Oregon Department of Forestry's Landscape Resiliency Program: Assessing the project selection process for the 2021-2023 Biennium

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About the Ecosystem Workforce Program:

The Ecosystem Workforce Program is a bi-institutional program of University of Oregon's Institute for Resilient Organizations, Communities, and Environments and the College of Forestry at Oregon State University. We conduct applied social science research and extension services at the interface of people and natural resources. Our publications aim to inform policy makers and practitioners, and contribute to scholarly and practical discourse.

Acknowledgements

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Executive Summary

The Oregon Department of Forestry's (ODF) Landscape Resiliency Program (LRP) is a grant program established by Senate Bill 762 (SB762), Section 18-20 (2021) to support cross-boundary restoration of landscape resiliency and fuels reduction within Oregon. In fall 2021, ODF requested the Ecosystem Workforce Program (EWP) at the University of Oregon (UO) devise and carry out a plan for monitoring investments and outcomes of the LRP. The full monitoring plan can be found here.[1] LRP monitoring focuses on three stages– Project Selection, Implementation, and Outcomes. The purpose of this working paper is to report the results of the Project Selection monitoring phase. This report presents 1) stakeholders' experiences with the LRP program development, application process, and project selection, 2) characterization of grantee organizations, and 3) characterization of project geographies.

Key Findings

- Across all Project Selection topic areas, survey respondents indicated that the selection process was **effective in distributing a high volume of needed funds** quickly. Many described the LRP as a good first step in addressing the wildfire crisis in Oregon and that lessons learned from the selection phase will help fine-tune the program in the future.

- Proposals primarily originated from organizations with projects in **high risk Quantitative Wildfire Risk Assessment (QWRA) regions**. Project applications represented geographies ranging from low to moderately high on the social vulnerability index.

- Some respondents found that the project selection process insufficiently considered factors involving **diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)** efforts in the LRP application and selection process. They described the criteria for inclusion of socially vulnerable groups at the project level as unclear. Furthermore, many respondents found efforts to include traditionally excluded stakeholders in the public outreach, applicant recruitment, and workgroup member selection processes insincere.

- Survey respondents expressed concern about the **compressed timeline** for all aspects of the project selection process. Many respondents found that the short window between the proposal announcement and application deadline exacerbated the aforementioned shortcomings in DEI efforts. They reported that the rushed recruitment process did not allow for thorough outreach to a range of communities, inclusion of innovative approaches in project proposals, or formation of new collaborations.

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1. https://scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1794/27937 ODF-LRP-Monitoring%20Plan.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

The short timeline, according to many stakeholders, may have challenged due diligence in the project selection process and may have contributed to issues of subjectivity and bias.

Introduction

The Oregon Department of Forestry's (ODF) Landscape Resiliency Program (LRP) is a grant program established by Senate Bill 762 (SB762), Section 18-20 (2021) to support cross-boundary restoration of landscape resiliency and fuels reduction within Oregon. In early 2022, the grant program announced funding in the amount of $20 million for the 2021-2023 biennium awarded to nine landscape-scale projects to reduce wildfires on public and private forestlands, rangelands, around homes, and near critical infrastructure through the restoration of forest resiliency and hazardous fuels reduction. As directed by SB762, ODF organized a workgroup composed of representatives of stakeholder organizations to guide the LRP program development and to facilitate the project proposal review and selection process. In fall 2021, ODF requested the Ecosystem Workforce Program (EWP) at the University of Oregon (UO) devise and carry out a plan for monitoring investments and outcomes of the LRP. To enhance capacities and capabilities, EWP partnered with Oregon State University to provide expertise on wildfire risk science and with the USDA Forest Service PNW Research Station to provide expertise on natural resources economics.

The monitoring plan addresses three program phases:

1. Project selection

2. Project implementation

3. Project outcomes

This working paper reports monitoring results for the project selection process. A working paper with results from the implementation and outcomes phases is expected to be complete in June 2023.

Approach

In October 2022, EWP initiated data collection for monitoring the project selection process. This activity had three tasks:

1. Assessment of stakeholder experiences with program development and the project selection and evaluation process.
2. Characterization of grantee organizations.
3. Characterization of geographic attributes of funded and unfunded projects.

Assessment of stakeholder experiences

Data Collection

To collect data on stakeholder experiences with program development and project selection, we surveyed people involved in the development of the LRP as well as grant applicants, regardless of whether or not their project was funded. Stakeholders who worked with ODF to develop the LRP and to select projects were either "members" of- or "technical advisors" to- the LRP "workgroup." In this report, we refer to these groups collectively as LRP "stakeholders." Using the online Qualtrics application to administer, we piloted the survey with a small sample of stakeholders that included ODF staff, Oregon State University Fire Extension staff, and members of the LRP workgroup. We then emailed an anonymous link for the Qualtrics survey to all LRP workgroup members, workgroup technical advisors, and primary contacts for selected and non-selected project applications. To recruit additional respondents, we asked the primary contact for each project application to either forward our email and anonymous survey link to additional individuals who participated in the grant application process or to provide us with contact information for those individuals.

The survey (Appendix A) included questions about the following topics related to LRP project selection:

- **Involvement and experiences with the LRP**
- **Opportunities for public involvement (in developing LRP goals/scope)**
- **LRP workgroup member selection**
- **Applicant recruitment**
- **Project evaluation & selection**
- **Other feedback**

Analysis

We separated the Qualtrics survey data into open- and closed-ended questions for analysis. Open-ended questions relied on text entry boxes while closed-ended questions included multiple choice and Likert-type scale options. We excluded incomplete responses from analysis. We used the qualitative analysis software, Dedoose, to apply an inductive coding structure that identified emergent themes in the responses to open-ended questions. To establish intercoder reliability, we cross checked the coding application of two different researchers, iteratively correcting codes that were unclear or ambiguous (see Appendix C for the codebook). We summed themes identified within responses to understand the proportion of responses reflecting each identified code. We analyzed closed-ended, scalar response questions using IBM SPSS version 28.

Characterization of grantee organizations

To obtain information on type, size, age, and capacity of funded organizations, we emailed the primary contacts for each awarded LRP project to request a brief phone interview. We also gave primary contacts, who we refer to as "project leads," the option to reply by email. We asked project leads the following questions:

- Is there a name for the collaboration of organizations under which your project was funded?
- How many organizations are involved in your LRP project?
- What is the geographic area your collaboration serves?
- How long has this group of organizations been collaborating?
- What are some key elements of the history of collaboration in this group of organizations?

- Does this group of organizations currently have other on-going projects they're collaborating on together, besides the LRP-funded project?

Characterization of project geography

To obtain boundaries for funded projects, we utilized ODF's ArcGIS online group specifically designed to coordinate LRP and other ODF grant funded wildfire risk reduction activities. We digitized non-funded project boundaries using coordinates and maps provided by the grant applications.

We mapped project boundaries to display their relative distribution across Oregon, their overall wildfire risk, and the relative social vulnerability of the populations living within those project areas.

To map wildfire risk, we used the 2018 Quantitative Wildfire Risk Assessment (QWRA), Overall Wildfire Risk layer (available from Oregon Explorer website).[2] This layer represents the "product of the likelihood and consequence of wildfire on all mapped highly valued resources and assets combined: critical infrastructure, developed recreation, housing unit density, seed orchards, sawmills, historic structures, timber, municipal watersheds, vegetation condition, and terrestrial and aquatic wildlife."[1] We obtained mean wildfire risk values

for each project area using the zonal statistics tool in ArcGIS Pro 3.0.

To map social vulnerability, we created a raster-based composite social vulnerability index (SVI) based on 2020 American Community Survey (ACS) data analyzed by Oregon State University (OSU) under SB762 (Reilley and Crandall, 2022). Methods for the SVI map are detailed in Appendix B. Mean SVI values for each project area were obtained using the zonal statistics tool in ArcGIS Pro 3.0.

Results

Assessment of stakeholder experiences

Population description

A total of 31 individuals involved in the application or project selection processes completed the survey. Survey respondents included LRP grantees, workgroup members and technical advisors, ODF employees supporting LRP, and participants in grant applications (Figure 1). Of the respondents who participated in a grant application, 80 percent participated in projects that were funded.

Figure 1. Respondents' involvement with the LRP (respondents could select multiple choices; n=31).

