



May 5, 2023

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

Read regular updates on projects and programs, and messages from Director, Ismaila "Ish" Maidadi. We also want and need to hear from you! Send your thoughts and suggestions to the [EC Virtual Suggestion Box](#); and check out the latest suggestions being submitted at [InsideESD/VSB updates](#). We always want to hear your newsletter ideas and comments, you can share those by emailing the EC Communications [inbox](#), and we'll be in touch with you!

Message from the director



Greetings, Employment Connections team,

It is finally starting to feel like shorts weather here on the westside of the Cascades. I am loving these warmer and sunny days. I hope that you can enjoy the weather as well during your breaks and after work.

On April 21, I announced a [new leadership structure](#) that aligns with our strategic goals on operational performance and service delivery. The assistant director of operations position and the assistant director of service delivery positions are in the review and approval process and will be posted as soon as they are ready.

On a related note, last week, I shared [Jennie Weber's plans to retire](#) after more than 45 remarkable years with ESD. This is a bittersweet moment as Jennie is a pivotal member of our division and agency. I congratulate Jennie one more time and thank her for her amazing years of service. Jennie has graciously agreed to support the recruitment of her successor and we will be posting for her replacement. Please watch for more information to come out soon.

On April 26, **The Village Circle** recognized our talented administrative support staff for all they do to keep the wheels on the bus. Thank you again for your dedication. The conversation then moved to the need for support on compassion fatigue and how to manage the stress that comes with providing services to customers seeing the hardest of times and looking to us for help and resources. Please know that leadership is working quickly to respond; and we have arranged a couple introductory sessions with EC's own [Monty Webb on May 23 and May 25](#). You can sign up by [emailing Anne Goranson](#).



Last week, I participated in the Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion's [Doing the Work: Truth in Action](#) session, where Aji Lemcke, Interim Director, Administrative Services Division, and I responded to questions on how we are continuing equity work in our divisions. I shared about EC's Village Circle process and how the EC

team let me know that our meetings were not a “safe space” but rather a “**brave space**” to talk through issues on equity and diversity. It is my goal - through action and doing the work - to create a safe place for all EC teammates to participate and belong.

I appreciate those of you who are joining The Village Circle, asking questions, and helping to shape the voice and the culture of our division and agency. The next Village Circle will be **Wednesday, May 24, from 10-11 a.m.** I personally invite you to join the conversation.

In mid-April, **EC senior leaders visited WorkSource centers in the Pacific Mountain Region;** and joining us were Marie Burrows, ESD director of human resources, Maribeth Sapinoso, chief information officer for ESD, and Christa Castanon, WorkSource IT systems manager. Our visits gave us the opportunity to hear from staff and supervisors about current challenges – some that are particular to their local areas and others that are shared across many of our centers.

From WorkSource Mason County, we learned of their strong working relationships with the tribes and the demand for Spanish translation and more bi-lingual staff. At WorkSource Grays Harbor in Aberdeen, the team expressed scheduling concerns and challenges in meeting customer needs. The WorkSource Thurston team requested more accessible labor market data and WorkSource Lewis County in Centralia requested a localized WIOA 101 training. It was exciting to hear that their team wants to submit a proposal for the future dislocated worker program and that the ESD IT services team is working on a white paper focused on support for WorkSource offices.



EC leadership visit on April 19 to WorkSource Mason County. Above, left to right: standing are Gustavo Aviles, Jeff Maris, Maribeth Sapinoso, Christa Castanon, Sean Wiley, Anita Davis, Jenna Argot, Yolanda Hewitt; and kneeling are Alberto Isiordia, Ismaila Maidadi, and Chris Skinner.



EC leadership visit on April 20 to WorkSource Grays Harbor. Above, left to right: Marie Burrows, Christina Pitts, William Westmoreland, Alisa Shaffner, Sam Mitchell, Alberto Isiordia, Catherine Ayres, Ismaila Maidadi, and Maribeth Sapinosa.

As we meet with each location to listen and learn, EC leaders are taking it all in and working to actively address the challenges that are brought forward by each team. This is just the start. We have office tours planned for the balance of the year; and in the coming weeks and months, I hope to meet more of you in person. Our next road trip is in early June, when we will head to WorkSource centers in Wenatchee, Okanogan (Omak), Moses Lake, Mattawa and Kittitas. Remember, if you have ideas, needs or recommendations you want us to hear and take action on, you can always use the [EC Virtual Suggestion Box](#).



