



April 2021

Dear Business, Community, Labor and Government Partners:

Over the past year, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused regional unemployment claims to reach historic levels. Notably, many of our community members – Black, Indigenous, and other people of color, women, immigrants, individuals with disabilities, and workers with less access to education and lower incomes – have disproportionately suffered from the health and economic devastation caused by the public health crisis. The aftermath of this crisis calls for deliberate and bold changes to stabilize our workforce and ensure our region can successfully move forward.

How do we do this?

We must design and embrace an equitable economic recovery. One that addresses long-standing inequities including lack of access to jobs and careers that allow people to support themselves and their families and perpetuates longstanding economic disparities.

We believe in the value of work and the shared benefits afforded to workers, businesses, and our communities through good, high-quality jobs. We also believe through partnership and intentionality we can increase the number of quality jobs and improve the regional economy for all. We are joining together to form a regional effort, building a public/private coalition of businesses, community-based organizations, and public partners to advance an equitable economic recovery through a quality jobs initiative.

This is not an issue for social services alone, this is also a business imperative. Good, high-quality jobs — ones with competitive wages and benefits, predictable hours, necessary training, and opportunities for advancement — are good for business!

Good, high-quality jobs lead to decreased employee turnover and absenteeism, greater productivity, better service to customers and higher company resilience and ability to survive economic downturns.

What are we proposing?

As workforce boards representing the Greater Portland-Vancouver Metropolitan Region, we are eager to convene a regional effort to increase inclusivity to economic prosperity during our recovery. As such, we are announcing a Quality Jobs initiative, and are asking our business, labor and community partners to join us in this effort.

Our objective in promoting quality jobs is to:

- Prioritize advancing workforce equity.
- Ensure the region's public workforce system is preparing and supporting customers to transition to high-quality jobs.
- Include and elevate partners and companies who are committed to promoting and meeting quality jobs standards.
- Provide a blueprint for companies that want to make improvements for their workforce.
- Align wage standards with the self-sufficiency standard and/or other best practices.

For this initiative, we have identified the following characteristics of a Quality Job but need further stakeholder input to define this for the region.

1. Wages sufficient to cover basic living expenses, a stable/predictable income, and opportunities to build wealth/assets.
2. Working conditions that are safe, free from discrimination and harassment, and have a process to engage with workers and their ideas for improvement.
3. Stable/predictable work hours.
4. A package of benefits that facilitate a healthy, stable life.
5. Opportunity to build skills and advance in a career pathway.

We will be evaluating our investments in the workforce development system, which will be assessed for effectively advancing equity and inclusion.

We look to you, our partners, to work with us to co-create with community input, a regional approach to foster positive outcomes for people and workers to contribute to business growth and success.

Please join us.

We hope you will join us as we rethink our collective investments to support working people and our local business community to expand equity for our region. We are seeking input and collaboration from stakeholders to develop this initiative, and we would like you to be part of these efforts. **Contact Darcy Hoffman, WSW's Director of Business Services, at dhoffman@workforcesw.org to join in the discussions and formation of this initiative.**

We've posted on our website examples of how other regions have implemented quality jobs practices and their successes. We know that by working together we can create a stronger, healthier, and more equitable recovery and region.

We welcome your partnership and value your support.

Sincerely,



Kevin Perkey
Chief Executive Officer
Workforce SW Washington



Andrew McGough
Executive Director
Worksystems, Inc.



Bridget Dazey
Executive Director
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