2026 Oregon Rural Health Conference Presentation Slides

OREGON RURAL HEALTH CONFERENCE

Integrated Care as Community Infrastructure

Lessons from Wallowa County

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Bridgework Collaborative

Bend | October 8, 2026

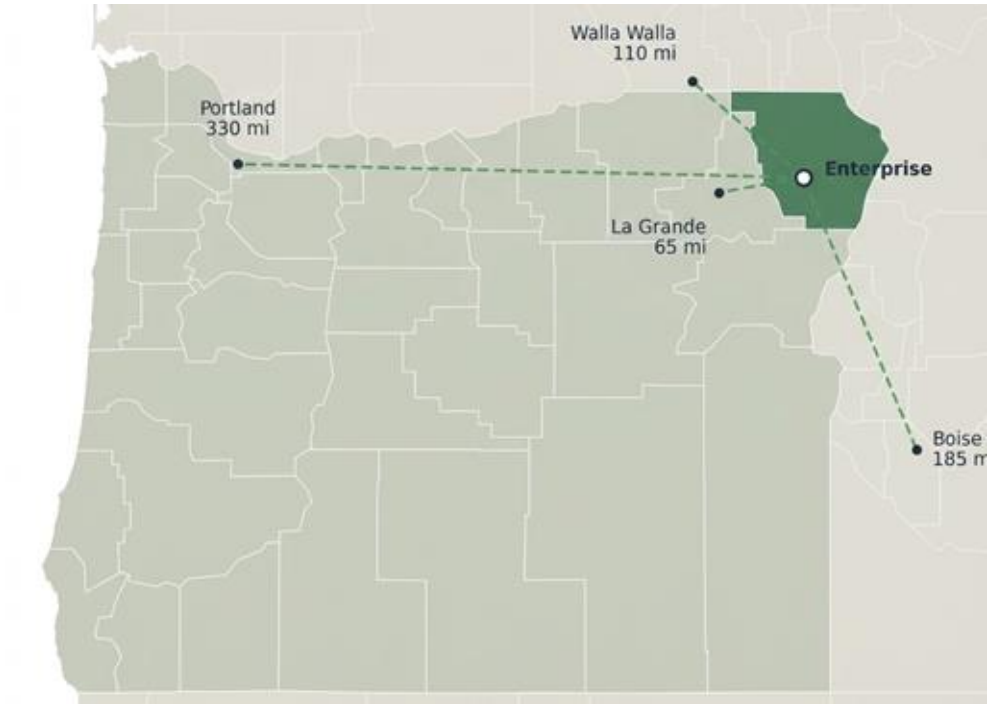


THE PLACE

Why Winding Waters?

WALLOWA COUNTY BY THE NUMBERS

7,553	3,146	2.4	0
people	square miles	people per square mile	urgent care clinics



Distances approximate, from Enterprise.



Photo credit: @heyjpipe

SPOILER ALERT!!

Three Main Things I Heard

1. Grounded in their vision, for the long haul

2. Integration and trusted partnerships, breaking traditional silos

3. Some traits I observed, which they hire for and continually reinforce as an organization:

   · ***Relentless hustlers*** · ***Entrepreneurial*** · ***Empowered***

   · ***Scrappy*** · ***Community minded*** · ***Nimble*** · ***Supportive***

WHAT STAYS LOCAL

Specialty Care Access

In the county

- Family medicine
- General surgery
- Orthopedics
- Podiatry
- Urology
- Infusion
- Birthing center
- Level IV trauma
- Family medicine specialists doing C-sections, scopes, and procedures
- Onsite MRI*
- 3D mammography and breast biopsy*
- CT with cardiac calcium scoring*

Visiting or by video

- Oncology, by video
- Rheumatology, by video
- Dermatology, two Fridays a month
- Orthopedics, about four days a month
- Urology, three days a month
- Psychiatry, through the behavioral health center
- Audiology, monthly
- Complex dental extractions, visiting dentist
- Mohs dermatology, monthly from Bend*

Must travel

- Cardiology
- Neurology
- Pulmonology
- Nephrology
- Endocrinology
- Ear, nose, and throat
- Ophthalmology
- Sleep medicine
- Pain medicine
- Pediatric subspecialties

* Coming through 2026 Rural Health Transformation Program awards to Wallowa Memorial Hospital.
Cardiology came from one visiting physician for more than ten years. He retired in August 2026.



Photo credit: @roarknelson

GEOGRAPHY

Getting In or Out Is Not a Given

65 miles to the nearest larger hospital.

On a road that can close in winter.

And patients don’t want to travel for care.

