



The Portland Metro Workforce Development Board

Workforce Development Board Minutes for previous 12 months

Minutes are posted once they have been approved by the Board.

The Portland Metro Workforce Board meets from 8:00 – 9:30 a.m. on the second Friday of the month in January, April, July, and October.

Meetings dates and times are subject to change.

Contact jweller@worksystems.org for more information or access to minutes from previous years.

Portland Metro Workforce Development Board

4/8/2022

8:00 – 9:30 a.m.

Worksystems

Virtual Meeting

In attendance: James Paulson – Chair, Travis Stovall – Vice Chair, Roy Rogers, Susheela Jayapal, Christina Ghan, Bob Gravely, Caryn Lilley, David Fortney, Maurice Rahming, Carl Moyer, Dave Nielsen, Deanna Palm, Jane Leo, Keith Mays, Norm Eder, Pam Hester, Shea Flaherty Betin, Aida Aranda, Eryn Byram, Danell Butler, Joe McFerrin, Biljana Jesic, Kadie Ross, Rolanda Garcia

Staff: Andrew McGough, Patrick Gihring, Jesse Aronson

Guest Speakers: Jacob Cox and Katrin Dougherty

CALL TO ORDER:

Meeting was called to order at 8:01 a.m. Quorum was announced.

Consent Agenda

Motion: Travis Stovall moved to accept the consent agenda containing the January 2022 minutes. Jane Leo seconded. Motion was unanimously approved.

Quality Jobs Resolution

Andrew McGough explained that this is a follow-up from our last meeting on the Quality Jobs Initiative. An Executive Summary of the Quality Jobs Framework was included in the Board packet. The summary builds on the framework and details some of the strategies to help move more people into quality jobs. We are working with employers and others who have an interest in improving the quality of jobs and start to recognize the value of creating a higher-quality work to help them be more competitive and able to attract and retain workers.

McGough reviewed the joint Board resolution in support of quality jobs which was developed by Worksystems, Clackamas Workforce Partnership and Workforce SW Washington staff. The resolution is being presented for adoption to each of our Boards. McGough explained that this is an evolving piece of work that will contribute to the development of this quality jobs initiative moving forward.

McGough explained that the resolution codifies the work of the Quality Jobs Council, provides a framework of guiding principles and a working definition of a regional quality job. The Council was convened in August 2021 and consisted of representatives from cross section of sectors. The Council looked at:

- What does it mean to have a quality job?
- What should an initiative look like?
- What are the guiding principles we ought to have as a region?

McGough explained that the work has already started. The framework will set the stage for specific actions that will begin immediately and continue for the foreseeable future. The Board wanted to make sure smaller employers are able to engage in the initiative. McGough explained that the framework includes a lot of strategies to help smaller employers and stay competitive.

The Board discussed the initiative and resolution.

Motion: Maurice Rahming motioned to approve the resolution. Travis Stovall seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Opportunity Youth Report

Commissioner Jayapal explained that Quality Jobs Initiative is a nice segue into the Opportunity Youth Report and Youth Team update. Jayapal explained the some of the most profound impacts we've seen from the pandemic are on young people who dealt with school closures, economic distress due to family job loss, increased violence, and isolation resulting in a ripple effect throughout our communities. There has been a lot of research that indicates youth employment is one of the most effective interventions to prevent violence among youth. We also have a projected decline in the number of people in the workforce and that's a gap that Workforce Boards can have an important role in addressing and in looking at solutions.

Liza Morehead provided an overview of the 2022 Opportunity Youth (OY) Report she is currently developing. The report is in the review process. The data in the report is primarily from the 2020 American Community survey. Morehead explained that the collection of the data was complicated by COVID and the resulting economic recession.

Morehead announced that in 2020, there were about 266,000 youth between the ages of 16 and 24. About 35,000 we identify as opportunity youth. These are youth who are disconnected from school and work. This is about an 18% increase from 2016. Due to COVID, schools had to go to on-line teach. While this impacted all youth, those who didn't have access to technology, internet, quiet spaces at home, and lack of support were impacted the most. In addition, the youth unemployment rate skyrocketed and has stayed higher. The sectors hit the hardest are often the same sectors where youth get their first jobs.

