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GOVERNMENT CONTRACTING PIPELINE™

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Funding support for public projects is showing no slowdown

By Mary Scott Nabers, CEO of Strategic Partnerships, Inc.

Governmental entities are stressed... there is no doubt about that! Ongoing changes under the Trump administration are creating heightened uncertainty, placing added pressure on both public officials across all levels of government and private sector leaders navigating the shifting landscape. However, the number of public projects launching weekly at the state and local levels of government has not diminished.

Most officials at the federal level—elected or administrative—believe that much more outsourcing will occur in the future. There is not a path for that to happen yet, but it appears to be inevitable. Funding cuts will have an impact, of course, but many public sector projects are also being financially supported from other sources like nonprofits, other governmental entities and economic development organizations.

The likelihood that private sector investments in future public projects will increase is almost a certainty. The projects that follow outline how public projects are often critical to multiple stakeholders, thereby resulting in consolidated funding from multiple sources.

Officials in the city of Bakersfield in California have approved an investment of \$24 million for a project that will revitalize parts of the Martin Luther King Park. Located in one of the city's most underserved areas, the park is an essential asset to the community and is in need of modernization and expansion. Funding for the effort will be evenly split between a federal grant and local matching funds.

Plans for this initiative include the construction of a new community center, upgraded sports fields, and modern playgrounds. The community center will be designed to function as a gathering place for activities for all ages in a 16.1-acre complex. This project is part of a broader city initiative which will also upgrade and renovate 10 other parks into safe and attractive public assets. The project is currently in the early planning phase and construction is slated to begin in 2026.

City leaders in Baltimore, Maryland, are planning to alleviate a longstanding problem by connecting several neighborhoods to the downtown area of the city. The communities in South Baltimore have been separated from services, retail, education, food options, health providers and other essential services in the downtown area because of a lack of convenient access.

[Read more about innovative funding solutions for critical projects](#)



Maine plan directs \$3.4B to transportation infrastructure



Maine is planning billions of dollars for infrastructure projects to improve, maintain and modernize the state's transportation system over the next three years.

The Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) has unveiled an updated work plan for transportation and infrastructure, which includes approximately \$4.8 billion worth of projects through 2027. The work plan outlines the estimated funding totals and costs for all capital projects and programs, maintenance and operations activities, planning initiatives and administrative functions delivered by or coordinated through MaineDOT.

MaineDOT transportation and infrastructure projects are funded through a combination of federal, state and local sources. While future revenues are estimates, the work plan projects 38% of the requested funding will be sourced from the state, including over \$1 billion from fuel taxes and vehicle fees. Proceeds from liquor sales, automotive sales and use tax revenue, TransCap revenue bonding, multimodal funds and general bond funding will all contribute to the state's portion.

Federally, MaineDOT anticipates nearly \$1.05 billion in formula funds from the Federal Highway Administration, or 22% of the work plan's total. The Federal Transit Administration, Federal Railroad Administration, Federal Aviation Administration and a few other departments will deliver approximately \$273 million for railroad, airport, transit and non-highway projects.

State officials note competitive program funding from the federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) and Congressionally Directed Spending will be essential to the success of the work plan, hinging on an estimated \$979 million contribution.

The updated work plan features estimated funding totals from the private sector as the state continues to pursue public and private partnerships for transportation projects. Private contributions, including pledges through MaineDOT's Business Partnership Initiative, total approximately \$154 million for the plan's three-year timeframe.

Matching funds from local municipalities account for about \$203 million and will support local initiatives, such as transit operations, bicycle and pedestrian enhancements, airports and MaineDOT's Municipal Partnership Program.

MaineDOT plans on utilizing the combination of funding to develop over 2,700 projects in the next three years. In accordance with the state's Long-Range Transportation Plan and the State of the Transportation System Report, these projects are designed to support economic opportunity, residents' quality of life, public safety and freight efficiency.

[Explore the full list of Maine's planned transportation capital initiatives.](#)

(Photo courtesy of Kiwi_Lisa from Pixabay)

COMING SOON

on Season 2 of
The Government Connection



Episode 2: Michael Irlbeck of EPCOR unpacks America's water crisis—failing infrastructure, rising demand, and the path to a sustainable future.

