

## Mid-Columbia Economic Resilience Team Meeting April 10, 2020

Jessica Metta (MCEDD) started the meeting with introductions and a brief overview of the group's purpose for new partners on the call.

Maui Meyer (Regional Solutions Advisory Committee, HMB50) provided an overview of a region-wide coordination effort to make and collect personal protective equipment (PPE) and deliver to frontline staff. Supplies are collected at regional Emergency Distribution Centers and delivered by volunteers to Gorge counties in Oregon and Washington as needed. Part of the effort includes design and manufacturing (with support of local businesses) of a single-use disposable gown ([HMB50](#)) intended as a stopgap but essential service until large US companies can assist with their manufacturing facilities. Maui noted they are working on cutting production costs for gowns but are still looking for funding to support manufacturing and increasing their production capacity. A facemask initiative is currently underway to develop and distribute facemasks to Skamania, Klickitat, Wasco, Hood River, Sherman and Gilliam counties as well.

Ryan DeGrofft (Business Oregon) reported that Oregon's Office of Emergency Management has collected a list of almost 1,000 companies interested in producing, coordinating efforts to procure, or sourcing PPE. The state's highest priorities for PPE are currently focused around surgical N95 and KN95 masks. The state is contacting companies to determine their inventory and potential production of these items.

Dave McClure (Klickitat County Economic Development) noted Washington has a webpage outlining PPE needs and how businesses can contact them (<https://coronavirus.wa.gov/how-you-can-help/personal-protective-equipment>). The Department of Commerce has been working with over 300 companies to retool their operations so they can manufacture PPE, testing kits and hand sanitizer.

Nate Stice (Regional Solutions) highlighted congressional staffing efforts to organize community needs and transform the community's feedback into action. He asked the group to think about regionally-specific needs around Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and Small Business Administration (SBA) lending that can be reported back to congressional leaders to help inform federal policy decisions.

Greg Price (CGCC SBDC) reported that one of the biggest gaps in the region has been for rural small businesses. PPP is designed to provide support to businesses with significant payrolls and employees. In our region there are a significant number of microenterprises, sole proprietors, self-employed individuals and contractors that are not seeing a proportional benefit from current programs. Another issue revolves around the need to streamline application processes for businesses in immediate need. Banks are working hard to process as many applicants as possible but the turnaround time to receive funding can take up to 3-5 weeks, while cash flow needs are immediate. Many banks in the region are overwhelmed by the number of businesses applying for these relief programs. Consequently, there are a number of businesses eligible to apply for federal relief who haven't been able to.

Dan Mahr (Office of Senator Jeff Merkley) provided a link to an [updated list of banks](#) in Oregon that are accepting PPP applications. The list will be updated regularly and Dan asked the group to let him know of any updates.

Lisa Farquharson (The Dalles Area Chamber of Commerce) noted concern over the regional readiness of banks. Lisa has been in communication with a number of local banks and is working to develop a list of

banks and local lenders accepting applications from businesses at this time. She also noted that clarifying federal guidelines would be helpful.

K'Lynn Lane (Condon Chamber of Commerce) reported that Gilliam County partnered with Condon Chamber of Commerce to sponsor and facilitate a [Small Business Stabilization](#) grant. The first round of funding is \$150,000 where eligible businesses can apply for bridge funding to maintain operations until state or federal funding is available. So far the Chamber has received 19 applications and have processed and awarded six grants totaling almost \$32,000. She noted the turnaround time from grant submission to funding is about three days. She also noted that a utility credit (up to \$200/month for three months) is being offered to businesses in the Condon and Arlington areas. The City of Condon has also reached out to a number of utility providers to ask for payment leniency for their businesses.

Nate Stice asked the group to report back on any federal loan program design issues they may be hearing about from their communities. Steve Scardina (Oregon Restaurant & Lodging Association) noted in a chat message that applicants who applied for an SBA EIDL prior to April 1 should reapply to take advantage of the up to \$10,000 grant portion. Dave McClure reported that the primary issues he has been hearing about are challenges with applying to these programs and uncertainty around when funding will be arriving. Washington recently announced a \$5 million grant program to support small businesses statewide. Business can be awarded up to \$10,000 grants. So far the program has received over 1,400 applications, so, while sorely needed to support small business, it is underfunded.

