

NOTES

Flourish Kings County Advisory Committee

August 7, 2020, 9:00-11:00am

via Zoom



Attendance: Julie LeFils, Karina Casarez, Frank Ruiz, Karl Anderson, Hedy Rogers-Jones, Jeff March, Andrew Cromwell, Kathryn DeFede, Antony V Lopez, Todd Barlow, Laura Magana, Joe Neves, Amy Ward, Ana Nicks, Nina Plata, Rebecca Russell, Antoinette Gonzales, Todd & Cathy, Rosana Donez, Dan Ramirez, Darcy Pickens

Welcome & Introductions

Economic State of Kings County *Laura Magana, Kings EDC & JTO*

- Despite the pandemic there are still jobs available in Kings County:
 - Within CalJobs, there are around 300 jobs shown as available in Kings County
 - Within Indeed.com, there are around 700 jobs shown as available in Kings County
- Many jobs currently require certain levels of certifications (RNs, truck drivers) that need vocational training or education on Indeed.com, there are “lower level” positions that are staying open (ex. Retail, CVS, Walgreens)
- Demographics Profile
 - Population has grown and the civilian labor force is currently ~56,800.
 - Only 13.3% of individuals aged 25-64 have bachelor’s degree
 - Home values have increased by 5.4% which is positive and shows the county continues to grow
- Employment Trends
 - Even before the pandemic, we were beginning to see an increase in unemployment
 - We are continuing to grow despite the pandemic and have opportunities to grow
 - Our employment numbers show that we are trying to return back to work
 - We are beginning to decrease in unemployment numbers due to country trying to reopen and return back to work
- Industry Snapshot
 - Largest industry sector in Kings County is HealthCare and Social Assistance with Agriculture in second
- Unemployment Rate
 - June 2019- 7.9% unemployment; June 2020- 14.6%
 - Unemployment rate in Kings County was higher than the national rate.

- Economy at a glance
 - Significant job loss sectors- professional and business services, education and health services, leisure and hospitality, and 'other services'
- Occupation Snapshot
 - Largest major occupation in Kings County is farming with office and administrative support in 2nd and transportation and moving occupations in 3rd.
 - Highest wage earned in Kings County is within Legal Occupations with Management occupations in 2nd and Healthcare practitioners and technical occupations in 3rd
 - The fastest growing occupation group is Healthcare Support Occupations
 - The highest separation/transition demand is expected in farming and food preparation and serving related (largely due to retirement or moving from one job to another)
- Education Levels
 - Need for education within the community is important
 - Jobs requiring post graduate degrees are expected to grow 0.8%. Jobs requiring a bachelor's degree are forecast to grow 0.3% per year. Occupations needing a 2 year degree or certificate are expected to grow 0.6%.
 - Jobs and the pandemic
 - Sales representatives and software developers are the most highly demanded remote jobs during the pandemic.
 - Job postings are 22% below what they would have been if COVID 19 had never happened

(link for presentation can be found at

http://www.kpfp.org/content/sites/kings/Meeting_Presentations/Economic_State_of_Kings_County.pdf)

Presentation Q&A

- *Question:* (Julie) What are barriers for people returning to work right now?
 - *Answer:* Lack of **marketable skills**; inability to interview or know how to job search. EDC & JTO works 1 on 1 with participants to help with this. Other barriers include affordable housing, reliable transportation, digitalization and meeting remotely with Zoom and ability to navigate technology, and disabilities that are also affecting individuals
- *Question:* (Julie) Do some of the people unemployed have the wrong skill set for the jobs that are currently available?
 - *Answer:* Employers recognize that not everyone comes with the skills that are needed but they identify skills that can be transferable. Employers are willing to do the training but we need to help people identify those transferable skills and motivate them to apply for these jobs

- *Question:* (Frank) Did the pandemic unemployment benefits have any impact on the ability for people to apply for jobs?
 - *Answer:* Many individuals who are receiving these benefits are seeing a significant increase in income for the first time in their lives. There is a challenge of refocusing these individuals to see the long-term effects of unemployment and the benefits of long-term work. There are also concerns that these individuals may have higher taxes they have never had to pay before due to these unemployment benefits. Overall, they are trying to switch the focus from short-term income benefits to long term employment benefits
- *Question:* (Rosanna)- working within the native community, what was one of the main challenges for this community to seek employment or look for jobs?
 - *Answer:* Prior to Covid, a representative would go to Tachi and the reservation and work in the career center on a weekly basis. The representative would help with resume writing, job searching, interviewing, etc. The main barriers seen were transportation and lack of education. The reservation makes education available to individuals but many people don't know what to go to school for, what they should be doing. The key is to match them to demand occupations (this is seen with youth even outside the native community). Have to identify through assessments, what are interests, work experiences, and how do you match that with training and occupations.
- Todd shared that KCOE is opening a testing center for certifications at the Lemoore office because the closest centers are Fresno or Tulare counties and Kings County doesn't want people from Kings County to go outside of the county for those certifications. It's a small testing center with about 3 seats.

Breakout room questions

1. What are Kings County current barriers to employment?
2. What messages do people need to hear about employment? (define that by primary audience)
3. How can Kings County leaders and organizations empower and encourage citizens?
4. How can citizens help our local economy?

GROUP 1:

Question 1: marketable skills, experience, digitalization, disabilities and housing, access to training due to training programs being restricted during pandemic; especially affecting medical programs

GROUP 2:

Question 1: Low education and occupational skills; no resources or awareness of supports to pursue

additional training/education; lack of motivation

Question 2: consider "stepping stones". The job may not be the best job but can be a stepping stone for a better job; considering self-employment.