2. https://oregonexplorer.info/
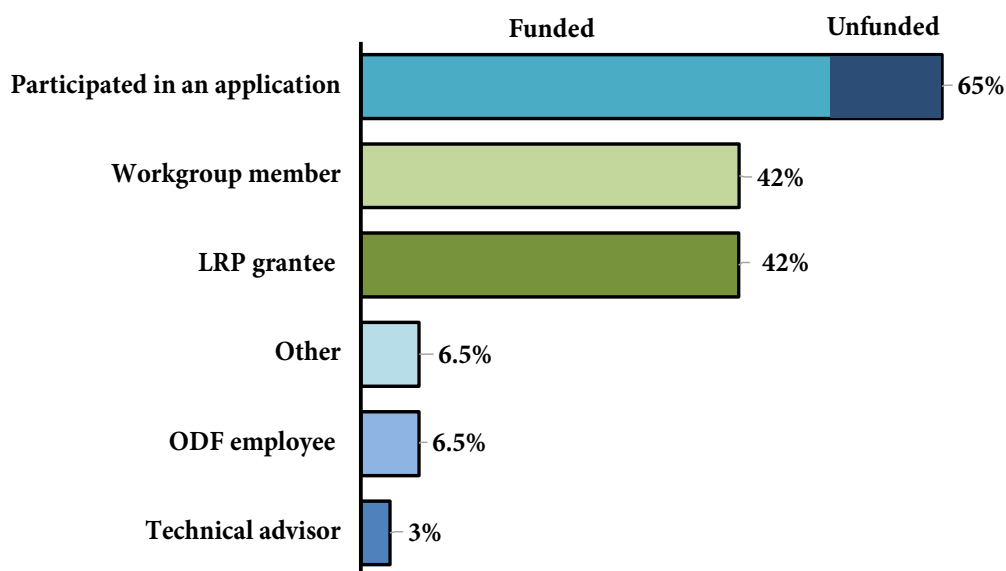
Half of these respondents indicated that they led the application process, while half reported that they took supporting roles. Respondents could select five options for gender identity- including non-binary, self-described (write-in), male, and female. Fifty percent of survey respondents identified as female, 43 percent as male, and the rest preferred not to share (Figure 2).
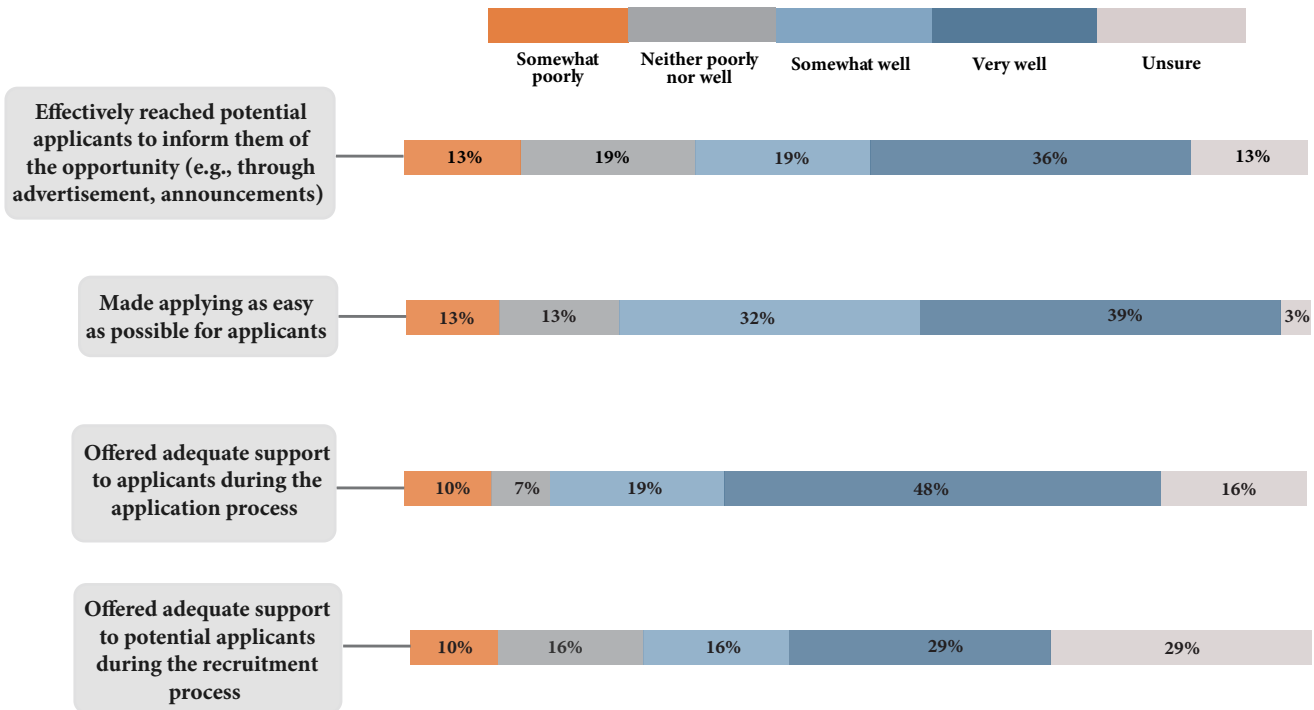
Figure 2. Respondents' self-described gender identity (n=31).
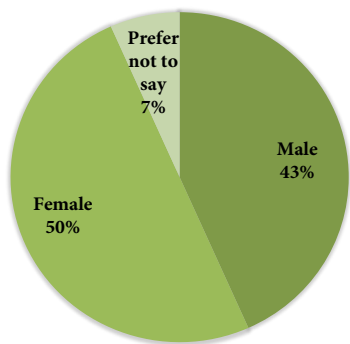
Applicant recruitment & application

We asked stakeholders how effectively ODF reached potential applicants to inform them of the opportunity to apply for funding from SB762. Fifty-five percent indicated that ODF did well with communicating about the LRP opportunity. Thirty-two percent selected neutral or unsure, and 13 percent indicated that ODF did poorly at effectively reaching potential applicants. Seventy-one percent of respondents indicated that ODF had made the application process easy, while 16 percent selected neutral or unsure, and 13 percent indicated that ODF did not make applying as easy as possible. Sixty-seven percent indicated that ODF did well offering adequate support to applicants during the application process, 23 percent selected neutral or unsure, and 10 percent indicated that ODF did poorly with offering support. Lastly, 45 percent of respondents indicated that ODF did well offering adequate support to potential applicants during the recruitment process, 45 percent selected neutral or unsure, and 10 percent indicated that ODF did poorly with offering support to potential applicants during recruitment (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Respondent assesment of the applicant recruitment process (n=31).

What went well?

We asked stakeholders what went well in the application and recruitment process. Several respondents (n=8) indicated that the **application was streamlined and easy to follow**. With regard to recruitment, six responses specifically mentioned either the webinars or the Q & A sessions as helpful resources. Additionally, nine respondents indicated that **ODF staff and LRP workgroup members were supportive during the application process**, either by making themselves available for calls or by promptly answering questions via email. Five individuals mentioned "outreach" efforts or "spreading the word" in a positive way. Two respondents mentioned that outreach efforts were diverse and inclusive in nature.

What could be improved?

We asked stakeholders what could have gone better in the application and recruitment process. Four main themes emerged within responses. First, several respondents (n=7) mentioned that the **selection criteria or match requirements were vague**. For example, one respondent wrote:

"I do not believe ODF was clear in their expectations for project applicants and this resulted in applicants proposing what they thought ODF wanted only to find out it was not."

One respondent suggested that a dedicated space on ODF's website outlining the project selection criteria would have helped to clarify requirements.

Second, respondents (n=3) reported that **DEI and social vulnerability goals in the application and recruitment process were unclear or unrealized**. Many shared that criteria for addressing DEI and social vulnerability goals in the application were unclear. Respondents mentioned that the **recruitment process failed to reach diverse stakeholders**. One respondent wrote:

"I think the process unintentionally excluded under-resourced communities and non-traditional partners, and forced applicants to focus on the most easily completed, available, 'shovel-ready' projects rather than the right treatments in the right places that would actually deliver on resilience goals."

Another suggested offering grant writing assistance to applicants with fewer resources, which could expand capacity and allow more under-resourced stakeholders to apply.

Third, some respondents (n=5) pointed out that the **process lacked sufficient "follow-up" pathways to obtain feedback for unfunded applications**. Four respondents indicated that they specifically tried to solicit written or verbal feedback from ODF, but were either

Figure 4. The most common words or phrases respondents used to describe the LRP project selection process (n=31).

unsuccessful in their efforts or found the process too cumbersome. They suggested that in the future, ODF should institute a process for following up with unfunded applicants to provide feedback on their proposals.

Lastly, several respondents (n=9) mentioned concern for the **short timeline's impact on both recruitment efforts and the application process**. The request for proposals was released in November 2021 and applications were due in January 2022[3]. Respondents suggested planning several cycles ahead of time to allow for a more thorough approach.

Project selection & evaluation

When stakeholders were asked to list three words or phrases they would use to describe the LRP project selection process, the most commonly mentioned words included collaborative, fast, fair, quick, and rushed (Figure 4).

We asked stakeholders to rate how well ODF and the LRP workgroup did with developing clear evaluation criteria and clearly communicating the evaluation criteria with project applicants. Fifty eight percent of respondents indicated that ODF did well with developing clear evaluation criteria. Thirty-two percent selected neutral or unsure, and 10 percent indicated that ODF did poorly with developing clear evaluation criteria. Sixty-eight percent of respondents indicated that ODF did well with clearly communicating the evaluation criteria with project applicants, while 19 percent selected neutral or unsure. Thirteen percent indicated that ODF did poorly with clearly communicating the evaluation criteria.

We asked stakeholders to rate how well ODF and the LRP workgroup did in terms of developing fair and inclusive project evaluation criteria, maintaining transparency throughout the project selection process, and selecting projects to fairly distribute available funding across the state. Forty-nine percent of respondents indi-

Figure 5. Respondent assessment of project evaluation criteria (n=31).


3. https://www.oregon.gov/odf/programs/frrip-timeline.pdf
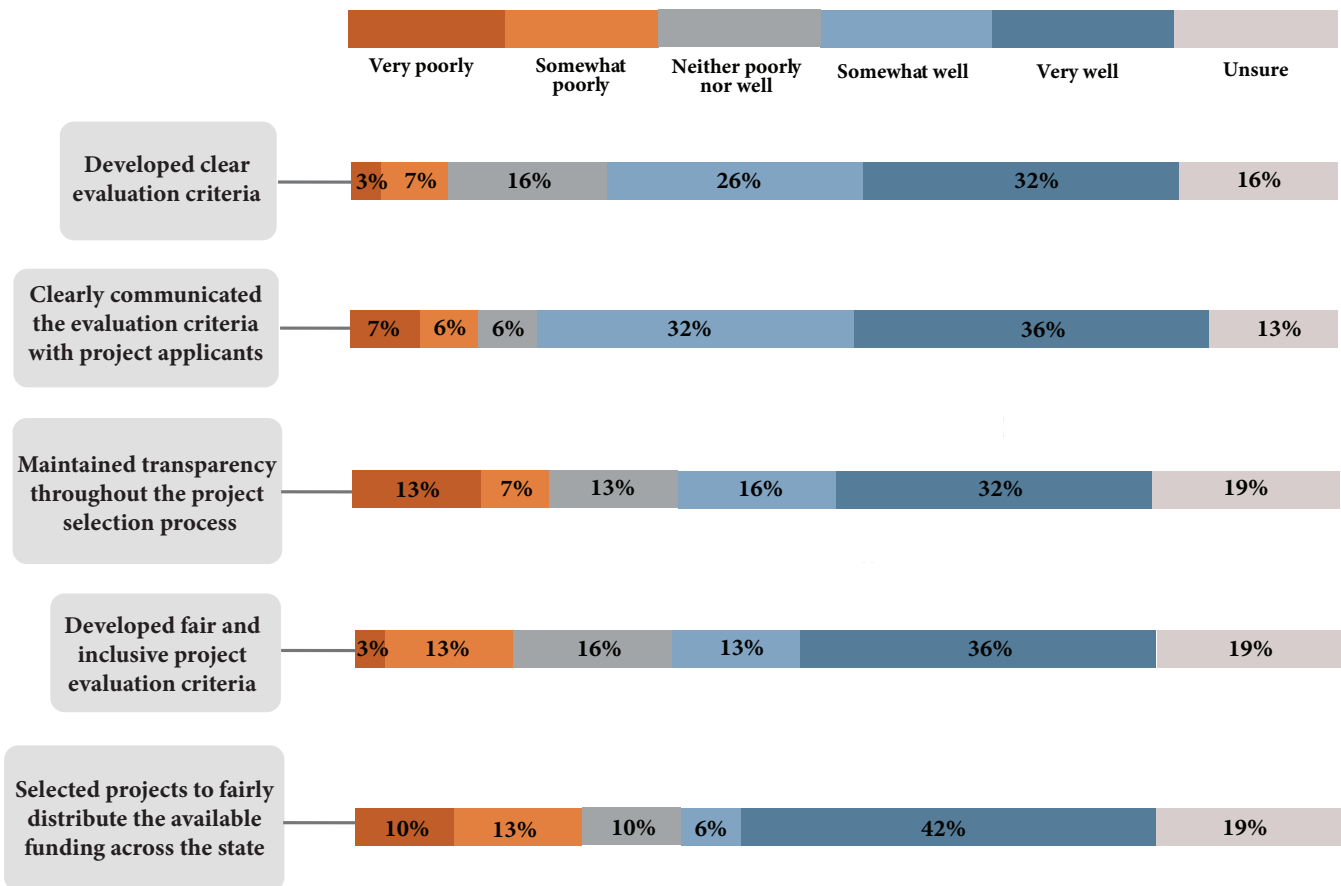
cated that ODF did well developing fair and inclusive project evaluation criteria. Thirty-five percent selected neutral or unsure, and 16 percent indicated that ODF did poorly with developing fair and inclusive project evaluation criteria. Forty-eight percent of respondents indicated that ODF did well maintaining transparency throughout the project selection process. Thirty-two percent selected neutral or unsure, and 20 percent indicated that ODF did poorly with maintaining transparency throughout the process. Lastly, 48 percent responded that ODF did well selecting projects to fairly distribute the available funding across the state. Twenty-nine percent answered neutral or unsure, and 23 percent indicated that ODF did poorly with selecting projects to fairly distribute across the state (Figure 5).

