

Oregon Employment Department Advisory Council Quarterly Meeting (4th Quarter)							
Date/time:		Dec. 15, 2025, 3:00-5:00p.m.					
Location:		Zoom platform					
Attendees:		A – Absent P – Present					
A	Robert Westerman Chair	P	Stacy Michaelson	P	Sarah Foster	P	Gail Krumeneaur
P	Kirtis Barker	P	Ramana Reddy	P	Perla Brambila-Arechiga	P	Lindsay Leahy
P	Paloma Sparks	P	Michelle McAllaster	A	Monica Reyna-Dunigan		
P	Robert Camarillo	P	Andrew Stolfi	A	David Genz		
A	Catie Thiesen	P	Karen Madden Hummelbaugh	P	Jim Pfarrer		

## MINUTES - DRAFT

	Topic	Minutes	Presenter
1.	Welcome, self-introductions of new Advisory Council members & OED staff	Called Meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.  New Advisory council members introduced themselves.	Director Stolfi
2.	Meeting Minutes Approval July & May	Motion to approve, Paloma Sparks, Kurtis Barker second motion.  Motion Passed.	Director Stolfi
3.	Advisory Council Role	<p>The council is created by statute, and its role is to assist the director in the effective development of policies and programs with the respect to Unemployment Insurance and Employment Services and in securing the benefits of the Oregon Wagner Pacer Act.</p> <p>The real focus is to advise and assist in OED programs and on what it does. This should be a forum for members to talk about issues and topics that are important to members and that they are hearing about and provide advice with their expertise.</p> <p>The next steps, what does that mean to members and what it looks like and how we can come to help refine that.</p> <p>Question from a member: The council has been the default RAC Unemployment Insurance. Shall members expect this to be different?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Anything Paid Leave related, the Paid Leave Advisory Committee is responsible for discussing Paid Leave rules.</li> <li>- Ideally, this would be the group that would continue the RAC for non-Paid Leave rules. If the council members would agree.</li> <li>- Members would like to use this space to discuss legislation and to discuss implementation.</li> </ul> <p>Question from a member: What kind of role can this council play in skills development that are in correlation with the WTDB?</p>	

	<p>-The opportunity may be more defined down the road, and there is immediate opportunities for alignment.</p> <p>In the past the council was used for OED programs to give updates on the performance piece and how the agency was in compliance or not in compliance, customer service, fraud, etc. Then, the council was shifted to a sound board for legislative concepts, and more recently as the de facto RAC. Members like all three pieces, accountability performance, legislative concepts and acting as the RAC.</p> <p>One member would like the separation of the RAC and the advisory council.</p> <p>More suggestions from members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Review or address internal policy or legislative concepts to align with the Governor’s mandate to make Oregon more business friendly.</li> <li>- Once a year in person meeting, to have more robust discussions.</li> </ul>	
4.	<p>Customer Service &amp; Workforce Strategies Project</p> <p>On Director Stolfi’s first Day of work, he received a letter of expectations from the Governor. One of the main expectations was to focus on customer service and Workforce mission. The Governor asked Director Stolfi to do a comprehensive organizational review in order to develop recommendations to improve the agency’s operations. It was broken up into two sections, information gathering and then set of action plans.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- First was customer service on Paid Leave and UI programs and how it could improve and how we can leverage AI to improve customer service.</li> <li>- Second, Frances Online, the new modernized system to improve its governance.</li> <li>- Third and fourth, the governor sought some ideas on how to improve our Worksource offices and what improvements could be made and more broadly on the Workforce mission.</li> </ul> <p>With this OED created the Customer Service Workforce Strategies Project. This included a lot of information gathering, included about 8,000 inputs from staff, legislators, external parties, etc. The agency came up with draft proposals and discuss them with the Governor’s Office and will be able to share a list of recommendations and action plans on how they can be implemented.</p> <p>There are a lot of consistent themes from the feedback collected. The key themes received from customers are that they need clearer, faster, and more predictable services. Also, received feedback around people struggling to understand the status of their claim, UI and Paid Leave. The second theme was about OED staff and how committed they are to continuous improvement, but some inconsistencies in the</p>	S

