

The Oregon Digital Safety Net



March 2022

Carol Coye Benson, Siva Narendra

A concept in development in partnership with the Technology Association of Oregon



Digital communications are
necessary to participate in
mainstream life today



The Oregon Digital Safety Net is a concept for a new technology-driven platform for low cost digital communication services to support marginalized populations.

The Problem



Oregon has **multiple marginalized populations** who struggle to participate in our economy. This includes the homeless, prisoners reentering society, refugees and immigrants, transient workers and people recovering from substance abuse and from physical and mental illnesses. Although their needs are different, most face **similar communications issues**: access to **phone, email, document, and banking services** that are keys to participating in our economy.



The **physical disruption of their lives and their poverty** contributes to the communications challenges: in particular, maintaining **continuity of communication** over time.

The Problem



Oregon also has **hundreds of public and private service agencies** that work to help these marginalized populations. Agencies provide assistance with shelter, food, healthcare, education, counseling, legal support, benefits applications, and more. **Although their workers are often highly skilled, many end up spending valuable time trying to solve the communications needs of their clients** - helping them get phones, get bank accounts, get their mail.

What Problem Do We Want to Tackle?

⇒ **Continuity of Communication for people in marginalized populations.**

- The ability of people and institutions to reach a person over time - even if the device they use or their physical address has changed.
- Employers, landlords, courts, schools and social services providers and others are frustrated by an inability to reliably do this.

This is a problem that cannot be solved by any single service agency. It demands solutions at scale: this is what the Oregon Digital Safety Net wants to do.

We're calling this **Evergreen Communications.**

The Oregon Digital Safety Net Concept

An integrated set of cloud-based services available from any phone, tablet or computer

Digital
Messaging
by Text

Digital
Messaging
by Phone

Digital
Messaging
by Email

Storage by
a Digital
Vault

Digitized
Physical
Mail

A Digital
Bank
Account

Enrollment Platform

All numbers/addresses are “**Oregon Evergreen**”, or long-lasting by design.

Service agencies retain the client relationship;
handle ORDSN enrollment but don't do any operational work

ORDSN Works in the Background

Device Layer	Any Mobile Phone, Tablet or Computer
The App Layer	Any Browser or App
Infrastructure Layer	ORDSN

People can use any phone or device, and any software application or browser to access ORDSN services.

ORDSN services don't require a contract with any carrier or provider.

The **OREGON EVERGREEN** Phone Number: an Example

- Maria enrolls with ORDSN at her homeless services agency and receives her **OREGON EVERGREEN** phone number. This is forwarded to her current mobile phone, which her sister has lent her. **Both numbers ring on that phone and are used for messages and texts.**
- Maria provides the **OREGON EVERGREEN** number to prospective landlords and employers.
- Three months later, Maria's sister has taken back her phone and Maria has bought a prepaid phone. Maria goes back to her homeless services agency and the **OREGON EVERGREEN** number is forwarded to her new phone.
- She is able to receive calls and messages from the **OREGON EVERGREEN** number on her new phone. During the week before she was able to get to her agency, she was able to retrieve her messages from her daughter's computer.

Benefits of the Oregon Digital Safety Net

People

- **Continuity of communication** helps with housing, health, family, safety goals
- Better ability to participate in workforce initiatives
- Improved dignity of life

