

## *Dear Partners,*

We know that businesses and workers are rapidly responding to the COVID-19/ Coronavirus circumstances. Many businesses are looking for help to access the resources that might be available to them to sustain their enterprise. Impacted workers are looking for help to sustain income and meet essential needs. Meanwhile the national landscape on resources being made available is changing daily, as Congress passes new legislation to address the needs.

Here's an update on what our team at Rogue Workforce Partnership has been working on this week with partners in response to the COVID-19 public health emergency. There's lots going on, so there's lots to read about.

### **Workforce Resources in Response to COVID-19**

We created a new page on our Rogue Workforce Partnership website to provide up-to-the-minute information and resource links to support businesses and workers - see [Workforce Resources in Response to COVID-19](#)

### **Business Conversations / Challenges**

I've had check-in confers with a few business leaders this past week, and have gained a deeper sense of the profound challenges our companies, workers, and communities are facing in this unprecedented time of crisis. As each of your organizations grapples with these immediate threats, please know that the RWP is deeply committed to working with all our partners to provide as much needed support as possible. We will help rally a collective, holistic, and community-wide response, and do the best we can to marshal resources, provide critical information, solve problems, and work with partners to coordinate help from all fronts.

**State Workforce Agency Coordination** - We worked with Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) on:

- ▶ **Layoff Aversion Funds** – We've accessed an initial allocation of **\$102,740** in Layoff Aversion funds, to help support businesses in our region. We recognize that this share of a statewide \$1.1 million allocation will not meet demands; But we're committed to accessing additional federal grant funds with our state agency partners, so they can be added to the toolkit of potential remedies to sustain businesses. More info on these funds can be found at the [Workforce Resources in Response to COVID-19](#) link and scrolling down or clicking on Layoff Aversion. See **attached Media Advisory** sent out today too that also speaks to these and other business support resources.
- ▶ **Dislocated Worker Grant Application** - We are also helping to craft a state grant application for additional federal Dislocated Worker funds that would include: 1) support service payments to enrolled participants; 2) helping interested and able laid-off workers (*e.g., from hospitality industry*) to get trained to serve in critically-needed occupations such as healthcare and transportation/logistics; 3) other trainings and support to address needs (**Please Share Any Ideas You Have!**).

**WorkSource Rogue Valley & UI Claimant Surge** - We are coordinating state-level response efforts with our regional **WorkSource Rogue Valley** operational oversight. The top priority is processing UI claims to support income security during the crisis. As of Wednesday, 30,000 Unemployment Insurance

claims statewide needed to be processed. Telephone wait times to the processing centers in Portland and Bend were up to 60 minutes. And the online system crashed for a time, as the national data connections experienced problems. Oregon Employment Department is redeploying staff to create a third virtual processing center to handle the surge in UI demand (see [Oregonian article](#)).

Our region's two WSRV centers are following public health guidelines, and limiting the number of customers allowed in the center at any given time. We've also coordinated with the Oregon Department of Human Services to ensure seamless referrals to other public benefits such as SNAP, TANF, etc. **For more info on UI resources see:**

- ▶ [OED Unemployment Insurance](#)
- ▶ [Workforce Resources in Response to COVID-19](#)

### **Regional Solutions Team Coordination**

We worked with **Alex Campbell** (*Regional Solutions Coordinator/Governor's Office*) and , **Marta Tarantsey** (*Regional Development Officer – Business Oregon*) to coordinate regional workforce response efforts with:

- ▶ **Small Business Administration Loans** - The U.S. Small Business Administration is also offering low-interest federal disaster loans for working capital small businesses suffering substantial economic injury as a result of the COVID-19. As of March 19, 2020, SBA disaster assistance is available to businesses in the following Oregon counties in our region: Curry, Jackson, Josephine, Klamath and Lake. It is also available in all counties within the state of California. **See attached Media Advisory for more information.**
- ▶ **Business Oregon** - The state's economic and community development agency, created an [Interim Guidance for Businesses](#) that addresses planning for immediate and ongoing impacts to your organization as well as [Financial Resources and Planning](#).
- ▶ **Business Response Network (BRN)** - After consulting with County Emergency Managers, the Regional Solutions Team started making regular email communications regarding COVID-19 business impacts and assistance to southwest Oregon economic development and business services professionals (*e.g., SOREDI, Chambers of Commerce, SBDC, WorkSource Rogue Valley, RWP, etc.*). The purpose is to pass along relevant information to our networks of businesses.
- ▶ RWP will be providing on-going, up-to-date information on the Workforce Resource in Response to COVID-19 to these business support organizations, as well as our broader array of partners, so that this information can be shared with employers and workers throughout the region.
- ▶ **Regional Economic Response Team (RERT)** - The Regional Solutions Team is also convening this group to facilitate information sharing and ensure that Oregon's Coronavirus Economic Advisory Council (CEAC) hears from every part of the state. This RERT will be focused on Jackson and Josephine counties, and will have participants from regional economic development organizations, chambers of commerce, SBDCs, cities, counties, tribal governments, workforce officials, and federal agencies. The key purposes of discussions will be:
  1. Coordinating activity among/between our various silos of economic development/business services.
  2. Gathering questions.
  3. Gathering input to feed up to the CEAC and/or other state agencies.

**Jessica Gomez** (*RWP Chair & CEO, Rogue Valley Microdevices*) and I will be participating at the kick-off meeting. In addition, future meetings will add in other regional business leaders to gather on-the-ground intelligence on the needs businesses and workers are facing.

**Federal Coordination**

RWP and our state association of Workforce Boards (*Oregon Workforce Partnership*) are members of the United States Workforce Association. This gritty, loose-knit, boot-strap group of state associations has proved highly effective in engaging, informing, and influencing federal policy makers on workforce priorities and issues. We're getting regular updates from our contact in Washington DC, who is in regular conversations with key Congressional and White House staff. The attached **HR6102 Coronavirus Response Overview** provides highlights on the second package which President Trump signed Wednesday night.

In addition to regular email updates, we will also post updates on all the areas covered above at our webpage - [Workforce Resources in Response to COVID-19](#). In the meantime, please contact me with any questions, concerns, ideas, innovations, challenges, etc.

**Please also forward this email to your business contacts / membership lists, or anyone you think I might have missed, or who hasn't seen it.**

Wishing you all the best in health, well-being, and fortitude.

*Jim*



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