

# 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



Greetings, Employment Connections team,

I really love receiving questions from you, and from your leaders on your behalf. It's not easy to stay closely connected within a large organization, but it is critically important. Your questions give me insight into your experiences and needs, and that helps me advocate for the tools and resources you need to do your best work and serve our communities! I also want to make sure that I'm getting you the best information I can, and your questions help me to understand what needs additional attention. Please keep the questions coming!

Recently, I heard a rumor that I was going to eventually stop all telework for staff serving in WorkSource centers. Let me squash that now. While there may be points in time that our customer needs demand higher in-person support in our centers, I'd like to emphasize here that our leadership team is committed to maximizing telework and mobile work opportunities as much as possible within our business constraints. I'm proud of our agency and our system for the way we have made a conscious decision **not** to simply return to our pre-COVID service delivery models. We know there were many customers we were not able to serve while we suspended in-person services. We also know that, prior to COVID, we also missed serving customers who were unable to overcome transportation, childcare, or other barriers to coming into our offices to receive support.

We know now, through our work this last year, that virtual connections can be equally beneficial to customers, and it gives us a much broader reach to serve more people. You've heard about our commitment to EC's statewide Virtual Services Team. We are equally committed to finding ways to maximize telework and mobile work opportunities for all WorkSource staff and ensure it is done fairly and equitably. I want to thank all the members of the Support Staff Pillar team who have been working hard these last couple weeks to help us identify the best ways to do it.

As you know, every local area is a bit different. Our system is intended to be coordinated by local workforce development boards (aka WDCs). Our regional directors, regional operations managers and administrators work closely with our partners to ensure that we're all providing great services to customers in a coordinated

way. That means that we may see slightly different approaches from area to area, but we are trying to bring alignment wherever we can. Please feel free to reach out to your local leaders for more background on your local approach.

Recently, you told us that you'd like to have more townhalls to discuss what's happening in the division and agency. We heard you. "Blueprints for Success Town Hall" meeting invites will be going out soon, so keep an eye out for those. If you have questions, suggestions on topics to cover, or general feedback, we'd love to hear from you. Please feel free to check in with anyone from our leadership team, or you can send feedback through the survey link at the top of this newsletter. We'll have an opportunity to talk more during our next Town Hall. In the meantime, my virtual door is always open. Drop me a line on TEAMS or email.

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

*Jairus Rice*

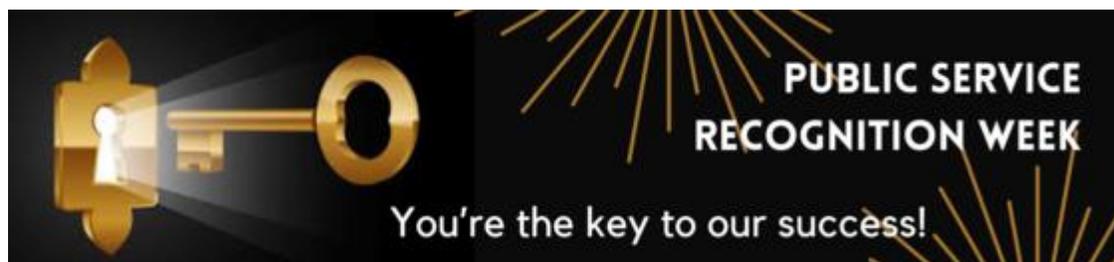
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## Public Service Recognition Week

It's Public Service Recognition Week! We want to share a big THANK YOU to all of the individuals that make Employment Connections and WorkSource as a whole, so spectacular.

In the twice a week, all ESD staff newsletter it was shared that Employment Connections served over 150,000 Washingtonians in WorkSource centers in 2021. That number includes 16,000 who identified as having a disability, 32,000 who were justice-involved and 14,000 who were veterans. This year's theme is, "You're the key to our success." That couldn't be more true with this division.

Thank you, Employment Connections team!



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## Project updates



### ***A little bit about WIT***

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

The WIT replacement team(s) have been working hard this past month. I'm excited to say that we concluded the first rounds of site visits and large RFP team meetings, and the information gathered has informed a multitude of business requirements, so thank all of you who provided feedback! We also have another town hall in the books – we had a great presentation by the WorkSource Product Manager, Michael Luchini, so if you missed it, make sure to check it out on the [WPC site](#).

We made the official decision to split the ETO Case Management replacement RFP away from the WorkSourceWA (Labor Exchange) RFP. They were always intended to be phased, but the decision gives us the flexibility to wait and see what cool new technology will be available when we are ready to move on the Labor Exchange replacement instead of getting tied into 2022 tech. 😊 Also, I had previously shared we had posted the RFP for our Quality Assurance (QA) vendor. That has now closed, we have evaluated bidder packages, and will be holding interviews in a couple weeks. More to come.