We cannot forget that Public Service Recognition Week (PSRW) is next week. This is the time when government agencies around the country honor and recognize public service accomplishments and ESD and Employment Connections can't wait to celebrate!

Early in the year, you and others nominated some of our brightest stars for Public Service Recognition Awards. We have since learned that several [EC team members are receiving PSRW awards](#) for leadership and going the extra mile. The state will be honoring all the award winners; and we will be celebrating our entire EC team at our own **EC All-Staff PSRW Celebrations** on **Wednesday, May 10, and Thursday, May 11**. I'm looking forward to all the fun that's coming, and you won't want to miss it! If you don't see it on your calendar, just contact [Allyn Schmidlkofer](#).

With that, I will close and say how appreciative I am for all you do in supporting our customers and how honored I am to be leading this team ... a team of capable and talented public service professionals working together to create a space where we all belong with equity at the center of our work.

Your effort, commitment, and resilience in doing your jobs humbles me on a regular basis. Here's to celebrating you and celebrating us, all together!

Ismaila "Ish" Maidadi

Project updates

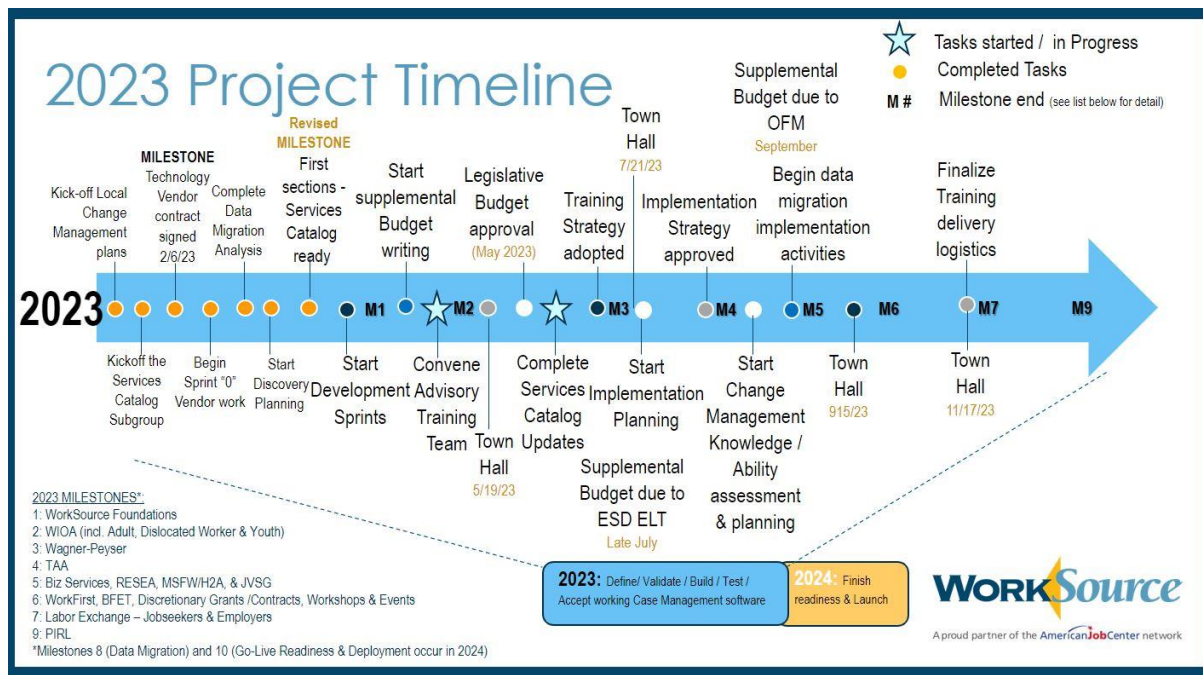


A little bit about WIT

Submitted by Nona H. Mallicoat, Deputy Director, Employment Connections

I am writing this month's column on my last day at ESD ... it's mid-April, and I would love to tell you it is a sunny spring day, but for some reason we still have snow and rain! Oh well. 😊

I know I've been talking about the importance of a clean data migration, and I am excited to share that the data migration team is over 50% complete and it is going great. This team is doing an amazing job and are setting us up for success before migrating into the new system. Kudos to that team and thank you for your hard work.



As

always, you can provide feedback, ideas, questions (or you just want to give someone a Kudos!), please use the [input and questions form](#) located on the [Workforce Professional Center site](#). We review that information often. Also, please remember to regularly check the [Workforce Professional Center](#), which is the best place for updates on the different facets of this project. You will also find the most recent recordings from the town halls, Q&A documents, and project status updates.

