

Workforce Table Report

PREPARED BY
**Commissioner
Shannon Singleton**

2025



Letter from Commissioner Shannon Singleton

After spending the majority of my career in housing and ending homelessness work, I never expected to find myself in transportation policy. I left my dream job as Executive Director at JOIN, a homeless services nonprofit, in 2019 to work for Governor Kate Brown. During my time in her office, I helped broker the compromise that moved the Rose Quarter Improvement Project forward after months of gridlock, and positioned it for federal funding.

Two years later, I joined Espousal Strategies LLC as their Director of Community Engagement and Advocacy, leading a team focused on equity-centered engagement and workforce and Disenfranchised Business Enterprise (DBE) investments for the Rose Quarter. I also designed and facilitated community benefits work for the Interstate Bridge Replacement Program.

Through that work, I found myself working alongside the trades and other industries. It didn't take long to see how my decades in social work connected directly to workforce and anti-poverty efforts. The family wage jobs created by infrastructure projects help address the same underlying economic instability that leads to food insecurity, housing challenges, and limited access to education. Lasting stability requires more than shelter or detox, it takes wraparound support together with a family-wage job.

While campaigning for office, I said that **I wanted to connect the people who are receiving County services to family-wage careers - and that is exactly what I set out to do** when I was elected. In May, I convened a workforce table focused on trades and manufacturing. Throughout this process, we explored the challenges and workshopped potential solutions. I want to thank everyone who took the time to share their expertise, experience, and ideas. I learned a tremendous amount from this process and look forward to the work ahead.

With gratitude,



Shannon Singleton, Multnomah County Commissioner District 2





Overview

Over four months, I held a series of work sessions with unions, industry leaders, pre-apprenticeship program leaders, and workforce development organizations. The goal was to explore how the County can better support programs that connect people stuck in poverty to stable, family-wage careers in the trades and manufacturing.

Participants highlighted strong local pre-apprenticeship and Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs and shared success stories from those who built careers through these pathways, gaining stability and moving out of poverty. At the same time, they identified barriers - limited and unstable funding, childcare shortages, jobsite culture issues, and the “benefits cliff” that makes it difficult for workers to advance in their career while keeping needed safety net supports.

Building on these discussions, the participants produced concrete, actionable recommendations. They called for multi-year funding to stabilize pre-apprenticeship programs, stronger connections between CTE and apprenticeships, and more intentional supports for contractors certified through Oregon’s Certification Office for Business Inclusion and Diversity (COBID), which promotes participation by minority-, women-, and service-disabled veteran-owned businesses. They also emphasized that retention must be prioritized through respectful workplace programs, mentorship, and mental health resources, alongside the continued work in recruitment diversification.

Together, these sessions laid the groundwork for a more coordinated system—one that centers equity, strengthens partnerships, helps more people access and succeed in trades and manufacturing careers, creating opportunities for individuals and families to move out of poverty.

Body of Work

The following section summarizes key needs, assets, and actions identified during the **Anti-Poverty and Workforce Development Work Sessions**, and is organized by the responsible entity (County, State/Federal, Regional Workforce Equity Agreement (RWEA), or Other). The content of this document will guide my office's work moving forward.

Key Issues We're Trying to Address

1. Increase successful completion of pre-apprenticeship programs by providing individualized supports and interventions.
2. Address the negative impact of "income cliffs" and how increased income can lead to loss of existing supportive services.
3. Provide multi-year flexible funding for pre-apprenticeship programs to stabilize staffing, program planning, and wraparound supports.
4. Increase consistency and support for mental health/psychological safety (respectful workplace safety) programs.
5. Improve government agency's understanding of the jobsite experiences for workers and employers, and how these experiences impact project timelines, budgets, and quality of work.
6. Identify how COBID businesses and workers can better access affordable healthcare. Identify and provide a path where businesses and workers can access affordable childcare. Hours of operation should match construction work schedules.
7. Better understanding of how people navigate the system. Make it people-centered, primarily looking at the connection and "hand off" between one step and the next.