Morehead explained that:

- 13% of the youth in our region are OY.
- Community College enrollment dropped 23% across the state
- 80% of OY worked less than half the year or were entirely unemployed.
- OY are less diverse than they were in 2016 and are less likely to be foreign born.
- OY are less likely to have health insurance due to job losses for their parents or for themselves.
- 63% of OY are white, 19% Hispanic, 6% Asian, 3% Black
- 21% of OY ages 20-24 have less than a high school diploma and worked less than 26 weeks in 2020

Morehead explained that there are 2.5 million fewer working age people in the United States than there was 2 years ago. This should create more opportunities for youth. In addition, there have been rising wages across the labor force with the lowest wage categories seeing the fastest increase. While this is good news, we are also seeing a lot of innovation and automation which is impacting the labor market.

Youth Team Update

Barb Timper provided an update on some of the lessons the Youth team have learned over the last 2 years. They've learned that a system based on connection is more important than ever. This includes a connection to career coaches, diverse service options, an encouraging community, mental health supports, and barrier reducing support services.

Workforce training and preparation works best once youth have stabilized and can manage unexpected issues that arise in their lives. This means longer engagement periods before youth are ready for placement. Prior to the pandemic, career coaches generally engaged with youth for 20-22 months. Now it's closer to 30-36 months because they are not ready to move on to the next phase.

Timper announced that the Oregon Youth Employment Program (OYEP) funding will give us the opportunity to expand services in a different way and provide new opportunities moving forward to allow us to be more responsive and able to connect to more youth service agencies in our community. It will give us the opportunity to provide support beyond the summer months and allow us to offer incentives and stipend payment or engagement in academic intervention or early career and job skill exposure.

Timper explained that we are also receiving funds from Multnomah County which allows us to expand programming to ages 14-15 and provide options to prevent or provide prevention/intervention for engagement activities to help address some of the violence that's happening in our community. We are looking for funding opportunities that will allow us to bring some of these types of services to Washington County.

Timper provided an overview of the Regions Youth System Vision. "Learn & Earn" provides opportunity to engage youth throughout the year by connecting existing programs and participants to the larger youth system through stipended academic interventions and early career and Job skill exposure. We've also created a path to learning opportunities by providing access to online training opportunities to LinkedIn learning available through the library system.

PDXYouth@Work is the new branding of our SummerWorks program. Through PDXYouth@Work, we provide short-term work experience and practice by linking NextGen and community youth to short-term paid work experiences and learning opportunities.

NextGen is our long-term career and training program. Youth meet with a career coach to develop a career plan and to received support along the continuum. Youth complete the program when they have met their career plan goals and no longer require intensive supports to remain at their job or in post-secondary education or training.

Timper reviewed the community engagement plan that was developed in late 2019. Due to the pandemic, we are now re-engaging. We want to access the effectiveness of our outreach, recruitment and community referral partner strategy to ensure targeted populations are served and share our findings bi-annually with the community. We want to establish an Employer/Worksite committee to capture and implement best-practices and expand business sponsorships. We also want to re-engage with the community to share lessons learned, best-practices and inform on continuous improvement.

Timper announced that we recently released an RFP for our NextGen program. The RFP includes an enhanced service design to encourage new partnerships.

Jacob Cox, a SummerWorks participant, provided testimony. Cox is an Impact NW program participant and worked at the SupaFresh Youth Farm. The program provided work-readiness training such as developing a resume, mock interviews, and leadership opportunities. They also provided vouchers for clothing, gas, and bus passes. At SupaFresh Youth Farm, Cox was put in charge of an environmental project doing some restoration which was an area he was very interested in exploring. He just completed his second year of college with a goal of obtaining a degree in Environment Studies. The Board congratulated Cox on his accomplishments.

