



**LANE WORKFORCE BOARD MEETING**

**Thursday, December 11, 2024**

**3:00PM – 5:00PM**

**MINUTES**

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<b>In Attendance:</b>	Jennifer Adams, Julie Davidson, Jeff Graham, Courtney Griesel, Bettina Hannigan, Solomon Harris, David Heavirland, Shondra Holliday, Heidi Larwick, Lynn McDonald, Bailey McEuen, Grant Matthews, Stan Pickett, Matt Sayre, Charlene Vermilyea
<b>Absent:</b>	Monica Bielski Boris, Billy Dover, Phil Hohnstein, Laura Luther, Jeff McGillivray, Chelsea Miller, John Stapleton, Steve Yamamori
<b>Board Staff:</b>	Ashley Espinoza, Anne Nestell, Tiffany Cink, Cindy Perry, Jesse Quinn, Ryan Kounovsky, Stephanie Lovell, Luke McCullough
<b>Others:</b>	Henry Fields, John Flanagan, Brian Rooney

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<b>Action Summary</b>	<b>Motion</b>	<b>Seconded</b>	<b>Status</b>
Approved Full Board meeting minutes September 26 <sup>th</sup> , 2024	Courtney Griesel	Heidi Larwick	Unanimous Approval

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**I. CALL TO ORDER and INTRODUCTIONS**

Shondra Holliday called the meeting to order.

**II. PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment.

**III. CONSENT CALENDAR**

Courtney Griesel made a motion to approve the September 26<sup>th</sup>, 2024, Board Meeting Minutes. Heidi Larwick seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved.

**IV. PRESENTATION: 2024 – 2026 STATE OF THE WORKFORCE REPORT**

Presenters: Ryan Kounovsky, Brian Rooney, Henry Fields

The presentation provided an in-depth overview of the state of Lane County’s workforce, highlighting key trends, challenges, and opportunities for the 2024-2026 period.

**Economic Trends**

Lane County’s economy has evolved significantly over four decades, fostering diverse sectors such as high-tech and environmentally conscious industries. While the region experienced prolonged recovery from the Great Recession – adding 26,200 jobs between 2010 and 2020 – the COVID-19 pandemic led to a steep job loss of 15% in early 2020. Currently, Lane County has regained 95% of these jobs, though challenges like high prices and increased remote work persist.

## **Labor Market**

Unemployment in Lane County peaked at 14.7% during the pandemic but has since stabilized at a low 4.0%. Factors such as retirements and ongoing job vacancies (peaking at 10,300 in 2022) reflect structural shifts in the labor market. Labor demand has been bolstered by economic stimulus, while retirements continue to create openings.

## **Employment Growth**

Projections highlight that even slow-growing industries will generate job openings due to replacement needs.

## **Wages**

Lane County's average annual wages increased during economic recoveries but have faced recent declines due to inflation. Approximately 62% of jobs in the region pay below the average annual wage of \$61,932. The wage gap between Lane County and the rest of Oregon reflects the concentration of higher-paying industries in the Portland area. High-paying jobs are often concentrated in healthcare and technology but represent a small portion of overall employment.

## **Education**

Educational attainment has improved over time, with 33% of residents aged 25 and older now holding a bachelor's degree or higher, up from 22.2% in 1990. Many job openings still require only a high school diploma, but 52% of roles projected between 2022 and 2032 will demand post-secondary education for competitiveness.

## **Workforce System Overview**

The report emphasized "Quality Jobs Principles," focusing on equity, job security, career advancement, and workplace culture. Oregon Employability Skills such as adaptability, digital literacy, and collaboration were highlighted as critical for workforce readiness.

## **Opportunities in Lane County**

- **Current State:** Small businesses dominate, with 96% employing fewer than 50 workers. Key sectors include healthcare, construction, and professional services. Workforce diversity is increasing, though gaps persist in high-wage sectors, particularly for women and Hispanic/Latino workers.
- **Opportunities:** Collaborative programs address barriers like housing and skills gaps, while employer-supported training enhances worker stability. Skills-based hiring and alternative pathways such as certifications are reshaping traditional recruitment practices.
- **Future Outlook:** Healthcare, technology, and construction are projected to lead job growth. Declining in-migration, an aging workforce, and automation trends pose challenges, necessitating investments in local training and mentorship programs. Younger workers prioritize inclusive workplaces and purpose-driven roles, while AI is expected to drive demand for skilled STEM and healthcare jobs.

