

Mid-Columbia Economic Resilience Team Meeting April 24, 2020

Jessica Metta (MCEDD) started the meeting with introductions.

Governor Kate Brown provided comments on Oregon's reopening framework. She explained that the model developed through previously convened economic advisory councils created to support local communities to access tools and resources in times of disaster has been activated statewide to help regions with the current situation. Governor Brown noted that the Stay Home orders are working - data shows that the curve has started to flatten in Oregon. Governor Brown shared her concern for small businesses in the state, stating that the primary goal is to start getting these businesses reopened safely. Oregon's reopening framework incorporates three criteria for reopening the state's economy in several phases:

- Criterion 1: Meet prerequisites, or "gating criteria" for reopening Oregon focused on reduced new cases of COVID-19 and preparedness for handling additional testing and a surge of new cases.
- Criterion 2: Local preparedness – the ability of public health institutions, with state support, to ramp up testing capacity, conduct contact tracing, and to quarantine individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19.
- Criterion 3: Reopening Oregon's economy in phases – ensuring that Oregon won't have to reverse course once businesses start to open back up.

Governor Brown thanked local efforts in the mid-Columbia region to produce PPE for healthcare workers, noting that additional PPE production will most likely need to continue for the next year. Dr. Laurel Berge (HMB50) reported that Oregon and Washington have worked in partnership to flatten the curve, noting the fine balance between the challenges the economy is facing and protecting public health. HMB50, a nonprofit established to help produce and distribute PPE, continues to offer its support and is prepared to collaborate with entities and communities in need of PPE.

Nate Stice (Regional Solutions) introduced local public health officials in Oregon, including Teri Thalhofer (North Central Public Health District), Celeste Hill-Thomas (Mid-Columbia Medical Center), Jeff King (Klickitat County Emergency Management), and Trish Elliot (Hood River County Health Department) and asked if they had questions for Governor Brown. Public health officials noted the following:

- **Staff support:** Can there flexibility in funding so local public health departments can provide staff for efforts and alleviate issues related to managing outside support for the next phase of this work? Governor Brown acknowledged that different regions in the state are in different stages of response and reported that the state is exploring options to align resources and staffing capacity with the needs of individual communities.
- **Testing:** It was noted that test kit supplies are low in the region and that there will be an issue with reopening unless we have adequate supplies and have adequate support for processing tests in a timely manner. In addition, rural clinics have not been able to get kits and have to send people to

larger cities. Governor Brown acknowledged the challenges at the national and state level to get adequate testing implemented, noting that Oregon Health Authority will work with labs and hospitals doing testing now to ensure the right types of tests are getting to the areas that need them. Governor Brown noted that the data for the State has shown that testing capacity in the region is sufficient, so will report back to her team about the discrepancy and need to increase local testing capacity. Nate Stice will follow up with local health officials to provide more detail to the State.

- **PPE:** Challenges still exist with getting adequate supplies of PPE. Shipments to counties have not been on consistent schedule, emergency orders have been cancelled, and quantities included in shipments are low. There is concern that reopening non-emergency medical procedures will overly burden the PPE supply chain with no clear strategy for replenishing. Governor Brown noted that most of the state's acquisition of PPE is being sent out to Oregon's counties so she would check on the status of PPE for the region. However, she clarified that these PPE shipments are for emergency management and that local non-emergency providers will need to acquire PPE through alternate supply chains.

Jessica Metta thanked the Governor for joining the Mid-Columbia Economic Resilience Team before Governor Brown departed.

Jessica shifted the conversation to discuss the region's local health system and needs and asked Jeff King (Klickitat County Emergency Management) to start the discussion. Jeff noted that Washington is facing the same challenges around PPE procurement and testing. He noted the Klickitat Valley Health may have test kits for others in the region depending on the type of testing. Local public health departments continue to work on conducting testing and contact tracing. Public health/emergency management departments have experienced staffing shortages across the board. He noted that one of the greater challenges around PPE will be gathering sufficient amounts of PPE not only for healthcare workers but also first responders such as EMS, law enforcement agents, firefighters, etc. to protect themselves.

