



May 25, 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 for 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,

May has been a month of well-deserved team celebrations, awards, and announcements. Just last week, Commissioner Cami Feek and Deputy Commissioner Phil White rolled out our new [ESD vision, mission, and values](#) — to fully align us with Governor Inslee's vision and the statewide pro-equity, anti-racism (PEAR) plan from the Washington State Office of Equity.

Our core values are at the center of what we do and are our promise to each other and to our customers. The past values lens was the foundation for this next step in the evolution of our core values to a pure and simplified form. They take us to a new level. It doesn't mean we won't carry past values forward — for example, we will always be innovative. With respect for Jennie Weber's "daily donut," we will always have an appetite for innovation!

Vision. Mission. Values.

Vision

Everyone in Washington has full access to the opportunities, power and resources they need to flourish and achieve their full potential.

Mission

We contribute to healthy communities by providing equitable access to resources that improve economic security.

Values

Access, Love, Equity, Belonging, Stewardship



Our new vision, mission, values are the right message at the right time for all the right reasons. If you haven't had a chance to read the articles and watch the fun short videos featuring Cami Feek and Phil White, they are sending out new videos weekly and will be [defining each core value](#).

You may have seen a few messages lately on the Office of Equity's annual [Diversity, Equity and Inclusion \(DEI\) Empowerment Conference](#), which starts on June 7. Look for a message from me this coming week, and I encourage you all to participate as much as you possibly can. I ask that you please work with your supervisors and managers to sign up. You can select topics and speakers that interest you most, and the knowledge to be gained directly aligns with [our strategic goals](#).

For those of you wondering where we are with Professional Pathways, last week was our first meeting with the Washington Federation of State Employees (WFSE), and I sent out a brief update. In this meeting, we made some initial headway on our next steps and have work to do. This was a very productive first demand-to-bargain meeting, and there are more set for June 15 and June 26.

I know how anxious many of you are to know the status and what's expected as we move forward. EC's senior leadership team is working with HR on a detailed Q&A and process that will be shared with you in the next few weeks. You will also be hearing from the WFSE; and if you have questions at that time, I encourage you to contact your local union representative.

The Hybrid Services Planning Workgroup is made up of a diverse cross section of EC staff including five administrators, five supervisors, two WSS3 team members, 10 WSS4 team members and three WSS5 team members. They have completed their work and submitted their recommendations for a sustainable remote/hybrid scheduling approach. The Strategic Leadership Team and I are in the process of reviewing the report the workgroup has compiled

summarizing their work and providing recommendations. We hope to draft a proposal to share with our labor partner soon.

As we look forward to the Memorial Day weekend, we can all appreciate a long holiday when many of us will be spending time with family and friends, going camping, hiking, and making memories. Many of us will be thinking of loved ones who have passed and paying our respects to those who gave their lives for our country.

As a Memorial Day tradition, many hold family get-togethers and visit cemeteries. For all generations and all cultures, we keep our loved ones alive by remembering them and telling their stories. Please take a moment to read this month's article on honoring [National Military Appreciation Month](#).



I hope you have a wonderful weekend making new memories with family and friends and honoring traditions – and that might be as simple as a flower or a flag.

Always remember, I appreciate all of you for your tireless dedication to this work, this team, and your communities. Keep remembering the wonderful work you do and please keep telling our story.

