

# Oregon Workforce Investment Board

## Strategic Plan

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2016 – 2020



## Table of Contents

Executive Summary .....	1
Acknowledgments .....	2
Introduction.....	4
The Oregon Workforce Investment Board .....	5
The Workforce Development System.....	5
The Oregon Workforce Investment Board Strategic Plan.....	7
VISION.....	7
GOALS & STRATEGIES .....	7
Next Steps.....	13
Appendix A: Strategic Planning Process.....	14
Appendix B: Themes and Feedback from Stakeholder Engagement .....	15

## Executive Summary

The goal of this strategic plan is to create a road map for the workforce system to capitalize on its strengths, identify and address obstacles, and promote continuous improvement of services through actionable recommendations and guidance.

The OWIB's goals and strategies will provide guidance to local workforce development boards, but are not intended to act as an implementation plan for local services. The OWIB's strategic plan will provide goals on what is to be accomplished, but local boards will determine how the work is done, creating plans that will work for the unique characteristics of each area. The OWIB will provide guidance and access to best practices, and will facilitate connections between local areas and other agencies where appropriate.

This plan identifies four key goals critical to successfully achieving the OWIB's stated vision. Throughout the goals and strategies outlined in this document there are several themes that cross areas, including improving equity, efficiency, and accountability to performance and customer needs. With this focus on accountability, there are several key elements that will be a change for the workforce system as a result of this strategic plan.

- **EMPHASIS ON TRAINING** – A focus on occupational training will ensure that individuals are developing skills that are directly transferable to a job. The OWIB will require a minimum threshold of funds be spent on occupational training.
- **EVALUATING EFFECTIVENESS** – As resources become scarcer, it is important to make certain that funds are being spent in the most effective way possible. The OWIB will promote evaluation of program spending through return on investment analysis to monitor effectiveness of spending.
- **MONITORING** – In another effort to increase effectiveness a focus on monitoring will ensure not only that plans are in place, but they are being carried out successfully. The OWIB will promote accountability through increased monitoring of compliance and performance, producing results that will be shared with the public to promote transparency.
- **INCENTIVES AND CONSEQUENCES** – To further promote accountability and follow through, the OWIB will promote a system of incentives for successes and effectiveness and consequences for a lack of adherence to policy.

The transformation proposed by this plan will require a set of action steps be outlined to provide a roadmap for implementation. Subcommittees will work to create the action steps that will accomplish each, or in some cases more than one, of the strategies. These action steps will include detailed information on who should be involved, what resources are needed, timelines, and metrics for success.

While the OWIB will share responsibility for implementation with local workforce boards, state agencies and partner organizations, it is necessary to include all of these action steps as a part of the strategic plan to assure coordination of efforts under the OWIB's responsibility to oversee continuous improvement accountability of the system at all levels.

# Acknowledgments

Throughout this strategic planning process, a wide variety of partners and stakeholders have given their time and input into casting a vision for Oregon’s workforce system and developing of the goals and strategies found in this plan. The creation of this plan would not have been possible without the contributions of these individuals and their represented organizations.

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# Introduction

## The Oregon Workforce Investment Board

The Oregon Workforce Investment Board (OWIB) is the overall advisory board to the Governor on workforce matters. Appointed by the Governor under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, the OWIB is made up of leaders representing private business, labor, community-based organizations, Oregon legislature, local government, and state agencies. The majority of the 34 member board represent business.

## MISSION

The Oregon Workforce Investment Board advises the Governor on workforce policy and plans, and contributes to the economic success of Oregon by:

- Aligning state workforce policy and resources with education and economic development;
- Promoting a proactive, flexible and innovative talent development system; and,
- Holding the workforce system accountable for results to ensure Oregonians develop the skills they need to sustain rewarding careers and businesses have the talent they need to be competitive.

One of the primary duties of the OWIB is to assist the Governor by developing a strategic plan for Oregon's workforce development system. This system provides a wealth of services including job placement and training for youth and adults, employment-related services for veterans, people with disabilities, migrant farm workers, limited English speakers and other Oregonians in need of special assistance. The system also serves employers by providing job listings and qualified applicants, as well as testing, screening, and labor market information.

