

Northwest Workforce Council Meeting Minutes

March 19, 2025

Action Taken:

- Approval of the Consent Agenda:
 - Approval of the January 29, 2025 Full Council Meeting Minutes
 - Approval of NWC 2024-2028 Regional Strategic Plan Rev 1
- Approval of Northwest Workforce Board Bylaws Revision

Note: All approved Council and Committee minutes can be found on the Council's website: www.nwboard.org.

I. Call to Order

Chair Mark Vorobik called the meeting to order at 1:32 p.m.

II. Consent Agenda

A. Minutes of November 20, 2024, Full Council Meeting

Lori Province moved approval of January 29, 2025, Full Council Meeting Minutes. Hart Hodges seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

B. NWC's 2025-2028 Regional Strategic Plan Rev 1

Chair Vorobik directed members to the update included in their meeting packets regarding NWC's Strategic Workforce Plan. He explained that the plan had been amended at the request of the state Workforce Board to support NWC's continued role in directly providing WIOA Title IB program services. He further noted that this revision, along with NWC's formal applications submitted in November to remain the Program Service Provider, is scheduled for review and action by the state Workforce Board at their March 20, 2025 meeting.

Chair Vorobik shared that the Executive Committee reviewed both the proposed changes and the rationale for the amendment, and has recommended full Council approval of this item.

Lori Province moved approval of the Regional Strategic Plan revision. Hart Hodges seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

III. NWC Committee Reports

Quality Assurance Committee Meeting Report (03/05)

At Mark's invitation, Lori Province provided an update on the most recent Quality Assurance Committee meeting. She shared that the committee has now concluded its compressed meeting schedule, which was adopted last year to support the restructuring of the committee's scope and responsibilities. Lori reminded members that all primary fiscal duties have since been reassigned to the Executive Committee. With this transition complete, the committee will now return to its regular quarterly meeting format.

As an informational item, Lori noted that she will be working with Marissa to engage all current committee members. The purpose of these conversations is to clarify the committee's objectives, gather input on future priorities, and ensure that upcoming agendas reflect member interests and goals.

Workforce Solutions Committee Meeting Report (03/05)

At Mark's invitation, Scott Iddings, NWC staff, provided an update on the most recent Workforce Solutions Committee meeting, which centered around updates from the Business Engagement Strategies Task Force (BEST). He reminded the board that the Taskforce is currently focused on updating the Council's Regional Business Services Plan, originally developed in 2014. While the existing plan - available on the Board website under "Policies" - remains largely relevant, the group agreed that updates are necessary to reflect the current economic environment and evolving workforce needs, and to better align with the Council's 2024-2028 Regional Strategic Plan.

The revised plan, once finalized and approved, will serve as a strategic guide for NWC's Business Engagement Team, ensuring a more cohesive and forward-looking approach to delivering business services across the region.

Scott also reported on a robust discussion regarding soft skills development, citing a persistent gap in essential workplace competencies among job seekers. Taskforce members unanimously agreed that participation in soft skills training should be strongly encouraged for program participants to be considered "work ready." Key focus areas may include time management, teamwork, communication, and critical thinking, with content tailored to the diverse needs of participants.

Scott concluded by noting that the next BEST meeting is scheduled for mid-May, with continued focus on finalizing updates to the Regional Business Services Plan.

IV. Chair's/Executive Committee Report

A. 2025 Update to Northwest Workforce Council Board Bylaws

Mark directed members to the Board Bylaws document included in their meeting packets and provided an overview of recent revisions developed by the Bylaws Task Force, which includes Marissa Cahill, Lori Province, John Sternlicht, Lori Strumpf, and Mark Vorobik.

He explained that the updates were made to better align the bylaws with current governance practices, reflect modern operational standards, and ensure continued legal compliance. Key changes include:

- Board Alternates must meet the same eligibility criteria as appointed board members.
- Meetings may be held virtually, with virtual attendance and voting now explicitly permitted.
- The bylaws will be reviewed on an ongoing basis, and at a minimum, once every five years.
- The conflict of interest policy has been significantly strengthened. Members with a conflict must disclose the conflict, abstain from voting, and recuse themselves from related discussions.

Mark noted that the Executive Committee supports the proposed revisions and recommended them for full board approval. **Lori Province motioned to approve the Update to the Northwest Workforce Council Board Bylaws. John Sternlicht seconded. Motion passed unanimously.**

B. Updated local NWC Policies

No policies required under [State WIN 0139, Change 1](#) currently in need of revision. Nothing to report.

