



MINUTES

ROGUE WORKFORCE PARTNERSHIP WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

January 15, 2021

Zoom Conference Call

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Kelsy Ausland, Robert Begg, Susan Bruce, Alex Campbell, Lance Corley, Mike Card, Bret Champion, Mike Donnelly, Jessica Gomez, Brent Kell, Norm Kester, Kari Kingsolver, Linda Schott, Sherri Stratton, Kim Whitney, Trever Yarrish

All attendees (members and non-members) attended remotely.

QUORUM PRESENT: Yes

OTHERS ATTENDING:

Jackson County Commissioner: Dave Dotterer

Oregon AFL-CIO: Josh Hall

Business Oregon: Marta Tarantsey

HECC – Office of Workforce Investments: John Asher

Rogue Community College: Kim Freeze, Donna D’Inzillo

VA-SORCC : Peter Weston

WorkSource Rogue Valley: Kok Foo, Joe Miller

EQUUS: Tabitha Northrop

Oregon Employment Department: Polly Farrimond, Guy Tauer

Youth Pathways Partnership: Joshua Shannon

Project Youth+: Jen Perry

Grayback Forestry: Bryan Wheelock

KOBI TV: Bob Wise, Kingsley Kelly

Jefferson Hemp: Natalie Castaneda

Rogue Workforce Partnership: Sherri Emitte, Ida Saito, Jill teVelde, Tami Allison, Greg Thweatt, Jim Fong, Jeremy Kotler

CALL TO ORDER

The Board meeting was called to order by Chair Jessica Gomez at 9:00 a.m.

Welcome & Introductions

RWP Workforce Board Members introduced themselves and the non-members roll was documented through the Zoom meeting participants list.

RWP Membership: Recruitment Update & Welcome New Members

Matt Ochoa, Founder & CEO of Jefferson Packing (Hemp Industry), introduced himself. Jessica noted that RWP has been talking quite a while about adding someone from the Hemp Industry to get a better understanding of the workforce needs and seasonal as well as economic components, and Matt will make a great addition to the board.

Bryan Wheelock, Vice-President of Grayback Forestry, is in attendance today as a guest. If he joins, he will represent the Natural Resources Sector. Grayback Forestry has offices in Merlin and White City and has been in business over 40 years, employing approximately 250 people (125 full-time).

CONSENT AGENDA

Alex Campbell moved to approve the consent agenda, consisting of the meeting minutes from the September 30, 2020 RWP Workforce Board meeting. The motion was seconded by Trever Yarrish. There was no discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

INTELLIGENCE / SITUATION REPORTS

[Economic & Labor Market Report](#)

- Ten years of job growth evaporated in a matter of a few months
- Will not see a quick decline in Unemployment Insurance going forward
- Keeping a watch on those who are unemployed 6 months or longer
- Challenge will be to keep these people attached to their employers until the businesses can reopen
- Population growth in Jackson County has slowed; challenge to estimate numbers in 2021 due to fires and loss of homes
- Home prices have returned to the level we saw in 2008
- Seeing an uptick in construction activity nationwide as interest rates have spurred growth
- Leisure and Hospitality are experiencing the most change
- Across the state, Portland is showing as the most impacted area, with no area showing any gains
- As of April 2020, seasonally adjusted UI rates are 15.1% in Grants Pass, and 15.6% in Medford

Guy indicated that although he does not have information on business bankruptcies, he has seen strong numbers for business start-ups.

Industry Sectors Roundtable

IT/E-Commerce

- Software is going strong
- People looking at future cycles
- Co-working space and venues have struggled with closures and social distancing
- Lots of money floating around but not from usual sources
- Business who cannot pivot are the ones struggling and closing their doors
- Businesses are reaching out to their customers to make it easier for them to access products and services

Manufacturing

- Business has increased over 10% from last year and over 20% in the past 6 months
- Ended the year strong but efficiency numbers not as good as expected due to smoke, power outages, and employees displaced by fire
- Industry appears to be doing fine, which is a good sign for the future
- Market soft for medical imaging, but making up for softness through portable digital imaging products
- 2021 will be challenging as there will be fierce competition with Asia

- For Quantum Innovations - In the first shutdown, business was deemed essential; however, customers were not. Optical shops were closed, and business went to zero revenue in a week. Second shutdown, optical was deemed essential and currently not seeing the drop in revenue. Pivoted business to making hand sanitizer and other essential products and ended the year up on gross sales and down on net profit.
- The one state that has not yet come back is California – only at about 65% of what they were.