## The Workforce Development System

When we use the term “workforce development system” we are referring to the group of agencies in the State of Oregon that provide workforce services to Oregonian individuals and businesses. Offering a variety of services across these agencies, the workforce system has two primary customers:

1. Job seekers/working learners, including a) youth and young adults ages 14-24; b) adults transitioning from unemployment, dislocation, or public assistance to employment; and c) current workers
2. Businesses seeking qualified candidates for job openings and partnering on solutions for economic and workforce challenges.

There are several agencies that contribute oversight, resources, and programming to the workforce development system. At the State level, this includes:

- Oregon Employment Department (OED)
- Oregon Commission for the Blind (OCB)
- Department of Humans Services (DHS)
- Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC)
- Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI)

Each of these agencies oversees and/or provides investment in programs that are delivered locally through an additional layer of agencies and organizations, including:

- Local Workforce Development Boards
- Community Colleges
- Oregon Commission for the Blind
- WorkSource Oregon Centers
- Department of Human Services

The role of the OWIB is to convene these agencies, provide oversight to the system, and promote alignment and integration of services and resources to provide effective solutions to businesses and individuals for their workforce needs.

Other state agencies and local organizations are also key workforce system partners. These entities, while not under the oversight of the OWIB, include the state Department of Education, Business Oregon, universities, local school districts, educational service districts, organized labor, local economic development organizations, community-based organizations, businesses and business or trade associations.

The workforce system is guided by a set of principles that serve as an identification of the values that should transcend all work of the system, through this strategic plan or otherwise.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The guiding principles identify core or foundational values for the workforce development system that will be used as a lens for evaluating the goals, strategies and actions.

- Customers of the workforce system include both businesses and individuals (job seekers, working learners and youth).
- Data, including customer input, drives continuous improvement and accountability of the system.
- The state supports local decision-making to achieve the OWIB's vision and goals.
- Strategies are business-led, demand-driven and benefit all customers.
- Customers have access to a simple, flexible and streamlined system.
- System agencies and organizations are agile and nimble to respond to customer needs.
- The system promotes equity and strives to reach equitable outcomes, including but not limited to addressing the unique needs of families in poverty, communities of color, and rural communities.
- Collaboration within the workforce system and with other policy areas occurs between state agencies, through sector strategies, and at the local and regional level.
- Investments and decisions are results driven, not program-driven, to optimize long-term results for clients served, build a strong economy and achieve the state's goals.
- The system adopts tools and promising practices from other states or communities rather than creating new ones, whenever appropriate.
- The workforce system targets investments to high-wage, high-demand occupations in sectors where the opportunities are the greatest.



# The Oregon Workforce Investment Board Strategic Plan

The vision statement is an ideal guidepost that depicts what the state of Oregon and its economy will look like if the OWIB is successful in achieving its goals.

## VISION

*A strong state economy and prosperous communities are fueled by skilled workers, quality jobs and thriving businesses.*

## GOALS & STRATEGIES

**GOAL 1: Create a customer-centric workforce system that is easy to access, highly effective, and simple to understand.**

### Strategies:

- 1.1 | Create a framework for effective partnering within the workforce system.
- 1.2 | Align and leverage resources (data, funding, capacity, etc.) to collectively impact common outcomes and reward collaboration.
- 1.3 | Build accountability mechanisms focused on results.
- 1.4 | Build a solution-driven (vs. program-driven) culture.
- 1.5 | Market coordinated system services and unite communications and information sharing among workforce, economic development and education.

**Goal 2: Provide business and industry customized workforce solutions to prepare and deliver qualified and viable candidates and advance current workers.**

### Strategies:

- 2.1 | Create a sustainable framework for locally-driven sector partnerships to understand, anticipate, and respond to the needs of business and industry.
- 2.2 | Foster positive perceptions in business and industry about the workforce system.
- 2.3 | Actively communicate the coordinated services of economic development, workforce and education services to business and industry.

## Goal 3: Invest in Oregonians to build in-demand skills, match training and job seekers to opportunities, and accelerate career momentum.

### Strategies:

3.1 | Actively reach out and engage customers, especially target populations, about education, training, employment, and entrepreneurial opportunities.