Finally, with my departure from ESD and the WIT project, I would like you to welcome Michelle Griffith, who is stepping up as the WIT Project Owner. She has been involved with WIT on the program side for some time

most recently as a Lead Development Partner. I have full confidence in her and look forward to seeing this project completed in 2024!

It has been an absolute honor and pleasure serving as the Project Owner for the WIT Replacement Project and I wish everyone the best of luck.

Until next month ... that's a little bit about WIT!

Legislative Town Hall update, and sine die, April 23.

ESD holds final Legislative Town Hall and session officially closes on Sunday, April 23.

On Tuesday, April 4, ESD held its final Legislative Town Hall for this session, and guests Pat Sullivan, Senior Labor Policy Advisor to the Governor, and Anna Minor, Budget Advisor to the Governor for Human Services. Both play critical roles for our agency by reviewing our reports, approving requests, and helping to shape budget proposals. During session, they helped guide the process and inform the Governor on aspects of impact and feasibility. They were incredible partners this year in ensuring our budget requests made it to the finish line.

At the time of the Town Hall event, the "Conference Committee" was in the middle of their work reconciling budget differences to finalize the 23-25 Biennial Operating Budget. The conference process is closed to the public, but we are pleased to report that the agency did well.

The legislature ultimately funded our requests to improve workforce services in a few different programs, as well as made critical investments to address remaining pandemic-era UI work, and to stabilize rates in the PFML fund.

For the **Employment Connections Division**, a few investments in the operating budget are worth highlighting:

- Increased stipend for Washington Service Corps AmeriCorps members who enter service with incomes below 200% of the federal poverty level, to the maximum monthly stipend allowed by AmeriCorps, or \$26,758, for their term of service (\$7.9 million).
- Expanded eligible population for workforce services provided by the Economic Security for All program, which seeks to streamline services and increase economic stability for working families (\$5.3 million increase).
- Increased Career Connected Learning grants to expand programs and apprenticeship opportunities connected to earning degrees and credentials (\$2 million, one-time funding).
- Established new business navigators in the state's Workforce Development Areas to support local talent acquisition, upskilling and retention, and develop pathways to employment for job seekers (\$2.9 million).

The close of the legislative session comes with SINE DIE (*/ˌsaɪ.niˈdaɪ/*), the last official day allowed for regular session under the state constitution. For 2023, that day was Sunday, April 23. After the close of session, lawmakers headed back to their home districts; and the governor's office is focused on completing its work to sign bills that passed with new fiscal year beginning on July 1, 2023.

The ESD Government Relations team archives session updates and Town Hall recordings on [InsideESD](#). Their Sine Die message to the agency is [available here](#). The ESD Spring “All Staff” meetings (May 9 and May 11) will feature a legislative session wrap-up and you are encouraged to [sign up](#).

On sine die, special news interviews are recorded at the Washington State Capitol featuring state legislators from the Democratic majority and the Republican minority caucuses in the House and Senate. This year, many big topics were taken on by lawmakers; and it is time well spent to hear the accounts of policy changes and budget investments across the state. Video recordings of these can be viewed on TVW.org by going to [2023 Impact Sine Die Special](#).

Contributed by Caitlyn Jekel, ESD Government Relations Director, and Victoria Pruett, EC Communications Coordinator.

Celebrating AmeriCorps Week and WSC to turns 40!

Governor Inslee visits for AmeriCorps Week and Washington Service Corps celebrates 40 years in May.

AmeriCorps Week — March 12-18, 2023: In mid-March, Governor Jay Inslee visited two AmeriCorps sites during AmeriCorps Week; and he met with some of our Washington Service Corps team (WSC) including Ashley Palmer, WSC Director, Brandon Rendon, Lead Site Member Services Coordinator, and Ariel Kay-Barto, Outreach Manager. AmeriCorps Week is observed annually as the time when AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers are recognized and celebrated.



Governor Jay Inslee visits Walla Walla site on March 15 and meets with representatives from the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, the Tri-State Steelheaders, and volunteers from AmeriCorps (photo courtesy of Gov. Inslee’s Office).



You can read more about the Governor’s visits, his history with AmeriCorps, and plans for a new Climate Corps Network in Serve Washington’s article, [Gov. Jay Inslee visits AmeriCorps programs.](#)

Governor Inslee presents Brock Peterson, WSC environmental educator, with a Washington apple pin (photo courtesy of Gov. Inslee’s Office).