The presentation underscored the importance of adapting to emerging trends such as the gig economy, remote work, and automation. Collaborative strategies and inclusive workforce initiatives remain key to ensuring economic resilience and sustainable growth in Lane County.

## V. RFP REVIEW COMMITTEE SELECTION

Julie Davidson, Chair of the Workforce Operations Committee, provided an update on the development of the Request for Proposals (RFP) for Adult/Dislocated Worker, Youth, and One-Stop Operator services. She noted that the committee has dedicated the past three meetings to crafting the RFPs, which are set to be released mid-January.

Julie outlined the next steps, which includes establishing three Review/Evaluation Committees. She encouraged board members to volunteer for these committees, which will convene in March to review proposals and provide final recommendations. The anticipated time commitment for members includes:

- Proposal Review: Approximately one hour per application received.
- Evaluation Meeting: A two- to three-hour meeting to discuss and evaluate proposals.

Julie emphasized the importance of avoiding conflicts of interest when participating in these committees. Examples of potential conflicts include:

- Direct financial or personal ties to a potential applicant or organization.
- Affiliation with a potential applicant, such as serving on its board.
- A contractual relationship with a potential applicant.

Board members with questions about potential conflicts of interest were encouraged to talk with LWP staff for guidance.

A sign-up sheet was distributed for those members interested in volunteering.

## VI. CHAIR'S REPORT

Shondra Holliday provided an overview, noting that the action item summaries from the LWP Board, Executive Board, and Lane Council meetings are outlined on page 11 of the board packet.

## VII. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Highlights from Ms. Espinoza's Report:

- **Award Highlights:**
  - Connected Lane County received the National 2024 Youth Program of the Year award from the National Association of Workforce Development Professionals. This award honors Connected Lane County's outstanding contributions to youth workforce development and its commitment to empowering young people in Lane County. The award ceremony took place during the 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Youth Symposium in Phoenix, Arizona.
  - John Stapleton was honored with the Oregon Workforce Partnership Workforce Champion of the Year award further solidifying Lane County's leadership in workforce innovation and excellence.
- **Grant Funding:**
  - Bushnell University has been awarded a \$1 Million Healthcare Workforce Ready Grant from the HECC as part of the Future Ready Oregon initiative. This grant will support the "Paving a Pathway to Practice" project, a collaboration with PeaceHealth Oregon and LWP, aimed at addressing Oregon's critical nursing shortage.
  - University of Oregon, in partnership with Connected Lane County and Lane ESD were awarded a \$10 Million dollar grant to support youth ages 18 – 24 with

- disabilities. The focus will be on work-based learning experiences to prepare participants for meaningful and stable employment.
- Latino Professionals Connect received funding from The Oregon Community Foundation for another year of programming.
- Industry for Educators (program is now called Blueprint) has received additional resources for another series, in partnership with LaneESD and Collaborative EDO.
- **Oregon Business Summit:**
  - Recently attended the Oregon Business Summit and it was wonderful to see two of our partners (Justin Thibedeau with Connected Lane County and John Stapleton with PIVOT) on stage talking about our work with Connected Lane County and Constructing a Brighter Future/Team Oregon Build youth programs.
- **Recent Presentations:**
  - People’s Coast Summit: LWP and CEDO presented at the 2024 People’s Coast Summit in Florence, Oregon, leading a keynote panel and workshop on the Oregon Coast Hospitality Industry Sector Partnership. The panel focused on economic development and professional growth along the coast.
  - WORKing Together Conference: Facilitated a panel around the construction-aggregate sector.
  - Bethel School Board: Ashley serves on the Bethel School Board and had the opportunity to attend the Oregon School Board Association Conference in Portland and present on Bethel’s strategic plan.
- **WORKing Together Podcast:**
  - Hosted by Ashley and powered by the Oregon Workforce Partnership, the podcast offers insights into innovation and collaboration driving workforce development across Oregon’s nine regions.
    - November episodes include Jennifer Richardson (Richardson Media); Tamar Jackson (Collaboration for a Cause), and Justin Yuen (Grouptrail).
    - December episodes include Chris Laney (LightCast) and Pastor Gabe (Everyone Village).
- **Board Year of Service Recognition:**
  - Jennifer Adams and Stan Pickett were recognized for their 10 years of service on the Lane Workforce Partnership Board of Directors.