Kevin Waters (Skamania Economic Development Council) echoed Dave's concerns about the Washington small business grants. The two local banks in the area currently accepting PPP applications are extremely overwhelmed by the level of demand coming in. He also noted that gaps in financial support for sole proprietors remains a big challenge. Greg Price highlighted the success of the Small Business Stabilization grant program being implemented in Gilliam County. He spoke about the limitations that accompany the federal loan programs and asked if we needed a specific program just to support sole proprietors.

Andrea Klaas (Port of The Dalles) stated that people are being overwhelmed by the number of funding programs rolling out and aren't always sure where they fit in. She encouraged the group to think about what we can do to help businesses understand what is happening today and how do they resume business operations in the coming months. Andrea pointed out that the business landscape and operations may look different after the crisis. Andrea also highlighted her concern for rural hospitals. Many rural hospitals rely on elective surgeries to remain viable, and are not able to schedule these procedures in the current crisis.

Dave McClure reported some results of a survey that Klickitat County Economic Development distributed to businesses. Out of 90 respondents, over 50% of responding businesses claimed they would not apply for the EIDL or PPP programs due to a lack of clarity around grant requirements and a concern from businesses about adding to their overall debt. Greg Price attributed low application rates to an overall lack of information and confusion around loan requirements and benefits of PPP and EIDL programs. He noted that the SBA has not provided clear guidance and what they have provided needs to be edited for business owners.

Dan Mahr reported that the Oregon delegation developed a letter to the Department of the Treasury and SBA asking them to streamline the application process and get funds out to businesses faster. Congressional offices are also working on developing priorities for fixes in future stimulus packages, and have engaged in negotiations around adding additional funding to the SBA's loan programs to provide

more assistance for state and local governments and the healthcare industry. Rick Evans (Office of Senator Maria Cantwell) echoed the same concerns. Kathleen Cathey (Office of Senator Ron Wyden) highlighted that there also concern over other unmet needs including support for nonprofits, healthcare institutions and other areas currently being overlooked.

Scott Bailey (Washington Employment Security Department, ESD) reported that the best indicator of the current economic landscape is the number of initial unemployment insurance (UI) claims. The number of UI claims filed in Skamania County over the last three weeks is roughly 11% of the estimated labor force, which is typical across the state. In Klickitat County, about 600 claims, or 6% of the estimated labor force, have been made in the last three weeks. Scott noted that in typical times, only about a third of unemployed individuals file claims. Therefore current numbers may not be fully representative of the situation in the labor market but it's a good indicator of the economic impact of COVID-19. Scott anticipates distributing updated unemployment figures every Thursday for the foreseeable future.

Kale Donnelly (Oregon Employment Department) noted that the most recent unemployment rates came out about a week ago. Kale expects the more accurate data will be seen in April. OED has received nearly 270,000 UI claims and expects them to continue to grow in the next several weeks. The Gorge has seen a 586% increase in the number of claims processed in the last three weeks (since March 15) compared to the previous three weeks. Hood River and Wasco Counties have seen the greatest share of claims in the region. Industries facing the biggest impacts are the restaurant and service industries. Amy Gibbs (Oregon Employment Department) added that her office has quadrupled their staff to process unemployment insurance claims in Oregon. Heather Ficht (East Cascade Works) noted that Oregon submitted a \$25 million disaster grant on March 15, but has yet to hear anything more. She also provided a link to OED's [webpage](#) clarifying how funds from the CARES Act will impact UI. Amy Martinez (South Central Workforce Council) reported that her office is working with the Yakima Economic Development group to develop a virtual town hall meeting to review available funding programs and relief options for inquiring businesses in Washington. She noted that similar meetings can be set up in other counties if it is of interest.

Dave McClure noted that people in Washington can sign up for [alerts](#) from ESD. They also have a [scenarios and benefits guide](#), an [eligibility checklist](#) and [webinars](#) to support those applying for UI.

Greg Price encouraged the group to send small businesses to the SBDC for assistance. The SBDC is continuing to partner with local Chambers to conduct webinars providing information about available resources to the business community and is willing to continue these as needed moving forward.

