Thursday, March 19

12:00 pm  Lunch Available

12:15 pm  Welcome
  •  James D. Ogsbury, Executive Director, Western Governors’ Association

12:20 pm  Opening Remarks
  •  The Honorable Kate Brown, Governor of Oregon

12:30 pm  Keynote: TBD

1:00 pm  Rural Water Infrastructure
Some rural communities still lack basic water and sanitary services, while others cannot maintain or upgrade existing infrastructure due to high costs and small user bases. This panel will examine the complexity surrounding water infrastructure investment and profile success stories.

  •  David Flesher, Community Programs Specialist, Rural Utilities Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture
  •  George McGraw, CEO, DigDeep
• Ari Neumann, Director of Community & Environmental Services, RCAC

2:00 pm Break

2:10 pm Rural Banking and Access to Credit
Community banks often serve as the primary source of credit for small businesses, homeowners, farmers and ranchers. As the trend of bank branch closures continues in rural areas, access to financial services is limited. This panel will examine the impact of these changes and explore efforts to increase the flow of capital to rural communities.

• Eric Hardmeyer, President/CEO, Bank of North Dakota
• Elsie Meeks, Board of Trustees Chair, Native American Agricultural Fund
• Lisa Smith, Executive Director, Washington State Microenterprise Association

3:20 pm Innovative Solutions for Attainable Housing
An adequate supply of housing is essential for communities to attract new residents and support economic growth. Housing stock in rural communities, however, is often limited, aged or unaffordable for workers. This panel will explore creative solutions western communities are using to fill the gap. Panelists will discuss pilot projects in Oregon and innovative models from other states to identify replicable solutions to housing challenges across the rural west.

• TBD, Oregon Housing & Community Services
• Natalie Spencer-Clair, Founder, APX1

4:30 pm Adjourn

4:30-6 pm Reception at Freebridge Brewing
Please join us for a reception at Freebridge Brewing (710 E. 2nd St, The Dalles) immediately following the conclusion of Thursday's workshop sessions.

Friday, March 20

7:30 am Breakfast Available

8:00 am Keynote: Economic Transitions in the West
Rural western communities are struggling with profound economic transitions. Many seek to reimagine their economic futures. This keynote will explain new research on how people, business, and government are working together to create more diverse and resilient economies. The talk will focus on proven solution approaches and regional case study lessons.
• **Ben Alexander**, Senior Program Advisor, Resources Legacy Fund

8:30 am  **Broadband Collaboration**
This panel will explore how communities are assembling broad coalitions to work toward the shared goal of broadband access. The panel will also discuss how regional or cross-sector collaboration can alleviate local government capacity constraints to advance rural development objectives.

- **Russ Elliott**, Director, Washington State Broadband Office
- **John Huffman**, Oregon State Director, Rural Development, U.S. Department of Agriculture
- **Carrie Pipinich**, Senior Project Manager, Mid-Columbia Economic Development District

9:30 am  **Break**

9:40 am  **Trends in Western Agriculture**
According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, one-third of America’s 3.4 million farmers are over the age of 65, and nearly a million more are within a decade of achieving that milestone. Growing participation of young farmers and historically under-represented communities in the agricultural economy can help address the challenges presented by an aging workforce. This panel will examine how young farmers and ranchers, women, veterans and minorities are changing agriculture in the West.

- **Christopher Mertz**, Regional Director, National Agricultural Statistics Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture

10:45 am  **Managing Wildfire Risk in Rural Communities**
Wildfires affect rural communities in many ways: destroying homes, polluting water supplies, and limiting recreational and business opportunities. This panel will examine how communities can mitigate risks of wildfire and prepare residents and businesses for post-wildfire scenarios.

- **John Giller**, Director of Fire, Fuels & Aviation, Region 6, U.S. Forest Service
- **Cassandra Moseley**, Research Professor, Institute for a Sustainable Environment, University of Oregon

11:45 am  **Closing Remarks**

- **Lauren DeNinno**, Policy Advisor, Western Governors’ Association

12:00 pm  **Adjourn**