C. Selection of Annual Audit Firm / RFQ process - Update

Mark provided an update on the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) issued for audit services. He reported that three firms responded:

- Alegria Advisors (current auditor)
- CliftonLarsonAllen LLP
- Cordell, Neher & Company, PLLC

During the Q&A period, only one question was submitted, regarding the feasibility of conducting a fully remote audit. In response, staff recommend that any newly selected auditor conduct an entrance interview and initial on-site review prior to transitioning to a remote audit process.

Mark noted that final staff recommendations will be presented to the Executive Committee in May, with Full Board action anticipated in June. Lori Province confirmed that all three responding firms are located in Washington State.

D. Preliminary Budget: Special Executive Committee meeting scheduled in May

Mark stated that the Executive Committee will be holding a special meeting in May to review the preliminary budget specifically, ahead of finalizing the proposed PY25 budget in June for full board and consortium committee approval.

V. Chief Executive Officer Report

Marissa Cahill shared information on the following items:

A. WIOA Re-Authorization “A Stronger Workforce for America” (ASWA) – Update

Marissa reported that the 118th Congress adjourned in December 2024 without reauthorizing the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). The final continuing resolution did not include the A Stronger Workforce for America Act (ASWA), despite bipartisan efforts to advance the legislation.

In March 2025, the House Education and Workforce Committee held a hearing titled “Strengthening WIOA: Improving Outcomes for America’s Workforce,” signaling renewed interest in reauthorization. The hearing revisited key provisions of the ASWA in the context of current labor market needs.

Marissa shared that the National Association of Workforce Board (NAWB) continues to advocate for preserving local board flexibility, cautioning against overly prescriptive requirements that could hinder effective service delivery. According to legislative sources, if ASWA moves forward later this year, it is expected to do so without further amendment. Provisions likely to remain include:

- The 50% training expenditure requirement
- An increase to the Governor’s reserve

- Provisions related to local area redesignation

Board staff will continue to monitor federal developments and provide updates as information becomes available. The topic is expected to be a point of discussion during the upcoming Washington, D.C. trip.

B. National Association of Workforce Board's (NAWB) Annual Forum March 29 - April 1, 2025

Marissa announced that NWC will be represented at the NAWB Annual Forum in Washington, D.C., from March 29 to April 1, 2025, by Mark Vorobik, Kevin Corrigan, Marissa Cahill, Scott Iddings, and Liz Vaughn.

The Forum is the nation's leading workforce development conference, bringing together board leaders, policymakers, educators, and industry experts to explore key issues and innovations. This year's agenda is expected to focus on WIOA reauthorization, sector partnerships, digital equity, and workforce strategies for high-demand industries.

Marissa noted that participation will allow NWC to gain insights into national best practices and bring back ideas to strengthen local workforce efforts and partnerships.

C. Draft [State Policy 1015](#): Procurement and Selection of One-Stop Operators and Service Providers – Update/Progress

Marissa shared an update on Draft State Policy 1015, noting that Liz Gallagher recently provided insight following a meeting between Workforce Board staff and Carol Padovan from the U.S. Department of Labor. While Carol offered minor feedback, she expressed general support for the draft policy's approach - using performance outcomes to determine when competitive procurement is required for Local Workforce Boards seeking to provide WIOA Title IB services directly.

The State Workforce Board will convene a task force to finalize revisions to the policy. Although the revised draft is not yet available, the intent is to produce language that reflects broad stakeholder consensus. However, the Governor's Office will not be able to review the policy until after the June deadline, so final approval is anticipated at the August or October Workforce Board meeting.

The initial task force will include local directors, Washington Workforce Association (WWA) representatives, and State Workforce Board staff. If major concerns arise, CLEOs, Board Chairs, and other stakeholders will be brought in, as was done in late 2023. Marissa confirmed she will keep the Executive Committee updated as developments occur.

D. WorkSource Certification

Marissa reported that the WorkSource certification process is currently underway. One-Stop System Operator (OSSO) Patrick Baldoz has been actively working with Center staff, providing training and collecting input for the certification application, which is due to the Board's Certification Team by April 1.

The Certification Team, originally convened in 2022 and composed of Board and community members, will reconvene in April to review the application, conduct site visits, and meet with

Center and Partner staff. Staff support has been assigned to Liz Vaughn, and preparatory work is in progress to ensure readiness for the review phase.

Marissa invited Tammie O'Dell, Certification Team Chair, to share additional updates. Tammie noted that the certification process and application have been revised to reflect current system priorities and improve clarity and effectiveness.

Lori Province encouraged board members who have not yet participated in the certification process to volunteer. As this is both a transitional and certification year, broad participation is critical to assess system effectiveness, partnerships, and physical accessibility. Members were also invited to recommend additional individuals who could bring valuable perspectives to the review process by contacting Marissa or Tammie.

