



Community Solutions
of Central Oregon

Strategic Plan

Our strategy to bring lasting solutions
to Central Oregon communities

Approved for implementation by the Board of Directors
July 27, 2016



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1. Executive Summary

What we do

We help people have difficult conversations, and then some. Since inception in 1997, our emphasis on providing assistance to individuals and groups from many communities locked in disputes has come in the form of neutral, third-party mediation. That has been and continues to be our signature service. As we approach our 20th year as a nonprofit organization incorporated as a 501(c)(3) in Oregon, the numbers speak for themselves: An estimated 3,200+ unique cases, supported by 450+ volunteer mediators, directly impacting some 10,000+ individuals, all while achieving a collective 70% success rate in reaching a wide range of compromise, consensus, or agreement. We're well established, very experienced, and the most affordable dispute resolvers you'll find.

Why we succeed

Our people, of course. Regardless of the changes in our environment, the newest techniques or standards in mediation, or the latest adaptations in strategy, technology, or funding, one thing remains a hallmark for which we're known: Talent. The members of our Board of Directors have and always will share a common passion; to bring their personal and professional talents to bear to keep our organization relevant and strategically focused. Our executive management and staff have been well-placed and experienced in handling a wide range of dispute resolution, program development, and financial planning matters. As for our volunteers; we view and treat them as committed, integral partners in pursuit of our mission. Their individual and collective talents in dispute resolution are second to none; they remain our core strength and represent what's most exciting about our work.

By the numbers

We're the smallest big operation in our region. It's all about how one assesses value. Our funding derives from either contributed or earned income that directly supports the planning, administrative, and professionalized needs our work demands. As a nonprofit corporation with annual revenue under \$250K, we measure valuation in terms of community impacts (during FY 2016 alone): An estimated 750+ hours engaged in difficult conversations, some 500+ people directly impacted by our dispute resolution services, an estimated \$12M+ in home foreclosures avoided, countless thousands of

dollars in court-related legal costs saved, and more than \$17K+ worth of volunteer hours contributed.

Our direction

Our strategy is designed to create new pathways for Oregon communities. For us this means expanding services and capacity to do more along three separate but related dispute resolution pathways: Mediation, Facilitation, and Education. This also means a renewed emphasis to diversify our funding sources, while at the same time continuing to brand ourselves as a center of excellence for appropriate dispute resolution in our tri-county region. Our past has been a success and our future is even more compelling, the details for which lie within this Strategic Plan. We are well positioned to offer new and dynamic programs to meet the ever changing needs of our industry and the communities we serve.



2. Vision, Mission, and Values

Vision

The Vision for Community Solutions of Central Oregon (Community Solutions) is to *transform communities through communication*. Our Vision statement is meant to remind us that improvements in interpersonal communications can have a great impact on issues and events shaping Central Oregon communities. We see ourselves as influence agents through:

- Practicing both time-tested and emergent communication techniques
- Promoting skilled communication as the best way of resolving disputes
- Diversifying our programs and services to meet changing community needs
- Advocating for most-appropriate levels of public funding for our profession

Mission

The Mission for Community Solutions is to *help people have difficult conversations*. Our Mission statement is our compass heading, meant to keep us on the right path when confronted with challenging disputes; to guide people stepping into difficult, sometimes painful conversations. We view our mission as essential because:

- Difficult conversations are often the first step in helping resolve conflict
- Engaging in such conversations helps to confront conflict head-on
- Communications are shaped by challenges, perceptions, and emotions
- Our professional role is to foster meaningful, effective dialogue

Values

The Values of Community Solutions serve as *standards by which we conduct ourselves in all matters*; developing programs, working in partnerships, making executive decisions, interacting with those we serve, and so much more. These include:

- Leadership: We are innovators in dispute resolution in this region providing influence, information, and inspiration.

- Quality: We are committed to delivering the best services in mediation, facilitation, and education.

- Trust: We are consistent, reliable, and accountable to our clients, partners, and the communities we serve.



3. Goals and Objectives

Our collaborative approach to strategic planning included group research, work sessions, and one-on-one brainstorming over a period of months. We came to agreement on a goal-development approach that emphasized four imperatives common amongst successful organizations; *people, practices, programs (or products), and finances*. Our resulting four strategic goals and supporting objectives follow.

Our People

Well-known for the highly qualified people we attract, develop, and retain.

