

# The Connection

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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](#).

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## Message from the Director



Greetings, Employment Connections team,

Is it summer yet? After having a teaser on the west side of the state in June, I'm looking forward to some warm, sunny weather that will hopefully stick around for a while. There are other signs that summer is here, like kids on summer vacation and baseball season being in full swing and, of course, our Independence Day holiday this last weekend. It's a special time for me to reflect on the birth of our nation and the incredible odds that were overcome through tremendous sacrifice by those committed to creating a nation built on personal freedom. While we must acknowledge the tragedy that those freedoms were not created

for everyone at our inception, I am proud that we've continued to fight to ensure everyone in this country enjoys the fruits of liberty. Our country, while not perfect, remains a beacon of hope and opportunity to much of the world. I am proud to work beside each of you, doing our part to ensure America fulfills its promises. We are uniquely positioned to support those still working to obtain their American Dream.

There are a few areas of our work that are particularly on my mind, and I want to share some of my thoughts with you in this message. I would love to hear back from you and so would your local leaders. Hearing your feedback is important to us.

A topic you've been asking about is the [non-English language assessment](#) that is now available for our Dual Language (DL) and Occasional Dual Language (OCDL) team members. I'm pleased to report that 16 of the 20 EC employees who have taken the assessment so far have passed! They've also taken the time to share great feedback about what to expect when taking the assessment. Many of you are using language skills with customers on a regular basis, and my guess is that you are ready for the test! I encourage you to take the assessment as soon as you can. If you don't pass it the first time, that's okay. There is no penalty, and you'll have two more attempts. By taking it now, if you don't pass, you'll have a sense of the areas to brush up on before taking it again.

The second area I want to highlight this month is related to performance, but more importantly it is related to outcomes for our customers. We've been building a foundation and finding our groove again, and we're seeing a lot of progress. I love

hearing stories about customers who came to us sort of lost and unsure of their next steps – and then our team provided the exact clarity and hope that they needed to help them be successful. Some of those interactions are short and sweet - and give the customer what they need in one appointment. Quite often, however, our customers need us to support them through a longer process. When you're serving many customers at once, that can be difficult to track.

Thanks to our DATA Solutions team, we now have a report called the 30/90 report that allows our WorkSource offices to see the customers attached to their area who are not currently showing a service in the last 30-90 days. There are several reasons this might occur. What we have heard from those who are using this tool is that it has helped to keep a pulse on things and ensure we connect with those who might have fallen off the radar. This is a great example of using a data tool to positively impact our performance and our customers' outcomes. If you are not sure where to find the 30/90 report or how to use it, please reach out to your supervisor to learn more.

We're getting better and better at identifying strategies that make a difference for our customers. Our current environment is unlike anything we've seen in the past. The great news is that customers who may not have been considered for job opportunities in the past are getting jobs. Your assistance to provide an extra review of a resume, to walk them through an online application process or to help customers practice interviewing techniques makes a tremendous difference. Thank you for taking the time to add those extra touches. They matter.

Later this month, I will be visiting our Bellingham, Whidbey, and Skagit offices – I'm looking forward to hearing what those teams are up to. Thank you all for supporting each other, our customers, and our communities.

*Jairus Rice*

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## **Program updates**

### ***JVSG Incentive Award Winning Offices!***

A round of applause and congratulations go out to WorkSource **Pierce, Kitsap, Lynnwood, Colville, Columbia Basin and JBLM** for winning the JVSG Incentive Award!!

Our director and five regional directors selected these winners based on the whole staff's combined efforts in serving the Veteran population. If you're familiar with each of these offices, you'll see both small and big offices were selected. Since size of an office isn't a factor on how an office serves the Veteran population, leadership focused on equitable comparison. Foot traffic was used so small offices weren't being compared to larger offices.



These six winning offices received an equal portion of the JVSG Incentive Award funds. The teams used those funds to send staff to the NASWA Veterans Conference in Washington D.C. and/or the upcoming Serving Those Who Served (STWS) conference in Wenatchee.