	<p>procedures and trainings. Third, is about the Worksource centers. Many centers are receiving UI traffic; many customers are coming in with questions and issue that staff in Worksource offices can resolve. There is a need to address that influx of UI customers. The last theme, coming from employers, they asked for simpler processes and clear guidance. There are a lot of business support services that OED provides that are not known in the business community and know the agency needs to do a better job of getting that information out.</p> <p>Based on the feedback, the agency is putting a number of recommendations together for next steps. The first action area is around organizational improvements, how the agency is structured and how the work is done.</p> <p>Question from a member: Did you engage with the labor community? How much longer is the system going to be new? Folks are still having issues following their claim and are frustrated.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- We have been hearing from customers for a long time. This was a rushed strategic plan so we weren't able to engage with everyone we would have if it was a regular plan, but we did engage with labor leaders and got their perspective. In terms of our system, getting to a good state is our priority. There is a typical timeline when government is implementing a brand new IT system, it takes three and a half to eight years in order to get it tuned in. There could be 5 phases to that and we are currently on phase two, we have about four more years of implementation optimization.</li> </ul> <p>Second, customer service improvements. You will start to hear us talk more about the customer and centering the customer experience in everything that we do. We want to simplify the process, provide self help tools for our customers and the businesses we support as well.</p> <p>Third, is to improve the Frances system and come up with a better governance structure to manage it and increase capacity to get through a back log of improvements, and improvements to the Workforce system.</p> <p>A lot more to come on this project.</p>	
<p>5. Employment Update</p>	<p>Gail Krumeneur, State Employment Economist</p> <p>In September, Oregon employers added 3,300 jobs to non farm payrolls. That was the second month of gains. The total difference within the last two years is 2,300 jobs. We are seeing sluggish and little job growth.</p> <p>The gains that we are seeing are highly concentrated in private healthcare and social assistance. Oregon's trends, such as in health</p>	

	<p>care and manufacturing have been similar to the U.S, but more pronounced.</p> <p>Oregon has lost 12,100 jobs as of September. That’s a decline at 0.6% over the year. Manufacturing has lost 10,000 jobs, down by 5%.</p> <p>Question from member: Seeing that primary growth in health care. To what extent does OED try to project?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A lot of the trends that we are seeing in Oregon we are seeing in the U.S. For example, in September US employers added 119,000 jobs and 57,000 of that or about half was in health care and social assistance. We are seeing a lot of the gains nationally. Manufacturing has been losing jobs more than 2 years nationally as well. Its hard to say because were seeing conversations around being some sort of mergers or branches of certain hospitals that are closing. We are also seeing announcements of multi-billion dollar gifts to science research in the state and its to soon to say how all of that washes out.</li> </ul> <p>Computer and electronic products is a notable piece of the picture, but many parts of the manufacturing sector have been experiencing declines.</p> <p>Oregon’s Unemployment rate was 5.2 %, 2.2 million in September of 2025. Up by one percent in the past year and is top ten in the US and slightly higher than the US percentage of 4.5%.</p> <p>Unemployment status is based on people’s job seeking activity. New or returning to works: 44,300(41%), lost jobs: 57,500(53%), left job voluntarily: 7,400(7%). For 2025, there were 4,600 weekly initial claims on average. And 33,500 weekly claims on average, that’s about 19% higher than the previous year.</p> <p>Job vacancy levels haven’t fallen off, but also didn’t have the seasonal increase wed expect to see over the summer.</p> <p>The job vacancy rate for manufacturing was 0.8% in the summer. Oregon’s overall private sector-job vacancy was 3.1%.</p>	
<p>6. Unemployment Insurance Rulemaking</p>	<p>Lindsay Leahy, Unemployment Insurance Director</p> <p>Proposed rule changes that will be filed with the SOS at the end of the month:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Informed Consent in OAR 471-010-0105(4)</li> <li>- Benefit Payments in OAR 471-030-0050(3)</li> <li>- Weekly Eligibility in OAR 471-030-0036</li> </ul> <p>OAR 471-010-0105(4): The purpose is to clarify that unless an attorney has been retained for purposes related to Unemployment Insurance, a release of information is required and must meet all requirements of informed consent. New language: <i>(b) if the attorney has been retained</i></p>	

*for purposes not related to ORS chapter 657 and the attorney asserts that they represent the customer or business, a written release that complies with subsection 1(a)(A)-(E) of this rule is required. The written release must be witnessed or verified by a department staff or notarized.* Also, made a minor change to correct a reference in another section of the rule and also removed some gendered language. Did not receive any negative feedback.