"WE ARE IN AN "ALL HANDS ON DECK" MOMENT AS IT RELATES TO PROVIDING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY. THIS GROUP WAS BROUGHT TOGETHER TO INFORM US, AS ELECTED LEADERS, ON WHAT STRATEGIES, POLICIES AND PROGRAMS MULTNOMAH COUNTY CAN IMPLEMENT AND PROMOTE TO MOVE THE DIAL. I LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING THIS WORK AND RECOMMENDATIONS COME TO FRUITION AND APPRECIATE THE LEADERSHIP OF COMMISSIONER SINGLETON IN CHAMPIONING THIS EFFORT."

Commissioner Vince Jones-Dixon

1. Increase successful completion of pre-apprenticeship programs by providing individualized supports and interventions.

Recommendation	Lead	Potential Partners	Cost	Timing	Status	Notes
Pre-Apprenticeship Stability Investment: Provide multi-year, flexible funding to pre-apprenticeship programs for wraparound supports and program operational needs (GED, child care, emotional support)	Multco	Worksource; Akana (childcare); pre-app programs; apprenticeship programs; PCC; BOLI	\$300 - \$500K per year	TBD	Not Started	County funded pre-apprenticeship workforce investments will need to increase from \$200,000 to \$300,000 - \$500,000 for Worksystems program. This can happen through the annual budget process or a budget modification.
Pilot Program: County Properties and Pre-Apprenticeships: Place 5-10 pre-apprenticeship graduates annually into County facility roles as paid transitional experience.	Multco	Pre-App and Apprenticeship programs; BOLI	TBD	FY 26 - Scope; Summer of 2027	Not Started	Potential to build on existing County programs, e.g. DCM's road and bridge maintenance apprenticeships and summer internships
Public Awareness Campaign: Media campaign showing real tradespeople (BIPOC, women, graduates with degrees who switched to trades) to shift perceptions and reduce stigma.	Multco	pre-apprenticeship programs; PCC;	TBD	2026	Not Started	Participants recommended linking to the County's upcoming RWEA site with the testimonials.

2. Address the negative impact of “benefits cliffs” and how increased income can lead to loss of existing supportive services.

Recommendation	Lead	Potential Partners	Cost	Timing	Status	Notes
Benefits Retention & Incentives for Trainees: Explore programs that allow apprentices and pre-apprentices to retain public benefits (child care, SNAP, healthcare) during training to avoid benefits cliff. ¹	Multco	Worksystems; Pre-apprenticeship programs	TBD	TBD	Not Started	There was a high degree of support for this to be prioritized. Potential loss of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Oregon Health Plan (OHP), and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) in particular is a significant reason why people cannot enroll in pre-apprenticeship programs. Model on past successful benefit-retention programs.

3. Provide multi-year flexible funding for pre-apprenticeship programs to stabilize staffing, program planning, and wrap around supports.

Recommendation	Lead	Potential Partners	Cost	Timing	Status	Notes
Pre-Apprenticeship Stability Investment: Advocate for a state-level ongoing funding (Dept. of Labor/Workforce Development) to make it reliable and not dependent on one-off grants.	Multco	Pre-Apprenticeship programs; Worksystems Inc	TBD	TBD	Not Started	Without solid and long term funding commitments, the pre-apprenticeship programs do not have time to react and plan in a meaningful way.

¹Refers to situation where if someone makes even a dollar more than a threshold thus making them ineligible for a service/benefit/program.

4. Increase consistency and support for mental health/psychological safety (respectful workplace safety) programs.

Recommendation	Lead	Potential Partners	Cost	Timing	Status	Notes
Respectful Workplace Climate Subsidy Pilot P.1: Address hostile jobsite culture by preparing trainees through pre-pre-apprenticeship modules and holding contractors accountable for creating inclusive environments. Train and support instructors to deliver this content effectively.	Multco	Amy James Neal/PCC; Metro; RWEA team; OHSU; primes and subs	TBD	TBD	Not Started	The groundwork for some of this is in the RWEA 2.0 proposal, but more could be added, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respectful workplace programs that include training and ongoing educational and policy programs
Respectful Workplace Climate Subsidy Pilot P.2: Commitment from RWEA partners on a coordinated approach. Make jobsite climate scores part of evaluation and enforcement (OHSU program).	Multco	RWEA team; RWEA partners; OHSU	TBD	TBD	Not Started	The groundwork for some of this is in the RWEA 2.0 proposal.
Respectful Workplace Climate Subsidy Pilot P.3: Subsidize respectful workplace programs (e.g., Green Dot, Rise Up) and climate evaluations for participating contractors.	Multco	Primary contract holders, their subcontractors, vendors; PCC; OHSU	TBD	TBD	Not Started	To ensure fidelity to the models, subject matter experts must work with contractors on implementation and provide monitoring.