The Board discussed the program and the need to bring more businesses to participate in the program.

Commissioner Jayapal announced that we are currently recruiting for a couple of Youth Subcommittees. One committee will focus on employer engagement and the other is a community of practice subcommittee. Timper announced that we are looking for RFP proposal raters. Members were asked to let McGough or Timper know if they would like to participate. Jenny Weller will send out an email to the Board with details.

Future Ready Oregon (FRO)

McGough announced that the Governor just passed Senate Bill 1545 – Future Ready Oregon. The total package for this bill is \$198.9 million and is focused on workforce development. McGough reviewed some of the key pieces of the bill and the impact it will have on Worksystems and some of our partners across the region. The regulations and details are still under development.

Local Workforce Boards will directly receive the following:

- \$35 Million (\$15 Million General Fund / \$20 Million ARPA) to Local Workforce Boards to implement Prosperity 10,000.

- \$10 Million in ARPA to Local Workforce Boards to employ benefits navigators/career coaches through WorkSource Oregon or Community-Based organizations.

McGough explained that of the \$35 million to Local Boards, we should receive about \$10 million. These resources may be used to provide career coaching, occupational training, job placement services, wraparound support services necessary to facilitate reengagement in the workforce, and to support targeted recruitment and engagement efforts. We anticipate serving about 2,000 participants with these additional funds.

Resources are intended to rapidly expand and complement existing services and organizations that successfully serve and support identified priority populations. We will first look to expand existing service provider capacity and work with the community to identify and fill gaps to increase participation and success.

Of the remaining funds, about \$85 - 90 million will be available in competitive grants to community-based organizations and others who serve targeted population as well as industry specific grants such as healthcare and manufacturing. This provides a lot of opportunity to bring in new organizations to help complement some of the best practices that we know are working well in the community and build additional partnership to address gaps.

Public Comment:

The floor was opened for public comment

Tyna Moreschi, with Springdale Job Corps, announced that, after 2 years, they fully opened their doors. They currently have about 190 spots available for youth at there facilities. Moreschi provided contact information for anyone who would like more information or has any referrals.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:31 a.m.

Portland Metro Workforce Development Board

1/14/2022

8:00 – 9:30 a.m.

Worksystems

Virtual Meeting

In attendance: James Paulson – Chair, Travis Stovall – Vice Chair, Roy Rogers, Susheela Jayapal, Seraphie Allen, Anna Thames, Bob Gravely, Caryn Lilley, David Fortney, Maurice Rahming, Carl Moyer, Deanna Palm, Jane Leo, Keith Mays, Norm Eder, Debi Mollahan, Lisa Skari, Kimberly Branam, Bob Tackett, Aida Aranda, Joe McFerrin, Tyna Moreschi, Kadie Ross, Komi Kalevor, Danell Butler

Staff: Andrew McGough, Patrick Gihring, Jesse Aronson

Guest Speakers: Beth Vargas – Oregon Refuse & Recycling Association, Gary Hollands – Interstate Trucking Academy, Tim Finnegan – SE Works, Trent Gay – Central City Concern.

CALL TO ORDER:

Meeting was called to order at 8:01 a.m. Quorum was announced.

Consent Agenda

Motion: Travis Stovall moved to accept the consent agenda containing the October 2021 minutes. Caryn Lilley seconded. Motion was unanimously approved.

Quality Jobs Initiative

Andrew McGough reviewed the “Quality Jobs Initiative” which builds on the work we’ve done over the past several years and is a way we can be responsive to some of the labor market challenges we are currently facing. The goal of the initiative is to help support the creation of jobs that enable workers to thrive, companies to be productive and profitable, and communities to benefit from healthy, sustainable economies. Quality jobs are integral to the success of our regional strategic workforce and economic development plans and the shared goal to foster upward economic mobility, particularly for BIPOC and other under-represented communities.

