

Study: Workforce needs to go back to basics

Umatilla County employers note lack of eligible, interested workers

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

Applicants' inability to pass a drug test is one of the top problems Umatilla County employers face when trying to fill open positions. That was one of several takeaways in the Umatilla County Skilled Workforce Study that didn't paint a very flattering picture of today's job seekers.

"I heard some stories that were amazing to me," said Susan Bower of Eastern Oregon Business Source.

Bower presented the results of the study on Thursday at the first Umatilla County Economic Development Summit, a gathering of more than 50 people involved in economic development. More than 400 employers — who together employ nearly one third of Umatilla County's workforce — participated.

Bower said another problem employers say they're running into is applicants who have decided it is more beneficial to stay on government benefits than join the workforce.

"Employers chose candidates that said, 'No, wait a minute, I don't actually want the job, I'm just supposed to show I'm working to find one,'" Bower said.

She also said that a poor work ethic was employers' top concern about the current workforce.

"One hundred percent — 100 percent — of employers



EO file photo

A technician adds coolant to an air-conditioning unit in July 2015 (left) and workers sort red onions on a conveyor belt at the River Point Farms packaging facility in Hermiston in January (right). A skilled workforce study showed employers struggle to find workers in Umatilla County with the basic skills needed to fill entry level positions.

Top 10 skills employers are looking for:

1. Good work ethic
2. Professionalism
3. Communication skills
4. Fluent English
5. Customer service
6. Basic office skills
7. Leadership abilities
8. Critical thinking
9. Basic computer skills
10. Basic math

brought up work ethic, unprompted from me," she said.

Similar themes were brought up in her conversations with employers about training needs for the workforce. Skipping complicated certifications like a commercial truck license, employers often said new hires lack skills like basic computer troubleshooting, phone etiquette and the ability to make change when

a customer pays in cash.

Not all of the takeaways from the study were so simple, however. Bower said one of the top concerns, voiced by employers in several industries, was an unreasonably difficult process for getting an electrician apprenticeship in Oregon.

Another top concern was reciprocity with Washington for certified trades. Bower said in many industries, getting licensed to work in Oregon is much more complicated than in Washington. And few steps from Washington's licensing process carry over to Oregon, prompting tradespeople to stick to the other side of the river even though they would rather work in Umatilla County.

"We lose people because they can just drive right across the border," she said.

Forty-four percent of the employers who participated in the study

said their company did not require a college degree, but Bower said employers reported the highest demand in skilled occupations was for electricians, mental health counselors, medical certified support, mechanics, truck drivers, value-added agricultural tech experts and computer information systems jobs.

Bower said the county had the following recommendations:

- Lobby for reciprocity between Washington and Oregon on certified trades licensing.
- Seek simplification of the process for electrician apprenticeships.
- Develop a collaborative effort to connect high school and college students with employers and trades
- Market the county as a great place to live, work and play.

After opening up the discussion to the rest of the

table, further suggestions included:

• Stanfield City Manager Blair Larsen said government investments such as the Eastern Oregon Higher Education Center in Hermiston should — when possible — be placed in areas where there are restaurants and retail outlets to help drive business to those establishments.

• Art Kegler of American West Properties said he would like to see more resources from the county to help entities fill out grant applications that would bring new investment into the county.

• Melissa Drugge of Business Oregon and Dave Tovey of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation said there needs to be an effort for the entities at the table to continue to compete with each other for economic development opportunities, while making

sure they aren't undercutting each other in a way that sends those opportunities outside of the county. "A win down the road is probably a win for their community anyway," Drugge said.

• Joe Franell of Eastern Oregon Telecom and the West Umatilla County Economic Development Group said he would like to see some sort of listserve or other way for the various entities at the table to share opportunities and ideas with each other.

• Jordan McDonald from the Pendleton Development Commission said more effort needs to be made to put second-story residential spaces downtown and other "ghost properties" back onto the tax rolls.

• Kim Puzey of the Port of Umatilla said the county needs to make sure the transportation and utility infrastructure is in place for the former Umatilla Chemical Depot to be developed as soon as the land is transferred to local control.

• Rep. Greg Smith said local entities needed to talk with their state legislators about projects that could be included in the major transportation package being put together for consideration in the 2017 legislative session.

The county plans to put together an economic development strategic plan and is looking for people who are interested in being involved in the plan. The county and Blue Mountain Community College also plan to put the full Workforce Needs Study that they commissioned on their websites starting May 11.

Contact Jade McDowell at jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4536.



