

Mid-Columbia Economic Resiliency Team Meeting

June 19, 2020

AGENDA

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://zoom.us/j/98720785607?pwd=TUJEb2JzQkt4SUZ5TzJZeJAvckJYQT09>
Or Call 669-900-6833, Meeting ID: 987 2078 5607, Password: 2266

- 11:00 a.m. Call to Order, Welcome
- 11:05 a.m. Ag Outlook with Derek Sandison, Director, Washington Dept. of Agriculture
- 11:20 a.m. Broadband Investments – Oregon and Washington
- 11:35 a.m. Partner Focus: COVID-19 Programs at The Next Door Inc.
- 12:00 p.m. Reports:
- Economist update
 - Workforce agencies updates
 - SBDC update
 - WA Dept of Commerce/Business Oregon Update
 - Chambers update
 - Ports update
 - Outdoor rec update
- 12:30 p.m. Adjourn

Guiding Principles

- Our first priority and common purpose is to serve our region's employees, communities, and businesses, and we will leave our politics at the door.
- We will find way to increase, efficiency and reduce duplication of efforts to not unnecessarily tax the bandwidth of those we are serving.
- We will work in the spirit of collaboration to support each other in achieving our individual mandates in service of our common purpose.
- We offer each other grace as we undoubtedly will make mistakes, recognizing we are all experiencing stress ourselves as we are interacting with others facing tremendous stress.
- We find and take every opportunity to give credit and praise to our colleagues and partners as we encourage each other in this moment.

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Jessica Metta (MCEDD) started the meeting with introductions for guest speakers on the call.

Jessica introduced Derek Sandison (Director, Washington Department of Agriculture (WDA)) to provide an outlook of the agricultural industry in Washington. Derek noted that impacts of COVID-19 were quick to affect the agriculture industry. An immediate consequence of the shutdown and stay home orders was an increase in demand at food banks (estimated \$6 million per week) across the state and they expect this higher need through at least August. Washington has also faced the displacement of a number of food products that rely on local and international restaurant supply chains, particularly for milk and dairy products, potatoes, and shellfish. The State is also focused on challenges around farmworker housing and packing plant health and safety issues. Derek noted that while initial standards were quite onerous, WDA is working with the Governor's office and Departments of Health and Labor & Industries to find alternate solutions to meet the requirements in order to protect farmworker health while maintaining as much worker capacity as safely possible within housing facilities.

Derek was asked if changes in export markets would affect producers in the Gorge. He replied that officials will use the outcome of Washington's cherry harvest as an indicator of what might be expected for other vegetable and fruit exports. Complicating factors include the fact that there has been a recent resurgence of COVID-19 in China, particularly in the Beijing area, and the U.S. also faces increased competition from Turkey in exporting agricultural products to China. However, they are also exploring new markets, especially in countries that are starting to recover from the pandemic as well as reinforcing relationships with existing trade partners like China and Japan.

Derek was also asked what partners should be thinking about at the local and regional level in terms of supporting agricultural producers. He noted Washington will need to maintain stable and robust trade relationships with traditional and new international markets. Additionally, addressing water availability issues in central and eastern Washington is key to sustaining agriculture production into the future. However, Derek noted that in the near future it will be challenging to fund capital projects due to an expected \$9 billion deficit in revenue for the State as a result of COVID-19.

Regarding PPE, Derek noted that getting adequate supplies to businesses is still a challenge, but the state has made significant strides to ramp up distribution efforts. The Governor's office has actively worked to gather and distribute PPE to various branches of the agricultural industry including farms, packing houses, and housing facilities.

Carrie Pipinich (MCEDD) introduced Monica Babine (WSU Extension) and Ryan DeGrofft (Business Oregon) to provide an overview of broadband investments in the state. Monica provided an overview of several programs to support broadband access in Washington ([link to presentation](#)). Additionally, the Washington State Department of Commerce has developed a [Drive-In WiFi Hotspots map](#) to help people find public WiFi hotspot locations throughout the state and has set up a [broadband survey](#) to determine broadband needs in the state. For more information regarding the programs mentioned in the presentation, contact Monica (babinem@wsu.edu).

For Oregon, Ryan DeGrofft noted that the Oregon Broadband Advisory Council was currently discussing how to advance broadband objectives in communities and that Business Oregon was releasing a request for applications for \$10 million in broadband funding (details [here](#)). He noted the RFP was for a portion of \$20 million funding the Emergency Board allocated of CARES Act funding to support broadband

capacity (details [here](#)). A stipulation of these funds is that they must be spent by December 31, 2020. Additionally, Business Oregon anticipates submitting an application to the EDA for \$12 million to support broadband projects across the state.

