



**Recommendations from Oregon's Local Workforce Development Boards
for a National Response to Unemployment Related to COVID-19**

March 23, 2020

The Oregon Workforce Partnership (OWP) represents the front-line responders to the looming national unemployment crisis in the state of Oregon. OWP's membership services over 100,000 Oregonians in education, job training, employment and upskilling programs, ranging from small non-profit programs and WorkSource Oregon Centers (known nationally as American Job Centers), literacy and vocational training to community colleges. Our diverse members have significant experience in responding to economic downturns that required new and innovative responses to support Oregon's employers and workers.

Our ability to rapidly respond is predicated on the speed of the federal and state government's release of critical funding and removal of regulatory barriers. We sincerely appreciate your commitment to supporting Oregon's dedicated workers and employers, and the workforce system as we organize to support our local communities.

Below are our recommendations for a comprehensive federal response.

- 1. Dramatically expand Unemployment Insurance funding and extended Unemployment Insurance to support those laid off or unemployed due to business closure or economic decline due to COVID-19**
 - Waive the 5-day waiting period for receiving UI benefits
 - Provide funding, or require use of the UI Modernization Fund, to State's to move all service delivery online and provide adequate equipment for remote workforce service delivery
 - **Invest** in Oregon's part-time Shared Work program **which** allows unemployment insurance to pay a portion of an employee's salary if their hours are reduced but they are not fully laid off/to avoid full dislocation.
 - Provide resources specific to supporting dislocated low-wage workers or vulnerable workers receive re-employment assistance and job training to adapt their skills for new careers
 - Address work search requirements, recognizing the inability of participants to access employment due to COVID-19

- 2. Provide National Emergency Dislocated Worker Funding or Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Rapid Response funding to rapidly expand online services for the federally funded American Job Center System, including but not limited to:**
 - American Job Center equipment purchases for employees who are required to work from home and need to continue to provide services including:
 - Software to support remote work, such as video conferencing, virtual meetings and case management, secure web-based servers and remote access file storage to keep customer information confidential and free conference calling. (go-to meeting, zoom, etc.)
 - Lap top computers, phones and printers for remote work



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3. A coordinated federal response from U.S. Department of Commerce and U.S. Department of Labor to support employers:

- Require State's eliminate all cumbersome paperwork for businesses to access grants to cover 3-6 months operating expenses for business with less than 25 employees; low or no interest payroll loans; extended unemployment insurance, and other programs or resources to reduce the impacts of wide scale unemployment.
- Expand and promote shared work
- Set up a federal call center and webpage that clearly details resources available, application requirements, and average length of application to funding.

4. Under the U.S. Department of Labor and U.S. Department of Education Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)

Funding Availability and Increases:

- Remove the State approval for 100% transfer of funding between Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth funding to allow local workforce areas the flexibility to immediately address the needs in a local area with existing resources
- Require immediate release of 50% of the State's WIOA Rapid Response funding to local workforce areas to address immediate needs locally
- Increased funding through expanded WIOA or National Emergency Grant funding
 - Rapidly expand occupations necessary for adequate COVID-19 response, including but not limited to:
 - Healthcare workforce through dedicated healthcare short-term job training fund in response to COVID-19; including hospital, nursing home and home-based caregiving occupations and credentials
 - Temporary Employment applicable to COVID-19 response, including drivers/delivery services; IT support occupations, HAZMAT, maintenance and cleaning, etc.
 - Increase in dislocated worker job training funds to respond to, and fund, eligible trainings on the statewide Eligible Training Provider List.
 - Address integrated competitive employment for individuals with disabilities under WIOA Title VI, recognizing the increased need for in-home supports to allow people to continue to work.
 - National Supportive Services Fund to address:
 - In-home internet stipends, to enable work from home options and to allow unemployed workers to access high speed internet to complete distance learning
 - Transportation, other than public transportation
 - Healthcare
 - Childcare for working guardians with children displaced during school closure
 - National Summer Youth Employment program to assist high school, college-aged and recent college graduates rapidly attach to paid work experience

Regulatory Relief

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- **Eliminate the Eligible Training Provider List and allow Local Workforce Boards to determine the validity and effectiveness of local training providers, allowing for rapid access and availability of online coursework and credentialing for all Oregonians**
- Enable flexibility and allowability for WIOA Title II to provide adult literacy and high school equivalency programs using distance learning and online
- Hold Harmless for all WIOA performance measures, including:
 - Entered Employment
 - 80% funding expenditures
 - 20% Youth Work Experience
 - On-the-job training

5. Additional regulatory relief and funding to provide maximum support to displaced and dislocated workers and reduce negative impacts of COVID-19

- Allow for States to request waivers to reduce the work participation under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families and SNAP
- Address federal student loan interest, as well as payments for room and board for students required to leave campuses due to school closure or move to online coursework
- Expansion of social safety net programs to stabilized low wage workers, displaced and unemployed workers including:
 - Medicaid
 - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
 - Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, cash assistance
 - Social Security Disability Insurance
 - Paid family leave

Regards,

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