Managing a remote team from across the state is always challenging, but our core planning team is amazing. Last week, we joined Michael and Matt on the final site visit in Walla Walla and were able to meet for an in-person planning team meeting. It was the first time most of us had met in person! During that meeting, we focused on refining the timeline of the WIT replacement project, clarifying staffing and budget, and most importantly identifying risks, risk owners, and beginning discussions on mitigation strategies. Check out the pics below to see this fabulous team in action!



Left to right: ashley olson, Anne Buchan, Linda Kleingartner, Matthew LaPalm, Liane Johnson, Reddy Varakantham, Michael Luchini

Left to right: ashley olson, Anne Buchan, Liane Johnson

Michael Luchini and Mariah Matthews

Left to right: Reddy Varakantham, Matthew LaPalm, Linda Kleingartner

As always, we encourage you to interact in the replacement process. I would recommend checking out the [Workforce Professional Center](#), where you can always find the most recent recordings from the town hall, a Q&A document, project status updates, and a link to submit ideas and questions. Until next month...that's a little bit about WIT!

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## 2022 Blueprint for Success

### ***Pillar updates in the Weekly Update Rollup***

Starting this Friday, we will begin a rotation of updates on our four pillars in the Weekly Update Rollup!

Each pillar will share all updates that have occurred within the month on a rotating weekly basis, starting this Friday with Support Staff! Keep on the lookout for this update, as well as Focus on Equity, Boost Customer Service, and Innovate and Adapt pillar updates in the following few weeks!

### ***Blueprint for Success on InsideESD***

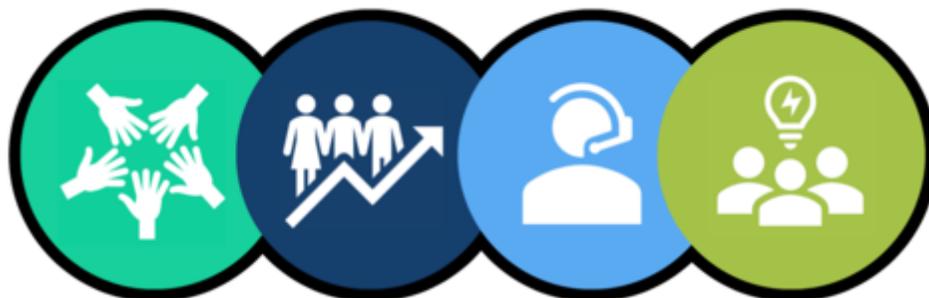
With the change of the 2021 Recovery Plan to 2022 Blueprint for Success, the InsideESD pages previously dedicated to the topic are getting a face lift! Not only have we updated the URLs to match the new name, but we've also updated the content!

Below are the links to each pillar's page:

- [Blueprint for Success landing page](#)
- [Support staff pillar](#)
- [Focus on equity pillar](#)
- [Boost customer service pillar](#)
- [Innovate and adapt pillar](#)

There, you'll find information about the pillar, leaders, change agents and participants for that pillar. We'll include all updates related to that pillar that have been shared in The Connection, as well as the Weekly Update Rollup.

The goal of these pages is to provide you a resource to access all information shared on our 4 pillars!



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## A message from your statewide EC equity team

### Calling in Accessibility Navigator Team (ANT) members!

Are you a natural when it comes to finding tools for the customers you work with that will help them be successful? Do you feel passionate about inclusion, equity, and accessibility? Would you enjoy working with other navigators from across the state to identify gaps in how we serve customers and find creative ways to fill them?

You don't have to have all the answers to be able to make a difference. As part of EC's Blueprint for Success, the statewide Equity team is seeking individuals who are excited about learning together and working as a strong team to reduce barriers for community groups so that ALL Washingtonians have access to WorkSource services. We'll work together to provide standardized tools, resources and service delivery procedures that can be shared across the state.

If this sounds like the perfect opportunity for you, **please reach out to your supervisor to make sure they can support your participation, and then send a written request to your strategic leadership team member with a short summary of why you are interested in joining this team. You can let them know that we expect your time commitment to be about 3-4 hours per month.**

Not sure who your Strategic Leadership team member is? Check out the [Employment Connections tab](#) on the [WPC site](#) for a list of our Strategic Leadership team.

Your leader will identify two individuals who will work together to support statewide projects, communicate between the Accessibility Navigator Team (ANT) and their regional (or statewide for VST or WSC) team to champion customer needs. These positions are open for Employment Connections employees and non-ESD partners, so please spread the word!

If you are selected, you'll participate in monthly, virtual meetings and follow up on assignments in between meetings. We hope to bring the team together in person once a year in the future. Plan to assist with presentations, data collection and regular report outs. Come help us change the world – or at least our corner of it!

