

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 [Jordyn Johnsen](#) or [Anne Goranson](#), or submit your feedback via [survey](#).

Message from the Director



Hello, Employment Connections team!

Almost all the local WorkSource offices are now providing in person services to customers! Congratulations to you and your partners—there was a lot of work that went into this planning, and you're rocking it!

I have been hearing how happy folks are to be back, and that makes me smile. I know how dedicated you are to your customers, and how much they depend on you. I've had some great opportunities to see that in action during my visits to several of your offices.

In the last few weeks, I've been able to visit Joint Base Lewis McCord (JBLM), Pierce, and our brand-new Silverdale office. These visits have easily been the most enjoyable of any work I've gotten to do in the last year. I love the opportunity to meet with each of you, hear about the unique ways you're serving our communities, and most importantly, understanding better how I can support you. If I haven't made it to your office yet, I will soon! We're just finalizing a schedule for me to visit each WorkSource center by the first week of October. I'm going to start sending some short e-postcards from the road to share the great things I'm seeing in each office so look for those coming soon. I learned very quickly after joining ESD almost seven years ago that every office adds its own special flavor to our collective work. I value the time I will get to spend talking with you and learning more about your local areas.

This brings me back to the first pillar of our Employment Connections Recovery Plan—**Supporting our Staff**. You are the heart of our work. If I could sit down with you for a one on one, I would ask you about your vacation plans and how you are taking care of yourself. I'd share some fun facts about the Rice Ranch (like our new pig pen) and outings with my family. As much as I love this work and find meaning in supporting you and our customers, my family comes first. I hope the same is true for you. I also know that if I don't take care of myself and find healthy ways to respond to work stress, I won't be able to support you or my family in the way that I want to. So, when I ask you to prioritize taking breaks and leave please know that I am doing the same. We have a lot of important work ahead of us. There will be times when we just need to hunker down

and get things done. But that should not be long-term and should always be followed by some time to recover.

While I've started learning to play the harmonica this year, I'm certainly not a musician. But, I've always appreciated the way bands or orchestras come together to sustain beautiful music. At any given time, a member of the flute section or the trumpet section will take a breath, but you'd never know it as the listener. The rest of the section carries the tune. If you are feeling like you just can't take the time, please recognize that like these orchestras, we have a division full of extremely capable people ready to back you up and carry the tune. It's ok to jump out when you need to take care of your own needs. That's why we work in teams. Your colleagues will support you, just as you'll do the same for them. It's a sign of a strong unit.

Thank you for supporting each other and our customers.

Jairus Rice



Project updates

Return to WorkSource Offices (IT/Facilities Focus)

The IT and Administrative Service Divisions (ASD) have done an excellent job to ensure that our local office facilities and equipment are ready for the return of staff and customers! ASD has been focused on safety while IT worked to meet these high-level needs:

- Computer access for all staff and customers (includes Webex/Teams video platform)
- Printing access for all staff and customers
- Phone access for all staff
- Currently, Webex smart boards are **NOT** a priority

Almost all the of 35 facilities that are being tracked are now open for employees. All but 7 have begun serving customers! Thank you to all EC employees across the state for making in person services possible!

Qtrac

A big part of our reopening plans has been the roll out of our statewide scheduling tool, Qtrac. Huge thanks to the many team members who have attended training and are experimenting with the Qtrac system! If your area is using Qtrac and you haven't gotten connected yet, please ask your local super users and leaders for information about your local roll out. You can also find training, FAQs and other resources [here](#). Special thanks to WorkSource Columbia Gorge team members who have shared a [desk aid](#) that is now available for all users!

Our general roll out is happening in these phases:

- Phase 1: Make the tool available to all offices for staff created appointments
Complete
- Phase 2: Add the walk-in feature (similar to the SKIES RFS feature, which some of you will remember) **Pilots will begin within the next few weeks**
- Phase 3: Turn on customer created appointments **Local offices will determine timing**
- Phase 4: Explore group appointment capabilities

Work Search Reinstatement

A team of ESD leaders has worked behind the scenes to make sure that information is shared with UI customers and training is available for WorkSource employees to support the return of job search requirements effective last week (week of July 4-10). UI claimants can find information on ESD's Unemployment website (esd.wa.gov) and WorkSource staff can access a training video and desk aid on the [Workforce Professionals Center](#). Information has also been shared in Jordyn Johnsen's Weekly Update Rollups – watch for any new information there on Fridays.

We are developing reports to track customer traffic and will share more next month. Please ensure you are capturing services provided in ETO. The Create a Record function can now be used for customers who haven't registered in WorkSourceWA.com.

Employment services

Virtual WorkSource Workshops Team

The Virtual WorkSource Workshops Team is a group of unsung heroes in the EC division. When offices closed in March 2020 due to the pandemic, a team of volunteers from across the state came together to ensure that workshops would still be available to WorkSource customers, with almost no interruption in service. Many staff from different offices who may never had met before collaborated to swiftly update the Job Hunter materials, learn the WebEx platform, and start facilitating. They were asked to turn on a dime, working together online to build curriculum, learn a video-conference platform,

and co-facilitate virtually. They did it all with grace, humor, and no shortage of excellence!

Since coming together in March 2020, team members have changed each month, but the one constant is the incredible care each and every one has shown for the work, the needs of the customers, and each other.

I am so deeply and immensely grateful for everything this team has done. I feel truly privileged to work with such amazing staff who bring their wonderful talents to the table and share them openly, and somehow remain flexible through every schedule change, process update, substitution request, flurry of fake registrations, and everything in between! Thank you so much to everyone who has served on the team, past and present!

From April 1st, 2020 to May 28th, 2021, the English and Spanish Job Hunter workshops have had 14,566 individuals register, 8,301 individuals attend, and the facilitators have conducted 598 workshops.