According to our most recent Self-Sufficiency report, 99,000 Metro households earn less than self-sufficiency wages. Low quality jobs exacerbate social and economic inequities across race, ethnicity, and gender. Low quality jobs also strain public resources. McGough believes quality jobs can be a part of the solution to our labor market challenges and areas that are successful in increasing the number and quality of jobs will be more likely to prosper in the years ahead.

Jesse Aronson reviewed the process and accomplishments of the Quality Jobs Initiative. In January 2021, the Columbia Willamette Workforce Collaborative (CWWC) Directors committed to developing a quality jobs framework as the foundation for our region’s workforce board programs, employers, and job seekers. For job seekers, a quality job can mean stability, health, and economic mobility. For businesses, improving job quality can mean attracting new talent, improved retention, and an engaged and motivated.

Aronson explained that we needed input and buy-in from regional stakeholders to define what a quality job means for our region. As a result, we formed a committee made up of leaders from the community, workers, organizations, and businesses throughout the 6-County region to develop a quality jobs framework using a solutions-based approach. The goal of the committee was to:

- Define quality job standards for our region
- Provide a set of job quality standards & guidance that regional employers will be able to adopt
- Incorporate stakeholder feedback
- Include a toolkit of resources and an initial roadmap of actions and implementation steps.

The committee landed on the following quality job standards:

- Pay living (self-sustaining) wages
- Provide safe working conditions, free from discrimination and harassment and are responsive to workers concerns
- Have predictable and guaranteed work hours
- Provide comprehensive benefits
- Provide training and advancement opportunities
- Provide equitable and accessible hiring and onboarding processes
- Provide a diverse workplace

Aronson reviewed the next steps:

- Complete the framework document
- Quality Jobs Council member “sign-on” and commitment to bringing framework to their organization
- Include framework in our Good Jobs Challenge Grant proposal
- Formally adopt definition and framework principles by all 3 Board in April
- Workforce Board integration into job seeker programs and business engagement activities

The Board discussed the initiative, framework, standards, and next steps.

Driving Diversity Program

Patrick Gihring reviewed Worksystems’ Driving Diversity Program. He explained that the program creates pathways into quality jobs and provides a pipeline of diverse, qualified workers for the recycling and waste hauling companies to serve our community. It took a lot of extensive and strong partnerships working together to make this program a success. Gihring announced that some of the partners are here today to discuss the program.

Gihring introduced Beth Vargas. Vargas is the Regional Director of Oregon Refuse and Recycling Association and staffs the Haulers Association for Washington and Clackamas Counties and the City of Portland (PHA). The franchise is a highly regulated system that provides stable rates, standardized services, environmental protections, and health and safety assurances in addition to providing stable living wage jobs. Vargas explained that one of their guiding principles is advancing diversity and this program is a great way of doing that. The Portland Haulers have embraced this program to help them advance diversity by providing funds and donating trucks for training.

Jesse Aronson reviewed the training model that is being used for the Driving Diversity Program. He explained that Worksystems has developed similar direct hire training models for banking, healthcare and I.T. careers. Aronson explained that some of the important characteristics of the model include engaging employers in developing the training curriculum and program design along with investing in the program. In addition to monetary and/or in-kind donations, employers invested extensive staff time to make this program a success and

prioritizing hiring of participants. Aronson described the 6 months of work that went on with the partners to set-up the program and make it a success.

Aronson explained that this program was funded by the City of Portland American Rescue Plan dollars. This is just one of several rapid re-career programs that Worksystems has set-up to quickly help Portland residents move into living wage jobs. These programs target participants who are low-income, women, people of color and/or housing insecure or impacted by homelessness.

Gihring introduced Gary Hollands, founder of Interstate Trucking Academy (ITA). Gihring explained that Worksystems had already been working with ITA to provide CDL training for some of our program participants. Hollands discussed the mission of the academy which is to get women and minorities into trucking and transportation careers. These careers provide real opportunities for advancement, economic growth, and wealth building. Hollands explained that their CDL training had already been invaluable to their students. The Waste Haulers program has added more value and opportunities to their students. In addition to ITA students getting their CDL, participants now have job opportunities.

