



Workforce

Overview

The region recognizes the critical role of a qualified workforce in addressing sustained economic growth of the region. In educational attainment, the MCEDD region is keeping pace with the states and exceeding the nation in the percentage of the population with an Associate's degree, but falls behind in measurements of individuals with a bachelor's degree or higher. The primary avenue to address the need for a skilled workforce is via support to enhance and expand upon existing services, with a long term vision for developing new resources. Needs include:

- Pre K-12 Support The pre K-12 system in the region is the primary provider for basic skills development. Most school districts have struggled in the past few years to maintain vibrancy during state and federal budget cuts.
- Higher Education Local community colleges are responsive to industry's needs with cornerstone programs which have supported the region's economic development initiatives such as CGCC's Nursing and Renewable Energy Technology training.
- Basic Skills Training Basic skill requirements and the workforce quality for entry level positions needs improvement. With a constantly evolving economy, talent in the region must be able to rapidly adjust to new occupations using transferable skills sets. The region seeks to match the needs of businesses with available skills trainings.
- Quality Workplaces With a very low regional unemployment rate, the tight labor market is creating competition for qualified workers. Thus, quality of the workplace becomes paramount.
- Bi-State Workforce As a bi-state area, we share a common workforce and require collective training opportunities and a regional system in Oregon and Washington.

Workforce Action Plan

Priorities

- Increase skill level. Focus on programs tied to key industry sectors (eg food/beverage at Columbia Gorge Community College)
- Develop more paid internship opportunities.
- Enhance regional participation on workforce investment boards.

	Partners	Timeline
3.1 Strategy: Support strong preK-12 programs throughout the region.		
3.1.1 Advocate for consistent and increased funding for educational programs throughout the region. a) Advocate for state funding b) Support mechanisms for local funding (eg Gorge Community Foundation, scholarships)	Education partners, Gorge Comm Fdtn, local advocacy groups	Current legislative session
3.1.2 Encourage participation of all education and workforce entities in the Regional Achievement Collaborative (RAC) to support consistency in quality of education and disseminate best practices.	RAC and partners	Immediate
3.1.3 Identify and address facilities issues for K-12 system a) Support master planning efforts for school districts b) Support new facility needs identified in master plans: Bonding, funding campaigns, site identification. c) Identify re-use options for closed facilities, including makerspace/ trade/skill centers.	School Districts, ESDs, business partners, ED partners	Mid to long term
3.1.4 Identify strong performing schools as an asset for recruitment and retention of business. Encourage media coverage of academic achievements. Compile data for employers of achievement metrics.	School districts, RAC, ED partners, industry alliances	Short to mid term
3.2 Strategy: Enhance/expand regional career preparation programs targeted to students and job seekers, including internships and apprenticeships		

<p>3.2.1 Support career and college readiness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Provide dual credit options: High School and college b) Provide early career education c) Offer trade programs at the high school level: CAD, auto, welding, Career Tech Education d) Coordinate needed training with state school curriculums. 	<p>School Districts, CGCC</p>	<p>Long term</p>
<p>3.2.2 Further develop regional internship and apprenticeships options</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Develop multi-faceted first training/employment experiences through job shadow/mentorship program. b) Enhance Columbia Gorge Internship Network. c) Enhance internship opportunities to support local employers. 	<p>Industry alliances, education partners, RAC</p>	<p>Long term</p>
<p>3.2.3 Increase connections to jobs for local students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Continue to host annual STEM career fair. b) Partner with Workforce Investment Boards and counties to host regional career fairs. 	<p>GTA, workforce boards, county economic development (ED)</p>	<p>Annual: career fair, other: mid-term</p>
<p>3.3 Strategy: Improve incumbent worker skills; support retooling and upgrading skills</p>		
<p>3.3.1 Increase awareness of training options available. Further establish relationships with local workforce boards.</p>	<p>Workforce boards, CGCC</p>	<p>Short-mid term</p>
<p>3.3.2 Address direct skill needs; focusing on skills transferable to a constantly evolving economy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Focus on filling “baby boomer” gap when they start retiring and addressing aging workforce issues. b) Address basic math and literacy skills. c) Develop contextual skills. 	<p>Workforce boards, CGCC, School Districts, RAC</p>	<p>Long term</p>
<p>3.4 Strategy: Promote and encourage connections between employers and workforce/education partners.</p>		
<p>3.4.1 Identify means to assist firms to gain access to higher educational and research institutions</p>	<p>County ec dev, industry associations, univ, PNNL,</p>	<p>Long term</p>

	CRITFC, USGS, USFS	
3.4.2 Ensure employers are active on local workforce boards.	Workforce Boards	Short term
3.4.3 Provide ongoing assessment of employer needs.	Workforce Boards, MCEDD, Industry, workforce partners (LLT)	Ongoing
3.4.4 Support employer sponsored training models (eg Wind Challenge, Robotics, Flight Academy). Facilitate development of new programs supported by industry.	Industry, MCEDD, GTA, Alliances	Ongoing (current) Mid-term (new)
3.5 Strategy: Address the talent needs of target industries.		
3.5.1 Food/Beverage Manufacturing. a) Support development of a fermentation/ food/ beverage program at Columbia Gorge Community College. b) Identify opportunities to support employers in meeting Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) requirements. c) Identify and support employers in achieving relevant certifications.	CGCC, CRITFC, BiG, Cider Society, MCEDD, Winegrowers Assoc, Gorge Grown	Short term- Ongoing
3.5.2 High Tech- unmanned systems a) Enhance/expand STEM initiatives. Expand STEM partnership through the STEM Hub. b) Increase connections to R/D facilities. c) Increase connections to Universities. d) Provide resources to identify and support employers in meeting certification requirements.	GTA, Universities, MCEDD, Industry, County Ec Dev	Short term: STEM Long term: universities Ongoing: certification
3.5.3 Art/Culture/Tourism/Recreation. a) Support the nascent culinary arts program. b) Support Qcare and tourism focused training programs, particularly those that “skill up” and lead to higher wages.	Chambers, Col Gorge Arts/Culture Alliance, Fresh Starts, CGCC, Col Gorge Visitors Alliance	Immediate- mid term
3.6 Strategy: Foster regional (cross jurisdictional, bi-state) training opportunities		
3.6.1. Explore possible tuition reciprocity that would be consistent among all	Colleges, universities	Future

higher learning institutions in Washington and Oregon (Bi-State agreement).		legislative session
3.6.2 Support Regional Achievement Collaborative to connect pre K-20 institutions, workforce training programs, employers. Address shared resources and connections.	RAC, workforce boards, industry alliances	Long term
3.7 Strategy: Further efforts to support attraction of qualified employees; job placement.		
3.7.1 Establish incentive to allow people to return to area after training	Workforce boards	Long term
3.7.2 Address related issues to employee recruitment (housing, amenities, broadband)	(see relevant sections of this strategy)	
3.7.3 Provide connections between multiple job listing sites	Lead TBD	Mid-term
3.7.4 Address wage and workplace benefits issues through a human resources support network.	GTA, MCEDD, CGCC, workforce partners	Mid to long term