We asked stakeholders to rate the LRP selection process for its fairness, efficiency, effectiveness, inclusivity, and positivity along a five point scale (Figure 6). For every measure, over 60 percent of respondents rated the LRP selection process positively. For example, 60 percent indicated that the process was fair or somewhat fair,

23 percent selected neither fair nor unfair, and 17 percent indicated somewhat unfair. On an efficiency scale, 63 percent indicated that the process was efficient or somewhat efficient and 37 percent selected neither efficient nor inefficient. For effectiveness, 71 percent of respondents indicated that the process was effective or somewhat effective, 19 percent selected neither effective nor ineffective, and 10 percent indicated somewhat ineffective. For inclusivity, 67 percent of respondents indicated that the process was inclusive or somewhat inclusive, 16 percent selected was neither inclusive nor exclusive, and 17 percent indicated exclusive or somewhat exclusive. Lastly, 63 percent of respondents indicated the process was positive or somewhat positive, 27 percent selected it was neither positive nor negative, and 10 percent indicated that it was negative or somewhat negative.

Figure 6: Respondent assessment of effectiveness, efficiency, positivity, fairness, and inclusivity of the project selection process (n=31).
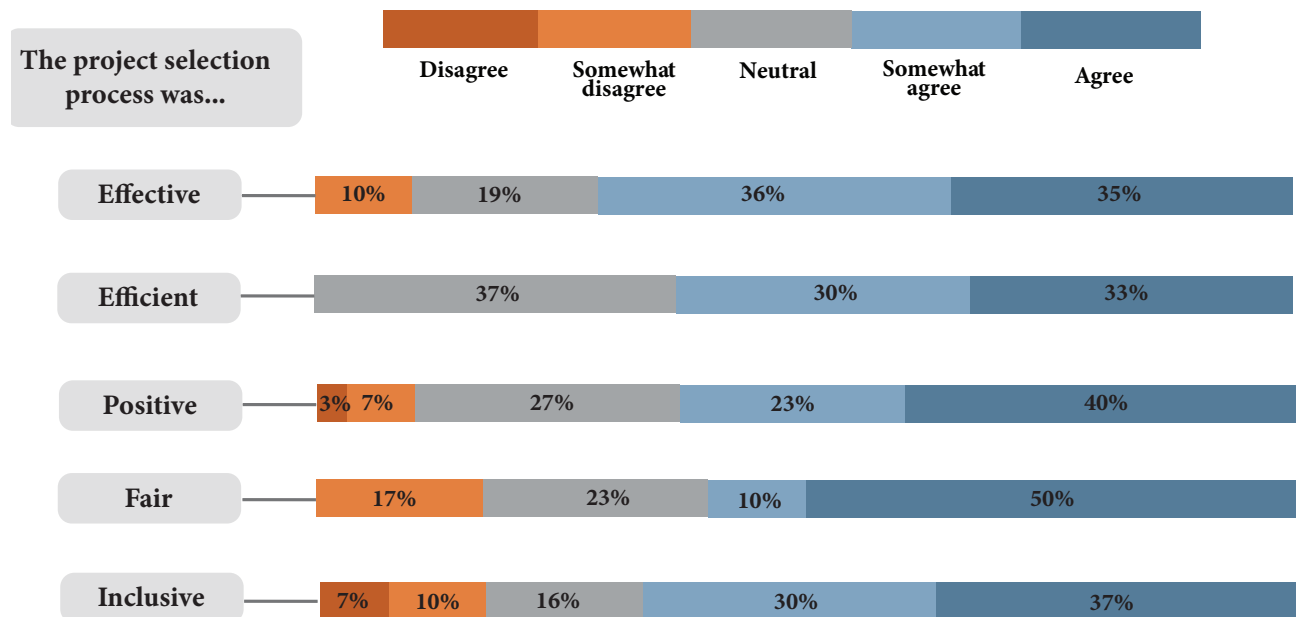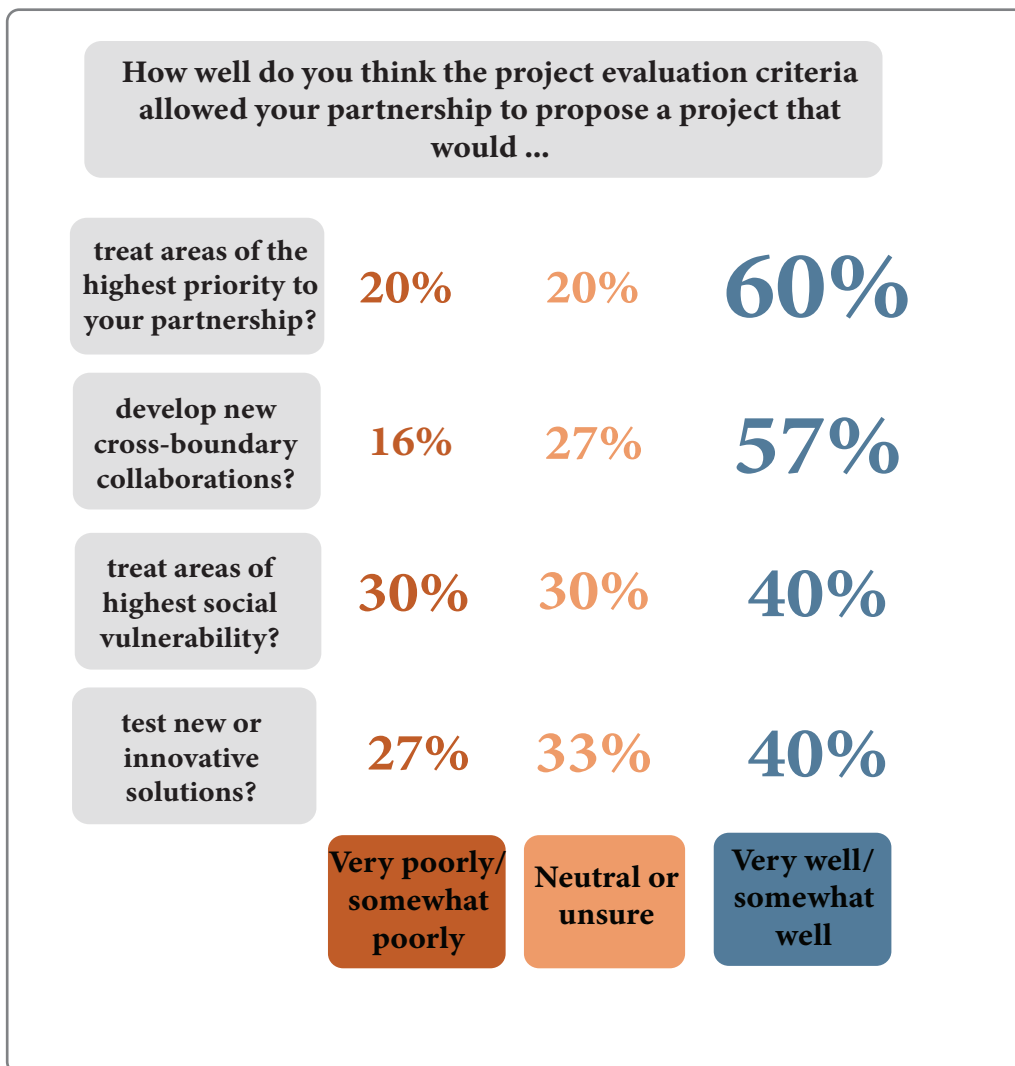
We asked stakeholders to assess how well they thought the project evaluation criteria allowed their partnership to propose a project that would meet various qualifications (Figure 7). Sixty percent indicated that the criteria allowed them to treat areas of the highest priority to their partnership. Twenty percent selected neutral or unsure, and 20 percent indicated the criteria did not allow them to treat areas of highest priority to the partnership.

Fifty-seven percent indicated that the criteria allowed their partnership to develop new cross-boundary collaborations, 27 percent selected neutral or unsure, and 16 percent indicated that the criteria only somewhat or very poorly allowed for new cross-boundary collaborations. Forty percent of respondents indicated that the criteria allowed their partnership to treat areas of high social vulnerability. Thirty percent selected neutral or unsure, and 30 percent indicated the criteria did not allow thier partnership to prioiritize areas of social vulnerability. Lastly, 40 percent of respondents indicated that the criteria allowed their partnership to test new or innovative solutions. Thirty-three percent selected neutral or unsure, and 27 percent indicated the criteria did not allow thier partnership to test new or innovative solutions.

