized management/development plans and flexible work conditions.
  - Continue to match our employee benefits to attract and retain quality staff and meet the needs of changing work conditions and trends.
  - Encourage the use of paid time off, paid volunteer hours, and sabbatical benefits to refresh our bodies, minds, and perspectives.

#### 2. Develop a Resilient Financial Position

- a. Responsibly Steward Our Financial Resources
  - Put forth annual budgets that show profits, employ new cost saving strategies, and add to unrestricted net assets.
  - Continue to streamline financial processes to help RDI more easily manage the volume and complexity of our fiscal responsibilities.

- Create program budgets that include sufficient financial resources to collect community data, fully deliver the program, conduct program evaluation, and support the direct administration and management needs.
- b. Diversify Our Funding and Revenue Generation
  - Continue to build the number and strength of relationships with philanthropy, state and federal government, and other funding sources.
  - Increase earned income through direct contract and licensing relationships with communities, partner organizations, and associations.
  - Cultivate and steward individual donors/friends, corporate partnerships, and major gift opportunities to increase unrestricted revenue.

### **3. Communicate Impact to Create Momentum**

- a. Collect and Share Data that Demonstrates Programmatic Impact
  - Collect community data and create community snapshots to inform our approaches and services.
  - Evolve evaluation processes that can be disaggregated to understand nuances for underrepresented groups and adjusted as new initiatives emerge or programs change.
  - Refine impact reports and dashboards to communicate better with our board, partners, funders, and donors.
- b. Increase Marketing and Outreach
  - Develop and provide professional, branded, multimedia and multilingual materials to communicate RDI's programs and impact, including general proposals, infographics, videos, and web pages.
  - Identify a marketing strategy and strategic partnerships that elevate impact and community benefit, increase engagement and support business development.
  - Seek opportunities for speaking engagements and meetings to advance awareness of RDI's past history and current approaches to rural community development.