

Dear Deschutes County resident,

If you reply to this invitation, you could be part of the Deschutes Civic Assembly on Youth Homelessness. This Assembly will be the first of its kind in Central Oregon – help our community take on a complex challenge, and be part of our history.

This letter was sent to 12,000 randomly selected households in Deschutes County. If you are 16 years or older, **you are almost certainly eligible – no experience is necessary.**

Central Oregon has among the highest rates of homelessness among youth and families in the country, and these numbers have risen dramatically since 2020. You could be part of turning these numbers around.

Civic Assemblies are a way for everyday people to help solve big challenges. Assemblies are able to break through tough, divisive issues to find new paths forward. Youth homelessness is not an issue that experts or government officials can solve alone. This is your seat at the table.

When:	Two weekends in September & October , 9AM to 4:30PM each day: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sat.–Sun., Sept. 14-15 and • Fri.–Sun., Oct. 4-6
Stipend:	\$450 total (equivalent to \$15/hour)
How:	Either reply using the enclosed form – postmark deadline: July 16. Or reply online by July 21 at cocap website/response

If you respond to this letter, you will be placed in an anonymous lottery drawing. That lottery will result in a Civic Assembly of 30 Deschutes residents. The Assembly is randomly selected to reflect the county’s population – on age, gender, location, and other factors. The aim is to bring together people from all walks of life, a sort of “**county in one room.**”

The Assembly will address the following topic: **exact framing question for the Assembly goes here** _____]

The Assembly will work closely with the Central Oregon Youth Action Board (YAB), one of the key groups working on this topic. The YAB is responsible for deciding how to spend a nearly \$1M federal grant to address youth homelessness in Central Oregon, and for providing other advice to local governments on this subject. The Assembly will fit in with this work by proposing additional policy solutions to this complex local challenge.

Para leer esta carta en Español y contestar con interés, visita: [cocap website/espanol.](#)

[another language to be included here?]

[remember to include phone number to call in any language]

Several other key agencies have pledged to take action on the Assembly's recommendations: the Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council, the City of Bend, and Deschutes County. Other cities and organizations may also join this list. This Assembly is funded by a wide variety of local individuals, local foundations, and national foundations.

**Who can serve on the Assembly?
How will Assembly Members be selected?**

To be eligible to serve on the Assembly, you must:

- Currently live at the address on this mailing, or have received it through a social service agency
- Be 16 years of age or older on September 12, 2024
- Be available on each day and time the Assembly is scheduled to meet
- Not be a current elected official
- **Either mail your reply by July 16, or reply at [cocap website](#)/response by July 21**

Assembly Members will be selected from among the replies to this mailing, at a public Lottery Event on August 1 at _____ [location] _____ and will be broadcast live online on _____ [website] _____. Selected Assembly Members will be notified by _____ [date] _____.

This project is strictly nonpartisan, and it is not associated with any political party, campaign, or individual. The Civic Assembly will be entirely independent. It will make the recommendations it chooses, with no outside interference, and it will present them directly to decision makers.

As part of the Assembly, you will learn about your county and the complex issue of youth homelessness. You will consider issues related to housing, education, and health, and you will hear directly from youth who have experienced homelessness firsthand. **You do not need to be an expert to participate.** Your individual perspective as a Deschutes resident is what matters.

You will have the unusual opportunity to work with fellow residents from all corners of Deschutes County to identify where government agencies, nonprofit service providers, and others should focus their efforts.

If selected, you will serve for **two weekends this fall** – you must be available on all days listed to participate. You will receive a stipend for your time, lunch and refreshments, reimbursements for transportation and child/elder care, and other personal assistance as needed.

For further information about the Assembly, please see the FAQ enclosed with this letter, or please contact Healthy Democracy at info@healthydemocracy.org or (503) 841-6865.

Thank you in advance for your service to the people of Central Oregon.

Sincerely,

XXXXXX
Co-Chair
Youth Action Board

Josh Burgess
Director
Central Oregon Civic Action Project

Panelist Response Forms

PLEASE COMPLETE A SEPARATE FORM FOR EACH MEMBER OF YOUR HOUSEHOLD AGED 16 & UP.

