



City of Chiloquin

INCORPORATED 1926

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Project Summary: Chiloquin Connects

Chiloquin Connects is an innovative community engagement strategy designed to empower residents in Chiloquin, Oregon, by streamlining public participation in local government and community development. By consolidating outreach efforts into quarterly events featuring interactive booths, formal presentations, and incentive-based participation, Chiloquin Connects fosters inclusivity, transparency, and meaningful resident involvement. This initiative ensures that historically underserved populations have a voice in shaping Chiloquin's future while maximizing limited municipal resources. With support from local organizations, community residents, and state and federal partners, Chiloquin Connects is strengthening civic engagement and laying the groundwork for a revitalized, vibrant, and resilient community.

Chiloquin Connects: Connecting Our Community

Project Need

Chiloquin, a small rural town in south-central Oregon (population 786), has faced long-standing economic and social challenges due to the decline of the timber industry, the dissolution of The Klamath Tribes, and the effects of COVID-19. High unemployment, poverty, infrastructure decay, and limited access to basic services have historically hindered community engagement and development. However, the city is on the cusp of significant revitalization, with major infrastructure and economic development projects underway. Given the sheer number of upcoming projects and the need for public input and discussion, there was a pressing need to create an inclusive, efficient, and engaging outreach process that encouraged public participation without overburdening community members or municipal resources.

Goals

Chiloquin Connects was designed to:

- Engage residents in local government processes.
- Enhance awareness of decision-making and foster local leadership.
- Create an inclusive and replicable model for community participation.
- Ensure that historically underserved populations have a voice in shaping community projects and policies.
- Improve transparency, communication, and accessibility of civic engagement opportunities.

Project Implementation

Chiloquin Connects achieves its objectives through a unique quarterly engagement model:

1. **Quarterly Public Meetings** – Each event serves as a ‘one-stop shop’ for residents to engage with multiple community initiatives simultaneously. Several critical city projects and initiatives have been presented during the three Chiloquin Connects meetings, including the new water well project, the wastewater project, the Safe Routes to School project, and the parks master plan. In addition, ODOT’s Great Streets Program, the CVIP’s Main Street Revitalization project of the HIRVI Building, the Sierra Service Project’s summer youth volunteer program, the CF&R Defensible Space program, the Klamath Tribes’ new policing department and planning department projects, and programs available to residents from Energy Trust, Hunter Communications, Pacific Crest Federal Credit Union, Klamath Jobs, and KLCS.
2. **Open House Format** – Informational booths from different organizations provide direct access to resources and project updates. Participating organizations have included the Oregon Department of Transportation, US Environmental Protection Agency, Klamath & Lake Community Action Services, Klamath Tribes, Energy Trust of Oregon, Chiloquin Visions in Progress, Pacific Crest Federal Credit Union, Hunter Communications, Klamath Jobs, Adkins Engineering, Cameron McCarthy, Chiloquin Fire & Rescue, Chiloquin Vector Control District, and Sierra Service Project.
3. **Incentive-Based Participation** – Residents receive “passports” requiring them to visit booths to earn a meal and door prize entries, increasing engagement.
4. **Formal Presentations** – Key community stakeholders present updates and collect feedback from attendees.
5. **Coordinated Outreach** – Leveraging social media, newsletters, and local organizational networks to ensure broad community awareness and participation.

Innovative Aspects

Chiloquin Connects stands out due to its:

- **Efficiency:** Consolidating multiple outreach efforts into one event reduces redundancy and ensures community members are not overwhelmed by excessive meetings.
- **Inclusivity:** By providing food, prizes, and accessible venues, the program encourages participation from marginalized groups, including Native American, low-income, homeless, and disabled residents.
- **Collaboration:** Multiple organizations work together to provide a unified platform for resident engagement.
- **Scalability:** The model can be replicated in other small towns facing similar engagement barriers.

Project Funding

Chiloquin Connects operates on a cost-sharing model:

- Participating organizations donate door prizes.
- Chiloquin Visions In Progress provides the event venue.
- Sponsoring organizations rotate responsibility for providing light meals.

Challenges and Solutions

The primary challenge was ensuring consistent attendance and participation. This was addressed by incorporating:

- Incentives (meals and door prizes).
- Strategic outreach via trusted community partners.
- Flexible scheduling to accommodate diverse residents.

Impact and Benefits

Since its launch, Chiloquin Connects has:

- Increased resident participation in local governance and community planning. Before Chiloquin Connects meetings, the city saw an average of 5 to 15 residents attending public meetings; however, with Chiloquin Connects, the number has increased to 40 to 100 residents in attendance.
- Improved communication between the city, residents, and partner organizations.
- Enhanced community trust and investment in local initiatives.
- Provided a replicable model for other small towns facing similar engagement challenges.

Conclusion

Chiloquin Connects is transforming civic engagement in Chiloquin by making participation accessible, inclusive, and impactful. As the city approaches its 100th anniversary in 2026, this initiative is playing a pivotal role in ensuring that residents are active partners in shaping their community's future. By fostering relationships, enhancing transparency, and empowering voices that have historically been unheard, Chiloquin Connects exemplifies the principles of good governance and serves as a model for small-town community engagement across the nation.



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