New AI oversight initiatives gain momentum in state legislatures

Creating and strengthening task forces focused on artificial intelligence is the latest trend at state legislatures across the country. Whether building on previous efforts or initiating something new, the most recent legislative pushes in West Virginia, Illinois and Alaska come as polling shows significant public concern about the impacts of AI.

New research shows significant gaps between how AI experts and the general public view artificial intelligence. According to an April 2025 Pew Research Center survey, experts are far more positive about AI's future impact than average

Americans.

The study found that while 56% of AI experts believe artificial intelligence will have a positive impact on the U.S. over the next 20 years, only 17% of the general public shares this optimism. Similarly, 73% of experts predict AI will positively affect how people do their jobs, compared to just 23% of the public.

As the AI revolution becomes impossible to ignore, task forces intend to position states in a proactive footing as they assess the potential benefits of the new technology. However, because of the gap between public and expert opinion, state efforts to harness AI also typically come with an emphasis on oversight and accountability with clear reporting requirements and opportunities for public input.

In West Virginia, House Bill 3187 would amend existing code to expand the responsibilities of the state's AI Task Force. The bill adds "identification of economic opportunities related to AI" to the task force's agenda and requires annual reports to the legislature and governor.

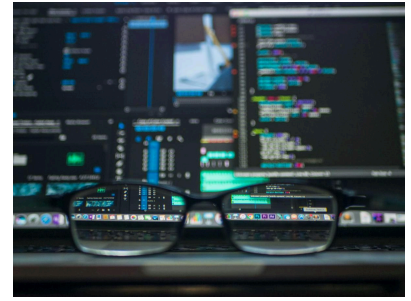
The task force, which is organized within the Office of the Governor, consists of representatives from both legislative chambers, various state agencies—including the Office of Technology and Department of Homeland Security—and industry experts. The legislation extends the task force's termination date from July 1, 2025, to July 1, 2027, providing a longer runway for its work. The bill has cleared the House and Senate.

Illinois House Bill 3646 modifies the operational structure of the state's existing Generative AI and Natural Language Processing Task Force established under the Department of Innovation and Technology Act. The bill replaces the requirement for "at least five public meetings" with authorization to meet "as frequently as necessary" and adds a hybrid meeting format with both virtual and in-person options.

The legislation also shifts reporting requirements from a single report due Dec. 31, 2024, to ongoing "periodic reports" to the governor and General Assembly. The bill passed in the House and will now head to the Senate for consideration.

Discover how other states are using AI to create economic opportunities.

(Photo courtesy of Kevin Ku via Pexels)



Florida governor names new appointees to Florida higher education boards



Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis has made a series of sweeping appointments to multiple Boards of Trustees (BOT) across the state's higher education systems.

A notable appointment to the state's education leadership is Paul Renner to the Board of Governors of the State University System. Renner served as speaker of the Florida House of Representatives, representing District 19. He has decades of experience as a state prosecutor and previously served in the U.S. Navy. He earned his law degree from the University of Florida and a bachelor's degree from Davidson College.

The Daytona State College District has welcomed one new appointment and three reappointments to its board, all slated to have their terms end May 31, 2029. Nellie Lupoli is the sole new admission to the BOT. She is a member of the Daytona Regional Chamber of Commerce and the Team Volusia Economic Development Corporation. She currently serves as vice president of a homebuilding company. Lupoli has a master's degree in business administration from Harvard University and both a master's degree in accounting and a bachelor's degree in business administration from the University of Michigan.



The first reappointment is Robert Lloyd, vice chair of the BOT. Lloyd is the principal of his own law firm and serves as chairman of the Daytona Regional Chamber of Commerce. He is well-established in Florida's higher institutions, operating as a member of the University of Florida Foundation and the University of Florida College of Law Board of Directors. He earned his law degree, as well as his bachelor's degree, from the University of Florida.

Randall Dye has also been reappointed. An active community member, Dye has been the owner of a car dealership since 1997. Dye was originally appointed to the BOT in 2019. Outside of his work with the university, Dye is a member of the NASCAR Foundation and a noted community philanthropist.



Lloyd Freckleton will also remain a member of the Board. Freckleton previously worked as a warden for the New York City Department of Corrections. He has an exemplary career with the U.S. Military, rising to the role of colonel in the Army Reserve before his retirement. Freckleton earned his bachelor's degree from John Jay College.



