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## Northwest Workforce Council Meeting Minutes November 20, 2024

### Action Taken:

- Approval of the September 25, 2024 Full Council Meeting Minutes
- Approval of the Draft 2025 WorkSource Certification Application
- Approval of Draft Youth Procurement documents
- Approval of Draft Application materials requesting the Governor's / State Workforce Board's approval to continue as WIOA IB Direct Service Provider to Youth, Adult and Dislocated Worker

**Note:** All approved Council and Committee minutes can be found on the Council's website: [www.nwboard.org](http://www.nwboard.org).

### I. Call to Order

The meeting was brought to order at 1:32 p.m. by Chair, Mark Vorobik.

### II. Consent Agenda

#### A. Minutes of September 25, 2024, Full Council Meeting

Del McAlpine moved approval of the September 25, 2024, Full Council Meeting Minutes. Robin Plume seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

### III. NWC Committee Reports

Mark Vorobik reminded the council that as we approach the conclusion of the interim phase of the new committee structure, we wanted to provide an update on the timeline and offer an opportunity for committees to share any activities or significant updates since our last meeting in September.

#### A. Quality Assurance Committee Charge (10/9 and 11/6 Meeting Report)

Mark invited Lori Province to share what activities and actionable items have gone on with the Quality Assurance Committee since September. Lori provided an update on time-sensitive projects initiated by the QAC. Two key items pertained to the board continuing as the direct WIOA IB program service provider to Youth, Adult and Dislocated Workers. The third item pertaining to the Draft 2025 WorkSource Certification Application. The following is a summary of these items.

- **NWC as WIOA IB Program Services Provider:** Lori shared the committee reviewed procurement processes for Youth, Adult, and Dislocated Worker program services. During their most recent meeting, Marissa summarized the board's past actions, noting that in March 2024, the board affirmed NWC's intention to continue providing these services, pending final state guidance on Policy 1015. In September 2024, the board directed staff to prepare a timeline and draft procurement materials for Youth Services. Staff presented these materials, including a timeline, an independent procurement manager solicitation, and an RFQ narrative. Following discussion, the committee unanimously approved the materials for use if procurement is ultimately required.

- **Request to provide WIOA IB Youth, Adult, and Dislocated Worker Program services directly:** Lori shared the committee discussed submitting a formal request to the State Workforce Board to allow NWC to continue directly providing WIOA IB Youth, Adult, and Dislocated Worker program services, as is outlined in draft Policy 1015. Staff had prepared draft materials for review, which were distributed ahead of time for member consideration and feedback. After minimal discussion, the committee moved to approve the draft materials, and forward for Executive Committee review and approval, with submission to the state WFB as soon as possible.
- **2025 WorkSource Center Certification:** Lori provided a concise overview of previous applications and the sustained efforts over the years to develop a revised framework and updated certification application. She stated the certification application had been revised, shifting from the Baldrige framework to a more contemporary, user-friendly model. The revised application provides a clearer, more positive evaluation of WorkSource services and processes. Lori emphasized the need for prompt board approval to implement the tool for the upcoming certification cycle, which occurs every three years, noting the Quality Assurance Committee's recommendation for approval.

#### **B. Workforce Solutions Committee Charge (10/9 and 11/6 Meeting Report)**

Mark reported that the Workforce Solutions Committee has identified three priorities for focus in 2025: Employer Engagement, Identifying Service Gaps, and Proven and Promising Practices. Mark asked Scott Iddings, NWC staff, to share his takeaways from the two previous committee meetings. Scott explained it was determined that establishing a Business Engagement Strategies Task Force would be beneficial. Given the committee's priority of engaging with local employers, this task force presents an exciting opportunity to address key issues proactively. The immediate goal of the task force is to strategize and recommend a cohesive action plan for business services.

The task force plans to engage and survey stakeholders, including businesses across key sectors, regional industry partners, WorkSource partners, and the workforce system. This effort aims to build relationships and gather insights to better understand workforce challenges and needs across the region. Robin added that she has already begun preliminary outreach to industry contacts in preparation for this initiative.