"The trades need work today more than ever. With so many government projects not moving forward, we must look at ways that we can support the trades so we have the skilled workers we need when projects are ready to go to construction. "

Commissioner Shannon Singleton



5. Improve understanding of the jobsite experiences for workers and employers, and how these experiences impact project timelines, budgets, and quality of work.

Recommendation	Lead	Potential Partners	Cost	Timing	Status	Notes
RWEA 2.0 Changes: Tie RWEA funding to measurable outcomes, track number of people placed and retained.	Multco	Supplier Diversity Program; Metro	TBD	2026	In progress	Multco is nearly ready to release the RWEA website that was created for this exact reason; it includes testimonials from workers.
RWEA 2.0 Changes: Revise penalties for non-compliance with apprenticeship representation goals.	Multco	Supplier Diversity Program; Metro	TBD	TBD	Not Started	Better tracking needed to follow up on contractors who consistently do not reach goals and continue to use the same methods that have been unsuccessful.
CAREER AWARENESS FOR EDUCATORS: Potential for the County to support this and look for educational opportunities within our programs. Align content with employer feedback; use National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) or similar tools to assess readiness	Multco	PPS, apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs	TBD	2026	Not Started	Specific examples of programs that could be expanded now are tours of active County construction projects for high school and pre-apprentice programs, as well as making CTA a full program instead of a class.

6. Identify how COBID businesses and workers can better access affordable healthcare. Identify and provide a path where businesses and workers can access affordable childcare. Hours of operation should match construction work schedules.

Recommendation	Lead	Potential Partners	Cost	Timing	Status	Notes
Small Contractor Incubator Program*: Lower Workforce Training and Hiring Program (WTHP) thresholds below \$250k to support increasing the pool of registered training agents.	Multco	PBDG; PCC; NAMC	\$100 - \$150K	TBD	Not Started	The County can programmatically change the WTHP threshold from \$250 to a lower amount. This will require an additional .5 Full-time Employee (FTE) to augment the Supplier Diversity Program Staff to provide supportive services.

7. Better understanding of how people navigate the system. Make the system people-centered, primarily looking at the connection and “hand off” between one step and the next.


Existing websites (BOLI registry, Oregonapprenticeship.org, LCPtracker, and WLDS/HECC) do not provide what is needed to track people through the system and after journeying out.

Recommendation	Lead	Potential Partners	Cost	Timing	Status	Notes
Unified Apprenticeship Pathways Portal P.1: Develop an online hub to track participants from pre-apprenticeship through journey level employment.	Multco	BOLI; JATCs; HECC/OED; Supplier Diversity Program; DCHS	TBD	TBD	Not Started	A new hub could be developed and/or support could be provided to an existing site.
Unified Apprenticeship Pathways Portal P.2: Track participant outcomes from pre-apprenticeship through journeyworker.	Multco	BOLI; JATCs; HECC/OED; Supplier Diversity Program; DCHS	TBD	TBD	Not Started	At a minimum, demographics, enrollment status, supports used, and completion status should be tracked.
Unified Apprenticeship Pathways Portal P.3: Connect workforce opportunities with people receiving County services through HD-HSD-DCHS-DCJ-MCSO so that as individuals enter or touch the County’s system, we can access information about their past history	Multco	BOLI; JATCs; HECC/OED; Supplier Diversity Program; DCHS	TBD	TBD	Not Started	A central hub should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Coordination • County staff, CBOs, and JATCs can log supports or referrals • Integration with SCOPE and Common Application for service eligibility and referral tracking



Overall Accountability and Transparency Recommendation

Recommendation	Lead	Potential Partners	Cost	Timing	Status	Notes
Stakeholder Advisory Committee: Convene quarterly meetings with education programs, pre-apprenticeship programs, apprenticeship programs, contractors, and community-based organizations to share resources, address challenges, and align outreach.	Multco	Worksystems; PCC; Columbia Corridor; NAMC; PBDG; Working Waterfront; Pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs	Minimal	Start Q1 of 2026; quarterly thereafter	Not Started	There is strong support for holding quarterly meetings to strengthen coordination, improve information sharing, and ensure that focus remains on solutions that move goals forward.



