

WORKFORCE AND TALENT DEVELOPMENT PLAN
2023 ANNUAL REPORT:
Oregon Revised Statute 660.324



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INTRODUCTION

Oregon’s Revised Statute (ORS) 660.324 requires that the Oregon Workforce and Talent Development Board (WTDB) convene, engage, and coordinate with leaders in business, relevant state agencies and organizations, and local workforce development and community-based organizations to “create a single, unified state Workforce and Talent Development (WTD) Plan” every two years. The WTD Plan is also the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Combined State Plan for Oregon produced every four years and updated at each two-year midpoint. The current WIOA Combined State Plan is near expiration and will be replaced in June 2024. ORS 660.324 also requires the WTDB to submit an annual report about the WTD plan.

Oregon’s WIOA Combined State Plan or WTD Plan reflects the work of multiple agencies and organizations. Each of these entities have their own missions, visions, and values and these are woven together on behalf of the broader workforce development system to realize equitable prosperity for all Oregonians. Delivering on this vision requires keen attention to the employment and skill needs of business and industry both now and into the future and requires access to timely education and training for all individuals that is both valued in the marketplace and results in or creates a pathway to self-sufficiency. The WTD Plan demonstrates Oregon’s commitment to continuous improvement in the workforce development system by increasing alignment of priorities and strategies to maximize resources currently within the workforce development system and to leverage additional resources not yet a part of the system.

This 2023 Annual Report provides current strategic and operational highlights reflecting elements included in the WTD Plan and new developments related to the WTD Plan. It also provides an update on the process to create an entirely new 2024 WTD Plan.

STRATEGY

WIOA requires all states to have a state workforce development board to provide leadership, strategy, alignment, and accountability across the workforce system. The WTDB is designated by the Governor as the state’s workforce development board in Oregon. Because the WTDB is made up of leaders representing business and industry, labor, community-based organizations, Oregon legislature, local government, and state agencies, it is uniquely positioned to provide leadership as Oregon’s workforce and talent development expert. The WTDB’s vision is equitable prosperity for all Oregonians. To realize this vision, the WTDB advances Oregon through education, training, jobs and careers by empowering people and employers.

The WTDB enables this Mission by:

- Leading and communicating a long-term vision for Oregon that anticipates and acts on future workforce needs;
- Partnering with workforce, education, and training entities including Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs);
- Advising the Governor and the legislature on workforce policy and plans;

- Aligning public workforce policy, resources, and services with employers, education, training and economic development;
- Identifying barriers, providing solutions, and avoiding duplication of services;
- Promoting accountability among public workforce partners; and
- Sharing best practices and innovative solutions that are scalable statewide and across multiple regions within the entire workforce system.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE

With the passage of Senate Bill 623 (2021), the WTDB, key state agencies, and the state's nine Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) collaborated to create the Continuous Improvement Committee (CIC) to assess the effectiveness of Oregon's public workforce development system, or WorkSource Oregon. WorkSource Oregon is a system comprising public and private partners who work together to respond to workforce challenges faced by individuals and businesses across Oregon. The purpose of the Committee is to:

- Complete a continuous improvement assessment of WorkSource Oregon every even-numbered year.
- Ensure that the assessment is jointly supported and participated in by all WorkSource Oregon partners.
- Consult with Local One-Stop Operators and align assessments with center certification requirements and State monitoring efforts.

In support of a recommendation from the CIC's Initial Assessment Report (Coraggio Group, 2021) to clarify and communicate the current WorkSource Oregon accountability and evaluation system, Coraggio Group was engaged to conduct an in-depth analysis of WorkSource Oregon's governance and accountability structure, with a particular focus on the participating state agencies responsible for allocating programmatic resources originating from the federal WIOA Titles and closely related workforce development programs delivered through WorkSource Oregon (WSO). This Governance Assessment Report was approved in December 2022 and was forwarded to the Governor and legislature. It included four Pillars necessary for good governance within the WSO system and associated near and long-term recommendations:

- Pillar One: A Clear and Shared Definition of the System
- Pillar Two: Committed Leadership from the Governor & Executive Branch
- Pillar Three: A Strong, Educated, Empowered, and Accountable State Board.
- Pillar Four: State Agency Alignment

FUTURE READY OREGON

The WTDB Equitable Prosperity Taskforce’s [Equitable Prosperity for All Taskforce Whitepaper](#) (Coraggio Group, June 2021) laid important groundwork for Future Ready Oregon, a comprehensive \$200 million investment package that supports the education and training Oregonians need for family-wage careers. Funded with a mix of state, general fund, and American Rescue Plan Act funds, this package includes strategic and targeted investments focused on advancing opportunities for historically underserved communities. Future Ready Oregon was developed by Governor Brown’s Racial Justice Council’s (RJC) Workforce Workgroup that included many key WTDB members. The package was passed by the Oregon Legislature in the 2022 Legislature Session, and signed into law April 2022, by Oregon Governor Kate Brown.

