

# The Connection

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Welcome to the Employment Connections (EC) Division's newsletter - The Connection! This newsletter focuses on sharing information to support, connect, engage and excel.

Read regular updates on projects and programs, and messages from Director Jairus Rice. Please share comments or ideas you have with [Jordyn Johnsen](#) or [Anne Goranson](#), or submit your feedback via [survey](#).

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## Message from the Director



Hello, Employment Connections team!

We have so much to celebrate this month!! Pride Month, Juneteenth, Father's Day and Flag Day!! I want to start by adding my complete support and gratitude for all who are engaged in both Pride and Juneteenth remembrances and festivities. I'm so proud that both our state and our nation have now taken steps to formally recognize Juneteenth as a holiday and create space for all Americans to celebrate the end of slavery in America and consider what we can each do to further address the reverberating impacts that slavery has caused in our country.

Recognizing the diverse backgrounds of every EC employee, our customers, and everyone we work with is important to me. I celebrate with you and recognize that we have more work to do. Let's all take a moment to honor our Black and LGBTQ+ coworkers, recognize the fathers and father figures that have had a positive impact on our lives, and celebrate our flag as a symbol of our never ending pursuit to form a more perfect union with liberty and justice for all.



Each month we have focused on one of the 4 pillars of our EC Recovery Plan. We've covered our plans to Support our Staff, Focus on Equity, and Boost Customer Service. This month my update for you will focus on the work we are doing within our division to **innovate and adapt**.

Many of you have started returning to our physical WorkSource offices, and while we're enjoying some familiarity of pre-Covid days, things aren't the same. We jumped into virtual services, and that provided opportunities for us to connect with some customers who had the means and digital literacy to connect with us virtually. It also created barriers for many of our long-time customers. Now we have an opportunity to do both, and it is through **innovation and adaptation** that we'll try out new models and improve on them to serve our customers effectively.

I'm excited to share with you that we're already seeing some progress. This work is being led by Jessica Barr and Alberto Isiordia, two great champions of progress and improvement efforts. They will be helping me track our progress on a list of projects that are designed to either make our work more efficient, improve customer outcomes or both. We have many projects we are tackling now or will be focusing on soon. Before I share the list, I want to mention that as an agency we are being more intentional about selecting and prioritizing projects that need our attention the most. I would rather do a few things really well than try to accomplish too much and not succeed.

Two projects that are being implemented this month are the **ETO Create a Record** project and the **Statewide Scheduler (Qtrac)** project. Both projects are filling long term needs and will benefit our whole WorkSource system. We're pleased that EC has been able to play a lead role in this work with support of the whole WorkSource partnership. You can read more about those efforts in the project update section below.

A few ongoing virtual services that we'll continue to improve on are our virtual workshops, one on one appointments and job fairs provided through the Brazen platform. Plans are also underway to evolve the Professional Pathways program, support integration across the WorkSource partnership and provide great resources for our customers.

As we move forward, I want to hear whether these projects really are making a difference for you and our customers. I'd also love to hear your ideas about where we should place our attention in the future. You can share these ideas with any of your leaders, and you can also provide feedback any time through our ongoing newsletter [survey](#).

Thank you all for your support of this work,

*Jairus Rice*

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### Survey: We need your help!

There is no better resource than our teams that work directly with customers to help us get just in time information about how to best recruit for jobs! With that end in mind, we'd like to ask you to help us connect with your customers and ask them to complete a short [survey](#). We'll use the results to create tip sheets for employers who are experiencing difficulties connecting with workers. Thank you in advance for your help - we know you are busy and we greatly appreciate your assistance!

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## Project updates

This has been a great month for projects! Thank you to our amazing Employment Connections team for your great work as subject matter experts and your openness to support new initiatives. We also couldn't have done this without the support of so many other ESD teams - IT, PPP, LMEA, Contracts, Policy, Communications, Financial Services - you all ROCK!

