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Background Brief on...

Oregon's Workforce System

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Workforce Economics

The economic health and wellbeing of the state is inextricably tied to the health and wellbeing of the state's business and industry and to the corresponding availability of a skilled workforce. Economic Development and Workforce Development go hand-in-hand—a viable economic strategy depends upon the dynamic balance of economic and workforce development. To maintain and attract business and industry, the *economic development part of the equation*, it is critical that the *workforce development part* provides the education and training necessary to equip competent workers to meet both the market demand and the skill requirement demand.

Oregon's workforce system continues to evolve and be refined, but since the early 1990's it has been consistently grounded in state, local and public/private partnerships; and, in a commitment to the vision of a world-class workforce—well educated, skilled and working—to keep Oregon's economy competitive in a global marketplace.

In 1989, a group of citizens representing business, labor, education and government identified the condition of the workforce as an indicator of quality of life in the *Oregon Shines Report*. In 1991 the legislature passed the Workforce Quality Act, in 1994 the Oregon Option and in 1997, Senate Bill 917 which created the Governor's Office of Education and Workforce Policy. All of these actions built and expanded workforce system partnerships. The partnerships included state agencies, government sectors and business and citizen groups.

By 1998, Oregon had a *Comprehensive Workforce Plan* and when the federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA) was passed, Oregon was already on the way toward integrating services. In 1999 the Oregon Workforce Investment Board (OWIB), consisting of business, labor, government and education leaders, was formed to advise the governor on workforce policy. In 2000 Oregon completed a Unified Plan for Workforce Investment, required by WIA, which formalized Oregon's workforce agency partnerships to create an integrated "One-Stop" delivery system. In December 2006 the Governor endorsed the OWIB's strategic plan "Winning in the Global Market". This strategic plan developed by state,

local business, labor, and education & workforce program providers lays out three major goals to accomplish over the next decade:

1. Ensure all Oregon employers have a competitive workforce advantage in the global market.
2. Prepare an agile, innovative workforce with the skills needed to succeed in the knowledge-based economy.
3. Build a flexible, unified workforce education and training system that consistently exceeds customer expectations.

Operating under the statewide brand “Worksource Oregon,” but true to Oregon’s traditional preference for local services, the One-Stop service centers are organized and staffed to meet local designs—so they look and operate somewhat differently across the state but all provide worker and employer access to services provided by the Oregon Employment Department (OED), the Oregon Department of Community Colleges and Workforce Development (CCWD), the Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS), and the Oregon Economic and Community Development Department (ECDD) and the local workforce and education agencies and boards.

At the state level, the leadership of the economic and workforce development agencies and the Governor’s Office of Education and Workforce Policy staff meet regularly in the Workforce Policy Cabinet. The communication and coordination that this group initiates contributes to the efficiency and effectiveness of workforce and economic development efforts that originate from diverse source agencies and/or funding streams. The workforce agencies are also at the table with the OWIB members as they craft advice for the governor

on workforce issues. Local boards, One-Stop center staff groups and the workforce response teams meet regularly to identify and initiate responses to localized workforce issues.

The federal funding for workforce programs comes to the state through the U.S. Department of Labor in WIA funding. The WIA programs relating to Adult Dislocated Workers, Youth and Adult Basic Education (Title 1B and Title II) are administered by CCWD. OED administers Employment Service/Wagner-Peyser, migrant and seasonal farmworker job training, and the veterans programs (Title III). DHS administers Title IV through the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services and the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds which have been tied to the WIA legislation and One-Stop services delivery system.

Resources

Link to WorkSource Oregon
<http://www.worksourceoregon.org/>

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