



**BETTER TOGETHER 10-YEAR ANNIVERSARY & VISION SUMMIT**

June 18, 2025 ○ Ridgeview High School



## Summit Agenda

- 11 a.m.**      **Welcome**, Overview of how Better Together serves Central Oregon
- 11:40 a.m.**    **Panel:** Origins and Evolution of Better Together in Central Oregon
- 12:20 p.m.**    **Lunch**
- 1:15 p.m.**      **Breakout #1:** Choose from four sessions
- 2:30 p.m.**      **Breakout #2:** Choose from four sessions
- 3:45 p.m.**      **Celebration** and closing activity
- 5–7 p.m.**      **Social** at The Annex Sports Bar, behind General Duffy's Waterhole in Redmond—appetizers provided! Plus a silent auction featuring concert tickets and more!

The Summit is a free and inclusive event thanks to our amazing sponsors.



Scan the QR Code to view the full program.



We can do **better**, if we do it **together**



# Breakout Sessions

## Breakout #1 | 1:15–2:15 p.m.

TOPIC AREA	COMMUNITY FACILITATOR	ROOM #
● <b>School Readiness, Reimagined</b>	Krissa Harris, Director, Early Learning Hub Mary Dailey, Project Manager, Early Learning Hub	A231
● <b>Inclusive Career Pathways</b>	Christy Walker, Dean Equity & Well-being, COCC	A230
● <b>Not Bend: Rural &amp; Place-based Engagement, &amp; Strategies</b>	Patti Norris, Rural Community Advocate, Prosper Path Advisors	A229
● <b>Economic Mobility: Adulting, Abundance, &amp; the Future</b>	Whitney Swander, Community Member & Consultant	A228

## Breakout #2 | 2:30–3:30 p.m.

TOPIC AREA	COMMUNITY FACILITATOR	ROOM #
● <b>Dream Big: Life, Learning, &amp; Work</b>	Heather Ficht, Executive Director, East Cascade Works	A231
● <b>Growing a Culture of Racial Equity</b>	Diane Murray, Community Member & Consultant Gelsyn Hernandez, Life Coach	A230
● <b>Next Level Youth &amp; Family Engagement</b>	Ruby Ruiz, Community Member & Prineville Family Council Facilitator Rutila Galvan-Rodriguez, Consultant, Bravo Consulting	A229
● <b>Economic Mobility: Adulting, Abundance, &amp; the Future</b>	Whitney Swander, Community Member & Consultant	A228

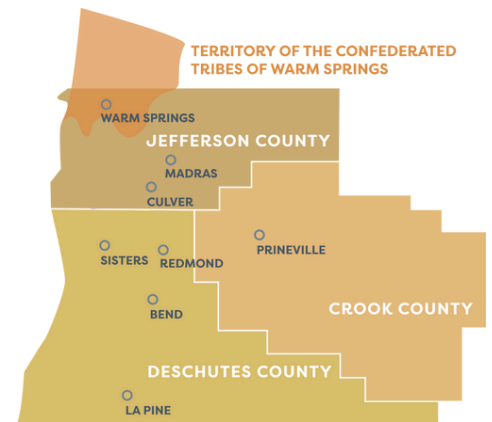


## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is Better Together?

