

Building Lasting Capacity for Communities to Lead Their Own Development

RDI experienced a complicated start to 2025 as we and our partners navigated unexpected funding challenges, yet we continued to provide on-the-ground and adaptive programs and services to communities as they face new challenges and imagine new possibilities. Through our programs focused on leadership capacity building, economic development, community building, small business creation, and technical assistance, RDI's work in community empowers rural leaders, builds rural connections, strengthens rural economies, and advances rural solutions to create resilient rural places in the Pacific Northwest.

Participants of our programs learned new skills, connected to resources, broadened their networks, and increased their capacity to collaborate. New leaders emerged from unexpected places, transforming individuals and creating the next generation of rural leadership. Community projects addressed real needs showing that small changes can make big impacts. Entrepreneurs gained the tools and knowledge needed to start and grow businesses. Our partnerships and regional events uplifted rural voices, fostered systems change, and supported information and resource sharing.



“The greatest benefits of the program were new connections between different members of the community who may not have otherwise interacted, and increased belief that positive changes can happen in the community.”

~ RDI Program Participant



1,654

Rural People Engaged



168

Small Towns and Rural Regions Across OR, WA, ID, & Northern CA Served



\$299,644

Directly Invested in Rural Communities



114

People Increased Community Leadership Confidence and Skills



52

Latino and Youth Participants in Leadership Trainings



185

People More Comfortable Managing Finances



127

Businesses Have Better Access to Support



33

Businesses Started Including Childcare Businesses

In 2025, RDI invested nearly \$300,000 in rural communities through awarding small business grants to help entrepreneurs start or grow their businesses; by supporting local services such as facility rentals, caterers, and lodging; and by providing participant stipends to reduce barriers to participation.

Empowering Rural Leaders

RDI's flagship Rural Community Leadership Program empowers local changemakers with the skills, connections, and confidence to create meaningful impact in their communities. In 2025, we launched new cohorts in Milton-Freewater and Ontario, OR, and Othello, WA, and delivered the inaugural Apodera Tu Liderazgo – the first Spanish-language Sherwood Trust Community Leadership Program in Milton-Freewater.

As part of our leadership programming to build knowledge, skills, and confidence of rural community members, we conducted Latino youth leadership sessions in the Columbia River Gorge area, and continued our focus on youth with a student collaborative in the Columbia Gorge region. We led a community-based leadership skills workshop as part of the City of Independence Civic Leadership Program, and brought Lunch, Learn, Lead, an interactive, rural-focused community leadership workshop, to Klamath Falls. We were honored to continue supporting the Pacific University Masters in Nonprofit Leadership as adjunct faculty for the program.



“The greatest benefit from this program is the real, tangible, and effective leadership skills I learned and continue to use in my career.”

~ Rural Community Leadership Program Participant



Strengthening Rural Economies

We continued supporting economic and community development in dozens of communities in OR, WA, CA, and ID through our Main Street Economic Vitality Program, with in-person skills trainings, community visioning, and planning sessions in Colville, WA, Dunsmuir and McCloud, CA, and Oregon's Illinois Valley and McKenzie River area. We facilitated capacity-building efforts in Mapleton, OR, and maritime and forestry sector development in Westport, WA, and Siskiyou and Modoc Counties, CA. We delivered Spanish-language wealth-building trainings throughout WA and OR in personal finance and investment, entrepreneurship, and technology for businesses.



“RDI's trainings motivated me to see as possible what I once thought was impossible. The classes guided me, gave me ideas, and helped me believe I was capable of starting my own business. Their support and the funds from the grant I received helped me buy equipment, supplies, and ingredients, and also allowed me to create two part-time jobs.”

~ RDI Financial Literacy & Business Program Participant & Small Business Grant Recipient

Advancing Rural Solutions



In October, we had a successful Rural Visibility Project pilot month, as we identified barriers to economic development and surfaced strategies to achieve rural prosperity across the region. The Rural Visibility Project is a campaign designed to center rural priorities through community-driven dialogue and elevate rural voices in state-level policy conversations. Our focus is on priority topics to impact specific policies and state legislation with the hopes of creating our own rurally inclusive policies for the 2027 session.

In fall 2025, women from counties across the state of Oregon participated in the Rural Women in Policy cohort, a collaboration between the Center for Women’s Leadership and RDI. Cohort members came together both virtually and in person to learn how to engage government to catalyze positive change in their communities. Attendees increased their capacity to advocate for their work and step into positions of leadership in their communities. This is the third cohort of this learning community that has brought together changemakers to catalyze cross-sector pollination through building trust-centered relationships and connections to the Oregon State Legislature.



“The greatest benefit of this program was finding community and learning new skills and ways of thinking from a diverse group of women that have different perspectives and life experiences than my own. It has allowed me to approach problem solving in my day-to-day work in ways that I hadn’t before, which has changed outcomes and conversations for the better.”