VI. Board Business

A. PY 2024 Q2 Community Success Stories

Mark invited Scott Iddings to provide an update on the latest Community Success Stories, which highlight the impact of NWC programs on both participants and businesses. Scott shared that second quarter success stories from across all WIOA Title IB programs have been compiled and are now available on the Board's website under the "[About Us / Community Impact](#)" section.

He commended NWC staff for their dedication in helping participants achieve meaningful career progress, noting that the stories reflect the transformative impact of workforce programs in improving lives and supporting strong communities.

This quarter's spotlight story features a young adult involved in the Out-of-School Youth (OSY) program who was at risk of justice system involvement. Through a work experience placement with a local nonprofit and participation in a pre-apprenticeship construction program, he is now making steady progress toward his goals. While he is still working toward his GED and considering military service, his turnaround began last fall and continues to show positive momentum.

Scott encouraged board members to explore the full collection of stories and emphasized that partnerships and expanded access to training are key drivers of the region's workforce success.

B. Dept. of Commerce Community Reinvestment Funds – Program Update

At Mark's invitation, Malinda provided an update on the Community Reinvestment Grant, reporting that the project remains on track with both service targets and expenditures.

A recent contract amendment added the implementation of Matched Individual Savings Accounts (MISAs), with a goal of establishing 40 accounts by June 2025. To date, 28 MISAs have been opened, and staff are confident the remaining 12 will be completed, as implementation is currently ahead of schedule. The amendment also included an additional \$59,000 to support up to six new Business Accelerator Grants. So far, 32 small businesses have received grants. Outreach has focused on increasing tribal business participation, resulting in two new tribal grantees.

Malinda highlighted the transformational impact of MISAs, particularly in helping participants reach major milestones such as homeownership.

VIII. System Oversight – Informational Items/Attachments

Mark reminded board members that as we are seeking to utilize our time together to engage in discussion and the sharing of ideas, we will not be reviewing reports unless necessary. He directed members to their packets and explained that there are several “Additional Informational Items” enclosed for reviewing on their own time. He reminded everyone that if they have any questions regarding the additional informational items, they can reach out to him or Marissa.

- A. WIOA Northwest Workforce Performance Reports ([reports available online](#))
As the operator for WIOA IB Programs: Youth, Adult, Dislocated Worker, the NWC provides quarterly data on performance as part of system oversight. *
- 1. WIOA IB Programs (Operated by NWC)
 - Program Performance Report: PY 24 Program Year: Qtr. 2 – July 1, 2024 – December 31, 2024
 - WIOA Grant Summary YTD
 - Non-WIOA Grant Summary YTD
- B. Annual WIOA IB PY24 State Monitoring April 7-11, 2025; Advance items due March 14th

Old Business – None

New Business –

- A. Washington State Ferries Contract Opportunity
Vice Chair Kevin Corrigan provided an update on a significant economic and workforce development opportunity involving Nichols Brothers Boat Builders and other regional maritime employers. He reported that Washington State Ferries has issued a five-boat contract to be awarded by June 1, 2025, with Nichols Brothers among three pre-qualified bidders—and the only bidder based in Washington State. The remaining contenders are located in Florida and Pennsylvania.

The contract includes two components:

- A build for two hybrid diesel-electric ferries
- A second build for two additional ferries, with an option for a fifth vessel

Kevin described this as a generational opportunity with long-term economic implications for the state, noting that additional ferry construction will likely be needed in future years. To strengthen their bid, Nichols Brothers is actively engaging the Governor’s Office, emphasizing the contract’s potential impact on workforce development, apprenticeship expansion, and regional economic growth. Kevin is assisting in the coordination of three letters of support, including one from workforce partners. He requested that board members sign a support letter highlighting Nichols Brothers’ apprenticeship programs, partnerships with education and training providers, and alignment with statewide priorities such as the Career Connected Learning Initiative.

Public Comment – None

Adjournment The meeting was adjourned by Chair, Mark Vorobik at 2:21 PM.

Attendance:

Board Members:

Mark Vorobik, *Business Sector, Skagit County*
Hart Hodges, *Business Sector, Whatcom County*
Tonja Myers, *Business Sector, Whatcom County*
Kevin Corrigan, *Business Sector, Skagit County*
Lynette Brower, *Higher Education, Skagit County*
Adele Skinner, *Business, Skagit County*
Tammie O'Dell (Alternate), *Labor, Skagit County*
Jessica Barr, *Labor, Regional*
John Sternlicht, *Business Sector, Skagit County*
Lori Province, *Labor, Whatcom County*
Victoria Compton, *Economic Development, San Juan*
Greg Winter, *CBO, Whatcom County*

Local Elected Officials:

Kari McVeigh, *San Juan County Official*
Jill Johnson, *Island County Official*
Peter Browning, *Skagit County Official*

NWC Staff:

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

Guests:

Michael Reese, *Skagit Valley College*