3.2 | Empower Oregonians with the access, knowledge, tools, and resources to launch and accelerate career momentum, including information on local in-demand skills and careers.

3.3 | Increase resources for occupational skill development and hold local workforce boards to a minimum investment in occupational training, which shall be established by the state board in local plan guidance.

3.4 | Rethink and restructure training and skill development to include innovative and effective work-based learning and apprenticeship models and to accelerate training.

## Goal 4: Create and develop talent by providing young people with information and experiences that engage their interests, spur further career development, and connect to Oregon employers.

### Strategies:

4.1 | Create pipeline plans, as part of Oregon's sector strategy approach, to connect in-school and out-of-school youth to opportunities in local sector partnerships.

4.2 | Pursue additional resources to support local initiatives in both rural and urban communities.

4.3 | Provide technical assistance and/or incentives to support adoption and expansion of work-based learning, apprenticeships, and internships.

4.4 | Build partnerships to increase exposure to job and career opportunities and better connect school to work.

## **Goal 1: Create a customer-centric workforce system that is easy to access, highly effective, and simple to understand.**

The State of Oregon has cultivated a strong workforce system which provides a solid foundation for further collaboration to promote improved customer service and increased effectiveness. Creating a streamlined, collaborative workforce system is the number one goal within this strategic plan because it directly affects the success of all other goals the OWIB pursues. If the system is not aligned, easy to navigate, and focused on the customer, all other efforts to improve our services will be less effective.

### ***Strategies***

#### ***1.1 Create a framework for effective partnering within the workforce system.***

A framework for partnering will put processes in place for state agencies, local boards and other workforce organizations to work together and better understand each other's services. This process will help to underline current policies that both help and hinder collaboration and will inform future policymaking decisions to support integration.

#### ***1.2 Align and leverage resources (data, funding, capacity, etc.) to collectively impact common outcomes and reward collaboration.***

Achieving more effective partnering will allow state and local workforce organizations to leverage resources, whether those be in the form of data, funds, or staff. As resources become scarcer, partnering will help to stretch them further to impact the outcomes of all participating organizations.

#### ***1.3 Build accountability mechanisms focused on results.***

Policies, processes, and funding decisions are only effective if they are followed or used properly. A theme of this strategic plan is to increase accountability to these things to focus on results. The OWIB will lead efforts to design and enforce mechanisms for accountability to ensure that investments are used wisely and programs are serving customers effectively, and to address shortfalls to make improvements.

#### ***1.4 Build a solution-driven (vs. program-driven) culture.***

A solutions-driven culture is one that starts plans with an end goal in mind. It focuses on the customer and seeks to understand their needs before deciding how to provide programs that will help to meet them. The workforce system has a lot of programs in place and is governed by federal law that could make it easy to turn to a program-driven culture, simply following the letter of the law and not thinking outside the box to meet the unique needs of the customer. The goal of this strategy is to ensure that does not happen and state agencies and local boards continue to hear from their customers and adapt programs to meet their needs.

#### ***1.5 Market coordinated system services and unite communications and information sharing among workforce, economic development and education.***

A system with uncoordinated services is very difficult for a customer to navigate. If the system markets services in a coordinated way, customers can come to one place and understand how to get the services they need without needing to understand the ins and outs of how it will happen. This is true for all services within the workforce system, but also for collaborating with economic development and education. For many customers, services from more than one or all three of these areas will be needed to reach a

successful outcome. A system is best coordinated and most effective when all partners understand each other's services and communication paths are clear and well utilized for a seamless customer experience.

## **Goal 2: Provide business and industry customized workforce solutions to prepare and deliver qualified and viable candidates.**

The second goal focuses on the business side of the workforce system's customer base. Businesses need an available workforce that is trained not only in the occupational skills required to do the job, but also in the employability skills necessary for candidates to be viable in the job market.