- ❖ By *well-known* we mean having a popular and professional reputation among our clients, key stakeholders and collaborative partners.
- ❖ By *highly qualified* we mean having obtained in-depth training, education, performance, and certification levels of achievement and experience.
 - A growth-oriented organization that is right-sized for the mission.
 - A professional and innovative Board of Directors environment.
 - An accomplished staff expertly managing our programs and services.
 - Dedicated volunteers who are integral to mission accomplishment.
 - Wide-ranging Board, staff, and volunteer career development opportunities.
 - Integration of mediation standards and requirements organization-wide.
 - Challenging team collaboratives for project, program, and training initiatives.

Our Practices

Standard setting practices critical to daily work, decision-making, and mission success.

- ❖ By *Standard setting* we mean performance levels others are compelled to match.
- ❖ By *practices* we mean those critical activities that must be expertly accomplished in order to grow and sustain the organization over the long-term.
 - Established governance practices in line with our oversight and fiduciary roles.
 - Utilize smart model matrices to aid organizational decision-making.
 - Comprehensive case management supporting mediators, clients and referrals.
 - Challenging volunteer commitments based upon mission requirements.
 - Innovative community outreach with influential public and private leaders.
 - Efficient service, financial, and annual reporting to Stakeholders.
 - Targeted marketing that highlights the benefits and value of dispute resolution.

Our Programs

State-wide recognition for the positive impact of our dispute resolution programs.

- ❖ By *State-wide* recognition we mean public and private acknowledgement by Oregon-based stakeholders for the leadership, quality, and trust inherent in our work.
- ❖ By *positive impact* we mean having performance measures to validate client hopes and confidence that our efforts will result in long-term, intact agreements.
 - Flexible program design and development for all dispute resolution services.
 - Enhance public focused programs to emphasize family and parenting success.
 - Integrate dispute resolution programs to meet wide-ranging government needs.
 - Adapt existing Restorative Justice programs to benefit youth in schools.
 - Provide dispute resolution support to business employee assistance programs.
 - Support nonprofit needs through customized mediation and facilitation services.
 - Leverage information/communications technology to enhance program delivery.

Our Finances

Growth built upon a diverse range of grant awards, service contracts, and donations.

- ❖ By *Growth* we mean expansion of services and programs and the requisite increase and development of organizational staff, volunteers, and board members.
- ❖ By *diverse range* we mean the requisite mix of multiple fund types that are directly related to our mission, services and programs.
 - Requisite funding for all budget-approved organizational needs.
 - Standardized financial statements, budgets, and annual reports.
 - Expert administration of managerial and financial accounting responsibilities.
 - Multiple service partner agreements and contracts with community partners.
 - Multi-faceted private donation initiatives to augment our fundraising plans.
 - Expand engagement of fund granters to resource specific programs.
 - Increase revenue generation through most appropriate fees for services.

Our strategic goals and supporting objectives were developed to help us meet ever-changing mission requirements over the coming years. Although imperative, they are not cut in stone. Each can be modified should measurable progress, internal/external conditions, or changes in community or stakeholder needs compel us to do so at any time during implementation.



Appendix A – Organization Background

Origins

Community Solutions is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization incorporated in the State of Oregon since 1997. Originally incorporated as the ‘Community Dispute Resolution Program for Deschutes County’ the organization quickly developed quality mediation services at low cost. As a result, the organization changed its name to ‘Central Oregon Mediation’ to emphasize its principle mediation services to other communities throughout Deschutes, Crook, and Jefferson counties, receiving State legislation-sponsored funds through the Oregon Office of Community Dispute Resolution (OOCDR) to ensure services were affordable to all, regardless of income.

Association

One of 16 Community Dispute Resolution Centers (CDRC) State-wide to receive grant funding, Community Solutions meets its annual matching funds requirement through earned income from a variety of service contracts and self-sustaining fees for services. Collectively known as the Oregon Association of Community Dispute Resolution Centers (OACDRC), each center provides varying degrees of dispute resolution programs and services. Several centers also provide Restorative Justice programs and services as member organizations of the Restorative Justice Coalition (RJCO). With the majority of centers located in/around the Portland metropolitan area or Willamette Valley, Community Solutions remains one-of-three centers east of the Cascades.

Funding

The organization is funded through continued OOCDR biennium grants, as well as through service contracts with Deschutes County; the City of Bend; the administrator of the Oregon Foreclosure Avoidance Program (OFAP), Mediation Case Manager (MCM), and; the Oregon Housing of Community Services, Manufactured Communities Resource Center (MCRC). The organization also realizes modest revenue from private mediation services provided to parties who pay either hourly flat-rate or reduced-rate fees based on assessed ability to pay and the impact of that on their quality of life.

