

**Oregon Rural Action Annual Meeting**  
**September 26, 2009**  
**LaGrande, OR**

**Collective Statements**

***Definition of Community Wealth:***

(Community wealth can be measured by our) children's degree of prosperity.

Community wealth is respect (and the) diversity of people.

(We) feel (that) it can be measured in the amount community members will invest in their community (using things like their) time, knowledge, (and) money. (It is) all the human potential available to the community for developing sustainability, (and) the collective spirit of people to engage in constructive dialog and action toward developing or maintaining all aspects of a community's capital base- natural, societal and economic. (It is) the collective ability to harness individual capability and develop it as an asset to the whole. It's about connecting the needs and capabilities and being open to recognize the fluidity of these relationships. (It involves) using our resources and people for the common good, and building systems that protect, nourish and honor the earth and all inhabitants. (Community wealth involves) the diversity of people and the ability to bring those people together in a positive manner. (It is) the ability of a community to live well, (have) strong and caring relationships, (and it is the) opportunity for individuals to fulfill their potential and to serve.

(Our) definition of community wealth is more people-centric, though (we) think it also needs to be holistic and include the natural world and local institutions. An engaged community that is willing to work towards a common good seems to be the healthiest to (us. Community wealth is) people acting for (the) good of the area- economic, environment(al and) people. (Community wealth includes) resources in (the) community, including networking. (It is) the ability of the individuals to communicate and work together for the benefit of all in the community. (It can be defined by) a healthy community with productive people and land, people working together so no one is left behind, people getting along with and helping each other, (and) harnessing all assets from natural to human capacity to collectively strengthen the fabric of your community. (It involves) a place where people have enough, value each other, are gracious, giving, positive and grateful. (It is) a synergistic relationship between land, people and money realizing potential.

Wealth is what you have that gets things done- land, money, connections, abilities, and knowledge. Building community wealth implies a shared wealth- not individual. (It is) the capacity to do work, financial, social, and biological, (and involves) the public

services, facilities, (and) networks. All the resources available to sustain a community culturally, economically, socially, and environmentally (define community wealth, as well as) diversity, talents, willingness to share, spirit of humor, and honoring of other and of self-attitude/willingness. (Community wealth involves) looking around at the abundance we have and choosing to live in sync with mother earth's agenda.

(Community wealth involves) love, open minds and giv(ing).

Ultimately, sustainability, connected emotionally, (and) spiritually (define community wealth).

(Community wealth includes the) inherent valuing of others while recognizing apparent threats and working to drop defenses, (the) involvement of everyone, lack of envy or disparagement as well as sufficient community investment in infrastructure, all peoples feeling creative/well fed/taken care of/ not judged/not warring/housed. (It also includes) the ability of a community to be inclusive of all different kinds of people and help them thrive in the community. (There should be) equality and social values.

(It is) the ability to envision a future where people and health of land are first importance.

(It involves) flourishing ecosystems with native biodiversity and ecological process, integrity, respect for and inclusion of community diversity, mutual and self- sufficiency of communities, (and) long range concern for all earth's resources, i.e. people, plant and minerals. Everyone has a sustainable enough now and in the future- protected natural resources.

(Community wealth can be defined by) the benefits that everyone gains by developing the best in all areas for their communities.

### ***Thing learned from panel:***

(We learnt that) resources are here, (and that) we have incredible people and ecological wealth. (We learnt) how diverse the backgrounds were by how they answered, (that) diversity and respect are needed, (that) diverse people are our wealth especially now (as they bring) knowledge, skills, and 'know how', (and that) the community in this room is wealthy. (We also learnt about the) importance of diversity (and about the) diversity of people working together for the community.

(There is a) strong desire for a positive, functional community (and) there are many concerned people and a broad interest in change. A lot of people in this group value relationships and human wealth, (and) people in this and surrounding communities seem to really care about building relationships and talking about differences.