### ***Strategies***

#### ***2.1 Create a sustainable framework for locally-driven sector partnerships to understand, anticipate, and respond to the needs of business and industry.***

Business-led sector partnerships present a great opportunity to convene industry representatives and partner agencies and organizations to work to understand the collective needs of businesses in an industry. These conversations about common needs can identify common solutions that may be targeted to impact businesses on a wider industry basis, such as training programs for candidates, incumbent worker training, or various operational support programs. While these partnerships occur locally, the OWIB will create a framework to provide guidance or a road map to successful sector partnerships based on current efforts and best practices, potentially facilitation coordinated strategies between regions.

#### ***2.2 Foster positive perceptions in business and industry about the workforce system.***

In order to maximize utilization of the services available to businesses, the workforce system needs to be seen as a trusted partner for meeting workforce needs. Greater utilization requires awareness of two different kinds – first, that businesses know the services exist, and second, they can see that they are effective. To increase awareness and visibility, local boards must be active in the community with other partners and at the table for any collaborative efforts. If progress is made toward Goal 1, increased accountability and collaboration and a focus on positive solutions will increase the effectiveness of the services that are available. This commitment to effective services and achieving results is a critical step to ensuring positive perceptions among business and industry. Boards should communicate success stories of businesses that have received benefits from workforce services.

#### ***2.3 Actively communicate the coordinated services of economic development, workforce and education services to business and industry.***

Workforce development, economic development, and education and training providers all offer tools to serve businesses. To effectively provide these services, all of these organizations must be coordinated to ensure a seamless experience for business customers. When a business needs assistance, they do not need to know all of the work it takes behind the scenes from different organizations to make it happen. If communication is coordinated, the business will be able to have a clear message on what is available and how to get services. The OWIB will create a framework for this at the state level by ensuring coordination and collaboration with other state level boards and agencies providing workforce, economic development, and education services.

### **Goal 3: Invest in Oregonians to build in-demand skills, match training and job seekers to opportunities, and accelerate career momentum.**

The third goal focuses on the jobseeker side of the customer base. In order to increase the opportunity for employment, jobseekers must be prepared with in-demand skills, or those that are currently needed by business and employers locally. Matching training opportunities to the needs of local employers will allow the workforce system to present jobseekers with more opportunities, and employers with more viable candidates to choose from. Focusing on demanded occupational skills can also allow jobseekers to get a first step toward a larger career pathway and to accelerate the process of advancement.

#### ***Strategies***

##### ***3.1 Actively reach out and engage customers, especially target populations, in education, training, employment, and entrepreneurial opportunities.***

To maximize the number of individuals taking advantage of the services offered, the workforce system should be proactive about engaging customers who are not already aware of the options available. Workforce and partner staff should also be fully informed on the full menu of services provided by all partners to be able to offer guidance and additional information to current customers.

##### ***3.2 Empower Oregonians with the access, knowledge, tools, and resources to launch and accelerate career momentum, including information on local in-demand skills\* and careers.***

Instead of prioritizing customer choice or job placement over the needs of businesses and the available individual career paths, the workforce system should combine these efforts by helping individuals understand their options within the local economy and opportunities for advancement. This allows individuals to think beyond just getting a job and focus on taking a step toward a sustainable, lifelong career.

*\*In-demand skills are those that are currently needed by local businesses and employers.*

##### ***3.3 Increase resources for occupational skill development and hold local workforce boards to a minimum investment in occupational training, which shall be established by the state board in local plan guidance.***

Funds should be prioritized for occupational training that gives people the tools that they really need to work in local businesses. By establishing a minimum requirement for funds spent on occupational training, the OWIB is promoting accountability to ensure that the workforce system is truly supporting services that benefit both jobseekers and local businesses. This minimum threshold will be revisited each year of this strategic plan to adjust to the environment of the workforce system.

##### ***3.4 Rethink and restructure training and skill development to include innovative and effective work-based learning and apprenticeship models and to accelerate training.***

Effective training often must go beyond classroom training to address all types of learners and provide hands-on experiences. Work-based learning and other innovative strategies that can help individuals understand more clearly what it is like to work in a certain industry or company are important to both improve learning outcomes and to help individuals with career exploration.

**Goal 4:** Create and develop talent by providing young people with information and experiences that engage their interests, spur further career development, and connect to Oregon employers.