This historic package supports the education and training needs of Oregonians, and includes funding for workforce readiness, post-secondary career pathway training, credit for prior learning, youth workforce development, workforce benefits navigators, and apprenticeship expansion.

[Future Ready Oregon](#) invests in existing successful programs, and in innovative equity-focused solutions to bolster recruitment, retention, and career advancement opportunities for priority populations. Many of the funds are being administered through the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC), working with local workforce development boards, community-based and culturally-specific organizations, education and training providers, employers, and communities. The WTDB has a continuing implementation role, including some oversight, consultation, and development of industry consortia in manufacturing, healthcare, and technology.

Many of the investments were shaped by successful programs and services currently expressed in the WTD Plan (e.g. WIOA local workforce development board training and support). Others provided focus and expanded services for advancing opportunities for historically underserved communities where such investment is critical. And still others represent new best practices that will shape the next WTD Plan (e.g. industry consortia and WSO benefits navigators).

RESEARCH AND THE OREGON TALENT ASSESSMENT

The WTDB commissioned key thought-leaders to develop a series of reports and papers regarding workforce and economic issues regarding the impacts resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. More recently, the WTDB published:

- [Overlooked & Undercounted 2021: Struggling to Make Ends Meet in Oregon](#)
- [The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Oregon 2021](#)

Previous years’ reports can be found [here](#).

One key convening in partnership with the HECC was the 2022 Oregon Talent Summit. Working closely with the Oregon Business Council, the Summit brought in keynote speakers William B. Bonvillian and Sanjoy E. Sarma – author and co-author of *Workforce Education: A New Roadmap*. Governor Brown participated virtually, and Oregon and national leaders described best practices related to community and industry engagement. The biennial Summit brings together leaders of business and industry, workforce and talent

development, postsecondary, and K-12 education, community-based organizations, government and public policy, and research to focus on emerging workforce needs, best practices, and solutions to current workforce problems. Preliminary findings from the [2022 Oregon Talent Assessment](#) were also presented at the Summit, and the WTDB approved the final report in June 2022. Within the report, employers noted the following opportunities for improving the workforce system for all customers:

- Greater business engagement.
- Earlier career exposure for students.
- Increased collaboration among partners.
- Streamlined processes and funding distribution.
- Stronger career pathways.

ESSENTIAL EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

The WTDB has continued important work on Essential Employability Skills (EES). The business-led Oregon Employability Skills Advisory Committee of the WTDB brought together numerous partners representing K-12 and post-secondary education (including STEM and CTE partners), local workforce development boards, Oregon Tribes, and community-based organizations to work toward a definition of the skills included, and described as employability skills, development of curriculum for each skill from middle school through post-secondary education, and credential and/or badge development.

Essential Employability Skills (EES) go by many names, such as soft skills, interpersonal skills, essential skills, social skills, 21st century skills, and applied skills. They are the collection of skills necessary to succeed in the workplace that can be learned in academic settings and are enhanced through simulated and actual workplace experience. They are sometimes referred to as behaviors and traits but can be learned and refined through modeling and practice. They include, but are not limited to, adaptability, critical thinking, communication, empathy, open-mindedness, problem-solving, teamwork, and work ethic. The number of EES and the individual importance of each cannot be disconnected from industry and occupation.

This work continues under the Workforce Readiness Advisory Committee. Significant work has been completed to incorporate EES into the curriculum in high school and middle school, apprenticeship, and postsecondary programs as well as industry training programs at Portland General Electric. EES will be a growing feature in future WTD Plans.

WTDB LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

Recently approved by WTDB leadership, the WTDB Legislative Committee will provide a table for board members to better understand Oregon's legislative process, align efforts with gubernatorial priorities, and explore high-return funding strategies for the entire workforce system, including public/private partnerships.

This committee will bring more intentionality to the development of legislative concepts, planning and other goals and systemwide priorities of the WTDB.

WSO SERVICE DELIVERY

WIOA affirms the role of the one-stop delivery system as a cornerstone of the workforce development system. WorkSource Oregon (WSO) is the statewide one-stop delivery system including a collection of providers, programs, and services required by WIOA to co-locate, coordinate, and integrate resources, activities, and information in WSO Centers. The programs and services of WorkSource Oregon have recently experienced transition and growth from the ending of COVID restrictions and re-opening to in-person traffic and reinstatement of claimant registration and engagement requirements. This has been anticipated in the WTD Plan, but not reflected as yet. Some adjustments are described in this section.

Job matching and employer engagement picked up as more businesses reopened and needed help filling vacant positions, given the tight labor market. The state continued to promote and enhance several key initiatives launched during the pandemic in support of a new virtual service delivery model. These initiatives included an online scheduling tool for customers to arrange for in-person and virtual meetings with staff, a suite of virtual job-finding workshops, a partnership with LinkedIn to connect employers and job seekers using their platform, an updated WSO website for customers to connect with services, and a hybrid work model for staff.