(We learnt the importance of) knowing your neighbors and community (and that) we need to work together. (There are) lots of people working for (the) greater good (and the)

aggregate of capacity is relationships and respect. (We learnt about) trying to bring people together, (and we were) impressed (by) the number of ways of looking at an issue and yet grasping its truth with the central theme being that we are powerful when we work together and that we need to reforge those bonds. (We also learnt that) energy and hope can come from frustration and despair when we know we're in it together.

(We) learned that people have different ideas about community wealth, which often reveal their special interest/stake, (and that) passionate disparate views leave no coherent consensus (on the) meaning of community wealth. (Also) not everyone here thinks exactly (alike, but there are) differing definitions (all with the) same core- people and control. There are some glimmers of hope (since we are) not all (of) one mind.

(We learnt that there is a) sense of threefold wealth of money, people "dirt."

(We learnt about the) importance of respecting difference/knowing people.

(We learnt that we) need to reclaim land and relationships from corporate and alienated people.

Community wealth is not mentioned in dollars but in the potential of people, (and) people, their interactions and relationships, are (the) guiding forces in building community wealth. (Also) community involves more than extracting monetary profit from the land. It has to benefit people and be sustainable.

(We learnt that we) have similar point of view(s) concerning community wealth, (and) that overall, individuals in this group have very similar feelings about what community wealth is. (We have) common goals about community.

(We learnt about) the importance of "the land" as such an important part of others' definitions of community wealth.

These people focused on non-economics

(We learnt that there is) commonality regarding moving away from self-sustaining communities to corporate domination and loss of resources – opportunity = diversity + learning from each other.

(We learnt that we should) keep listening (and) don't make assumptions, (as) everyone's ideas can be considered to reach a consensus (and) balance between different sectors of (the) community seems to be an important factor to community wealth.

(We learnt) how best to resolve conflict in (our) town.

(We learnt that we) have social, economic and ecological leakage- lost potential.

### ***Present Situation:***

(We believe that the present situation involves) leaking resources (that) need to be sequestered locally. (There is) leakage in all facets- low economic multiplier, lack of opportunities to contribute, (and a) loss of organic matter. Currently (there is) not enough diversity of food and meat crops, (and) too much money leaves the community. (There is) much leakage where power forgot (the) initial purpose.

(There is) waste (and a) lack of respecting one another, and corporate food production makes (us) fearful of (the) possibility for regaining community and sustaining local economy/life.

(We) think (that our) community's wealth is not strong; connections need to be restored. (Our community wealth is) very fractured, (and) embodied in opposition rather than cooperation. (It is) not good. Our community is not sustainable but we are working toward it. (It is) not connected, (and) not healthy. Historical forces have left our communities fractured, some like a jigsaw puzzle with hundreds of pieces randomly pulled out. We lack roots, (and) we're forced into being economic refuges- and yet there is the powerful seed of community (that is) always waiting to be tended. (The present situation is) weak but strengthening (and has shown us that we) came from an unhealthy community. (It) needs improvement (as the) present community wealth is not as good as it should be.

(The present situation is) increasing awareness; (there is some) degree of hope. (The current situation involves) efforts to begin local food movements (and) education about the global/corporate problem.

In La Grande and Union County, (there is) potentially more there than what's being accessed. (There is) too much resistance to change to mobilize what's needed.

(There are) lot of political conflict and divisions (but) we have it all. We just need a non-political inclusive structure/process to tap into it and solve local needs.

(The present situation is) sad. (It is) self-serving. (There is) media promotion of self-interest and religious organizations maintain (the) status quo. (We are thinking) "what's in it for (us)?" More reaching out needs to be done.

(The present situation is) looking at what needs to be changed. We spend way too much time and energy focusing on what we think we need or (that) lack conscious choosing.

Community wealth has been neglected and dismissed as unnecessary; things are getting better and worse at the same time.

There are pockets and projects where community wealth plays out but by and large community wealth has not been internalized by enough people or leaders to be broadly successful or recognized. (We) think we lack the forum that opens up opportunities for

individuals to come together and connect deliberately. (There are) few formal ways of sharing and cataloging.

