Clackamas Workforce Partnership
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

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Columbia-Willamette Workforce Collaborative
Quality Jobs Initiative

Safe Working Conditions & Worker Engagement

Over the past year, the Columbia-Willamette Workforce Collaborative (CWWC) began the process to develop the Quality Jobs Framework (Framework). The Framework is part of the Quality Jobs Initiative, a cross sectoral effort that seeks a regional approach to (1) define quality jobs, (2) provide guidance on standards employers can be encouraged or incentivized to adopt, (3) identify resources to help employers implement in accordance with their workplace needs, and (4) develop a roadmap of actions and implementation steps.

The Quality Jobs guides provide an in-depth look into each of the six Quality Job strategies for the Portland-Southwest Washington metropolitan area. The guides provide strategies, indicators and an interactive workbook to help improve job quality within your business. This guide explores the strategy Safe Working Conditions & Worker Engagement.

The Quality Jobs strategies include:

Self-Sufficiency Wages	A quality job provides sufficient income to afford a decent standard of living. For example, jobs that offer pay consistent with established published self-sufficiency standards that consider family composition and cost of living.
Safe Working Conditions/Worker Engagement	A quality job offers employees dignity and respect and welcomes engagement in workplace operations. For example, jobs that are subject to anti-discrimination and anti-discrimination policies and provide reasonable accommodation to employees with disabilities.
Predictable Hours	A quality job offers employees predictability on the number of hours they are offered per week to minimize hardship on employees and their families.
Comprehensive Benefits	A quality job provides basic benefits that increase economic security, improve health and overall well-being. Quality jobs include healthcare, childcare, transportation, wellness programs, and access to retirement savings programs, among other supports.
Accessible Hiring and Onboarding Practices	A quality job offers transparent and accessible hiring and onboarding practices to ensure that employer and employee are set for success.
Training and Advancement Opportunities	A quality job provides opportunities to build skills and access new roles and responsibilities in a workplace. For example, quality jobs offer internal pathways to support career progression, professional development, and incumbent worker training opportunities.

Employers

STRATEGIES

1 Uphold and enforce anti-discrimination, anti-violence, anti-hostility, and anti-harassment policies.

Beyond complying with anti-harassment, discrimination and other labor and employment laws, all employers and their workers must put effort towards making their workplace culture genuinely inclusive. In a job satisfaction survey by the Society for Human Resource Management, employee respondents ranked "respectful treatment of all employees" as their top contributor to job satisfaction.[9] To do so, employers must develop clear report processes and procedures that employees can follow if they are subject to harassment or see harassment occur in the workplace.

Employers can use existing tools to determine interventions that advance equity across operations and business practices. One resource is Portland Means Progress – a citywide initiative that helps Portland-based businesses create better work experiences for Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) and underrepresented youth, shift to intentional purchasing, and create cultural change. Portland Means Progress' Culture Change Roadmap[1] details tools, actions, and an overall framework in which employers can begin to build a more equitable workplace culture.

Employers can also collaborate in adopting common curricula and practices to increase workplace safety. Employers in Portland's construction sector have adopted the Safe from Hate Pledge containing four key commitments to improve jobsite culture.[10] One of the commitments includes the adoption of common anti-harassment education on jobsites. Best practice training programs include RiseUp and Green Dot for the Trades which can engage employees in a "train the trainer" model where construction workers deliver training to their peers.[2] These programs are tailored to meet the specific needs of the construction industry, and pilot evaluation efforts demonstrate that the program has been successful in decreasing incidences of harassment.[3]

9 Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM). Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement: The Doors of Opportunity Are Open. https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/trends-and-forecasting/research-and-surveys/Pages/2017-Job-Satisfaction-and-Engagement-Doors-of-Opportunity-Are-Open.aspx

10 Worksystems. Safe from Hate Pledge. https://www.worksystems.org/sites/default/files/Safe%20from%20Hate%20-%20Pledge%20and%20Signatories%20-%20Updated%2001-07-21.pdf

1

Sample Metrics

- Number (#) of high quality, and regularly scheduled anti-discrimination, anti-violence, anti-hostility, and anti-harassment trainings.
- Presence of clear report processes and policies around anti-discrimination, anti-violence, anti-hostility, and anti-harassment trainings.

2 **Provide reasonable accommodations for all employees.**

By law, employers must comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).[4] Rather than creating accommodations piecemeal as employees request them, employers should invest time and resources to embed reasonable accommodation practices across all operations and business practices to work towards a genuinely inclusive work environment. Employees with disabilities should be active participants in making the workplace more accessible and should be consulted in any process.