Jessica Metta asked what the regional public health entities needed to support local capacity. Needs highlighted included:

- **Contact Tracing:** having official guidelines for contract tracing from Oregon Health Authority as well as staffing to complete these efforts,
- **Isolation Capacity:** both infrastructure and staffing to manage isolation requirements
- **Health Care Staffing:** the impact that reopening non-emergency medical services will have on support for our response as they return to work
- **Culturally Appropriate Care:** support for bilingual and bicultural populations.
- **Migrant Labor Force:** support for the agricultural industry as harvest seasons begins, in particular how to support safely housing workers
- **Supplies:** Additional PPE (specifically masks, gloves, and eye protection) are needed as well as additional testing capacity (kits, people to conduct tests, and processing). Health officials are also concerned that as we start to reopen sectors of the economy, local businesses will be increasing the demand on PPE, requiring long-term PPE capacity.

- Rural Hospital Financial Health: There is also concern over the financial hardship facing rural hospitals. Ensuring they can safely reopen for elective procedures to provide additional revenue to maintain regular operations is critical.

Maui Meyer (Regional Solutions, HMB50) noted the challenge in finding appropriate guidance and a reliable funding stream to support production of gowns for use in non-medical settings. Maui is currently collecting information about the number of durable cloth masks that public health officials may need. Contact him at maui@copperwest.com with information or questions.

Jessica Metta asked public health representatives if there are steps the Economic Resilience Team can take to support coordination between local public health entities around economic reopening. The public health staff noted that coordination has been largely successful between local healthcare providers in the region and that they meet regularly via incident command structures.

The group discussed guidance for housing for seasonal agricultural workers. In Oregon, they are still waiting for state guidance, making it difficult for local public health to plan for how to support farmers. Erick Garman (Oregon Department of Agriculture) said he would report the group's concerns around supply shortages and agricultural housing guidance to his agency's director and thanked this group for their work around this need. Teri Thalhofer also noted that North Central Public Health, MCMC, and One Community Health recently met to discuss testing strategies for agricultural workers and the community as a whole with a focus on maintaining equity. In response to Erick, Teri noted that time is of the essence in terms of providing guidance to public health officials to begin mobilizing around response strategies. Erick noted that ODA was hoping to get draft guidelines out today.

The team heard updates from the following partners.

Regional Economists:

- Oregon – During the week of April 12-18, the Employment Department received 36,700 initial claims for unemployment insurance. [More details in this week's news release.](#)
- Washington – Initial claims in Klickitat County dropped from 173 to 131 in the past week; initial claims in Skamania dropped from 142 to 88 claims. Scott Bailey noted continuing trends around the types of industries being impacted the most and shared that food and lodging industries have been among the hardest hit. Read more [here](#).

Workforce agencies:

- Mike Scroggs (Oregon Rapid Response Program, CGCC) asked the group to continue referring businesses to him that are experiencing new or additional layoffs (mscroggs@cgcc.edu). Mike's team has been engaging in daily rapid response sessions (more info [here](#)).
- Amy Gibbs (Oregon Employment Department) reported the department's customer call volume is enormous. The Oregon Employment Department just published a [press release](#) on Pandemic Unemployment Assistance for gig workers and other non-covered workers, which is scheduled to launch at the end of the month. Amy advised the group to encourage people to thoroughly read through the Employment Department's website in advance of beginning their claims to reduce mistakes as the system can be confusing.

SBDC: Greg Price (CGCC SBDC) discussed the new appropriation of funding under the CARES Act that was just passed, allocating an additional \$370 billion in funding assistance for businesses (see details [here](#)). Farmers are also now eligible to apply. If a business has already applied for the EIDL program and has received a confirmation number, they do not need to reapply. Lenders will be processing applications on a first-come-first-served basis and Greg anticipates that the program will not accept new applications until all existing applications have been processed and if there are still funds left to disperse.