(We) think the present situation depends on what you're talking about, (and) where you're talking about. Generally many people and communities seem to be moving away from civic engagement and "commonwealth" but it's not dead.

(The present situation is) full of diamonds, disconnected (and) not recognized.

(The present situation involves) ignorance, (and) short-term thinking (which are) polarizing and demonizing. (There is also) envy and blame.

(It is) lousy, locally, nationally and globally

(There is a) loss of capital, skills, natural resources, ecological functioning, biodiversity, (and) community identity. (We are) enthralled by virtual realities (such as the) tv, (and the) internet, (and this causes) alienation.

(The present situation is) friendly but (there is a) lot of underlying fear and judgment, (and a) "we're right, they're wrong" (mentality).

(It possibly involves) low income (and) drugs. (Also) hunger, violence, deprivation, illness, (and) poverty of all kinds are much too much with us. It seems like (there are) major conflicts (between) people who've been here awhile (and) new people, EOU (and the) town, etc. (However, there is a) big potential for wealth.

(The present situation involves) disorganized interests controlled by money.

Currently most communities have forgotten how to work as a community. We have been taught to act as individuals in many ways without regard to anyone else.

(We) think in many places many more people are becoming more engaged and more interested in their communities and what can come from collective work. Though there is much work to be done, this motivation and involvement is an important and huge first step.

### ***How do I feel about the present situation?***

(We feel) anguished, but we (believe that we) have good basic assets and huge opportunities. (We feel) sad (and we think that) detractors are so powerful. (We are) depressed, (and) angry but (we are) learning slowly to take more productive actions. (We are also) tired, (and) overwhelmed (but) willing to follow the plan.

(We) feel empowered to help the community build upon it. Without a strong community it creates a lot of weak individuals (but) empowered individual(s) working towards good

efforts helps everyone. (We should) use the skills we've learned today to become more involved with organizations and groups to improve the communities.

(We are) encouraged, hopeful and positive. (We feel) optimistic (that this will) give out the opportunity to change. (We are) glad to be contributing (as this makes us feel as if we are) more (like) member(s) (and) not loner(s). (There is a) roller coaster (feeling) of fear and hope; this group is a sign of hope. (We) like and know people on both sides (so we) hope (that we) can talk to them, (and) maybe change things a bit. (We feel that) it is very possible with great energy, and working with people positively. We need to realize how forces have shaped the status quo, learn what worked in the past, let deep and meaningful relationships start here and now, create roots, imagine, (and) build together. (We) find it discouraging that the American ideal seems to value the individual's wants over the common good but (we) feel more encouraged at the local level. (We feel) good (and we are) confident in our ability to learn and change. While it's frustrating (we are) also hopeful. Sometimes (we feel) despair (but) sometimes (we think there is) opportunity and hope to spread (our) views of the world. (We are) hopeful, but (we) honestly have different feelings about this community. (It) often feel(s) like it's a place (that is) not very accepting of new people and ideas. (We feel) desperate, motivated, (and) isolate(d) (but we are) ready to work.

(We feel) excited about the opportunity for change.

(We feel that) community wealth must begin with the individual, their awareness of self and others, (and) respect of all aspects of capital. (We) feel like community wealth is minimal at present; it hasn't achieved critical mass.

(We feel) that it's an amazing catalyst for improving quality of life for everyone everywhere.

(We) feel a concern (about) how we inform and connect with coworkers, neighbors, (and) leaders, to discover and put into place sustainable ways of using wealth. (We) need a time bank to be established. (It) can provide positive info(rmation) and view(s).

(We feel) terrible. (We) need to bring diverse people together toward self- governance, (a) sense of community, (and) local self-sufficiency. Sustainability should be (a) goal.

(We) feel it's bad. It should be a lot better.

(We are) worried that the politics of fear and greed and control and paranoia are winning the day.

(We) feel we are squandering potential.

