



Intro

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 Interim Director, Ismaila "Ish" Maidadi. Please share comments or ideas you have with the EC Communications email inbox - ESDGPECComms@esd.wa.gov.

Message from the interim director

Greetings, Employment Connections team,

Last week, I had the pleasure of participating with sarahlloyd and Nona Mallicoat in my first of many EC Town Halls to come. It was a lively exchange with EC leadership sharing fun and personal things we are passionate about and our lives.



During the town halls, I took the opportunity to introduce you all to a new meeting series I am calling "The Village Circle," where you will come to know that "I see you, I hear you, and I value you."

In my home country of Cameroon, my mother's village had an age-old custom where young and old would gather in a village circle to share what was impacting and shaping their lives. I want to create the time and space for staff to realize you are not alone, your thoughts and ideas are considered, and that we are all valued members of our EC team – all capable of serving our customers and supporting our coworkers.

My hope for these meetings is that we will all:

- Create a supportive space that fosters care and belonging,
- Build on our community to empower diverse relationships,
- Understand we all need a safe space to manage and navigate change, and
- Embrace the opportunity to talk openly about priorities, work challenges, and the stresses inherent in purpose-driven work.

In **The Village Circle**, all are welcome. You can drop in, participate or simply listen in. This is a forum for us to hear from each other. There is no structured leadership, it will be a place for people to come and

share, to brainstorm and toss around ideas, think creatively, and continue conversations on how we do the daily work of supporting our teammates and serving our customers. The first will be on Dec. 21, 2022, at 10 a.m. Invitations went out to you earlier this week. So please “Accept” and I’ll see you there!

My first month with Employment Connections has flown by. With the holidays just a few weeks away, you can look back with pride on the great work you have all accomplished in 2022. This will set the foundation for the promise of an exciting new year in 2023.

I am grateful for the vision and passion of our Executive Leadership Team and for time spent over the past year with Nona and others in understanding ESD operations and the EC landscape. With certainty, I know that I am in the best possible place to create positive and innovative change for the workforce system.

Thank you for serving our customers, partners, and your colleagues this past year. I hope you have wonderful plans for the holidays, and that you come back refreshed and rejuvenated for good things to come in 2023.



Wishing you and your family happy holidays and a spectacular New Year!

Smaila Muidadi

Message from ESD assistant commissioner saralloyd



hello hello, EC SQUAD!

by now, WE may have connected through recent ‘speak your truth’ and town-hall events, or in the flood of emails i’ve received so far. if WE haven’t connected yet, hello!!! i’m sarahlloyd, and i’m humbled to serve as your assistant commissioner for equitable & holistic service delivery.

i am SO grateful to be in this work with you, and i am THANKFUL for the ways you stand in the gap for our community, inside AND outside of esd.

i am THRILLED to be partnering with you to do this work! my background is deeply-rooted in community engagement and relationship building throughout the k-20, social work, workforce development, and entrepreneurship realms! i have been a receptionist and a ceo, a case manager and a grant administrator...and a whole bunch of things in between! one theme throughout is working to understand complex systems and synthesizing (AND SIMPLIFYING!!) how things can work better for the greater good.

when thinking about what i wanted to share here, i came up with three things:

1. YOU ARE SEEN. i have been in many of the spaces that you occupy, and i know what it means to see the impact of our organizational strengths AND stretches first-hand. your commitment does not go unnoticed.

2. YOU ARE IMPORTANT. your insight about our work is INVALUABLE. there have probably been times that you've felt invisible or insignificant, ESPECIALLY in times of change! whether it was here at esd, or somewhere else, i'm SO SORRY that you didn't feel like a critical piece. WE cannot afford to repeat that misstep. WE may not always do what you recommend, AND you all are the experts of your experience in this work. you have critical information that WE need to do this well. full stop.

3. YOU ARE TREASURED. you may have felt like there were times that you and/or your team were alone in this. i lead DIFFERENTLY. i am POSTED UP in your corner, i am LITERALLY your biggest cheerleader. i care DEEPLY about doing right by our community, and that definitely includes YOU.

thank you for all of the work that you do. more importantly, thank you for being who you are. WE cannot do this without you, and i appreciate you more than you know.

if there is anything i can do to support you in feeling SEEN, IMPORTANT, and TREASURED, please let me know. i got you. AND, WE got this!!

with radical love,
sarahlloyd

*assistant commissioner for equitable & holistic service delivery
employment security department*

what's with the lowercase?

within my communications, you will find non-traditional orthography. this intentional practice in my writing serves as an intentional reminder for all of us to diligently question what lies at the core of our obedience to all things; a principle paramount to bringing about radical change. where we follow without examination, may we start interrogating everything; where we demand others sacrifice in the same ways we have chosen for ourselves, may we remember the moments we have been deemed **powerless**.

Project updates



A little bit about WIT

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

It's the last month of the year! For those involved in the WIT replacement project, it has been a long year to get through – from CX teams coming out to the local offices, to RFP creation, to evaluating applications from all the vendors, to watching or participating in demonstrations, to workshops, to final evaluations, to announcing the apparent successful bidder (ASB) and finally to contract negotiation and prep for next steps – this team has been amazing!

We also have a data migration team that is looking at how we migrate clean data from ETO into the new case management system, and I am excited to see what they come up with. For those of you who have been around for a while, you understand the need for good data being moved from one system to another (anyone remember SKIES?).

I will have more to share next month once the contract is signed and we move into the next phase of the project. As a reminder, we have canceled the December WIT replacement town hall due to the holidays; and we will pick up the series again in January. So, look for a new invitation soon!

