

For the record my name is Wendi Secrist and I am honored to be the executive director of the Idaho Workforce Development Council. As many of you know, the Council has been in existence as an independent entity under the Executive Office of the Governor since late 2017.

We are charged with developing and implementing a “comprehensive, statewide strategic workforce development plan”. Simply said, the Council works with partners within and outside of government to ensure that we are all working towards a future where Idaho’s diverse and prepared workforce meets the needs of our unique communities and employers.

The goals set by the Legislature and Governor for the Council include:

- Increasing public awareness of and access to career education and training opportunities.
- Improving the effectiveness, quality and coordination of programs and services designed to maintain a highly skilled workforce.
- Providing for the most efficient use of federal, state and local workforce resources.

From an organizational standpoint, the Council consists of 37 dedicated members of the business community, state agency leaders, labor, education and community organizations. Deni Hoehne, who is a Senior HR Business Partner for Amazon, Chairs the Council. Representative Syme and Senator Stennett are the legislature’s representatives on the Council.

The Council oversees the Workforce Development Training Fund and serves as the state and local workforce board under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act which spans programs delivered by the Department of Labor, Idaho Career & Technical Education, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Idaho Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Health & Welfare and the Commission on Aging.

In addition, our education and economic development partners are equally as important to ensure that we have a seamless workforce development system in Idaho. I want to highlight a few initiatives that we’ve implemented in the last year to achieve this.

The first is Talent Pipeline Management which was developed by the US Chamber of Commerce Foundation and applies supply chain management theory to workforce development. It starts with building employer collaboratives to align both demand and skillsets across common occupations – creating actionable data. Then education and community partners come in to leverage that data to align the curriculum and workforce preparation efforts locally to meet employers needs.

Over the past year, we've trained 30 Idahoans as facilitators of Talent Pipeline Management through a partnership with IACI. The secondary benefit of TPM is that it will help the Council better target workforce development investments to programs that will have the greatest ROI.

The facilitators completed their training in December and we are now forming the employer collaboratives in construction, cybersecurity, energy, healthcare, hospitality, various segments of manufacturing, transportation and tribal enterprises. We took care to recruit facilitators from economic development, education and industry associations. We also placed specific emphasis on ensuring a balance between urban and rural Idaho. I look forward to sharing success stories next year from TPM.

The second initiative is Idaho Launch. Last fall, we were able to utilize CARES Act funding to start a new training program available to any Idahoan who needs to reskill or upskill. Until the CARES Act funding is exhausted, we can pay the full cost of training that is aligned to employer needs for anyone impacted by the pandemic. The Council also approved workforce development training funds to augment the program for those not impacted by the pandemic and to sustain it beyond June 30.

To identify the training that we would pay for, we surveyed Idaho businesses in August to identify the top skills they are looking for in new hires. Just about 850 employers responded and two of the more interesting factors that came through loud and clear is that soft or professional skills are just as important as the technical skills – and 4 out of 5 employers had tried to hire someone since the start of the pandemic in March.

We took the information from the survey and matched it up against training provided by our state institutions along with other providers to seed the opportunities. Right now the messaging is targeted towards those who have been impacted by the pandemic; and the training opportunities are mostly online, but we have the flexibility to adapt and add or delete training programs based on employers needs. While the CARES funding helped us move this forward quickly, we had already identified that there was a gap for Idahoans who needed to upskill through short-term workforce training courses. Federal financial aid and scholarships provide assistance on the for-credit side, but those needing these this type of training didn't have many options. We have partnered with Idaho Department of Labor, and their career planners provide one-on-one guidance to interested Idahoans. This new program, along with the Talent Pipeline Management initiative, helps us achieve a goal we set 2 years ago to shift to broader workforce development strategies over single employer grants.

Third, we received a \$2.5m grant from the US Department of Labor to scale youth apprenticeship in Idaho. Combined with grants that Idaho Department of Labor and Career & Technical Education have, there is \$6m invested in expanding apprenticeship in the state. We work together on a regular basis to coordinate grant efforts and ensure the most efficient program delivery.

Our focus is on connecting high school students directly into apprenticeship programs while they are juniors/seniors. Approximately 22,000 seniors will graduate this year and only 48% of them will go-on to traditional postsecondary education. While we need to continue to do more to encourage them to go-on, we also need to expand the definition of going on. Apprenticeship combines on-the-job and classroom training and results in a national credential. It should be celebrated with as much success as someone receiving a bachelor's degree and the Council and State Board of Education are committed to sharing that messaging. Employers may not think you can have a 16 or 17 year old doing certain jobs, but if you do it under a registered apprenticeship model, USDOL waives certain labor laws to make it happen. Apprenticeship isn't only for the trades – we are building programs in cybersecurity, healthcare, professional services and advanced manufacturing...just to name a few. We expect the first youth apprentices to be placed over the next 6-8 weeks and a drone operator in American Falls may be the first one.

Collectively our goal across all three grants is to create over 3,000 new apprenticeships in Idaho over the next 4 years.

This year also marked the launch of the “new” Next Steps Idaho, a collaboration between The Council and The Idaho State Board of Education to create one spot for Idahoans to access career information. Some of you may have had a guided tour of the site from our colleagues at the Office of the State Board of Education – if not we’d be happy to facilitate that. The site was a great tool for 8-12 grade students who were likely going to go-on to college. We’ve expanded it to be the resource for students who don’t think of themselves as college material, for transitioning adults and for those who support and influence them. You can visit it at: <https://nextsteps.idaho.gov/>

Finally, we are collaborating with the Board office on Online Idaho. From the beginning, the vision has been that Online Idaho will provide access to pathways and credentials that meet employers needs in the state. To that end, we’ve been deliberate to ensure that the systems support both for-credit and non-credit opportunities. Aligned with investments in broadband, this goes a long way in creating equitable access to education and training throughout the state.

*Show IPTV video if there’s time.*

The work of the Council gets Idahoans into the careers they want and puts them on a path to prosperity. We also make sure Idaho’s employers have the highly educated, highly skilled talent they need to thrive, today and into the future. We do it by bringing cohesion and providing the expertise and funding to set things in motion for our workforce development partners throughout the state.

With that, I’d be happy to stand for questions.