ELECT

JOHN L. BALLARD

FOR CIRCUIT COURT JUDGE

Paid for by Committee to Elect John L. Ballard Circuit Court Judge

EAST OREGONIAN

— Founded Oct. 16, 1875 —

211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton 541-276-2211
333 E. Main St., Hermiston 541-567-6211
Office hours: Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Closed major holidays

www.eastoregonian.com

To subscribe, call 1-800-522-0255
or go online to www.eastoregonian.com
and click on 'Subscribe'

East Oregonian (USPS 164-980) is published daily except Sunday, Monday and Dec. 25, by the EO Media Group, 211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton, OR 97801. Periodicals postage paid at Pendleton, OR. Postmaster: send address changes to East Oregonian, 211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton, OR 97801.
Copyright © 2016, EO Media Group

Subscriber services:
For home delivery, vacation stops or delivery concerns: 1-800-522-0255

Didn't receive your paper? Call 1-800-522-0255 before noon Tuesday through Friday or before 10 a.m. Saturday for same-day redelivery

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

	Local home delivery	Savings off cover price
EZPay	\$14.50	41 percent
52 weeks	\$173.67	41 percent
26 weeks	\$91.86	38 percent
13 weeks	\$47.77	36 percent

*EZ Pay = one-year rate with a monthly credit or debit card/check charge

Single copy price:
\$1 Tuesday through Friday, \$1.50 Saturday

ADVERTISING
Advertising Director: Jennine Perkinson
541-278-2683 • jperkinson@eastoregonian.com

Multimedia Consultants
• Jeanne Jewett
541-564-4531 • jjewett@eastoregonian.com
• Terri Briggs
541-278-2678 • tbriggs@eastoregonian.com
• Dayle Stinson
541-966-0806 • dstinson@eastoregonian.com
• Stephanie Newsom
541-278-2687 • snewsom@eastoregonian.com
• Audra Workman
541-564-4538 • aworkman@eastoregonian.com
• Chris McClellan
541-966-0802 • cmcclellan@eastoregonian.com

Classified & Legal Advertising
1-800-962-2819 or 541-278-2678
classifieds@eastoregonian.com or legals@eastoregonian.com

NEWS
• To submit news tips and press releases: • call 541-966-0818 • fax 541-276-8314 • email news@eastoregonian.com
• To submit community events, calendar items and Your EO News: email community@eastoregonian.com or call Tammy Malgesini at 541-564-4539 or Renee Struthers in at 541-966-0818.
• To submit engagements, weddings and anniversaries: email rstruthers@eastoregonian.com or visit www.eastoregonian.com/community/announcements
• To submit a Letter to the Editor: mail to Managing Editor Daniel Wattenburger, 211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton, OR 97801 or email editor@eastoregonian.com.
• To submit sports or outdoors information or tips: 541-966-0838 • sports@eastoregonian.com

COMMERCIAL PRINTING
Production Manager: Mike Jensen
541-215-0824 • mjensen@eastoregonian.com

AccuWeather.com Forecast

TODAY

Warmer with sunshine

SUNDAY

Mostly sunny and not as warm

MONDAY

Partly sunny

TUESDAY

Partly sunny and pleasant

WEDNESDAY

Mostly sunny and beautiful

PENDLETON TEMPERATURE FORECAST				
83°	56°	73°	45°	69°
56°	45°	43°	74°	43°
HERMISTON TEMPERATURE FORECAST				
88°	58°	78°	47°	74°
58°	47°	43°	78°	45°
49°				84°

ALMANAC

PENDLETON
through 3 p.m. yesterday

TEMPERATURE	
HIGH	LOW
Yesterday 71°	48°
Normals 68°	44°
Records 93° (1992)	31° (1927)

PRECIPITATION
24 hours ending 3 p.m. 0.02"
Month to date 0.17"
Normal month to date 0.21"
Year to date 4.57"
Last year to date 3.14"
Normal year to date 5.36"

HERMISTON
through 3 p.m. yesterday

TEMPERATURE	
HIGH	LOW
Yesterday 75°	57°
Normals 71°	52°
Records 95° (1966)	27° (2000)

PRECIPITATION
24 hours ending 3 p.m. 0.00"
Month to date 0.59"
Normal month to date 0.24"
Year to date 3.57"
Last year to date 1.80"
Normal year to date 4.26"

SUN AND MOON

Sunrise today	5:34 a.m.
Sunset tonight	8:10 p.m.
Moonrise today	6:37 a.m.
Moonset today	9:27 p.m.

First

Full

Last

New

May 13

May 21

May 29

June 4

Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.