Forms must be **postmarked by July 16** – or **reply online by July 21** at: cocap.website/response

Address: <Full Address>		Code: <code>
Name:	My household . . . <input type="checkbox"/> Owns this address as our primary residence <input type="checkbox"/> Rents this address as our primary residence <input type="checkbox"/> Is currently unhoused Note: If the property at the address above is not a residence (e.g., it is a business) OR if this property is a vacation or second home OR if you otherwise do not live at this address as your primary residence, you are not eligible for this particular lottery – even if your primary residence is elsewhere in Deschutes County.	
Phone:		
Email:		
Primary Language:		
Age: <input type="checkbox"/> 16–24 <input type="checkbox"/> 25–34 <input type="checkbox"/> 35–44 <input type="checkbox"/> 45–54 <input type="checkbox"/> 55–64 <input type="checkbox"/> 65–74 <input type="checkbox"/> 75+		
Highest education level attained: <input type="checkbox"/> Some schooling but no diploma <input type="checkbox"/> High school diploma or equivalent <input type="checkbox"/> Some college or Associate’s degree <input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor’s degree or higher	Which best describes how you most identify? <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Another gender identity	
Please initial each of the statements below: ____ I received this invitation mailer at my primary residence or through a social service agency, <i>not</i> at a business address, second home, or other address. ____ I am <i>not</i> a current elected official. ____ I am able to commit to participate in the Assembly on <i>all</i> of the following dates, from 9 AM to 4:30 PM each day: Sat.–Sun., Sept. 13–14 , and Fri.–Sun., Oct. 3–5 ____ I understand that missing more than 8 hours of the Assembly will disqualify me from continuing as an Assembly Member.	Which best describes how you most identify? <input type="checkbox"/> Asian or Pacific Islander <input type="checkbox"/> Black or African American <input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic or Latina/e/o/x (of any race) <input type="checkbox"/> Native American or Alaska Native <input type="checkbox"/> White* <input type="checkbox"/> Multiracial <small>*Note: These categories are matched to Census data. Although Middle Eastern & North African will become a future US Census category, the current Census encouraged MENA respondents to mark "White."</small>	
	Which party are you registered with? <input type="checkbox"/> Democratic Party <input type="checkbox"/> Republican Party <input type="checkbox"/> Another party, Unaffiliated, or Not registered	
	I certify the information on this form is true to the best of my knowledge. Signature: _____ Date: _____	

For more info on the democratic lottery, our privacy policy, and other details, see the enclosed FAQ.

If you included an email address above, you will receive confirmation of your submission as responses are processed. Look for an announcement of the public Lottery Selection Event, which will also be the official launch of the project, in your email – or simply tune in on **DATE at TIME at PROJECT WEBSITE URL.**

[2nd response form on back - Duplicate of above]

Frequently Asked Questions

Do I need to have knowledge about youth homelessness in order to participate?

No. You do not need any experience or expertise on the topic. You will be gathering information during the assembly, and you will be able to make up your own mind about what you think are the best ways forward. Then you'll work through a process with your fellow Assembly members to investigate options, weigh tradeoffs, and recommend which policies and programs should be prioritized – and by whom.

If selected, what will I receive as an Assembly Member?

- **A stipend equivalent to \$15/hour** (for a total of \$450).
- **Accessibility assistance.** Everyone will be able to participate, no matter their needs.
 - **Reimbursement of expenses** incurred to participate, including transportation costs and costs for childcare or eldercare.
 - **Language access** for Assembly Members whose primary language is not English, and **auditory/visual assistive technologies**, as needed.
- **A one-of-a-kind experience.** This will be a unique opportunity to work with your neighbors to help tough challenges. Members of previous Assemblies have often formed friendships and continued to work together in their communities, long after the Assembly has wrapped up.

How was my household chosen to receive this invitation?

By pure chance. We asked the County for every residential address in Deschutes County. We put them in a spreadsheet, mixed them all up, and pulled out 12,000 of them at random. It's possible that your neighbors received letters – dice can hit a roll like that – but it's also possible that you're the only one on your street.

What is the lottery, and how does it work?

A *democratic lottery*, also known as *sortition*, is a way to select people that has been around for millenia. It has made a comeback in recent years because it avoids some of the pitfalls of other methods, such as appointing hand-selected folks onto a committee. Lotteries avoid favoritism (or accusations of favoritism), and they ensure that everyone gets a chance to be part of governing ourselves.