#### Timeline for Implementation of new Committees

Mark noted that two more interim phase meetings are scheduled for January and March of next year before transitioning back to a quarterly meeting schedule. The finalized 2025 schedule will be shared during the January meeting.

### **IV. Chair's/Executive Committee Report**

Mark shared information on the following items reviewed by the Executive Committee:

#### **A. Updates on local NWC Policies**

*Note: Local areas must establish designated policies to ensure compliance with state and federal regulations. Washington state WIN 0139, Rev 1, provides clear guidance on the mandatory policies and emphasizes the required involvement of the board in developing or amending local policies. NWC has delegated this responsibility to the Executive Committee.* Mark stated that there have been no updates to policies.

## **B. Draft 2025 WorkSource Certification Application**

Mark stated that as discussed previously, and noted in the minutes of previous committee meetings, work has been underway on a new and improved draft Certification Tool for the WorkSource Center Certification process. This updated tool moves away from the rigid and often overly prescriptive Malcolm Baldrige model, instead emphasizing a more positive and inclusive approach. It highlights the impactful contributions of the workforce system to the region and recognizes the dedication of staff working directly with the community. Initially recommended by the Quality Assurance Committee, the Executive Committee now also endorses the tool for full council approval.

**Lori Province motioned to affirm the Executive Committee’s recommendation to approve the 2025 WorkSource Certification Application. Robin Plume seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.**

## **C. NWC Processes Necessary to secure WIOA Program Service Providers**

Mark noted that there are two service-related items for review and approval, both of which come with recommendations for approval from the Quality Assurance Committee and the Executive Committee.

- i. Preparing Processes Necessary to secure Youth, Adult, and Dislocated Worker Program Service Providers.** Mark explained the first items requiring attention are the draft materials prepared by staff in anticipation of potentially needing to procure an independent procurement manager to oversee a Youth RFP process. Currently, we manage our own WIOA IB programs, and as a reminder, it was decided in March of this year to continue operating in this capacity. As requested, the relevant materials are included in your meeting packets for review and approval.

**Lori Province motioned to affirm the Executive Committee’s recommendation to approve Exhibit A Solicitation for Independent Procurement Manager. Greg Winter seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.**

**Robin Plume motioned to affirm the Executive Committee’s recommendation to approve Exhibit B Request for Qualifications Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Youth Services Provider. Del McAlpine seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.**

- ii. Request to provide WIOA IB Youth, Adult, and Dislocated Worker Program services directly.** Mark highlighted that the meeting materials include two draft documents prepared by staff: the first referring to Youth Services, and the second referring to Adult and Dislocated Worker Services. He noted that the North Central LWDB submitted a similar request to the State Workforce Board under draft Policy 1015, seeking approval to directly provide services through their 2024–2028 strategic plan. However, the State Workforce Board granted approval only through the current program year ending June 30, 2025, likely due to the draft status of Policy 1015, which is expected to be finalized by then.

In alignment with this precedent, and given the timelines of our board and the State Workforce Board meetings in 2025, Mark recommended submitting these materials as

early as possible in the new year. The draft requests were reviewed and approved by the Executive committee and are recommended for Full Council approval.

**Tonja Meyers moved to affirm the Executive Committee recommendation to approve the Requests to provide WIOA IB Youth, Adult and Dislocated Worker Program services. Lori Province seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.**

## **V. Chief Executive Officer Report**

### **A. Washington Workforce Association annual conference November 13-14, 2024**

Marissa reported on the annual Washington Workforce Association conference, held November 12–14 at the Marriott Tacoma Downtown. Planning for the event began in January, with Marissa participating on the Conference Committee. The conference hosted 548 attendees, including 17 NWC staff, and featured representation from 150 organizations and 34 breakout sessions. Board member Jessica Barr highlighted her biggest takeaway: the potential of AI to streamline processes, work smarter, and serve more customers effectively. Lori Province proposed the idea of inviting board members to future conferences to deepen their understanding of services and programs. Marissa shared having a board member track at future conferences was something the WWA conference committee was considering.

Scott shared that staff found the conference valuable, particularly for networking with other workforce boards statewide. A key insight was that while 95% of businesses and employees may be familiar with generative AI, many lack the knowledge to use it effectively, sparking conversations on how NWC can integrate AI into its practices. Additionally, sessions on trauma-informed case management were impactful, aligning with the challenges staff face when assisting individuals with lived trauma. Scott emphasized the conference was a worthwhile investment, and the insights gained will be shared across the agency.

