

Mid-Columbia Economic Resilience Team Meeting April 17, 2020

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

Greg Price (CGCC SBDC) reported that the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) program have stopped taking applications due to a lapse in funding. Greg has heard from businesses that applied to the EIDL a month ago that they have just now received funds. He expects that some businesses will still get funds in the next few weeks, depending on where they were in the application queues. He reported that businesses who have received funds on average will be able to cover about two months of payroll and utility expenses. A primary challenge is that businesses are not ready to bring staff back yet. Greg also highlighted the work K'Lynn Lane (Condon Chamber of Commerce) and Gilliam County have done with respect to developing and implementing a local small business grant fund in the County.

Jessica Metta reported that many tech companies in the Columbia Gorge are maintaining regular operations. A number of them are also now helping make PPE.

Nate Stice (Regional Solutions) and Carrie Pipinich (MCEDD) introduced a discussion related to impacts for the agricultural community. Director Alexis Taylor (Oregon Department of Agriculture, ODA) provided an overview of how ODA is supporting the agricultural industry. Their primary goal is keeping supply chains open or looking at alternate supply chains to support the continued movement of food and agriculture across the state. ODA is also prioritizing employee safety, so looking at how they can continue to do inspections to minimize exposure but also support businesses. They are also gathering input to provide feedback on what the agricultural sector needs in the Phase 4 stimulus package.

Nate Stice introduced representatives from various sectors of the agricultural industry in the Mid-Columbia region. Guests included Mike Doke with the Columbia Gorge Fruit Growers, Megan Thompson with the Oregon Sweet Cherry Commission, Alan von Borstel and Darren Padget with Oregon Wheat Growers League, and Sarah Sullivan with the Gorge Grown Food Network (GGFN). Overall highlights from the discussion included:

Access to Markets

- Managing potential for decreased sales as a result of reduced institutional buying or less frequent visits to the grocery store for things like cherries and pears that are often an impulse buy.
- Concern about drops in market pricing for products to ensure costs for getting crops harvested are covered.
- Continuing to get fresh food to market via regular channels but also creative strategies (CSAs, etc.) to make up for gaps left in regular sales channels.
- For food security, lost support for food access programs as funders, like hospitals, have revenue challenges and ensuring adequate school food resources over the summer are major concerns. There is also a need for increased funding for the state's food banks to support addressing food insecurity at this time.
- Growers are on the margin and are already seeing lower prices this year, exacerbating the issues we're currently facing and highlighting the need for market stabilization.

- Director Taylor noted that consumer trends around the way we eat will most likely shift as a result of COVID-19. ODA is exploring ways to support producers in catching up to new market realities.

Labor and Employment Practices

- Ensuring enough farm workers can travel safely for harvest seasons to support through the summer into fall for harvest in Oregon and Washington.
- Implementing proper safety protocols for farm workers and packing warehouses, including associated costs and potentially scarce equipment/products to support enhance sanitation and worker safety for spraying.
- Many fruit growers already have central information locations as well as medical/sanitation areas at farms and packing houses. Continuing to support and enhance these resources to limit infection and preparing contingency plan for an outbreak scenario to ensure supply chains are kept open.
- Director Taylor noted that ODA is working with Oregon Health Authority (OHA) to provide clear guidance to growers around new policies and regulations as the situation evolves. ODA is also working with farm advocacy groups and major farm organizations in the state to provide direct guidance for farmers to ensure they are taking care of the health and safety employees.

Operations

- Lack of certainty regarding continued ability to operate with changing conditions. A two to six month timeline is when harvests will occur. Crops are growing now, and producers need supplies, labor, and clear guidance to move forward with the season.
- Because of impending harvest seasons, some starting in June, many growers will have to operate as safely as possible within the current guidance - efforts will focus on training employers and employees on updated safety/sanitation protocols to support compliance during harvest operations.
- Two thirds of the farmworker housing in Oregon is located in Wasco and Hood River Counties. Possible new regulations from OSHA related to farmworker housing and field sanitation practices would cut down available housing by about a third and have extensive costs associated with implementation.
- There is interest in safety protocol training for farm stand operators, based on successful practices already in place (ex. Gorge Grown Food Network's [protocol](#) for farmers markets).
- Longer-term concerns about access to farmland and continued farm consolidation.

