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BETTER TOGETHER CENTRAL OREGON ANNOUNCES NEXT PHASE OF GROWTH AS INDEPENDENT NONPROFIT

After more than a decade of partnership-building across Central Oregon, Better Together assumes full operational independence

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Redmond, Ore., April 21, 2026 — [Better Together Central Oregon](#), a nonprofit organization dedicated to connecting communities, strengthening partnerships, and advancing opportunity for children, youth, and families across Central Oregon, today announced a significant milestone in its organizational growth: the transition to full operational independence.

Better Together became an **independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit in 2015**. For more than a decade, the backbone organization has brought together diverse community members, organizations, and systems across Crook, Deschutes, and Jefferson Counties and the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs — a region encompassing more than 67,000 children and youth.

In February 2026, the Better Together Board of Directors voted to conclude its long-standing operational MOU with the High Desert Education Service District (HDES), which has served as the employer of record and a professional home for Better Together's staff. This change is set to take effect June 30, 2026. With this step, the organization will fully manage its own operations, staffing, and infrastructure in alignment with its mission and scope.

The announcement comes on the heels of a landmark year. In fiscal year 2024–25, Better Together:

- **Hosted a 10-Year Celebration & Vision Summit** with 150+ community partners in attendance.
- **Stewarded nearly \$2 million through fiscal sponsorships** supporting seven community-rooted organizations.
- **Engaged more than 500 families and young leaders** through eight regional Family and Youth Councils.
- **Sponsored programs that impacted 4,585+ youth and 619+ adults** across the region.
- **Facilitated four active convening groups** that bring leaders together to drive coordinated, community-led action in these priority areas: early learning, housing and education, youth voice, and Latinx success.

“This is a moment we have been growing toward for years,” said Gabriela Peden, Executive Director of Better Together Central Oregon. “Operational independence gives us the ability to fully align how we work with what we believe, which is that communities are stronger when people come together. Our mission, our relationships, and our commitment to the people of Central Oregon are not changing. What changes is our capacity to sustain and deepen that work for the long term.”

Since its founding, Better Together has grown from a vision of collaborative K–12 support into a regional anchor organization, convening workgroups, supporting youth leadership, and connecting families with resources and opportunities.

“Better Together has always been shaped by the communities it serves — and this next step reflects that strength,” said Carlos Salcedo, Board Chair of Better Together Central Oregon.

“We are deeply grateful for the partnership with HDESD that supported an important chapter of our development. And we move forward with confidence, grounded in relationships built over more than a decade and guided by an unwavering commitment to the people and communities of Central Oregon.”

As part of establishing independent operations, Better Together will also begin directly operating Juntos Aprendemos, one of its signature programs. Juntos Aprendemos is a Spanish-language family engagement initiative launched in 2018 through the leadership of Better Together’s Latinx Success Workgroup. Since its launch, the program has been operated by HDESD in partnership with Better Together. Beginning July 1, 2026, Better Together will directly operate the program and maintain its core model and commitment to serving Spanish-speaking families across the region.

Better Together extends its gratitude to HDESD for its role as a catalyst and early champion for developing cradle-to-career partnerships in Central Oregon, and as a fiscal and operational partner since 2015. The two organizations anticipate continued collaboration in service of shared community priorities.

Better Together will continue to share updates with partners, funders, and community members as the transition progresses. To learn more, access the 2024–25 Impact Report, organizational history, and supporting materials at bettertogethercentraloregon.org/news. For media inquiries, contact Gabriela Peden at gabriela@bettertogetherco.org or (541) 745-4355.

About Better Together Central Oregon

Better Together Central Oregon is a nonprofit backbone organization dedicated to strengthening communities by bringing people together to help community-led solutions thrive. Since 2015, Better Together has served as a connector and convener across Crook, Deschutes, and Jefferson Counties and the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs. Through a collective action and impact process, Better Together aligns 400+ partners to advance belonging, equity, and opportunity for Central Oregon families and 67,000+ youth. Better Together is headquartered in Redmond, Oregon. Learn more at www.bettertogethercentraloregon.org.

Additional Resources

- **2024–25 Impact Report:** A full overview of Better Together’s reach, programs, and community partnerships.
- **Organizational Timeline:** A decade of milestones, partnerships, and community-led progress across Central Oregon.
- **Convening for Impact:** An overview of Better Together’s four active cross-sector convening groups and what drives the work forward.

All documents available at: bettertogethercentraloregon.org/news

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