



The Connection

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 this month's message from Strategic Initiatives Manager Anne Goranson. We also want and need to hear from you! Send your thoughts and suggestions to the [EC Virtual Suggestion Box](#); and for newsletter ideas and comments, you can share those by emailing the EC Communications [inbox](#), and we'll be in touch!

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Message from Employment Connections leaders

Greetings, Team EC!



Ish asked me to jump in as a guest contributor for this month's newsletter. You'll hear from other EC leaders here in the future. I'm happy to share my experience with you!

I'm not sure how I became the person in the room with 30 years of experience at ESD! It seems like just yesterday I was hanging out in the Columbia Gorge taking unemployment claims in person, working the front desk, and teaching a mandatory week-long 30-hour workshop for claimants! As someone who has "grown up" at ESD, I know that I am biased. I think ESD has the **best** mission and the **best** people – and

there is nothing I love more than getting to know our team members and supporting your work with customers.

A year ago, I began working as EC's strategic initiatives manager. In this role, I support projects and initiatives intended to remove obstacles and improve services for customers and team members. At ESD, we are

committed to a portfolio system that tracks projects from beginning to end. It is easy to initiate a project. It's more difficult to maintain focus, especially when other projects are competing for the same resources. We're still learning and developing our portfolio system, and we're already seeing progress! Here are a few of the projects that have been completed, thanks to the fabulous portfolio team!

- Modifications to the Reemployment Appointment Scheduler (RAS self-scheduler) – part of the RESEA program tracking system – have made it possible for a few offices to pilot weekend appointments for customers. Thank you, Sunnyside and Columbia Basin!
- A landing page of key websites that has been added to WorkSource Resource room computers to make it easier for you to help customers navigate to the right page.
- A new alerts page on WorkSourceWA.com that lists office closures and other important updates and alerts for customers.
- Data dashboards for EC programs that let us know if we are meeting our program goals.
- The [EC Scorecard](#), where you can find counts of job seekers and business customers served, visits, RESEA referrals to partners, wages and more – broken down by region, WDA and local WorkSource office.
- Customer feedback analysis that started with Virtual Services Team customers and will expand to other areas. We'll be using their feedback to inform the WIT Replacement Project.

Speaking of the [WIT Replacement Project](#), on Feb. 1, I began a new role as the WIT project owner. Over the last few weeks, I have been deep in learning mode, thanks to Michelle Griffith, previous project owner who recently started a new position as the Eastern regional operations manager. Michelle and Linda Kleingartner, WIT project manager, have done an excellent job organizing the project and responding quickly to team and partner needs. Like most of you, I've been watching their progress from afar. It is exciting to see how efficiently and effectively this team works together! Please watch for updates in this newsletter and via town halls. If you have questions, please feel free to send me a message.

I'll end this message by saying that ESD and EC are in a great place. Our world is changing constantly, and it can be challenging to keep up. We have leaders who really care about focusing on the right things and letting go of what is less important. It's much more than words. We will continue to innovate and find ways to provide the very best services for our customers who depend on us.

We're all in this together. Every single person who shows up every day, giving this important work their very best effort, matters. I love being part of the EC team.

Thank you for all you do!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anne". The script is cursive and fluid.

Anne Goranson
EC strategic initiatives manager and WIT project owner

Project updates



A little bit about WIT

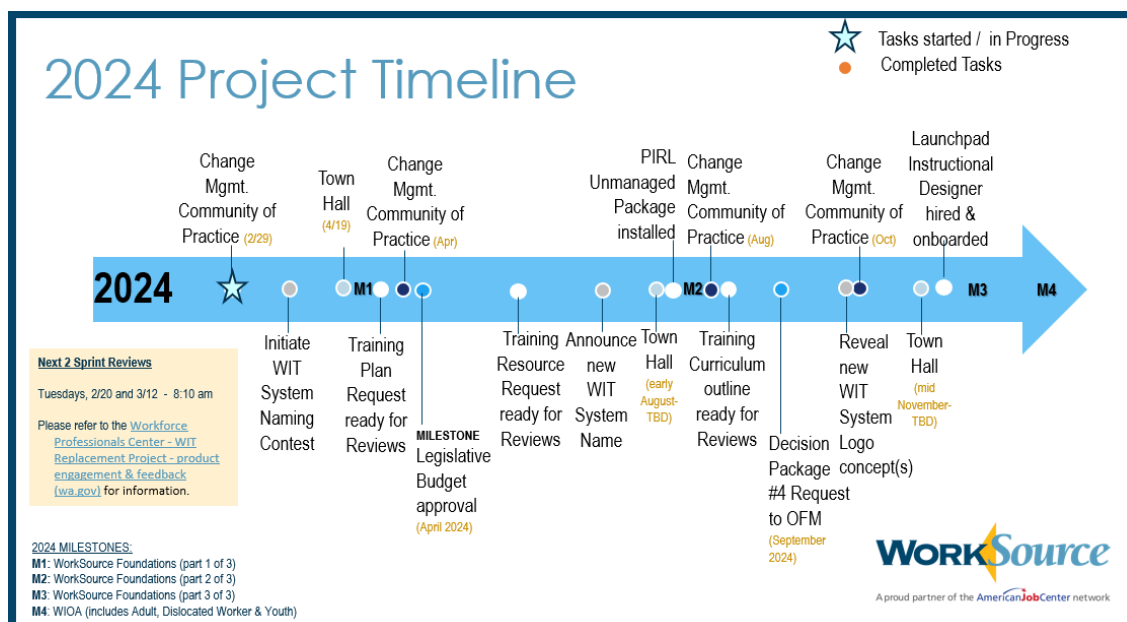
Submitted by Anne Buchan, WIT Replacement Project team