Serving claimant customers in WSO centers and addressing their Unemployment Insurance (UI) related needs continues to be an important component of service delivery. In response to this need, which was further highlighted during the pandemic, WSO Leadership established a standard level of UI service delivery in the centers, being at a higher level than was provided pre-pandemic. This has improved the claimant experience and strengthened connectivity between WSO and UI.

Going forward, WSO Leadership will continue to apply lessons learned during the pandemic, such as: highlighting the vulnerability of Oregon's underrepresented and marginalized communities; embracing a virtual service delivery model to improve access to WIOA programs and services, regardless of a customer's proximity to the WSO center; expanding its regional approach to business services and targeted sector strategy for job matching; and working to further integrate workforce programs to leverage funding and enhance career and training services for Oregonians.

NEW 2024 WTD PLAN

ORS 660.324 REQUIREMENTS

As previously stated, ORS 660.324 requires the WTDB to convene a broad range of business and workforce system partners and interested entities to create a single, unified state WTD Plan. The WTD Plan is expected to:

- Determine needs across identified key industries in this state, including challenges and opportunities in developing and growing relevant talent pipelines;

- Ensure that the talent pipeline development infrastructure includes:
 - A listening process to collect workforce needs of employers from identified key industries in this state;
 - Curriculum alignment for high-demand occupation skill needs;
 - Prediction and monitoring of national trends relating to high-demand industries and occupations;
 - Occupation-aligned education and training options with a clearly articulated progression;
 - Skills assessments; and
 - Academic career counseling;
- Utilize sector partnerships to:
 - Advise the development of career pathway programs for critical occupations in identified key industries in this state; and
 - Ensure the coordination of education, economic development, business and workforce initiatives between key partners to develop a strong talent pipeline;
- Leverage and optimize existing measures and data systems to improve systems alignment and interagency communication; and
- Ensure state alignment and coordination between industry sector partnerships and initiatives in the local workforce development areas.

WIOA REQUIREMENTS

These criteria are in addition to what is federally required under WIOA. WIOA requires the State’s plan outline a four-year strategy for the State’s publicly-funded workforce development system. This system is a national network of Federal, State, regional, and local agencies and organizations that provide a range of employment, education, training, and related services and supports to help all job-seekers secure good jobs while providing businesses with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy. States must have an approved in place to receive funding for core programs. These plans:

- Foster better alignment of Federal investments in job training;
- Integrate service delivery across programs and improve efficiency in service delivery;
- Ensure that the workforce system is job-driven and matches employers with skilled individuals;
- Promote shared understanding of the workforce needs within each State; and

- Foster development of more comprehensive and integrated approaches, such as career pathways and sector strategies, for addressing the needs of businesses and workers.

2024 WTD PLAN DEVELOPMENT

The process for development of the 2024 WTD Plan is underway. The first step is the [2023-2024 WTDB Strategic Plan](#) which was adopted by the WTDB on April 28, 2023. The next step is Joint Priority Setting (JPS) to be completed by July 2023. JPS is a new effort for the WTD Plan to gather input from all partners to the WTD Plan and those closely aligned. Using current economic and workforce data, issues, challenges, and trends and using the WTDB's Strategic Plan as a high-level framework especially the Vision and Values and the Imperatives and Objectives where appropriate, those engaged in the JPS process will discuss and ultimately agree to 3-5 priorities that can be shared across the entire workforce system for the upcoming 2-3 years. These shared priorities are expected to be incorporated into the WTD Plan and WIOA local plans and shape budget and policy development. The timing of the priorities allows for more informed future budget and policy recommendations in both the short and long legislative sessions as priorities are implemented or piloted and experience provides insight and builds support. Outcomes and progress will be reported and tracked at least at WTDB meetings. Every 2 years the priorities will be reviewed, refreshed, and possibly revised by the same group of representatives.

The WIOA Combined State Plan for Oregon will be due to the U. S. Department of Labor in March 2024. The 2024 WTD Plan will be summarized, linked, and reported to the Governor and legislature in June 2024.

CONCLUSION

Oregon's WTD Plan reflects the work of multiple agencies and organizations. Each of these entities have their own missions, visions, and values and these are woven together on behalf of the broader workforce development system to realize equitable prosperity for all Oregonians. Significant successful progress has occurred to implement the WTD Plan including the Continuous Improvement Committee Governance Assessment, Future Ready Oregon's investments focused on advancing opportunities for historically underserved communities and supporting the education and training needs of Oregonians including workforce readiness, post-secondary career pathway training, credit for prior learning, youth workforce development, workforce benefits navigators, and apprenticeship expansion, reopening of WSO Centers throughout the state while keeping and expanding the best of virtual service delivery, and others. A new 2024 WTD Plan is underway including the JPS effort to gather input from all partners to the WTD Plan to ultimately agree to 3-5 priorities that can be shared across the entire workforce system for the upcoming 2-3 years. These priorities will be broadly shared and included in the 2024 WTD Plan Annual Report.