Gihring introduced Josh Brown, District Manager for Arrow Sanitation Services. Arrow Sanitation Services is a franchise that services the City of Portland and hires graduates of the Driving Diversity Program. Brown has been a key partner in developing this program. Brown explained that Arrow Sanitation Services provides full-time living wage jobs in the residential and commercial sectors. Arrow Sanitation realized they were missing the boat on recruiting diverse populations and communities of color. Through this collaboration, they have done a better job of recruiting and looking deeper into the community for qualified employees.

Gihring introduced Tim Finnegan, Director of Workforce Development at the SE Works. Gihring explained that SE Works also operates the BankWorks and CareerWorks training. Finnegan explained that SE Works was asked to help develop a Driving Diversity program based on the BankWorks and CareerWorks model. Since they are also a WorkSource center (WorkSource SE Portland), they have access to a broad swath of job seekers. Through their programs, they provide support services, coaching, and can connect participants with resources and other programs through the Portland Metro area. Finnegan explained that one of the barriers participants faces is the ability to pay for training. The Portland Housing Bureau and ARPA provide funds for training which breaks down a significant barrier allowing participants to be successful. Additional wrap-around resources are also available to participants.

Finnigan announced that, so far, they have had 35 participants graduate through the program and have another group graduating in a couple weeks. 66% of the participants are Black or African American, 12% are American Indian or Alaskan Native, 17% are white, and 18% identify in more than one category. In addition, 37% identify as female. 75% of the graduates have already been hired.

Gihring introduced Trent Gay from Central City Concern (CCC). Gihring explained that we had planned to have Richard Holmes, a program graduate, speak to the group. However, he is busy working and is indispensable to his company and the team he works with. Gay was Holmes' career coach and the main person who helped Holmes achieve success. In addition to being a career coach, Gay is also a team lead and supervisor with the A Home for Everyone Economic Opportunity program (AHFE). AHFE helps people experiencing homelessness get back on their feet and into a career. Holmes was a participant in the AHFE program.

Gay explained that Holmes came to CCC after being out of prison for about 3 ½ years. With Gay's help, Holmes was able to overcome obstacles so he could get his CDL. Within 5 months, Holmes graduated from the Driving

Diversity program and was able to become self-sufficient. As a result of the program, Holmes was hired right out of the program at an amazing pay rate. He now has a home and a car and a bright future.

The Board discussed the programs and thanked all the presenters for their time and commitment.

Public Comment:

The floor was opened for public comment. There was no public comment.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:21 a.m.

Portland Metro Workforce Development Board

10/8/2021

8:00 – 9:30 a.m.

Worksystems

Virtual Meeting

In attendance: James Paulson – Chair, Travis Stovall – Vice Chair, Roy Rogers, Susheela Jayapal, Seraphie Allen, Anna Thames, Bob Gravely, Carl Moyer, Carl Moyer, Caryn Lilley, Nave Nielsen, David Fortney, Deanna Palm, Debi Mollahan, Keith Mays, Maurice Rahming, Norm Eder, Danell Butler, Kadie Ross, Rolanda Garcia, Biljana Jesic, Joe McFerrin, Shea Flattery Betin, Lisa Skari, Tyna Moreschi, Aida Aranda, Bob Tackett, Eryn Byram

Staff: Andrew McGough, Patrick Gihring, Tricia Ryan, Stacey Triplett

Presenters: Annie Kucklick, MSW – Research Manager Center for Women’s Welfare

CALL TO ORDER:

Meeting was called to order at 8:02 a.m. Quorum was announced.

Consent Agenda

Motion: Travis Stovall moved to accept the consent agenda containing the July 2021 minutes. Roy Rogers seconded. Motion was unanimously approved.

Special Election Results

Jenny Weller announced the results of the special election. Carl Moyer has been elected to the Executive Committee for the remainder of the term. Moyer replaces Pam Treece, who retired from the Board.