During the stakeholder input activities throughout the strategic planning process, there was an overwhelming theme identifying youth as an important target population for the strategic plan. Recognizing that the current youth population is tomorrow's workforce, this goal focuses on providing opportunities, in partnership with business and education, for young people to experience and understand the local economy to inform their future careers.

### ***Strategies***

***4.1 Create pipeline plans, as part of Oregon's sector strategy approach, to connect in-school and out-of-school youth to opportunities in local sector partnerships.***

While some activities of sector partnerships will focus on meeting the immediate needs of the industry, to ensure that the future workforce is also prepared, sectors must take into account the youth population. As new and existing sector partnerships are being launched or expanded throughout the state, a plan is needed to ensure a focus is kept on the emerging and future workforce and that young people are informed about and connected to the strong industries in their communities.

***4.2 Pursue additional resources to support local initiatives in both rural and urban communities.***

As resources become scarcer from federal and state sources, it is important to make sure that a strong menu of youth services isn't lost. The OWIB will support local areas in pursuing additional resources for maintaining current initiatives and implementing new and innovative programs that engage and provide work experiences for youth.

***4.3 Provide technical assistance and/or incentives to support adoption and expansion of work-based learning, apprenticeships, and internships.***

While the OWIB does not directly provide services to businesses or individuals, it will be a resource for technical assistance, making connections between local areas, and sharing best practices related to various work-based learning initiatives. When possible and if funds are available, it will prioritize incentives for programs that provide these experiences for youth.

***4.4 Build partnerships to increase exposure to job and career opportunities and better connect school to work.***

Partnerships with businesses and schools are essential to ensuring young people are exposed to local career options and are able to see real-world applications of what they are learning in school. The OWIB will work to make these connections at the state level and to share best practices from across the state and country on how to make these partnerships successful and address any of the obstacles that typically exist when trying to provide youth work experiences.

## Next Steps

### Action Steps and Implementation

Even though goals and strategies have been identified, the planning process is not complete. The OWIB will organize strategic planning subcommittees to define the next section of this strategic plan – the section that addresses, *“Now what do we do about it?”*

Each of the strategies outlined in the previous section will be accompanied by actions that outline the steps the OWIB needs to take to accomplish its goals. Because a system is more than a collection of silos, some action items have been designed to address multiple goals and strategies. Each action step will include several elements:

- A Description of the Action to be Taken
- OWIB Member Champion
- Parties with Implementation Responsibilities
- Resources Required for Implementation
- Timeline for Implementation
- Anticipated Outcomes
- Metrics to Measure Progress and Results
- Consequences of No Action

After all of the action steps are planned, including timelines and necessary partners, they should fit together to build a timeline and a clear roadmap for implementation. It is important to be realistic and assign priority among the action steps, to create a critical path for implementation success. After the implementation timeline is completed it will serve as a guide not only for carrying out the strategic plan, but also tracking progress and reporting back to the full OWIB and Executive Committee.

## Appendix A: Strategic Planning Process

Based on the OWIB's desire to create a planning process that was as inclusive of as many stakeholder groups as possible, work began on creating a new strategic plan in May 2015. The OWIB chose a process that was highly interactive and focused on input from a variety of stakeholders across the state to ensure buy-in and ownership from those who will share responsibility for implementing the plan's recommendations.

The process was kicked off with a board meeting focused on the OWIB's mission, vision, and focus areas. The board discussed the purpose and values of its work to begin identifying concepts and language for new or revised vision and mission statements. The board also began discussing some of the top priorities for the workforce system and identifying some of the broader themes across these ideas.

To align with the board's desire to include a high volume of input, focus groups and interviews were held to gather feedback from a variety of stakeholders, including businesses, education and training providers, local workforce boards, economic development, labor organizations, community-based organizations, and other partners in the workforce system. Representatives were asked a series of questions based on their stakeholder groups, ultimately culminating in feedback on areas of strength and opportunities for improvement within the workforce system.

Upon gathering the board's input and that of its stakeholders, themes were identified, and four subcommittees were formed to drive the next step in the planning process. Subcommittees were made up of OWIB members as well as other interested partners and subject matter experts. Each committee met twice to review the input and begin formulating goals and strategies.