“Courage isn't always a lion's roar. It's also the silence of ants working patiently, persistently and never giving up.” – Rajmohan Pillai



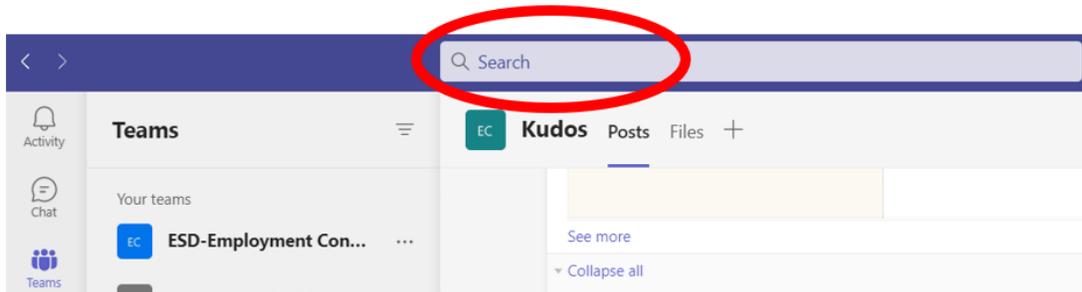
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## Resources

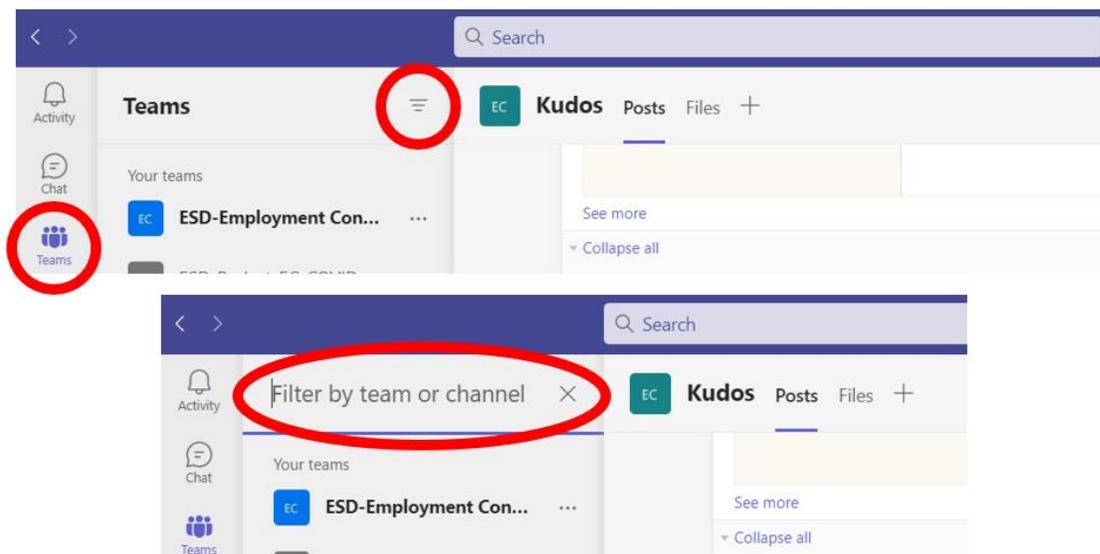
Did you know you can search in Teams? There are two helpful ways to do so!

1. You can use the top 'Search' bar
2. If you're in multiple Teams/Channels, you can 'filter' by Team or Channel

To search using the top 'Search' bar, type your desired key word and hit 'Enter' to find all related items.



To filter by Team or Channel, select the three lines on the 'Teams' tab, type your desired key word and hit 'Enter' to find all related Teams/Channels.



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## A management tip from the Harvard Business Review

### ***Chip Away at Your Long-Term Career Goals***

Most of us would prefer to think long-term about our careers, rather than just veering randomly from opportunity to opportunity. But how can you be strategic if you're not entirely sure where you ultimately want to end up? Try these four strategies:

1. **Figure out what you don't want.** For instance, you might decide you never want to work for a micromanaging boss again, or you're done with your current industry, or you no longer want to work hands-on and only want to take on advisory roles. Those are useful pieces of data that can help you form a more realistic picture of what you *do* want.
2. **Pick a "provisional hypothesis."** It's hard to think about narrowing your options permanently so pick one direction as a hypothesis for where you want your career to go. This should be an informed choice, and you can always change your mind later, but it'll help you to work strategically toward a plausible goal.
3. **Make progress on the basics.** Double down on foundational, transferable skills and knowledge that will make you better, no matter what direction you ultimately decide to pursue.
4. **Take stock of your emotional and mental energy.** Sometimes the best thing you can do for your long-term career success is to take a well-deserved break, whether it's a more formal sabbatical or simply recognizing that it's OK to pause on ambitious new goals right now. There's no need to beat yourself up for a smart choice.

This tip is adapted from "[How to Make Progress on Your Long-Term Career Goals](#)," by Dorie Clark