Transportation & Logistics

- Refrigerated division is booming, flatbed is up and down, and heavy haul has been hurt due to construction halt
- Struggling to fill jobs for office positions, as well as drivers and diesel mechanics
- Businesses are struggling with product being held at ports of entry

Hemp Industry

- More product demand with people staying home
- Season was down not directly due to COVID, but also FDS and DEA coming out with various announcements
- PPP loans were a great help
- Overall business is down, but continuing to open up sales markets which is stabilizing the industry

Natural Resources / Wildland Fire Fighting

- Deemed essential from the beginning
- Challenge keeping employees safe
- Very busy, revenue present, couldn't find workers
- Targeted people out of the region to fill recruitment needs
- Housing is a huge issue for both local people, as well as nationwide recruitment
- Housing far exceeds the median income of our region, even with top-level pay scales

Staffing Industry

- Is a meter for what the economy is doing
- Fourth quarter of 2020 was the largest in Express Professional's 35-year history
- Receiving large requests in manufacturing and distribution
- Seeing as many people wanting to stay home and collect UI as wanting to go to work

Construction, etc.

- Local electrical contractor maintained full crew even though projects were delayed
- Adjusting to PPE for a few months
- Future book of business, backlog, and foreseeable future all look good.

Healthcare

- 50% reduction from mid-March through early May 2020
- Challenge onboarding people for testing and now for vaccinations

Wildfire & COVID Disaster Recovery Status & Plans

- Vaccine distribution is the biggest economic and health issue
- Counties are doing amazing work with wildfire recovery – about 500 people still being housed in hotels
- Many people not eligible for FEMA due to being undocumented

- Very heavy process oriented. A model that makes sense is the North Bay Recovery model that has a sector business-driven group that meets separate from the larger collective

Jessica will follow up with Guy Tauer to see if we can figure out how the schools staying closed is impacting getting employees who want to work.

WIOA LOCAL PLAN

Reviewed the Local Plan process and next steps as required by Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act. The group walked through the essential elements of this plan that has our strategies and OKR's embedded throughout.

Cathy Kemper-Pelle added that because the WIOA Local Plan has evolved over the past 5 years, it has allowed us to reach the underserved high poverty population and offer options for job training and living wage jobs. Cathy also noted that the SOHOPE program is being recognized nationally. The program has taken over 400 students in poverty, given them the opportunity to train, and become employed in living wage jobs.

RWP STRATEGIC ROADMAP / OBJECTIVES & KEY RESULTS

The new format of the RWP Strategic Roadmap / Objectives and Key Results was vetted last month with the Corporate Directors who indicated that the format was resonating with them.

- Have clear OKR's with each team shown on the infographic
- Each industry sector will have their own tab with a drilldown of some overlapping OKR's that are very specific and time-bound.
- Will push many things simultaneously in order to make the quickest change

REIMAGINING WORKFORCE ROGUE VALLEY

Additional Resources

- \$100,000 (\$50,000 per year for two years) was awarded from Ford Family Foundation in support of the RCC Commercial Truck Driver and Diesel Technician Training Programs. Scholarships of up to \$2,500 are available to qualified applicants living in Grants Pass and rural cities and towns with populations under 35,000.
- \$7.5 million Disaster Recovery award received for recovery and relief, as well as debris removal on public lands, humanitarian aid, job search assistance (such as On-the-Job Training), paid work experience, training and placement in jobs, and enhanced support services (such as childcare and housing).

Build New Communications Infrastructure

Greg demonstrated the [Rogue Careers website](#) that is soft-launching today and walked through some of the main parts of the website. There will be a place on the website where local employers can have their logos with links to their hiring portals, links to WorkSource Centers, as well as training and education programs.

An [infographic](#) was shown to describe the work that is being done to pivot quickly into virtual services due to WorkSource Centers still being closed. A new communications structure is being quickly built, and we are moving to [Podium](#), which is an interactive all-in-one customer communication platform that incorporates phone, email, text and online chatting.

Launch Communications & Outreach Campaign

Bob Wise and Kingsley Kelley from KOBI did a brief presentation sharing the [communications and outreach campaign](#) they are proposing. Various forms of prospecting and tracking mechanisms are being used to see what is working and what is not, and dollars will be shifted to what is working the best to show proof of concept.

The vision is to have employers eventually volunteer to provide videos, content, etc. RWP has brought on part-time staff to help and will be asking employers to be part of a speaker's bureau to get the word out and connect with all the media channels.