As most of you know, 2024 is the year of the WIT Replacement build, and we're already seeing pieces of our future system. Sprint Reviews are underway, and it's been exciting to be part of the presentations and share in the product development process.

Sprints allow you, as the end user, to review and give input as each component is being designed. This is why your involvement and input are so critical. As users, we value your experience and insights to design the best Customer Relationship Management (CRM) solution possible for you, our partners and for our customers.

The live-session Sprints occur every three weeks on Tuesday mornings, from 8 – 11 a.m. They are approximately three hours and may be longer depending on the topics. Our next Sprint is scheduled for Tuesday, Feb. 20. To make it easy for you, these are recorded and segmented by session topic. This allows you to view them and give us feedback on your own schedule. We are building a library of recordings edited by topic. You can choose topics that are important to you at a time that works best for you!

Simply go to the [Spring Review Engagement & Feedback](#) page and choose the topic you want to review. The links to give feedback for each session are on the same page directly below the recordings. The WIT project team really needs our help! What did you like? What have we missed? What concerns you? The next WIT town hall meetings are set for April 19, and we want your feedback before then. We would love to hear from you **now** as you watch the Sprint Reviews.



WIT reminders:

- Don't forget to regularly check out the [WIT Replacement Project](#) page on the Workforce Professionals Center site. It's continuously updated with excellent information about the project, including the most recent recordings from the WIT Town Halls, the upcoming Sprint Review sessions and project status updates.
- If you are searching for WIT project links, you can always find them in the EC Weekly Update Rollup that comes out every Friday afternoon.

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

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Resources and other updates

A Veteran's comeback story

Submitted by Seth Maier, Veterans & Military Families Program operator, and Victoria Pruett, EC communications consultant.

Employment Connections (EC) has a dedicated [Veterans & Military Families \(V&MF\) Program](#) team that provides Priority of Service and support for Veterans who have served and their eligible spouses, who are experiencing significant barriers to employment. When they find their way to WorkSource, their first connection is through our WorkSource specialists and our partner career specialists. They are the boots on the ground for those first conversations, and they are a source of hope to those in need. WorkSource staff work closely with these Priority of Service customers to [assess their needs and eligibility](#) as well as provide referrals to resources and supports – including to a local DVOP/CVSR or another eligible program.

Glenn Hoffman, a retired U.S. Navy Veteran, worked with Kevin Sullivan of WorkSource Yakima in Union Gap, and wrote a wonderful message of gratitude and success. Glenn's message tells of his transition from homelessness to a secure and stable life, where he is setting an example and paying it forward. His words say it best.

To read Glenn's letter, go to [InsideESD](#).



Kevin Sullivan (left), DVOP, and Glenn Hoffman, U.S. Navy Veteran, at WorkSource Yakima in Union Gap, Washington.

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February: Black History Month

Submitted by Victoria Pruett, EC communications consultant

Black cowboys: The art in creating one's craft.