So they do what they can in county:

- C-sections and local obstetrics
- Colonoscopies and upper endoscopies
- Dermatology handled in clinic before referring out
- Cross-trained teams at the top of their licenses

STEPPING IN

When Something Closes Here, It Just Closes…

The question they keep asking: *"What would losing this (fill in the blank) mean for the county?"*
The answer is usually: *"It would mean too much to not take over or support it to continue."*



2017

Dental in Joseph

Took over the town's only dental practice as its dentist retired, then added medical care.

2018

Public health

County handed authority back to the state. Winding Waters delivers it under contract.

2023

Pharmacy

The last independent pharmacy closed, and the one chain store was not meeting the need. Winding Waters runs the only sliding-fee pharmacies in the county.

Now

End-of-life care

No hospice, and hospital home health closed. Their visiting nurses carry it.

FIFTY YEARS

Improving Lives in Wallowa County for Over 50 Years





1972
Private practice

2007
RHC
Rural Health Clinic

2013
Nonprofit; Wallowa clinic closes

2015
FQHC
PCPCH ★★★
Federally Qualified Health Center; Oregon's first three-star PCPCH

2017
PATIENT CENTERED PRIMARY CARE HOME 5 STAR
PCPCH ★★★★★
Dental in Joseph; Oregon's first five-star PCPCH

2018
Public health

2021
Hearts for Health

2023
Wallowa clinic and pharmacy reopen

● Certification earned. PCPCH: Oregon's Patient-Centered Primary Care Home program.

INTEGRATION

A Recipe for Integration and Partnership

Tend the trust

Between leaders, and between the people who work across organizations. Constantly.

Commit on paper

Hearts for Health is co-owned 50/50 with the behavioral health center. Both guarantee the loan.

Design the space

Exam rooms, dental chairs, and counseling rooms mixed, not split into wings.

Take the time

Shortcut trust or design, and the result gets watered down.

"My stress level dropped 300 percent when we did this integration [with Hearts for Health]."

Winding Waters clinician, 2016



TECHNOLOGY ENABLERS

Tools That Help Trust Form and Hold



Illustration, not an actual message thread.

TigerConnect secure chat

One secure chat across clinic, hospital, dental, behavioral health, and public health.

Shared records

All three on Epic, kept current. A new imaging interface between clinic and hospital is coming through RHTP, likely a year out.

Telehealth

Specialists by video support family medicine specialists doing more locally.

Mobile by design

Laptops, tablets, home visit bags, portable otoscopes and ophthalmoscopes, eye, ear, and wound totes, portable ultrasound. Few fixed desktops.

AI, watched closely

Helping with documentation and compliance for now. Watching for rural problems it could reliably help solve.

Simple tools and workarounds often are the seed to innovation that delivers value and improves integration day to day.

SCOPE

What They Have Taken On

Behavioral health

Therapists in primary care, plus the partner center

Dental

Only county dental provider taking Medicaid coverage

Pharmacy

Two locations, sliding fee

Public health

Under contract with the state

Schools

Counseling, Nursing, Immunizations

Legal help

An attorney in the clinic weekly

Home and end of life

Visiting nurse service

County coalition

About two dozen organizations, monthly



On the horizon

Nutrition services

Applied for HRSA funding in September 2026 to add a registered dietitian.

Becoming the county DME supplier

The county’s only supplier shut down years ago. Newly funded to certify, running through their pharmacies.

PARTNERSHIP

The Clinic and the Hospital Prop Each Other Up

6 of 8
weeks of hospitalist coverage

6 of 8
weeks of obstetric coverage
staffed by Winding Waters physicians

20 to 30%
of emergency department coverage

What Winding Waters brings to the hospital

- Hospitalist, obstetric, and emergency coverage
- One of two C-section qualified physicians in the county
- Weekly procedures: colonoscopies, endoscopies, stress tests
- Lots of lab and imaging orders



What the hospital keeps in the county

- An emergency department and Level IV trauma center
- A birthing center
- Surgery and procedure space
- Inpatient beds, 25 as a Critical Access Hospital
- A new $2M maternal and newborn initiative*

* Rural Health Transformation Program award, 2026. Sources: Nic Powers, September 12, 2026; Wallowa County Health Care District audit, FY2025; Wallowa.com, September 21, 2026.