Ismaila "Ish" Maidadi

Project updates



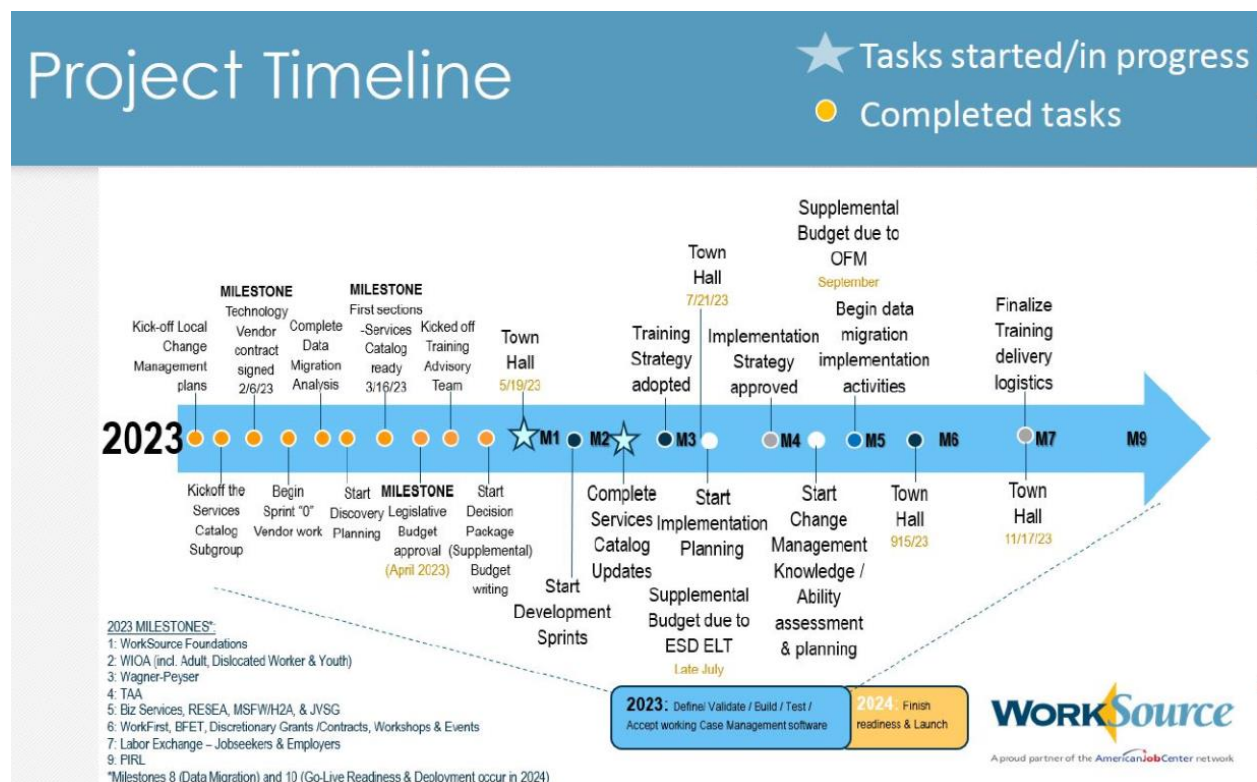
A little bit about WIT

Submitted by Michelle Griffith, WIT Project Owner

The WorkSource Integrated Technology (WIT) project work continues, and our team keeps growing! McKenzie Hogan joined ESD on May 1 as the statewide WIT trainer. McKenzie brings over 10 years of training and teaching experience to her new role, previously working for privately held companies as well as state and Federal Government. McKenzie earned a bachelor's degree in art history and studio art and design and uses her design experience to create engaging training content and materials. We're thrilled to have McKenzie as part of this exciting project!

In April, our dedicated Service Catalog Workgroup, led by the fabulous Data Integrity Team, finalized all the job seeker services. These services are then passed over to the Information and Technology Advisory Committee for review and approval. It's exciting to see we're nearing the home stretch on this part of the project!

Earlier this spring, Nona highlighted that the Data Migration Team was over 50% complete in their preliminary data mapping. By the end of April, this team has now completed 100% of that work. This dedicated team continues to exceed expectations, now focusing on future quality reviews. Kudos to the Data Migration Team and THANK YOU for all your tireless efforts and hard work.



As always, you can provide feedback, ideas, and questions directly to our WIT team by using the [input and questions form](#) located on the [Workforce Professional Center site](#). Also, my friendly reminder for you is please don't forget to regularly check out the [Workforce Professional Center](#), where you'll find valuable information about the project, including the most recent recordings from the town hall, Q&A documents, and project status updates.

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

Washington WorkSource offices honored for service excellence.



Jobs for Veterans State Grant Incentive Awards go to six WorkSource offices!

Congratulations to all six WorkSource offices for their top performance and excellent work in serving Veterans in Kitsap, Pierce, Spokane, Thurston, and Walla Walla counties as well as the City of Colville in Stevens County. Award letters were sent the week of May 8 and honors were celebrated during the Employment Connections' (EC) Public Service Recognition Week all-staff celebrations that same week.

The winners of this year's [Jobs for Veterans State Grant \(JVSG\) Incentive Award](#) receive an \$8,200 award that can be used by the entire office for whatever meets the needs of their team members. The incentive award is a grant allocation set aside for this purpose and is based on 1% of the JVSG grant each year. Because of this, the amount may vary from year to year. In the past, local offices have used their awards to cover staff participation in a variety of regional and national Veterans conferences, events and learning experiences. Funds may also be used to benefit the entire office, including technology investments, sponsoring team events, or purchasing shared items like a new refrigerator or microwave for the office breakroom.

After reviewing service performance data, along with innovative approaches and creative service delivery, EC's five regional directors score and rank the WorkSource locations. Each WorkSource is categorized by job center size to assure that smaller WorkSource offices are equitably represented. The winners are determined following a closed-vote process with up to two winners in each size category. After scoring has closed, our director confirms the results and only votes if a tiebreaker is necessary.

