

The Connection

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](#).

Message from the Director



Greetings, Employment Connections team,

As I'm writing this, the sun is out, and that adds such a great, hopeful element to everything we are doing! I hope that you all are enjoying the sun as well. We live in a great state where natural beauty is such a gift. I try to get outside as much as possible. In fact, I'm considering how I might incorporate shout outs to special places across the state in my future road trips!

Action Item: If you have a special place in your area that you think I just have to see, please send it to me and Allyn

Schmidtkofer. These could be places of natural beauty or historical significance or anything else. We will do our best to fit them in as I'm traveling and visiting our WorkSource centers. I'm really looking forward to spending time with you both in person and virtually.

Speaking of virtual connection, thank you to everyone who participated in our town hall gatherings in mid-March. It was great to hear your questions, ideas, and enthusiasm for our new plan and EC's leadership team is excited about it as well! We've had a great opportunity to get a feel for our capacity to take on new projects and consider where we may need to put ideas on hold. This includes some great ideas, which we are certainly not lacking. Our intention is to give the right things our best attention and effort and see them all the way through. It's also a way we can make sure we are living our value of supporting our people by not asking them to take on too much. You'll see updates here as we work through our Blueprint for Success! If you missed our town halls, please access the recording [here](#).

One of the topics that you asked about during our town halls was related to the changes in the state's COVID requirements. Thank you for engaging in that discussion. It is important for me to understand what is on your minds, and I sincerely appreciate your comments. Our goal is to support all our employees and ensure that you feel as safe as possible at work. We will continue to follow the direction of our Governor, State HR and DOH with the loosening of requirements. However, it is possible that some local workforce boards may determine that stricter requirements are needed for their areas. If that happens, we'll follow their guidance. Please keep checking in with your local

leaders as you have questions, ideas, or concerns about how this is unfolding in your area.

Finally, I'm happy to announce that our efforts to pull meaningful reports together are coming along! Tammi LeClerc and her DATA Solutions team have done an amazing job of responding quickly to our needs. You've heard me say that I value the use of data to support important division decisions, and we're getting better in this area! The EC Programs Team led by Elizabeth Court is leading the way with monthly report outs. Watch for more information in future newsletters!

Thank you for supporting each other, our customers, and our communities.

Jairus Rice

Project updates



A little bit about WIT

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

A lot has happened in the last month with the WIT replacement project! First, it was officially funded in the Governor's budget, woohoo! That means we are officially moving along now. 😊

For those of you in the field, you may have seen the product and customer experience team come out on one of their site visits to meet staff in the WorkSource office and at the LWDB, gathering feedback about what worked and didn't work with our last case management/customer relationship tool; what we would like to see in the next one; and local, state, and federal grant requirements. At this point, they have visited 11 of the 12 WDAs and will wrap up their state tour in Walla Walla later this month.

We've convened 5 of the 6 RFP teams that are responsible for gathering and pulling all the requirements together for vetting and approval, so we can build a robust RFP that will help us ensure we get the case management system we want and need! We have also finalized the stakeholder plan (which outlines all of the stakeholders and when/how we will interact with them) as well as formalizing the overall project with the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO). That means it is now tracked on the OCIO Project Dashboard as a public record as [WIT Project Phase 1 - ETO Replacement](#).

The Advisory Communications Team is actively building the project communication plan, which will help the cadence of regular communications over the span of the project. Finally, we posted the RFP for our Quality Assurance Vendor, which we hope to award later this month.

We continue to encourage staff to interact in the process through site visits, town halls, RFP teams, and the [Workforce Professional Center](#), where you can always find the most recent recordings from the town hall, a Q&A document, and our newest addition... a link to submit ideas and questions!

As always, we encourage you to join the semi-monthly town hall meetings, and the next one will be held Friday April 22nd at 9am and 2:30pm. The content is the same each time, so please only attend one. We look forward to seeing you!

Employment services

2022 EC Blueprint for Success

In the March 2022 town halls, you voted on a new name for the Recovery Plan and the votes are in!

2022 EC Blueprint for Success is the winner!



Thank you to all who attended and for those of you who didn't, a [recording](#) of the town hall is located on the [Workforce Professionals Center](#).

Please complete this [short survey](#) around the March town halls and this year's Recovery Plan – "Blueprint for Success". Thank you!

A PDF of the below image is available [here](#).



Zoom will soon be available!

Good news! You asked and we delivered - Zoom will soon be available for use with job seekers, employers, in workshops, as well as on WSC participant sites!

More conversations are happening around logistics, but we wanted to share the good news, as we know many of you have been requesting this for some time now.

Things we're working on now that Zoom has been approved:

- Partnering with IT to create an implementation plan
- Identifying field needs to determine licensing
- Coordinating with ESD programs to determine what updates need to be made
- Building a change management plan
- Beginning to research and build training

In the meantime, don't use Zoom quite yet. We will update you with more information as soon as it's available!

Kudos to our ESD BFET Teams!

Submitted by Economic Mobility Programs Operator Shannon Booth

An important part of the BFET Program (Basic Food Employment and Training) is monthly monitoring. The Economic Mobility Programs Operations team wants to express our gratitude and appreciation for the excellent work and attention to detail that WorkSource Columbia Basin, Colville, Okanogan, Skagit, Spokane, Vancouver, Walla Walla, Whatcom, and Yakima have demonstrated. In their most recent monitoring reviews, DSHS has reported these offices have achieved **100% Case Note Accuracy** for the month of February and overall **YTD they have achieved 97.6% accuracy**. In addition to the accuracy, the quality of the notes was highlighted.

DSHS had this to say about our BFET Team: *"Staff show compassion and dedication when assisting participants in meeting their employment and training goals. Community collaboration and partnerships are instrumental in their ability to provide appropriate BFET Services".*

To recap, DSHS had this to say about our BFET Team:

- Excellent Case notes with 100% Case Note accuracy for February!
- Timely notes that provide good details of each customer's progression.
- Demonstrated strong customer engagement.
- Showed collaboration with other community partners.
- Many co-enrollments with WIOA.
- Partnership collaboration has allowed for customers to be connected to training opportunities and with supports from both WIOA and BFET.

The cumulation of these efforts have been a game changer in reducing funding barriers for our WorkSource customers! Way to go ESD BFET Teams!

A management tip from the Harvard Business Review

Great Presenters Establish Trust with Their Audience

When giving a presentation, your most important responsibility is to establish trust with your audience. How can you do this? Focus on four key areas.

- Demonstrate expert knowledge of your topic by sharing current trends in your industry and by using specific anecdotes.
- **Clarity.** Clear communication lets expertise shine through. Identify the goal of your presentation in advance and use a clear structure with logical transitions to achieve that goal. Then, read your presentation out loud and refine as needed.
- **Compassion.** Speak directly to your audience's needs, highlight what's relevant to them, and make them feel heard and understood.
- **Connection.** Weave personal examples into your presentation — particularly examples that demonstrate vulnerability and transparency — to connect emotionally with your audience.

This tip is adapted from “[To Win Over an Audience, Focus on Building Trust](#),” by Allison Shapira and David Horsager.