

Mid-Columbia Economic Resilience Team Meeting May 8, 2020

Jessica Metta (MCEDD) started the meeting with introductions for guest speakers on the call, including child care and County partners.

Reopening

The group discussed reopening updates by county. Washington has outlined a four-phase approach to re-opening (link to [Safe Start plan](#)). The State entered Phase 1 of the plan on May 5, which includes drive-in spiritual services with one household per vehicle, auto/RV/boat/ORV sales, retail open for curbside pick-up orders, car washes, landscaping, and pet walking. Businesses may only re-open when they are able to fully comply with the industry-specific requirements posted on the state's [Safe Start page](#). Each phase will be at least three weeks — data and metrics will determine when the state can move from one phase to another.

Kevin Waters (Skamania Economic Development Council) reported Skamania County applied to the State to enter Phase 2 starting the week of May 11th. Skamania County Commissioners are focused on reopening outdoor recreation at appropriate times during the phasing process. Businesses are eager to open back up but the general consensus is to keep the community safe and healthy amidst reopening processes. If Washington enters Phase 3 in early June like officials anticipate, Kevin expects that outdoor trails will start to open up around that time as well.

Dave McClure (Klickitat County Economic Development) noted that the Governor has been convening task forces to develop guidance for specific industries and that they hope to have Phase 2 guidance available by May 15. Counties can apply for a variance if they can show no new cases in the past three weeks. Klickitat County does not meet those criteria yet.

In Oregon, Governor Brown announced a phased [reopening framework](#) (view [video presentation](#)). The earliest counties can start to reopen under Phase 1 will be May 15 and that each phase will take a minimum of 21 days. The State also released guidance for industry sectors ([link](#)) as well as general employer guidance. If an industry isn't specifically called out in a guidance document, they should follow the General Employer guidance. Nate Stice (Regional Solutions) reminded the group that Oregon has not entered Phase 1 yet and there are still more steps required to meet public health advice before starting.

Jeff Hecksel (Hood River County) reported that Hood River County's Board of Commissioners has approved their reopening plan and it will be submitted today. Hood River County has requested to begin Phase 1 on May 15th. He noted that these plans are more like public health preparedness plans than reopening plans. Hood River County has met the [prerequisites for reopening](#). The County will defer to state guidance around individual business reopenings.

Teri Thalhofer (North Central Public Health District) has completed a draft of Wasco County's plan and has drafts for both Sherman and Gilliam counties she anticipates completing today. Teri believes these counties have met the gating criteria to begin reopening. She noted that officials anticipate more people getting sick as testing capacities ramp up and more people come into contact with one another. There was a brief discussion related to whether or not the prerequisites for reopening applied to health regions, grouped regions (specifically Regions 6 and 9), or counties. Kristy Beachamp (Oregon Health Authority) reported that only testing capacity and hospital surge capacity will be reviewed regionally; and that Region 6 and Region 9 have exceeded the metrics for both.

Teri also noted that North Central Public Health District is the lead agency for Eastern Oregon Modernization Collaborative (EOMC), a collective serving 13 counties in Eastern Oregon including Wheeler. EOMC staff has been connecting with county partners to assist with capacity needs.

Matt Davis (Wheeler County) stated that according to the County's public health analysis, officials are confident that Wheeler County has met the region's prerequisites for reopening. The first draft of the County's reopening plan was sent out to community stakeholders and Matt anticipates reviewing responses later in the day before submitting the plan.

The group briefly discussed outdoor recreation and the concern over potential increase in visitors despite non-essential travel bans still in place in both Oregon and Washington. The group also discussed guidance for farm workers. Teri Thalhoffer stated that public health officials have been working to prepare producers for harvest season through PPE procurement, planning for isolation and quarantine measures, supplies increased sanitation practices, and other measures to protect workers' health. This group has been very helpful in coordinating response efforts, noting that the connections made will better prepare the region in the future.

Industry Focus: Child Care Adaptation and Needs

Jessica Metta introduced representatives from the child care sector in the region, including Janet Davis (Our Children's Place Academy), Nancey Patten (Director of Child Care Partners), and Christa Rude (Four Rivers Early Learning Hub). Child care providers noted the following:

- There are 48 child care facilities in the region approved for essential services. These centers have to meet higher health and safety standards and limit capacity. Despite capacity restrictions, there are still a number of spots available in these facilities.
- Phase 1 of Oregon's reopening framework allows for child care centers to open. The Oregon Early Learning Division is currently working to finalize standards. These requirements will reduce the number of children allowed per staff member/space and require cohort models which create additional challenges as revenues decrease with increased costs.
- Immediate needs include getting facilities up and running again while meeting updated state guidelines. This requires ensuring providers have enough supplies, such as PPE, sanitation, and food, in order to safely reopen.
- Currently child care workers are not paid a living wage so there are challenges in recruiting new child care providers to meet increased staffing requirements. New child care facilities have faced challenges in opening child care programs due to regulations creating barriers at the local level as well, and this might be an opportunity to consider ways to address these needs to support the industry long term in the Gorge.
- The Department of Human Services has made several significant shifts to accommodate families during this time, including eliminating co-pays for families and increasing eligible income levels so more people qualify for assistance.
- The panel suggested exploring future partnerships with businesses and local institutions to support child care. They suggested more creativity in thinking about how we can support child care providers. If you know a business interested in having these conversations, contact Christa Rude (christa.rude@cgesd.k12.or.us).
- The group encouraged to engage legislative representatives on these issues. Senator Murray is the ranking member on the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee. As the lead negotiator on child care, workers, and health care issues, feel free to engage her office alongside Senators Wyden and Merkley.

Business Impacts Information: Michael Held (Business Oregon) reported that initial results from the COVID-19 Business Impact Survey have been [released](#). Data shows that rural and underrepresented business owners are being disproportionately impacted.

Economist Updates: Kale Donnelly (Oregon Employment Department) provided a report on Oregon's unemployment claims ([link](#)). Demographics of unemployment claims can be found [here](#). Scott Bailey (Washington Employment Security Department) provided a [report](#) on Washington's unemployment claims. Details for weekly claims for Skamania and Klickitat counties can be found [here](#). You can also view the March 2020 Labor Market Summary for the two counties [here](#). The Labor Market Summary for the five Gorge counties (Skamania, Klickitat, Hood River, Wasco and Sherman) through March 2020 can be viewed [here](#). Demographics reveal that individuals in the 25-34 year-old group, women, and those whose education is at the high school level are disproportionately represented in claims.

Workforce agencies: Heather Ficht (East Cascades Workforce Investment Board) shared that her team is working with the State leadership team to figure out what reopening will look like for Oregon's WorkSource centers.

SBDC: Greg Price (CGCC SBDC) reported that SBDC will be hosting a webinar May 14 at 10:00 am. ([Register here](#)) to discuss loan forgiveness and reporting aspects of the PPP program. Greg is also working to develop a webinar on state and federal tax issues as they pertain to COVID-19.

Chambers: USFS National Scenic Area staff are working on media messaging to remind people that the National Scenic Area is still closed. Travel Oregon has sent out a media [toolkit](#) developed by the Office of Outdoor Recreation. Travel Oregon also established a [COVID-19 Emergency Response Grant Program](#), which will take applications from May 11th-15th to support tourism businesses including local Chambers of Commerce and rural/small businesses who have not received funds from EIDL or PPP.

Other Updates: Jessica Metta shared that MCEDD was successful in securing an Oregon Community Foundation grant for \$50,000 from the Oregon Business Stabilization fund to support MCEDD's business loan clients. The EDA announced a Notice of Funding Opportunity ([link](#)) for CARES Act Recovery Assistance Projects (see the addendum at the end of the NOFO for the CARES Act funding details). Jessica also highlighted the Virtual Business Adaptation Training scheduled for May 14 at 1:00 pm, which will focus on guiding Oregon businesses through the state's reopening guidelines. Register for this training [here](#).

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 Friday (May 15) at 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

MID-COLUMBIA ECONOMIC RESILIENCY TEAM**May 8**

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 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	
Bryan Stebbins	Office of Senator Patty Murray	x
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	
Don Mann	Port of Cascade Locks	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)	
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)	
Jacob Egler	Office of Senator Ron Wyden	x
Jacque Schei	Mid-Columbia Economic Development District	x
Jared Glibert	Columbia Gorge Community College	
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	
K'Lynn Lane	Condon Chamber of Commerce	
Kale Donnelly	Oregon Employment Department	x
Kallie Kurtz	Washington Employment Security Department	
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.	
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	
Matt King	Wallowa Resources	
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	
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	
Scott Bailey	Washington Employment Security Department	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	x
Susan Nielsen	Washington Department of Commerce	x
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	x
Tom Schnell	Business Oregon	x
Wendy Popkin	Oregon Restaurant & Lodging Association	
Guests		
Christa Rude	Four Rivers Early Learning Hub	x
Janet Davis	Our Children's Place Academy	x
Jeff Hecksel	Hood River County	x
Kristy Beachamp	Oregon Health Authority	x
Matt Davis	Wheeler County	x
Nancey Patten	Child Care Partners	x
Teri Thalhofer	North Central Public Health District	x