OAR 471-030-0050(3): The purpose is to remove reference to branded language for stored value cards (commonly referred to as a debit card) as a method for benefit payments. New language: *(3) Individuals who do not apply for direct deposit will be paid by a stored value card.* Removed the name of the card.

OAR 471-030-0036, Implementation of SB 916: The purpose was to implement SB 916. Establish Weekly eligibility requirements for striking workers. OED will treat striking workers like employees who are temporarily unemployed, because they also expect to return to work with the same employer after the strike ends. Striking workers will not be required to look for work from other employers to be eligible for weekly benefits.

Proposed changes: which allows striking workers to receive up to 10 weeks of Unemployment Insurance benefits beginning Jan. 1, 2026. Also, Ensure weekly eligibility rules reflect how the Oregon economy and workforce have evolved over the years.

- Simplify eligibility requirements for “being available for work”
- Update the number of required work seeking activities each week
- Change requirements for claimants who are “temporarily unemployed”
- Update requirements for claimants seeking remote-work opportunities

New language is in section (8)

- (8) For the purpose of ORS 657.155(1)(c), an individual shall be considered actively seeking work when:
  - (a) They are unemployed, as of January 1, 2026, due to a labor dispute as described under ORS 657.200;
  - (b) There is an expectation that they will return to work for their employer when the labor dispute ends; and
  - (c) They are willing and available to return to work at the end of the labor dispute.

We received the most feedback for this rule change.

Question from a member: In the opening part of the bill it has a notwithstanding provision which refers to actively looking for work, have we decided that it means something different?

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- We haven't decided that it means something different, it's specifically saying that they need to be able, available, and actively seeking work and as a state we get to define that. We define actively seeking as being ready to return to work. We have been proactively sharing drafts of the rule with DOL, so that they can provide any feedback and haven't received any yet, but would incorporate and be responsive to any feedback from USDOL.</li> </ul> <p>Question from a member: Does an employee on strike need to be organized?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Yes, it cant be an individual who goes on strike, it has to be part of an organized strike, bring a member of the union. We verify the information, right now when a labor dispute happens, whether it's a lockout or a strike, we do verify that information. This change makes it so if you are on strike there is eligibility before you would automatically be denied because that is how the law is currently written, after Jan. 1,2026 that changes.</li> </ul> <p>Question from a member: When do you expect to file this rule?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Before the end of the year.</li> </ul>	
7.	WorkSource Oregon Mobile Van Program	<p>Jim Pfarrer, WorkForce Operations Director</p> <p>We have purchased 3 mobile vans, which are currently being worked on to use as mobile WorkSource center vans to provide services throughout communities. We have 37 WorkSource centers throughout the communities, we have some customers that travel long distance for services, so the idea is to provide services on periodic times where there is not a center available. The three vans will be in different areas. We have one that will be in eastern Oregon, one in central Oregon and also cover the south coast are along with Medford and Grants Pass area, and the other will be covering the Willamette Valley and the rest of the coast up north.</p> <p>The goal is to have these go out on the 1<sup>st</sup> of the year. Will be trials runs first, before making the routes public. Department of Corrections has agreed to partnering and having the vans visit the facilities as well. Other partners include Oregon Emergency Management and Department of Human Services. Also, looked at having UI and Paid Leave Oregon folks to provide services.</p> <p>Question from a member: Is this a pilot, or permanent?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- This is permanent, but a soft launch for the first few months.</li> </ul>	
8	Public Comment	No comment from the public.	

9.	Adjourn	Adjourned at 4:50 p.m.	
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**ACTION ITEMS**

Action	Assigned	Date Due	Completed

**FUTURE MEETING TOPICS**

Action	Assigned	Date Due	Completed
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Minutes submitted by Perla Brambila Arechiga