

Mid-Columbia Economic Resilience Team Meeting May 1, 2020

Jessica Metta (MCEDD) started the meeting with introductions.

Jessica Metta (MCEDD) provided some details about Washington's reopening plans. Starting on May 5, Washington will allow reopening of a number of outdoor recreational activities including fishing, hunting, playing golf, and day-use of some state parks and lands managed by Department of Natural Resources, State Parks and Fish and Wildlife, though these efforts will be scaled back down if the public does not adhere to social distancing measures. Governor Inslee also announced that low-risk construction projects already underway will be able to resume.

Kevin Waters (Skamania EDC) stated that county officials are awaiting guidance from Governor Inslee around the specific guidelines of Washington's reopening framework. Dave McClure (Klickitat County Economic Development) noted that the Governor would be holding a press briefing about reopening guidelines later today and should provide substantive guidance around Washington's reopening framework. To see the Governor's remarks, watch [here](#).

Nate Stice (Regional Solutions) mentioned that Oregon has released five draft guidance documents for reopening the state, noting that state officials are leading the framework under the guidance of public health officials. Nate encourage the group to help businesses think about overarching guidelines that will apply to all as we begin to reopen such as providing more space for social distancing, implementing additional cleaning practices, etc. Nate asked the group whether or not they thought businesses could reopen under the current guidelines and if no, why not? For each of the associated guideline documents (general employers, restaurants, retail) the group had mixed reactions to reopening per the draft guidelines. Concerns included:

- Businesses will have a hard time opening at limited capacities – revenues will be less if openings are limited and with expected reduction in number of customers, but expenses will be the same, if not more, because of additional requirements.
 - Sarah Sullivan (Gorge Grown Food Network) noted that it has taken significantly more staff time to ensure safety at Farmers Markets due to a requirement for social distancing officers, messaging to the public, and an increased demand for food from Gorge Grown. They increased staff from 2 at markets pre-COVID to 6 plus 3 volunteers (social distance officers). The increase in staffing needs for markets will keep certain small farmers markets from opening or delaying their opening.
- There is confusion over requirements and when reopening will take place. The messaging about reopening for specific business clusters has been confusing for some business owners.
 - It was noted that petitions have been going around to salon owners that contain confusing language that some may interpret as an okay to reopen May 1.

- Peter Mitchell (Port of Arlington) asked if it would be appropriate for restaurants to implement outdoor seating as the economy moves towards reopening. Nate responded that when it is OK to reopen, this could be a good strategy to explore.
- Nate clarified that the health criteria for reopening have not yet been met in the State, so the business sectors identified in the guidance documents do not have the okay to reopen yet.

Michael Held (Business Oregon) said he is working with the local team to host a virtual Business Adaptation Training on Thursday, May 14, to provide clear guidance and input from experts in the different sectors. He noted that the training would also include public health officials.

Nate Stice noted that the Governor's Council of Economic Advisors is gathering community feedback before they issue final guidance. He noted that officials would most likely receive county and regional-level criteria for reopening parts of the economy, emphasizing that no county in Oregon has met all the gating criteria at this time to be able to begin reopening. Nate clarified that counties can submit reopening plans to the Governor's office on their own time but are not required to submit anything at this time. He called out the need to refine many of these plans as officials consider the capacity needs of public health facilities. Public health officials are still very concerned about reopening the economy too early, particularly amidst outbreaks among more vulnerable populations in some communities.

The team heard updates from the following partners:

SBDC:

Greg Price (CGCC SBDC) noted the SBDC has been developing several webinars to support the business community. One webinar will focus on various tax requirements at the state and federal level as they pertain to the CARES Act and other relief programs. The SBDC is also scheduling a free webinar called Taking Your Company Virtual aimed at businesses that have had to pivot their operations to online sale and/or manage staff remotely. Greg has also been working with local Chambers of Commerce to set up a webinar focused on how to calculate and report for the forgiveness portion of the PPP loans.

- EIDL Program: Still closed; only processing existing applications. If there are funds left after all current applications are processed the program will open up again for new applications.
- PPP: Many banks are still accepting applications for the PPP and business owners are now able to access a larger array of lenders, including community development financial institutions, economic development lenders, and other more nontraditional lenders. However Greg expects funds will be depleted from the program very quickly.

Regional Economists:

- Scott Bailey (Washington Employment Security Department) – In the last week initial claims rose, likely due to confusion around how to access Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) benefits. Moving forward, Scott anticipates an increase in data for Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) and PUA claims.