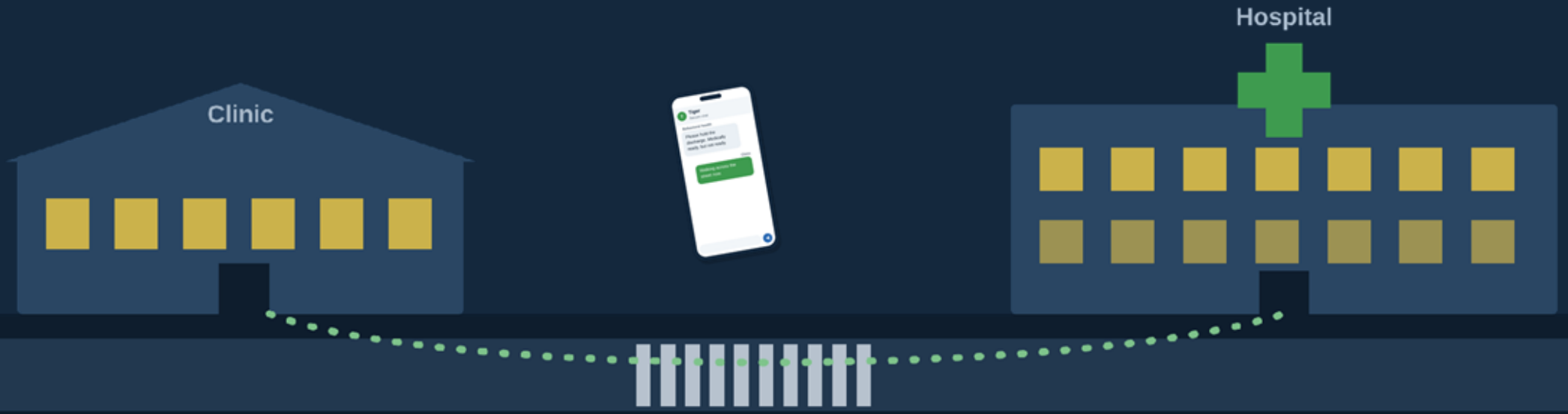
IN PRACTICE

Medically ready is not the same as ready.

A shared building.
A trusted hospital across the street.
A message on TigerConnect.
A small community.



Hearts for Health, across Medical Parkway from the hospital



CULTURE

They Hire for This, and Reinforce It Every Day

- **Relentless hustlers**

  Every designation and grant, aimed at the vision

- **Scrappy**

  Cross-trained, working at the top of their license

- **Nimble**

  An org chart that keeps changing with the people in it and as the circumstances require

- **Entrepreneurial and empowered**

  Told no on a needed role, found another route

- **Community minded**

  Picking up what would otherwise close

- **We take care of one another**

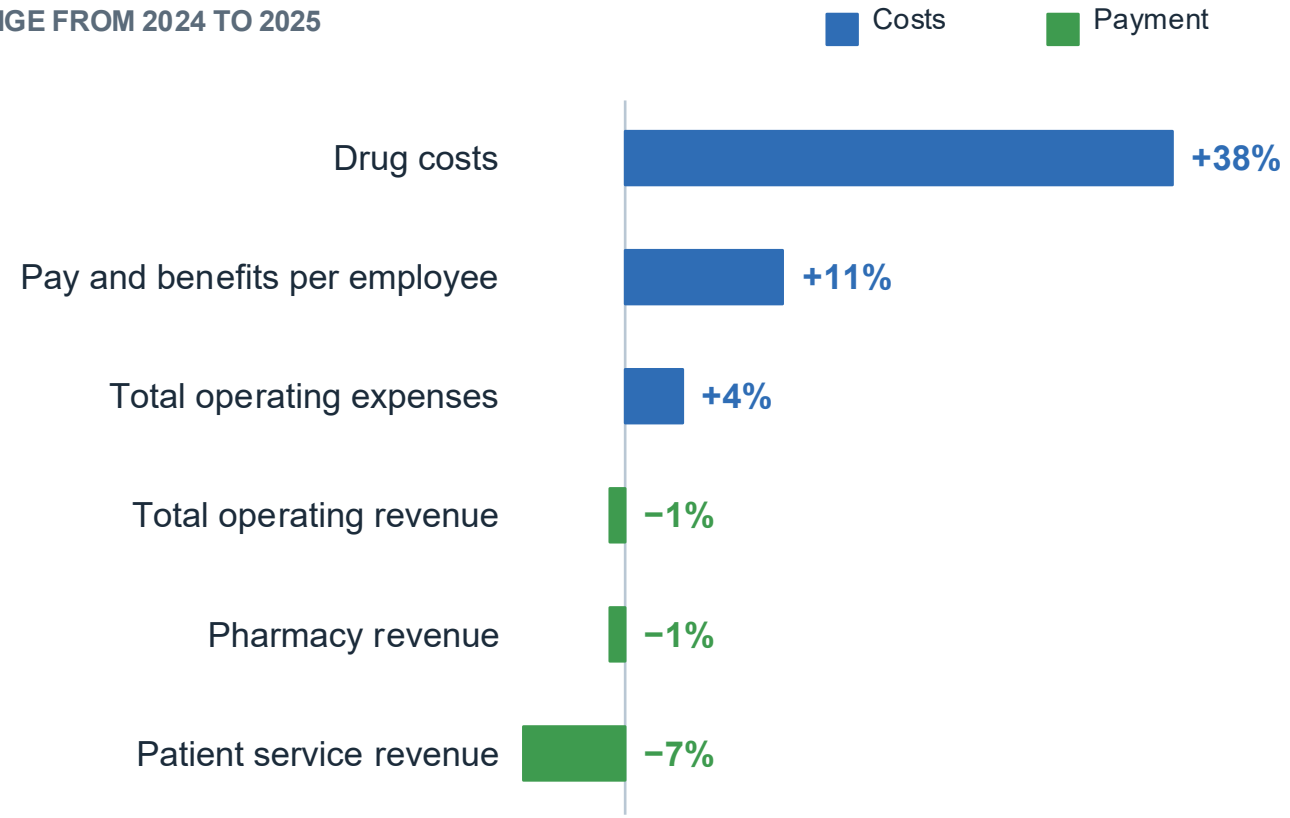
  7 am all-staff, shared peer review, coaching, flexible schedules