The workshops are consistently getting rave reviews like the two below:

- "They are very personable, you can tell they love their job and care about the people they help. They give an excellent workshop! I got a lot of value out of it."
- "Extraordinary. Very knowledgeable, empowering, strong motivators. Love them and would love to be in their future classes. I will rate them an A+. Provided a whole lot of resources."

A special shoutout to the Spokane facilitators (Ray Keevy, Bill Kinyon, Tony Parks, and Ellen Nagourney) who have gone above and beyond to support our customer's needs! As well as the Spanish workshop facilitators (Marco Roman, Brenda Morales, and Ric Valdez) who were the only Spanish workshop facilitators for several months. Without them, Spanish workshops wouldn't have been happening.

Brenda Morales
Cynthia Pocasangre Leticia Valle Erik Hontz
Tina Wilson Karen Nordeng **Ellen Nagourney**
Michell Wood Elah Israel Diana McKnight Tom Carlton
Ray Keevy Jessica Ramirez Irene Torres Ed Looby
Paul Caseley Marissa Cox Michele Brown **Bill Kinyon**
Kellie Donovan **THANK YOU** Karen Powell
Jose Delgado Rhetta Barker
Roberta Kowald **Marco Roman** John Hjorten Kallie Kurtz
Joe Fenton Juan Ortiz Abel Hartman Marra Johnson
Tanya Mahre Jessica Bobes **Tony Parks**
Jeff Stauffer Alisha Garcia Rebekah Wilkes
Susana Hesser-Galaz Daian Navarro
Kevin Sampson Ione Turner
Ric Valdez

If you're interested in joining the virtual team of workshop facilitators, please connect with your local leadership and express interest to [Jaclyn Cascio](#).

Story submitted by Lead Instructor Jaclyn A. Cascio

Reopening success story

The first day back in action, the Pierce office received a visit from a customer looking to apply for work.

Supervisor, Luke Upton noticed a gentleman sitting and staring at a blank computer screen. He went to assist the customer, inquiring if he needed help. The customer pointed to the computer mouse, stating, "Yes I do, I don't even know what that is."

Luke chatted with the gentleman, gathering more information about why he was visiting the office. The customer explained that his work background has been in the labor industry, but he is aging and trying to transition out. He got his CDL from Commercial Driving School (CDS) two weeks ago and he was looking to apply for jobs, with a specific company in mind.

Luke assisted the customer in setting up an account with the company he had in mind and filling out the application, as well as walking him through how to complete the job search log.

Luke then called Emeline Pahulu in business services, to connect the gentleman to any additional opportunities. After explaining the customer's situation, Emeline advised that CDS has employment services for new graduates as well. She was also aware Federal Express was looking for drivers, so she connected Luke and the customer with Carl Peterson, the Federal Express contact.

Due to this customer's lack of technical skills, we would not have been able to assist him virtually.

Our director, Jairus Rice, heard this story during his visit and shared it with members in leadership, stating, "This is why we're back!!"

The Pierce team was able to skillfully assist a customer who has never used a computer! Amazing teamwork and collaboration!

RESEA & BFET success story

On June 15th, Michele D Brown assisted a RESEA customer who wanted help transitioning out of her medical assistant career. This customer had food assistance, so she was referred with a warm hand off to BFET.

AnJanet Martinez took her under her wing, giving her gas money and a clothing voucher for interviews.

Michele called the customer on July 7th for her follow up RESEA phone call and receive great news. This customer is now working at the Hermiston Walmart distribution center and told Michele she is very happy. The customer explained that Anjanet gave her all the tools she needed, improving her confidence and helping her get the job!

Kudos to these amazing team members!

Story submitted by RESEA Program Operator Dina Morris

Kudos

For Dave Reid

Dave has been Program Coordinator for most of the WSC's environmental partners for years and AmeriCorps members and site supervisors love him.

I'm working with a client who is a veteran seeking a post-military career in Environmental Science. Dave graciously offered to meet with my client to tell her not only about AmeriCorps opportunities, but to share insights about gaining employment in a field that can be a little difficult to break into for those just getting started.

My client just landed an interview after over six months of silence. Dave is amazing and I want everyone to know!

From Career Specialist Katrina Stensgaard, WorkSource JBLM

Kudo submissions

If you'd like to submit kudos to be shared in The Connection, send them to [Jordyn Johnsen](#).

Make sure to also submit your kudos to *ES-tounding!* to be shared in the all-staff NewsNet newsletter. You can do so by emailing NewsNet@esd.wa.gov. To find all newsletter stories, go to the [NewsNet home page](#) on InsideESD.

A tip from the Harvard Business Review

Struggling to find solutions to your obstacles? HBR knows problem solving can be a challenge and is a great resource for tips and tricks on how to reframe your thinking, so we're sharing this article as a helpful tool!

Try Reframing a Problem You're Trying to Solve

Most people know that how you frame a problem will influence how you solve it. This means that you have to carefully choose the words to describe your issue. If you're struggling to generate effective solutions, you might change the way you've phrased the problem. Specifically, ask yourself two questions. First, what's the subject? For example, let's say you want to change an element of your organization's culture. A problem statement focused on employees will generate different solutions than one that's focused on how resources are allocated. Second, how do you measure the problem? The metric you use to define success or failure will influence the answers you come up with. For example, "We only bring one new product/service to market each year" will lead you to different solutions than "Only 5% of our revenue comes from products developed in the past three years." So next time you're struggling to find a

solution, try rewriting the problem statement. You'll likely find that a small change of words can lead to a big change in your perspective.

This tip is adapted from "[Struggling to Solve a Problem? Try Reframing It.](#)," by Daniel Markovitz