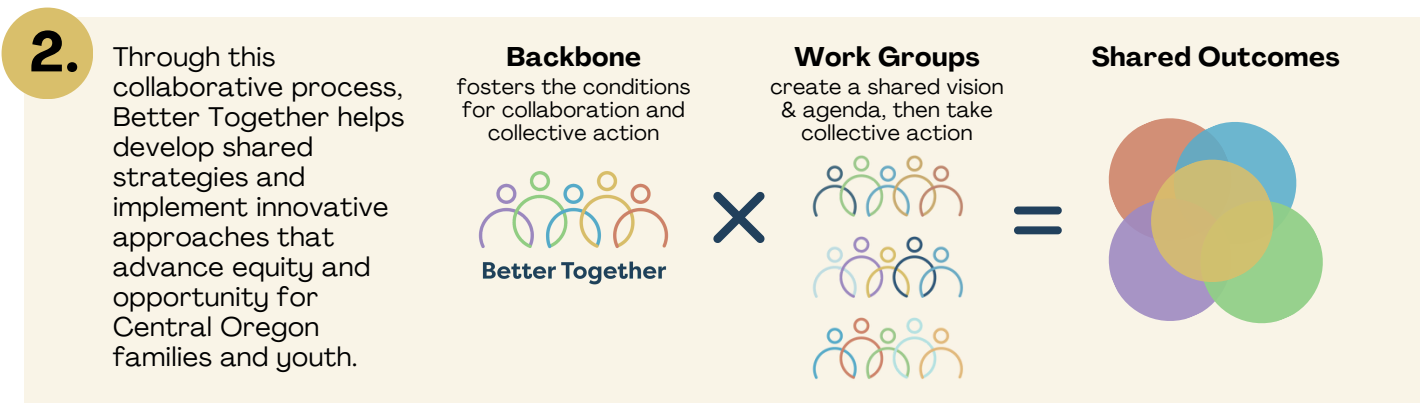
Better Together became a regional nonprofit in 2015. It operates as a backbone organization to catalyze cross-sector partnerships and address systemic challenges that no single organization or sector can solve alone. Better Together can also be described as:

- **A regional partnership** of 400+ diverse community stakeholders.
- **A movement** to ensure success for Central Oregon youth from before birth to careers.



### What does Better Together do?

Better Together uses a **collective action and impact process** to convene, facilitate, and nurture the development of shared priorities to complex challenges.





## Key Terms and Definitions

### Collective Impact

Collective Impact, sometimes referred to as **Place-Based Work**, is a way of **working together as a community to create big, lasting change**. Instead of one group trying to solve a problem alone, Collective Impact brings together people from all kinds of organizations—schools, nonprofits, businesses, and more—to work toward shared goals.

It's all about learning together, aligning our efforts, and moving in the same direction to make a difference for everyone, especially those who've been left out in the past.

There are five things that make Collective Impact work:

1. A common agenda
2. Ways to measure progress together
3. Different groups doing what they do best in a coordinated way
4. Regular, open communication
5. A strong team (called a backbone) to help guide the work

### Place-based

Place-based work focuses on creating change in a **specific location, like a county, city, or neighborhood**, by bringing together local people, organizations, and resources to design solutions that reflect the specific strengths, cultures, and priorities of that place.

### Backbone Organization

A backbone organization is an **independent team** that helps keep a big community effort like Collective Impact moving forward. They're not the boss," but they support and coordinate the work—kind of like the glue that holds everyone together.

**Backbone teams** do things like:

- Keep partners connected and communicating
- Help set shared goals and track progress
- Make sure voices from across the community are heard
- Provide behind-the-scenes support so others can focus on their part

### Equity

**Better Together** serves as the backbone for regional cradle-to-career efforts across Central Oregon.

Equity means making sure every child, family, and community has what they need to thrive—not just treating everyone the same, but recognizing that some people face bigger barriers than others.

When we **lead with equity**, we:

- Listen to those most impacted
- Remove unfair systems and practices
- Focus our time, resources, and solutions where they're needed most

It's how we ensure that **zip code, race, income, or ability** doesn't determine a young person's future.



## Key Terms and Definitions

### Cradle-to-Career

Cradle-to-career is a way of thinking about **a young person's journey**, from early childhood all the way through to a thriving career and adulthood.

It means:

- Supporting children and families at every stage.
- Connecting the dots between early learning, K-12 education, college, job training, and careers.
- Making sure that no one falls through the cracks along the way.

**In Central Oregon**, Better Together brings people and organizations together to strengthen every step of that journey—for all kids, in every community.

### Partners

Partners are the **people and organizations** who work together to make Collective Impact possible.

They can be:

- Nonprofits, schools, businesses, government agencies, or community groups
- Formally involved (through an agreement like a Memorandum of Understanding, or MOU)
- Or informally connected, showing up to collaborate, share ideas, or lend support

Every one of **Better Together's 400+ partners** plays a role in building better outcomes for children, youth, and families across Central Oregon.

### Lived Experience

People with lived experience are those in our community who have been **directly impacted by systemic barriers**—things like poverty, racism, disability, or language access.

They hold powerful **insight** because they've experienced the challenges of our systems firsthand. Their voices, stories, and leadership are essential in creating solutions that actually work, especially for those furthest from opportunity.