Director Taylor answered a number of questions from the group, outlined below:

- Producers with crop surpluses should contact Jess Paulson, Market Access and Certification Program Manager for the state (jpaulson@oda.state.or.us). You can also contact Regional Solutions member Erick Garman with questions about agricultural industry needs, operations, guidelines, etc. and he can support getting you to the right connections at ODA (Erick.H.Garman@state.or.us)
- ODA has been working with the USDA to determine flexibility in the short-term for H2A visas. If you have specific concerns or questions within your industry email ODA (info@oda.state.or.us).
- ODA is working with the Department of Justice and legislature on requirements for license renewals, such as pesticide licenses, as they implement social distancing measures with their staff.

Buck Jones (Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission) reported that they have been working with NOAA to access funding under the CARES Act for supporting fisheries. They are also trying to get food access resources into communities, treaty fishing access sites and in lieu sites.

Nate Stice briefly discussed Oregon's recovery framework in its three phases, noting that in order to begin reopening communities, the state must first see a steady decrease in COVID-19 cases. The first phase would entail a soft reopening while still encouraging people to telework whenever possible, limiting non-essential travel and avoiding crowded public spaces before moving forward to gradually opening up more sectors of the economy. More details to follow. Nate also noted that the state is working with Washington and California on a common strategy for reopening and they will coordinate efforts to reopen individual state economies in synchronization.

The team heard updates from the following partners.

Federal Delegation: Officials hope that a new deal around federal relief for small businesses will be reached within a day or so. The group highlighted their push for focus on microbusinesses in the next deal.

SBDC: The EIDL program is still processing applications already submitted until all funds are dispersed, operating on a first-come-first-served basis. The general recommendation is that business owners hold onto their application confirmation numbers and check business-related bank accounts to see if their loan was received.

Regional Economists:

- Oregon - almost 300,000 unemployment claims have been filed in Oregon, and the state has paid out millions of dollars in unemployment insurance over the last few weeks. Regional data shows that accommodation, food service, retail trade and manufacturing sectors were some of the hardest hit industries.
- Washington - fewer unemployment insurance claims this week compared to the week before although the total number of claims are still unusually high. In both counties a large number of claims are coming from the beverage industry, while in Skamania County agriculture and support services are being hit the hardest. In the long-term, manufacturing, accommodation and food services, and construction will be three major industries to keep an eye on.

Workforce agencies:

- Washington WorkSource is waiting to hear about the status of the application the State submitted for federal disaster relief funding. The State is developing a dislocated worker application for reemployment and working to identify funds for impacted small businesses. Duties for WorkSource employees have shifted to focus on supporting the rise in unemployment insurance claims in the state.
- Oregon – see attached for details of East Cascades Works' Regional Rapid Response Activities in supporting businesses. Oregon has been awarded funding from the Dislocated Worker Disaster Recovery Fund.

State business departments:

- Washington Department of Commerce's small business grant application period has closed. Estimate that Klickitat and Skamania counties may see funding for about 10 applications each with significantly higher numbers of applications submitted to the County level organizations for initial vetting.
- Business Oregon - Community Development Block Grant funds will be reallocated for emergency funding for small businesses and microenterprises. The \$2 million fund will provide up to \$150,000 per applicant (note: applications must come from cities/counties and serve multiple

jurisdictions). For more information for Hood River, Wasco, and Sherman counties, contact Michael Held (Michael.held@oregon.gov). For Wheeler and Gilliam counties, contact Ryan DeGrofft (Ryan.DeGrofft@oregon.gov)

Tourism - lodging occupancy is plateauing at about 22% across the state. The Hood-Gorge region shows a slightly higher percentage because frontline healthcare workers are utilizing the region's hotels. There has been an uptick in Oregon booking searches for dates in August, reflecting that it is being perceived as a 'safe' travel destination.

Ports

- Port of Arlington - shipping is still operating under distancing protocols which are creating some slowdowns with loading and unloading. The bulk of commodities are still using the Columbia River system to move products.
- Port of The Dalles - Oregon Public Ports are in communications with the state to ensure that they are classified as essential services and stay open on the Columbia River and at the coast.

Jessica Metta thanked the group for their work. If there are items you'd like communicated during next week's meeting, please send details to jessica@mcedd.org or jacque@mcedd.org. This group will meet next Friday (April 24) at 11:00 am-12:30 pm.