Figure 7. Respondent assessment of how well project evaluation criteria allowed goals to be met (n=30).

How well do you think the project evaluation criteria allowed your partnership to propose a project that would …	Very poorly/ somewhat poorly	Neutral or unsure	Very well/ somewhat well
treat areas of the highest priority to your partnership?	20%	20%	60%
develop new cross-boundary collaborations?	16%	27%	57%
treat areas of highest social vulnerability?	30%	30%	40%
test new or innovative solutions?	27%	33%	40%

What went well?

We asked stakeholders an open-ended question about what went well in the project selection and evaluation process. Several mentioned **inclusivity, diversity, and collaboration**. Three respondents specifically said that they appreciated the diversity of ecosystems and landscapes that were funded. One respondent thought that a variety of treatment approaches, both traditional and innovative, were included in selected projects. Two respondents mentioned inclusivity with respect to land ownership, voicing that selection reflected cross-boundary goals. In addition, seven respondents thought that the selection process was collaborative. For example, one of these respondents commented that several funded projects included new partnerships that may not have formed without this opportunity.

In addition, many respondents indicated that the selection process and criteria were **transparent (n=4), efficient (n=4), and fair (n=4)**. For example, one respondent wrote that, *"It [LRP] was able to get a lot of funding out the door and appeared to be transparent and inclusive."*

Lastly, many respondents applauded the selection process for **quickly moving a high volume of needed funding to address the wildfire crisis**.

What could be improved?

We asked respondents an open-ended question about what they thought could have gone better in the project selection and evaluation process. Several themes emerged in response to this question.

Eight respondents indicated the **project selection process was biased**, including words like "political", "unfair", or "semi-transparent" in open-ended responses. Concerns over biased selection were also indicated in tandem with the aforementioned compressed application timeline. A few respondents (n=4) mentioned that the brief application window caused bias in favor of existing partnerships and "shovel-ready" projects, excluding smaller projects without the capacity to respond quickly to the request for proposal. One re-

spondent suggested that a third party, less involved at the project-level than ODF, could administer the grant in the future to reduce bias. Some respondents (n=5) thought that the selection process favored conventional management approaches over innovative ones. A few respondents (n=3) also indicated that selection was biased in favor of forest ecosystems and excluded rangelands and other ecosystems. For example, one respondent wrote that the selection process *"...was rooted in political maneuvering and a relatively one-dimensional perspective on wildfire risk reduction-- namely, conventional fuels reduction in forested environments..."*

Additionally, some respondents found that the **acreage, match, and QWRA criteria inhibited otherwise qualified projects from receiving funding**. Several respondents (n=5) thought that the use of the QWRA to define high risk areas was problematic, due to the perceived inaccuracy or low resolution of the models. One respondent suggested that the acreage cutoff criteria excluded smaller projects, and they thought lowering the cutoff or the match requirement would have been more inclusive. Another respondent suggested implementing two-tiered criteria, one for established projects and a second for smaller projects still building capacity that could be eligible for "seed" funding.

Lastly, some respondents (n=5) mentioned that **the selection criteria was not applied uniformly among the workgroup members**, leading to subjective scoring. Four respondents suggested the use of a more objective, quantitative, and standardized scoring process. They further suggested the review process should involve more than two readers per project to reduce inter-scorer variability in the future.

Public engagement

We asked respondents to indicate their agreement with three statements related to public involvement and inclusivity in relation to the development of program goals and objectives (Figure 8). Many respondents (35%) indicated that they were unsure whether or not, "feedback from the public was inte-

grated into program goals and objectives." A majority also selected unsure or neutral concerning their agreement with the statement, "there were sufficient opportunities for public involvement in development of the LRP." However, a majority agreed that program goals were inclusive of diverse perspectives.

What went well?

We asked stakeholders an open-ended question about what they thought went well in terms of public involvement in the development of the LRP goals and scope. Although many respondents critiqued the effort or were unaware of it, ten responded with positive impressions on the process. Specifically, a few (n=3) mentioned that the **public meetings were helpful** and that ODF took public comments voiced during these meetings into consideration when developing the LRP scope. Additionally, two respondents mentioned that **public engagement was inclusive and reached diverse stakeholders.**

What could be improved?

We asked stakeholders what they thought could have improved public involvement in the development of LRP goals and scope. Some respondents (n=4) mentioned they were not aware the public was involved at all.

Several respondents reported that the **short outreach timeline** did not allow for thorough public outreach efforts (n=5). Three respondents thought that outreach efforts were **not accessible to under-represented communities.** One of these respondents suggested implementing multiple language formats for more inclusive public outreach. Another pointed out that the language used in public meetings may have been too technical, discouraging public participation.

Lastly, one respondent thought that the public comment agenda items during the Board of Forestry meetings were too open-ended to solicit feedback, and suggested making them more specific in the future.

Figure 8. Respondents' agreement or disagreement with three statements regarding public engagement (n=31).
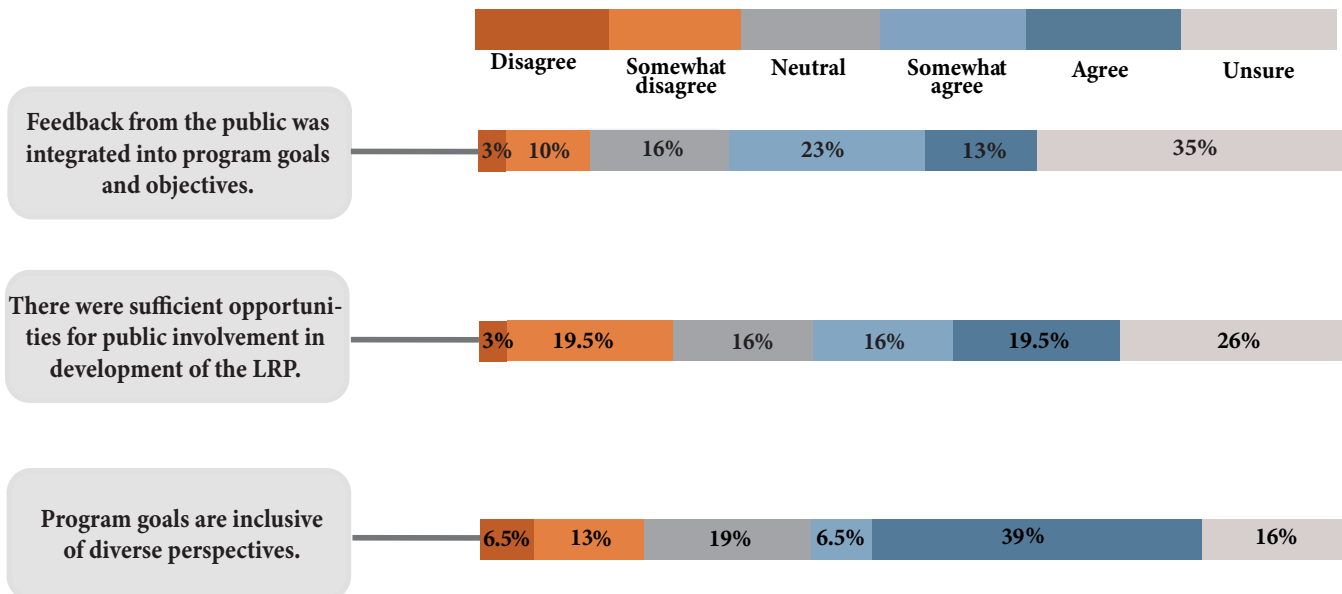
Workgroup member selection

We asked stakeholders to rate (on a 5-point scale) ODF's LRP workgroup selection process (Figure 9). Thirty-three percent indicated that ODF used a fair recruitment process to select workgroup members. Sixty-four percent selected neutral or unsure, and 3 percent indicated that ODF did not use a fair recruitment process to select workgroup members. Forty-four percent of respondents indicated that ODF selected a workgroup that adequately represented interests of key stakeholders and rights-holders. Forty-three percent selected neutral or unsure, and 13 percent indicated that ODF did poorly with selecting a workgroup to adequately represent interests of key stakeholders. Lastly, 46 percent of respondents indicated that ODF kept the process and content of the workgroup transparent and open. Forty-three percent selected neutral or unsure, and 11 percent indicated ODF did not keep the process of the workgroup transparent and open.

What went well?

We asked stakeholders what they thought went well with regard to workgroup member selection. Some (n=3) mentioned that **the workgroup represented all the key stakeholders outlined in SB762**. Three respondents also thought that the workgroup was effective in getting the job done in a short period of time. For

example, one respondent wrote:
"given the time constraints I think the workgroup involved many of the important voices of organizations involved in landscape resilience work across the state."

Lastly, two respondents mentioned the **diversity of technical specialties** represented in the workgroup, and how this allowed for a broad range of feedback on projects.

What could be improved?

We asked stakeholders what they thought could have gone better with workgroup member selection. As with other survey sections, a few (n=3) respondents indicated that **diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts fell short**. Specifically, they mentioned that the workgroup should include representatives from Oregon's Tribes and socially vulnerable communities.

Additionally, three respondents thought that the workgroup members represented special interest groups and high visibility organizations, rather than subject-matter experts or individuals with relevant experience. One of these respondents suggested that workgroup members could be selected by an open application process in the future, based on wildfire risk reduction experience.

