

REIMAGINE OREGON: IMPROVING YOUTH-TO-WORK AND WORKFORCE SYSTEMS IN THE WAKE OF COVID-19

APPENDIX B

REGIONAL CONVENING SUMMARIES

This appendix contains summaries of each of the four regional conversations with industry members, workforce stakeholders, educators, state agency representatives, and community members. Regional conversations were hosted in August 2020 in coordination with Lane Workforce Partnership, East Cascades Works, Southwestern Oregon Workforce Investment Board, and Clackamas Workforce Partnership.

SUMMARY OF THE SOUTHWESTERN OREGON REGIONAL CONVENING

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SUMMARY OF SW OREGON REGIONAL CONVENING

With the support of the National League of Cities (NLC), Oregon ASK partnered with four workforce boards and representatives from nearly a dozen cities and mayors' offices to capture the experiences of their communities and document early needs, lessons, solutions, and crisis-driven innovations that might inform recovery going forward. The project convened four online conversations involving 135 people, all informed by a pre-event poll completed by 50 people from across the four regions (this allowed us to prioritize different topics in different regions). A subsequent convening of 88 stakeholders from across the state was convened on September 22 to share findings and preliminary recommendations, and build support for solving critical challenges.

This document summarizes the content of the Southwestern Oregon convening, the third of four similar conversations. This convening took place on August 12, 2020, using the Zoom video conference platform. It was hosted by the Southwestern Oregon Workforce Investment Board serving Coos, Curry, and Douglas Counties along the southern Coast of Oregon, with the support of Oregon ASK. Thirty-two people participated, representing a wide range of stakeholders including elected officials, industry representatives from key sectors, education and training providers, foundation representatives and several additional stakeholders from the wider region. The convening featured a series of crowdsourcing activities—using a shared Google doc—with conversation between each activity, followed by a large group conversation and Q&A supported by note-taking and recording.

Key Issues are those that generated the most discussion during the convening and structure the summary that follows.

Key Issues:

- 'Wrap-around' and support services for youth (especially devices, wifi, career navigation, mentoring, and support) and adults (especially childcare, and housing and transportation assistance)
- Work-based learning (especially career and technical education and apprenticeship)
- Better Jobs (e.g. family-wage, high-road employment, etc.)
- Implementation strategies (including innovative business and service delivery models)

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‘WRAP-AROUND’ SERVICES & SUPPORTS

The subject of wrap-around services—or services that enable work and learning—generated energetic conversation among participants. Although participants generally agreed about their importance and had seen a rise in demand since the COVID crisis began, they pointed to some differences in the specific needs of young people compared to adults.

Critical needs identified for **young people** included:

- Devices and wifi connectivity
- (Intrusive) academic and career counseling, navigation, and support (middle school, high school, post-secondary education and training)
- Mentoring, support for peer, academic, and professional networks

Critical needs for **adults** included:

- Childcare
- Devices, wifi connectivity, assistance with set-up/use
- (Intrusive) academic and career counseling, navigation, and support (into employment)
- Peer and professional mentoring
- Housing support

Transportation, assistance with books, fees, and tuition, and direct cash payments for living expenses were also cited as needs for both youth and adults.

A function of the crowdsourced nature of the session, participants were able to share a large number of existing solutions and potential innovations in the area of wrap-around services, especially early learning and childcare. However, we ran short on time for in-depth discussion of them.

SOLUTIONS

Proposed solutions for **early learning and childcare** challenges cited:

- Accelerator and incubator programs for childcare (possibly modeled on Bend’s [accelerator](#) initiative)

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- Employer incentives for onsite or sector-centered childcare
- Co-op childcare approaches that invite community engagement and participation
- Shared service models for childcare
- Subsidized “pod-centered” pilots
- School-centered childcare (based in K-12 and college facilities)
- Multigenerational or community-centered care pilots
- Early learning and childcare sector support that links provision with training

“Rules around childcare are pretty restrictive but once we’re in a world with people working at home, we just *have* to find solutions. We’re trying to figure out how much room there is in the grey areas of regulation and law—like how we could design tutoring into camps.”

- Community Leader

“We’ve got a regional group meeting weekly about childcare. It’s big. And so complex.”