"The value of a sustaining job cannot be overstated. It is the bedrock of an empowered life. Steady work provides the physical and mental stability that keeps families healthy, the financial peace of mind to save and plan for the future, and a deep sense of personal pride and purpose. When our residents have reliable work, they aren't just earning a living; they are building the social ties and skill-sets that make our entire community more resilient. These recommendations are an exciting step forward, and I look forward to moving them from vision to action."

- Commissioner Vince Jones Dixon



Conclusion

This is just the beginning. As we move forward to address these recommended actions, I will work with the Chair and my fellow Commissioners to move forward some short-term and low-cost recommendations while planning for mid-term recommendations as part of the FY 27 budget development process.. My office will also continue to check-in with this workgroup by hosting quarterly follow-up meetings.

Future workforce tables are already being planned, with the next series of conversations beginning in early 2026. Commissioners Singleton and Jones-Dixon will be connecting with leaders in the green jobs and agriculture fields. Those conversations are expected to conclude in the spring of 2026, laying the groundwork for more collaborative and inclusive workforce opportunities ahead.



Special Thanks to everyone who participated. We could not have done it without you!

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Appendix - Detailed Recommendation Table

1. Increase successful accomplishment of pre-apprenticeship programs by providing individualized supports and interventions that drive program completion.

Recommendation	Notes
Pre-Apprenticeship Stability Investment: Provide multi-year, flexible funding to pre-apprenticeship programs for wraparound supports and program operational needs (GED, child care, emotional support)	<p>Multco is currently committed to funding pre-apprenticeship programs at \$200K/year until 2027 through Worksystems outside of the RWEA and CCAP requirements. This is currently paid out of CDEF funds. It would be beneficial to increase that to \$300 - 500K if the County had an additional funding source. With additional funding, people who are already receiving County support services should can be prioritized for training programs.</p> <p>Most pre-apprenticeship programs don't have unrestricted funds to help with unexpected costs for participants. It is more practical to provide dollars directly to participants and let them spend it on their greatest need (car, tools, GED, etc) .</p>
Pilot Program: County Properties and Pre-Apprenticeships: Place 5-10 pre-apprenticeship graduates annually into County facility roles as paid transitional experience.	<p>Program will need to be updated in order to not conflict with union hiring practices at the County. This will create a bridge into apprenticeships. This should be designed not to conflict with positions at the County like custodial and grounds keeping already covered by the Oregon Forward Program.</p> <p>It is important to ensure these are desirable positions and matched with skills suitable for apprenticeships. (BOLI is a potential partner in this work). There is a need to ensure clarity on the duties, benefits, and skill building potential</p>
Benefits Retention & Incentives for Trainees: Explore programs that allow apprentices and pre-apprentices to retain public benefits (child care, SNAP, healthcare) during training — modeled on past successful benefit-retention programs. Shift to avoid the benefits cliff	<p>Nearly every participant identified this as a top priority. Most said SNAP was the most significant loss; qualification is lost even with a very small increase in wages. Even if you make a slightly higher wages, many still pay over a third of their wages on childcare and depend on the SNAP.</p> <p>There is no gradual off-ramp to most benefits programs to bridge gaps. As soon as a participant qualifies for a new program, other programs immediately end before the new benefit is active. OHP has a bridge, but it is not well known and so is often missed.</p> <p>Temporary layoffs are often viewed as a hardship and participants do not qualify for benefits.</p>

1. (continued) Increase successful accomplishment of pre-apprenticeship programs by providing individualized supports and interventions that drive program completion.