## VIII. BOARD COMMITTEE UPDATES

- Julie Davidson, Workforce Services Operations Committee
  - Update was covered in the RFP Review Committee Selection agenda item.
- Jesse Quinn, Community Engagement Committee

Jesse Quinn provided an updated on the activities of the Community Engagement Committee, highlighting achievements and ongoing initiatives:

- **Public Relations and Outreach**

Over the past two years, social media engagement has grown significantly, with a 400% increase across platforms. Current efforts include active presence on Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, and the monthly newsletter. Recent outreach on Reddit has also proven successful in promoting events.
- **CTE Talent Matches**

The committee is exploring approaches to connect industry with education, including collaboration with Lane ESD and Collaborative EDO. They are evaluating Group Trail as a potential platform to bring industry partners to classrooms. Plans are underway to engage a few industry partners in a pilot program.

- **Re-entry Populations**  
Recognizing opportunities within re-entry populations, we are creating a list of “second chance employers” to share with service providers and partners.
- **Expungement Clinic**  
Planning is underway for a third Expungement Clinic, scheduled for April 2025.
- **National Recognition**  
Identifying opportunities to pursue national awards/recognition to showcase the region’s work and elevate the contributions of our partners.

## IX. BOARD MEMBER UPDATES

- Dave Heavirland (U.S. Dept. of Veteran Affairs)
  - Attended the WORKing Together Conference, which he found very insightful. The experience inspired him to join the National Association of Workforce Development Professionals (NAWDP).
  - Expressed gratitude for the board photo session facilitated by LWP.
  - Recently applied for and was accepted to a Field Advisory Board Role within the Department of Veterans Affairs. This mentorship position supports 200 of his peers, leveraging his 32 years of experience.
  - Volunteered to lead the One-Stop Operator RFP Evaluation Committee.
- Julie Davidson (Oregon Employment Department)
  - At the One-Stop Center, the team navigated transitions involving unemployment insurance and new software, using the opportunity to develop expertise in the public-facing aspects of the system, assist customers with navigating changes, and work closely with employers to address their needs.
  - Implemented strategies to engage customers immediately, focusing on reemployment services while ensuring alignment with their unemployment benefits.
  - Currently exploring how to offer support services for individuals on unemployment insurance. The goal is to provide immediate employment services during the initial six-week unemployment period and encourage engagement with the center. Updates on this initiative are forthcoming.
- Heidi Larwick (Connected Lane County)
  - Announced the upcoming Health Exceclerator scheduled for February. Encouraged members to refer students interested in healthcare to participate.
  - Highlighted ongoing challenges in communicating the importance of engaging with Gen Alpha. Shared plans to develop resources such as modules and videos to emphasize the benefits of hiring Gen Alpha talent.

- Matt Sayre (Collaborative EDO):
  - Shared Collaborative EDO's strategic approach to economic development, emphasizing collaboration anchored in key partnerships. Highlighted three significant partnerships:
    - Oregon Entrepreneurs Network (OEN) and Technology Association of Oregon (TAO): Renewing partnerships with these statewide organizations to establish a body of work in Lane County in 2025.
    - Oregon Bioscience Association: Recognized this as an emerging industry and a significant forward-looking opportunity for economic development.
  - Provided an update on Regional Innovation Hubs, established by Business Oregon to support innovation-based businesses across various sectors. The hub for the region, covering Benton, Lane, Lincoln, and Linn counties, is managed by Cascades West Council of Governments through Business Oregon. An RFP was released to support the hub's development. Collaborative EDO submitted a proposal and was selected. The innovation hub will function as a platform to leverage regional strengths rather than as a new entity, fostering partnerships beyond Lane County.
  
- Bailey McEuen (Homes for Good)
  - Secured funding to expand permanent supportive housing services.
  - Announced the upcoming move-in process for individuals at Lazy Days in Blue River starting next month. This site, a mobile home park destroyed during the 2020 wildfires, is being redeveloped with modular units designed to support homeownership. The goal is to transition residents into a program that enables them to eventually own their units, fostering long-term stability and homeownership.
  