There are several low-cost actions that can be implemented to carry out this strategy. First, employers can connect to free government services (Washington DSHS, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation[5] and Oregon DHS Employment, Vocational Rehabilitation[6]) to access tailored trainings and technical assistance, recruitment consultant services, hiring incentives, on the job training, job site modifications and assistive technology support, and internship and sponsorship opportunities. Workforce Development Boards (WDBs) can assist by directing employers to these services and make a warm hand off connection.

Furthermore, employers can connect to free online resources/consulting services. Job Accommodation Network (JAN)[7] provides free technical assistance, articles, and other tools on worker accommodations by role. They have an comprehensive index of articles[8] that breaks down information by disability and topic. Finally, employers can engage a specialist to conduct a workplace accessibility audit.

3 Support English Language Learner (ELL) employees.

The need for English skills may differ by industry, but most workers are required to speak English at some point at their job. Employers can support non-English speaking employees by offering language development classes or connecting workers to low-cost or free English classes, many which are provided through local community colleges or community-based organizations. English classes can help retain workers and increase their overall engagement, productivity, and career outcomes.[11] Visual aids are also often helpful for ELL employees or employees with other speech or language impairments. Some manufacturers have also established production lines by language and/or hired managers that oversee ELL employees which can open more opportunities for non-native English speakers.

Sample Metric

- Demonstrated improved English skills that lead to promotions, higher wages, or increased morale.

11 Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM). “English Classes Help Retain Immigrant Workers: Investing in employees reduces turnover and builds respect.” https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/all-things-work/pages/english-classes-help-retain-immigrant-workers.aspx

4 Ensure worker right to collectively bargain.

The National Labor Relations Act (NLRA)[9] guarantees private-sector employees the legal right to organize and collectively bargain with their employers. Collective bargaining and worker voice agreement processes matter when it comes to job quality. Employers can be leaders by supporting employees to independently navigate this process by agreeing to neutrality and/or labor harmony during any organizing efforts.[10] Workers can negotiate for increased wages, but also negotiate around benefits, training and education opportunities and funding, safe working conditions, and worker feedback or grievance processes – all without fear of retaliation. Employers can also benefit from collective bargaining and unionization, finding improved productivity, profitability, and stability. This could come from actions like (1) standardizing wages rather than constantly negotiating, (2) formalizing employer-employee communications that improve retention, and (3) improving safety and compliance.

Sample Metrics

- Percentage (%) of workers covered by collective bargaining agreements.[12]
- Number (#) of labor harmony policies or neutrality agreement policies.

12 "Covered" is defined as workers whose pay and/or conditions of employment is determined by one or more collective agreement(s). International Labour Organization. "Quick Guide on Sources and Uses of Collective Bargaining Statistics." https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---stat/documents/publication/wcms_648799.pdf

5 Conduct regular employee engagement surveys to gather input about workers' experiences and inform the improved delivery of services.

Engagement surveys are a crucial way to gather insight into the experiences of employees and what is important to them. It is also a great time to measure leadership effectiveness. Employers can utilize online, free resources such as the Qualtrics Employee Satisfaction Survey template[11] which provides a starting point for employers to create their own employee survey, or SHRM's Managing Employee Surveys Toolkit which reviews the details of how to prepare for, conduct, and follow-up on surveys.[12] It is just as important to have a plan for using the data as it is to gather the data itself. As an opportunity for employee feedback and input, it is important for employers to be transparent about results and their influence on tangible objectives or strategies for implementation. Surveys can also be benchmarked to compare results with industry-specific data or benchmarked internally to see the change in satisfaction over time.

Sample Metric

- Presence of regular employee survey schedule (once or twice a year).

6 Add worker voice to company boards or management teams.

Adding worker voice to boards or management teams can help better inform the direction of the business, while also increasing worker satisfaction and engagement. Worker voice in boardrooms and management brings direct feedback and insights to company leadership that can improve operations. Workers are deeply involved and knowledgeable on day-to-day procedures and can shed light on potential challenges that company leadership might not otherwise be aware of.