Annual Report

Andrew McGough reviewed the 2020 – 2021 annual report which was included in the packet. This has been a challenging year. On the revenue side we were down about \$1 million. Local and State resources now account for about 52% of our revenues. This compares to about 40% last year and about 25% a couple of years ago. McGough explained that Federal funds tend to be more flexible, while some State and Local funding tend to be more targeted.

Our expenses are in 3 buckets – community investments, coordination, and administrative. We achieved our goal of spending at least 80% towards community programs and activities. Administrative costs accounted for just 8% of our total expenses.

McGough reviewed the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. We don’t know what all the impacts will be yet, but we know what industries and populations have been most impacted by the downturn. As such, we are focusing on making sure those most impacted by the downturn receive our support.

McGough reviewed our response to the pandemic which included shifting to remote service provision, setting up a COVID call center, language lines, and administering wrap-around services. We learned that workforce development goes beyond just the acquisition of skills. It includes connections to vital supports like rental assistance, childcare, and transportation.

McGough explained that we will continue to evolve services that have worked well during the pandemic including remote service delivery, online access to training, earn and learn activities, alignment of workforce training and wrap-around services, and connecting training activities to employer needs.

McGough thanked all the organizations that we've invested in who do the day-to-day work or serving people in our community.

Self-Sufficiency Standard Report for Oregon

McGough explained we have done this report for many years as a way for us to look at what takes for an individual or family make their way out of poverty. The Federal poverty measure is antiquated and does not accurately reflect all the costs people face in the daily lives.

Annie Kucklick, MSW – Research Manager Center for Women's Welfare, explained that the official Federal poverty measure is outdated and not keeping up with the cost of living. The Self-Sufficiency Standard, a project for the Center for Women's Welfare, is a budget-based, living wage measure that defines the real cost of living for working families. The standard was developed to address the shortcoming of the official poverty measure. It determines the amount of income required for working families to meet basic needs at a minimally adequate level, taking into account family composition, ages of children and geographic differences in costs.

Kucklick pointed out that 9% of working-age households in Oregon live below the Federal poverty level. However, 26% of working-age households in Oregon live below the self-sufficiency standard. The Federal poverty level does not reflect real changes in family budgets, geographic location, or family composition.

Kucklick reviewed the data components of the standard which includes a realistic measurement of the income requirements of over 700 different family types. The components include:

- All major budget items which include food, housing, childcare, healthcare, transportation, taxes/tax credits, and miscellaneous costs.
- Accounts for geographic differences in costs.
- Varies costs by age groups of children.
- Reflects modern family practices.

Kucklick explained that, in partnership with Worksystems and the Oregon Workforce Talent and Development Board, the center for Women's Welfare produces two separate reports – "The Self Sufficiency Standard for Oregon 2021" and "The Overlooked & Undercounted 2021: Struggling to Make Ends Meet in Oregon." The reports provide data on the amount needed to be economically self-sufficient and how it varies considerably by geographic location and family composition.

Kucklick provided several examples of self-sufficiency standards based on geographic location, housing costs, family size, race/ethnicity, and gender.

Kucklick explained that the COVID pandemic exacerbated the economic and health risk facing low-wage workers. These workers are disproportionately in service occupations that are at higher risk for loss of income during the pandemic. Women and people of color with inadequate income are even more likely to be concentrated in low-wage occupations. Additionally, lack of affordable and available childcare has reduced the number of people, mostly women, in the labor force.

Kucklick explained that the Standard is a data tool that can be used by:

- Customers of workforce, training and education programs seeking paths to self-sufficiency.
- Managers to evaluate program effectiveness.
- Communities and businesses as an indicator of the basic cost of living.
- Policymakers to create programs and pathways that lead to economic self-sufficiency for working families.

The Board discussed the report and findings.

Community Programs for Low-Income and Other Underserved Residents

McGough introduced Stacey Triplett, Community Programs Manager. The focus of her presentation is on Goal 2 of our Strategic Plan, which focuses on ensuring regional workers have the skills and supports needed to fill current and emerging quality jobs.