Charbel Barakat has been appointed to the University of South Florida BOT. He currently serves as corporate vice president and counsel for public policy with a home construction company. He is also a commissioner for the Florida Supreme Court Judicial Nominating Commission, the Florida Development Finance Corporation and previously served as vice chair of the Central Florida Tourism Oversight Commission. He has a law degree from New York University and a bachelor's degree in international studies from Johns Hopkins University.



Tara Ezzell was selected as a member of the Santa Fe College District BOT. Ezzell is a licensed dermatologist and serves her community as assistant secretary of the Parker Road Community Development District Board of Directors. She is also an active member of the American Academy of Dermatology, the American Medical Association, the Florida Medical Association, the Florida Society of Dermatology and Dermatologic Surgery and the Alachua County Medical Society. Ezzell has a doctorate from the University of Florida and a bachelor's degree from Emory University.



Report: Higher education facilities face growing maintenance backlog

Higher education institutions slowed campus renovations and capital spending in 2024, a new report finds.

Construction data and research firm Gordian is unveiling the next installment of The State of Facilities in Higher Education—a comprehensive needs-based analysis of higher education institutions and facilities. This 12th edition reveals a cautious landscape in which many colleges are reevaluating their physical footprint, cost structures and long-term investment strategies.



While the 2024-2025 academic year saw a 4.5% spike in student enrollment, long-term forecasts predict a 13% decline in high school graduates between 2025 and 2041. Combined with a drop in international student enrollment, many institutions are facing a shrinking pool of students and a need to realign facilities and infrastructure with enrollment trends.

Throughout the nation, facilities on higher education campuses are aging and lack financial support for what the report calls the “inevitable entropic demands of buildings and their systems.” As is natural with all campus buildings beyond a service life, they must be repaired, renovated or replaced.

The report indicates that deferred capital renewal costs on campuses have risen to over \$140 per gross square foot (gsf), reflecting a 2% increase from last year. This rise represents a larger jump from just under \$125/gsf in 2022. This escalation shows a growing backlog in essential maintenance and upgrades across campuses.

This backlog is compounded by a 32.5% funding shortfall, which continues to represent a barrier to sustainability and growth on campuses. While down from the previous year's 34%, operational spending rose by 4.5% over the last year,

outpacing inflation and lagging behind pre-pandemic levels.

Despite shortfalls, the report does indicate areas of growth for campuses. Approximately 27% of institutions are expanding at an average rate of growth of 3%. Though expansion projects are generally at schools that have not yet been burdened by high repair and replacement costs.

Gordian's data shows that institutions are factoring long-term operational costs into decisions about facility upgrades. While some campuses are enhancing facilities to meet new programming needs, many are also exercising caution due to uncertainties in funding and future enrollment.

Learn how universities plan to implement AI for "self managing buildings."

(Photo courtesy of Stanley Morales via Pexels)

Alabama opens \$1.4B BEAD grant applications for rural broadband expansion



Grant applications are open through May 22 for Alabama's \$1.4 billion allocation from the Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD) Program. The initiative, administered by the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA), targets last-mile broadband infrastructure for areas lacking adequate internet access.

Alabama's share represents 3.3% of the \$42.5 billion federal BEAD program—one of the largest allocations nationwide—reflecting the state's significant broadband needs in rural and underserved communities.

Grant Scoring Criteria (Maximum: 75 Points):

- Minimal BEAD outlay (up to 40 points) - up to 10 bonus points for exceeding the required 25% funding match
- Affordability (up to 20 points)
- Fair labor practices (up to 15 points)
- Speed of deployment (up to 1 point)
- Community/local/tribal government support (up to 10 points)
- Network performance (up to 10 points)
- Speed and capacity (4 points)
- Scalability (3 points)
- Future-proof investment planning (up to 3 points)
- Low-cost service offering (up to 4 points)

Funds may be used for a range of infrastructure needs including backhaul, middle mile, last mile and connections to multi-dwelling units (MDUs). Eligible applicants include cooperatives, nonprofits, utilities, private companies, local governments and public-private partnerships.