MID-COLUMBIA ECONOMIC RESILIENCY TEAM**April 17**

Aaryn Rassmussen	Columbia Gorge Regional Airport	
Abe Friedman	Office of Senator Maria Cantwell	
Alan von Borstel	Oregon Wheat Growers League	x
Alberto Isiordia	Washington Employment Security Department	
Alexis Taylor	Oregon Department of Agriculture	x
Amy Gibbs	Oregon Employment Department	
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	
Ashley Huckaby May	Visit Hood River Council	
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 Thompsen	Oregon State Senate	
Dallas Fridley	Oregon Employment Department	x
Dan Mahr	Office of Senator Jeff Merkley	x
Dan Spatz	Columbia Gorge Community College	x
Dana Peck	Goldendale Chamber of Commerce	x
Darren Padget	Oregon Wheat Growers League	x
Dave McClure	Klickitat County Economic Development	x
Emily Reed	Columbia Gorge Tourism Alliance	x
Eric Nerdin	USDA Rural Development - Oregon	
Eric Proffitt	Worksource Oregon	
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	
Heather Ficht	East Cascades Workforce Investment Board (OR)	x
Jacob Egler	Office of Senator Ron Wyden	
Jacque Schei	Mid-Columbia Economic Development District	x
Jess Paulson	Oregon Department of Agriculture	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	x
Justin Withem	Office of State Representative Anna Williams	
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	
Kevin Waters	Skamania Economic Development Council	x
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 Longan	WA Department of Commerce	
Marc Thornsby	Port of Klickitat County	x
Marla Keethler	City of White Salmon	
Matt Craigie	ECONorthwest	
Maui Meyer	Regional Solutions Advisory Committee, HMB50	
Megan Thompson	Oregon Sweet Cherry Commission, Sage Fruit/Cascade Cherry Growers	x
Michael Held	Business Oregon	x
Michael McElwee	Port of Hood River	
Mike Doke	Columbia Gorge Fruit Growers	x
Mike Scroggs	Oregon Rapid Response Program, Columbia Gorge Community College	x
Nate Stice	North Central Regional Solutions	x
Olga Kaganova	Port of Cascade Locks	
Pat Albaugh	Port of Skamania County	
Patrick	Office of State Representative Greg Smith	
Peter Mitchell	Port of Arlington	x
Rachel Weinstein	Gilliam County Community Development	
Rep. Anna Williams	Oregon House of Representatives	
Rep. Daniel Bonham	Oregon House of Representatives	x
Richard Evans	Office of Senator Maria Cantwell	x
Richard Foster	Klickitat County Economic Development	x
Ryan DeGrofft	Business Oregon	x
Sarah Sullivan	Gorge Grown Food Network	x
Scott Bailey	Washington Employment Security Department	x
Sen. Ron Wyden	Office of Senator Ron Wyden	
Shanna Hamilton	Oregon Wheat Growers League	
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	x
Tami Stockton	Wheeler County Economic Development	
Tammara Tippel	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
Tom Schnell	Business Oregon	x
Wendy Popkin	Oregon Restaurant & Lodging Association	



EAST CASCADES WORKS' REGIONAL RAPID RESPONSE ACTIVITIES

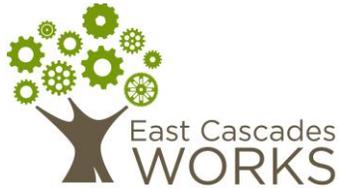
The East Cascades Rapid Response team is a task force specifically trained to offer services to employers who are experiencing workforce changes such as layoffs or closures. Each of our sub-regions has a dedicated Rapid Response Coordinator who will collaborate with employers to determine which vital resources best fit their needs, as well as the needs of their employees.

The following represents the number of employers who engaged in Rapid Response Activities; meaning that they had to layoff, either permanently or temporarily at least one worker; between the period of March 14-April 10. Note: that the number of job losses shown is under-represented, given that the total number of job losses suffered by a company is often not yet know when rapid response activities begin.