Carrie noted several projects to improve broadband access locally. Through the emergency response effort, Wasco County 21 cell based hotspots and nine fixed wireless access points have been secured to support telehealth access at the orchards to support migrant/seasonal farm workers, with support from Gorge.Net, OSU Extension, and The City of The Dalles staff. Google provided funding and RADCOMP donated time for setup. In South Wasco County, broadband partners are working with the school district and County to identify potential hotspot locations to reduce travel times for local residents in need of broadband access. This project was also funded by Google. In Hood River County, Hood River Electric Co-op and Gorge.Net have been working to expand access opportunities and provide some financial relief for customers. In Sherman County, rural residents have reported gaps in broadband access so the County is planning to deploy additional equipment to improve their wireless system. Additionally, Carrie noted that MCEDD in partnership with the SBDC will also host additional WebWorks trainings to support businesses with their broadband needs. Lastly, anyone interested in participating in the next Gorge Broadband Consortium meeting can contact Carrie for more information (carrie@mcedd.org).

Jessica introduced Justine Ziegler (The Next Door Inc.) to provide an overview of several programs The Next Door has set up to support local communities in the face of COVID-19 ([donate to help support these programs](#)). Though The Next Door's staff is working remotely, they have maintained thirty-four of the organization's programs and have developed nine additional programs to address needs, including:

1. Financial/Fiscal Program: Served as the fiscal agent for HMB50, a local effort to produce and distribute PPE, until they received nonprofit status.
2. Shopping: Partnered with Volunteers In Action to set up grocery store accounts in several locations to support volunteers in grocery shopping for people who are homebound.
3. Mental Health: Established mental health crisis hotline where people can speak directly with a mental health provider.
4. The Next Connection: Established a bilingual hotline where individuals can connect with bilingual staff members to receive a number of Spanish-language resources around COVID-19 and Gorge updates.
5. Fundraising Campaign: Since March, have raised over \$120,000 to meet the needs of people who couldn't access other financial support for loss of income.
6. Health Care Worker: Set up virtual communication dyads for healthcare workers.
7. Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers (MSFW): Designated an outreach coordinator responsible for communicating with health departments, healthcare providers, and others who provide services to MSFW to ensure clear and consistent messaging that is accessible.
8. Native American Communities: Designated outreach staff to work with Native American communities to ensure that COVID-19 info is accessible and culturally appropriate.
9. Oregon Workers Relief Fund: Approved to distribute grant funds to support workers who don't qualify for other funding.

Justine noted The Next Door has also launched a campaign called [Esencial](#) (Essential) to remind people that workers are essential and help remove the stigma seasonal farmworkers are facing.

Jessica noted that the weekly Economic Resiliency Team meetings would shift to bi-weekly. In addition, we'll shift the next meeting to Thursday, July 2 in order to avoid the holiday.

Regional Economists: Scott Bailey (Washington Employment Security Department) provided a report on Washington's unemployment claims ([weekly report](#)). Scott noted that unemployment in Washington is slowly declining, in part due to businesses starting to reopen. Details for weekly claims can be found on the Department's [dashboard](#) and a report on demographics can be found [here](#).

Workforce Agencies: Mike Scroggs (Oregon Rapid Response Program, CGCC) reported that they are continuing to focus on worker reemployment and training. Additionally, they received a grant from East Cascades Works to support layoff aversion efforts and were able to disperse funds to businesses in Hood River, Wasco, and Wheeler counties.

Economic development agencies: Jessica shared that MCEDD received a Business Oregon grant to distribute emergency funds to businesses and nonprofit organizations that weren't able to access PPP or EIDL program funds. The program will enable MCEDD to distribute \$100,000 in Wasco and Hood River counties and \$50,000 in Sherman County.

Dave McClure (Klickitat County Economic Development) noted that Klickitat County's small business emergency grant program is developing contracts with local businesses that have been awarded funds.

Business Oregon: Ryan DeGrofft (Business Oregon) mentioned that a consortium of credit unions have received funding from the same pool as MCEDD, intended to be distributed as grants to businesses and nonprofit organizations that weren't able to access PPP or EIDL program funds. Each county in Oregon will have access to a portion of these funds through this consortium. Ryan noted that there will be a third request for applications of Business Oregon's emergency grant funds (targeting the same eligible applicants as the first round in May), but the announcement will be delayed as Business Oregon wants to first ensure that the results of the first two phases of the program are being achieved.