### ***ETO Create a Record***

This project launched successfully last week! WorkSource employees can now create records in ETO for customers who need our support. Enormous thanks to Reddy Varakantham and the whole team for making this possible! We'll now be able to ensure that all customers who receive our services are registered in ETO, as required by the US Department of Labor. If you need more information, please check in with your local leadership team. Our new policy (WIN 0120), FAQs and training videos for staff and managers are available in the [Workforce Professionals Center](#) for anyone who missed the live training. We'll be tracking our progress as we begin using this new tool and look forward to hearing how it is working for you!

### ***Qtrac***

Beginning June 30th, customers will be able to schedule appointments with local WorkSource offices for virtual and in person appointments through the Qtrac system. So far, 22 offices are on track to implement this feature for customers. Training for staff users and super users is taking place this week (June 21-23) with user testing beginning on June 24th. Staff will have access to the Qtrac environment to practice during this period. **Special thanks to Sarafine and our IT colleagues for responding quickly to technology needs and ensuring that we're on track for launch!** We'd also like to thank everyone who has been asking great questions that are helping us to be prepared. Please keep them coming!

### ***Zoom/Microsoft Teams***

We are not moving forward with Zoom as a customer service platform at this time. Instead we will be utilizing Microsoft Teams and its robust suite of options to serve customers virtually. This update may be disappointing, but we hope that it will be helpful to have clear direction related to virtual platforms. It can be challenging to balance customer satisfaction with customer security, and in this case we made a decision as a division to follow the strong advice from our security experts who asked us to shift away from our Zoom project to MS Teams. Security of confidential and sensitive information is one of those things that we often take for granted until it fails, and MS Teams is the more secure tool. Please do not begin using MS Teams with external customers quite yet—you'll be receiving instructions and guidelines soon as there are still some risks we want everyone to be aware of before deploying it externally.

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## Kudos

***For ETO Create a Record team***

BIG Congrats are in order to the ETO Create a Record team!! It feels so good to complete this work and have a new function available to support WorkSource staff who work directly with customers! Enormous thanks to the following awesome team members:

- Reddy Varakantham, PM
- Mary MacLennan, BA
- Alberto Isiordia, Business Sponsor
- Jairus Rice, Executive Sponsor
- Mitch McGear
- Skyler Blumenthal
- Rebecca McGinnis
- Lynn Aue
- Elise Rowe
- Christa Castanon
- Brian Mark

*From System Alignment Liaison Manager Anne Goranson*

### ***Kudo submissions***

If you'd like to submit kudos to be shared in The Connection, send them to [Jordyn Johnsen](#).

Make sure to also submit your kudos to *ES-tounding!* to be shared in the all-staff NewsNet newsletter. You can do so by emailing [NewsNet@esd.wa.gov](mailto:NewsNet@esd.wa.gov). To find all newsletter stories, go to the [NewsNet home page](#) on InsideESD.

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### **A tip from the Harvard Business Review**

With so much change happening at once, it's easy for self-doubt to set in. HBR is a great resource, and this recent message seemed fitting, so we are passing it on to you.

#### ***Turn Self-Doubt into an Opportunity to Improve***

Imposter syndrome is the persistent, nagging thought that tells us that we're undeserving of our achievements. If you've ever felt that way, you're not alone. So, how can you channel feelings of self-doubt into something more constructive and productive? Here are some tips.

- **Reframe self-doubt.** Instead of shying away from experiences that trigger your doubt, deliberately embrace them. Remember that challenges are opportunities to learn. Think of your nerves as a reminder that there is always room to grow.
- **Be okay *not* being the smartest person in the room.** Ironically, you appear more confident when you demonstrate the humility and courage to ask about what you don't know.

- **Cherish feedback, even when it's critical.** No one likes to hear what they're doing wrong, but that's the only way to grow. Assume good will from the feedback giver. They took the time to point out your development areas because they want to see you improve and believe that you can. After receiving the feedback, take some time to plan out how you will apply it - you might even do this with the person who gave it to you.

This tip is adapted from "[How to Make Friends with Your Inner Imposter](#)," by Amantha Imber.

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### **Ask away: A regular column supported by a pack of experts**

We've introduced a [panel of resident experts](#) on a range of topics. Have questions about our division? [Submit a topic or question to our experts](#).