



REGIONAL SOLUTIONS OFFICE
GOVERNOR KATE BROWN

AGENDA

South Central Oregon Regional Economic Response/Recovery Team

July 7, 2020

3:00 pm – 4:00 pm

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/95123500971?pwd=c1l4eHRMWERPWnVnOWlZL0tqOFFlZz09>

Meeting ID: 951 2350 0971

Password: 435132

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- I. Employment Department update – David Gerstenfeld, Acting Director
 - a. Program updates
 - b. CARES Act program timelines
 - c. How are benefits set? How does Oregon compare to other states?
 - d. UI trust fund status
- II. Governor’s Office update – Annette Liebe. Regional Solutions Coordinator
 - a. Special session de-brief
- III. Remote Workers – Josh Lehner, Office of Economic Analysis
- IV. Federal legislation re: Klamath Basin – Amy Amrhein/Jacob Egler
- V. Roundtable
- VI. Adjourn



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MEETING SUMMARY

South Central Oregon Regional Economic Response/Recovery Team

July 7, 2020

3:00 pm – 4:00 pm

I. Employment Department update – David Gerstenfeld, Acting Director

- a. **Program updates:** The Employment Department initially had challenges processing regular claims due to the sheer volume of people filing for benefits. Went from record low number of claims to a record high. Exacerbating the processing was the timing of the filings. During the Great Recession, the claims took a year to ramp up to the peak number; at the start of the Pandemic, this was shortened to 2 weeks. Some good news is that the Department is almost caught up in processing regular filings and are now able to keep up. There have been subsequent roadblocks with those claims that need adjudication because they take more time to investigate and take more time to train adjudicators. Taking about 10-12 weeks to process these but increasing the number of adjudicators. At the same time updating processes. Also have a backlog with Workshare claims. Normal year have 160 to 170 claims from businesses with up to 200 employees. Have over 1300 claims since March this year by some businesses with thousands of employees. The Department is still behind where they want to be to process claims and are continuing to hire more staff. PUA claims are the hardest to process and the most difficult to identify the number of claims because it is a manual process and some might have also applied for regular benefits. Estimate about 90,000 PUA claims. This is the current focus area to increase processing with a target to be on track by mid-month. Working on automating these claims to help speed up processing.
- b. **CARES Act program timelines:** The extra \$600 weekly benefit continues through July 25th and there are discussions about whether to continue. PUA continues through December 26th, 2020. And, there are three extension programs in place for regular claims once those benefits are used up. Federal government will also pay a portion of Workshare through the end of the year.
- c. **How are benefits set? How does Oregon compare to other states?:** Oregon is pretty generous compared to other states, in the top quarter percentile, in terms of the amount of benefit paid. Minimum is approximately \$151/\$157 and maximum is \$648/\$673; ranking 9 or 10th in terms of maximum and 5th highest in terms of minimum benefits paid.
- d. **UI trust fund status:** Oregon Trust is in pretty good shape, especially compared to other states. 9 states have had to borrow to pay UI. Oregon had \$5 billion which is the 1st or 2nd highest. Expect \$4.6 B even after payouts. However, all of the models and projects aren't based on examples during a pandemic.

- II. **Governor’s Office update – Annette Liebe. Regional Solutions Coordinator**
Special session de-brief: Annette shared updates on policing, Omnibus, and housing bills.
- III. **Remote Workers – Josh Lehner, Office of Economic Analysis**
Have data on those who work from home not just remote workers. Still unknown what the impact of COVID-19 will be on remote working but there is a lot of speculation that this might be an opportunity for rural areas (e.g., lots of Zillow searches but whether that actually translates to people moving to rural areas is unknown). 1 in 3 could theoretically work from home. Already have a high number of people in Bend, the Coast area, and Valley who work from home on a regular basis. People who work from home can come from all walks of life and every occupation and tend to be higher income workers in areas that aren’t super expensive. Ability to increase remote workers can have a huge impact on increasing economic diversification. The ability to increase remote workers is linked to broadband accessibility, quality, and price. Further from Portland the quality goes down. Also an equity issue. Plus, there are still benefits to live in a metro area including ability to find more jobs, young workers need experience before working remotely, and in-office experience matters for promotion and layoffs.
- IV. **Federal legislation re: Klamath Basin – Amy Amrhein/Jacob Egler**
Amy Amrhein (Senator Merkley) shared there was a fix in the \$10 million of funding available to support ground idling and water pumping. The original authorization was confusing and only \$2-3 million of funds were distributed. The fix allows use of the entire \$10 million. Farmers can go to DRE to apply. Also \$11.5 m for restoration and drought relief programs.
Jacob Egler (Senator Wyden) shared working on Water for Conservation and Ag Act for infrastructure and conservation projects to increase reliability and conserve water. Question came up whether funding could cover lower Klamath Lake Clean-up and Amy indicated the project would fit the \$11.5 m appropriation – proposal should be in for next spring consideration.
- V. **Roundtable**
Updated provided on lodging – now approximately 60% of normal (compared to Bend where a recent article indicated they were around 80 to 85% of normal. This will probably lead to softer lodging tax collections which will have a ripple impact beyond hospitality (e.g., museum, fairgrounds).