Democratic lotteries generally follow these steps:

1. A mailing is sent to thousands of randomly selected addresses. That's this letter.
2. A population profile is created, looking at age, gender, and so on – using mostly Census data.
3. People reply to the mailing using a simple form that asks for only what's needed to run the lottery: demographic info. It's not an application or a test – no essay questions or special qualifications.
4. All those replies are placed into an open-source computer program that creates dozens of possible "Assemblies" – all of which match the population profile. These are all "counties in one room" – each include different individuals, but all of them match that same Census data for age, gender, etc.
5. There's a public Lottery Event, where one of those potential Assemblies is chosen as the official one. Then, we contact folks, tell them the news, and work with them to make sure they can serve.

As you can see, we need to collect demographic information so that the Assembly will be able to reflect the county's many kinds of people and range of political perspectives. Selection for the Assembly is random but also takes into account the demographic information that you share on this form. The Assembly is selected through a lottery drawing from among all respondents to this mailing.

How will my privacy be ensured?

Many of us do not want to be politicians or other public officials, yet we should all have ways to help solve our biggest challenges. If being known publicly is the only way, then we miss out on a lot of folks' skills and experience. Assemblies are meant to help fill that gap.

Therefore, we take your privacy very seriously. Your personal information will be known only to Healthy Democracy staff with one exception: if you are selected onto the Assembly, your first name (and only your

first name) will be used during the process. All of your other personal details, contact information, and demographic information will remain confidential to Healthy Democracy, unless you give specific permission to share it. Your information is not subject to public disclosure (like FOIA requests).

Although parts of the Assembly will be live streamed, Assembly Members may choose to avoid being on camera. The public may observe the Assembly's work quietly from a public gallery, but the Assembly does most of its work at private small group tables, and no interaction with the public or with decision makers is required. For more info, see HD's Privacy & Transparency Policy at: healthydemocracy.org/privacy.

What if I am selected and then I'm not able to participate?

All selected Assembly Members commit to participate in the full process. A group of alternates will also be selected in case anyone must drop out before the first session.

Can more than one person reply from my household?

Absolutely. In fact, we encourage all available members of your household, aged 16 and up, to reply. No two members from the same household will be chosen for the Assembly, but the more replies, the more representative the Assembly will be. Several response forms are enclosed, and you may make more copies. Just remember: everyone who replies **must currently live at the address on this letter, or have received this letter through a social service agency.**

Who is organizing this Assembly?

This program is a partnership between the Central Oregon Youth Action Board, the Central Oregon Civic Action Project, the Laboratory for the American Conversation at OSU-Cascades, and two organizations that focus specifically on lottery-selected Assemblies: an Oregon-based nonprofit called Healthy Democracy and an international nonprofit called DemocracyNext. With the exception of the Youth Action Board – which is focused on youth homelessness – all the other partners are in this for one reason only: to find and carry out innovative ways that all of us can more thoroughly participate in the decisions that affect our lives. And we have never and will never take any political positions beyond promoting those tools.

Healthy Democracy is leading the design and coordination of the Assembly. They have nearly two decades of experience designing similar Assemblies in Oregon and beyond. HD is best known for the Citizens' Initiative Review (CIR), where randomly selected residents evaluate ballot measures and provide trustworthy, nonpartisan voter information for the state voters' pamphlet. In other words: "voter info by voters, for voters." The CIR was born in Oregon and was one of the first permanent lottery-selected institutions created anywhere in the world when it was passed into Oregon law in 2011.

What will happen with the Assembly's recommendations?

The Assembly will deliver its recommendations to the Youth Action Board and to several local governments, including Deschutes County, the City of Bend, and ___ . Representatives of these governments have committed to receiving the results, thoroughly considering them, and issuing a public response, and the project team is working to secure more committed recipients – governmental and nongovernmental – for the Assembly's policy proposals.

Who is funding the Assembly?

The Assembly is funded by contributions from dozens of local individual donors and foundations – including the Ford Family Foundation, the Roundhouse Foundation, the Wade Family Foundation, Brooks Resources, and the City of Bend. It has also received funding from three national foundations interested in promoting innovative ways of making local policy decisions – The Rockefeller Foundation, Porticus, and Omidyar Network.

For any **more information** or to donate to the project, visit [cocap project website](#)

Rejected Bits:

What Is a Civic Assembly?

A Civic Assembly is a democratic process that brings together a group of everyday people through a *democratic lottery* to research, discuss, and make recommendations about an important public issue. Assemblies are designed to respect each individual's perspective while also helping to identify widely supported solutions – to get the best of both worlds. Outside research backs this up, showing that Civic Assemblies are able to be innovative and productive, even in divisive and complicated political situations.