

## Orange County Jobs First Collaborative Meeting Abridged Notes

July 12, 2024

### **Jesse Ben Ron**

The work of Jobs First is about the economy, equity, and environment. I didn't put them in any particular order. But I will note, that this is an economic development grant and that's the focus, love our environmental people. But this isn't a Cal EPA grant, where they ask how many jobs are created by this. This is an economic development grant, where we have to seriously show where the equity and the environmental impact is. There's not an easy playbook that we're following. We're all passionate about these things, but because these things at times can be tense, we're coming together to work on these challenges, so it's never going to be smooth sailing from the beginning. I think as we move forward and when we talk about scoring rubrics or superior criteria guidelines when we talk about project selection let's focus on a few things. One is, let's focus on the what and the why what we like or don't like, and why we don't like it. It's not really about the person or the group of people who are coming up with those ideas. There is no "they" and "us" in this we are collaborative, we're going to have disagreements, and we have a democratic process. We can express how we want to proceed. There are five different delegations--- we're all coming together based on these three "E's". We have to allow everyone to be authentic be who they are, and how they operate. We have to recognize that everyone here cares deeply about the work that they do but and we can treat each other with dignity and respect.

### **Ismael Herrera**

We will start off with an exercise. This exercise is going to give us a chance to take a step back, and remind ourselves about the humanity of the people who are sitting next to us. What are some things that you're passionate about? In your personal life with your family, and when you have that time to yourself, how do you spend that time?

### **Mayra Chavez**

I work on several community impact initiatives, as well as scholarship programs at Orange County Community Foundation. I'm a part of this Job's First collaborative representing the community impact initiative for our workforce development program, as well as serving as a co-lead with Orange County Grantmakers. A Community Foundation is a public charity that usually focuses on a particular geographic area supporting local community needs and local nonprofit organizations. There are about 800 nonprofit or Community Foundation's across the nation and most have primary focus areas of charitable funds, grant, scholarship programs, and community impact initiatives at OCCF. Community Foundations are intended to bring in pooled funds and facilitate donations to be able to support a nonprofit organizations local community needs through impact initiatives scholarship programs. We've grown a lot since our initial founder Judy Swain started this work in 1989. We are now home to 600. I have the great privilege of working with Dr. Wallace Walrod on the Workforce Development Initiative. We have a giving day every March for different organizations that are focused on supporting the workforce in the county.

### **Wallace Walrod**

I have the privilege and pleasure of working with Mayra on this initiative. I think it's been about four years now that we've done this, and the original funding came from a legacy donor fund. But that has

catalyzed other investments in this initiative. James Irvine Foundation is a supporter, as is the Nicholas Endowment. With the Warren Family Fund, we are focused on middle-skilled jobs. Those are jobs that are greater than a high school degree, but less than a four-year degree. We have granted about \$2.3 million, as of last month, that's gone to 23 different grants across 14 workforce projects. Here are some of our key partnerships. We've mainly focused on community colleges, with growing investment in our LPs. While we've also engaged with high schools, our primary focus has been on healthcare, IT, and manufacturing. For example, we're launching a project with Santa Ana College to revamp their manufacturing program. Santiago Canyon College is running a behavioral tech program, and we've had a successful partnership with OCTA for training coach and bus operators, which started with Saddleback and now includes Santa Ana College. OCTA has hired nearly all graduates from this program. One of our most popular initiatives is the Hornet Drone Apprenticeship Program at Fullerton College. It began with funding from OCF, catalyzing a \$500,000 state grant. The program provides students with commercial drones and flying hours, allowing them to gain the experience needed to become FAA-certified drone pilots. They can either work for companies like Southern California Edison or start their own businesses. We're also collaborating with North Orange County ROP on dental assistant and sterile tech programs, and with Cox Communications on customer service and sales training for their employees. Fullerton College also developed a unique salon program that helps students build a client base. We fund projects at various stages, from planning grants to implementation funding. You can sign up for meet-and-greets through OCCF to connect with our philanthropic advisors.

### **Apolonio Cortez**

What sort of demand have you seen for these programs from participants themselves?

### **Mayra Chavez**

The three-pronged model includes educational institutions receiving grant funding, employer partners sharing their hiring needs and required skills, and nonprofit organizations that handle community outreach. We work with several nonprofits that are well-connected in underinvested communities, helping to spread the word about these programs. Each project has a unique partnership tailored for outreach.

### **John Gutierrez - OC Hispanic Chamber of Commerce**

How can we better help you? We have a lot of business owners that are part of us a lot of nonprofits.