As part of this goal, McGough announced that Worksystems, along with our partners in Clackamas County and SW Washington, received a \$2.3 million grant from the Department of Labor Dislocated Worker grant. The purpose of the grant is to provide childcare services to dislocated workers to allow them to participate in workforce training. The grant also allows us to build pathways for people to access training to pursue careers in childcare. We want to make sure these pathways move people to livable wages.

Triplett explained that we've updated the language of Goal 2 to call out who we are talking about serving in the community. Triplett reviewed what the community-based programs do, including:

- Career Mapping and Coaching
- Work readiness training
- Work experience placement and support
- Job search assistance and placement
- Retention and advancement support after job placement

Triplett discussed how career mapping uses the Self-Sufficiency tool to help clients identify their needs. All the program elements are provided in conjunction with other supports and 1-on-1 navigation to WorkSource resources.

Triplett provided a snapshot of the FY 2020-21 accomplishments for Portland Economic Opportunity program which provided the framework for other Economic Opportunity Programs across the region:

Career Coaches served 787 clients. Of those served:

- 266 completed the program
- 82% obtained employment
- 60% were people of color
- 81% were very low-income
- 31% were homeless at entry

Clients from the Latino Network, IRCO and Central City Concern provided testimony illustrating their assistance they received and their success with the program. All successfully completed their training and are now fully employed.

The Board thanked the participants for sharing their stories and their career coaches for the work they do to help support people in our community.

Public Comment:

The floor was opened for public comment. There was no public comment.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:31 a.m.

Portland Metro Workforce Development Board

7/9/2021

8:00 – 9:30 a.m.

Worksystems

Virtual Meeting

In attendance: James Paulson – Chair, Travis Stovall – Vice Chair, Roy Rogers, Susheela Jayapal, Bob Gravely, Cara Turano, Caryn Lilley, David Fortney, Maurice Rahming, James Posey, Carl Moyer, Jane Leo, Dave Nielsen, Debi Mollahan, Kimberly Branam, Bob Tackett, Aida Aranda, Eryn Byram, Danell Butler, Biljana Jesic, Rolanda Garcia, Komi Kalevor, Mark Mitsui, Keith Mays

Staff: Andrew McGough, Patrick Gihring, Tricia Ryan, Jesse Aronson

Guests: Christian Kaylor, Oregon Employment Department Economist

Handouts:

CALL TO ORDER:

Meeting was called to order at 8:00 a.m. Quorum was announced.

Announcements

James Paulson announced that Pam Treece has retired from Westside Economic Alliance and will no longer be on our Workforce Board. Paulson and Andrew McGough thanked her all her contributions to the Board.

Consent Agenda

Motion: Jane Leo moved to accept the consent agenda containing the April 2021 minutes. Travis Stovall seconded the motion. Motion was unanimously approved.

Local Economic Outlook 2021 & Beyond

Christian Kaylor provided an overview of the 2021 Economic Outlook. Attendees were encouraged to contact him if they had any questions or wanted additional information

Kaylor explained that in May, there were 9.2 million job openings in the United States which is up 34% from February 2020. Of the openings, 1.25 million were in the accommodations and food service industry. In our region, 55% of the jobs lost in 2020 have recovered. This is below the U.S. recovery rate which is 66%. Construction and Transportation/Warehousing have fully recovered. Manufacturing, Accommodation/Food Services and Retail Trade are still down.

Kaylor reviewed population growth trends. Currently, Oregon is the 11th fastest growing state in the country. The Portland Metro region grew by 12% in the last decade, ranking Portland 18th among the 50 largest U.S. Metro regions. While overall the U.S. fertility rate declines, our population is also aging with 1 in 6 of the U.S. population age 65+. Kaylor explained that as the working age population decreases and fertility rate declines, it will become more difficult to fill jobs and fill the workforce pipeline. If we can't attract more workers to the area, we will continue to see more loss jobs.