REGIONAL RAPID RESPONSE REPORT MARCH 14-APRIL 10, 2020			
Employers by County		Employers by Industry	
Crook	46	Food Services	202
Hood River	116	Other	171
Deschutes	322	Retail	57
Gilliam	1	Health Care	42
Jefferson	38	Arts & Entertainment	16
Klamath	118	Manufacturing	7
Lake	9	Construction	7
Sherman	2	Transportation	5
Wasco	51	Unknown	4
Wheeler	2	Education	3
		Real Estate	3
		Agriculture	2
Total Job Losses by Sub-Region		Public Admin	1
North	2561	Admin (Private)	1
Central	6554	Information	1
South	3790	Finance	1

For more information on Rapid Response, please reach out to Stefanie@ecworks.org. If you are an employer and need support with Rapid Response, please contact your local Rapid Response Coordinator:

- Jefferson, Crook and Deschutes: Dana Dunlap: ddunlap@coic.org
- Hood River, Wasco, Sherman, Gilliam, and Wheeler: Mike Scroggs: mscroggs@cgcc.edu
- Klamath and Lake: Penny Newton: newton@klamathcc.edu



Connecting Talent To Opportunity



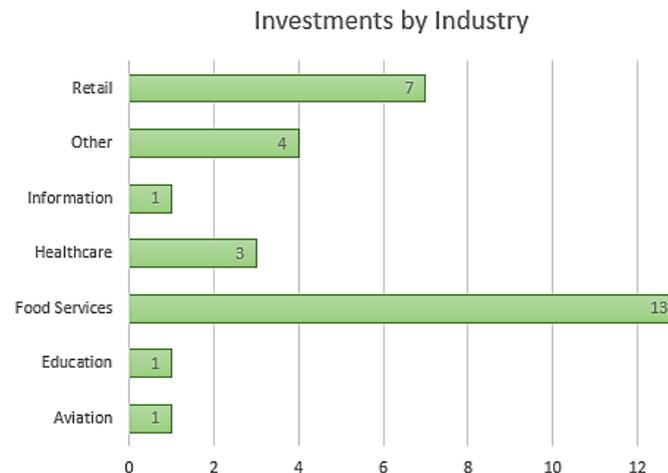
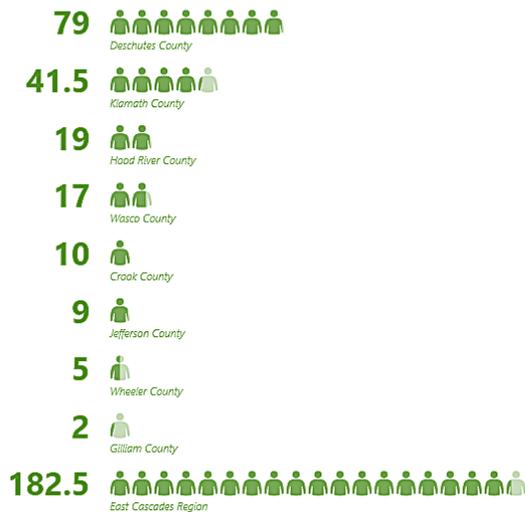
EAST CASCADES WORKS' LAYOFF AVERSION INVESTMENTS

East Cascades Works received funding in late March from the Higher Education Coordinating Commission-Office of Workforce Investments in the amount of \$118,000, with the purpose of quickly deploying resources to avert layoffs for local employers. Our team mobilized quickly to implement Layoff Aversion efforts that leveraged the support and expertise of our Rapid Response Coordinators.

EC Works staff are now working side-by-side with Rapid Response Coordinators to identify rural, women owned, and/or minority owned businesses that are most in need of Layoff Aversion funding. The EC Works team expedites their review of employer applications, turning around funding at a maximum investment amount of \$5,000 within 72 hours. Within less than two weeks, EC Works has been able to directly invest our original allocation and secure an additional \$88,000 from the state to allow our efforts to continue.

Here is a snapshot of the local layoffs averted, the investments we have made, outlined by industry and by county, from March 30 to April 15:

LAYOFFS AVERTED BY COUNTY (JOBS SAVED)



County	Total Invested to Date
Crook County	\$ 10,000.00
Deschutes County	\$ 50,000.00
Gilliam County	\$ 2,066.00
Hood River County	\$ 10,000.00
Jefferson County	\$ 20,000.00
Klamath County	\$ 40,000.00
Wasco County	\$ 10,000.00
Wheeler County	\$ 5,000.00
Grand Total	\$ 147,066.00

For more information on Layoff Aversion, please reach out to Melissa@ecworks.org.