

**Governor Brad Little**

State Capitol :: Boise, Idaho 83720  
(208) 334-2100 :: gov.idaho.gov



June 26, 2020

Alex J. Adams, Chairman  
Coronavirus Financial Advisory Committee (CFAC)  
304 N 8<sup>th</sup> St, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Boise, ID 83702

Chairman Adams,

I have reviewed the recommendations of the Coronavirus Financial Advisory Committee, agree with and approve the funding recommendations as follows:

- \$34,026,600 to the State Board of Education, as described in Appendix A.
- \$1,000,000 to the Workforce Development Council, as described in Appendix B.

In my judgment, these are necessary expenditures incurred due to the public health emergency and align with the U.S. Treasury guidance on allowable uses of funds.

Please work with the State Controller on carrying out these recommendations and reporting all expenditures to Transparent Idaho.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Brad Little', is written over a blue horizontal line.

Brad Little  
Governor

## Appendix A

### CFAC Request from the State Board of Education, Matt Freeman, Executive Director

Please submit public comments by 5:00 p.m. MT, Monday, June 22, 2020, to:

- Board@osbe.idaho.gov

### Request to the Coronavirus Financial Advisory Committee (CFAC) from the State Board of Education

The State Board of Education (Board) requests funding in the amount of \$34M for two initiatives, one for a postsecondary digital campus and one for mini-grants to K-12 districts and charter schools to close the gap known as the digital divide.

When the spread of COVID-19 and the resultant stay at home order issued by the Governor required the sudden closure of K-12 schools and postsecondary campuses, moving classes online became an urgent and immediate necessity. During the rapid transition to remote delivery of instruction, technology at schools and institutions was pushed to its limits, and gaps in technology infrastructure emerged. In the K-12 system, many rural and economically disadvantaged students lacked the devices that would connect them to online curriculum. Students were also faced with the ability to continue within their current curriculum and parents were tasked with assuring that their students were able to continue their studies with as little impact as possible, often while balancing their own challenging work schedules. The funding to provide students with technology to connect to their new online classroom was not part of the previous year's appropriation.

At the postsecondary level, students found themselves adapting to a fully online or distance learning platform within a matter of days. While the institutions already deliver a large number of courses and programs online, none were prepared to offer all spring catalog courses fully online mid-semester. The public colleges and universities were already responding to constrained financial resources and thus found themselves under more significant fiscal pressure as they were called upon to deliver courses exclusively online. They attempted to manage this shift to online delivery while also vacating campuses to the extent possible; continuing to meet the health, safety, and residence life needs of students who had no home in which to return; and processing room and board refunds, among many other concerns.

In order to better support the spectrum of students across the Idaho public education system, the Board submits two requests that address these needs that were identified in the wake of the public health crisis. Each request meets the three-pronged requirements of the U.S. Department of the Treasury for CARES Act funding as follows: (1) enable higher education institutions and the K-12 school system to help address the needs of students directly impacted by the public health emergency; (2) create a response which was not addressed in the most recent budget; and (3) allow for expenses to be incurred between the time of award and December 31, 2020.

#### Postsecondary Digital Campus (\$4 million)

Idaho requires an immediate yet nimble response to the public health emergency for current and future postsecondary students. Strategic investment in a technology and support ecosystem for postsecondary online education is what Idaho needs to deliver resilient teaching and learning opportunities going forward. The exigencies of the pandemic have compelled the Board to submit a request for \$4 million

from CFAC to support laying the foundation of a statewide digital campus that will provide high quality, online postsecondary opportunities for Idahoans, no matter their life circumstances or where they live in the state.

“College is especially important for students from low-income families, who stand to benefit the most from the upward economic mobility that higher education can provide. At the same time, the current crisis has created new uncertainties for these students in particular.” (Carnevale, A. P. 2020, June 11. *We Can't Let COVID-19 Derail College Dreams for Low-Income Students*. Retrieved June 17, 2020, from <https://medium.com/georgetown-rew/we-cant-let-covid-19-derail-college-dreams-for-low-income-students-a1eadd61a5cf>).