## What would you change/what's missing in the Holisticgoal?

1. Opportunities for people of all ages to be valued and have their gifts honored. Facilitate the sharing of those gifts with others.
2. How to get the community involved
3. I question non-profit healthcare. I think the main problem is the insurance industry, which results in unaffordable healthcare. Pay the doctors. Cut the insurance system.
4. Early education for our children. Keeping out seniors involved so that while we teach the young, we keep the knowledge of the elders.
5. Talks at organizing around issues but need to have something that goes further to retain public policies to help bring this about. Example...?
6. Engaging youth from a young age to consider many of these topics and learn from their community (and other community members)
7. Nothing...I helped develop the statement.
8. Honoring elders, nurturing children; gender equity; physical safety, no one lives in fear of violence
9. Comparison for nature- biophilia
10. Valuing our young people- our potential community
11. Non-capitalist terms e.g. meaningful work instead of "jobs", exchange instead of "fair prices", needs met instead of profit or "wealth."
12. The goal being no pesticides/herbicides and toxins, not just less.
13. Missing climate change considerations- non-fossil fuel transportation and farming.
14. No direct mention of agricultural practices and eating habits- it's effect on animals being raised for meat and dairy production.
15. Human population control.
16. Space to bitch or let it all out- a tribe that had a ceremony that men and women lived up across from each other and threw thing and said all they were mad about and then had shared dinner...happened once a week.
17. Collaboration with other groups.
18. Future holistic comprehension of community and planetary needs.
19. Effect of population pressure on planet; need for family planning.
20. It's all good and I'd like consolidation and removal of redundancies, create "principles", best practices, and a plan. I want integration and synthesis- statement of agreement/consensus.
21. Integration of everything- processes, etc.
22. Under basic living for all, include education with healthcare, food and shelter.
23. Promotes spiritual wellbeing of all; does not coerce ideas or actions on anyone.
24. More forums of this type
25. Sense of spirituality that goes beyond dogma.
26. Structure to deal with conflict and inequality (yes "justice" rather than legal) but need specific conflict resolution processes/structures.
27. Creating a local currency system
28. I should stop spending so much money on objects, and spend more time with people.

29. Some synthesis work for contradictory or ? pieces; contradictory: “human footprint” can be positive, “no water loss” won’t work.
30. Clarity and focus
31. Investment from seniors to youth that are “bleeding” out of E. Oregon
32. Moving ORA from needed for community organizing to not needed as communities become self-sustaining.
33. Honoring our elders
34. Take off quality of life 5, 6, 7, 16, 18, and 20. They are so very subjective. I’d change the same types in other areas or at least frame them in a group.

**What are suggested strategies and actions that will begin the process of fostering the Holisticgoal?**

1. Honor and value those I meet. Encourage them in their self-care and in sharing their gifts.
2. Open forum. Town hall meeting with the community and diverse organization.
3. Public forums that are honestly and fairly moderated help charge with circles forum and set guidelines.
4. Do whatever it takes.
5. Engaging schools/school children in many of these topics and in their community because many sustainable topics such as local foods.
6. Put political pressure on representatives in government to help holistic goal.
7. Change Oregon regulations to enable certifying custom slaughterhouses for state inspected meat for retail by the cut.
8. List of Honor at ORA office- those incur community who have built community (i.e. Annie Ray, etc.)
9. Making more alliances between community organizations
10. Better support for education (K-12 + higher ed)
11. Work with kids in middle and high school to make it an expectation that they must try to go to college.
12. Need to get more people to understand the importance of, and agree to achieve their goals.
13. A strategic planning session and SWOT analysis matching vision and goals with opportunities and threats, strategies, people signing up to take on tasks.
14. Considering arenas for action, relevant history, language to be used, etc.
15. Linkages with local native tribes to input their cultural and ecological concerns, perspectives and practices.
16. Sponsor “voices of elders” of all cultural and ethnic backgrounds, rural + city-back to basics; “How I survived the Depression” themes for forums/educational
17. Continue to avoid inhumanely grown and produced meat/dairy and to continue to educate myself.
18. Go forward with board work.
19. Create a time bank to collect info about mentors, provide fair prices, non-profit healthcare, empower people, engage community, etc.