- Industry Leader

The majority of solutions offered in the area of work supports or wrap-around services addressed childcare, demonstrating the urgency of the care crisis. Solutions aimed at the remaining challenges are provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Proposed Wrap-Around Service Solutions

Devices and Wifi Connectivity
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improve broadband access at the community level• Extend wifi access through hotspots on school buses• Expand/increase wifi extenders and boosters in schools and public buildings (that can be accessed from outside or from parking lots)• Return to internet cafes• Bulk-purchase chromebooks for students• Expand device trade-in programs
Academic Advising, Career Counseling, Navigation

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- Extend outreach/support youth outside of school
- Focus on retaining English Language Learners in high school
- Focus on “intrusive” coaching, support and navigation, and career mapping (so individuals and families don’t “fall through the cracks”)
- Increase remote provision of student support services
- Pilot paid distance learning “coaches”

Mentoring

- Engaging new leaders
- Listening to lived experience
- Uncommon partnerships
- Virtual mentorship

Housing & Transportation

- Adopt subsidies and incentives (housing and transportation)
- Increase Individual Development Accounts (IDAs, housing)
- Encourage and support Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs, housing)

“We need more career navigators. Modern careers are too complex to just stumble into.”

- *Community Leader*

WORK-BASED LEARNING

Participants expressed high-levels of support for work-based learning. Although there were a few distinctions made between the needs of youth and adults, most participant contributions applied generally to the category of work-based learning or to a specific model such as apprenticeship regardless of apprentices’ age.

SOLUTIONS

Solutions participants named (or contributed in writing) are categorized and provided in Table 2.

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Table 2: Work-based Learning

Career and Technical Education (CTE, K-12 and college)

- Participants advocated for “normalizing” career and technical education in K-12, colleges (and universities, although university education was not a focus in this convening). They called for widespread advocacy for alternatives to four-year degrees after high school and required (paid) internships, work-experience or other work-based learning for all college students, including transfer students. A few participants advocated service or volunteer work be included as work-based learning as well as shared approaches to awarding credit.
- Specific tools, models and platforms named include:
 - [Recruit Hippo](#) (a platform for connecting young people with work experience and talent coaches)
 - [Resource Assistance for Rural Environments](#) (a potential networking, training, resource development, and capacity building opportunity) <https://rare.uoregon.edu/program-resources/program-calendar/>
 - [Oregon Youth Corps](#)—work, stewardship, and leadership development for at-risk youth through direct hire.

Apprenticeship

- Participants expressed enthusiastic support for apprenticeship, especially in the **trades. Maritime, culinary, and early learning and childcare** were also cited. A few participants expressed support for exploring apprenticeship in **non-traditional sectors and occupations**, such as healthcare (SOWIB launched the first [Medical Technician](#) apprenticeship) and IT ([Apprenti](#) has piloted programs in Oregon).
- At the same time, several participants noted that apprenticeship is difficult and not suited to all employers or occupations.
- Two participants indicated that **better information and shared platforms** were needed to support apprenticeship since it was difficult to identify what apprenticeships were available or what kind of help existed to support them. (Note: Registered apprenticeships in Oregon are now searchable by [county](#) and [Oregon Apprenticeship](#) is undergoing a website upgrade which may help solve these problems).

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- A few participants advocated for all forms of work-based learning, noting that this was a need before the pandemic and will be more urgent and widespread in the current (and more uncertain) economic climate and going forward.

Other solutions (to expanding, enhancing, improving work-based learning)

- Build more finance and economics into traditional education and CTE for young people
- Develop a common learning management system (LMS) for trades-centered education
- Explore remote work-based learning opportunities (especially those that could turn into jobs)
- Explore locally-relevant credentials (and provide this information so it can be used in coaching and decision support tools)
- Expand subsidized work programs like [Jobs Plus](#)
- Explore entrepreneurship not job placement alone in work-based learning (take advantage of Oregon [Self Employment Assistance](#) program to support this)

[At Oregon Youth Corps]...“We can keep students distanced and safe in learning and work. We employ them. We could use the program to hire young people to work on the garden to grow food for the students party and their families. Models like this meet student and community needs.”

- *Youth Program Leader*

“The big hurdle on apprenticeship is the costs—outreach, employer engagement, startup, design, progressive wages...you need an intermediary. We don’t have a natural one so workforce boards and colleges are stepping in. Apprenticeship is the anchor in the ecosystem of work based learning.”