Figure 9. Respondents' assessment of the workgroup member selection process (n=30).
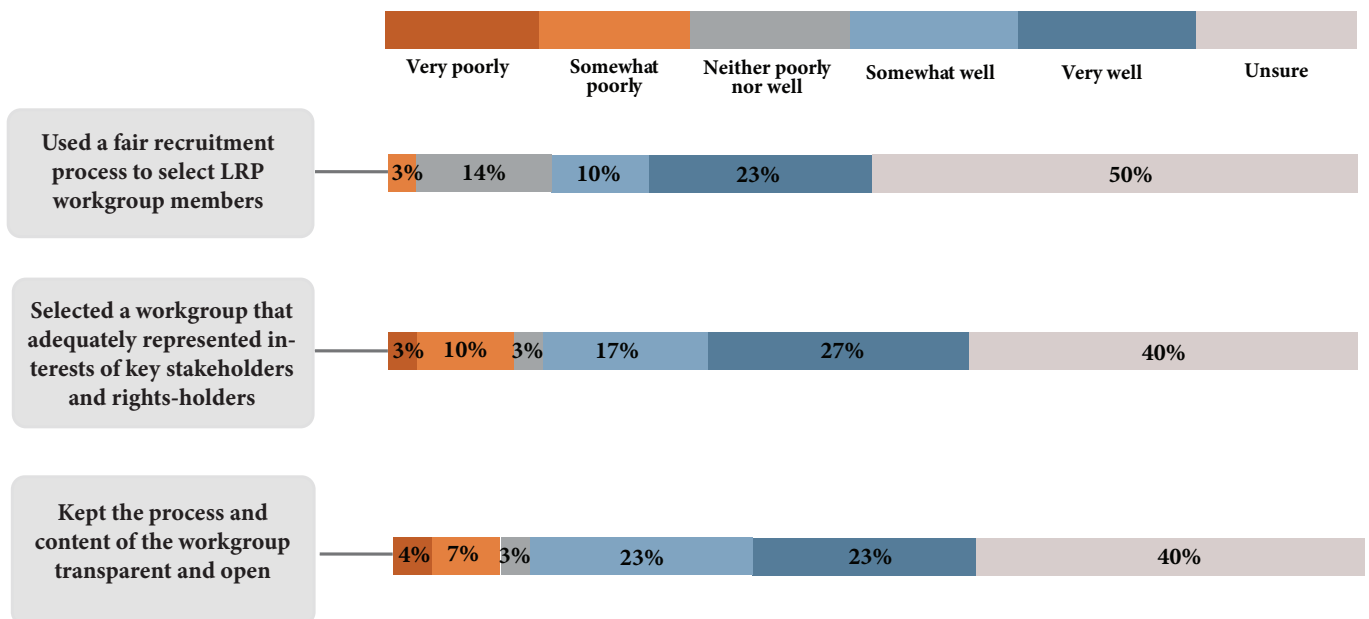
Survey limitations

Although 31 individuals involved in the application and selection process completed the survey, several skipped the open-ended questions or said they had no knowledge of particular aspects of the process. For example, many respondents involved in a grant application did not know about how workgroup members were selected or how the public was involved in the development of LRP scope (Figure 9). This means that some questions had fewer responses than others. These limitations should be taken into consideration when considering both our qualitative and quantitative assessment of the LRP selection process.

Characterization of grantee organizations

LRP projects funded during the 2021-2023 biennium represent a diverse range of institutional arrangements. Nine projects were funded with 25 different agreements between ODF and grantees (Table 1). The Ashland Forests All-Lands Restoration project consists of an agreement with the City of Ashland. The project involves 11 partners over three different types of land ownership. The Upper John Day Valley project is led by the Grant Soil and Water Conservation District supporting an All-Lands partnership of 10 different organizations across three different types of land owner-

Table 1. Characterization of grantee organizations.

Project	Grantee Type	Partners*	Land Ownership Types*
Ashland Forest All-Lands Restoration	Local government, supporting All-Lands partnership	11	3
Upper John Day Valley Landscape Resiliency	Soil and water conservation district, supporting all lands partnership	10	3
Laurel Butte Landscape Resiliency	NGO, supporting federal lands collaborative	8	2
Wasco County Forest Resiliency	2 agreements: NGO, supporting federal lands collaborative, and a private forest conservation fund	12	4
West Bear All-Lands Restoration	NGO, supporting All-Lands partnership	15	3
Upper Applegate Watershed Landscape Resiliency	NGO, supporting All-Lands partnership	13	2
Lower Rogue Oak Resiliency	NGO, supporting federal lands collaborative	15	4
Central Oregon Shared Stewardship Landscape Resiliency	16 Agreements: large All-Lands partnership involving agreements with NGOs, Warm Springs Tribe, state and local government, private homeowners' association, commercial forests, and other property management	16	6
Southeast Oregon Wildfire Resiliency	NGO, supporting All-Lands partnership	9	3

*Preliminary assessment only, subject to change pending further data collection.

ship. Five of the projects consist of agreements with non-governmental organizations that support either All-Lands partnerships or federal lands collaboratives. The largest project is the Central Oregon Shared Stewardship project which involves 16 different agreements with a range of different organizations including land stewardship and conservation NGOs, local and county governments, the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, as well as commercial forest lands and property management companies over six different types of land ownerships.

Geographic attributes of funded and unfunded projects

Projects from across the state were selected for the LRP (Figure 10). Geographic characteristics of funded and unfunded projects are displayed in Table 2. The

social vulnerability index for unfunded and funded project geographies ranged from low to moderately high. Nearly all of the funded and unfunded projects were located in high or very high risk QWRA regions, with one funded and one unfunded exception. The proposed acreage ranged from around five to 89,896 acres among unfunded projects and from 150 to 32,767 acres among funded projects. There was a range of one to 12 communities within unfunded project boundaries and between two to nine communities within funded project boundaries. The total population within project boundaries ranged from 95 to 86,367 among unfunded projects and from 355 to 219,058 among funded projects.

Figure 10. Projects selected for the LRP.
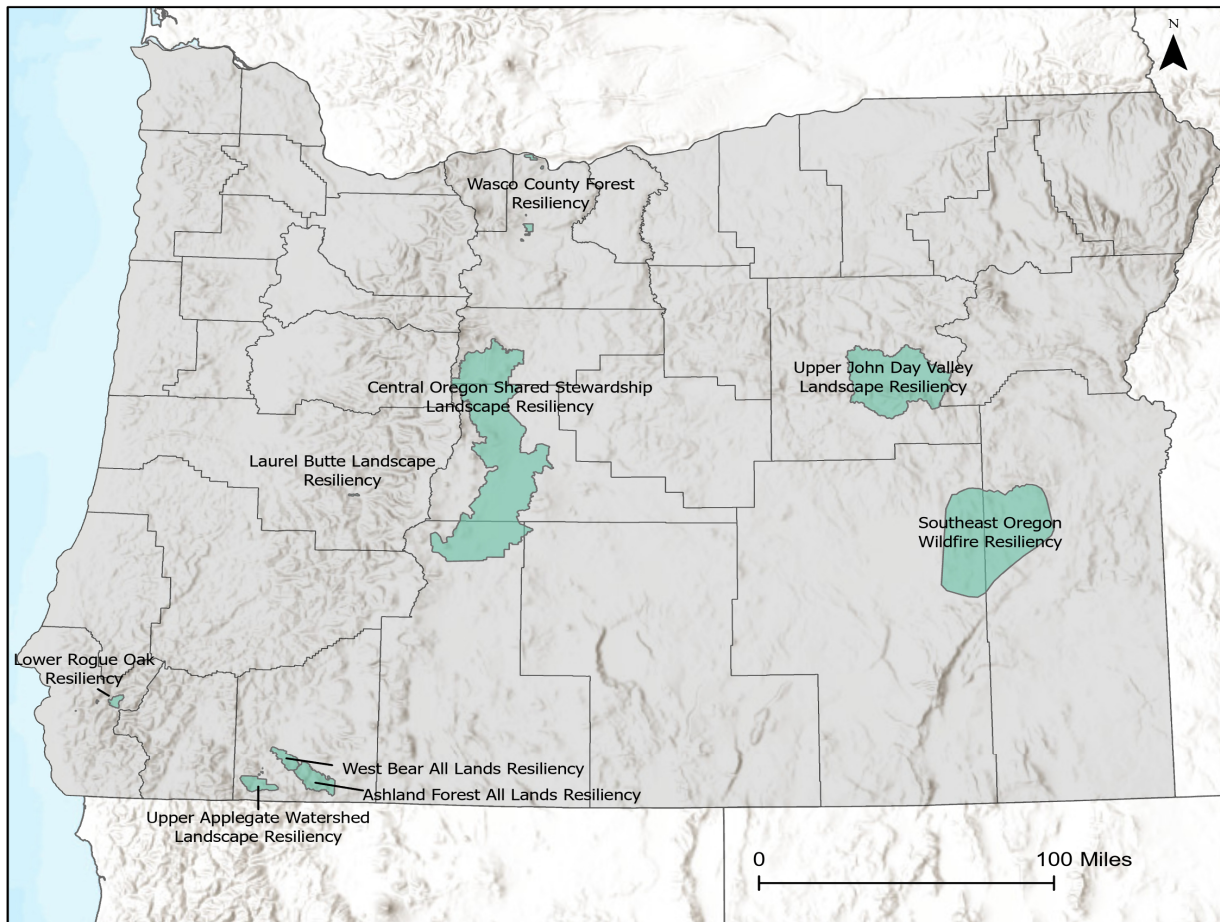
Table 2. Wildfire risk and social contexts for funded and unfunded projects.

Project	QWRA	SVI Average	Proposed Acres	Communities	Population Total
Ashland Forest All-Lands Restoration	very high	Low	585	2	6,503
Upper Applegate Watershed Landscape Resiliency	very high	Low	350	3	10,786
Upper John Day Valley Landscape Resiliency	very high	Moderately High	23,100	4	3,745
Laurel Butte Landscape Resiliency	very high	Moderately High	150	2	3,599
Lower Rogue Oak Resiliency	very high	Moderately High	732	3	355
Wasco County Forest Resiliency	very high	Moderately Low	3,300	6	1,308
West Bear All-Lands Restoration	low	Moderately Low	2,000	6	134,546
Central Oregon Shared Stewardship Landscape Resiliency	very high	Moderately Low	6,785	9	219,058
Southeast Oregon Wildfire Resiliency	high	Moderately Low	32,767	4	1,848
Unfunded 1	very high	Moderately Low	5.5	1	25,679
Unfunded 2	very high	Moderately Low	325	1	86,367
Unfunded 3	very high	Moderately Low	unknown	1	1,059
Unfunded 4	very high	Moderately High	12,000	2	10,308
Unfunded 5	very high	Moderately High	11,401	6	26,833
Unfunded 6	very high	Moderately High	89,896	12	25,611
Unfunded 7	high	Moderately High	1,024	4	10,634
Unfunded 8	low	Moderately High	530	4	2,588
Unfunded 9	high	Moderately High	354	1	70
Unfunded 10	very high	Low	3,183	2	95

Conclusion

This working paper reports results of the Project Selection phase of monitoring of the ODF's Landscape Resilience Program for the 2021-2023 biennium. It presents a summary of LRP stakeholders' experiences with the application, recruitment, public engagement, workgroup member selection, and project selection processes. It additionally outlines grantee organization characteristics and geographic attributes of funded and non-funded projects. Qualitative and quantitative results from this phase highlight successes, lessons learned, and suggestions to inform future landscape resiliency work across the state.