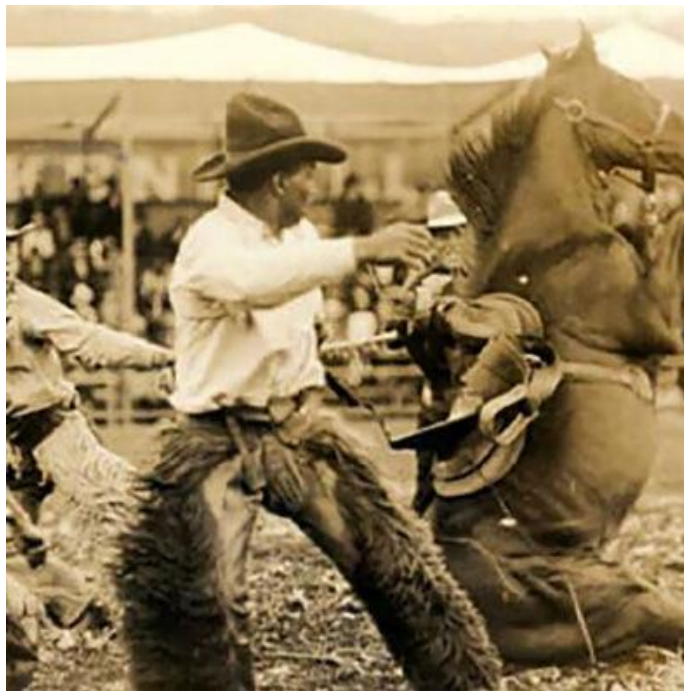
expression.

Black History Month has been observed for 108 years, since 1915, when the [Association for the Study of African American Life and History](#) (ASALH) gave it life. This year, the ASALH has defined this year's theme as [African Americans and the Arts](#). African Americans have used art to preserve a collective history and community memory along with other forms of cultural

This article takes a creative look at art and culture by focusing on [African American cowboys](#) and how a person's work or trade leads to craft, impacts art and creates culture. Art is often seen as a form of personal self-expression, while a person's craft refers to a learned skill and creating something tangible. Discovering and learning one's craft can and does build cultural significance over time: years of learning a trade and passing it on, innovating, capturing a narrative history through practice and words, telling stories, writing poems and singing songs. All of these contribute to cultural meaning and value whether you are a fisherman, a farmer or a cowboy.

Many people do not realize that some of the first settlers of the “Wild West” and the Northwest Territories were freed slaves who traveled west and became the Black cowboys of the American frontier. Following the Civil War and Reconstruction, America turned its attention to settling the West. The availability of land presented a new opportunity for many to escape the South, and they headed west to find their fortunes. In the 1870s and 1880s, as many as 25% of the 35,000 cowboys in the Old American West were Black.

To read the rest of this story and find links to more on Black cowboy culture, please go to [InsideESD](#).



George Fletcher was [a cowboy](#) who won first prize in the Pendleton Roundup in 1911.

He enlisted in World War I and served overseas in a cavalry unit.

George Fletcher (Image courtesy National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum)

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Management tips

Business and leadership trends in 2024

Submitted by Victoria Pruett, EC communications consultant



In 2022, our agency and other organizations across the country faced the great resignation, with 4.4 million workers leaving their jobs to retire or to search for something better. This impacted business outcomes and moved leaders to develop the great reimagination with flexible work options, including hybrid and remote work schedules.

In 2024, organizations are facing a new set of challenges that come at a quicker pace and often with greater impacts. New leadership styles are needed to flex and adapt to rapidly changing business situations and environments. Leaders and managers are looking for ways to develop a culture of trust and collaboration as well as ways to promote and build adaptability and resilience for the quickening pace of change. With the right leadership strategies, organizations can be ready to take on the challenges and opportunities of a new year.

Businesses look at trends to get a sense of prevailing direction and enable leaders to adopt strategies and manage the risks that come with innovation and rapid change. It's about understanding where the business environment is going and how to evolve to stay relevant and ahead of the wave. For example, we are looking at an aggressive AI-development future. We will need to minimize the risks involved and amplify how to work better and smarter with our teams and human resources. At some point, we will need to understand what we can hand off and trust to AI. It is about how to lead differently and how to keep our teams ahead of the changes that are coming.

Here are some articles from respected sources on leadership trends for 2024:

- [9 trends That Will Shape Work in 2024 and Beyond](#), HBR.org, Jan. 2024.
- [Working Knowledge - 10 Trends to Watch in 2024](#), Harvard Business School, Jan. 2024.
- [Gallup: 6 Workplace Trends Leaders should watch in 2024](#), gallup.com, Jan. 2024.
- [Top 10 Governance and Leadership Trends for 2024](#), Forbes.com, Dec. 2023.
- [The Top 5 Leadership Trends That Will Drive Success in 2024](#), Forbes.com, Jan. 2024.
- [Forecasting 2024 Workplace Trends with Prof. Matthew Bidwell](#), KnowledgeAtWharton, Jan 2024.
- [UW Study: Best leadership style for inclusive hiring depends on manager's identity](#), Nov. 2023.

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***Thank you for being the heart of our business and putting
so much love and kindness into your work!***



Chocolate-lovers tip of the day:

The best time to buy chocolate is the day after Valentine's Day!



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