The Board discussed the presentation and asked several follow-up questions. It was agreed that this is a complicated matter, and we need to look at things on the near-term and the long-term.

WorkSource Systems Update

Jesse Aronson provided an update on the public workforce system in our region. In our region, there are 5 WorkSource centers, 3 express centers, over 30 community partners, and 7 NextGen youth providers.

In response to the pandemic:

- All system partners shifted to completely virtual services in early April 2020.
- Unemployment insurance eligibility was expanded which essentially paid people to stay home and reduce contact with others.
- Worksystems worked with our funders to get approval within our current contracts and statements of work to help people connect to safety net services to address their immediate needs. Systems were set up to facilitate access to services

Aronson explained that, in April 2020, a COVID response line was launched with over 60 system staff supporting the lines. These supports included:

- Unemployment insurance information (over 85% of calls)
- Connection to SNAP and DHS support
- TriMet low- income fare eligibility
- Language services
- Job leads and referrals
- Statewide bilingual unemployment insurance support funded by the Oregon Employment Department
- Best practices training for our providers

Aronson announced that Worksystems received ~\$3 million in CARES Act funds. These funds were used to support rent assistance, household assistance VISA cards, cohort trainings (IT and truck driving) and expanded overall workforce systems capacity.

Aronson explained that we distributed over 500 laptops to customers. We formed a partnership with Xfinity Internet Essentials to support 6 months of internet to WorkSource customers to continue in training. Eight computer workstations were placed in homeless shelters throughout the region. In addition, Wi-Fi hotspots were installed at 2 housing properties managed by Reach CDC giving residents free internet access.

Through our network of service providers, Worksystems provided rent assistance and \$1,000 household assistance cards. The rent assistance was focused on communities of color through system partners with close connections to those most impacted by the pandemic. The rent assistance was linked to participants in workforce programs. Aronson noted that emergency rent assistance is critical, but people need a steady income to maintain it. Aronson pointed out that these supports can make a big difference to people living on the edge.

Liza Morehead discussed current labor market trends. As the economy re-opens, we are facing 2 issues: high unemployment rates and labor shortages. To understand the contradictory issues, we must understand what jobs are available and hard to fill, who is still unemployed, and why aren't the unemployed filling the jobs.

Morehead explained that prior to the pandemic, the unemployment rate in our region was at an all time low and the current rate is just slight above that rate. In February 2020, 894 UI claims were filed compared to 18,669 UI claims filed in April 2020. 45% of the claimants worked in accommodations & food services, health care and retail. More than 50% of the claimants did not have an education beyond high school.

Morehead noted that there were 68,000 fewer jobs in May 2021 than compared to May 2019. The job category with the most losses were jobs that pay at or close to minimum wage. Jobs with the highest wages increased slightly. She explained that some of the jobs are permanently gone due to business closures or advances in technology. Other job openings lack qualified candidates. These jobs pay higher wages but require additional education and work experience.

The second group of hard to fill vacancies include jobs that have a high risk of exposure to COVID. This includes retail and home healthcare aides. These jobs are all low paying and often do not pay enough for people to support themselves and their families. We are seeing that employers who are paying a living wage are having more success with staffing. Other factors also include childcare and transportation.

Aronson reviewed what's ahead in the reopening of our WorkSource Centers. He explained that a statewide reopening framework and process was developed. Locally, reopening plans were developed by local leadership teams and the plans were submitted to and approved by the State. After the plans were approved, the State began a phased approach to reimplement work search requirements. Services are being phased back in with a goal of having all centers fully reopened by the end of July. So far, there has been limited demand for in-person services.

Aronson reviewed the challenges and lessons learned. Challenges include navigating varying timelines, policies, and processes across organizations along with changes in State mandates. In a rapidly changing environment, we learned that a "just-in-time" response is better with Centers rapidly adapting to the changing environment.

Public Comment:

The floor was opened for public comment. There was no public comment.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:30 a.m.