



Oregon Workforce Partnership – Introductory Statement

Thank you Representative Alonso Leon and Committee members for leading this important conversation. We appreciate the opportunity to work with you to ensure state and local workforce efforts are meeting the needs of all Oregonians and our business partners.

My name is Bridget Dazey and I am the Executive Director of Clackamas Workforce Partnership. I am here today as Chair of the Oregon Workforce Partnership, the association comprised of the 9 local workforce boards and the State partners joining us today.

We would also like to thank the Governor and State agencies for their efforts to modernize State data systems and associated practices. This is a much-needed undertaking that we hope will position the State's technology infrastructure to most effectively support the current and future business needs of the State and the multitude of Oregonians it serves.

We are hoping this conversation opens the door to the bigger picture, future state. One of your questions was *'what does the ideal future state look like'*. I'll come back to that in a minute.

I would like to start with a comparison of the healthcare system and Oregon's workforce system. Our structures, in many ways, are different, yet there are some distinct similarities if you'll bear with me a moment. We have all visited or called a clinic or doctor's office and shared details about our health, only to be referred to another doctor or clinic to fill out similar forms and provide information regarding our health needs. Have you been transferred from one department to another; had to repeat your story or situation; and been frustrated by the need to repeat yourself and/or fill out paperwork, often having to track follow-up for yourself?

In many ways, the workforce system is like the health care system, in that clients accessing services through WorkSource Oregon or a partner agency branch office face similar challenges in how records are kept and shared, how personal information is collected and how a client's progress is managed through multiple access points.

Now let's walk through a potential scenario for an Oregonian needing assistance to obtain or retain employment in today's economy. Let's imagine that a client walks into WorkSource Oregon for support with job search or training. The intake process to enter information into WOMIS and I-Matchskills takes anywhere from 30 to 60minutes. Information about their income, demographics, education and work history are gathered. They do so and begin a journey to assess which tools and resources from system partners could benefit them on their road to self-sufficiency.

This individual, depending on their age or barriers to employment, could be referred to or qualify for programs with DHS Self Sufficiency, Vocational Rehabilitation, Older Worker Programs, Job Corps, the community college, Title I-funded training, etc. Depending on which programs and services make sense for this individual, the client may have to complete additional enrollment processes with each program — each asking many of the same questions as the original WSO registration. At the same time, staff assisting the client are not able to know, other than client self-attestation, which programs they are already enrolled in and receiving benefit from. For example, a client may be receiving food stamps and

a WorkSource staff may or may not know this depending on whether it is disclosed or if the staff has access to this information through a data-sharing agreement among parent organizations and agencies.

If staff, across all system partners, has the opportunity, in real time, to know pertinent information about a client -- it takes the guess work out of the equation and allows staff to provide meaningful support in an efficient manner, while reducing duplication of effort and resource.

The data environment used to support the WorkSource Oregon System is unique in that WorkSource Oregon is a shared state/local system. By design WorkSource promotes the alignment and integration of programs and services to better serve clients and is made up of several partners ranging from Federal and State programs to local agencies, nonprofits and education institutions.

Understanding the local workforce ecosystem and sharing client service-level data between all partner organizations is essential to seamless customer service and to achieving the vision and promise of WorkSource Oregon.

With record low unemployment rates and a huge demand for workers or talent, we have a small window of time to create a stronger value proposition for private sector partners to tap into talent we serve. More of our community is living in poverty, has limited access to reliable transportation, have a criminal history, and faces discrimination because of the color of their skin, their gender, age, or disabilities. This means more assistance and resources will be necessary to help them achieve their goals of self-sufficiency.

So, what does an ideal future state look like? Ideal means all partners, through the use of 21st century technology solutions, being able to access and enter data in a way that allows multiple partners to serve the same client in a meaningful way. Solutions such as simple data sharing agreements are options that our system is using some to some degree, the opposite end of the spectrum is one data system used by all workforce partners.

Local Workforce Boards support Modernization efforts of state legacy systems. We understand that state government modernization is bigger than the workforce system partners represented here today just as the workforce system is comprised of many other partners not represented here today. So, modernization efforts do not necessarily address the challenges we are attempting to bring to light for WorkSource Oregon, its clients, partners and staff.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Section 107 and the State Workforce Plan requires Local Boards to accomplish 13 primary functions. One of those is to coordinate the delivery of core WIOA programs through the one-stop service delivery system. Another is to “develop strategies for using technology to maximize the accessibility and effectiveness of the local workforce development system.” To adequately perform these functions, there needs to be a clear process for engaging Local Workforce Development Boards in State-level conversations about changes that may impact WorkSource, including the use and functionality of related data systems.

What do we want from the Legislature?

- Review of any regulatory or legal constraints that impact data sharing between the State and Local Boards.
- Ensure compliance by state agencies with the mandates of federal law by acknowledging the role of Local boards to lead and be involved in the development of real-time technology solutions, of which data sharing is a component.

- An opportunity to come back to the Committee prior to the start of the session to update you on progress and to identify any ongoing challenges related to the WSO system coordination.
- Designate a neutral “body” to provide oversight for all system partners in order to provide a mechanism for dispute resolution.

We don't expect resolution today; this should begin our path forward. This will take time, collaboration, consensus building and be informed by what's working and what's not.

At the core of it, this is about serving people better. We must, as public servants, reduce our clients, community members, and businesses frustration working with the public sector.