REGIONAL CITIES

	Today			Sun.		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Astoria	65	49	s	61	47	c
Baker City	76	43	pc	73	34	pc
Bend	75	41	s	66	35	s
Brookings	67	52	pc	64	49	pc
Burns	75	43	t	74	33	pc
Enterprise	73	46	pc	68	34	pc
Eugene	81	49	s	67	40	c
Heppner	80	51	s	70	38	s
Hermiston	88	58	s	78	47	s
John Day	77	51	pc	71	38	pc
Klamath Falls	75	41	pc	71	34	s
La Grande	76	45	s	70	38	s
Meacham	74	44	s	67	36	s
Medford	83	50	s	76	46	pc
Newport	61	49	s	59	45	c
North Bend	62	53	s	61	48	c
Ontario	80	55	c	81	45	pc
Pasco	88	55	s	81	46	s
Pendleton	83	56	s	73	45	s
Portland	81	53	s	68	48	c
Redmond	79	40	s	70	29	s
Salem	81	51	s	68	43	c
Spokane	82	54	s	74	44	s
Ukiah	74	43	s	67	33	pc
Vancouver	81	52	s	65	45	c
Walla Walla	82	57	s	74	48	s
Yakima	90	54	s	79	44	s

WORLD CITIES

	Today			Sun.		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Beijing	80	49	s	82	54	s
Hong Kong	88	78	c	87	80	t
Jerusalem	67	51	pc	71	56	pc
London	73	56	t	77	58	pc
Mexico City	84	55	pc	82	56	pc
Moscow	70	44	pc	72	47	pc
Paris	74	54	pc	76	59	pc
Rome	70	51	pc	71	53	pc
Seoul	72	50	s	74	55	pc
Sydney	75	62	s	73	62	c
Tokyo	75	61	pc	74	63	s

WINDS

	Today	Sunday
(in mph)	N 6-12	WSW 10-20
Boardman	NW 6-12	WSW 12-25
Pendleton		

UV INDEX TODAY

1	4	7	7	4	1
---	---	---	---	---	---

8 a.m. 10 a.m. Noon 2 p.m. 4 p.m. 6 p.m.
0-2, Low; 3-5, Moderate; 6-7, High; 8-10, Very High; 11+, Extreme

The higher the AccuWeather.com UV Index™ number, the greater the need for eye and skin protection.

Forecasts and graphics provided by AccuWeather, Inc. ©2016

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY

Shown are noon positions of weather systems and precipitation. Temperature bands are highs for the day.

National Summary: Showers and storms will move through the southern Great Lakes and Ohio Valley today. It will be sunny and warm across the Southeast. Severe storms will erupt in the afternoon from Texas to Nebraska.

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)
High 101° in Presidio, Texas **Low 25°** in Chemult, Ore.

NATIONAL CITIES

	Today			Sun.				Today			Sun.		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W		Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Albuquerque	69	44	pc	67	46	pc	Louisville	81	59	pc	74	62	c
Atlanta	81	60	s	87	64	s	Memphis	82	61	s	83	66	pc
Atlantic City	58	51	c	66	51	pc	Miami	81	65	s	83	70	t
Baltimore	64	50	c	70	48	pc	Minneapolis	58	42	c	61	45	pc
Billings	68	47	c	77	51	pc	Nashville	69	47	s	71	51	s
Birmingham	82	57	s	85	62	pc	New Orleans	84	60	s	86	63	pc
Boise	74	55	t	79	47	pc	New York City	61	51	c	68	53	pc
Boston	54	48	c	64	49	sh	Oklahoma City	81	62	pc	79	64	t
Charleston, SC	81	62	s	91	65	s	Omaha	75	55	pc	74	58	r
Charleston, WV	74	54	t	68	52	c	Philadelphia	64	52	c	70	51	pc
Chicago	61	42	t	68	50	c	Phoenix	76	61	pc	79	62	pc
Cleveland	70	44	t	65	46	pc	Portland, ME	53	44	c	59	40	sh
Dallas	84	67	pc	78	67	t	Providence	60	47	c	63	47	pc
Denver	68	41	t	57	41	t	Raleigh	75	60	pc	82	60	pc
Detroit	70	45	t	67	45	pc	Rapid City	64	41	c	59	43	r
El Paso	81	57	s	78	57	s	Reno	61	50	t	74	48	c
Fairbanks	57	41	pc	64	41	pc	Sacramento	64	53	sh	74	51	pc
Fargo	72	42	s	76	48	s	St. Louis	87	60	pc	79	64	c
Honolulu	82	69	pc	81	71	c	Salt Lake City	63	51	sh	63	54	sh
Houston	83	62	pc	80	69	pc	San Diego	68	60	c	70	59	pc
Indianapolis	77	50	t	63	54	c	San Francisco	64	54	sh	66	52	pc
Jacksonville	81	55	s	89	59	s	Seattle	79	52	s	65	49	pc
Kansas City	82	59	t	73	61	c	Tucson	79	56	pc	77	54	c
Las Vegas	73	57	pc	80	63	pc	Washington, DC	66	55	c	71	55	pc
Little Rock	84	60	s	82	64	pc	Wichita	84	61	pc	75	61	t
Los Angeles	67	55	pc	69	56	pc							

Weather (W): s-sunny, pc-partly cloudy, c-cloudy, sh-showers, t-thunderstorms, r-rain, sf-snow flurries, sn-snow, i-ice.