These conferences are huge value adds to one's knowledge in serving the Veteran community!

The [NASWA Veterans Conference](#) (6/28-6/30) had amazing speakers and workshops! To share a bit about the keynote speakers:

- Four Star General Stan McChrystal served for 34 years and shared lessons based on leading and innovating one of the world's largest organizations.
- Disability Advocate Richard Pimentel, who lost his hearing while serving in Vietnam, helped write the ADA and developed training materials aimed to help employers integrate persons with disabilities into the workplace.
- Gold Star Wife Jennie Taylor is the widow of Army Major Brent Taylor, who was killed in Afghanistan. Jennie has since started the Major Brent Taylor Foundation and was appointed a civilian aide to the Secretary of the Army in Utah.
- Retired Army Master Sergeant Cedric King was severely injured by an IED which caused permanent damage to his right arm and the amputation of both legs. Within 21 months of his injury, he ran the Boston Marathon on prosthetic blades and has since completed 5 marathons in total.

The [Serving Those Who Served Conference](#) (8/25-8/26) is aimed at establishing better collaboration and connection for all those who work with veterans and their families. During this conference, a wealth of knowledge from industry experts in areas that

impact the lives of our veterans, and their families will be shared. Some of the breakout sessions include topics such as Justice Involved Veterans, VA Programs, VA Healthcare/VA Choice, Life Cycle of a VA Disability Claim, Suicide Prevention/Suicide Safety, VA Education Benefits/Vet Corps, Cemetery & Burial Benefits, PTSD & Traumatic Brain Injury, and county specific topics such as, best practices/creating regional strategic partnerships, helping vets succeed in the workplace, YesVets, service animals, veteran homelessness/housing programs and more.

If you work with the veteran population or are interested in learning tips on how to serve them, there's still time to attend the Serving Those Who Served Conference and/or, you can check out the presentations and videos from the 2019 conference [here](#)! If you're interested, please talk to your supervisor, and one more big round of applause and collective cheer for WorkSource Pierce, Kitsap, Lynnwood, Colville, Columbia Basin and JBLM!

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## Project updates



### ***A little bit about WIT***

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

Big news this past month! The Request for Proposal (RFP) posted early! The RFP is the mechanism used to tell potential vendors what we are looking for, and it's also a request for them to submit an initial bid/proposal to be selected. Over the next few weeks, we should begin to get an idea of what vendors are interested in working with Washington State on this exciting endeavor!

Even though that was a big hurdle for the team, the momentum has not stopped! We are continuing to ask for and receive specific business requirements for the new system; selecting and training the robust team of evaluators; and preparing for the upcoming bidder conferences.

We often hear "How can I still be involved?", and I want to assure you there are multiple ways. First, if you have feedback you want to make sure the 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.

I am currently writing this column in the break between the two June 24<sup>th</sup> WIT replacement town hall presentations...if you missed them, make sure you [watch!](#) Not only are they filled with great information, but our theme this month was “high school” to celebrate graduations, the end of school, and the beginning of summer. There are some fun pictures of presenters during their high school years (which for some of us was longer ago than others!) that you won’t want to miss!

As always, we encourage you to continue interacting in the WIT replacement process and 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!

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## Recognizing survey fatigue

Our agency and division use surveys... a lot. They’re an effective way to gather feedback, but we’re hearing from some folks that there are too many surveys – aka survey fatigue. Some of you may be experiencing this – being bored or just tired of the survey process. This can cause a quick delete, or “no thanks” (followed by an eye roll and a sigh) when you’re prompted to take a survey. We don’t want that! But we do want to hear from you, so what can we do?

There are two main issues here – survey response fatigue and survey taking fatigue. We’re finding that over-surveying, survey length, and unclear or tedious questions may be adding to this fatigue.

