

# 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



Happy New Year, Employment Connections team,

I hope you were all able to spend time doing what you love over the holidays and that you were able to rest and relax. I'm feeling enthusiastic about this new year. I know it's going to be a good one!

2021 was supposed to be all about recovery – for customers and for us as a team. While we did “recover” in a lot of ways, much of the year was also spent adapting to the ever-changing conditions the pandemic created. That put us squarely in response mode most of the time. That said, we did a great job collectively of weathering those changes and still accomplishing much in laying the foundation of how we will help our communities recover in the coming year. I want to tell you again how deeply thankful I am not only that you were able to do that, but also for **how** you did it with grace and compassion towards your customers and each other.

My focus for 2022 is to increase our **Operational Excellence**. I use those words purposefully, knowing that they could create some trepidation. That's not my intention. When I think of excellence, it is different from perfection. (The word perfection would concern me too!) Excellence is about being in a state of learning and exploration that moves an organization toward delivering the highest quality of service.

To me, Operational Excellence from a business lens includes:

- Clear goals and visibility into our progress
- Strict prioritization to prevent burnout
- Established battle rhythms

The four pillars we prioritized in 2021 will remain our pillars for 2022 (Support Staff, Focus on Equity, Boost Customer Service and Innovate & Adapt). We'll prioritize projects like the WIT Replacement and expansion of Virtual Services within those pillars.

Some of you may be wondering what I mean by battle rhythms. Battle rhythm, a term from my days in the Marine Corps, speaks to having well developed processes,

workflows, routines, and schedules to manage our work. It means we all know **who** comes together, **when** they come together, and **how** they make decisions to move specific types of work forward in an efficient way. It means we know how to bring new issues or opportunities to the table in a way that's helpful and streamlined. It means we can all meet the high demands of our job in a way that feels sustainable and supportive.

We've created two new multi-divisional teams, each with regular meeting cadences to help build this rhythm. The EC Comprehensive Leadership Team (CLT) will meet twice monthly. Key leaders from the divisions that support our work – Data Architecture, Transformation & Analytics (DATA), Employment System Policy & Integrity (ESPI), Product, Planning and Performance (PPP), Information Technology Services Division (ITSD), Budget, Facilities & Safety, and Unemployment Insurance Customer Service (UICS) – will join the EC Strategic Leadership Team, Regional Operations Managers (ROMs), EC Product Manager and MA5s to share our vision and operational experiences so that we can prioritize efforts that will result in best practices. Similarly, EC leaders will meet monthly with PPP's Portfolio Product Manager, Customer Experience Product Analyst and Organizational Change Leader and the DATA Workforce Data Supervisor to understand and improve our program performance. You can find a list of these leaders below! Please feel free to reach out to any of them if you have questions.

This entire division did a phenomenal job throughout 2021 amidst multiple distractions and challenges. We will be on the front lines of our state's workforce development recovery efforts in 2022. I know we're up to the task. As we focus on our operational excellence, our customers are going to enjoy the highest quality of service because of your commitment, professionalism, and expertise. I'm looking forward to taking this journey with you as we begin this new year.

Thank you for supporting each other and our customers.

*Jairus Rice*



**"IF YOU CAN'T FLY THEN RUN, IF YOU CAN'T RUN THEN WALK,  
IF YOU CAN'T WALK THEN CRAWL, BUT WHATEVER YOU DO,  
YOU HAVE TO KEEP MOVING FORWARD."  
REMEMBERING DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.**

EC and Leadership and Planning Team Members	
Strategic Leadership Team	Deputy Director: Nona Mallicoat Regional Directors: Jennie Weber, Alberto Isiordia, Lekha Fernandes, Norton Sweet, Jessica Barr Virtual Services Manager: Anne Goranson Program Integrity Manager: Elizabeth Court Administrative Assistant: Allyn Schmidkofer
Regional Operations Managers	Rob Crow, Sondra Pieti, JR Richards, Chuck Durham, Michelle Wilson
Assistant Program Integrity Manager	Sandy Crews
WA Service Corps Director	Ashley Palmer
Program Operators	Shannon Booth, Jaclyn Cascio, Michelle Griffith, Seth Maier, Juan Martinez, Dina Morris
EC Product Manager	Vacant
MA5s	Ashley Olson, Anne Buchan
DATA – Workforce Supervisor	Tammi LeClerc
ESPI Policy Manager	Gary Kamimura
ESPI Title 1 Director	Ismaila Maidadi
PPP Portfolio Product Manager	Joel Getzendanner
PPP Customer Experience Product Analyst	Marissa Meyer
PPP Organizational Change Leader	Liane Johnson
ITSD WorkSource System Manager	Christa Castanon
Budget Manager	Lisa Henderson
Facilities & Safety Manager	Jesse Austin
UICS Strategic Ops Manager	Karen Bailey