Washington Department of Commerce: Susan Nielson (Washington Department of Commerce) noted that the Working Washington Small Business Grant program has released funding to all counties in Washington to distribute to businesses. Klickitat and Skamania counties each received \$154,500. Between the two counties, about 54 businesses were able to receive funding from this program. Susan also highlighted the [Thriving in Challenging Times program](#), a free program for second-stage businesses that will deliver high-impact, actionable information without disrupting operations, will run from July 7-9, 10 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. . Contact Susan for more information (susan.nielson@commerce.wa.gov, 509-220-6048).

SBDC: Greg Price (CGCC SBDC) reported that the SBA has reopened the EIDL program and is accepting applications from all small businesses and there is still funding available for the PPP. He noted that the total funding for the program is unknown so small businesses should apply soon. The SBDC also decided to offer all of their online courses for free throughout the fall. View a list of available programs [here](#).

Chambers: Lizzie Keenan reported that The Dalles Chamber is working with Google on a small business grant program to deploy 35 \$1,000 grants to businesses in The Dalles. They are also working to develop an event in July around cherries to make up for the cancelled annual cherry festival. Lisa Farquharson mentioned that the Chamber is working with local media to promote The Dalles as a tourism destination to support the local economy while maintaining social distancing guidelines.

Travel Oregon has pushed back a marketing campaign targeted toward Oregonians to mid-July and then will look towards secondary markets in Washington and California to promote tourism in the area. Lizzie mentioned that visitors are already coming back without any marketing. Partners are working to develop educational materials to inform visitors of ways to travel responsibly.

Ports: Andrea Klaas (Port of The Dalles) reported that the Port, the City, and Mid-Columbia Medical Center had a call to discuss reopening strategies once cruise ships arrive again. There is an indefinite moratorium on cruise ships. Port staff have worked to coordinate with local businesses, museums, and the Chamber to make sure cruise ships guests understand what local expectations are when people come to visit.

Peter Mitchell (Port of Arlington) shared that Maritime Association has been distributing cloth masks to ports, so may be a resource if any ports are still looking for masks.

Outdoor Recreation: Lynn Burditt (U.S. Forest Service) noted that they reopened the Dog Mountain trail in Washington and opened Viento and Wyeth campgrounds in Oregon. Lizzie and Emily Reed have been working to revamp messaging around outdoor recreation so counties can align as much as possible. Lynn noted differences in re-opening phases among the six counties in the National Scenic Area.

Jessica thanked the group for their work. If there are items you'd like communicated during next week's meeting, please send details to jacque@mcedd.org. This group will meet next Thursday (July 2) at 11:00 a.m.

MID-COLUMBIA ECONOMIC RESILIENCY TEAM**June 19**

Aaryn Rassmussen	Columbia Gorge Regional Airport	
Abe Friedman	Office of Senator Maria Cantwell	
Alberto Isiordia	Washington Employment Security Department	
Amy Gibbs	Oregon Employment Department	
Amy Martinez	South Central Workforce Council (WA)	
Andrea Klaas	Port of The Dalles	x
Angie Waiss	Skamania County Chamber of Commerce	
Anna Osborn	The Next Door, Inc.	
Anne Medenbach	Port of Hood River	
Arlene Burns	City of Mosier	
Ashley Huckaby May	Visit Hood River Council	
BJ Westlund	Office of Senator Jeff Merkley	
Bryan Stebbins	Office of Senator Patty Murray	
Buck Jones	Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (CRITFC)	
Captain Tony Gilmer	Klickitat County	
Carrie Pipinich	Mid-Columbia Economic Development District, Wasco/Sherman EDO	x
Charlotte Bentley	USDA Rural Development - Oregon	
Chuck Thompsen	Oregon State Senate	
Dallas Fridley	Oregon Employment Department	
Dan Mahr	Office of Senator Jeff Merkley	x
Dan Spatz	Columbia Gorge Community College	
Dana Peck	Goldendale Chamber of Commerce	
Dave McClure	Klickitat County Economic Development	x
David Kavanagh	Klickitat County Public Health	
Emily Reed	Columbia Gorge Tourism Alliance	x
Eric Nerdin	USDA Rural Development - Oregon	
Eric Proffitt	Worksource Oregon	x
Erick Garman	Oregon Department of Agriculture (exports)	
Evan Bryan	Office of State Senator Bill Hansell	
Gabriel Muro	The Next Door, Inc.	
Gladys Rivera	One Community Health	
Gordon Zimmerman	City of Cascade Locks	x
Greg Price	Columbia Gorge Community College/Small Business Development Center	x
Greg Svelund	Oregon Department of Environmental Quality	x
Hannah Brause	WSU Extension, Klickitat and Skamania	x
Hannah Ladwig	Gorge Grown Food Network	x
Heather Ficht	East Cascades Works (OR)	
Jacob Egler	Office of Senator Ron Wyden	
Jacque Schei	Mid-Columbia Economic Development District	x
Jarett Glibert	Columbia Gorge Community College	