As of April 2025, 19 states have received more than \$1 billion in BEAD allocations.

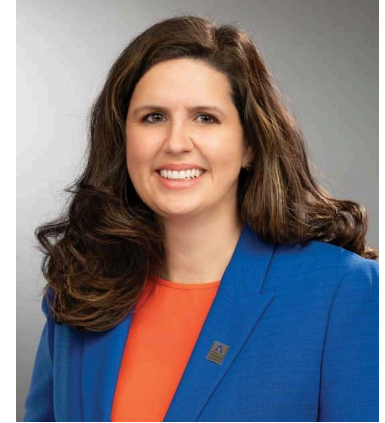
See which of those states are currently accepting applications.

(Photo courtesy of Brett Sayles)

PROFILES IN POWER

Jennifer Cowley, Ph.D.
President
The University of Texas at Arlington

My public career highlights and education: I've been UTA's president since 2022 as well as a professor of public affairs and planning. I previously held leadership positions at the University of North Texas and Ohio State University and in city government in Amarillo and College Station. I have a Ph.D. in urban and regional science, a master's degree in urban planning and a bachelor's degree in political science—all from Texas A&M. I also have master's degrees in interdisciplinary studies and public administration from UNT.



What I like best about public service: I love seeing firsthand how it can transform lives—something I experience every day at UTA. We directly impact the lives of our students, empowering them to succeed and contribute to our communities. Our university is a catalyst for economic growth and a hub of groundbreaking research, and being part of that work feels like a calling.

The best advice I've received: Find colleagues who lift you up and support you. When I was early in my career as a faculty member, a mentor told me she believed I had what it took to be a university president. At the time, I was just focused on my research and being an effective teacher. But she planted a seed that took root.

One thing I wish more people knew about The University of Texas at Arlington: University research has been pivotal in driving scientific and medical breakthroughs over the past 75 years, from lifesaving treatments to groundbreaking technologies. Federal and state funding have played crucial roles in supporting this research, which strengthens our nation's health, economy and global competitiveness. Our universities are laboratories of innovation, and it's critical we keep supporting them.

A project or initiative we're currently working on is: We are breaking ground this year on a new campus in west Fort Worth, UTA West, that will serve as a significant investment in the future talent and workforce of one of the fastest-growing parts of Texas. Major employers are moving in right down the road. Having a high-quality UTA education in close proximity is a key contributing factor for companies deciding to call Fort Worth home.

People might be interested to know that: This job has brought me full circle. I grew up in Arlington and graduated from a high school about seven miles from campus. I went to orchestra camp and took summer classes at UTA when I was a kid. It's incredibly fulfilling to be president of my hometown university.

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UW-La Crosse plans \$58.5M recreation center overhaul



The University of Wisconsin-La Crosse (UW-La Crosse) will spend \$58.5 million to renovate its recreation center. Construction on the Mitchell Hall renovation project is expected to begin in May 2028.

The project will prioritize:

- Replacing the building's HVAC system and its two electrical services with a single service.
- Renovating the fieldhouse for gymnastics and wrestling practice facilities and building an instructional and research space.
- Repairing and renovating the natatorium.

Work on the HVAC system and electrical services will revolve around replacing outdated, obsolete and substandard equipment. The new equipment will feature a variable-air volume system with reheat coils and terminal units. The university will also clean, repair and reactivate ductwork and related obsolete equipment.

UW-La Crosse will install air handling units, fans, terminal units, variable-frequency drives and associated piping and controls wiring as replacements for the control systems. The updated equipment will help enhance energy management system performance. The university plans to retrofit a fire protection system into the building and install a single, combined electrical service.

The singular electrical service will provide better distribution and expanded emergency power capacity. To further support building systems, the project will install chilled water coils for the air handling equipment. The expanded emergency power capacity will ensure that all associated units will be connected with appropriate electrical distribution configurations that exist but have been disconnected.

Renovations for the fieldhouse will include building practice facilities for the gymnastics and wrestling programs. The university will relocate the strength center into the fieldhouse and develop additional instructional and research space for the Exercise and Sports Science program. Additional site work will include replacing and installing flooring, wall finishes, lighting and controls.

