

## Northwest Workforce Council Meeting Minutes September 25, 2024

### Action Taken:

- Approval of the June 20, 2024, Full Council Meeting Minutes
- Approval of Recommendation to Prepare for Procurement Process of Auditor in 2025
- Approval of Recommendation and Preparation of Processes Necessary to Secure Youth and Adult and Dislocated Worker Direct Services Provider(s)

**Note:** All approved Council and Committee minutes can be found on the Council's website: [www.nwboard.org](http://www.nwboard.org). Also, NWC's written outline that describes using a [Consent Agenda](#) for a Board can be found on the Council's [Meeting Minutes and Agendas](#) webpage for reference.

### I. Call to Order

The meeting was brought to order at 1:35 p.m. by Vice-Chair, Del McAlpine.

### II. Consent Agenda

#### A. Minutes of June 20, 2024, Full Council Meeting

Peter Browning moved approval of the June 20, 2024, Full Council Meeting Minutes. Lori Province seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

### III. NWC Committee Reports

Del McAlpine reminded the council about the June 2024 board retreat focused on restructuring committees for improved effectiveness. He directed members to materials available in their meeting packets. The NW Transformation Plan, which details the reconfigured committees and their implementation timeline. A new information packet for incoming board members that outlines each committee, the Council's roles and responsibilities, as well as a nomination form for prospective members. Additionally, he noted the included Strategic and Operational functions document is intended to help the board and committees understand their responsibilities and track ongoing activities.

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

Del reminded the council that the Quality Assurance Committee oversees the quality of program operations and the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) system of the WDC. He invited Jessica Barr to share her insights from the Quality Assurance Committee meeting. Jessica expressed enthusiasm about each committee having specific goals and purposes to support the Northwest Workforce Council's ongoing efforts. Jessica also highlighted the new reporting transparency and praised the collaborative changes taking place. Del noted that the committee will evaluate program goals and performance measures, with the new reporting transparency aiding in this process.

#### B. Workforce Solutions Committee Charge (9/11 Meeting Report)

Del informed the council that the Workforce Solutions Committee is tasked with bringing together business and industry leaders to enhance economic and workforce development. He invited council member Robin Plume to share her insights from the committee meeting. Robin expressed her enthusiasm for expanding the committee's focus to include a taskforce focused on business

outreach. She highlighted the significance of transparency, as it enables council and committee members to gain a clearer understanding of the realities on the ground. Del noted his satisfaction with having staff present at meetings, as their direct feedback helps the committee grasp the impact of their work on job seekers and the community.

#### Timeline for Implementation of new Committees

Del guided the council through the scheduling of upcoming committee meetings and outlined what to expect moving forward. He emphasized that staff are prepared to present transparent and actionable items, urging council members to do their homework and uphold their accountability in their roles and responsibilities as board members.

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

Del 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.* Del stated that there have been no updates to policies.

##### **B. Upcoming Procurement Processes**

**Procurement Process of Auditor for 2025.** Del referred members to a briefing note in their meeting materials referring to the need to procure an independent auditor in the coming year. He shared members of the executive committee discussed the importance to re-procure its third-party auditor periodically, and agreed it would be time to conduct an open procurement in 2025, last having done so in 2018. The committee unanimously approved the staff's recommendation to begin preparing the necessary materials to conduct an auditor procurement in 2025.

**Preparation Process for WIOA IB Service Provider(s).** Del referred members to a second briefing note in their meeting materials which detailed the purpose and need for staff to begin developing a timeline and preliminary materials for the procurement process and for requesting the governor's approval to continue as the WIOA IB program services provider. The goal is to be ready to act swiftly in the coming months to finalize the procurement or governor's request for the program year starting July 1, 2025, and beyond. He reminded the board of the April 2024 decision to continue serving as the WIOA IB program services provider while awaiting a final decision from the state workforce board on draft Policy 1015-1. Since the policy remains in draft form with no updates on its finalization, staff believe it is prudent to start preparing for the potential procurement process and the request to the governor for the upcoming year. Members of the executive committee agreed with the proposed recommendation to begin compiling the materials necessary to conduct such activities in 2025.

Janet St. Clair moved to affirm the Executive Committee recommendations related to procurement for the aforementioned 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 reminded the council that the annual Washington Workforce Association conference is scheduled for November 12-14 at the Marriott Tacoma Downtown. She noted that staff will be attending alongside peers from across the state, participating in engaging sessions and hearing from guest speakers on topics related to Workforce Development.

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

Marissa reminded members that during the Council’s June meeting it was noted the House had passed its version of new legislation, A Stronger Workforce for America (ASWA). Since then, the Senate also released a discussion draft to reauthorize WIOA. Here are some key takeaways from the Senate draft:

- **No Training Mandate:** Unlike the House bill, which included a 50% training mandate for Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker funds, the Senate draft does not mandate a specific spending requirement on training services.
- **Re-designation of Local Areas:** The Senate proposal significantly enhances the ability of State Governors to consolidate or restructure local workforce development areas (LWDAs), providing greater flexibility compared to the House bill. This raises concerns about potential impacts on local governance.
- **Statewide Funding Reservations:** Similar to the House proposal, the Senate draft allows states to set aside an additional 10% of WIOA Title I funding for statewide initiatives. However, it specifies that these funds must be directed toward Industry/Sector Partnership efforts or employer-based training activities, potentially limiting resources available to local communities.
- **Funding:** The bill does not specify authorized funding levels for programs, using vague language like “such sums as may be necessary.” This gives appropriations leaders more discretion in determining WIOA funding within the broader federal budget.

It is anticipated that little movement will occur before the election, so updates will be shared in the new year as more information becomes available.