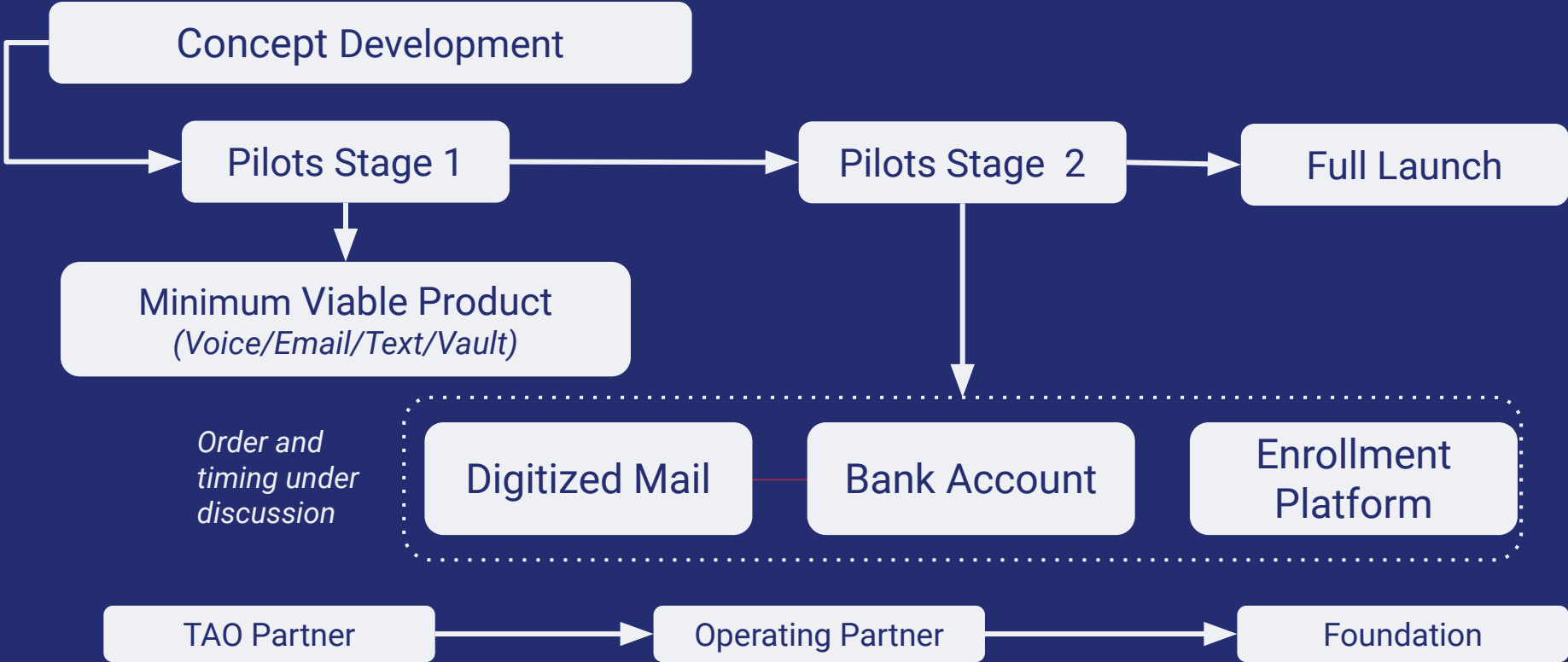
Agencies

- **More efficient use of staff** on primary missions
- Ability to follow clients over time
- Ability to deliver targeted services to clients

To Local and State Government

- **More efficient use of resources** for marginalized populations
- Ability to deliver targeted services to community populations

Possible Evolution of the ORDSN Concept



For Service Agency Partners

Service Agencies Would be Distribution Partners

Includes any non-profit entity providing services to marginalized populations in Oregon: public or private, large or small.

- We envision a low-key, simple web interface that enables a service agency employee (or volunteer) to enroll a client in ORDSN services. The client would receive their **OREGON EVERGREEN** phone number and email address (and eventually other ORDSN services).
- No technology “build” is required of service agencies, although they would need to explain the service to their clients. Larger service agencies may opt to tailor apps or programs with more integrated technical approaches, but this is not necessary.

Enrollment would include some form of simple biometric registration (such as a fingerprint pad) to enable a client who had lost their phone, for example, to re-associate a new phone with their **OREGON EVERGREEN** number.