### Systems

Systems are the bigger picture: the **web of organizations, policies, institutions, and decision-makers** that shape people's everyday lives.

They include things like schools, healthcare, housing, government programs, and funding structures. When we talk about **"changing systems,"** we mean working together to shift how these parts connect and operate—so that they **work better for everyone**, especially those who've been left out or left behind.



# BETTER TOGETHER

Since 2015

2015

- Achieves **501(c)3 status**
- Welcomes **first cohort of AmeriCorps VISTAs** to Central Oregon
- Releases **baseline report** on regional student success indicators

2016

- Sponsors first group of school district leaders to attend **CFEE's racial equity training**
- Co-launches the **first Skilled Trades Fair with Central Oregon STEM Hub**
- Collaborates on **National Mentoring Month with CBO partners**, recognized by City of Bend

2017

- Integrates **Early Learning Hub** to form a **complete cradle-to-career partnership**
- Acquires **Volunteer Connect** platform to expand **volunteer service for youth**
- Latinx Success Initiative champions **expansion of COCC's AVANZA and OSU's Juntos programs** to all regional middle and high schools

2020



- Champions the **school-age childcare** of essential workers families
- Hires Director of Family and Youth Partnerships; launches **Latinx Family and Youth Councils** in Sisters, Culver, and Prineville; and supports Native Indigenous Communities: Papalaxsimisha's Family Engagement efforts
- Launches **fiscal sponsorship for culturally-specific programs** (e.g., The Father's Group, Papalaximisha, Restorative Justice & Equity)

2019

- Partners with 3 districts to authentically engage **diverse youth & family voice in Student Success Act funding**
- Pilots **Juntos Aprendemos**, Spanish-language early learning program in Bend and Redmond
- Co-hosts **City Club Youth Series** to elevate **youth voice & leadership**

2018

- Launches the **Culture of Care, trauma-informed training** across 6 districts and **regional resilience survey**
- Launches **Youth Career Connect** internships with EDCO and regional Chambers
- Secures federal High School Equivalency Project (HEP) grant, **expands GED programs for migrant students with COCC**

2021

- Co-facilitates **growth of Bend-La Pine Schools Racial Equity Coalition** to include school, community, and family voices
- Expands **Youth Empowerment Leadership Summit post-pandemic** with regional K-12, Higher Ed, and CBO partners
- Year of leadership transitions

2022

- **Latinx Family & Youth Councils expand to Redmond and Bend**
- Partners with HDESD to **train & assess school leaders in family engagement** with national TA partner
- **Launches the South County Collaborative** as a fiscal sponsor, in La Pine, Sunriver, and Three Rivers

2023



- Secures ODE funds, **brings culturally-specific afterschool learning programs to Redmond SD**
- Leads the first **Spanish-language racial equity training for parents (Liderazgo en Accion)** with **CFEE Collaborative and Southern Oregon ESD**
- Becomes the fiscal sponsor for the **regional Latinx Student Scholarship Program**, partnering with Family Councils to review and select recipients

10<sup>th</sup>

2025

- **10-year anniversary, hosting first Summit** with 150+ regional and cross-sector representation
- Launching **updated priorities and strategies** in partnership with Central Oregon communities

2024

- Conducts **Education-Housing Partnership Analysis** with Enterprise Community Partners
- Secures funds with South County Collaborative to **improve school engagement and achievement in South County; launches La Pine Family Council**
- Supports development of **Hearts & Minds Together Collaborative**, joining people from the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, Yakama Nation, and Yurok Tribe around **Native and Indigenous Youth Success**

**Note:** This timeline highlights just a few of the many milestones, partnerships, and moments that have shaped Better Together's first 10 years.. It's not a complete history, but rather a starting point to honor the progress we've made together.

# Your Voice is Part of the Story

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Over the past 10 years, Better Together has grown because of YOU—our incredible community of changemakers.

Now, we want to capture those moments, memories, and milestones that don't fit in a timeline.



**Tell us about a Better Together experience that mattered to you.**

Whether it's a project, partnership, or moment that made you proud—we want to hear it!



**Scan the QR code to share your story.**

Your reflections may be featured in future newsletters, social posts, or storytelling projects that continue the collective work.



Or tap this [link](#) 😊