Uncertainties for low-income and minority families may include unemployment or job loss, reluctance to accrue student loan debt, fear of a second wave of COVID-19, etc. Yet, we know that “[h]aving some college education raises lifetime earnings, enabling workers to earn 14 percent more on average than they would with no more than a high school diploma. The earnings premium over having no more than a high school diploma rises to 23 percent with an associate’s degree, 66 percent with a bachelor’s degree, and 123 percent with graduate education. ” (Carnevale, 2020)

As a state, we have a window of opportunity to invest in a powerful resource which could mitigate the potential of a generational setback in our efforts to increase Idaho’s college-going rate and close the equity gap for low-income and minority students. A postsecondary digital campus would facilitate and increase access to online/distance learning courses, programs, degrees and support services for all students – especially those who are place-bound, time-bound, or otherwise unable to attend face-to-face classes due to health concerns and other life circumstances.

The specific digital campus model that is right for Idaho is being developed by Board staff, but the purpose and vision for what this entity will accomplish is clear: greater educational access for all Idahoans. Our digital campus strategy is meant to help fortify high-quality online postsecondary opportunities for Idahoans in the wake of the pandemic. No current funding exists for such an investment, and the request from the OSBE is for an initial infusion of resources to create the capacity to coordinate and develop this technology and support an ecosystem for online education in this calendar year.

#### [Aid to Lessen the Digital Divide \(\\$30 million\)](#)

Many students do not have the necessary devices and are unable to access the technology necessary for connectivity to school resources. This proposal seeks to narrow the gap between students and educational resources, known as the digital divide. The Board is requesting \$30M to provide mini grants to school districts and charter schools to help close the digital divide by the start of the 2020-2021 school year (August 2020) and prepare school districts and charter schools to pivot to a blended learning model— an educational model that blends in-seat, in-person teaching with an online pedagogical model.

The grant program would be managed by the State Department of Education, using a framework developed through a Digital Divide Committee of the Governor’s K-12 Emergency Council. Grants would be awarded to school districts and charter schools to enable them to support blended learning strategies to assure quality and equitable instruction for all students.

Grants would provide funding for expenses incurred between March 1, 2020 and December 30, 2020, to provide:

- Devices to students
- Connectivity to students
- Infrastructure to staff/schools
- Adaptive Technology for providing instruction and support for special education students
- A statewide Learning Management System (LMS)
- Professional development to teachers related to effective online teaching and LMS use

During the 2020 spring term schools were forced to shutter their doors in response to the Coronavirus pandemic to keep students, staff, and their communities safe. During this same period, schools attempted to fulfill their responsibility to continue to provide instruction and other supports to their students. In order to continue to provide instruction, schools found they needed to grapple with issues around students not having devices or connectivity to the internet in order to participate in online learning opportunities. Idaho's rural and low-income families were impacted the hardest by these issues. During this time, this digital divide exacerbated student achievement gaps between Idaho's groups of historically underserved student populations as these students struggled to stay connected to their schools and teachers and continue their learning.

Idaho has a constitutional responsibility to provide a uniform, thorough, and free system of public education. The pandemic forced school districts and charter schools (local education agencies, or LEAs) to close their doors for continued periods of time in order to lessen the spread of COVID-19. Many LEAs incurred expenses to purchase tools necessary to continue providing and delivering quality instruction. A number of LEAs were not able to fully acquire tools necessary to continue providing and delivering quality instruction.

Providing quality online or remote instruction requires that students have devices to connect to their schools' online learning environments, connectivity for those devices, a learning management system or hybrid online platform for delivering instruction, and training for teachers and staff to use the tools and work with students in a way that keeps them connected and engaged in the learning. Due to variations in size, resources, and local priorities, LEAs in Idaho are at various points along the digital divide continuum. LEAs with existing programs providing one-to-one devices to their students may have a greater need to provide professional development to their instructional staff to provide quality online or blended instruction. LEAs with robust learning management systems and instructional staff with a track record of using these systems may have greater need for student connectivity and devices.