### **B. WIOA Re-Authorization “A Stronger Workforce for America” (ASWA)**

Marissa shared that it appears WIOA reauthorization (ASWA) is unlikely to occur before the end of the year, leaving its future dependent on the direction of the incoming administration. She noted that under a Republican president, workforce development would likely remain a priority, though the specifics of the reauthorization might shift. This could include an emphasis on state flexibility, job training efficiencies, and cost-effectiveness of federal programs, potentially resulting in adjustments to funding allocations or program administration.

## **VI. Board Business**

### **A. PY 2024 Q1 Community Success Stories**

Mark invited Scott to provide an update on the latest round of success stories. Scott shared that the success stories from the first quarter of PY 2024, encompassing all programs, are now available on the Board’s website under the "About Us/Community Impact" section. He expressed pride in the staff's dedication to helping participants achieve meaningful changes in their lives.

This quarter’s lead story features a woman from Afghanistan who, along with her two young children, was among the last to leave the country in 2021. With support from the Northwest Workforce Council and the EcSA program, she is on track to earn her associate degree in Business Administration at Whatcom Community College next year.

Additionally, the Council highlighted businesses that successfully leveraged Community Investment Program funds through a Business Accelerator grant. Scott encouraged board members to explore these and other inspiring stories on the Board’s website.

**B. Department of Commerce Community Reinvestment Funds Program Update**

Marissa invited Malinda Bjaaland, NWC staff, to provide an update on the Community Reinvestment Project. Malinda reported that all deliverables with the Tribes were successfully met, noting that Nooksack and Swinomish have expressed enthusiasm for future collaboration opportunities. She highlighted that the Chamber’s Latino Youth Program is fully enrolled, with strong engagement from the Latine business community.

Malinda also shared that the Business Services fund is significantly ahead of spending targets. While there was a minor shortfall of less than 1% on Incentive Payments, the establishment of MISA accounts had been delayed due to state-level policy issues. Staff are proactively working with Umpqua Bank to establish MISA accounts for CRP participants.

**VIII. System Oversight**

Mark reminded the council that as agreed we want to use our time together to engage in discussion and the sharing of ideas, rather than reviewing reports unless necessary. Therefore, several items are included as “Additional Informational Items” for you to review at your own convenience. If you have any questions regarding these attachments, please feel free to reach out to myself or Marissa. The following reports were provided:

- A. WIOA Northwest Workforce Performance Reports
  - 1. WIOA IB Programs (Operated by NWC)
    - Program Performance Report: PY 24 Program Year: Qtr. 1 – July 1, 2024 – September 30, 2024:
    - WIOA Grant Summary YTD
    - Non-WIOA Grant Summary YTD
- B. Employment Security Department’s *Recognizing Your Teams Successes* Letter

**Old Business** – None

**New Business** – None

**Public Comment** – None

**Adjournment** The meeting was adjourned by Chair, Mark Vorobik at 2:38 PM.

**Attendance:**

***Board Members:***

Mark Vorobik, *Business Sector, Skagit County*  
Del McAlpine, *Business Sector, Whatcom County*  
Lori Province, *Labor, Whatcom County*  
Robin Plume, *Business Sector, Whatcom County*  
Tonja Myers, *Business Sector, Whatcom County*  
John Sternlicht, *Business Sector, Skagit County*  
Lynette Brower, *Higher Education, Skagit County*  
Adele Skinner, *Business, Skagit County*  
Kyle Jones, *DSHS Division of Vocational Rehab, Regional*  
Greg Winter, *CBO, Whatcom County*  
Tony Melillo, *Labor, Skagit County*

Dave Paul, *Higher Education, Skagit County*  
Tammie O’Dell, *Labor, Skagit County*

***NWC Staff:***

Marissa Cahill, *Executive Director*  
Malinda Bjaaland, *Director of Programming*  
Liz Vaughn, *Executive Administrative Manager*  
Scott Iddings, *Workforce Programs Manager*