Recommendation	Notes
PUBLIC AWARENESS CAMPAIGN: Pair with a media campaign showing real tradespeople (BIPOC, women, graduates with degrees who switched to trades) to shift perceptions and reduce stigma.	<p>Participants recommended promoting European-style apprenticeship as a first choice career path, not a fallback. Draw on European models to reduce potential stigma.</p> <p>When working with you, Benson High School was mentioned as an example that could used to promote this work among youth.</p>
CAREER AWARENESS FOR EDUCATORS: Potential for the County to look for educational opportunities within our existing programs. Conent should be aligned with employer feedback and use National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) or similar tools to assess readiness	<p>Attendees agreed that the trades need to be introduced at a much younger age and presented as a serious career option, not just an option for students who are not "good at academics". They also advocated that the county explore supporting Portland Public Schooling in implementing their own pre-apprenticeship program.</p> <p>Attendees identified a number of actions that could be taken now. A career fair for educators to promote how good careers in the trades are could be set up quickly. It was recommended that this could be an extension of the Oregon Trades Women annual event. Additionally, the County has been inviting local high schools and pre-app programs to tour the East County Library during construction to get a feel for what a construction site is like. This could be expanded to other locations.</p> <p>Finally, attendees stated that the county and other public sector employers (PPS, PDX, Metro) should explore become training agents for apprenticeships</p>

2 Address the negative impact of "income cliffs" and how increased income can lead to loss of existing supportive services.

Recommendation	Notes
Benefits Retention & Incentives for Trainees: Explore programs that allow apprentices and pre-apprentices to retain public benefits (child care, SNAP, healthcare) during training — modeled on past successful benefit-retention programs. Shift to avoid the benefits cliff	<p>See notes in Key Issue #1 Benefits Retention & Incentives for Trainees</p>

3. More and smarter financial stability and certainty for programs that are working well. Provide multi-year flexible funding for pre-apprenticeship programs to stabilize staffing, program planning, and wrap around supports.

Recommendation	Notes
Pre-Apprenticeship Stability Investment: Provide multi-year, flexible funding to pre-apprenticeship programs for wraparound supports and program operational needs (GED, child care, emotional support)	See notes in Key Issue 1.
Pre-Apprenticeship Stability Investment: Advocate for a state-level budget line item (Dept. of Labor/Workforce Development) to make this funding reliable and not dependent on one-off grants.	There was near unanimous consensus from attendees for this advocacy. Attendees recommend that any state funding should go directly to organizations and not through Worksystems in order to avoid any potential restrictions due to federal standards. Direct County participation would help with data sharing and collection.

4. Increase consistency and support for mental health/psychological safety (respectful workplace safety) programs.

Recommendation	Notes
Respectful Workplace Climate Subsidy Pilot P.1: Address hostile jobsite culture by preparing trainees through pre-pre-apprenticeship modules and holding contractors accountable for creating inclusive environments. Train and support instructors to deliver this content effectively.	<p>Many attendees supported jobsite culture scores, but there needs to be a thoughtful approach to determining what will result from those scores. Potential action as a result of jobsite climate scores could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you can't reach a particular score, you can't bid • Highlighting contractors that have high scores or are consistently improving. Potentially set up a system where high scoring contractors could mentor new or lower scoring contractors
Respectful Workplace Climate Subsidy Pilot P.2: Commitment from RWEA partners on a coordinated approach. Make jobsite climate scores part of evaluation and enforcement (OHSU program).	
Respectful Workplace Climate Subsidy Pilot P.3: Subsidize respectful workplace programs (e.g., Green Dot, Rise Up) and climate evaluations for participating contractors.	



5. Improve understanding of the jobsite experiences for workers and employers, and how these experiences impact project timelines, budgets, and quality of work.

