

# EASTERN WASHINGTON PARTNERSHIP

## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

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### **Workforce Development Council and Regional Board Meeting December 10, 2020**

The December 10, 2020 meeting of the Workforce Development Council Board of Directors and the Regional Board was called to order at 12:30PM by Chairperson, Bill Clemens. The meeting was held virtually due to restrictions from COVID19.

#### **Introductions**

Bill began the meeting by doing a roll call of attendees. Those in attendance were as follows:

Board of Directors – Jerry Anhorn, Bill Clemens, Gabe Coates, Kathy Covey, Jim Drake, Leslie Druffel, Larry Frick, Scott Habenicht, Jeff Koffel, Jim Kowalkowski, John Little, Tony Maiorana, Angela Merritt, Brian St. Clair, and Jennie Weber.

Regional Board of Directors – Brian Shinn, Mike Talbott, Scott Hutsell, Steven Kiss, Todd Kimball, and Art Swannack.

Guests – Susan Pearson, Kelly Charlton, Mike Ensor, Brandon Harting, Doug Tweedy, Larry Allen, Brian Raines, Brian Fox, Barney Brockwell, and Morgan Smith

Staff – Rod Van Alyne and Tracy Ferrell

#### **Approval of agenda**

After review of the proposed agenda, *Jeff Koffel made a motion to approve it as presented. Leslie Druffel seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.*

#### **Approval of Meeting Minutes**

After review, *Scott Hutsell made a motion to approve the September 24, 2020 meeting minutes as presented. Art Swannack seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.*

#### **Regional Board Report**

Scott Hutsell gave a heartfelt thank you to long time Board member Steve Kiss and Mike Talbot, as this was their last meeting. He also thanked Howard Hambleton for their brief but important service. Their commitment is greatly appreciated, and they will be missed.

#### **Chairman Report**

Bill reminded attendees that the calendar for the 2021 meetings had been included in their board packet. Bill also spoke towards the need for committee members on the various committees. Anyone interested in joining a question should contact Rod regarding questions or a list and definitions of the various open positions.

#### **Administrative Committee Report**

Bill reported that the committee had met on December 3, 2020 to discuss the approval of a new Eastern Washington Partnership WDC Policy requiring the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program participants to be co-enrolled in the Dislocated Worker (DW) program. Rod added that this may sound

familiar to those that have served on the board for some time, as it is not a new concept. Previously when determining the participant's co-enrollment in the two programs, it was necessary to ask why they should be co-enrolled. The new policy changes the emphasis to a why-not question for reasoning for co-enrollment. Rod also added that it is fortunate that those providing services for the two programs are currently working side by side in the respective facilities. In addition, the staff are all trained and able to easily adapt to the change. The benefit of co-enrollment is primarily to fill in gaps not provided by the TAA program alone. There were no further questions or comments.

*Jeff Koffel made a motion to approve Eastern Washington Partnership Policy 275 as recommended by the Administrative Committee. Brian Shinn seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.*

### **Director's Report**

Rod also extended a thank you to the outgoing county commissioners noting their long-term commitment to serving the citizens in their counties.

Rod then provided an update on the Regional Local Plan that had been worked on prior to COVID19 shutdowns. He anticipates that the DOL Board will be asking for the final draft of the plans next Spring. Rod intends to present the final draft shortly after the first of the year. He is still working out information in the IFA/MOU. He anticipates approval and signatures obtained at the February 28, 2021 meeting.

Rod spoke about the Disaster Relief and Disaster Recovery funding that was recently received. Following the second surge of COVID19, he anticipates that the "relief" jobs will be different as there are new gaps forming for transition jobs. The Recovery funding should be rolled out in February, when recovery starts to occur.

Rod added that there was no Quality Assurance Committee meeting, as there are gaps in the current data. However, he did note that the programs are ahead of their numbers from last year for the most part. He also added that the job search requirement for UI benefits has been extended again. He encouraged the review of claimants to begin working with them sooner than later. It is important to not wait and be reactive.

There are a great deal of recovery planning occurring currently in many governmental departments. The Washington Workforce Association (WWA) made up of the 12 Local Workforce Development Boards are also working on a recovery plan collectively. Their emphasis will be on the creation of an impact message and how the recovery could be addressed as a group.

### **Labor Market Report**

The Labor Market Report was provided by Doug Tweedy, Regional Economist. Doug stated his agreement with Rod on the importance of working with the unemployed now and actively thinking ahead. Temporary impacts could result in permanent impacts. Doug added that there is currently work being done to address the Demand and Decline job report.

Doug's report formally began with a review of April's unemployment numbers. The numbers were record breaking and very scary. Fortunately, they were also short-termed. He believes that the results of the approval of the CARES Act and the implementation of the COVID19 Vaccine will result in positive impacts on both the workforce and the businesses. However, the month of October saw a rise in the UI rates, and it is anticipated there will be additional rises in November and December. Now would be the time to focus on those employees that are long-term UI claimants. Doug then presented a history

of job creation from 2004-2020. It is expected that many of the jobs recently lost will come back. It was also noted that rural counties appear to have suffered less impact than urban counties in Washington State. The number of UI claimants from August 2020 through November 28, 2020 was presented. It is anticipated that there will be a rise in the numbers in the next few months. One of the areas of UI Claimants that has not been seen before is for those that are self-employed and self-contractors.