After the first draft of the subcommittees' goals and strategies was created, community forums were held in each of Oregon's nine local workforce areas to react to the draft and provide further input on the direction of the strategic plan. Valuable information was gathered from across the state and incorporated into the goals and strategies through staff, consultant, and further subcommittee work.

The mission, vision, goals, and strategies that you will find in this document are a reflection of this highly interactive input and review process.



# Appendix B: Themes and Feedback from Stakeholder Engagement

## Focus Groups

During the week of June 1, 2015, focus groups were held with four stakeholder groups – Business and Industry, Community-based Organizations and Labor, Education, and Local Workforce Board Representatives. Each group was asked a similar, but tailored set of questions, the themes of which revolved around two questions, 1) what is the workforce system doing well? and 2) what are opportunities improvement or advancement of the workforce system? Some of the common themes and key pieces of input from each focus group are found below.

### Business and Industry

#### What is the workforce system doing well?

Local workforce boards are running many successful programs across the state.

Providing levels of training that are hard to find or not offered in other places; e.g. some remedial training, basic skills, employability skills.

Good source to refer employers to when looking for a specific skill or kind of worker.

#### What are opportunities improvement or advancement of the workforce system?

Not everyone is aware of successes of programs around the state. Advertise successes and best practices to promote the system.

Partner with economic development to make staff fully aware of all the workforce services available to promote when making field visits.

Goals must be aligned at the higher policy level to make sure all partners are able to work toward the same thing.

Focus on training that crosses industries to provide the most opportunities for jobseekers.

Need to increase flexibility to make sure services are demand-driven, not program-driven.

### Community-based Organizations and Labor

#### What is the workforce system doing well?

Variety and quality of services provided are good.

Effective in pulling industries together and learning needs. Sector strategies have – in places they are established – and will enhance this.

#### What are opportunities improvement or advancement of the workforce system?

Many people have to “happen upon” the system. It could serve more people if it were more well-known. The system should have clear access points for both customers and partners. There are inconsistencies between boards and branches that exacerbate this. Clear messaging would be very helpful.

More industry-wide training mechanisms.

Increased focus on wrap around services.

More focus on special populations. For this expansion, all staff need to be trained on the unique needs of other target populations to be able to better serve anyone who walks through the door.

Identify other providers in the area and include them in planning and strategic conversations.

## Education

### **What is the workforce system doing well?**

Collaboration and convening. Workforce development is a trusted partner.

Looking to the future. The workforce system and other partners are focused on celebrating successes and moving forward with what we have, not looking backward.

Strong labor market and employer data and analysis. Having dedicated LMI staff in each region is a huge advantage.

Ability to have different designs for programs across the state to meet needs.

### **What are opportunities improvement or advancement of the workforce system?**

There are a lot of opportunities for distance education. This will be a partnership between the workforce system and education entities.

More opportunities to bring workforce development into education conversations with employers, especially in CTE. This will be easier/promoted through sector strategies.

Youth strategies were mentioned throughout stakeholder engagement. Continued and enhanced partnerships with education entities will help to reach a younger population and build a pipeline.

Leverage interactions with industry to share information and reduce duplicative conversations.

## Local Workforce Board Representatives

### **What is the workforce system doing well?**

Empowering local boards to utilize strategies that are tailored to each region. The OWIB can be a guidance and support structure for local boards, providing a vision, best practices, and sharing information, but leaving the “how” to the locals.

The last strategic planning process was useful in that it was specific on outcomes, but loose on how to achieve them.

Guidance and support in chartering new boards. The State staff were very helpful throughout this development process.

### **What are opportunities improvement or advancement of the workforce system?**

The more boards can be consistent across the state, at least in face value, the stronger they will be for customers. This can refer to messaging, awareness, and also the services offered.

Tools could be more flexible to be able to truly meet an employer’s needs when they request services.

There is potential to create a ROI model that is consistent for programs across the state.

Would like to see the OWIB as educators on WIOA and the workforce system. Visuals or diagrams of all the programs and services would be helpful.

## Interviews

One-on-one interviews were held with a variety of stakeholders representing business, partner agencies and organizations, apprenticeship programs, education associations, community colleges, and local workforce boards. Like the focus groups, each individual was asked questions specifically tailored to his or her position, but the overarching themes revolved around two questions, 1) what is the workforce system doing well? and 2) what are opportunities improvement or advancement of the workforce system? Some of the common themes are found below.