Stakeholders reported several key concerns with the LRP project selection process. Many thought that inclusivity, diversity, and equity goals were unclear and unrealized. They also critiqued the compressed timeline, pointing out that it constrained both applicants' and the workgroup members' capacities. Lastly, several respondents indicated that the LRP selection process was biased towards more conventional projects or forest ecosystems, to the exclusion of rangelands. Despite these concerns, many respondents also ap-

plauded the program for quickly filling a much needed funding gap. The majority of respondents reported that ODF made applying as easy as possible for applicants, offered adequate support to applicants, and effectively reached potential applicants. Over half of respondents reported that ODF developed clear evaluation criteria and clearly communicated this criteria to applicants. Our effectiveness, efficiency, positivity, fairness, and inclusivity scale results highlight overall positive impressions of the program. Many thought the LRP was a critical first step in building wildfire resilience across Oregon's landscapes and shared that they hope to see the program continued in future biennium.

Given the results of this first stage of monitoring, we suggest that ODF clarify and prioritize equity efforts during recruitment and selection for future landscape resiliency grants. For example, ODF may consider including more representatives from under-represented stakeholders in the LRP workgroup. Additionally, we suggest ensuring more than two reviewers per application to reduce potential subjectivity. ODF should also consider providing more thorough feedback to unfunded applicants. Lastly, we suggest implementing longer timelines for outreach, recruitment, application, and selection.

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Appendix A: LRP Project Selection Survey

Background

Thank you for your interest in this survey on the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) Landscape Resilience Program (LRP) project selection process.

The University of Oregon has been funded by ODF to conduct the monitoring of the LRP, from project selection to completion. As an initial step in collecting monitoring data, we are conducting this survey on the project selection process, which occurred in January 2022.

The purpose of this survey is to understand experiences with the LRP's project selection process. In this study, we are considering the processes to evaluate, prioritize, and select LRP grant applicants. We are asking people to complete this survey if they are or were involved in: supporting, submitting or evaluating applications to the LRP, **regardless of whether that project was funded**.

We will compile feedback from all those who respond and summarize findings in publicly accessible reports. This will help ODF improve their project selection process in the future if LRP is renewed, or for other potential projects.

There are no right or wrong answers to any of these questions. Your responses are confidential. We will not share your name or any other identifying information in our findings. We appreciate your honest and candid input.

If you have questions, or prefer to talk to us directly instead of completing this survey online, please contact Michael Coughlan, project lead, Ecosystem Workforce Program, University of Oregon: mcoughla@uoregon.edu

Please note that this work is about project selection. We will follow up later with those associated with LRP project implementation.

Consent for Research Participation

Your participation in this research will remain confidential. Use and dissemination of the information you provide through your responses to these questions will be completely anonymized.

Duration. The questionnaire should take you about 10-20 minutes to complete.

Risks of Participation. The risks of participating in this evaluation are not expected to exceed the risks of daily life.

Benefits of Participation. While there are no direct benefits for participation, the information you provide to the monitoring team may help to improve ODF landscape resiliency grant programs and initiatives as well as the implementation of landscape resiliency and wildfire risk reduction projects more broadly.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Michael Coughlan, Principal Investigator at mcoughla@uoregon.edu. You may also contact Research Compliance Services for questions about your rights as participants at 541-346-2510

Voluntary Consent. You are being asked to voluntarily participate in a research study. It is up to you whether you choose to participate or not. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled if you choose not to participate or discontinue participating.

By checking "yes," you agree to take this survey and that you are at least 18 years of age.

☐ Yes
☐ No

Involvement & Impressions

This section asks you about how you have interacted with the LRP and your overall impression(s) of the LRP's project selection process.

1. Please enter your name. This will be used for tracking purposes only, your participation will be kept confidential.

   [ ]

2. In which of the following ways have you been involved with the LRP, check all that apply?
   ☐ Participated in a grant application
   ☐ ODF employee supporting or administering LRP
   ☐ LRP workgroup member
   ☐ LRP workgroup technical advisor
   ☐ Member of the LRP project selection committee
   ☐ LRP Grantee (please specify role and employer)

   [ ]

   [ ]

   ☐ Other, please describe

2.2. If you specified "Participated in a grant application," what was your role in the grant application process?
   ☐ I led the grant application

☐ I supported the grant application (please describe below)

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2.3. If you specified "Participated in a grant application," was the grant funded?
 ☐ Yes
 ☐ No

3. Overall, how would you describe the LRP project selection process?
 Please mark the point on the scale that most represents how you feel about the process overall. I thought the LRP project selection was…

Unfair	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Fair
Inefficient	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Efficient
Ineffective	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Effective
Exclusive	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Inclusive
Negative	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Positive

4. (Optional): Write in why you selected the responses you did above.

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5. What are the first three words or phrases you would use to describe the LRP project selection process?
 1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____

Public Engagement & Program Development

This section includes more targeted questions to understand what you think about four different elements of the project selection process, including:

- o Opportunities for public involvement in development of the LRP goals/scope
- o LRP Workgroup recruitment
- o Project Recruitment
- o Project Selection

You may be more familiar with some of these elements and less familiar with others. If you encounter questions about anything you are not familiar with, please select "unsure".

Opportunities for public involvement (in developing LRP goals/scope)

First, we want to understand your experience with how the public was involved in developing or shaping the LRP's goals and scope.

6. Please indicate your agreement with the following statements.

	Very poorly	Somewhat poorly	Neither poorly nor well	Somewhat well	Very well	Unsure
There were sufficient opportunities for public involvement in development of the LRP	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Feedback from the public was integrated into program goals and objectives.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Program goals are inclusive of diverse perspectives	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

7. What, if anything, do you think worked **well** to involve the public in developing LRP goals/scope?

8. What, if anything, do you think would have **worked better** to involve the public in developing LRP goals/scope?

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Workgroup Member Selection

This section asks for your knowledge and experience with the LRP workgroup and review committee. SB762 Section 18 1(c) specified that ODF should consult and cooperate with "state and federal agencies, counties, cities and other units of local government, federally recognized Indian tribes in this state, public and private forestland and rangeland owners, forest and rangeland collaboratives and other relevant community organizations," and Section 18. 3(a) that ODF should collaborate with OSU Extension Service and other entities to prioritize projects. To do this ODF formed the LRP workgroup and review committee.

9. How do you think ODF staff did with each of the following?

	Very poorly	Somewhat poorly	Neither poorly nor well	Somewhat well	Very well	Unsure
Used a fair recruitment process to select LRP workgroup members	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Selected a workgroup that adequately represented interests of key stakeholders and right-holders	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Kept the process and content of the workgroup transparent and open	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

10. In what ways do you think the workgroup member selection process was effective in achieving its SB762 mandated goals?

```



```

11. How do you think the workgroup member selection process could be improved upon in the future?

[ ]

Applicant Recruitment

This section asks about your experience of LRP applicant recruitment and support.

12. How do you think ODF did with each of the following?

	Very poorly	Somewhat poorly	Neither poorly nor well	Somewhat well	Very well	Unsure
Effectively reached potential applicants to inform them of the opportunity (e.g., through advertisement announcements)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Made applying as easy as possible for applicants	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Offered adequate support to applicants during the application process	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Offered adequate support to potential applicants during the recruitment process	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

13. What do you think ODF did effectively to recruit and/or support potential applicants?

[ ]

14. How do you think ODF could improve recruitment and support for applicants in the future?

<div style="border:1px solid black; min-height:300px"></div>

Project Evaluation & Selection

This section asks about your opinions about how projects were evaluated and selected for funding.

15. How well did ODF and the LRP workgroup do with the following?

	Very poorly	Somewhat poorly	Neither poorly nor well	Somewhat well	Very well	Unsure
Developed clear evaluation criteria	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Clearly communicated the evaluation criteria with project applicants	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Developed fair and inclusive project evaluation criteria	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Maintained transparency throughout the project selection process	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Selected projects to fairly distribute the available funding across the state	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

16. (Optional) What is your understanding of how decisions were made about which LRP projects would be funded or not funded?

<div style="border:1px solid black; min-height:280px"></div>

17. How well do you think the project evaluation criteria allowed your partnership to propose a project that would…

	Very poorly	Somewhat poorly	Neither poorly nor well	Somewhat well	Very well	Unsure

Treat areas of the highest priority to your partnership?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Develop new cross-boundary collaborations?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Treat areas of highest social vulnerability?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Test new or innovative solutions?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

18. (Optional) Please write in anything you'd like to explain from your answers above.

19. In what ways do you think the LRP project evaluation and selection process was effective?

20. How do you think LRP project evaluation and selection could be improved?

Other Feedback

This last section asks if you have any other feedback for us concerning the LRP project selection process.

21. Are there any other aspects of the LRP project selection process that you think **went especially well**?

[ ]

22. Are there any other aspects of the LRP project selection process that you think **did not go well?**

[ ]

23. Do you have any other ideas for how to improve the LRP project selection process in the future?

[ ]

24. Are there any questions about the LRP project selection process that we should have asked but did not?

[ ]

25. Is there anything else we should know about the project selection process?

Demographics

Please take a minute to tell us about yourself.

26. How do you describe yourself

☐ Male
☐ Female
☐ Non-binary/third gender
☐ Prefer not to say
☐ Prefer to self-describe

27. Is there anything else you'd like to share about your identity?

28. Are you aware of any other individuals involved in the LRP application or selection process? If so, please provide their email address.

Thank you for your time. If you have any questions or would like more information on this research project, please email Dr. Michael R. Coughlan: mcoughla@uoregon.edu

Appendix B. Methods for the social vulnerability index analysis

The overall vulnerability of people and property to wildfire is conventionally estimated based upon the spatial distribution of the probability of exposure to wildfire. The concept of social vulnerability adds depth to this estimate by additionally accounting for how and why some people are more sensitive to impacts from wildfire in comparison to others due to personal, social, economic, or cultural characteristics which make them more vulnerable to harm from specific types of hazards such as wildfires (Coughlan, 2019).