UW-La Crosse will perform extensive renovation work to ensure the natatorium is in a state of good repair. The university will start by replacing all room and pool finishes, room and pool basin lighting and associated controls, pool basin lining and HVAC system equipment, distribution and controls.

Plans for the aquatic center feature replacing high-bay room lighting fixtures with high-efficiency units. Once the HVAC system is replaced, the natatorium will have better ventilation and humidity controls. Finally, the university will consider building a new entrance to promote accessibility.

(Photo courtesy of Lacrossewi)

Budget reconciliation reshapes transportation funding future

As federal lawmakers reconcile a new budget for fiscal year 2025 (FY25) and beyond, a flurry of budget and tax cuts will highlight the next year of federal U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) funding. As priorities shift, reevaluating the FY25 transportation budget is more important than ever.

The FY25 federal budget, announced by then-Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg last year, represents a federal commitment to modernizing the country's transportation systems, enhancing safety and building a sustainable future for all Americans. This acting \$146.2 billion budget prioritized investments in nationwide infrastructure, environmental resilience and supply chains while pushing existing funding obligations out the door—an issue which the current administration has criticized.



The U.S. federal budget allocated approximately \$232.64 billion in budgetary resources to the DOT, or about 1.6% of the federal budget. Previously, allocations from fuel excise taxes have been one of the only ways to fund the DOT. Following Congress's approval of non-defense outlays for transportation in 2008, discretionary outlays account for the largest portion of the federal transportation budget with about two-thirds earmarked for ground transportation.

Applications are open—but not for long. Discover which DOT grants are still accepting proposals.

(Photo courtesy of Richard van Liessum from Pixabay)



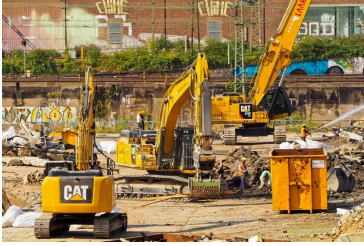
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Government projects withstand construction abandonment wave



The construction industry has been abandoning nonresidential and multifamily construction projects at higher rates, according to the latest data from ConstructConnect.

The Cincinnati-based firm unveiled the March report for the Project Stress Index (PSI), which leverages data from the public and private sectors to provide a comprehensive look at the construction industry. After a rise in abandonment activity last month, the index rose to 113.7, signifying a stressful trend developers. While the construction sector as a whole faces challenges, public projects are demonstrating significantly more stability than their private counterparts.

The index indicates that the private sector is taking the brunt of abandonment activity for preconstruction projects. For every abandoned public development, approximately two private sector projects were concluded, according to the report. This 2:1 abandonment ratio highlights the comparative strength of government-backed construction initiatives, which appear better positioned to weather current economic uncertainties.

Abandonment is up—but some municipalities may have the blueprint for stability.

(Photo courtesy of Pixabay)

U.S. electricity demand to surge 50% by 2050, new study finds

A new analysis by PA Consulting for the National Electrical Manufacturers Association (NEMA) found the demand for electricity in the U.S. will grow 50% by 2050. Data centers and transportation electrification will drive the electricity demand about 2% higher each year for the next quarter century.

The consumption will vary by region due to the differences in data center and EV growth. The study found “the Mid-Atlantic and Texas will see the largest data center electricity demand growth through 2025, and the Northeast and West will experience the largest electricity demand growth from EVs between 2035 and 2050.”



See how San Antonio and Pittsburgh are leading the grid transformation.

(Photo courtesy of Pixabay)



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New York seeks proposals for new cruise terminal development in Buffalo



Gov. Kathy Hochul is unveiling a Request for Proposals (RFP) to design and develop a new cruise ship terminal along the Buffalo River in Buffalo. The project, led by the Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation (ECHDC), will accept proposals until May 7 and is expected to support domestic and international cruise operations starting as early as 2027.

The RFP comes after the state evaluated Buffalo's port infrastructure, facilities and feasibility for Great Lakes Cruises' move to New York. The evaluation, titled the Market Demand Study, outlines the potential economic impacts of a new cruise facility development and provides recommendations on moving the project forward.

[Explore the cruise terminal timeline and what it means for Buffalo's waterfront.](#)

(Photo courtesy of Susann Mielke from Pixabay)

New innovation office to streamline Pennsylvania county services

Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, has launched a new department dedicated to improving service delivery, resource optimization and community service.