Workers will feel more invested in their work if they know their feedback is being considered by leadership regularly or they are directly involved in decision-making. Aspen Institute published a series of essays[13] which offer strategies that employers can adopt to add worker voice to their workplace in a meaningful way. These strategies can be customized to engage workers at varying degrees of decision-making. Strategies include the following: (1) Appoint employees(s) as board members or members of existing management teams; (2) Appoint director(s) to meet regularly with employees and provide worker perspective at board meetings; (3) Create special committees of employees to provide input on important decisions, such as relocations or expansions, among others.

Sample Metric

- Presence of one or more methods mentioned above, that add worker voice to company board or management team.

7 Develop an employee share ownership program.

Employee share ownership programs increase opportunity for BIPOC and women to build wealth and decrease wealth disparity. Moreover, they support higher job quality, business resilience and worker retention. An employee's share of ownership may vary depending on the type and size of a business. For example, Employee Stock Ownership Plans (ESOPs) are plans that allow companies, through tax incentives, to finance a purchase of company shares for its employees. These plans allow employees to invest in their company without using their savings. Employee Equity Grants or Employee Stock Purchase Plans allow employees to receive restricted stock at no cost to them or can purchase stock at a discounted rate. Worker Cooperatives are companies that are worker-owned and led - and profits earned by the company are paid out to the workers based on share of labor.

There are various resources available to those interested in growing worker ownership programs. Next Community Partners supports building engagement, power, and wealth for communities of color. Their Worker Ownership Initiative[14] program provides education, training, and free consultation to employers interested in implementing worker ownership programs. Project Equity,[15] another national nonprofit focused on expanding worker cooperatives, provides similar consulting and resources to businesses and communities. The National Center for Employee Ownership[16] is a nonprofit that publishes additional resources, webinars, and tools. Finally, Democracy at Worker Institute (DAWI), a "think-and-do tank" focused on worker cooperatives, published this visual guide to employee ownership models.[17]

Many of the above organizations also provide resources for local government bodies, philanthropy, and community-based organizations. Project Equity publish this resource called The Case for Employee Ownership[18] geared to philanthropy and local government bodies. DAWI, in partnership with National League of Cities, created a report called Economic Recovery and Employee Ownership[19] that offers guidance on integrating employee ownership models into pandemic economic recovery work.

Sample Metric

- Presence of one or more programs mentioned above, that implement employee share or ownership.

Others

8 Improve enforcement of labor and employment laws that establish worker protections.

Labor and employment laws protect workers and guarantee certain standards. It is critical that local government bodies invest time and resources into enforcement. The Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) and the Center for Innovation in Worker Organization (CIWO) created The Labor Standards Enforcement Series[20] which provides best practices for investigating and applying labor standards, and carrying out enforcement. The free webinars and briefs cover topics such as compliance and investigations.

Sample Metric

- Number (#) of enforcement procedures or actions taken by the state or municipality.

Safe Working Conditions/Worker Engagement Quality Jobs Workbook

1.	Uphold and enforce anti-discrimination, anti-violence, anti-hostility, and anti-harassment policies. ☐ Number (#) of high quality, and regularly scheduled anti-discrimination, anti-violence, anti-hostility, and anti-harassment trainings. _____ ☐ Presence of clear report processes and policies around anti-discrimination, anti-violence, anti-hostility, and anti-harassment trainings. _____ _____
2.	Provide reasonable accommodations for all employees. ☐ Implementation of accessibility audit and systemwide reasonable accommodation policies and procedures. _____ _____
3.	Support English Language Learner (ELL) employees. ☐ Demonstrated improved English skills that lead to promotions, higher wages, or increased morale. _____ _____
4.	Ensure worker rights to collectively bargain. ☐ Percentage (%) of workers covered by collective bargaining agreements. _____% ☐ Number (#) of labor harmony policies or neutrality agreement policies. _____

Safe Working Conditions/Worker Engagement Quality Jobs Workbook

5.	Conduct regular employee surveys to gather input about worker's experiences in the workplace and inform the improved delivery of business services. ☐ Presence of regular employee survey schedule (once or twice a year). _____ _____
6.	Add worker voice to company boards or management teams. ☐ Presence of one or more methods mentioned above, that add worker voice to company board or management team. _____ _____
7.	Develop an employee share ownership program. ☐ Presence of one or more programs detailed in the strategy, that implement employee share or ownership. _____ _____
8.	Improve enforcement of labor and employment laws that establish worker protections. ☐ Number (#) of enforcement procedures or actions taken by the state or Municipality. _____

Additional Resources

Portland Means Progress Culture Change Roadmap is a guide to assist businesses through their racial equity journey offers tools, actions and things to be mindful of as you design your own path toward culture change.