Recommendation	Notes
RWEA 2.0 Changes: Tie RWEA funding to measurable outcomes, track number of people placed and retained.	Multco is nearly ready to release the RWEA website that was created for this exact reason; it includes testimonials from workers.
RWEA 2.0 Changes: Revise penalties for non-compliance with apprenticeship representation goals.	Penalties already exist under RWEA, but there are concerns that some contractors build the cost for them into their budget and ignore goals. Attendees agreed that the County should highlight the contractors that are overachieving; mentor contractors who could do better
PUBLIC AWARENESS CAMPAIGN: Pair with a media campaign showing real tradespeople (BIPOC, women, graduates with degrees who switched to trades) to shift perceptions and reduce stigma.	See notes in Key issue 1
CAREER AWARENESS FOR EDUCATORS: Potential for the County to support this and look for educational opportunities within our programs. Align content with employer feedback; use National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) or similar tools to assess readiness	See notes in Key issue 1

7. Better understanding of how people navigate the system. There's a need for better management/orchestration of the system to make it people-centered, primarily looking at the connection and "hand off" between one step and the next.

Recommendation	Notes
<p>Unified Apprenticeship Pathways Portal P.1: Develop an online hub to track participants from pre-apprenticeship through journey level employment.</p>	<p>Existing sites include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. BOLI registry - official apprenticeship registration and completion for all state reg. apprenticeships 2. Oregonapprenticeship.org - program finder/outreach 3. LCPtracker - public works payroll and compliance system - tracks apprentices at a project level while active; for the County, contractors are "invited" into the system after contract execution 4. WLDS/HECC - WLDS is a state data system that connects info from multiple agencies (OED, ODE, BOLI, etc)to understand how Oregonians move through education, training, and employment
<p>Unified Apprenticeship Pathways Portal P.2: Track participant outcomes from pre-apprenticeship through journeyworker.</p>	<p>Suggested outcomes to track:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intake & profile (demographics, contact, language, info on gender, race/ethnicity, and geography) • Enrollment in pre-apprenticeship, apprenticeship, and journey-level tracking • Interruptions: reason, duration, supports offered, resolution • Supports used (e.g., County or State programs, CBO services) • Interruptions and supports: type, frequency, resolution rates • Wage and employment outcomes (via de-identified data matches with HECC/OED) • Completion and journey-out data • Post-completion follow-up at 6, 12, and 24 month <p>Most orgs are not currently required to provide info beyond what BOLI requires - a requirement and a standard format for submitting data would be needed.</p>
<p>Unified Apprenticeship Pathways Portal P.3: Connect workforce opportunities with people receiving County services through HD-HSD-DCHS-DCJ-MCSO so that as individuals enter or touch the County's system, we can access information about their past history</p>	<p>Foundational work has been done in DCHS and the Supplier Diversity Program that could provide a base for this if the County wanted to pursue a workforce case management database.</p> <p>There is the potential to evolve CDEF into a true central hub using info like the Common Application. Successful execution would be contingent on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant Resource Allocation: A funding commitment to secure new staffing and IT resources to build and manage this system. • Formal Data-Sharing Agreements: The County does not have direct access to most of the required pipeline data. It is possible to use in-house information like the Common Application and would likely need to secure a formal Memorandum of Understanding with JATCs, BOLI, and HECC/OED to ensure a sustained flow of de-identified data for the dashboard and reporting.

8. Identify and provide a path where businesses and workers can access affordable childcare. Hours of operation should match construction work schedules.

Recommendation	Notes
Small Contractor Incubator Program: Lower Workforce Training and Hiring Program (WTHP) thresholds below \$250k to get to the desired outcome of increasing the pool of registered training agents.	<p>Suggestion for a pre-qualification to bid, and establishing requirements before the bid.</p> <p>Lowering the program threshold under \$250K would mean higher requirements for smaller contractors on more contracts. Contractors will need technical assistance to become training agents and commit to employing apprentices under both the Workforce Training and Hiring program and the RWEA, and will need support to reach compliance and goals.</p> <p>It is worth exploring other commitments that a small contractor could make to the prime that would provide enough incentive to make more and smaller subcontracting packages</p>

Overall Accountability and Transparency Recommendation

Recommendation	Notes
Stakeholder Advisory Committee: Convene quarterly meetings with education programs, pre-apprenticeship programs, apprenticeship programs, contractors, and community-based organizations to share resources, address challenges, and align outreach.	<p>Strong support for this proposal among participants. It is clear that these meetings must be meaningful and actionable. Contractors must be included as partners, not outsiders.</p>