What was the outcome of the first OWIB WIOA Implementation Committee meeting?
The WIOA Implementation Committee (WIC) met in November for the first time. OWIB established the WIC to provide leadership and oversight to develop policy and guidance for the workforce system critical to the successful implementation WIOA. The WIC acknowledged the significant work that had already been completed and discussed the work remaining. Two parallel tracks of future effort were identified: (1) system alignment and improvement including the Compass Policy, WorkSource Oregon (WSO) Standards, and One-Stop Certification, and (2) WIOA policy development including a variety of new and revised operating and program policies beginning with MOUs and Cost Sharing, One-Stop-Operator Procurement, and fiscal policies. The initial Implementation Priorities are on the WIC’s webpage. The HECC Office of Workforce Investments (OWI) is committed to developing policy and guidance in accordance with the priorities established by the WIC.

Can you share details regarding workforce programs in the Governor’s Budget?
Governor Kate Brown released her recommended budget for 2017-2019 on December 1 (press release). According to the release, “Governor Brown has prioritized investments in education, health care, and job creation to empower Oregonians and support their quality of life.” The Governor addressed a projected $1.7 billion general fund (GF) shortfall in the two-year budget with a combination of new revenue and program cuts. Highlights for the HECC OWI and the Oregon Employment Department (OED) were gleaned from recent communications from agency directors Ben Cannon and Kay Erickson, respectively.

HECC’s OWI is primarily funded by federal funds, but in the current 2015-17 biennium it received $8.2 million GF for payments to providers for Back-to-Work Oregon, National Career Readiness Certificates, and other workforce activities. The Governor’s budget proposes cutting those payments to $7.5 million. The Employment Department (OED) is primarily funded by employer-paid unemployment insurance taxes and dedicated Federal Funds. The only program within the OED budget impacted by the shortfall is the Oregon Talent Council. The Governor’s budget eliminates all funding for the Council, with the exception of one 12-month limited duration position to accommodate the completion of outstanding business. There is a desire to find a way to continue to produce a core deliverable of the OTC, the Oregon Talent Plan, in future biennia. Finally, the Governor is recommending what is essentially a status-quo budget with respect to each agency’s operations. More detail and information will be available as the budget process unfolds through the legislative session.

What is happening with the WorkSource Oregon Standards?
WorkSource Oregon (WSO) is the statewide one-stop system and it serves as the cornerstone of the public workforce development delivery system. The WSO Standards were developed through an extended collaborative process to provide the minimum-level content/services(s) required to be available at all WSO centers. They also build in an accountability mechanism to ensure that this effort will come to fruition across the entire state. Finally, they offer an opportunity to work together to continually improve the system, engage new partners, and better serve Oregon job seekers, workers, and businesses. The OWIB will be endorsing the current WSO Standards even as effort is underway to
address the implications of the required expansion of core partners in WSO Centers under WIOA. In addition, discussions are ongoing regarding adjustments to the Business Services standards. Part of the intent is to incorporate lessons learned from the successful business services alignment through WorkSystems, Inc. (WSI) that includes WSO and the Department of Human Services (DHS).

Why are state workforce partner staff meeting in Eugene on December 7?
The Workforce System Executive Team (WSET) is hosting a training for staff in all state partner agencies involved in developing the Oregon Workforce System. State leaders will share their vision and provide an all-day training regarding state agency staff’s role in developing collaborations and building relationships in the community. The goal of the event is to expand best practices and facilitate better partnerships in the Workforce System with agency staff in each local area throughout the state to improve the delivery of services for all Oregonians.

Did the HECC receive an ApprenticeshipUSA grant award?
Yes. The HECC received a $1.5 million grant through DOL’s ApprenticeshipUSA State Expansion Grants Program. The Advancing Oregon Apprenticeship (AOA) project will support apprenticeship becoming Oregon’s preferred training model and fully integrate Registered Apprenticeship with Oregon’s workforce system including increased participation in apprenticeship by women and members of underrepresented populations. The AOA project will align with and build on the $3 million Oregon-Apprenticeship Initiative in Manufacturing (Oregon-AIM) project funded through DOL’s American Apprenticeship Initiative that seeks to build a supportive ecosystem for registered apprenticeship in Oregon through a multi-part strategy focused on manufacturing.

Are there any additional details regarding the upcoming OWIB meeting?
The full OWIB membership meets quarterly and the next meeting is scheduled for December 9, 2016 at the Chemeketa Center for Business & Industry (CCBI), 626 High Street NE in Salem. Two important highlights are notable. First, Governor Kate Brown is planning to attend the meeting to discuss her priorities and how they are connected to the work of the OWIB and the broader workforce system. Second, the Oregon Workforce Partnership has invited all OWIB board members to attend a luncheon prior to the full OWIB meeting. The luncheon will allow OWIB members and local board directors to exchange ideas, share best practices, and better understand how to work effectively together.

Will OWI be expanding the resources available online for WIOA?
OWI will be updating, expanding, and reorganizing what was formerly referred to as the “weebly” site for all things related to WIOA in Oregon over the next few months. The site also has a new web address, www.wioainoregon.org, but all previous links should still work. The site currently links to a comprehensive planning and implementation site including the state plan, local approved plan documents, plan updates, WSO Standards, Memoranda of Understanding, cost sharing agreements, monitoring information, tools, and resources. It also links to separate pages for policy and guidance (including the ETPL) and Titles I, II, III, and IV. OWI intends to continue to grow and develop this site as the one-stop resource that remains current and flexible.

What is this Communication?
The Oregon Workforce Investment Board will provide regular communication to the Oregon workforce system regarding the work of the OWIB, workforce strategy and planning, system alignment, program policy and guidance, compliance and monitoring, and other issues based on questions and requests for information received. If you have a question or would like additional information, please contact Todd Nell, Executive Director at 503-947-2406 or todd.a.nell@oregon.gov.