Results for America's Quality Job Playbook offers guidance on metrics to measure and evaluate safety and security, environment and culture, and purpose and meaning as pieces of job quality. The playbook includes information on empowering job seekers and giving work purpose.

End Notes

1 Portland Means Progress. "Culture Change Roadmap." https://portlandmeansprogress.com/culture-change-roadmap

2 Worksystems. :Tools to Address Jobsite Culture in Construction." October 2020. https://www.worksystems.org/sites/default/files/Respectful%20Workplace%20Review%20Committee%20Recommendations%20Report.pdf

3 Kelley, Maura; Wilkinson, Lindsey. Evaluation of Green Dot for the Trades. August 2020. https://www.oregon.gov/odot/Business/OCR/SiteAssets/Pages/OCR_DIS_CMPLNT_FORM/Green_Dot_Final_Report.pdf

4 U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division – Disability Rights Section. https://beta.ada.gov/

5 Washington State Department of Social and Health Services – Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. https://www.dshs.wa.gov/dvr/

6 Oregon Department of Human Services – Vocational Rehabilitation. https://www.oregon.gov/dhs/EMPLOYMENT/VR/Pages/index.aspx

7 Job Accommodation Network. JAN is the leading source of free, expert, and confidential guidance on job accommodations and disability employment issues. https://askjan.org/

8 Job Accommodation Network. "Publications." https://askjan.org/publications/index.cfm

9 U.S. Department of Labor. "Employee Rights Under the National Labor Relations Act." https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/olms/regs/compliance/eo_posters/employeerightsposter11x17_2019final.pdf

10 Freeman, Richard; Barenberg, Mark; Rogers, Joel. The Legal, Economic and Business Case for Neutrality and Majority Verification of Worker Desire for Union Representation. February 2016. https://cows.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/1368/2020/12/2016_The-Legal-Economic-and-Business-Case-for-Neutrality-and-Majority-Verification-of-Worker-Desire-for-Union-Representation.pdf

11 Qualtrics. Survey Template: Employee Satisfaction Survey. https://www.qualtrics.com/marketplace/employee-satisfaction-survey-template/

12 Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM). Managing Employee Surveys. https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/tools-and-samples/toolkits/pages/managingemployeesurveys.aspx

13 Aspen Institute. A Seat at the Table: Worker Voice and the New Corporate Boardroom. https://www.aspeninstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Worker-Voice-and-the-Corporate-Boardroom.pdf

End Notes

14 Nexus Community Partners. “Worker Ownership Initiative.” https://www.nexuscp.org/business-transitions/

15 Project Equity is a national leader in the movement to harness employee ownership to maintain thriving local business communities, honor selling owners’ legacies, and address income and wealth inequality. https://project-equity.org/

16 National Center for Employee Ownership. NCEO is a nonprofit organization that has been supporting the employee ownership community since 1981. https://www.nceo.org/

17 Camille Kerr. Democracy at Work Institute. A brief, visual guide to understanding employee ownership structures. https://institute.coop/sites/default/files/resources/EOStructures.pdf

18 Project Equity. The Case for Employee Ownership: Why philanthropy and government should invest in this powerful business model. https://project-equity.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/The-Case-for-Employee-Ownership_Project-Equity_May-2020.pdf

19 National League of Cities and Democracy at Work. Economic Recovery and Employee Ownership. https://www.nlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/DAWI-Employee-Ownership-Report.pdf

20 CLASP. “Labor Standards Enforcement Series.” https://www.clasp.org/tags/labor-standards-enforcement-series

Engage with the Quality Jobs Initiative

Quality Jobs guides are available on the Workforce Southwest Washington Quality Jobs page for all strategies, including:

- Self-Sufficiency Wages
- Safe Working Conditions/Worker Engagement
- Predictable Hours
- Comprehensive Benefits
- Accessible Hiring and Onboarding Practices
- Training and Advancement Opportunities

Learn more about the Quality Jobs Initiative and read the entire Quality Jobs Framework online.

Contact us!

Workforce Southwest Washington Business Services Team

Darcy Hoffman, Director of Business Services
dhoffman@workforcesw.org | 360.608.4949

Alyssa Joyner, Senior Project Manager - Manufacturing
ajoyner@workforcesw.org | 360.567.1076

Sean Moore, Senior Project Manager - Healthcare & Technology
smoore@workforcesw.org | 360.762.8569

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