

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 us by emailing the EC Communications [inbox](#).

Message from the Director



Greetings, Employment Connections team,

I hope you all have been enjoying your summer as much as I have. I hear about summers past when things would slow down at ESD. It doesn't feel like that has been the case this year. There is plenty of great work taking place – AND, as I've mentioned before, it's important to me that we consider our bandwidth and reduce the number of projects we have going at one time. That's easy to say but much more difficult to execute. To make sure we get there, I've enlisted some help!

On June 16th, Tammi Leclerc returned to EC as our Strategic Initiatives Manager. Those of you who have worked closely with Tammi know that she has an extraordinary ability to help organize work into understandable and manageable buckets. That and her "outward mindset" (ask her for more information when you get a chance!) made her a perfect choice for this new position. She will be helping us ensure that we do the right things at the right time. Tammi started taking inventory of projects and ideas right out of the gate – but the intention is to organize and prioritize them, not just to add everything to a never-ending list. By ensuring that Tammi has an overall understanding of our work and how areas overlap with each other, we'll be able to improve coordination, communication, and clarity for everyone involved.

Also on June 16th, Alberto Isiordia moved to the EC Central Operations team as our Program Integrity Manager. In doing so, he will be able to sprinkle the greatness he contributed as a regional director across the whole state! Alberto has impressed me for as long as I have known him with his ability to understand the nuance of complicated policies while explaining them in simple ways that get at the heart of our work. Integration has been a long-term goal of the programs team. By adding an experienced leader who understands real life applications, we are already seeing opportunities to simplify, focus and improve integrated efforts. I want to give a special shout out to Sandy Crews for her expert guidance of the team while we were filling this position. She is another fabulous EC leader, and we are extremely lucky to have her on the team.

For the final leadership team announcement, I have asked Ashley Olsen, our newly promoted Business Operations Manager to join EC's Strategic Leadership Team. Ashley has spent years quietly and effectively supporting our administrative and

operational needs. Bringing her voice and talents to the team will provide greater speed and effectiveness in ensuring all of you get the administrative support you need to do your best work. Welcome, ashley!

Finally, I'd like to give a special thanks to everyone who participated in the Professional Pathways focus groups. We are reviewing the data and will provide more specific detail as we roll out the recommendations. Until then, I want you to know that your meaningful insights about the program will make a difference. You can expect to see significant changes in the future that will be designed to train our team members fully, efficiently, and with a focus on what is most important for our customers and our teams.

Thank you all 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

Well, at the time of writing, we have received 9 letters of intent to bid on the WIT replacement! This means we have 9 vendors who have read the request for proposal (RFP), had the chance to ask questions and receive answers (either at the bidder's conference or in writing by email), and believe they can meet our requirements and are interested in contracting with Washington State to develop our ETO replacement. This is exciting news! Final responses to the RFP are due in early August, and teams will be evaluating the responses over the following several weeks.

There are still ways for you to be involved as much or little as you want. First, if you have feedback you want to make sure the WIT replacement team gets, questions you want answered, (or you just want to give someone a Kudos!) please use the [input and questions form](#) located on the [Workforce Professional Center site](#). Second, there will be open sessions that staff can attend at two points in the evaluation process – the vendor demonstrations in mid-September, and the workshops later in October. More information will come out later this summer on how to sign up to participate.

As I have been visiting offices with Director Jairus Rice the past several months, it is obvious that the excitement of a viable solution is felt across the local WorkSource

offices. We feel that excitement and are striving to meet everyone's expectations (the WIT replacement making ice cream on Friday's may be challenging, though).

The next WIT town hall will be held Friday, August 26th – I will not be leading it, but Linda and Michael will be there with the latest and greatest updates! Please plan on joining either the morning or afternoon session for the latest update.

As always, we encourage you to continue interacting in the WIT replacement process – don't forget to check out the [Workforce Professional Center](#), which is the best place to get updates on the different facets of this project, and you can also find the most recent recordings from the town hall, Q&A documents, project status updates, and the link to submit ideas and questions. Until next month...that's a little bit about WIT!

2022 Blueprint for Success

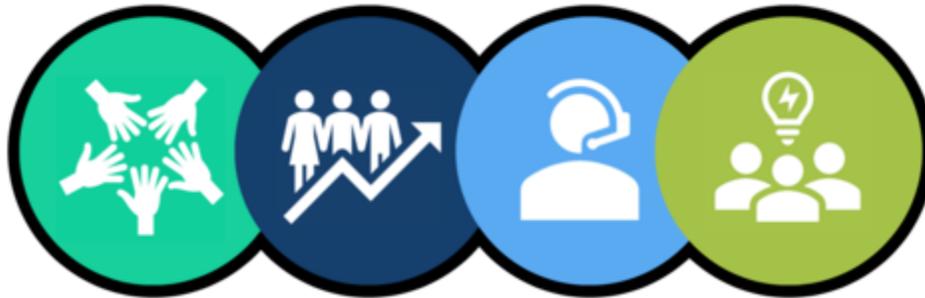
Monthly pillar wrap up

We concluded the third month of rotating updates on our four pillars in the Weekly Update Rollup! Here's the summary of this last month's pillar movement.

The four pillar teams:

- Focused work to enhance the [dashboard](#) environment and increase data competency across our division.
- Planned Strategic Workshops for the last week of August and first week of September for major Employment Connections programs. These workshops will:
 - Evaluate the current state
 - Discuss data and strategy
 - Define our future state
- Collected survey data and met with program operators to better understand legal or policy requirements surrounding how we serve our customers within each program.
- The distribution of a 'Customer Flow Tracker' to every WorkSource office in the State to conduct a two-week assessment of actual customer behavior.
- Discussion around how many of the necessary resources used to support customer barriers are unevenly utilized and distributed across Statewide WorkSource centers, and that many staff aren't trained in how to use the various technological tools and software which a center may have. This discussion helped create an achievable 90-day first step plan.
- Piloting information and resources that focus on equity and hiring for Leaders and Managers.
- Hiring Managers and Supervisors were invited to attend a session that is focused on equity in recruitment.

A big thank you to all of the pillar team members who are doing this work and making the movement happen! Reminder, you can find information on each pillar on [InsideESD - EC Blueprint for Success](#).



A management tip from the Harvard Business Review

Performing Under Pressure

No one is immune from freezing during high-pressure moments at work. Maybe you lose your voice or your ability to think straight when speaking with an important client, manager, or audience. That's normal, but also preventable. To set yourself up for success in your next big moment at work, use visualization. Bring to mind your previous successes to remind yourself that you have what it takes. This will reduce your anxiety and boost your comfort level. Next, visualize the upcoming moment in as much detail as you can. What will it look and feel like to walk into your manager's office and ask for that raise? How do the lights feel as you walk out in front of the audience, into the boardroom, onto the stage, or even sign on to Zoom? What will be the first words you say? You might develop a short ritual — such as a breathing exercise, repeating a phrase or mantra, listening to a particular song, sipping a favorite tea — that can get you in the right mindset to get through those first nerve wracking moments before autopilot kicks in. Once you've got a routine you're comfortable with, you can use it whenever you need to. Finally, consider simply writing down your fears ahead of time. Doing so can help to both normalize them, and make them seem not so daunting after all.

This tip is adapted from "[The Science of Choking Under Pressure](#)," by Alyson Meister and Maude Lavanchy