Unfortunately, surveying cannot completely stop because we want and need your feedback! Our goal for surveying is to increase employee engagement by giving frontline staff a voice and using those comments to drive the direction we’re headed in. We want a culture of feedback and continuous improvement!

In an attempt to reduce survey fatigue, we’re going to be keeping these things in mind while making our surveys:

- Are we explaining the value/purpose?
- Are all of these questions necessary? Can we cut back or make it shorter?
- Are the questions concise/clear cut?
- Can we avoid open-ended, fill-in-the-blank questions when unnecessary? (We know multiple choice is so much easier!)
- Are we sharing the results, so you can see the consensus?

We hope this helps as we move forward, and we are open to ideas and feedback! Please feel free to share ideas with your leaders or by taking [The Connection feedback survey](#)..... (Oops, sorry, another survey! Too soon? 😊)

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## 2022 Blueprint for Success

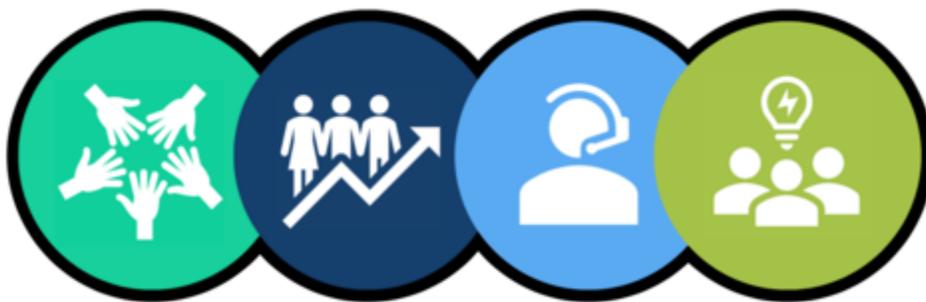
## ***Monthly pillar wrap up***

We just concluded the second month of rotating the 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:

- Revealed shortcomings with our current hybrid model, and many possibilities/best practices for improvement. From this information, the team is on the cusp of offering a solution that will be data-backed and productivity-based!
- Shared the results for the top 10 skills a WorkSource Specialist should have. Those skills included: Customer Service, Communication, Empathy, Emotional Intelligence, Adaptability/Change Navigation, Problem Solving, Willingness to Learn, Team Oriented, Comfort with Technology, and Openness/Time Management (tied).
- Offered pilot tools for managers to use in recruiting diverse staff that represent the communities we serve.
- Started the conversation about looking at skills for all levels, including leadership, based on your recommendation!
- Continued working with ITSD to acquire Zoom licenses for all staff who interact with external customers virtually.
- Continued working to improve outreach throughout the division, by updating the scope of outreach to broaden the perspective, more clearly define focus areas, and work with other agencies throughout the state to better understand and leverage current statewide best practices and new developments.

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](#).



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## **A management tip from the Harvard Business Review**

### ***Interrupt “Benevolent” Sexism on Your Team***

As a leader, you have a responsibility to address "benevolent" sexism: attitudes, practices, and actions that seem positive but undermine supporting women at work, often under the pretense of helping, protecting, or complimenting them. (For example,

not offering a high-visibility project to a woman because she has young children.) To interrupt benevolent sexism, start by increasing your awareness. Reflect on how ideas such as "men are responsible for protecting women" or "men and women are different and complementary" can actually be harmful. Check your assumptions about how people should or shouldn't act based on their gender. Then, if you hear others making benevolently sexist comments, challenge them. For example, if a colleague wants to "save" a woman from a complex project, help them zoom out by asking: "What are the consequences of not involving her in this project? Wouldn't it be better to ask her directly instead of assuming she won't want it?" Finally, model equitable behavior by focusing on women's competencies. Give feedback related to work results, instead of characteristics stereotypically associated with women, such as warmth or likability.

This tip is adapted from "[Dismantling 'Benevolent' Sexism](#)," by Negin Sattari et al.