The Board indicated their agreement with this outreach strategy and encouraged that diversity is considered when promoting careers – make sure everyone sees themselves in the ads. President Kemper-Pelle offered to partner with industry and workforce and place website addresses on RCC billboards.

Redesign the Job/Career-Seeker Customer Experience

- [Career Bridges /Appetizers](#) – short term, hands on experience to give people the opportunity to get some practical experience in various sectors. Partnering with RCC, Maker Spaces, 71:Five, and others to create these events that will also incorporate self-assessments in skills and interests.
- [Medford Urban Renewal Agency \(MURA\)](#) – offering an approximate 20,000 sq. ft. building to education and industry partnerships at no cost to create construction training as well as room for makers spaces.
- [Equity, Personal Effectiveness, Essential Employability Skills](#) - Jim encouraged the board to view the following links to review this body of work: [Essential Employability Skills Rubric](#), [Wings Seminars](#), [Evolutionary Consulting](#), [New World of Work Badges](#)

Critical Supports Needed & Our Next Steps to Help

- [Rebuild Child Care Capacity](#) - working closely with the Early Learning Hub to build capacity of child care workers, businesses, and child care providers.
- [Create Regional Housing Plan](#) - There is an affordable housing problem, and the E-Board has added \$25 million for housing investments. Regional partners are convening key stakeholders to try address this complex issue. Let Jim know if you want to be involved in these conversations.

Policy Changes

In order to implement the strategies discussed today, new policies for Emergency/Natural Disaster and WorkSource Work Experience (Transitional Jobs) were presented, along with a revision to the current On-the-Job Training policy for the Board's approval.

Robert Begg moved to approve the two new policies for Emergency/Natural Disaster and WorkSource Work Experience (Transitional Jobs), and the revision to the On-the-Job Training policy. The motion was seconded by Norm Kester and approved unanimously.

WIOA LOCAL PLAN – PUBLIC COMMENTS & APPROVAL

After spending reviewing the strategic components of the Plan, Jim asked if anyone in the audience wanted to make public comment. No one commented. The public comment period will be open for another 25 days.

Norm Kester made the motion to approve the Local Plan with the contingency that RWP staff would amend it to include additional comments after the public comment period closes. The motion was seconded by Mike Donnelly and was approved unanimously.

REIMAGINING HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE ROGUE VALLEY

The Southern Oregon Education Leadership Council (started by Representative Pam Marsh) has been working on:

- Transfer Partnership Agreement – will allow for ease of transferring credits from RCC to SOU
- Allowing for guidance for students and parents regarding dual credit taken in high school
- Guided Pathways alignment provides 6 career pathways that tie closely to the Rogue Careers website, as well as Medford School District, Grants Pass School District, Southern Oregon University, etc.
- RCC and SOU to have common course numbering for general courses.

Medford Mail Tribune Article: [Local group is building bridges from school to jobs.](#)

School districts are interested in dovetailing work around creating behavioral pathways by taking some of their non-educational staff and providing training that would allow them to obtain their bachelor's degree and move into counseling positions.

Data was presented in a recent meeting that indicates that higher education needs to change the first year -- and more specifically, the first term -- to allow for a repeat of high school to better engage students and provide the critical step needed to remain in higher education and complete a credential.

STATE & FEDERAL POLICY ALIGNMENT

Oregon Proposed Legislation – “[COVID Recovery & Workforce Modernization Act of 2021.](#)” Various state legislators approached the Oregon Workforce Partnership (our state association of Workforce Boards) to find out what can be done to support and re-employ workers impacted by the pandemic. Legislators are concerned about the unemployment response delay in benefits overwhelming the system and feel we can do more to streamline and bring accountability and transparency to the workforce system. Senate Bill 623 is legislation that's been introduced to address this issue. State agencies have been asked to carve out some modest funding to provide an evaluation of the system. Private sector members and non-governmental agencies will be asked for their support of the legislation in the form of letters, logos for letters, etc.

Jessica encouraged those interested to get involved in the next legislative session. **Jim will follow up with appropriate members individually.**

Other Alignments / Advocacy Needed –

- [Piloting Prosperity 1000 Project](#)
- BOLI – Proposed transfer of oversight of WIOA from HECC to BOLI
- WIOA & TANF Reauthorization
- Benefits Cliff
- EITC & Health Benefits for Child Care

ADJOURN

With no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 12:01 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tami Allison
Senior Project Manager

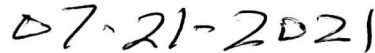
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APPROVED:



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark R. Donnelly", written over a horizontal line.

Chair



A handwritten date in black ink, "07-21-2021", written above a horizontal line.

Date