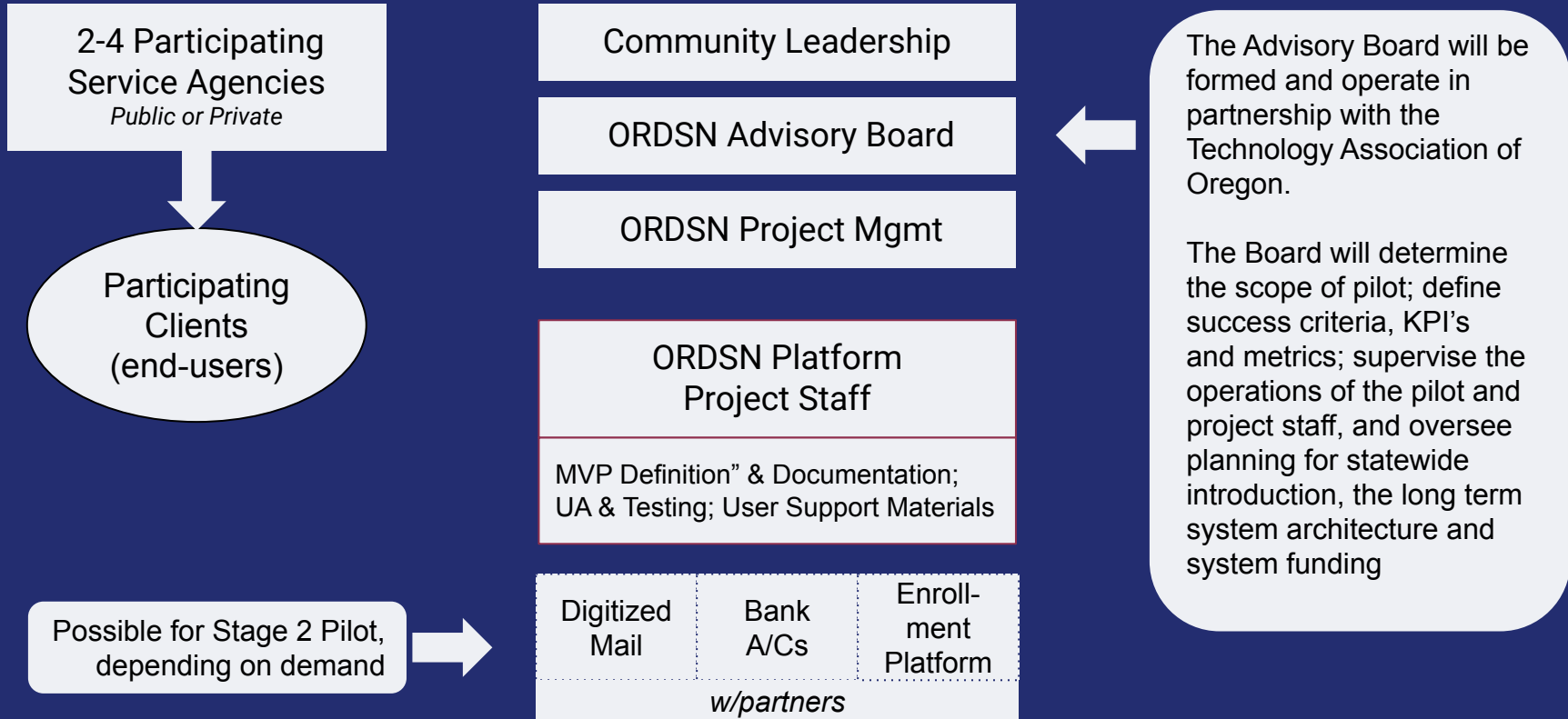
Different Paths for Different Service Agencies



An individual moving from one agency or program to another, statewide, would retain the same **OREGON EVERGREEN** number in the ORDSN system.

- Some agencies will connect clients, using their existing phones and browsers, directly into ORDSN.
- Some agencies will incorporate ORDSN into existing apps and phone/tablet distribution programs
- Some agencies may create new programs, expanding device distribution and writing new apps that tightly integrate with ORDSN

An ORDSN Community Pilot - What it Will Take





ORDSN is inspired by the amazing success of the “India Technology Stack”

The India Stack is a rigorously minimal, but universal infrastructure approach which led to biometric identities being issued to over 1 billion residents in a short period of time.

Multiple applications in finance, voting, healthcare, academia, government, etc. leveraged this infrastructure without changing the minimalist approach.

“IT has obviously come a long way— from something seen as a threat to people to something people are demanding as a way of protecting their rights. For Indians, it has become an enabler.”

Nandan Nilekani, entrepreneur credited as one of the original thinkers behind the “India Stack”

For Technology Partners

The Oregon Digital Safety Net Functional Architecture

Core design principles: the ORDSN operations layer is minimal and remains so over time; no end-user private data is ever kept or stored by ORDSN

End-User Services

Core Services - Provided by Technology Partner

Digital
Messaging
by Text

Digital
Messaging
by Phone

Digital
Messaging
by Email

Storage by
a Digital
Vault

Provided by Third Parties

Digitized
Physical
Mail

A Digital
Bank
Account

ORDSN Operations

Custom development, operated by service partners

ORDSN Enrollment Platform w/biometric authentication

Enables service agency access to ORDSN platform components for provisioning and re-provisioning of end-users.

ORDSN Database

Maintains minimal end-user data on services used

ORDSN Opportunities with Technology Partners

Core Services	Provide the integrated core bundle of phone, text, email, and digital vaults for end-users
Operating Platform	Develop and/or operate the central platform and database for enrollment, provisioning, and connections.
Platform Components	Provide digitized physical mail and/or bank accounts
ORDSN Initiative	Participate in funding, development, and governance of the ORDSN initiative
Agencies	Provide service agencies with software and/or devices for their clients to connect to ORDSN infrastructure

Concept Definition Team

Carol Coye Benson
carol@ordsn.org

Siva Narendra
siva@tyfone.com

Send email to Carol for more information

ORDSN is being developed in partnership with the Technology Association of Oregon