The Office of Innovation, Strategy and Performance (OISP) will oversee operational excellence, prioritizing work that most effectively distributes and implements taxpayer dollars. This latest modernization effort builds on the transformation of the County Recovery Office. The Recovery Office was created to handle coordination of the \$161 million in available pandemic recovery funds supplied to Montgomery County from the federal government.



The office will bridge multiple departments, emphasizing collaboration to streamline processes and efficiency.

[See the four-phase plan behind this major government modernization effort.](#)

(Photo courtesy of AS Photography via Pexels)

EPA revises standards for states affected by foreign pollution



The Environmental Protection Agency is making it easier for states to prove they are being affected by international air pollution. EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin announced that changing guidance, saying previous rules made it difficult for states to demonstrate that air pollution affecting residents comes across borders—rather than from domestic pollution sources. The move could lower air regulations in states with high levels of pollution.

The announcement, made during Zeldin's visit to Utah, specifically targets the "Guidance on the Preparation of Clean Air Act Section 179B Demonstrations for Nonattainment Areas Affected by International Transport of Emissions." This guidance had established requirements for proving that air quality violations stemmed from foreign sources.

The Clean Air Act allows for lower emissions controls when an area would have met national air quality standards if not for emissions transported across international borders. However, some states have long argued that the evidence requirements were too stringent, effectively penalizing them for pollution beyond their control.

[See how the EPA is revising its rules to reflect cross-border pollution challenges.](#)

(Photo courtesy of Ralf Vetterle from Pixabay)



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Jennifer Campbell

Douglas Lawson

Catherine Rinaldi

Jennifer White

Dave Baden

Eric Hanks

Missouri – Kyra Moore has been named deputy director of the Missouri Department of Natural Resources. Moore brings 26 years of experience to the role, most recently serving as director of the department's Division of Environmental Quality.

Massachusetts – Warren Smith has been selected as the new airport manager for Nantucket Memorial Airport. Smith previously served as airport manager for the Grand Canyon National Park Airport and has held roles at Everett Paine Field and Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport.

California – Eric Ceja is stepping into the role of assistant city manager for Indian Wells. He brings nearly two decades of local government experience, holding several positions in planning and economic development.

South Carolina – Tee Coker has been unanimously voted in as Simpsonville's new city administrator. Coker has been Greenville County's assistant administrator and brings a combined 15 years of planning experience in the public and private sectors.

Maryland – Meena Seshamani, M.D., Ph.D., is the state's new Department of Health Secretary. She will be leaving her role at the helm of the Medicare program at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Seshamani has served as a health care executive, health economist, physician and health policy expert.

Iowa – Mike Collett has been appointed interim city manager in Sioux City. Collett has been the city's assistant city manager and also serves as director for administrative services, Sioux Gateway Airport/Brigadier General Bud Day Field and transit departments.

California – Jennifer Campbell has been unanimously appointed as the new city manager for Encinitas. Campbell has worked with the city since 2016, previously serving as director of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Arts.

Florida – Douglas Lawson has been chosen as Riviera Beach's new mayor. Lawson served on the City Council for six years. His mayoral term lasts until March 2027.

New York – The Gateway Development Commission (GDC) has appointed **Catherine Rinaldi** as its first executive vice president. Rinaldi most recently served as president of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's Metro-North Railroad. She began her transportation career with the MTA as deputy executive director and general counsel before transitioning to vice president and general counsel of the Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) and chief of staff and counsel to the MTA chair. Her first day was April 7.

Idaho – The Idaho State Board of Education has welcomed **Jennifer White** as executive director. White most recently served as assistant vice president for finance and operations and senior counsel at Boise State University, a role held since 2023. She replaced Josh Whitworth in the new position.

Oregon – **Dave Baden** has been appointed acting superintendent of the Oregon State Hospital (OSH). Baden currently serves as deputy director of policy and programs at the Oregon Health Authority (OHA). He replaces Dr. Sara Walker in the role.

Montana – The city of Columbia has chosen **Eric Hanks** as its next city manager. Hanks came out of retirement after three decades with the United States Navy to accept the role. He officially succeeded Susan Nicosia in the position April 1, 2025.



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