~ Rural Civic Engagement Project (Rural Women in Policy) Participant

In spring 2025, RDI hosted Rural Oregon Day in Salem in partnership with the Oregon Rural Support Partners Network with attendees from across the state. Honing advocacy skills, meeting with representatives, hearing compelling stories, and making connections gave attendees the tools and inspiration to make change at home as we work to shift rural interests from the periphery to the center.



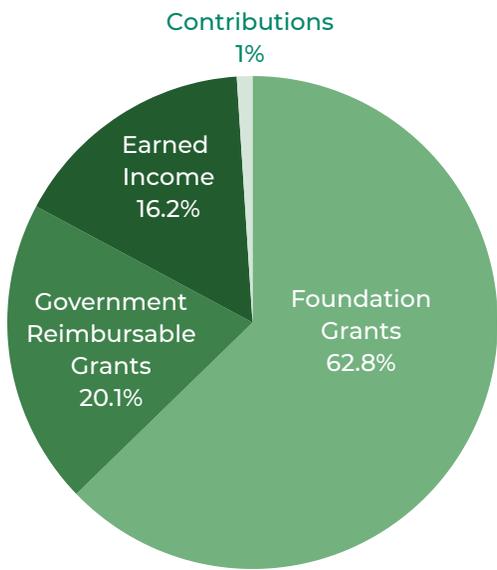
“This work is unfolding in powerful ways, and is positively impacting my work in my local community.”

~ Rural Oregon Day Participant

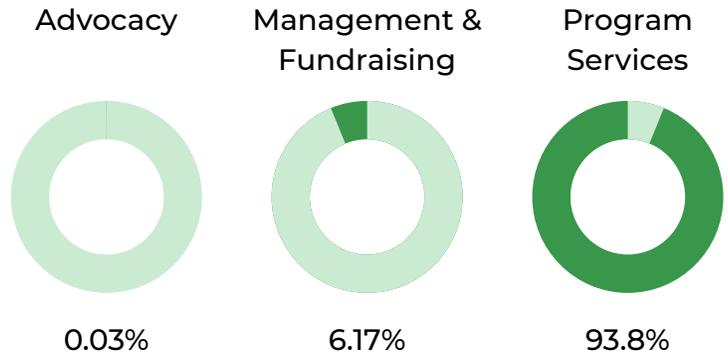


Financial Snapshot

This is a provisional summary of RDI's financial activities for the year ending December 31, 2025. Full audited accounts will be available in 2026.



RDI Expenses 2025

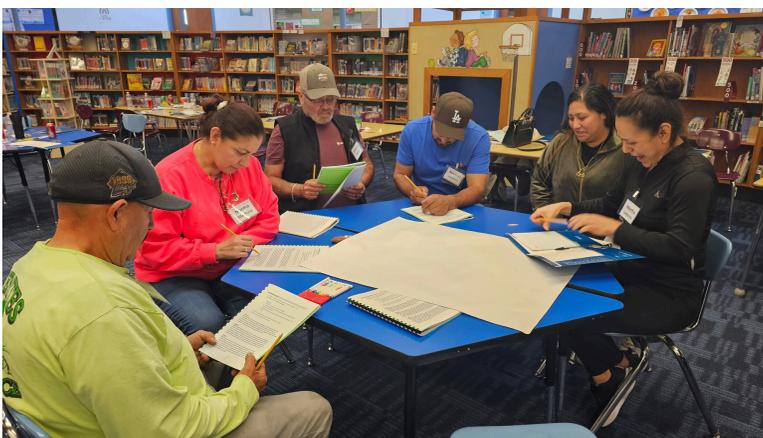


THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS & SUPPORTERS

We are grateful to generous donors and forward-thinking foundations for providing flexible support that allows us to adaptively respond to the needs of rural people, places, and economies. In 2025, your support strengthened 1,654 people in 168 rural communities. Special thanks to the following:

- Business Oregon
- CoBank
- The Ford Family Foundation
- The Marie Lamfrom Charitable Foundation
- Medina Foundation
- Meyer Memorial Trust
- MillsDavis Foundation
- NALCAB
- Oregon Community Foundation
- Oregon Immigrant & Refugee Funders Collaborative

- Oregon State Capital Foundation
- Pacific Power Foundation
- Reser Family Foundation
- Roundhouse Foundation
- Satterberg Foundation
- Sherwood Trust
- Wildhorse Foundation
- Plus Other Funding Partners



“I really enjoyed being a part of the cohort. I learned about a lot of new resources and new people in the community that one can reach out to for help in multiple areas. It really helped me feel more confident in knowing what my community offers and how I can help better it. I have lived in this community my whole life and didn't know half of what I learned from being a part of this group.”

~ Rural Community Leadership Program Participant