Doug then presented a discussion on industries that have been affected by the pandemic. Amazingly, Healthcare tops the list. Doug explained that the pandemic required employment in only one sector of health care. Other sectors such as dental, vision, and other types of health care not affiliated with COVID needs saw a great loss in jobs. He noted that there is a close relationship between Healthcare employment and UI claims right now. There was a review of future target industries with less jobs being seen in food service and more jobs in utilities, IT, Finance, etc. Jim Kowalkowski asked if this was a portion of the structural changes that may occur. Doug said that it is, but there would be more examples through the presentation. Angela Merritt inquired about shortages in some areas that job seekers will be pursuing. Doug reiterated the need to start switching UI Claimants from high risk (low demand) jobs to the industries that will see a greater need (high demand). Bill asked if Doug was concerned that should the food service industries make a comeback, there may be difficulties in finding replacement workers. Doug noted that the workers will go to where the jobs are. Art Swannack stated that he does not totally agree with the optimistic view of Doug's report. Art does not believe that the small-town businesses will be able to come back easily. Many will close for good. The impact of these closures will be felt at the governmental level with a decrease in tax revenue. Doug agreed that the small-town businesses were at higher risk than the medium and large essential businesses. Art shared his concerns regarding the impact of tele-commuting at the university level, specifically WSU. He said that he was not sure how it was working overall and that it would require a change in operations as well as acceptance. Doug answered that enrollment in all colleges was down. In addition, college communities were being affected because of loss of revenue from college events such as sports and other college sponsored happenings. Jim Kowalkowski added that K12 schools are seeing a savings by kids not attending classes in person. He added that he too is concerned about the small local businesses.

Doug shared an experience with a recent hospital visit. The hospital had been operating with an older workforce (55+). The pandemic was starting to accelerate retirements. He asked Jim if the school districts were also experiencing this phenomenon. Jim replied yes, with some teachers but especially with school bus drivers. The nine counties served by the Eastern Washington Partnership were reviewed with each county and the declining job categories. Government jobs were high on the list of most of the counties due to an anticipated decline in tax revenue. This group includes school districts. Manufacturing was also predicted to decline, but that would depend greatly on the type of manufacturing. Jerry Anhorn asked where wineries fell in the categories noting that he had recently attended a meeting that included wineries in the area. Doug said that wineries can fall under agriculture manufacturing, food processing and leisure and hospitality. In California there has been an increase in wine making but a decrease in productivity, due to the wildfires and the pandemic. Jerry stated that in Washington, there had been some hardships reported but many wineries had seen an increase in sales. Bill asked Jerry if there were hardships felt due to restrictions affecting the wine tasting rooms. Jerry answered that the wineries that had pivoted away from tasting rooms and focused on on-line marketing were the wineries that were seeing record breaking sales. Art added that the largest contributors to tax income during the pandemic were alcohol and marijuana sales. Art then provided a summary of how property taxes were calculated in the state noting that impacts from the pandemic would not be felt until 2021 and especially in 2022.

Doug concluded his report noting that the hardest hit workers were those age (25-30), that had an education level of high school diploma and possible one year of college and occupation (caterer/food service) as they were typically first-time employees. These are also the employees that would be good candidates for a transfer to different essential businesses, such as telework, telehealth, and virtual learning. Doug reviewed the declining occupations vs. the in-demand occupations noting that there were some in-demand businesses (grocery stores) that would be temporary while there were others that were “hot” and candidates for long time careers. He restated that retirement would influence all future jobs and advised attendees to refer to the webpage (<https://esd.wa.gov/labormarketinfo>) for new information. The County Profiles have recently been revised (effective 11/27/20). Bill asked one last question regarding the effect of the pandemic on real estate, noting that he has seen an increase in housing prices. Doug replied that there was an increase in the housing market in the eastside of the state. However, the westside of the state saw a decrease in prices as many homeowners opted to move to the rural areas. Overall, there was an increase in Washington state in values and in permit revenue.

### **WorkSource Report**

Jennie Weber provided the report noting that there had been a struggle to get adequate data as well. Working virtual created challenges. She remarked that the job seekers were evenly split between those that sought help from ESD staff and those that did self-searches. She provided the remaining data on demographics of job seekers and job providers. Worksource updates were provided by Bryan Raines, Angela Merritt, Anne Buchan, and Kelly Charlton. Please refer to attached report.

### **Presentation WorkSource Veterans Services**

A great presentation was provided by staff involved with the Veteran’s services. Larry Allen began by highlighting his career, both current career and previous career in the military. He also noted many of the accomplishments he and his partners have achieved. He concluded with notation that the future intentions included continued collaboration with Worksource partners and the tribes to provide employment and training opportunities. All of this will continue to be done using virtual technology until they are able to meet in person again.

Mike Ensor then shared his work with veterans in the Walla Walla area, noting that there had been an improvement in services. This resulted in Worksource Walla Walla receiving Veteran’s Service Recognition for successes in working with veteran clients as well as work done with other government agencies and businesses. Mike also shared some of his success stories.

Brandon Harting concluded with an explanation of his work with the Disabled Veteran’s Outreach Program (DVOP) and Local Veteran Employment Representatives (LVER). He provided annual data as well as success stories for 2018 – 2021 (projected). Brandon also reported that The Pend Oreille County PUD was recognized as The Washington State Medium 2020 Hire A Vet Employer Of the Year.

Larry, Mike and Brandon were all thanked for their amazing teamwork and ability to connect with partners to provide much needed services to our veterans.

Rod introduced Brian Fox, Director for Supportive Services for Veteran Families at Blue Mountain Action Council. Brian provided a summary of the SSVF program and how it helps families with housing in addition to work and other needs. Rod thanked the presenters, especially Larry and Brandon who were working in an office that was undergoing construction.

There was no Old or New Business for discussion. The meeting was adjourned at 2:37 PM.