Washington also qualified for state-level extended unemployment benefits, which provides an additional 13 weeks of unemployment insurance benefits.

- Dallas Fridley (Oregon Employment Department) – Dallas noted he has been working with Scott to gather data on the number of businesses in the region, including the Washington side, that are covered by the Governor Brown’s draft reopening guidelines. Initial claims fell to 320 in the past week. Since March 21st, there have been about 2,700 initial claims in the region. Data shows that about 1 in 4 initial claims are in accommodation and food services, 20% in healthcare, 11% in retail trade, and 10% in manufacturing.

Workforce Agencies:

- Heather Ficht (East Cascades Workforce Investment Board) noted that Oregon received the National Disaster Assistance Dislocated Worker grant, but it is anticipated to be more restrictive than initially thought. Officials will be meeting to determine what actions will be possible under the grant.

Tourism:

- Travel Oregon published an [updated report](#) on the state of the travel industry in Oregon.

Chambers:

- Kate Schroeder (Hood River County Chamber of Commerce) announced that the Chamber launched the Hood River [online marketplace](#) yesterday for its members. The virtual marketplace, funded by Pacific Power, serves as a centralized online shopping site where the public can purchase items to support local businesses.
- Tammara Toppel (Mt. Adams Chamber of Commerce) noted they are working with Greg Price at the SBDC host the Taking Your Company Virtual webinar for members.
- K’Lynn Lane (Condon Chamber of Commerce) shared that they and Gilliam County have funded \$94,560 in small business stabilization grant funds to 17 businesses that have applied to the program. They plan to reallocate the remaining funds into a second round of funding for the grant program.

Ports

- Port of Hood River is scheduled to resume tolling operations today (May 1).

Other updates:

- Erick Garman (Oregon Department of Agriculture, ODA) noted that ODA has been working with OSHA on the temporary rules for agriculture workers. The new rules take effect on May 11, with some specific requirements not effective until June 1 (see summary and effective dates [here](#)). ODA is also engaging in conversations at the state level around coordinating PPE so different industries aren’t competing with each other or healthcare institutions. If producers have any questions, send questions directly to Erick (Erick.H.Garman@state.or.us). OSHA also has a [website](#) where agricultural

businesses can submit technical questions about how the guidelines may impact their businesses. OSHA and ODA are also developing a cost estimate for the additional requirements. ODA is also applying for a [USDA FSMIP grant](#) to support Oregon's craft beverage industry and Erick will share more information as it becomes available.

- Dave McClure (Klickitat County Economic Development) anticipates that the final guidance around agricultural workforce housing will be coming out in Washington shortly. The Incident Command team in Klickitat County is planning to host a virtual conference with agriculture businesses that have seasonal workers on Tuesday, May 5th at 1:00 pm to better understand the challenges local producers, particularly in Klickitat County, are facing and determine how officials can support them. For more details, contact Dave at 509-773-2481, davem@klickitatcounty.org.
- Buck Jones (CRITFC) shared that the Tribal community recently experienced a loss of one of their staff and community members from COVID-19. There is a lot of concern about the potential for an influx of fisherman once state recreational fisheries are reopened in Washington. CRITFC will be discussing guidelines for tribal fisheries in the coming week.

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 8) at 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

MID-COLUMBIA ECONOMIC RESILIENCY TEAM**May 1**

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	
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 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	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.	
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
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	
Liliana Justo-Bello	The Next Door, Inc.	x
Lisa Atkin	Gilliam County	
Lisa Farquharson	The Dalles Area Chamber of Commerce	x
Lizzie Keenan	Mt. Hood & Columbia Gorge Regional Destination Management Organization	
Lynn Burditt	U.S. Forest Service	x
Lynn Longan	WA Department of Commerce	
Marc Thornsby	Port of Klickitat County	x
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
Neita Cecil	North Central Public Health District	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
Rachael Fuller	City of Hood River	x
Rep. Anna Williams	Oregon House of Representatives	
Rep. Daniel Bonham	Oregon House of Representatives	x
Richard Evans	Office of Senator Maria Cantwell	
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
Shellie Campbell	North Central Public Health District	x
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	
Tami Stockton	Wheeler County Economic Development	x
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	
Tom Schnell	Business Oregon	x
Wendy Popkin	Oregon Restaurant & Lodging Association	