### **Mayra Chavez**

If you're hearing about any specific skill gaps from employers at the Hispanic Chamber, let us know. We can either match them with an existing program or explore creating a custom one to meet their needs. Nonprofits interested in connecting with employer partners, please reach out.

### **Ismael Herrera**

We will now pass it on to Annalisa to present on the Theory of Change.

### **Annalisa Siregar-Wurm**

Thanks, Ish. This collaborative effort, which we approved in October, involves a subcommittee of volunteers working with a model from The Mark. The one-pager is designed for clarity across Orange

County. It includes a problem statement on the far left, our process in the middle, and desired outcomes on the right. The problem statement covers issues like housing shortages, labor gaps, environmental vulnerabilities, and the digital divide. Inputs include our group, data, and technical resources, while outputs focus on immediate goals like securing funding and strengthening communities. Outcomes are categorized into short, medium, and long-term goals aimed at fostering a more inclusive county. Today, we'll review this model, address questions, and thank our dedicated subcommittee members.

**Linda DiMario**

I need some clarification on a few points: When we say "stronger communities," what exactly do we mean? Also, could someone explain what is meant by creating space for deeper engagement and long-term relationships? I think I understand "braided funding," but a brief explanation would be helpful.

**Ismael Herrera**

I can help with that third point—braided funding refers to combining multiple funding sources, like philanthropy, federal, state, and county funds, to support a project or strategy. It's about not relying on a single source but drawing from various resources, both within and outside the county. The outside funds, in particular, could bring new, exciting opportunities to Orange County.

**Katharyn Muniz**

Where are we addressing the need to attract youth and young families to Orange County? This is crucial, especially in an aging county. If we don't focus on bringing in younger people, we're facing a tough situation.

**Ismael Herrera**

We should include "retain" to address brain drain and keep young families and professionals in the county. I suggest adding retention and attraction as a potential outcome of this work.

**Annalisa Siregar-Wurm**

If everyone agrees, we could change "stronger communities" to "thriving communities." Later, we discuss inclusivity, diversity, equity, and resilience as our key goals, which align with this change. We can also refine the idea of cross-sector stakeholders working together to drive change. Additionally, it might be useful to ensure our outcomes are measurable metrics for clarity. We recognize this might read as general, but we can incorporate more specific data in the next iteration. This is just a starting point. There were no specific requirements for this document—it's more of a guiding tool, like Cliff Notes, rather than something we'll be held accountable for. The metrics will come later in the implementation phase.

**Unknown Speaker 4**

Looking at the graphs, I see overlaps in youth engagement and rising labor costs. With labor force gaps and young people preferring quick gains from platforms like TikTok over hands-on jobs, we need to address this issue now. We should focus on building a skilled workforce to meet future demands.

**Nate Greensides**

I think one key aspect missing is how alternate identities and practices of individuals, especially in disinvested communities, are integrated into economic models. For example, many immigrant communities practice environmentalism in everyday life, like reusing containers or repurposing items, but these contributions are often overlooked.

#### **Unknown Speaker 6**

Regarding the short-term outcomes box, which addresses high-level goals from the original plan, we should aim for more specificity. It would be helpful to clearly define the types of issues and our strategies to address them. This will also improve the effectiveness of the issue box and overall clarity.

#### **Unknown Speaker 7**

Building on the idea of cultural identity, the concept of "cultural match" in Native American nation building involves aligning plans and projects with indigenous values. This highlights the need for clearer, more accessible language in our documents to ensure everyone understands the goals.

#### **Ismael Herrera**

To conclude, we'll review the feedback gathered today and incorporate it into a revised draft. We'll postpone the action item and discuss it further in a future meeting. Now, I'll hand it over to Jesse to guide us through the next steps of the agenda.

#### **Jesse Ben Ron**

Here's where we stand: \$50 million in funding is available statewide starting in November, with Orange County set to receive about \$14 million, including \$9 million earmarked for shovel-ready projects. The application process will be open from September to November, with decisions made by early December. This process is competitive among 13 regions, so it's crucial to strategize effectively. We need to decide whether to focus on one or two high-impact projects or several smaller ones. It's important to ensure that these projects meet the funding criteria and budget expectations. Regarding project criteria, we must choose between a simple checklist or a detailed scoring rubric. We should also address conflict of interest concerns and determine if the criteria should differ from those used for Catalyst funding. Now let's discuss these points and plan accordingly.

#### **April Barnes**

How do we get this group to work together? I love the way that Wallace and Mayra put together the program and partners. There are so many partners in this room, how do we figure out how we all have pieces of it in a way, that definitely will make the conflict minimal?