### What is the workforce system doing well?

Collaboration is a strength. There is a strong referral process between many programs and there is good communication. Some local areas have great models for these partnerships that could be shared to other areas and adapted.

Empowerment is given to the local boards, which makes partnerships and collaboration easier.

Availability and communication of workforce data. The workforce system shares high quality data on state and local workforce trends and employer needs with partners.

Promoting sector strategies. These are in the beginning stages in many areas, but the efforts to promote them are increasing the communication and collaboration in serving industries. Partnerships will be outlets for business engagement in workforce strategies, including apprenticeships.

Support for the rollout of the new boards was strong. The State provided a lot of guidance and support that made the process as smooth as possible in new areas.

### What are opportunities improvement or advancement of the workforce system?

Workforce system is under-known and under-appreciated. There is an opportunity for increased awareness through common messaging and promotion. This will increase the ease of access. Messaging should also be created reflecting the language of business, not government.

Increased focus on youth strategies. There is an opportunity for this across the board, educating youth on local opportunities and providing more work experiences.

Utilize technology to connect different areas of the state, or even within individual areas that cover a larger footprint, for better communication and program collaboration where possible.

Apprenticeships should be included as a vital part of the workforce system, not just a tool that is available.

Increase flexibility for boards to meet the needs of customers, including customized training for specific employer needs and timelines.

Further alignment of K-12, post-secondary education, and workforce development. Workforce can be the connection of these education entities to business and industry.

Technical assistance and information sharing to the local boards. This can be both on the program side through sharing best practices, or on the technical/legal side to help boards make sure they are in compliance. Technical assistance and facilitating connections between local boards will help build capacity in smaller areas with fewer staff.

## Community Forums

Between July 8 and August 4, 2015, the Oregon Employment Department and Oregon's nine Local Workforce Boards co-hosted a series of Workforce Development Community Forums. These meetings were held in Eugene, Portland, Wilsonville, Salem, Lincoln City, Medford, Redmond, La Grande, and Coos Bay. The purpose of the forums was to gather feedback from businesses, service providers and other stakeholders regarding the draft goals of the Oregon Workforce Investment Board's strategic plan, and to assist Local Workforce Boards in development their subsequent strategic plans. Over 450 individuals participated in the forums statewide.

The Oregon Workforce Investment Board's (OWIB) sub-committees had developed four draft strategic goals. They were:

1. Create a simple, easy to access, demand-drive workforce system that inspires and empowers all Oregonians to build skills and accelerate career momentum.
2. Business and industry looks to the Oregon workforce system to deliver relevant, qualified and viable candidates.
3. To unite workforce, economic development and education to contribute to a thriving business economy in Oregon.
4. To create a workforce system that is customer-centric, easy to access, highly effective, and simply to understand.

During the forums, one of the questions asked of participants was, "What do you think of these goals?"

Responses were generally consistent and can be summarized as follows:

- The goals are similar to each other and have significant overlap, especially goals 1 and 4, and goals 2 and 3.
- The goals need to be clear enough in specificity that you can know if you have been successful in achieving them.
- Goal 1 is good, but too large and complex. Consider breaking it into two goals, or move parts of goal 1 to goal 4.
- Goal 3 seems like the "lead" goal and should be first.
- There needs to be a goal specifically addressing youth.
- Goal 3 needs to include "business" or "employers" as a partner in building a thriving business economy.

While some variations in timing and agenda were made to account for local needs, all the forums included a brief presentation that included the findings from the 2014 Future of WorkSource forums, changes made in the workforce system in the previous year, a summary of legislative and state agency actions taken during the past year, and a brief description of key elements of the new federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. Following the presentation, participants were asked to select one of the OWIB draft goals and answer the

question, “What will be different in five years?” Within the ideas generated, table groups were then asked to identify the one or two ideas that were most compelling and necessary or needed to be accomplished first. A summary of responses includes:

**Goal 1: Create a simple, easy to access, demand-drive workforce system that inspires and empowers all Oregonians to build skills and accelerate career momentum.**

Partnerships need to be large and inclusive and include greater involvement of business and education, especially K-12. Shift the perception of WorkSource as a “crisis center” to include more highly skilled jobs and job seekers with services relevant to their needs.