20. Make sure group (Blue Mt) is in agreement and committed with energy and time to work it.
21. Get paper to cover forums and ideas and report on how local reps vote.
22. Support sex education, availability of contraception and counseling for unwanted pregnancy.
23. Help ORA do their work; take this work into my heart and everyday life outside of ORA.
24. More community gardens
25. Overcome fear of asking
26. Voting yes in January on the tax fairness package
27. Build online social networking site explicitly dedicated to ORA: forums/discussions, blogs/opinions, surveys of opinion, measure of consensus
28. Have quarterly events
29. Form neighborhood organizations to advocate for local change in our immediate environment.
30. Educate self and others about where our food comes from, what's in it and it's true costs.
31. Explore/research existing models.
32. Start monitoring some key indicators e.g. leakage on local economy (start with food?), social- see Community Indicators Consortium, soil organic matter?
33. Include more people in HG formation.
34. Refine this goal and communicate it locally.
35. "Adopt a grandkid" from school
36. Do a plot in community garden, harvest some for self and help prepare extra for local food bank or sell and donate the money to realize the power of a dollar.
37. Continue pushing toward helping communities to be self-sustainable.
38. It says "Fair prices, wealth through empowerment, balanced pay, living wage jobs." Scroll down. "Non-profit healthcare." Huh? So folks who provide healthcare are excluded from 'fair pay?' Add- how about- holistic health care as opposed to sick care that is accessible and affordable.
39. Conflict resolution
40. Consensus building
41. Positive thinking

## \* COLLECTIVE STATEMENTS

Collective statements are based on the belief that each of us sees the world from a different viewpoint. Our individual views are like pieces of a puzzle – when we fit them all together we get the full picture.

In most meetings our views tend to be seen as competitive. When someone speaks, another person responds with a counter-statement and the meeting progresses with each trying to convince the other of his or her rightness. This behavior is based on a belief in the “one right answer” to all questions. Only one of us can be right, so our intelligence is used to establish that rightness firmly. It becomes a competition in which each person’s ego and intelligence are at stake.

This is either/or thinking – either you are right or I am! Often, two or three people will capture all the time in a meeting with this either/or conflict, while others listen, get bored, and drop out. It is a time-consuming, ineffective process. The meeting ends with some vaguely worded compromise that relieves the participants. They leave with little commitment to it.

Collective thinking assumes we can all learn something from each other. We have different views of a situation, and all views are right.

This is done with many of the workshop tasks. The collective statements are the result of adding individual statements together, keeping each person’s words to the best extent possible, and creating a statement of the total group.

## **\* *DEVELOPING A COLLECTIVE STATEMENT***

A collective statement process is based on the notion that we all have different views of a situation, and all views are right. Each of us perceives the world through our experiences, our values and beliefs and our desires.

In some tasks, statements made by each individual participant are recorded as accurately as possible. These statements are first segregated into common groups. The individual statements are then added together, keeping each person's words to the best extent possible, creating a statement of the total group.

At times it is necessary to add words to the brief recorded statements to clarify the intent. Or, a word might be added to bridge two or more statements together. This is kept to a minimum in order to retain the original recorded thought.

While some grammatical improvements may be made, the original statement and the original words are kept as close as possible.

As an example, these were the original recorded statements of the "Senior Citizens Worst Outcomes of the Situation":

### **SENIOR CITIZENS WORST OUTCOMES OF THE SITUATION:**

1. Unsafe community to live in
2. Will regress, if no progress
3. Things fine, no higher taxes
4. Our senior programs will be cut—lack of funds
5. My needs as senior will not be considered and taxes rise—skyrocket
6. More leave town, higher crime, higher taxes, less facilities
7. Leads to collapse of government
8. If not forward, then backward.
9. Become retirement community, kids leave, no industry
10. Uncertain, unhappy future

**\* *DEVELOPING A COLLECTIVE STATEMENT (continued)***

The statements are segregated to become like groups of statements:

**SENIOR CITIZENS WORST OUTCOMES OF THE SITUATION:**

2. Will regress, if no progress
8. If not forward, then backward.
  
3. Things fine, no higher taxes
9. Become retirement community, kids leave, no industry
  
5. My needs as senior will not be considered and taxes rise—skyrocket
4. Our senior programs will be cut—lack of funds
  
1. Unsafe community to live in
6. More leave town, higher crime, higher taxes, less facilities
7. Leads to collapse of government
10. Uncertain, unhappy future

These statements are now linked together to form the final collective statement. Words that are added in the process are shown in parentheses:

**THE SENIOR CITIZENS WORST OUTCOMES:**

(The community) will regress, if (there is) no progress. If (we do) not (move) forward, then (we slide) backwards.

(We all think that) things (are) fine, (as long as there are) no higher taxes. (We) become (a) retirement community, (the) kids leave, (there is) no industry.

My needs as (a) senior will not be considered and taxes rise, skyrocketing. Our senior programs will be cut (because) lack of funds.

(This will be an) unsafe community to live in. More (business and people) leave town, (because of) higher crime, higher taxes, less facilities. (This) leads to collapse of government. (We face an) uncertain, unhappy future.

**\* DEVELOPING A COLLECTIVE STATEMENT (continued)**

This is another example of the process. Begin with the original recorded statements:

**PARENTS WORST OUTCOMES OF THE SITUATION:**

1. Extremely large classrooms (40/50 room)
2. Children won't have educational background to get into college
3. If parenting skills not improved, what will it do to child's education?
4. If we can't solve drug problem, what is future of our children?
5. The children will never leave home.
6. My kids will waste their talents and be average like everybody else.
7. Dropping out!
8. The children won't be happy and won't be prepared for the next step after high school
9. Parent's lack of concern will hinder ability of the child
10. Drugs and gangs will come into community
11. The lack of the best education and know-how to deal with life on their own.

Segregate them into the like statements:

**PARENTS WORST OUTCOMES OF THE SITUATION:**

11. The lack of the best education and know-how to deal with life on their own.
8. The children won't be happy and won't be prepared for the next step after high school
  
2. Children won't have educational background to get into college
6. My kids will waste their talents and be average like everybody else.
  
1. Extremely large classrooms (40/50 room)
7. Dropping out!
5. The children will never leave home.
  
9. Parent's lack of concern will hinder ability of the child
3. If parenting skills not improved, what will it do to child's education?
  
10. Drugs and gangs will come into community
4. If we can't solve drug problem, what is future of our children?

**\* *DEVELOPING A COLLECTIVE STATEMENT (continued)***

Then put the statements together, adding words where absolutely necessary, keeping the original intent as much as possible.

**PARENTS WORST OUTCOMES OF THE SITUATION:**

(The children will have a) lack of the best education and (the) know-how to deal with life on their own. (They) won't be happy and won't be prepared for the next step after high school. (Our) children won't have (the) educational background to get into college. (Our) kids will waste their talents and be average like everybody else.

(We will have) extremely large classrooms (40/50 room). (The students are) dropping out (of school)! The children will never leave home!

(The) parent's lack of concern will hinder ability of the child. If parenting skills (are) not improved, what will it do to child's education?

Drugs and gangs will come into community. If we can't solve drug problem, what is (the) future of our children?

**\* *DEVELOPING CONSENSUS STATEMENTS FROM COLLECTIVE STATEMENTS***

On the following pages, the entire process for developing consensus statements is demonstrated.

1. The process begins with the recording of best possible outcomes, first on the 3 x 5 cards, and then on the flip charts.
2. The members of the different buildings are sent to other buildings to listen to, and select, best possible outcomes from these other locations.
3. The second list of best possible outcomes is recorded as a separate list.
4. A collective statement is prepared using both lists. The outcomes from other groups are shown in Italics for demonstration purposes only.
5. The group develops consensus with words using the collective statement. The process is highlighted, showing added and deleted words.
6. The final consensus statement is developed.