FINANCES

Costs Are Rising Faster Than Payment

CHANGE FROM 2024 TO 2025



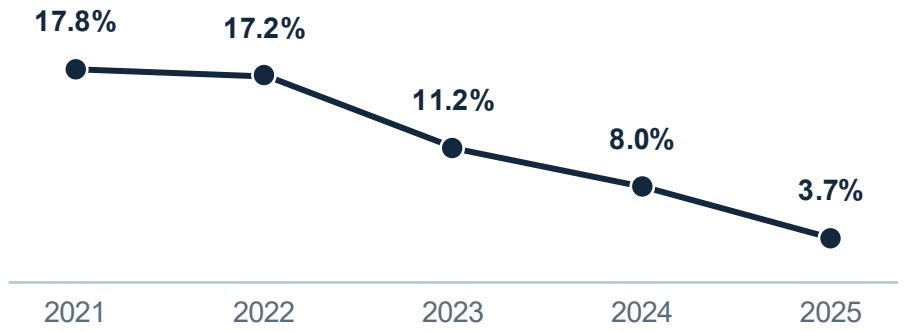
HEALTH INSURANCE, 2026

$1,323

per employee per month

Up from $606 in 2020. Two carrier switches and renewals of 29%, 11%, and 30% along the way. 2027 rates are still unknown.

Operating margin



Winding Waters 2025 audited financial statements and DZA financial indicators; health insurance renewal history provided by Winding Waters.

SUSTAINABILITY

Staying Solvent Takes Constant Hustle

Every layer has to be earned, applied for, renewed, and defended.

What they hold

FQHC, PCPCH

FQHC since 2015, with enhanced visit rates and a floor under Medicaid plan payments.

PCPCH: Oregon's first 3-star (2015) and 5-star (2017). Renewed at Tier 5 with new Equity designation (2025).

Malpractice coverage

Federal FQHC coverage that makes obstetrics sustainable. First earned in 2017.

340B drug pricing

Supports the medication sliding fee discount program and pharmacy operations.

Grants

$2.6M in 2025, about 15% of revenue. What lets them try things.

Always applying

$500K a year

HRSA Expanded Hours grant, awarded late 2024

$550K over two years

Oregon Rural Health Transformation Program: "HOME" project for community medication access, awarded July 2026

$300K application

HRSA Expanding Nutrition Services grant application, submitted September 2026

FUNDING

Rural Health Transformation in Wallowa County

Oregon funded fewer than 17% of the dollars requested. Several Wallowa County partners won.

$550K

Winding Waters

Pharmacy locker in Joseph, plus home delivery by a pharmacy tech who is becoming a community health worker.

Nic notes the first round left rural FQHCs out. OHA is making up for it with added awards at lower per-site amounts. The medical-legal partnership is still unfunded.

$5.4M

Wallowa Memorial Hospital

Onsite MRI, maternal and newborn care, 3D mammography and biopsy, CT, Mohs dermatology, and an imaging interface with Winding Waters/OCHIN Epic.

$2.2M

Wallowa Valley Center for Wellness

A Catalyst cybersecurity award, plus school mental health expanding to up to four days a week.