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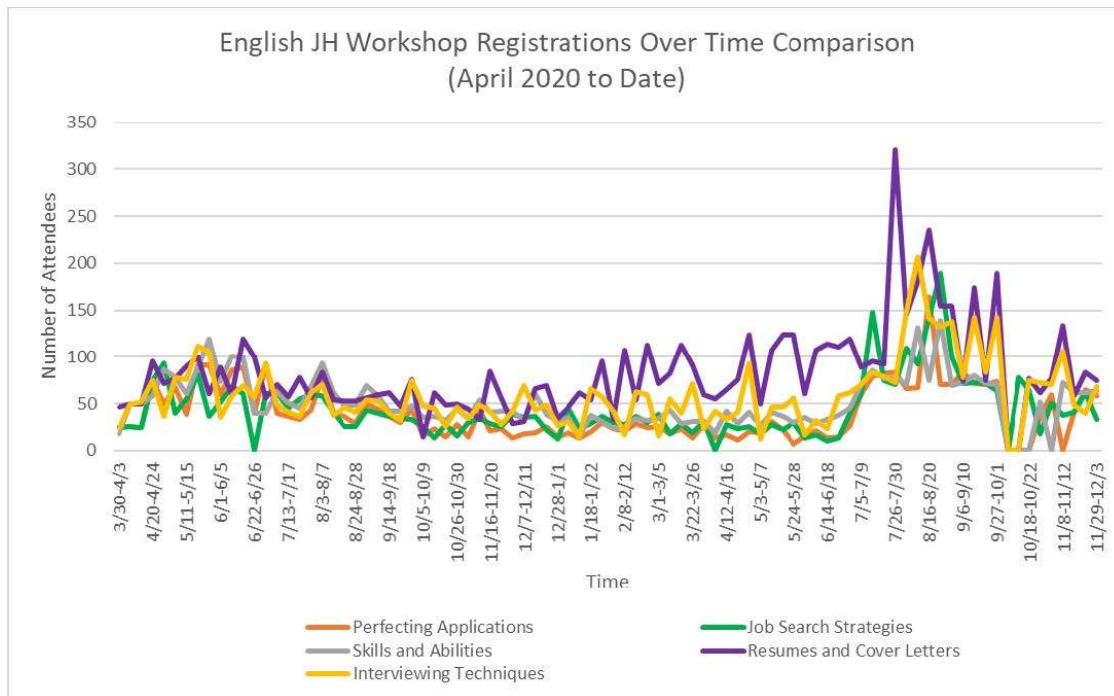
## Employment services

### ***Update on workshop capacity***

When the UI job search came back into effect, we saw a surge of customers wanting assistance with their job search activities and seeking attendance for workshops. There were large waitlists for statewide virtual workshops during that time, causing many to stop attempting to attend. Today, workshop traffic has slowed down a bit. Not all workshops are full. There are still classes filling up but we're seeing waitlists of 10 individuals, instead of 100. The average participant show rate for workshops is 59%. With a waitlist of 10 people long, there's a very high chance that all customers, waitlisted or not, will still be invited to attend.

Continue to refer your customers and encourage them to sign up for both English and Spanish workshops!

Below is the customer registration comparison graph for Job Hunter classes.



### ***Back by popular demand – the Employment Connections Virtual Q&A's!***

Employment Connections is hiring! Join a virtual Q&A session to answer career related questions, tell folks about current opportunities within Employment Connections, and share tips and tricks on how to make an application stand out!

Please share this opportunity with your customers!

Click here to [register](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/employment-connections-virtual-qa-tickets-235502854377) an attendee or share this link:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/employment-connections-virtual-qa-tickets-235502854377>

### **Dual Language Assessments – Now Open to Volunteers!**

For those of you in Dual Language roles or receiving the dual language pay differential, ESD has the opportunity for you to be formally assessed in the non-English language(s) you feel competent speaking and writing in.

At ESD we are always looking to provide great customer service. By developing a dual language assessment process and providing objective measures of language proficiency in non-English language, we are able to provide better customer service to our Limited English and non-English speaking customers.

As you may know, to meet federal requirements, we must be able to objectively show that each staff member providing dual language services to our clients is qualified and dual language proficient to justify the dual language pay (5% increase) they receive. This assessment process will allow us to provide that objective data in a way we have not been able to provide it before.

Now is your chance to volunteer to take the test! This gives you a chance to “practice” before requirements go into effect, and see what all it involves. If interested, let your Supervisor know. They will submit a [Dual Language Assessment Request form](#) to HR. An HR Talent Acquisition team member will then coordinate with you to schedule the assessment at a time that works best for you and your team.

ESD has contracted with Avant to provide assessment and scoring. Avant (<https://avantassessment.com/>) provides real-world language proficiency tests and uses scoring aligned with the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines. Tests are available for Arabic, Cantonese, French, German, Hebrew, Hindi, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin (Simplified & Traditional), Polish, Portuguese (Brazilian), Russian, and Spanish.

You will be tested in the following skill sets: Reading, Writing, Listening, & Speaking. Your assessment will be completed online and a proctor will need to be online with you to ensure the integrity of the testing system. You will have your results back within 5 business days.

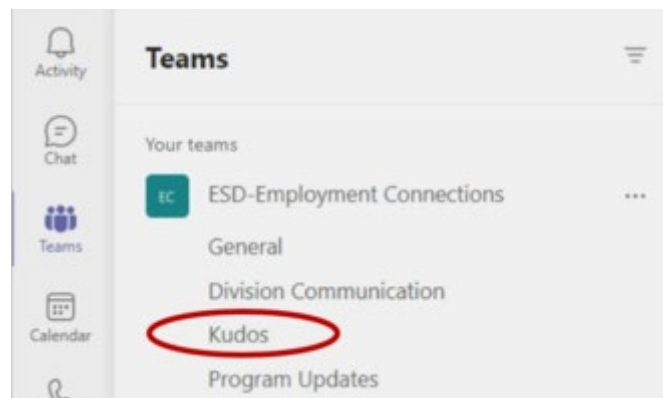
This voluntary phase will continue through the end of April 2022. During this voluntary phase, you may take the assessment with no impact to your employment status. If you are unsuccessful obtaining a qualifying proficiency score the first time around, we encourage you to take some time to self-study and then re-schedule.

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## Kudos

### ***Kudo submissions***

Give your coworkers kudos on the Kudos Employment Connections Team channel! Post stories, comments, your appreciation and even a GIF or emoji to help share your kudo story.



As always, 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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**2022 IS HERE!**

**HAPPY NEW YEAR!**

