

Diversity, Disability & Inclusion: Using Community Listening Sessions to Become More Welcoming Organizations

Rhonda M Eppelsheimer, MSW, CSWA; Angela Weaver, MEd; Lindsay Sauvé, MPH;
Brook McCall, MPH, LEND Fellow Health Administration; Alice Miller, MSW/MPH Intern, LEND Fellow Health Administration

Background

There is an important responsibility and mandate from AIDD and MCH funders to foster and increase organizational cultural competence in understanding and best serving diverse healthcare populations. In an effort to expand cultural competency and develop as more welcoming organizations, the OHSU UCEDD in partnership with Partners in Oregon Diversity & Disability, the Regional Health Equity Coalitions, and Centers for Independent Living, collaborated to conduct three listening sessions in rural Oregon with Latino families with children with disabilities.

Project Description

The OHSU UCEDD, in partnership with PODD and three Regional Health Equity Coalitions, conducted Listening Sessions with Latino communities in three rural Oregon cities. The Listening Sessions were held in Northern Oregon in Hood River, in Central Oregon in Madras, and in Southern Oregon in Klamath Falls in June 2015. The project provided an opportunity for members of PODD to develop relationships with Latino communities' members and gain understanding about strengths and challenges for Latino families.

Methods

The primary assessment approach was qualitative, and three distinct listening sessions provided insight and information to establish a database that will be used to inform and guide actions in the future.

Step 1: Reach Out to Collaborators

(Establish goals, culminate group knowledge, ensure a win-win for all)

Step 2: Plan Listening Sessions

(Identify an accessible location, plan for and obtain attendance incentives (childcare, gas money, dinner), develop meeting agenda, secure local interpretation services)

Step 3: Outreach to Communities

(Team up with local stakeholders/agencies, create bi-lingual flyers, radio ads and newspaper ads)

Step 4: Conduct Listening Sessions

(Lead thoughtful discussions, engage attendees, encourage participation, create a safe environment)

Step 5: Follow-Up with Communities

(engage attendees as new stakeholders and provide opportunities for further input, conduct evaluation)

Objectives

The objectives of the Listening Sessions were to help members of PODD better understand each community's:

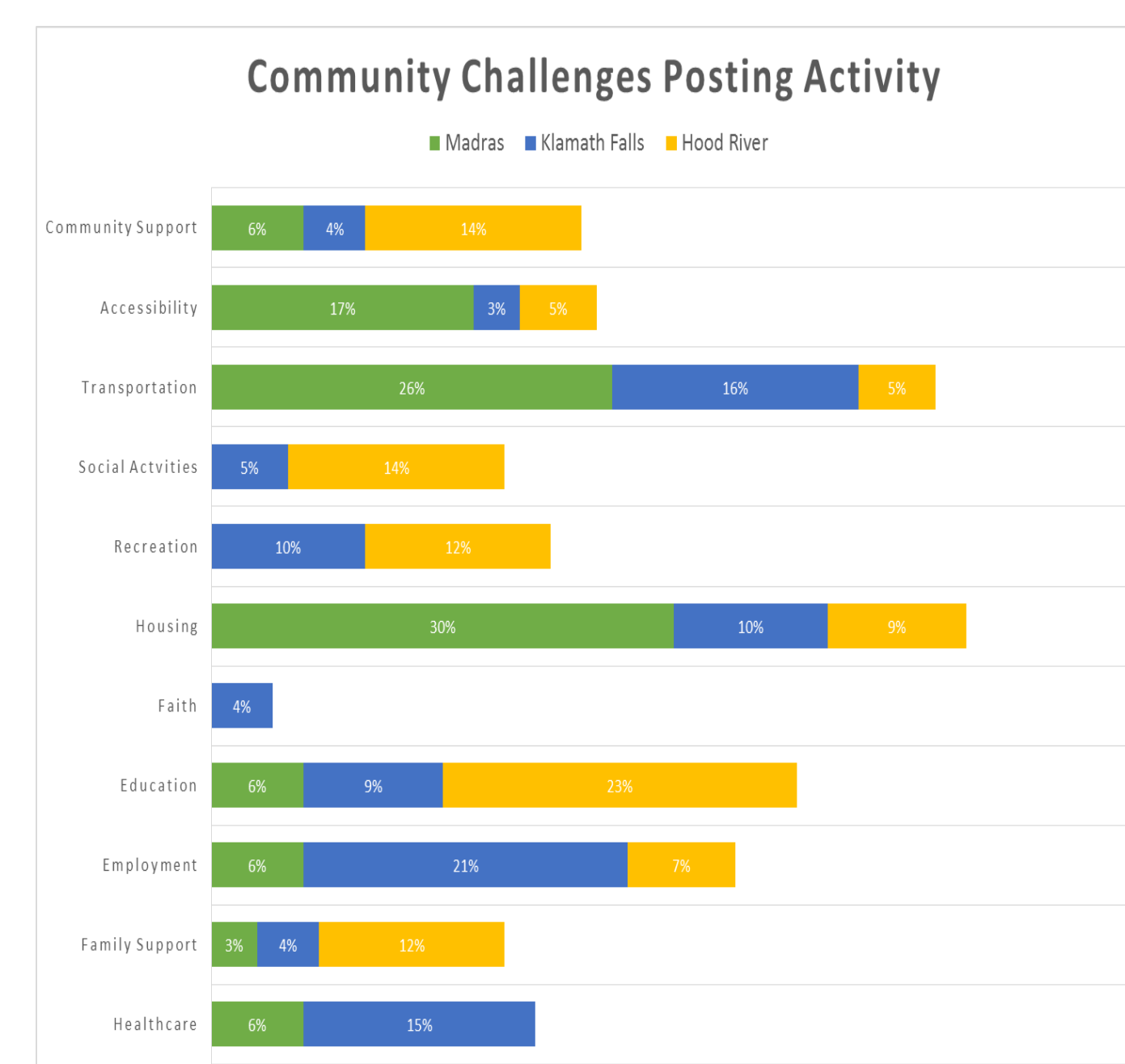
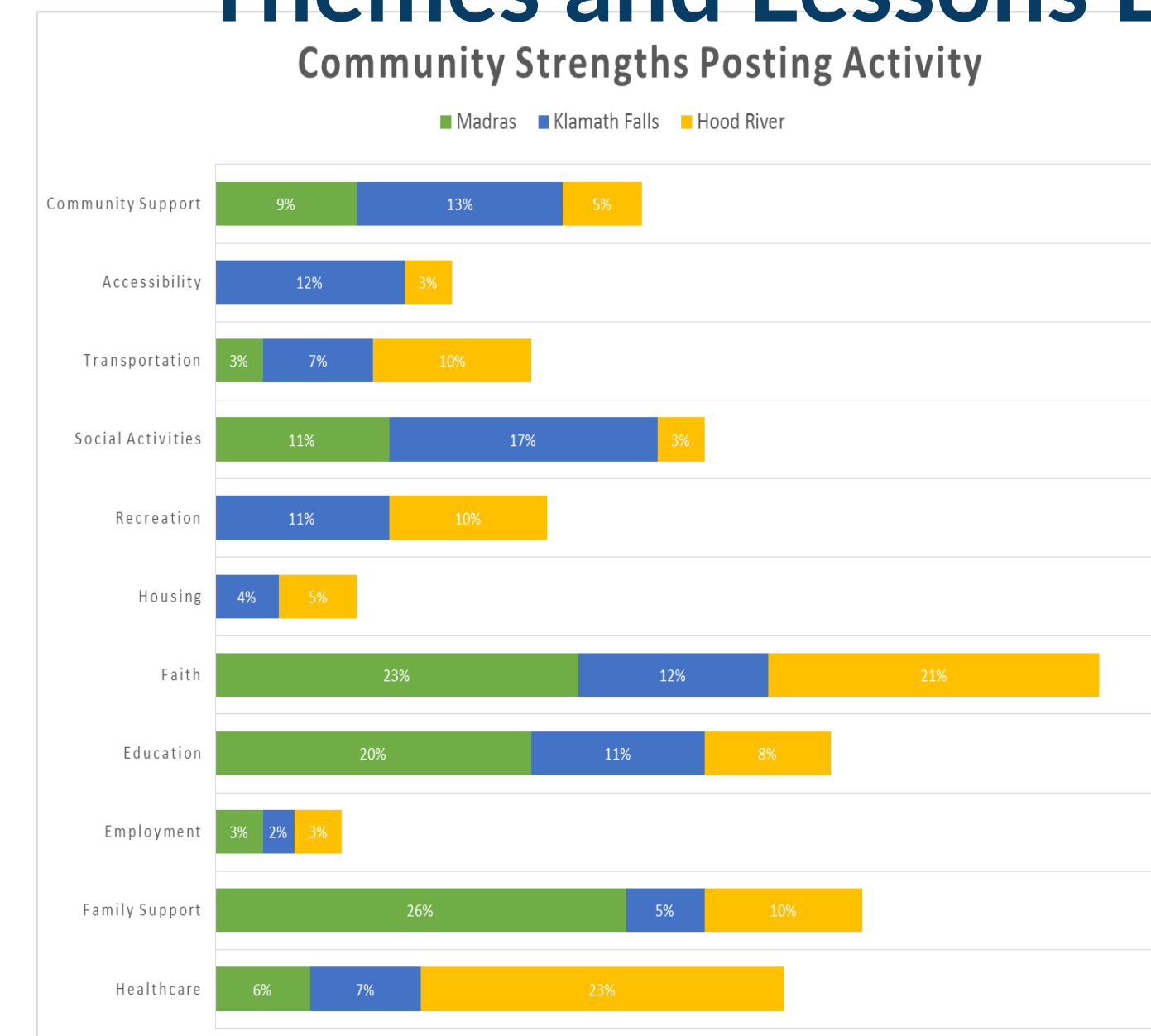
- strengths and successes,
- cultural perspective on disability,
- perspectives on what is culturally relevant and important to them,
- gaps, barriers and challenges,
- perspectives on how agencies can be more culturally sensitive, welcoming and responsive, and
- dreams for their community if money wasn't as issue.