$2.3M

Northeast Oregon Network

Statewide community health worker training in English and Spanish, with partners including Columbia Gorge Health Council.

$356K

Northeast Oregon AHEC

Preceptor payments for clinicians who train students across Eastern Oregon.

Worth noting: Year 2 depends on more federal funding. And one-time money raises the question on the next slide: what sustains the work after?

Oregon Health Authority, RHTP awards; Wallowa.com, September 21, 2026. Amounts are two-year totals where listed; Year 2 not guaranteed.

MEASUREMENT

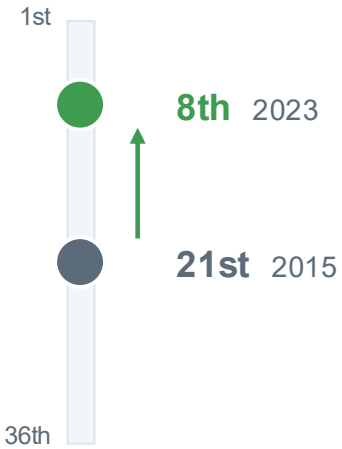
Proving the Value of the Connective Tissue

"I'm confident our teams significantly improve long-term outcomes for patients, and for the county in many ways . . . And it's very hard to prove."

Nic Powers, CEO, Winding Waters

AN OUTCOME SIGNAL

21st to 8th

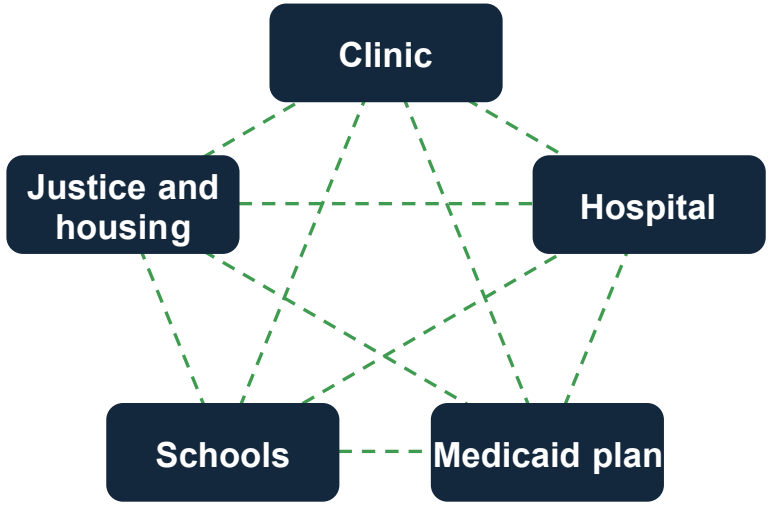


Wallowa County health ranking among 36 Oregon counties

It lines up with the model. It does not prove it.

Source: OHSU Foundation, 2024.

WHO COUNTS THE LINES?



The rural catch: in a county of 7,500 the numbers are small. A study like this example may need several rural counties together.

CROSS BUDGET COST STUDY: AN EXAMPLE OF A METHOD

Home Not Found:



Santa Clara County: 25 million records for 104,206 people, linked across health, justice, housing, and social services. The top 10% of people accounted for 61% of cost.



Average yearly public cost for the highest-cost group, before and after housing. Infographic and figures: Economic Roundtable and Destination: Home, Home Not Found, 2015.

THE FIRST INGREDIENT

Visionary, entrepreneurial, clinical leadership.

From the founding physicians in 1972 to Dr. Liz Powers today.

PULLING IT TOGETHER

The Recipe, as I Heard It

1

Grounded in vision, for the long haul

Get the status that changes the math, in sequence. Be willing to stop and come back.

2

Integration and trusted partnerships

Tend the trust. Commit on paper. Design the space. Look for tools. Take the time.

3

Values they hire for

Relentless hustlers. Entrepreneurial and empowered. Scrappy. Community minded. Nimble. We take care of one another.

What makes it fragile: much depends on specific people, and on value that is hard to prove.

OPEN QUESTIONS

What I Am Still Sitting With

- Can prevention be shown in dollars before the benefits that pay for it get cut?
- Who pays for the coordination nobody bills for?
- What happens when key clinicians and/or visionary leaders move on?
- How will H.R.1. impacts be felt in Wallowa County and by Winding Waters?

"It takes the whole to make you whole again."

A patient's daughter, Winding Waters, 2024

Max Holfert
Bridgework Collaborative

Winding Waters
Your Health Care Home

Questions? Suggestions?

Nic Powers
CEO, Winding Waters