



MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of Commissioners

FROM: Madison Riethman, Assistant Director of Public Health

DATE: January 29, 2026

RE: Addition of Program Element 76: Tobacco Retail Licensing to Public Health Operations, via Intergovernmental Agreement with Oregon Health Authority

Summary

Local public health departments in Oregon are granted funding by the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) for each of the various programs they conduct. Beginning with the 2026-2027 fiscal year, Columbia County Public Health (CCPH) wishes to opt in to the Tobacco Retail Licensing program and receive the associated funding to administer it.

About the Tobacco Retail Licensing (TRL) program

Oregon statute requires any business that sells tobacco, nicotine, or vaping products to be licensed by the state and follow associated rules. Enforcement is conducted via two annual inspections: one which checks compliance with general retail sale laws, and one which ensures the sale of products is not available to those under 21. These inspections are conducted by State of Oregon representatives unless the local health department has opted in to the TRL program; if so, the local health department conducts inspections and is paid a flat rate by OHA for each completed retailer.

TRL inspections identify potential violations and provide support to retailers in resolving them before more impactful civil penalties are issued by the state. Locally operated TRL inspection programs can be particularly effective at this; community-based inspectors have a better understanding of the environment retailers operate in and can develop stronger relationships with business owners.

TRL in Columbia County

Columbia County currently has approximately 46 applicable retailers. In prior state inspections, retailers have been largely in compliance; in 2024, only 4 sites (10%) had identified violations.

CCPH has never maintained a TRL program; all previous TRL inspections have been conducted by a state representative. The inspector currently covering Columbia County relayed that sites have been largely appreciative of the support provided in helping them stay in compliance.

Financial impact

OHA provides local health departments who operate TRL programs with a fee of \$480 per site, for an estimated income of \$22,080 each year. Approximately \$15,000 would be used to support staff conducting inspections and program operations (about 0.15 FTE). There is no match requirement, and allocation of a 15% administration fee is permitted.