Jennifer Toepke	Port of The Dalles	
Jessica Metta	Mid-Columbia Economic Development District	x
John Huffman	USDA Rural Development - Oregon	
John Swanson	Office of State Senator Chuck Thompson	
Jonathan Hale	Office of Senator Maria Cantwell	
Josh Bruce	UO/IPRE	
Justin Withem	Office of State Representative Anna Williams	x
K'Lynn Lane	Condon Chamber of Commerce	
Kale Donnelly	Oregon Employment Department	
Kallie Kurtz	Washington Employment Security Department	
Kate Schroeder	Hood River County Chamber of Commerce	x
Kathleen Cathey	Office of Senator Ron Wyden	
Kevin Waters	Skamania Economic Development Council	
Kristy Beachamp	Oregon Health Authority	
Krystyna Wolniakowski	Columbia River Gorge Commission	
Leticia Valle	Washington Employment Security Department	
Liliana Justo-Bello	The Next Door, Inc.	
Lisa Atkin	Gilliam County	x
Lisa Farquharson	The Dalles Area Chamber of Commerce	x
Lizzie Keenan	Mt. Hood & Columbia Gorge Regional Destination Management Organization	x
Lynn Burditt	U.S. Forest Service	x
Lynn Longan	WA Department of Commerce	
Marc Thornsby	Port of Klickitat County	
Marla Keethler	City of White Salmon	
Matt Craigie	ECONorthwest	
Matt King	Wallowa Resources	
Michael Held	Business Oregon	
Michael McElwee	Port of Hood River	
Michelle Mulrony	Klickitat County	
Mike Scroggs	Oregon Rapid Response Program, Columbia Gorge Community College	x
Nate Stice	North Central Regional Solutions	x
Neita Cecil	North Central Public Health District	
Olga Kaganova	Port of Cascade Locks	
Pat Albaugh	Port of Skamania County	
Peter Mitchell	Port of Arlington	x
Rachael Fuller	City of Hood River	x
Rep. Anna Williams	Oregon House of Representatives	
Rep. Daniel Bonham	Oregon House of Representatives	
Richard Evans	Office of Senator Maria Cantwell	
Richard Foster	Klickitat County Economic Development	
Ryan DeGrofft	Business Oregon	x
Sarah Kohout	Office of Senator Maria Cantwell	

Sarah Means	South Valley/Mid-Coast Regional Solutions	
Sarah Sullivan	Gorge Grown Food Network	
Scott Bailey	Washington Employment Security Department	x
Sean McCormick	Oregon Office of Emergency Management	
Sondra Pieti	Washington Employment Security Department	
Stephanie Anderson	Maupin Chamber of Commerce	
Stephanie Krell	Wasco County	
Stephanie Siebold	East Cascades Workforce Investment Board (OR)	
Steve Scardina	Oregon Restaurant & Lodging Association	
Susan Nielsen	Washington Department of Commerce	x
Tami Stockton	Wheeler County Economic Development	
Tammara Toppel	Mt. Adams Chamber of Commerce	x
Tatiana Eckhart	Mid-Columbia Economic Development District	x
Teresa Cummings	Oregon Rapid Response Program, Columbia Gorge Community College	x
Teri Thalhofer	North Central Public Health District	
Tom Schnell	Business Oregon	
Wendy Popkin	Oregon Restaurant & Lodging Association	
Will Norris	City of Hood River	
Guests		
Derek Sandison	Washington Department of Agriculture	x
Justine Ziegler	The Next Door, Inc.	x
Monica Babine	Washington State University Extension	x