The Board has collected feedback from the Governor's K-12 Emergency Council and through surveys to LEAs. The surveys have focused on identifying priority areas for LEAs to provide equitable, quality instruction to all students and additional supports for special education students arising from building closures and social distancing requirements necessary to keep students and staff safe during the pandemic. LEAs have indicated their highest priority during the pandemic is to enhance capabilities for remote/online learning at the local level. LEAs have also identified the need for maximum flexibility in order to provide blended learning to their students. The K-12 Emergency Council asked LEAs for an estimate on the number of devices needed by grade band, number of families/students and teachers that need connectivity at home and the number of educators that need professional development or training around delivery of on-line instruction. LEAs indicated they had the most difficulty in quantifying the need for connectivity, and estimated, in addition to professional development, they would need the following to address the digital divide at the local level:

Devices		Connectivity		Professional Development	
Total Devices	114,180	Total Homes	19,329	Total Educators	15,696
Teachers	8,209	Teachers	1,462		
Students	105,971	Students	17,867		
K-3	32,555			K-3	8,101
4-6	24,234			4-6	2,625
7-12	49,182			7-12	4,970

\* Numbers updated 6/15 based on additional responses received from LEAs

The Board recognizes the \$30M request will not be enough to close the digital divide for all students. LEAs would use grant funds in coordination with existing technology funds to offset the added expenses caused by the pandemic in order to provide continued instruction to students during the pandemic. Should the funds be made available, the Board would coordinate the use of these funds and other CARES Act funding and initiatives along with private partnerships to leverage the greatest benefit for all Idaho students.

A separate request, not included in the State Board’s request, comes from the Council for Deaf and Hard of Hearing (CDHH). This request is for \$26,600 to purchase approximately 30 iPads (with cellular data plan). CDHH would make the iPads available on loan to help the deaf community communicate, access information in American Sign Language, work remotely from home, and communicate with telehealth providers. In order to reduce the number of actions for CFAC, Chairman Adams has recommended that the CDHH’s request be included in the State Board’s technology request.



## Appendix B

### Idaho Rebounds – Upskilling for the Future of Work

#### Objective

As of May 22, 2020, 102,975 Idahoans were unemployed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. 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.

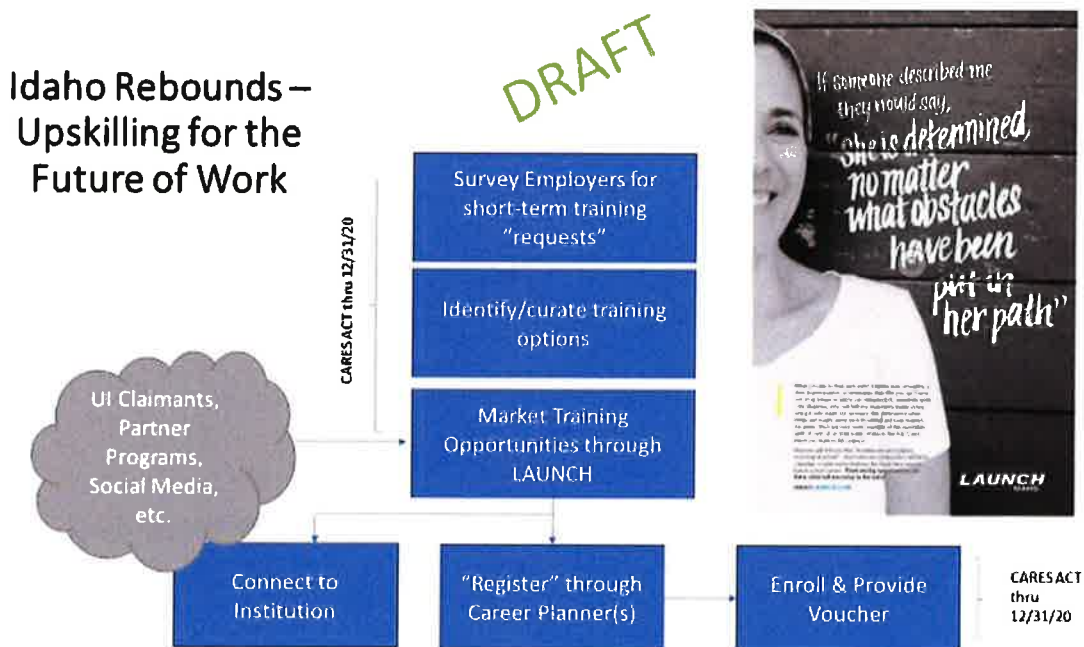
The WDC has been working on two initiatives that can be leveraged to stand up this skills training program relatively quickly. The first is *Idaho LAUNCH* – a marketing campaign that was designed to encourage Idahoans, with a focus on those under 40, to take advantage of existing training opportunities that lead to in-demand jobs in their region of the state. [idaholaunch.com](http://idaholaunch.com) has been built and the WDC was just beginning to test the messaging before kicking off 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 creation 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 bringing the recommendation 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 direct the assistance to developing the specific skills that Idaho's employers are requesting.