Programs

Three dispute resolution programs dominate today's activities, collectively accounting for 90% of all services provided throughout the year. These programs include (a) the *Family Mediation program*, providing couples and parents in the midst of separation, divorce, relationship and/or parenting conflict with tailored resolution services through the efforts of co-mediators; (b) the *Pre-Trial Mediation program*, providing plaintiffs and defendants filing through small claims court with specialized mediation through the efforts of court-trained mediators, and; (c) the *Foreclosure Avoidance Mediation program*, providing homeowners at risk of losing their home with facilitated mediation that includes mortgage lender, legal representative, and housing counselor participants through the efforts of program certified mediators.

Emphasis

Today's organization offers comprehensive mediation, facilitation, and education programs and services throughout the tri-county region. Our clients include families, neighbors, groups, businesses, nonprofits, schools, court filers, municipalities, county departments, and State agencies. Recently renamed 'Community Solutions' to better reflect these enhanced services, the organization is governed by a Board of Directors, and managed by an Executive Director and Case Manager. Our volunteer program includes 35 professionally trained and experienced mediators who collectively handle approximately 250 unique cases per year. These efforts, in many cases, contribute to lasting, positive solutions that directly impact up to 600 persons/organizations annually.



Appendix B – Key Stakeholders

Key Stakeholders are people, groups or organizations that have interests or concerns in our organization. Our stakeholders are a combination of grant funders, government entities, resource providers, and nonprofit associations; our employees, volunteers, and clientele from the communities we serve also meet this standard. Each can affect or be affected by our strategic plan, our policies, and actions.

Our strategic plan is of the utmost importance to these stakeholders in that the goals, objectives and actions we intend to pursue can either define or redefine our relationship with each. We've kept this in mind during our work sessions, as our intent is to protect stakeholder interests and alleviate their concerns. At the time our strategic plan was approved, Key Stakeholders – categorically – included:

Grant Funders

- The Oregon Office of Community Dispute Resolution (OOCDR)
- Manufactured Communities Resource Center (MCRC)

Government Entities

- Deschutes County
- The City of Bend

Resource Providers

- Mediation Case Manager, Inc. (MCM)
- Deschutes Children's Foundation (DCF)

Nonprofit Associations

- Oregon Mediation Association (OMA)
- Oregon Association of Community Dispute Resolution Centers (OACDRC)



Appendix C – Collaborative Partnerships

Collaborative partnerships are agreements and actions made by consenting organizations to share resources to accomplish a mutual goal. We have such partners, with whom we agree to share resources, such as finances, knowledge, and people.

Our Strategic Plan sends a clear signal to our partners that we not only intend to sustain such collaborative efforts, but that we're actively looking to expand such as opportunities emerge. We've communicated this throughout our organization, with the intent of promoting an institutional mindset of passion for our work, and immediately rewarding new ideas, continuous networking, and a spirit of innovation. At the time our Strategic Plan was approved, our collaborative partnerships included:

Circuit Courts

A long established partnership, we work closely with the mediation program coordinators at both the 11th Circuit Court in Bend, and the 22nd Circuit Court in Madras. Our mutual goal is successful mediation agreements for court filers; we share knowledge and people.

Justice Court

A long established partnership, we work closely with the court coordinator for the Deschutes County Justice Court in Redmond. Our mutual goal is successful mediation agreements for court filers; we share knowledge and people.

NeighborImpact

A growing partnership, we work closely with the housing counselors within the HomeSource program of NeighborImpact. Our mutual goal is successful avoidance of foreclosure by at-risk homeowners; we share knowledge and people.

National Policy Consensus Center

A new partnership, we have begun work with program and project managers within the Oregon Consensus and Oregon Kitchen Table arms of NPCC. Our mutual goal is successful facilitation and mutually beneficial training; we share knowledge and people.

Association of Oregon Counties

An emergent partnership, we have begun work with the executive director and staff members of the AOC Oregon County Solutions Center. Our mutual goal is integration of dispute resolution services in support of County programs, collaboratives, and plans; we share knowledge.



Appendix D – Contact Information

Our office address:

1029 NW 14th Street, Suite 104
Bend, OR 97703

Call or email us for information or support:

(541) 383-0187
support@solutionsco.org

Our cool website:

www.solutionsco.org

Find and follow us on social media:



www.facebook.com/solutionsco



@solutionsco



www.linkedin.com/in/solutionsco

Add us to your Google + Circle



plus.google.com/101090868442272949191

Email the Board of Directors:

board@solutionsco.org

Call, email or geo-locate our Executive Director:

(541) 318-6265
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