If you have feedback, ideas, questions, (or you just want to give someone a Kudos!), please use the [input and questions form](#) located on the [Workforce Professional Center site](#). We review that information often. Also, please remember to regularly check the [Workforce Professional Center](#), which is the best place to get updates on the different facets of this project. You will also find 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!

2022 Hire-A-Vet Employer of the Year Awards

Congratulations to our small, medium and large ESD employers of the year!



ESD Commissioner Cami Feek, WDVA Deputy Director David Puente Jr., and the Seahawks team say thanks to all employers who hire Veterans, while Cami announces the 2022 winners!

Image and video link provided by Seth Maier, EC Veterans & Military Families Program Operator.

There are many benefits to hiring veterans and ESD and Employment Connections understands that as well as private-sector employers. They bring countless talents and skills to the workplace. To recognize Washington employers who prioritize hiring veterans and their spouses is an honor. Over the history of the Yes-Vets program, over 1,400 employers have hired more than 6,700 veterans.

In November, Commission Cami Feek announced the [Employment Security Department Yes-Vets awards](#) honoring the following employers for their commitment to hiring and supporting veterans in the workforce:

Small employer – [Transblue, Lynwood](#) – Veterans are always encouraged to apply with 60% of the workforce being veterans and in 2022, 100% of new hires were veterans.

Medium employer – [Day Wireless Systems, Pasco](#) – Hired 10 veterans in 2022, 10% of the workforce are veterans and Veterans Day is recognized as a paid company holiday.

Large employer – [SKOOKUM Contract Services, Bremerton](#) – SKOOKUM created a dedicated support committee for veterans and a company [Veterans Employee Resource Group \(VERG\)](#). Their HR team regularly interacts with VA programs to coordinate benefits. In 2022, they hired 46 veterans and 25% of its workforce are veterans.

See ESD's [Dec. 7 NewsNet News Flash](#) for more information on this year's winners.

Be a Mentor or Mentee, or both —

Applications now being accepted!

The ESD Mentorship Program ran during 2022 and was a big success! This is now established and in place and the ESD Employee Engagement Team is proud to announce that the new application for the 2022-2023 Employee Mentorship Program is available.



Having a mentorship program in place allows ESD employees to connect with fellow employees who can help them learn and grow in new ways. There are different types of mentorship experiences available: Traditional – Peer – Aspirational – Practical – Reverse – Identity.

Mentees and mentors will find definitions for these on the application form. The application is for both those who want a mentor and those who want to be a mentor. The goal is to pair you with the person who will help you fulfill whatever goals you have to be successful here at ESD and wherever your career may take you.

If being a part of this exciting new program interests you, then [submit your application today](#); and watch for more information about the with the Mentorship Kick-Off event Jan. 5, 2023, in celebration of National Mentoring Month!

Sharing a few mentor-mentee success stories from Employment Connections staff:

“Anita Bowser, I appreciate you and the time we spent together. You helped me overcome my nervousness speaking in public and lots of fabulous ideas to be able to make it fun. Thank you.”

– Jacqueline Byers, Employment Specialist, WorkSource Vancouver

“I appreciate the flexibility of this program and the ability to tailor it to mine and my mentor’s needs. I as well feel very grateful to this Pilot Program. My mentor Felicia Johnson helped me so much to feel heard, seen, and shared tools that I might find useful.”

– Monica Trujillo, Employment Connections Specialist, WorkSource Clallam

“As someone who signed up both as a mentor and a mentee, I will say that I learned SO much from my conversations with Malcom Erickson as his mentor. I feel that he mentored me too in our shared time. This process has had SO many moments of learning and opportunity that were unexpected.”

– Ashley Olson. Business Operations Manager, EC Central Operations

Adapted from an announcement by Lydia White, ESD Human Resources

A Tip from the Harvard Business Review

Rebuilding Your Team’s Energy

With the holidays and a new year ahead of us, for many this is a stressful time that adds more to our list of commitments and pressure to complete projects before the calendar turns to January. After more than two-years of pandemic constraints, remote work, and life challenges, many of us and our coworkers are feeling the weight of it all. Everyone is hanging in and getting their work done, but for many they are tired and spent.

If this sounds familiar, know you are not alone. The effects of the last few years have resulted in a widespread human energy crisis, which may lead to a global mental health crisis. According to Gallup, seven in 10 people globally report they're struggling or suffering; and the U.S. Surgeon General recently released a new framework for workplace mental health and well-being.

There is plenty of data to show that rapid change and today's shifting workplace takes a toll on employee engagement and productivity. If your teammates don't seem to have the energy they once did or what you believe they are capable of, here are some ways to build up your own reserves and re-energize coworkers.

- 1) Initiate purpose-driven career conversations.
- 2) Create team rituals that foster mutual care and belonging.
- 3) Help build a portfolio of diverse relationships.
- 4) Model being okay with not being okay.
- 5) Swap productivity paranoia for helpful conversation.
- 6) Watch for signs that your team is flourishing and intervene when it wanes.

We are all part of one team and expressing concern for individuals or the whole is different than expressing concerns about them. Taking the opportunity to show caring and encouragement will help those who might be overwhelmed with workload demands or hesitant to ask for help or time off. If we all embrace our own selfcare and the part we play in contributing to our team's energy, it may lead to a workplace where we all thrive, and great outcomes are accomplished.

This tip is adapted from [“6 Ways to Reenergize a Depleted Team”](#) by Ron Carucci and Kathleen Hogan.