Michael Held (Business Oregon) has been helping facilitate efforts around PPE. Michael reminded the group about the Travel Oregon/Business Oregon/SBDC [survey](#); deadline has been extended to April 24<sup>th</sup>. Michael noted the survey's importance in guiding policy discussions later down the line. Ports in Oregon are still waiting for federal or state funding to become available to help maintain operations. Michael has also been working with Lizzie Keenan to gather stories and data points to develop a bi-weekly report to capture the current impacts of the crisis in the region. On the Washington side, Kevin Waters noted that the Port of Skamania is working with tenants to reduce rent by 50% but needs to ensure this would not be considered a gift of public funds before finalizing.

Lizzie Keenan (Mt. Hood & Columbia Gorge Regional Destination Management Organization) noted the interest from the local business community in Greg Price/SBDC webinars. Chambers have been fielding a lot of calls about loans. Travel Oregon is coming out with [weekly reports](#), reflecting a drop in tourism rates and subsequent drops in revenue. Travel Oregon is already starting to plan a comeback strategy,

focusing a large push on local and state support once businesses start to reopen. Lizzie highlighted <http://gorgelove.org/>, a website that was created to show support for Gorge communities and Travel Oregon's [Hood Gorge Homemade](#) campaign. There have been more closures in the Gorge because people are not following guidelines and managers have faced a number of issues in enforcing trail and land closures. In the Mt. Hood area, there isn't enough staff to enforce trail closures.

Liliana Justo Bello (The Next Door, Inc.) reported that eight Latinx businesses have been successful in turning in SBA applications with The Next Door's assistance. A lot of questions remain from the business community but The Next Door continues to support businesses working through the application processes. Liliana also highlighted The Next Door's efforts to address food insecurity for Latinx communities in the region.

Buck Jones (CRITFC) noted that CRITFC has been working with NOAA regarding support under the CARES Act for tribal fishers and food access in the gorge for tribal communities. Several tribal fishing sites above the John Day Dam have been closed, but several lower-river sites continue to remain open. CRITFC may eventually open their east White Salmon center for additional emergency freezer and refrigeration capacity.

Jessica Metta highlighted the phases of the national and regional response to COVID-19 and encouraged the group to consider these phases and share information with this group as needed. Jessica encouraged the group to continue sending resources and updated information to Jacque Schei.

Michael Held noted that agencies in Oregon would like to collect input related to what a phased approach should entail. Greg Svelund (Oregon Department of Environmental Quality) noted two primary questions for feedback:

- 1) How can we start thinking creatively when we start to reopen in a new environment? What will the economic landscape look like after the immediate crisis? What shifts or adjustments will need to occur?
- 2) What are the barriers for recovery (phased or longer term)?

These are questions that apply in both states, so we encourage everyone to think about them and send your feedback to Jacque ([Jacque@mcedd.org](mailto:Jacque@mcedd.org)).

Jessica Metta and Nate Stice thanked the group for their work. Nate noted that what this group and its partners are doing is having a broad impact on our communities throughout the region. If there are items you'd like communicated during next week's meeting, please send details to [jessica@mcedd.org](mailto:jessica@mcedd.org) or [jacque@mcedd.org](mailto:jacque@mcedd.org). This group will meet next Friday (April 17) at 11am-12:30pm.

**MID-COLUMBIA ECONOMIC RESILIENCY TEAM****April 10**

|                    |  |   |
|--------------------|--|---|
| Aaryn Rassmussen   | Columbia Gorge Regional Airport                                    |   |
| Abe Friedman       | Office of Senator Maria Cantwell                                   |   |
| Alberto Isiordia   | Washington Employment Security Department                          |   |
| Amy Gibbs          | Oregon Employment Department                                       | x |
| Amy Martinez       | South Central Workforce Council (WA)                               | x |
| 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   | x |
| Ashley Huckaby May | Visit Hood River Council   | x |
| BJ Westlund        | Office of Senator Jeff Merkley                                     | x |
| Bryan Stebbins     | Office of Senator Patty Murray                                     |   |
| Buck Jones         | Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (CRITFC)               | x |
| Carrie Pipinich    | Mid-Columbia Economic Development District, Wasco/Sherman EDO      | x |
| Charlotte Bentley  | USDA Rural Development - Oregon                                    |   |
| Chuck Thompson     | Oregon State Senate  |   |
| Dallas Fridley     | Oregon Employment Department                                       | x |
| Dan Mahr           | Office of Senator Jeff Merkley                                     | x |
| Dan Spatz          | Columbia Gorge Community College                                   |   |
| Dana Peck          | Goldendale Chamber of Commerce                                     | x |
| Dave McClure       | Klickitat County Economic Development                              | x |
| Emily Reed         | Columbia Gorge Tourism Alliance                                    | x |
| Eric Nerdin        | USDA Rural Development - Oregon                                    | x |
| Eric Proffitt      | Worksource Oregon  | x |
| Erick Garman       | Oregon Department of Agriculture (exports)                         | x |
| Evan Bryan         | Office of State Senator Bill Hansell                               |   |
| Gabriel Muro       | The Next Door, Inc.  |   |
| Greg Price         | Columbia Gorge Community College/Small Business Development Center | x |
| Greg Svelund       | Oregon Department of Environmental Quality                         | x |
| Heather Ficht      | East Cascades Workforce Investment Board (OR)                      | x |