Each winning WorkSource office deserves to celebrate and recognize their accomplishments. This award is designed to recognize all center employees and is based on the efforts and results of all services for Veterans. Approximately 70% of support services for Veterans result from connections with WorkSource specialists and case managers before individuals are ever referred to a JVSG representative. The referral of eligible customers is a critical component of this award. It is determined by the accurate referral of an eligible person to the JVSG touch point in the Efforts to Outcomes (ETO) system and carries the most weight.

Some WorkSource offices have won in past years and continue to stay competitive and at the forefront when serving their local Veterans and their families. These team members are passionate about serving Veterans, they value the recognition that comes with earning the award and will likely keep the bar high as they look to next year. For a little history on past winners, check out the table below.

Washington Jobs for Veterans State Grants – Annual Incentive Award Winners			
FY-23: 6 winners	FY-22: 6 winners	FY-21: 5 winners	FY-20: 7 winners
WS Spokane	WS Pierce	WS Clallam	WS Wenatchee
WS Pierce	WS Kitsap	WS Cowlitz	American Lake
WS Kitsap	WS Lynnwood	WS Vancouver	WS Columbia Basin
WS Walla Walla	WS Colville	WS Auburn	WS Spokane
WS Thurston	WS Columbia Basin	WS North Seattle	WS Walla Walla
WS Colville	WS JBLM		WS Kitsap
			WS Yakima

Contributed by Victoria Pruett, Communications Coordinator, and Seth Maier, Veterans & Military Families Program Operator, Employment Connections, ESD.

May is National Military Appreciation Month.

In May, we honor those who have given their lives for our country, and we remember those who have passed before us.



In the United States, there are several times during the year when we honor and remember those in military service -- Memorial Day and Veterans Day being two that are recognized with official holidays. The month of May is special in that several days in the month are tied to military remembrances and public service; and in 1999, Senator John McCain, lobbied to have the entire month designated as [National Military Appreciation Month](#).

There are six observances and events that bring the month together:

- [Loyalty Day](#): This day kicks off the month-long celebration and is set aside to reaffirm our loyalty and the heritage of our American freedom.
- [Public Service Recognition Week \(PSRW\)](#): Familiar to all government employees as a time to honor public service work at all levels.
- [Victory in Europe Day \(VE Day\)](#): Monday, May 8, 1945, is the day when Germany surrendered to the Allies, marking the end of World War II in Europe.
- [Military Spouse Appreciation Day](#): This day honors the contributions and sacrifices made by military spouses. It is a presidentially approved holiday celebrated on the Friday before Mother's Day.
- [Armed Forces Day and Armed Forces Week](#): This day honors everyone serving in U.S. Military branches and is celebrated on the third Saturday in May. Armed Forces Week leads up to that day.
- [Memorial Day](#): The most solemn of federal holidays observed on the last Monday in May. This day commemorates the men and women who gave their lives in service to our country.



Photo credit: Washington State Veterans Cemetery in Medical Lake, May 2021 (Dan Pelle/The Spokesman Review).

There are also other military observances in May that aren't as well-known but are meaningful to those who have lived a life of care and service. These include [Month of the Military Caregiver](#); [Silver Star Service Banner Day](#), and [Children of Fallen Patriots Day](#). Many don't realize that in the last 25 years, more than 15,000 children have lost a parent due to military conflict. To read more, you can utilize the event links and also go to [National Military Appreciation Month 2023](#).

Time to honor those who have passed before us -- preserving their memories, places, and spaces.

For most, Memorial Day weekend marks the start of summer and often involves a family picnic, camping out, a visit to the beach or local events. For past generations, the day was about much more than a long holiday weekend that kicks off summer. For many families, this is the one time of year when grandparents, parents, and kids will pile in the car to make the rounds to local cemeteries to clear the winter debris from gravestones and leave flowers for loved ones and flags for Veterans.

For some activities to bring meaning to your Memorial Day, here are few links to recent articles.

[*23 Best Things to Do on Memorial Day Weekend*](#)

[*17 Memorial Day Activities for the Whole Family*](#)

[*7 Things You Didn't Know About Memorial Day*](#)

For those of you that observe Memorial Day with visits to family gravesites and find some of these places and spaces in disrepair and in need of love and attention, there may be help available.



In 2016, the State of Washington launched the [Washington Historic Cemetery Restoration Program](#).

This state grant program preserves historic heritage and provides families and communities with the support to preserve revered spaces.

This year, the state legislature approved funding for the grant program to continue with \$515,000 in grant funds. Applications for the next grant cycle will open in early September 2023.

Laurel Grove Cemetery, Port Townsend, WA (dahp.wa.gov).

To learn more about cemetery preservation, go to [Washington Trust for Historic Preservation](#) and the [National Preservation Institute](#).

Contributed by Victoria Pruett, EC Communications Coordinator, ESD.

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