**C. WWA Digital Equity Grant – seeking \$12m from NTIA to support local areas**

Marissa shared that the Washington Workforce Association (WWA) is preparing a grant proposal for submission to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), seeking \$12 million to support Digital Equity initiatives. If awarded, the Northwest Workforce Council's share could exceed \$650,000. This funding would allow for the provision of equipment and devices, assistance in connecting individuals to internet services, and the offering of digital skills training to enhance the services available to customers. She will share more details as they are made available.

**D. Guest: Jenny Veltri with Career Connect NW, to share on the status of WAVE & ECHO tours, and what’s been going on with Career Connect.**

Marissa introduced Jenny Veltri, Director of Career Connect WA, and invited her to discuss the upcoming Washington Apprenticeship Vocational Education (WAVE) and Education and Careers in Healthcare Opportunities (ECHO) Tours. Jenny began with the ECHO tour, modeled after the Council’s WAVE Tour, however focused on healthcare careers. High school students from the NW region are invited to this multi-day hands-on information fair to explore career opportunities in healthcare. The program launched in Snohomish County earlier in 2024, with tours planned for Whatcom and Skagit counties in Spring 2025.

Jenny then provided details about the upcoming WAVE Tour, currently scheduled to take place in October, which will be held at the Skagit County Fairgrounds. Catering to the region's high-schools, students are bussed-in to learn about various careers in the construction trades through hands-on activities and informational sessions sharing the benefits of apprenticeship programs and careers in trades for young adults.

Jenny shared more about the programs and strategic goals of Career Connect WA, highlighting their collaboration with partners in an interest to create credit and curriculum alignments that ensure credit transferability to Career & Technical Colleges.

## **VI. Board Business**

### **A. PY 2023 Q4 Community Success Stories**

Marissa referred members to the community success stories enclosed in their meeting materials, and invited NWC Workforce Programs Manager, Scott Iddings to report. Scott shared the successful outcomes of a few customers' journeys, and demonstrated where these stories could be found in greater detail on the Council's [website](#).

### **B. Department of Commerce Community Reinvestment Project**

Marissa invited NWC Director of Programming, Malinda Bjaaland, to share an update on the Community Reinvestment Project. Malinda stated that we have a business services staff member as well as a Spanish speaking staff that are working to engage more Black, Latine, and Tribal participants as intended under this grant. She also shared NWC had been working with WWU's Small Business Development Council (SBDC) to engage with small businesses owned or operated by Black, Latine, or Tribal communities in an effort to increase their profitability through small grant awards made possible by the CRP funds – a pilot project expected to expand regionally in the future. She invited CJ Seitz, SBDC Director, to share her experience. CJ shared that the flexibility and support that NWC has provided for small businesses within these CRP communities has been instrumental in providing the types of supports they need to thrive. By bridging the connections SBDC has with small businesses in Whatcom County with the opportunities afforded by NWC through this new grant, the Council is uplifting those traditionally underserved communities, bringing prosperity to local entrepreneurs, creating new jobs, and fostering economic growth that benefits the entire region.

### **C. Preparing for Regional workforce needs**

#### **a. Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD)**

Marissa explained that the Department of Commerce has been organizing efforts around broadband since last year, along with the Washington State Broadband Office. She mentioned that the State Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board is working to organize information and resource deployment, but the state-wide project is still in the discussion phase with no actionable information available yet. Island County Commissioner, Janet St. Clair, concurred, noting that while funding is confirmed for the state of Washington, little other concrete or actionable information is available at this time.

#### **b. MEGA (and other) Construction Projects: Lynden and Sumas Borders**

Marissa informed the council that the Lynden and Sumas border expansion projects are still slowly moving forward. Department of Labor has been holding information sessions across Whatcom County for the \$200 million dollar Sumas project, with

construction awards expected to be announced in December 2025. Both projects are slated to start the design and construction phases in 2026 and be completed in 2028.

## VII. Council & Committee Interim Schedule

Del shared the interim Council and Committee schedule was available in their meeting materials, as well as posted on the Council's [website](#).

## VIII. System Oversight

Del reminded the council that the meetings are intended for discussion and idea-sharing, and that the reports would only be reviewed when necessary. He stated that Council members received the detailed reports in their meeting materials, and encouraged members to let Marissa know if they had questions. The following reports were provided:

- A. WIOA Northwest Workforce Performance Reports and Monitoring
- B. Employment Security Department's *Recognizing Your Teams Successes* Letter
- C. WIOA PY23 – Internal Q4 Administrative and Fiscal Monitoring Report
- D. One-Stop System Operator (OSSO) Final PY23 Report to the Board

**Old Business** – None

**New Business** – None

**Public Comment** – None

**Adjournment** The meeting was adjourned by Vice-Chair, Del McAlpine at 3:28 PM.

## Attendance

### ***Board Members:***

Del McAlpine, *Business Sector, Whatcom County*  
Kevin Corrigan, *Business Sector, Island 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*  
Jessica Barr, *Public Employment Service, Regional*  
Hart Hodges, *Business Sector, Whatcom County*  
Adam Lambe (alternate to Lori Province), *Labor, Whatcom County*  
Kathi Hiyane-Brown, *Higher Education, Whatcom County*  
Kyle Jones, *DSHS Division of Vocational Rehab, Regional*  
Dave Paul, *Higher Education, Skagit County*  
Victoria Compton, *Economic Development, San Juan*

### ***Elected Officials:***

Janet St. Clair, *Island County Commissioner*  
Peter Browning, *Skagit County Commissioner*

### ***Visitors:***

CJ Sietz, *Western Washington University's Small Business Development Council*  
Jenny Veltri, *Career Connect WA; Educational Services District 189*  
Kori Olson, *Port of Bellingham*  
Michael Reese, *Skagit Valley College*

### ***NWC Staff:***

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