

Idaho Rebounds – Upskilling for the Future of Work

Objective

As of May 21, 2020, more than 135,000 Idahoans have filed for unemployment insurance. While the majority are job attached and expect to go back to their employers, there is an opportunity to hone or learn new skills, aligned to Idaho's employers' needs, while they wait. For those who won't go back to their employer, starting a training program sooner, rather than when their unemployment benefits expire will assist in Idaho's recovery efforts.

The Workforce Development Council (WDC), and its partners in the workforce system and education, propose to stand up a workforce training component to Idaho Rebounds that provides targeted, short-term training to individuals impacted by COVID-19 at no cost. Training will be aligned to employers needs and curated primarily from Idaho institutions.

The WDC has been working on two initiatives that can be leveraged to stand up this skills training program relatively quickly. The first is *Idaho LAUNCH* – a marketing campaign that was designed to encourage Idahoans, with a focus on those under 40, to take advantage of existing training opportunities that lead to in-demand jobs in their region of the state. idaholaunch.com has been built and the WDC was just beginning to test the messaging before launching a social media campaign as the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded. The messaging (*examples below*) would not need significant modifications to pivot to support this effort:

- *“She is determined, no matter what obstacles have been put in her path”*
- *“Being open to the flow of things allows me to adjust my job and try new things”*
- *“Created to give every Idahoan the tools they need to launch a new career.”*

The second initiative is the development of a new policy under the Workforce Development Training Fund. In January, the WDC discussed the need to fill a gap for individuals who want to pursue additional education and training, but either the training program does not qualify for federal financial aid or the individual does not qualify for support under the traditional workforce system programs. The Policy Committee had already started working on a framework to provide financial assistance to these individuals and has now prioritized developing a recommendation that will be brought to the WDC for approval in July. In addition, WDC staff have been working across 10 agencies to identify a list of high-quality industry-recognized credentials that employers are seeking through their job postings to help direct this assistance to developing the specific skills that Idaho's employers are requesting.

These two initiatives would be combined with an effort to understand the specific skills employers need individuals to be developing as the recovery progresses. A survey of Idaho employers will be conducted with an emphasis on regional needs and those skills will be mapped to training opportunities – first targeting existing programs at Idaho's institutions and then curating opportunities where there are gaps (ex. Amazon Web Services Cloud training and the Manufacturing Skill Standards Council's Certified Production Technician). The results will be integrated into a search tool on the Launch platform and marketing will commence to drive Idahoans impacted by COVID-19 to it. This will include direct marketing, in partnership with the Department of Labor, Health & Welfare, Vocational Rehabilitation and other workforce partners to individuals who are receiving unemployment benefits, food stamps, cash assistance and other supports. Individuals will be connected to the training provider and a Idaho

State	Type of Training Provided	Are Training Costs Paid?	Other Considerations
Utah	Specific courses that have been curated in alignment to the “short-term skill development priorities” that were identified in a survey of Utah employers.	No. The training that is being curated is requiring the institution to provide some sort of “incentive” in order to be on the site. It can be as simple as a waived application fee, a percentage off, or free first course.	Many individuals are not going to be in a position to pay the cost of training. In addition, putting pressure on our institutions to offer discounts at this time is problematic given their budget issues.
Maine	Online training courses offered through the Maine Quality Centers (similar to Idaho’s Workforce Training Centers at NIC, LCSC, CWI, CSI, ISU and CEI)	Yes.	Leverages an existing program that provided workforce training grants to employers by waiving requirements to allow maximum flexibility in responding to COVID-19. It appears that the training offered will be highly aligned to employer needs.
Connecticut	Online training through the SkillSoft platform. Approximately 5,000 courses – some of which are arranged into skills tracks and career pathways.	Yes. Each individual is provided with a 180-day unlimited access license to the platform.	While the breadth of options is significant, there is not alignment to what CT employers are “asking” for. They intend to enhance the offering to show that type of alignment, but it is very much a free-choice model.

Implementation

Approximately 8-9 weeks after project approval, the program will be ready to market to Idahoans. The WDC will engage Strategies 360 (under our existing contract, which was procured with the support of the Division of Purchasing) to conduct the survey, map the training opportunities, enhance the Idaho LAUNCH platform to support the initiative and implement the communications/marketing plan. Strategies 360 will subcontract the survey and program mapping to the firm that is building Utah’s platform to speed up delivery so that they can simultaneously enhance the platform and prepare the marketing collateral.

The WDC’s partners will be engaged as follows:

- Employers/Industry Associations – assist with disseminating the survey to employers.
- State Board of Education, Idaho Career & Technical Education – assist with mapping training opportunities and vetting them to ensure quality.

- Idaho Department of Labor, Department of Health & Welfare, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Idaho Commission for the Blind & Visually Impaired, Department of Corrections (reentry program), Commission on Aging and Commission for Libraries – assist with developing communications/marketing plans to target their participants.

Anticipated Reach

As this is a new initiative, there are no existing metrics to use in estimating the number of Idahoans that may take advantage of the training opportunities. Connecticut launched their program on May 4 (following a pilot in one region of the state which started April 1) and shared the following statistics:

Emails delivered to UI claimants between May 4 and May 17	130,886
Self-service registrations	6,069
Registrations/delivered emails	4.6%
# of site logins	12,061
# of courses completed	2,448

Connecticut’s program offers access to a library of over 5,000 courses – thus the 4.6% “participation rate” is likely on the high end of what Idaho could expect. Our program will be targeted towards a smaller set of offerings that are highly aligned to employer needs, meaning that they may not appeal to everyone. Applying a rate of 3.5% to our 135,000 UI claimants, we might anticipate 4,725 participants.

Cost Estimates

Start Date – December 31, 2020

Item	Amount	Description
Survey & Skills/Workforce Training Taxonomy	\$212,500	Cicero Group (through subcontract with Strategies 360)
Updates to Idaho Launch to connect Idahoans to Short-Term Training	\$75,000	Strategies 360 (under existing contract with WDC)
Marketing of Idaho Launch	\$200,000	Strategies 360 (under existing contract with WDC)
Assessment, Approval & Providing Training Vouchers	\$60,000	IDOL anticipates \$50 per person to assess their eligibility for individuals who end up not qualifying for their program. Estimated at 25% of anticipated participants.
SharePoint Site Development to track participants	\$5,000	IDOL will need to build an internal database to track participants so that employment outcomes can be tracked.
Training tools and delivery for Workforce System Partners	\$20,000	IDOL & WDC will develop and deploy training for workforce system partners to
*Training cost for those falling into a gap	\$427,500	Pool of funds that can be supplemented with state workforce development training fund resources once depleted.
Total	\$1,000,000	

*As noted previously, most individuals interested in the training are going to qualify for services through the existing workforce programs so the actual cost of training to the CARES Act will be low.

Beyond January 1, 2021

- Ongoing marketing costs will be integrated into the allocation approved by the WDC in July. Anticipate \$250,000 for FY21.
- Training vouchers for individuals not qualifying for other federal program support will be covered by the WDTF Short-term Financial Assistance funding.

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