- *Community Leader*

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“We need ways to coordinate apprenticeship [and related certificates and credentials] across state lines. This works better in the skilled trades but it’s a big challenge.”

- *Community Leader*

BETTER JOBS

Participants briefly shared and discussed ideas for improving jobs, job quality, and job opportunities in Oregon.

SOLUTIONS

Solutions offered in this area include:

- **Asset mapping** to aid retention and expansion efforts (an ecosystem approach)
- Focusing on **traded sectors**
- Focusing on **industry diversification and reshoring**
- Embedding quality jobs in a community well-being context

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

The SOWIB-hosted conversation uniquely emphasized the “how” of solutions in addition to the “what.” Many participants called for not just solutions but **new approaches to meeting education, workforce, and community needs more generally**—whether in the area of early learning and childcare provision or adult career support.

APPROACHES

Specific practices, presented in context but more widely applicable include:

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- Focusing on **equitable access to services** so that race, gender, age, English-language ability, disability status, and other issues does not prevent Oregonians from accessing the services they need to be contributors to Oregon's economy and communities.
- **Distributed access** supported by remote navigators was suggested as a strategy for promoting equitable access.
- **Warm-handoffs**—simple information-sharing and follow-up practices that can prevent people from falling through the cracks.

In addition, participants pointed to a need for new approaches, business models, and strategies. Again, specific contributions are presented in context but also apply more education, training, and workforce programs more generally.

- **Program and service models rooted in human centered design (HCD)** that place students and workers at the center of program activities rather than institutional rules or historical precedent. Participants noted that this approach can inform better and more effective programs and also increase equity and access.
- **Family and community-centered program and service models**, not just those designed to serve individuals. Participants noted that family-centered approaches tend to be more effective in normal times, but during this pandemic, where the impacts of the crisis are wide-spread and many people are restricted to their homes, whole-family approaches are more necessary.
- **Implementation and scaling strategies informed by data and implementation science** rather than transplanted practices shown to be effective generically or in different contexts.
- **Coordinated approaches to government and philanthropic investments (e.g. funders collaboratives)** that both complement one another and support the goals of recipient organizations and communities.
- **Shared service models** and other innovative business approaches. Although cited in the early learning and childcare context, business models that make use of infrastructure across organizations (e.g., employers of record, fiscal agents or sponsors, intermediaries, etc.) were suggested in several other contexts as a way to leverage resources and capacity and share risk in resource-scarce environments.
- **Support not just for programs but for the organizations operating them**—participants repeatedly pointed to funding and capacity challenges

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their communities faced prior to the pandemic that are more significant in its wake. They advocated for institutional funding, not just program funding, because without the former, the latter would almost certainly produce lesser results.

- **Better and more coordinated data.** Three specific complaints around data were cited repeatedly: data collection processes and sources are not linked (e.g., it's hard to know when programs are serving the same people); these same processes and sources are not always aligned (e.g., similarly named fields mean different things in different programs and databases), and too often, data that is required to be collected does not adequately measure the goals or outcomes of the program or intervention it purports to track. Two additional challenges cited were: too little data use in adapting or planning for the future and too little effort to repurpose data into decision support systems (e.g., apps) for staff or for customers.
- **More shared platforms**—a central problem across education, workforce, and economic development is the “silo” problem. Programs and agencies are working on shared challenges but often lack shared infrastructure for collaboration. Email and applications like Slack can help communication, but are not the whole answer. Collaboration across geographic boundaries on grants or programs can help, but does not remove misaligned incentives such as schools and colleges competing with one another for student reimbursements.
- **Future (of work) focus**—a few participants shared powerful statements about needing to prepare for the future, not just respond to the current crisis. They spoke to the importance of better forecasting (of need), better career-proofing (rather than training for specific jobs whose requirements change), and ongoing learning and training in which the private sector is a partner.

“[We need to] reinvent the ‘why’ of wraparound services and how they are triggered. If you apply for public housing or financial assistance, we could also assign a ‘navigator’ to assist the household. They may uncover more readily important social or medical complexities. Families in poverty can be hesitant to reach out for help in things more closely held in their private lives.”

- *Youth Advocate*

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“We need better intel on industry needs and the demand for credentials. It’s hard to respond when business signals are so unclear.”

- *Educator*

“Businesses will close – this will shift the character of some communities. We’ll need to look more broadly at the whole ecosystem and in investing and rebuilding communities.”

- *Community Leader*