



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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USDA Rural Development Funding Awarded to Support Community Vitality in Othello, Washington

WASHINGTON – USDA Rural Development (RD) has awarded \$250,000 to a collaborative working to improve community vitality and foster economic growth in Othello, Washington as part of the Rural Placemaking Innovation Challenge (RPIC). Funding will be used for data-gathering, community visioning meetings, and skill building trainings to help Othello leaders develop a plan for the future of their community. The grant is one of just 17 awarded nationwide toward collaborative planning and technical assistance to help leaders from rural communities create places where people will want to live, work, visit and learn.

A diverse community collaborative will lead this two-year effort, supported by [Rural Development Initiatives](#) (RDI) in partnership with USDA RD. RDI and partners will facilitate a process that includes a Placemaking Learning Tour of Northwest rural communities to learn from others who have successfully implemented plans, with a focus on communities where small food and agriculture businesses, youth entrepreneurship, Latino community involvement, and innovative broadband initiatives are thriving.

Othello leaders are interested in developing small food businesses and fostering a food-related community gathering space, engaging local youth in community planning and projects, and supporting economic vitality by providing skill building and tools related to community leadership, grant writing, and entrepreneurship (including trainings tailored to Othello's large populations of youth and Spanish speakers).

The final product will be a Placemaking Vision and Action Plan that provides a roadmap for Othello leaders to achieve their goal of a thriving community, along with an Innovation Seed Fund that will provide startup grants to implement plan goals and small projects.

In addition to RDI and USDA RD, project partners include the City of Othello, Adams County Development Council, Lighthouse Community Center, Port of Othello, Othello School District, Partners for Rural Washington, and the Foundry Collective. Match funding for the project is being provided by the City of Othello, Adams County Development Council, Innovia Foundation, Avista Corporation, and Columbia Bank. RDI is thrilled to collaborate with the many Othello community partners and USDA RD on this exciting and innovative effort, and is honored to receive this competitive USDA RD grant.

“We are thrilled to partner with RDI in this important place-making effort,” said Helen Price Johnson, State Director for USDA RD in Washington State. “It is vital that rural communities plan for the future they want to see. Our agency offers a wide-variety of financing programs for rural communities, and we encourage people to connect with us to discuss potential projects.”

Further details about USDA RD’s Rural Placemaking Innovation Challenge awards nationwide can be found [here](#).

For more information, contact Rural Development Initiatives Leadership Services Business Manager, Christine Gilmore, cgilmore@rdiinc.org, 208-631-1734.

Rural Development Initiatives is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to strengthen rural people, places and economies in the Pacific Northwest. RDI envisions rural communities that are strong and vibrant as a result of skilled, inclusive local leadership and robust community-led efforts. People in rural communities share a vision that fuels optimism and motivates positive action; they work collaboratively across their regions to achieve mutual benefit and promote diverse, resilient communities.

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