We created a composite social vulnerability index (SVI) that combined (1) the Oregon State University/Oregon Wildfire Risk Explorer 2020 Social Vulnerability Index (OSU SVI) data for Census County Sub-Divisions, Tracts, and Block Groups (Reilley and Crandall, 2022). The OSU SVI was created as part of the Oregon's omnibus wildfire bill (Senate Bill 762) wildfire risk assessment and followed the SVI methodologies developed by Flanagan et al. (2011) for disaster risk management that were previously used by the Centers for Disease Control and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry to assess social vulnerability at the national level.

SVI is calculated by taking the percent rank of the sum of percentiles across four data themes: socioeconomic, household composition and disability, minority and language, and housing type and transportation. These themes are themselves composed of multiple variables derived from American Community Survey data (McKay, 2018).

We chose to modify the OSU SVI due to reliability issues inherent in the American Community Survey data used to construct the index. Because the American Community Survey variables are estimates, each variable has an associated standard error that can be used to calculate the coefficient of variation (CV) as a proxy for the reliability of the variables for each given unit of analysis (e.g., county sub-divisions, tracts, and block groups). Tabular versions of the OSU SVI data contain a reliability classification based on CV thresholds defined by McKay (2018): Low reliability (unreliable) are CV values over 40 percent indicating that the sampling error is large relative to the estimate, Medium reliability (use with caution) are CV values between 12 and 40 percent, and High reliability (estimate is reliable) are small CVs less than or equal to 12 percent. However, rather than presenting the reliability analysis for each variable used to calculate the SVI, the OSU SVI reliability classification reports the percentage of total indicators in the SVI that are at or above the three reliability thresholds (Low, Medium, High). A fourth reliability class accounted for situations where valid CVs could not be calculated.

For our modified SVI, we selected block groups, tracks, and county sub-divisions with SVI values where 50 percent or greater of the contributing indicators were in the OSU SVI High or Medium reliability category. We considered that sample units with fewer than 50% of indicators at high or medium reliability could result an unreliable assessment of social vulnerability. Thus, our reliability classification eliminated sample units with SVI values that were mostly unreliable. To preserve the highest data resolution, we intersected the sample units with high and medium reliability such that we retained the SVI value of the smallest, reliable sample unit (block group, followed by tract, followed by county sub-division). The resulting layer is thus composed of all three sample units

SVI is a continuous scale variable ranging from 0-100. To simplify interpretation, we further classified the SVI into 4 categories: Low, Moderately Low, Moderately High, and High.

References

Coughlan, M. R., Ellison, A., & Cavanaugh, A. (2019). *Social Vulnerability and Wildfire in the Wildland- Urban Interface*. https://ewp.uoregon.edu/sites/ewp.uoregon.edu/files/WP_96.pdf

Flanagan, B. E., Gregory, E. W., Hallisey, E. J., Heitgerd, J. L., & Lewis, B. (2011). A Social Vulnerability Index for Disaster Management. Journal of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, 8(1). https://doi.org/10.2202/1547-7355.1792

Reilley, C. & Crandall, M. (2022) Social Vulnerability for the State of Oregon [Data set]. Oregon State University. https://doi.org/10.7267/z890s265n

McKay, G. (2018). The American Community Survey: An ESRI Whitepaper.

Appendix C: LRP Project Selection Survey Codebook

1. **<u>Applicant Recruitment</u>**: respondent mentions anything relevant to recruitment, the application process, or communication with applicants. Also includes communication with applicants following selection process. Includes relevant responses to survey questions 13 and 14.
    a. **<u>AR Positives:</u>** anything in the applicant recruitment parent code that refers to positive feedback or aspects that went well.
        i. **<u>Helpful staff</u>**: respondent mentions that ODF or workgroup members were helpful or supportive during application or recruitment process.
        ii. **<u>Application</u>**: respondent mentions the application itself in a positive manner; ex: easy, straightforward, simple application.
    b. **<u>AR Room for improvement</u>**: anything in the applicant recruitment parent code that refers to aspects that did not go well or could have gone better.
        i. **<u>Unclear criteria</u>**: respondent mentions project requirements or criteria were not made clear, ex: comments like "be upfront about what you're looking for so as not waste people's time."
        ii. **<u>Lack of follow up</u>**: respondent mentions no feedback to non-funded applicants, ex: ODF didn't answer calls, etc.
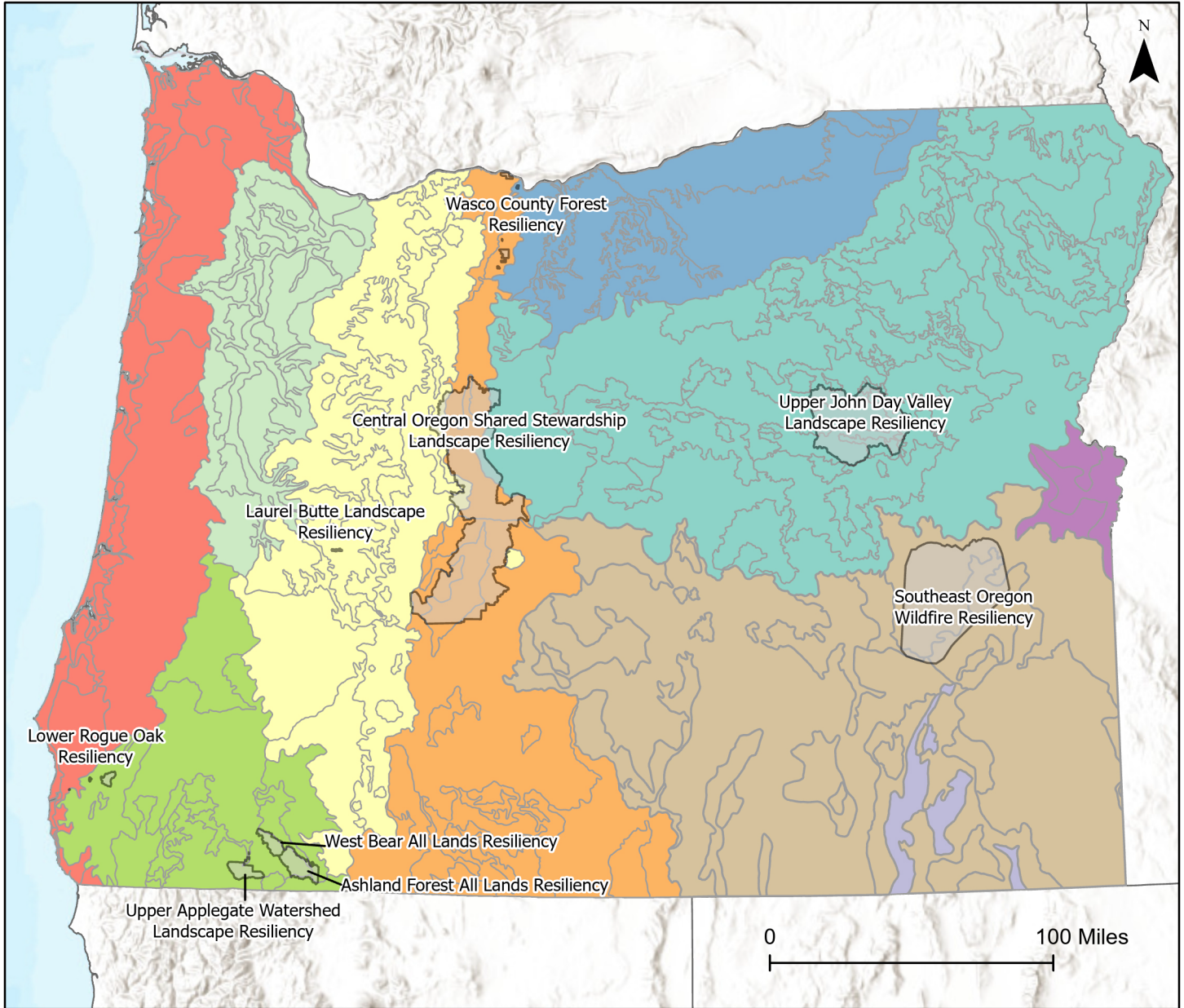
2. **<u>DEI</u>**: respondent mentions diversity, inclusion, equity, and social vulnerability efforts within any of the other categories (application, outreach, workgroup, selection). We will use code co-occurrence to see how this code falls within other parent codes.
    a. **<u>Lacking:</u>** most of the DEI coding will be in this child code; mentions DEI efforts falling short.
    b. **<u>Positive:</u>** a handful of the DEI codes will fall in this child code; mentions diverse or inclusive outreach/application/workgroup/selection going well.

3. **<u>Project Selection & Evaluation:</u>** Respondent mentions the selection or evaluation process. This is the broadest category, so if there is feedback that does not seem to fit the other categories, it probably can be considered part of this parent code. Relevant answers to survey questions 19-22 and 5.
    a. **<u>PS positives</u>**: anything in the Project Selection & Evaluation parent code that refers to aspects that went well.
    b. **<u>PS room for improvement</u>**: anything in the Project Selection & Evaluation parent code that refers to aspects that did not go well or could have gone better.
        i. **<u>Limited Ecosystems</u>**: Respondent mentions rangelands or non-forest ecosystems are not well represented.
        ii. **<u>Not innovative</u>**: Respondent mentions that conventional approaches were prioritized or that there was no time/capacity for innovation.

iii. **QWRA**: Respondent mentions issues with using the QWRA or risk models in general.

iv. **Biased:** Respondent mentions selection process seemed biased or political, ex: "it seems projects were pre-selected".

v. **Subjective scoring:** Respondent mentions scoring or ranking process subjective or highly variable among selection committee members. Distinct from "biased" in that the subjectivity is unintentional.

4. **Public Engagement:** Respondent mentions the public involvement process; includes relevant answers to survey questions 7 and 8.
   a. **PE Positives:** anything in the Public Engagement parent code that refers to aspects that went well.
   b. **PE Room for improvement:** anything in the Public Engagement parent code that refers to aspects that did not go well or could have gone better.
      i. **Unaware**: Respondent mentions they did not even know there was a public involvement process.

5. **Workgroup Member Selection:** Respondent mentions the workgroup or the workgroup member selection process; includes relevant answers to survey questions 10 and 11.
   a. **WMS room for improvement:** anything in the Workgroup Member Selection parent code that refers to aspects that did not go well or could have gone better.
      i. **Interest groups:** special interest groups represented rather than subject matter experts.
   b. **WMS positives:** anything in the workgroup member selection parent code that refers to aspects that went well.