Data collected from the sessions would be used to help agencies be more welcoming, understand barriers to service, and develop outreach efforts and programming that better meets the needs of communities across Oregon.

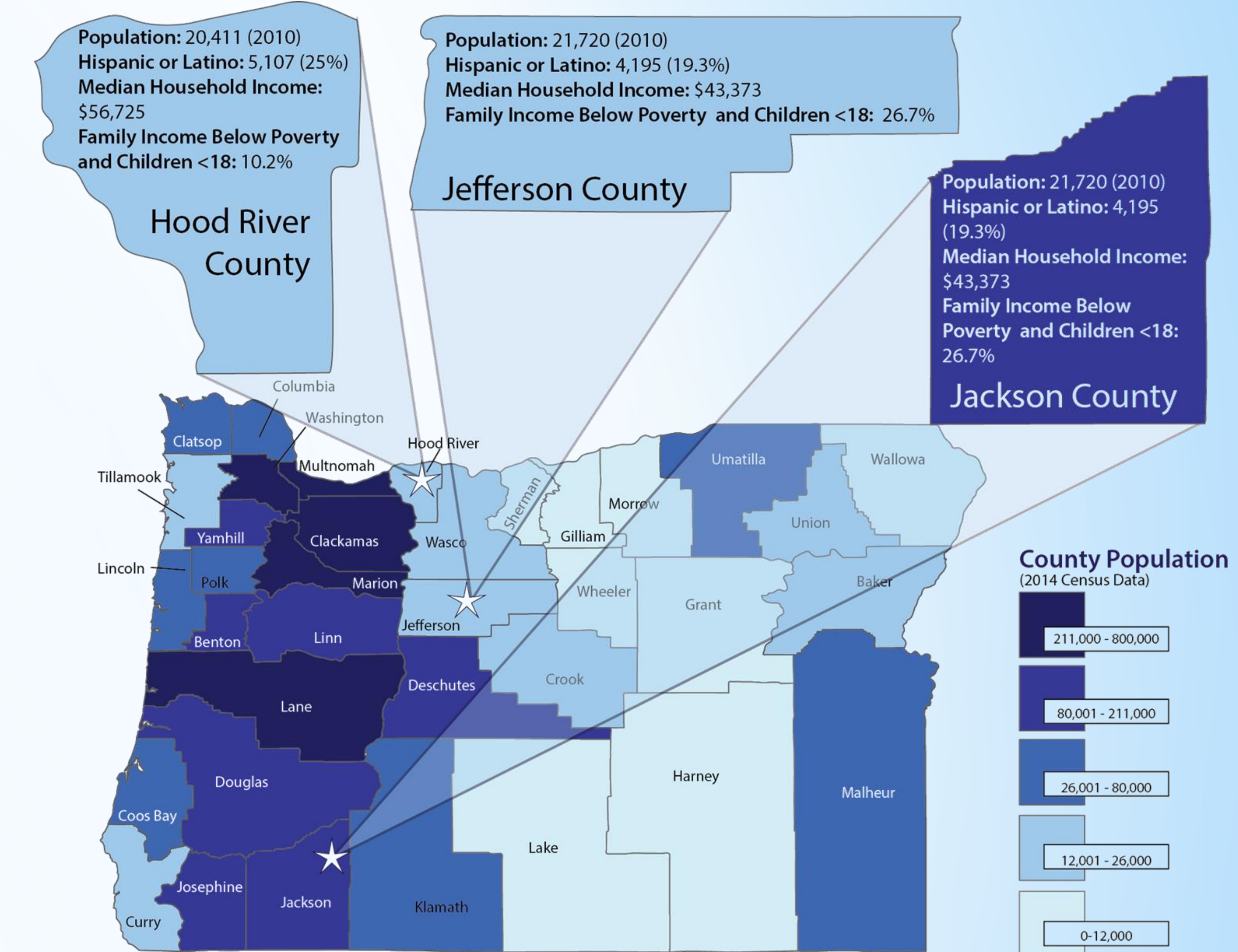
Results

Listening Session participants shared their perspectives on their communities' top three strengths and challenges. The charts below show the frequency participants chose a particular topic as a top "Community Strength" and "Community Challenge".

Themes and Lessons Learned Across Communities



- Developing a cultural broker relationship is vitally important
- Be clear and concise with the communities about our role (not there to fix, but to learn)
- In some culturally diverse communities, identification with the culture comes before identification with the disability
- Listening sessions' attendees are not intended to be representative sample
- Identifying the communities' trusted leaders, i.e., where they get information and support; and inviting those individuals or groups to the Listening Sessions is important
- Being in "community" and with family can be more important than access to services
- What we as an organization value is not necessarily the same as what a community or population values



Moving Forward

The work post-listening session includes taking the time and investing the effort to integrate the information learned into practice at the organizational, community and individual levels. This includes:

- Sharing information learned back with communities to allow for dialogue and feedback and strengthen relationships.
- Working with communities to provide any resources and supports our organization has to offer and seek ongoing consultation as we develop new services and practices.
- Developing intentional organizational strategies to integrate information into our work and practice.

For More Information

Rhonda Eppelsheimer: eppelshe@ohsu.edu;
Angela Weaver: weaverro@ohsu.edu
Lindsay Sauve: sauve@ohsu.edu