Available resources include a wide array of federal, state, and local assistance programs that focus on removing barriers and not just building skills. Services are available 24/7 including simple on-line tools and apps with single sign-on and common assessments across programs. Learning is integrated with career pathways and OJTs are abundant and begin earlier, including in K-12.

Utilize faith-based organization’s facilities for workforce services as they are locally distributed, have established trust relationships with the community, and are available during the week.

**Goal 2: Business and industry looks to the Oregon workforce system to deliver relevant, qualified and viable candidates.**

The workforce system is the resource of choice for businesses looking for qualified candidates. It is the “go to” place for workforce solutions. All workforce agencies and partners speak to business with one voice and the resources and value of the system are better marketed. Employers have resources and funding to train their employees and invest money and time in the development of current and future workers through job training and internships.

The workforce system better understands employer needs on a statewide basis and from an individual employer perspective with increased clarity on the necessary employee skills sets and training required. Employer needs are captured through onsite visits, networking, and developing relationships through a consultative approach. Employers have clearly identified their needed skills and hire employees with the skills that match their need. There is a focus on the retention of businesses.

There is a continuum for developing skills starting in middle and high school and a link of skills to careers, especially in STEM. Intergenerational mentoring is a standard practice. Flexible training options are responsive to business needs and the economy, with an innovative approach to where the training takes place.

Data drives investments, continuous improvement, and accountability.

**Goal 3: To unite workforce, economic development and education to contribute to a thriving business economy in Oregon.**

System partners support each other’s success, avoid duplication of efforts, and know what strengths each brings to the table. A strong, forward-thinking relationship exists between each local business community and their workforce system. There is stronger alignment with economic development.

Oversight of the workforce system by a single state agency facilitates transition from secondary education, earlier contextualized learning, and vocational programming for high demand occupations with business/industry involvement. All partners operate under a common brand. Marketing happens with straightforward plain language that the general public understands.

Increased awareness and connection between employers and the system includes high schools, community colleges and economic development with a stronger alignment between K-20 and the needs of business. There are more volunteer, internship, and on-the-job training opportunities available, especially for youth. There is increased awareness and engagement with career counselors and increased focus on youth employment and connections to apprenticeships, volunteer opportunities, internships, OJTs and paid and unpaid work based learning. High school workforce programs focus on “earning and learning” and are connected to the talent needs of business. Digital badges certify soft skills.

Planning includes all partners and is proactive. A ten-year forecast includes anticipated skill needs. Use best practices, get “in front” of the economic cycle regarding demand for education and workforce services.

Fewer or looser regulations encourage business to grow and thrive. The system has more certainty around funding, and is technically streamlined.

**Goal 4: To create a workforce system that is customer-centric, easy to access, highly effective, and simply to understand.**

There is clarity at the state level on expectations, coordination, alignment, resource sharing and service delivery. Integration and adaptability focus on meeting business and job seeker needs rather than individual services and programs. Employers have an increased perception of the value of the system, and are willing to be more engaged. There are incentives to work together.

The workforce system will have a simple registration process. It will be simple to use for both businesses and job seekers and have multiple access points through the use of technology. Multiple entry points serve as a launch pad for job seekers with little or no experience. Highly knowledgeable staff provides seamless services to job seekers and employers. Technology and personnel facilitate individualized outcomes for business and job seekers. A single data system across agencies allows staff to have a complete picture of the customer.

Focus on continuous process improvement with better customer feedback systems and a customer-based interactive navigation system.

**Conclusion**

Participants in the nine forums provided valuable feedback on each of the OWIB’s four draft strategic goals. The feedback and input also creates a compelling picture of a potential future at the state and local level. Sufficient detail is provided to aid both state and local planning efforts and to drive necessary and positive change that better serves employers and job seekers alike. While the information provided in this Executive Summary is a high level report of the feedback provided, the Comprehensive Report provides even greater detail and description of how those stakeholders in the system see the possibilities of the future.