6. **Suggestions:** Respondent mentions any specific, constructive suggestions within any of the other categories (application, outreach, workgroup, selection). We will use code co-occurrence to see how this code falls within other parent codes.

7. **Short timeline**: Respondent refers to the timeline as compressed, quick, rushed, etc. within any of the other categories (application, outreach, workgroup, selection). We will use code co-occurrence to see how this code falls within other parent codes.

Appendix D: Additional maps
Ecoregions and LRP projects funded in the 2021-2023 biennium

Wasco County Forest Resiliency

Central Oregon Shared Stewardship Landscape Resiliency

Laurel Butte Landscape Resiliency

Upper John Day Valley Landscape Resiliency

Southeast Oregon Wildfire Resiliency

Lower Rogue Oak Resiliency

West Bear All Lands Resiliency

Ashland Forest All Lands Resiliency

Upper Applegate Watershed Landscape Resiliency

0   100 Miles

Esri, HERE, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, EPA, NPS, Esri, USGS

Ecoregions

- Blue Mountains
- Cascades
- Central Basin and Range
- Coast Range
- Columbia Plateau
- Eastern Cascades Slopes and Foothills
- Klamath Mountains
- Northern Basin and Range
- Puget Lowland
- Snake River Plain
- Willamette Valley

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Wildfire Risk To LRP Projects funded 2021-2023 Biennium

Wasco County Forest
Resiliency

Upper John Day Valley
Landscape Resiliency

Central Oregon Shared Stewardship
Landscape Resiliency

Laurel Butte Landscape
Resiliency

Southeast Oregon
Wildfire Resiliency

Lower Rogue Oak
Resiliency

West Bear All Lands Resiliency

Ashland Forest All Lands Resiliency

Upper Applegate Watershed
Landscape Resiliency

| 0 | 100 Miles |
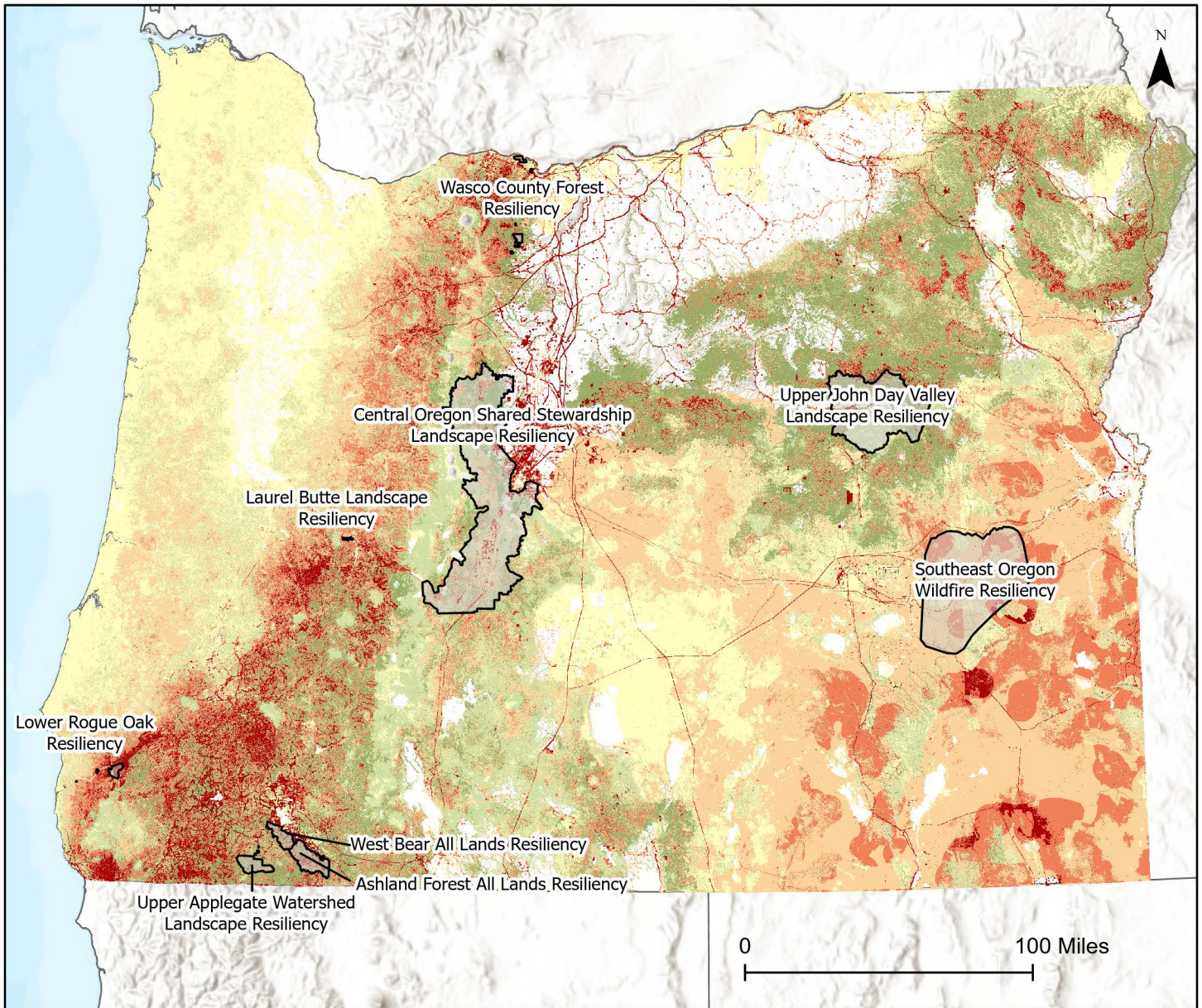
Esri, HERE, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, EPA, NPS, Esri, USGS

Overall Wildfire Risk (Total eNVC)

- Very high
- High
- Moderate
- Low
- Low benefit
- Benefit

Wildfire risk represented by the 2018
Quantitative Wildfire Risk Assessment
Total eNVC (expected net value change)

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Social vulnerability and LRP projects funded in the 2021-2023 biennium

N

Wasco County Forest Resiliency

Central Oregon Shared Stewardship Landscape Resiliency

Upper John Day Valley Landscape Resiliency

Laurel Butte Landscape Resiliency

Southeast Oregon Wildfire Resiliency

Lower Rogue Oak Resiliency

West Bear All Lands Resiliency

Ashland Forest All Lands Resiliency

Upper Applegate Watershed Landscape Resiliency

0   100 Miles
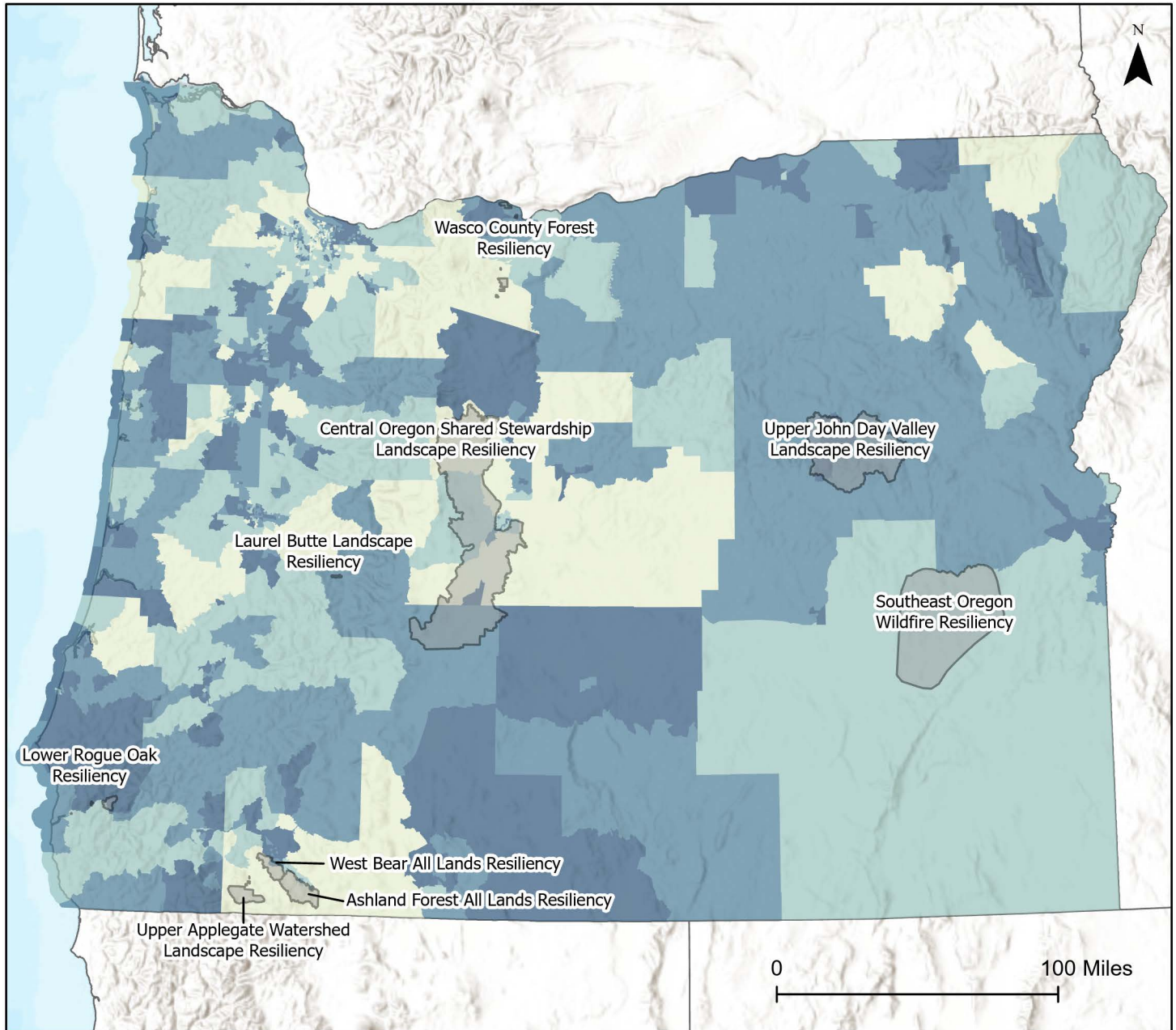
Esri, HERE, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, EPA, NPS, Esri, USGS

Social Vulnerability

	Low		Moderately high
	Moderately low		High

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