#### **Unknown Speaker 9**

I agree with the idea of a scoring rubric for clarity and objectivity, and I also like the idea of having a criteria checklist. Keeping things simple will expedite the process and ensure that funding reaches projects quickly. My agency has seen that simplifying these processes leads to faster funding and more effective on-the-ground results.

#### **Jesse Ben Ron**

Let's discuss the balance between simplicity and thoroughness. While a scoring rubric can provide clarity, it might also introduce complexity if it has too many criteria. Do people prefer a simpler approach with potential ambiguity or a more detailed rubric that might make the process more complicated? We need to decide whether to prioritize simplicity or thoroughness, keeping in mind that a detailed rubric could lead to more complex evaluations. We do have a basic roadmap and can add our own conditions as needed.

### **Unknown Speaker 10**

In my previous feedback, I mentioned that the metrics weren't clear, and I didn't fully grasp the effort's intent. By setting specific, measurable outcomes—like a 10% increase in median wages—we can make the goals clearer and simplify project evaluations. Clear outcomes will help us assess which projects best achieve our objectives.

### **Jesse Ben Ron**

I'll provide more clarity soon, but we need to consider if waiting until February could mean missing out on funding. Decisions about our strategy for soliciting, selecting, and timing submissions are crucial since funds might be allocated by December.

### **Unknown Speaker 11**

Given the competitive nature, have they released an RFP or criteria? To streamline the process, we might consider mirroring their criteria in our community proposals, as they are the ultimate funders.

### **Jesse Ben Ron**

If the group agrees, we can use the state's criteria as a foundation. We need to decide if we should adjust the bar for our region. If the bar is set too low, we might get too many projects, making selection difficult. Setting a higher bar could help us focus on the top projects. We must align with state guidelines but consider if their draft criteria are sufficient or if adjustments are needed. We'll see the final criteria in September.

### **Unknown Speaker 12**

On using rubrics, the design will impact their effectiveness. A poorly designed rubric could lead to everyone rating projects similarly, making it hard to differentiate. A well-designed rubric simplifies the process and sparks meaningful discussions about project evaluations. It's a tool to guide evaluation, not the sole determinant.

### **Toni Symonds**

It's great that you're addressing the state's unclear process early on. If the state divides the \$50 million regionally, each would get about \$3.8 million, which is quite limited, especially with administrative cuts and potential set-asides. My suggestion is to integrate the selection of these projects into a broader regional plan. For instance, if we select two projects at \$1.5 million each, we could use the remaining high-ranking projects to seek additional technical assistance or matching funds from other sources, like community foundations. This approach could leverage the collective effort and potentially attract more public and private investment, making it more valuable for everyone involved.

**Unknown Speaker 13**

We need to consider the trend of state grants requiring cross-sector collaboration. When selecting projects, it's beneficial to have a mix of both large and smaller projects, given the limited funds and the number of regions involved. We shouldn't focus only on recommending a few large projects, as many smaller organizations also provide crucial groundwork. A well-designed rubric could help evaluate projects of different sizes and impacts, ensuring we address various needs and community benefits effectively.

**Jesse Ben Ron**

We need to clarify the use of Catalyst funds, which are intended for projects that might be several years away. Orange County has \$9 million available, which could be allocated quickly once approved. As we plan, consider whether to support a few large projects with significant funding for pre-development or to spread the funds across many smaller projects. Also, think about whether the same criteria for implementation should apply to Catalyst projects. Please share your thoughts via email or any other method before we draft the final plan.

**Luis Sarmiento**

Here's an idea: we could conduct a survey to gather information on potential projects. Let me know if you think this is a good approach or if it's not feasible.

**Jesse Ben Ron**

I'll follow up to see if people are comfortable with us using broad strokes even if details aren't final. Would a one- or two-page summary be useful for applicants, or would that be a waste of their time given potential changes? I'd like to know how others feel about this approach.

**Unknown Speaker 16**

Let's move forward with a one-pager to help ensure we have strong applications. Starting early is crucial, and facilitating connections between applicants early on is also part of our role as a regional convener.

**Ismael Herrera**

Let's give a round of applause to Jesse, Dr. Walrod, and the entire OCBC team. Your insights and adaptability have been outstanding. Maria, you've been a fantastic addition to the team—thank you for your dedication. And thank you, Reina and Spoons, for your incredible hospitality and support of local businesses. It's been inspiring to see the unity and collaboration in this group. Continue to support each other, agree to disagree when needed, and make necessary adjustments. Your progress is impressive compared to other regions, and your work is noted and valued. Thank you all for the productive and engaging sessions. We hope to keep up the in-person interactions and build strong relationships that go beyond the data. On behalf of the California Forward team, have a great weekend!