WSC celebrates 40th anniversary!



WSC was created by the State Legislature in 1983, and EC is proud to have the Service Corps included in our division. This year, on May 23, WSC will celebrate their 40th anniversary! To honor and celebrate WSC, our affiliation with AmeriCorps, its people, and accomplishments, they will be hosting an in-person service event on Friday, May 19, in Federal Way. You can check out the [event registration](#) page for more information.

If you can’t attend in person, you can hear more from Commission Cami Feek on [May 9 or 11 at the ESD all-staff meetings](#). You can also join the May 19 fun by sharing pictures of you in Washington Service Corps gear or memories using **#WSTurns40** on social media. Check out the Washington Service Corps [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) to share and see highlights.

Last but not least, make sure to “Save the Date” for WSC and Serve Washington’s upcoming WSC [2023 Leadership Summit and Training Day](#) on Saturday, June 17, at Central Washington University in Ellensburg.

Please share the date and link with interested people and check your calendar and with your supervisor to see if this is something that’s an option for your schedule.



Contributed by Ariel Kay-Barto, WSC Outreach Coordinator and Victoria Pruett, EC Communications Coordinator.

Veterans Digital Navigation Program – Help spread the word!

Veterans may be eligible for digital supports and connectivity.



Submitted by Seth Maier, Veterans & Military Families Program Operator, Employment Connections, ESD

The Employment Connections team interacts with Veterans daily and most come to WorkSource and meet with an employment specialist for support and services before connecting with our Veterans & Military Families team. That's why we need your assistance in getting the word out on an exciting new program for Veterans and their families.

Washington State has rolled out a [Digital Navigator Program](#) that all eligible Veterans and their families will want to know about. The Department of Commerce is covering the cost to advance digital literacy, equity, and connectivity for Washington's Veterans; and this grant-funded effort has a 2023 goal of assisting over 1,000 Veterans in gaining equitable access to technology.

If you know of a Veteran who's household is [at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Guideline](#), they may be eligible to receive a FREE 5G cell phone (Wi-Fi hotspot enabled); two years of unlimited talk, text, data; and a Chromebook laptop computer! There is also a toll-free hotline to schedule navigator services and support to help guide the way.

The Digital Navigator Program focuses on Veterans in underserved rural areas, elderly Veterans, Veterans of color, Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program Participants and Veterans participating in higher education or apprenticeships.

Please help reach Washington's goal by sharing this information with Veterans and their families. They can [apply today through DVA!](#)

Management Tip from Harvard Business Review and news from Washington State University.

Fostering team creativity and an innovative way to tackle a local environmental culprit.

Observation, creative thinking, and innovation are fundamental when looking at implementing change along with improving programs and delivering services. Having a team culture and work environment that encourages and fosters creativity is critical and goes beyond brainstorming and team off-site sessions.

Authors Jeremy Utley and Perry Kelbahn co-wrote *IDEAFLOW: The only Business Metric That Matters* to bring attention to the fact that U.S. executives identify creativity as the top skill for today's leaders. Utley and Kelbahn's research found leaders fail to



understand how creativity works and retain systems and processes that stifle creativity with bureaucracy and busy work.

To read the top five recommendations for boosting team creativity, see the Harvard Business Review (HBR) links below and check into reading *IDEAFLOW* and *TomorrowMind*, the subject of the HBR Ideacast link below.

WSU INSIDER

In mid-April, just in time for Earth Day and National Volunteers Month, Washington State University (WSU) Extension announced an innovative program to solve an invasive species issue. By recruiting public volunteers to help identify an intruder to our coastal shoreline - the European green crab - they will gain an early-warning system to control an unwelcome transplant. By launching this innovative molt search project, WSU will multiply their outreach efforts to cover thousands of miles of shoreline. They will also provide mobile tools for reporting, which will give the WSU team on-demand reports to inform resource management.

The first volunteer trainings will be in Kitsap County on May 10 with [additional trainings to follow in May and early June](#). For more information on getting involved with WSU Extension's new [Molt Search](#) program as a citizen volunteer, check out the WSU link below.

[Five Ways to Boost Creativity on Your Team](#), HBR Management Styles, March 2023.

[A Deeper Understanding of Creativity at Work](#), HBR Ideacast (:30 min. podcast), January 2023.

[WSU Extension helps train volunteers to find invasive green crab](#), WSU Insider, April 2023.

Contributed by Victoria Pruett, Communications Consultant, Employment Connections

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