Question 3: the connection between partner agencies; to bring together agencies and figure out what everyone is doing and coordinate/work together; would be helpful if the community knew the information out there; transparency to the community

Question 4: stay healthy, shop local/ support local businesses, support each other

GROUP 3:

Question 1: Seasonal nature - (e.g. tomato packing takes 5 months) people need year long employment. There is no calendar to connect workers to make this more organized. Many are return employees, almonds are 2-3 weeks early which could throw off a calendar. Multiple crops picked at one time

Question 2: Many of the jobs listed at per diem. Per diem does not have guaranteed hours or benefits. Resources may not be known. Help is in 211. Unemployment is uncomfortable to use. Unemployment can be a confusing system to navigate.

Question 3: Mentoring, internships, resume writing, technology, Zoom P's and Q's....

Question 4: Community members could mentor students or new employees, Introduction to organizations and what jobs they offer to elementary age children and high school students. Job or career spotlight.

GROUP 4:

Question 1: Is there a “one stop shop” for lists of available jobs specific to Kings County? Partnering together with the EDC might be a good idea. Indeed.com seems to be the best current source. It’s not about recreating the wheel but coming together to promote the same avenue.

One current barrier = need for flexibility (lack of flexibility), especially during school closures.

Many jobs requiring certain levels of certification are filled by people from outside the county. This might indicate a lack of a pathway for the local population. Students leave to get education and many don’t return.

Question 2: People need to hear what’s available (Jobs). A positive perception of the jobs available. Again, that many jobs are held by people from outside the county.

Question 3: Coming together as a county (like we are) - marketing, branding, messaging, etc.

***Question 2:* Julie added to highlight “transferable skills” that may not be realized

- Steering committee will compile this information, look for common denominators, and agree on action plan to move forward

School Updates

- Todd shared that schools have been closed since March 13. At the time, they were planning on opening after Spring Break but then this was pushed back to May and it wasn't until June 8 that the CDC released guidelines for schools to reopen safely. There was also a budget cut during this time. They began offering distance learning options. Schools planned to do "in person" opening as much as possible. They looked at reorganization, social learning guidelines, etc. On July 17th, the governor of California released the order that schools on counties watchlist could not do any learning other than distance learning. KCOE has been having weekly meetings with the county health department since May and have been discussing how to reopen safely and conduct distance learning full time. They are also exploring how to provide services to vulnerable populations.
 - *Question:* (Rosana) Families are facing issues that students were already struggling with and tutoring programs that were being provided are now not able to be provided. Parents are asking where they could go for tutoring programs and if so, how do they go about that?
 - *Answer:* All 13 school districts are providing distance learning resources including tutoring over distance (phone, zoom, etc) and in some cases allowing students to come to school to receive services (focused on vulnerable populations). The first stop is to visit the local school of residence where the student would normally attend. They school offices or teachers should have the resources to give to the students. Each student will be enrolled in a class and have an assigned teacher and so the contact will be primarily their student's teacher/school.

Blue Zones

- Blue Zones link:
 - <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/06/changing-the-way-america-eats-moves-and-connects-one-town-at-a-time/>
 - Adventist Health is championing and pushing this program forward. Focused on health and quality of life.
 - Will go over in more depth at next Advisory Board meeting

'Support Safe Learning' Initiative

- 'Support Safe Learning' is a community initiative designed to help focus the conversation of education to the heart of the matter: support and gratitude for our teachers, parents, and students who are going through so much! We want Kings County to rally around our educators and families to show our love through this stressful time.
- Ways to participate: Spirit Week, Adopt-a-Class program, donate, mentor
 - Spirit Week (August 17-August 21): goal is for teachers, students, organizations, businesses, individuals, etc. dressing up so that students/teachers/parents are seeing a community that is supporting them; we will be showcasing organizations who are dressing up during this week

- Adopt-A-Class: Through the 'adopt-a-class' project, businesses, organizations, families, or friends have the opportunity to shower love and support to a Kings County classroom. The teacher of the adopted class will provide the sponsors with suggestions of ways to support the classroom. Some simple ideas include notes of encouragement for each student, gift card prizes for the teacher to use, join them virtually to read to the class, and donating school supplies
- Toolkit includes a list of ideas on how to participate: donating, mentoring, "going the extra mile" such as discounts, giveaways from businesses and organizations
 - Promoting the work that the organization does but also showcasing the support for teachers/students/parents
 - Gives exposure to organization
- Support Safe Learning webpage:
<http://www.kpfp.org/resourcelibrary/index/collection?alias=supportsafelearning>

Questions for the group:

1. What are the best ways to ensure these messages get promoted County-wide?
Newspaper and Facebook;
 2. Can you identify a specific business/organization that needs to be involved? And how?
Chamber of Commerce;
 3. What creative ideas are we missing for community involvement?
 4. How can we make sure this campaign propels us into a supportive/successful school year?
Supporting essential workers such as through providing tips for businesses to create flexible schedules
- *Question:* (Frank) Was there any talk of any day camps supporting essential workers? Sycamore Valley in Tulare County has day camp for kids of essential workers; is there anything like this in Kings County?
 - *Answer:*
 - (Julie) At the beginning of pandemic, there didn't seem to be as big of a need for daycare opportunities
 - (Todd) Some schools are sponsoring pop-up daycare but there are challenges where they can't be on campus and have to be held off campus. Hanford High hosts one at the Civic Center. Many of the youth are children of employees of Hanford High and may be filling up most of the spots. Charter and private schools operate differently
 - (Karl) High school board got a waiver to hold daycare for staff. Care has to be at a community center. They coordinated with Parks & Rec center and were approved to use the Teen Center
 - (Frank) Would be a great opportunity if churches were involved with this
 - (Jeff) Pro Youth organization is doing similar programs but challenges of social distancing

Next Meeting: November 6, 2020; 9:00-11:00am, via Zoom