|                       |  |   |
|-----------------------|--|---|
| Jacob Egler           | Office of Senator Ron Wyden  | x |
| Jacque Schei          | Mid-Columbia Economic Development District                             | x |
| Jessica Metta         | Mid-Columbia Economic Development District                             | x |
| John Huffman          | USDA Rural Development - Oregon  |   |
| John Swanson          | Office of State Senator Chuck Thompsen                                 |   |
| 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   | x |
| Kale Donnelly         | Oregon Employment Department   | x |
| Kallie Kurtz          | Washington Employment Security Department                              | x |
| Kate Schroeder        | Hood River County Chamber of Commerce                                  | x |
| Kathleen Cathey       | Office of Senator Ron Wyden  | x |
| Kevin Waters          | Skamania Economic Development Council                                  | x |
| Krystyna Wolniakowski | Columbia River Gorge Commission  |   |
| Leticia Valle         | Washington Employment Security Department                              | x |
| Liliana Justo-Bello   | The Next Door, Inc.  | x |
| 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 Longan           | WA Department of Commerce  |   |
| Marc Thornsbury       | Port of Klickitat County   |   |
| Marla Keethler        | City of White Salmon   |   |
| Matt Craigie          | ECONorthwest   |   |
| Maui Meyer            | Regional Solutions Advisory Committee, HMB50                           | x |
| Michael Held          | Business Oregon  | x |
| Michael McElwee       | Port of Hood River   |   |
| Mike Scroggs          | Oregon Rapid Response Program, Columbia Gorge Community College        | x |
| Nate Stice            | North Central Regional Solutions                                       | x |
| Olga Kaganova         | Port of Cascade Locks  | x |
| Pat Albaugh           | Port of Skamania County  |   |

|                    |   |   |
|--------------------|---|---|
| Patrick            | Office of State Representative Greg Smith                       |   |
| Peter Mitchell     | Port of Arlington   |   |
| Rachel Weinstein   | Gilliam County Community Development                            |   |
| Rep. Anna Williams | Oregon House of Representatives                                 |   |
| Rep. Daniel Bonham | Oregon House of Representatives                                 |   |
| Richard Evans      | Office of Senator Maria Cantwell                                | x |
| Richard Foster     | Klickitat County Economic Development                           |   |
| Ryan DeGrofft      | Business Oregon   | x |
| Scott Bailey       | Washington Employment Security Department                       | x |
| Sen. Ron Wyden     | Office of Senator Ron Wyden                                     |   |
| Sondra Pieti       | Washington Employment Security Department                       |   |
| Stephanie Anderson | Maupin Chamber of Commerce                                      |   |
| Stephanie Krell    | Wasco County  | x |
| Stephanie Siebold  | East Cascades Workforce Investment Board (OR)                   |   |
| Steve Scardina     | Oregon Restaurant & Lodging Association                         | x |
| Tami Stockton      | Wheeler County Economic Development                             | x |
| Tammara Toppel     | Mt. Adams Chamber of Commerce                                   |   |
| Tatiana Eckhart    | Mid-Columbia Economic Development District                      | x |
| Teresa Cummings    | Oregon Rapid Response Program, Columbia Gorge Community College |   |
| Tom Schnell        | Business Oregon   |   |
| Wendy Popkin       | Oregon Restaurant & Lodging Association                         |   |