

**Oregon Employment Department  
Statement of Interest  
State/Tribal Government to Government Relations  
Executive Order 96-30  
December 2001**

**Background**

The employment security system has been in existence for more than 60 years as a federal/state partnership to design and administer unemployment insurance and employment services programs at the local level. The Oregon Employment Department has approximately 1,400 employees in 47 offices throughout the state. Our \$1.1 billion budget is funded almost entirely by payroll taxes paid by Oregon employers. The majority of these funds go to pay unemployment insurance benefits to workers who have lost from their jobs through no fault of their own.

The department's top management team consists of a director, who reports directly to the governor, a deputy director, an assistant director for work force programs, an assistant director for field services, and an assistant director for administrative services. The Employment Department Advisory Council appointed by the governor advises the department on matters of concern to both business and labor -- our two primary customers.

**Mission and goals**

In 1996, the department wrote a two- and six- year strategic plan, which was approved by the governor. The plan has since been updated. It ties directly to the mission of the Employment Department:

To promote the employment of Oregonians by developing a diversified, multi-skilled work force, providing support during periods of unemployment, and promoting safe, quality child care

The plan has eight strategic goals:

- Give businesses a greater return on their investment by providing more direct services to address their priority needs.
- Become the state's Research and Development (R&D) center for researching emerging employment trends, testing model programs, and developing innovative solutions to local, regional, and statewide challenges in the emerging work force development system.

- Become a model agency for customer responsiveness and continuous improvement of the quality of programs and services; and collaboration with partners in the work force development system.
- Provide economic stability to Oregon communities by providing temporary income assistance to eligible individuals, helping unemployed workers return to work more quickly, and employed workers advance to higher paying jobs.
- Enhance the overall economic climate by maintaining a fair and equitable tax system and a solvent unemployment insurance trust fund.
- Create a comprehensive statewide system of accessible, affordable, quality and safe child care.
- Conduct hearings for panel agencies that are fair, timely, efficient, and meet public expectations of impartiality.
- Create an infrastructure support environment offering consistent, dependable, and innovative solutions for serving our internal and external customers.

## **Interests**

The interests of the Employment Department are directly reflected in our mission and our ability to carry out that mission.

Promote employment and develop the work force. The department has the largest labor exchange in the state. We have thousands of job openings in a wide range of occupations and skill levels and are also the largest single source of job applicants statewide. Our field offices provide a variety of services to employers recruiting qualified applicants, including meetings rooms for interviews and nationwide access through America's Job Bank (AJB). Many services are also provided to job seekers, such as resume writing, Internet and kiosk access to job openings, career planning, timely labor trends and economic information, as well as job and skill matching opportunities.

Our field office managers and staff have developed good working relationships with leaders of the nine federally recognized Native American tribes around the state by providing comprehensive labor exchange services for the tribes. Several managers provide space in local offices to tribal staff; others provide part-time staffing or kiosks on reservations. All offices provide some level of these labor exchange services.

Our department is responsible for publishing industry employment statistics for the state and all its local labor market areas. Tribes provide accurate and consistent data and information on a regular basis to our Research Section. We secure written permission to publish monthly statistical information by county.

Support the unemployed. The department provides temporary income to workers who become unemployed through no fault of their own. This program helps maintain the purchasing power of individuals and communities by partially offsetting the lost wages of unemployed workers. Filing for unemployment insurance claims is both convenient and easy. In fact, once an application has been approved, the claimant can receive weekly

benefits through our computerized telephone system or by using one of our touch-screen kiosks located throughout the state.

Federal unemployment insurance (UI) laws do not require the tribes, as separate nations, to have UI coverage. However, all nine federally recognized tribes in Oregon have voluntarily agreed to participate in the unemployment insurance program. Accounts are paid in a timely manner and kept current. If any issues arise, our department works directly with the tribal council for immediate resolution.

Ensure safe, quality child care. The Child Care Division is the state's primary entity to ensure safe, quality, affordable, and available child care throughout Oregon. The division registers and regulates child-care facilities by establishing standards that programs must meet to operate. The division also contracts with local non-profit organizations to provide Child-care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) services to parents, child-care providers, employers, and communities. More than 95 percent of the division's budget represents federal funds, which are transferred to the Department of Human Services, Children, Adult and Family Services Division and used to subsidize child care for low-income working parents. Finally, the division provides information and technical assistance to businesses and promotes the Employer's Dependent Care Tax Credit program for businesses that develop child-care services for employees.

Under federal laws governing sovereign nations, the Child Care Division has no direct jurisdiction over child-care facilities sponsored by the tribes. However, when asked, the division does regularly certify these facilities. Several tribes have requested such a review. Also, several CCR&Rs have working relationships with tribal nations in Oregon. In the past, some tribes have chosen to participate in a federally subsidized child-care program provided by the division for high-risk children.

### **Communication process**

Our staff believe they currently have good working relationships and effective communication processes with the tribes in their local areas. The issue for us is how we can improve on current practices and ensure that any problems and concerns are addressed at the appropriate level and in an expeditious manner.

The Oregon Employment Department strongly supports the concept of Executive Order 96-30 and is committed to carrying out the full intent of that order to ensure continued and improved relationships and communication with all sovereign Native American nations of Oregon.