Chambers of Commerce: Travel Oregon will conduct a State of the Industry webinar on April 29th. Local chambers are anticipating a 50% reduction in their budgets. Outdoor recreation groups are beginning to discuss coordination for reopening efforts. Officials anticipate that recreation reopening will occur on a regional level and a trail and parks-specific level. Ready Set Gorge is also working on developing messaging around recreation in the Gorge when places begin to re-open. Gillam County's Chamber has distributed \$90,000 in grant funding for small businesses and still has \$60,000 left to distribute. Hood River's Chamber is developing a centralized online marketplace for businesses to sell goods virtually.

Business Departments

- Washington: Dave McClure (Klickitat County Economic Development) reported that Washington added \$5 million to the state's Working Washington Small Business Emergency Grant fund. Counties are processing applications from the initial round of funding as the current pool will likely exhaust all funds.
- Oregon: Michael Held (Business Oregon) pointed out that Travel Oregon's State of the Industry report will include results from the joint survey. Ryan DeGrofft (Business Oregon) noted that the Emergency Board approved \$50 million to go towards supporting rural hospitals.

Ports

- Port of Skamania – Concern that the rent relief provided to tenants could be considered a gift of public funds. The Port is asking their representatives to help make a determination. The issue could be addressed in by a proclamation by the Governor if necessary.
- Port of Arlington – Grain continues to be shipped from the Port terminal and barge traffic continues to move along the river. The Port is still seeing some use of its boat and kite launch sites but it is minimal. Currently their tenants are also all in good standing.

Other updates:

- Erick Garman shared that ODA is working with the Oregon Farmers Market Association to develop a statewide app to allow virtual shopping at farmers markets to support maintaining social distancing measures. Farmers markets have even seen increased sales.

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 jacque@mcedd.org. This group will meet next Friday (May 1) at 11:00 am-12:30 pm.

MID-COLUMBIA ECONOMIC RESILIENCY TEAM**April 24**

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)	
Andrea Klaas	Port of The Dalles	x
Angie Weiss	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	
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	
Dave McClure	Klickitat County Economic Development	x
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)	x
Evan Bryan	Office of State Senator Bill Hansell	
Gabriel Muro	The Next Door, Inc.	
Gordon Zimmerman	City of Cascade Locks	
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
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	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	
Krystyna Wolniakowski	Columbia River Gorge Commission	
Leticia Valle	Washington Employment Security Department	
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	
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	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 Sullivan	Gorge Grown Food Network	x
Scott Bailey	Washington Employment Security Department	x
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 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	
Wendy Popkin	Oregon Restaurant & Lodging Association	x

Guests

Governor Kate Brown	Oregon Governor	x
Carol von Borstel	Regional Solutions Advisory Committee	x
Celeste Hill-Thomas	Mid-Columbia Medical Center	x
David Kavanagh	Klickitat County Public Health	x
Dr. Laurel Berge	HMB50	x
Jeff King	Klickitat County Emergency Management	x
Joe Dabulskis	Sherman County/MCEDD Board/Regional Solutions Advisory Committee	x
Keith Mobley	Regional Solutions Advisory Committee	x
Ken Bailey	MCEDD Board/Regional Solutions Advisory Committee	x
Leah Horner	Gov. Brown's Jobs and Economy Policy Advisory	x
Lynn Ewing	City of Maupin	x
Maui Meyer	Regional Solutions Advisory Committee Convener, HMB50	x
Nicole Bassett	The Renewal Workshop	x
Teri Thalhofer	North Central Public Health District	x
Tonya Brumley	MCEDD Board	x
Trish Elliott	Hood River County Health Department	x
Tyler Stone	Wasco County	x