- Bettina Hannigan (Florence Chamber of Commerce)
  - Announced the launch of a Young Professionals Organization in Florence. Over 100 individuals expressed interest, with 45 attending the first meeting. The group is highly engaged and has established its own leadership team, with mentorship support from the Young Professionals Organization in Eugene. This initiative is part of the Chamber's broader investment in workforce retention, and feedback has been overwhelmingly positive.
  - Expressed gratitude to LWP for coordinating the board photo session.
  - Highlighted concerns over the recent loss of several key businesses in Florence, noting challenges affecting the workforce, including housing shortages, limited funding, and a lack of succession planning. Shared that the Chamber is actively addressing these issues through a phased approach: awareness, advocacy, and action.
  
- Jeff Graham (Danone/So Delicious)
  - The company has introduced new product packaging and an updated logo design, along with new products that will launch in Q1.
  - With strong sales and increased customer demand projected, the company is evaluating workforce needs and anticipates hiring additional employees in the near future.
  - Launching a campaign with Billie Eilish in Q4 so anticipating excitement around that.
  - The \$7M refrigeration project is progressing well and will require a plant shutdown during the final two weeks of the year for completion. The plant will reopen in the new year with upgraded refrigeration systems in place.

- Courtney Griesel (Sierra Pacific Industries)
  - Partnering with Onward Eugene and industry leaders to foster community dialogue about the industry's value, contributions, etc.
  - Have achieved near 100% employment for the first time during her tenure and expressed optimism about economic stabilization within the next 18 months.
  - This year the company completed a new 45,000-square-foot fabrication shop and truck maintenance facility. We will be closing that down next week to do a ham drive-through for our employees for the holidays.
  - In partnership with Downtown Merchants, installed a Christmas tree in Keesey Square for the first time in years and is also placing a tree along Highway 99.
  
- Stan Pickett (Delta Sand and Gravel)
  - The company faced significant impacts from retirements this year, leading to some downsizing. Moving forward, will be focusing on implementing culture change across the organization, with plans to provide training over the next 12 – 18 months. Anticipates revisiting workforce growth as the economy stabilizes and returns to normal patterns.
  
- Jennifer Adams (Northwest Community Credit Union)
  - The merger is in its final phase, with the official operational date set for March 3, 2025.
  - Northwest Community Credit Union's CEO of 40 years will be retiring next year, and the search for a successor is underway.
  - 2025 will focus on internal employee development, with opportunities to upskill staff.
  - Celebrated achieving zero pay gaps across all protected classes for the first time in four years, a significant milestone for the organization.
  
- Charlene Vermilyea (Emergence Addiction & Behavioral Therapies)
  - Works for Emergence Addiction & Behavioral Therapies, a second-chance employer that mainly serves court-mandated clients along with working directly with Sponsors. The organization provides evidence-based services, including intensive outpatient programs, DUII education and treatment, peer support, aftercare recovery, and specialized programs for the Latinx and LGBTQ communities. Emergence employs many former clients who have successfully graduated from its programs and serves communities across Lane and Linn counties, including Eugene, Springfield, Cottage Grove, Florence, and Albany, fostering a culture of grace and acceptance.
  
- Lynn McDonald (IBEW, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers)
  - Things are going well at IBEW, which covers nine counties with approximately 1,800 members. Currently, about 150 Journeymen are on the out-of-work list, though most apprentices have recently returned to work. By March or April, the organization anticipates near full employment, particularly in Central Oregon, though Lane County remains a challenging area. Efforts are ongoing to improve employment opportunities in Lane County.
  - Actively working on Project Labor Agreements (PLAs), noting the favorable support from the current national administration for labor initiatives.

- Grant Matthews
  - Anticipates the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) will approve Lane Community College's Bachelor of Science in Nursing Program tomorrow. The program has already been approved by the LCC Board, with the curriculum under development and plans to launch in fall 2025.
  - Shared that the new Industry and Trades Education Center, a 54,000-square-foot facility dedicated to trades, construction, and manufacturing training, has received provisional occupancy, with plans for an official grand opening coming later.

**X. OTHER BUSINESS**

No other business was noted.

**XI. ADJOURNMENT**

Ms. Holliday adjourned the meeting.