These two initiatives will be enhanced by employer data regarding the specific skills they need individuals to develop 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. The results will be integrated into a search tool on the Launch platform, and a marketing campaign will drive

Idahoans impacted by COVID-19 to the site. 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 Department of Labor Career Planner who will assess their eligibility for workforce programs (which could provide additional support beyond just the training), make referrals to other agencies if appropriate, and provide a voucher for the cost of the training program. The benefit to leveraging the existing infrastructure through IDOL are twofold. First, other federal program dollars that can support the training will be accessed before spending CARES Act and/or state Workforce Development Training Funds; and second, the institutions are already familiar with receiving vouchers from IDOL to pay for the training which means the funds will not be directly distributed to the individuals.



Comparable state programs have been launched in Maine and Connecticut. A nearly identical program is being launched in Utah on June 1. A quick comparison of the programs to our proposed model is included below:

State	Type of Training Provided	Are Training Costs Paid?	Other Considerations
Idaho	We would be deploying a version of the survey modeled after Utah's program version and map specific training opportunities against the results.	Yes. We would leverage existing federal program funds to pay for most of the training costs. For those individuals who are not eligible, training costs would be covered by CARES Act fund until 12/31/2020 and by the Workforce Development Training Fund afterwards.	Our program leverages existing initiatives and programs into a model that can continue beyond the current crisis.
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.	Target individuals are not 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.

*Note: Strategies 360 will subcontract the survey and mapping of training programs 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, Commerce, College Technical Advisory Committees, IDOL, etc. – 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 on the extreme 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 their appeal may not be as apparent to everyone. If we apply a rate of 2.5% to our 102,975 UI claimants, we might anticipate over 2,500 participants.

**Cost Estimates (note – all line items are fluid and may be adjusted within the approved budget)**

Start Date – December 31, 2020

Item	Amount	Description
Survey & Skills/Workforce Training Taxonomy	\$212,500	Conduct statewide survey of employers to identify desired skills and map training opportunities that will be provided under the program. Managed by Strategies 360 and subcontracted to Cicero Group.
Updates to <i>Idaho LAUNCH</i> to connect Idahoans to Short-Term Training	\$75,000	Develop new data-driven functionality within existing site. Provided by Strategies 360, under an existing contract with WDC.
Marketing of <i>Idaho LAUNCH</i>	\$200,000	Develop and implement a marketing campaign to inform Idahoans of the opportunities and connect them to the training. Provided by Strategies 360, under an existing contract with WDC.
Assessment, Approval & Providing Training Vouchers	\$31,250	\$50 per person to assess the eligibility of individuals who end up not qualifying for WIOA programs (estimated at 25% of anticipated participants). Provided by IDOL.
SharePoint Site Development to track participants	\$5,000	Development of an internal database to track participants so that employment outcomes can be tracked. Provided by IDOL.
Training for Workforce System Partners	\$20,000	Development and implementation of training for workforce system partners.
*Training cost for those falling into a gap	\$456,250	Pool of funds that can be supplemented with state workforce development training fund resources once depleted.
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,000,000</b>	

\*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.

**Questions**

Please contact Wendi Secrist at [wendi.secrist@wdc.idaho.gov](mailto:wendi.secrist@wdc.idaho.gov) or (208) 870-6573.