

**Northwest Workforce Council Meeting Minutes**  
June 25, 2025

**Action Taken:**

- Approval of the Consent Agenda:
  - Approval of the March 19, 2025 Full Council Meeting Minutes
- Approval of the NW WorkSource Center Certification through June 30, 2028
- Approval of the 2025 NWC Regional Business Services Plan
- Approval of Alegria & Co. as the NWC Auditor
- Approval of the PY 2025 Preliminary Operating Budget

**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**

Chair Mark Vorobik called the meeting to order at 1:31 p.m.

**II. Consent Agenda**

- A. Minutes of March 19, 2025, Full Council Meeting**  
Lori Province moved approval of March 19, 2025, Full Council Meeting Minutes. Jessica Barr seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

**III. NWC Committee Reports**

Quality Assurance Committee Meeting Report (05/21)

*Ensures quality program operations and the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) system of the WDC. The committee evaluates program goals, performance measures, the extent to which the Centers and programs meet quality standards, and the implementation of new program components.*

- **Review and Recommendation of NWC Auditor to Executive Committee**

At Mark's invitation, Lori shared updates from the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC). Lori stated that there were two notable items that were discussed at the recent QAC meeting. The first was the procurement of an auditor firm. Lori provided a brief update regarding the recent procurement process for audit services. Members of the QAC reviewed three proposals in response to the RFP issued in and made a recommendation to the Executive Committee. It was noted that the responses received were thorough and that the committee was pleased to have multiple submissions. Alegria & Co., the current auditor, has provided strong service in the past, and their continued interest was appreciated. Lori stated that Alegria & Co. was the independent auditor the QAC recommended for Executive Committee approval. Additional details, and approval by the full board would take place later in the meeting.

- **NW WorkSource Certification**

Next, Lori referred members to the Technical Assistance letter issued by the Council's Certification Team available in their meeting materials. She explained that the certification process is conducted every three years and includes in-person site visits, customer interviews, close observation of staff and customer interactions, as well as a written application that is submitted directly to the Certification Team. The goal of the certification process is to gain a more authentic understanding of how WorkSource system services are delivered day-to-day and to assess how well coordination and planning translate into real-world execution. Lori asked Tammie O'Dell, Certification Team Chair, to share her impressions of this year's concluded certification activities.

Tammie noted that NWC's local approach is both robust and comprehensive, stemming from a desire to go beyond the state's minimum requirements for WorkSource Center Certification. Our local process encourages collaboration and reflection among partners, creating a stronger, more integrated system, something Tammie described as a unique strength of the NW region. She also emphasized the value of board member participation in the certification process. For new members in particular, it offers a comprehensive view of the organization's work and impact, and serves as a powerful reminder of why board service matters. This cycle included conversations with staff, the one-stop system operator, and partner representatives to evaluate the effectiveness of both the written application and the process. Tammie also explained that despite organizational changes, leadership transitions, and staffing shifts since the last certification, this round was considered a success. Tammie expressed her confidence in the organization's operational strength, citing the presence of well-established policies, procedures, and systems that support continued success moving forward.

Following discussion, Lori Province motioned to approve the recommendation by the Certification Team to certify each of the three NW WorkSource Centers as comprehensive centers for an additional three years, through June 30, 2028. Tammie O'Dell seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

#### Workforce Solutions Committee Meeting Report (05/21)

Mark directed the Council's attention to the draft *2025 NWC Regional Business Services Plan* included in the meeting packet. The revised plan, developed by the Council's Business Engagement Strategies Taskforce (BEST), outlines an updated operational framework for how the Council will deliver business services across the region. The Workforce Solutions Committee recommends full board approval of the document.

Mark explained that the updated language has been modernized to align with the Council's 2024–2028 Regional Workforce Plan and streamlined to eliminate redundancies carried over from the 2014 version. The plan also reflects the priorities and vision of key regional employers and partners, aiming to enhance the overall effectiveness of business services delivered by Council staff.

Following additional discussion, Tammie O'Dell moved to approve the 2025 NWC Regional Business Services Plan. Adele Skinner seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

#### IV. Board Business

A. PY 2024 Q3 Community Success Stories – Business success showcase

Mark introduced Donna Sanchez, NWC Business Engagement Specialist, and invited her to share a presentation on recent business service activities. Donna shared an overview of local outreach strategies and recent successes in business services and participant job placements. Since joining the Council staff in April 2023, Donna has strengthened relationships with local businesses and associations through multiple realms of outreach, which has led to. She highlighted several impactful participant success stories, including placements in internships, on-the-job training, and full-time employment. She also emphasized business partnerships that have utilized services such as Incumbent Worker Training to upskill staff and enhance operational capacity, as well as Business Accelerator Grants that have helped numerous small businesses advance their growth and competitiveness.

Scott emphasized Donna's deep knowledge, proactive approach, and successful outreach to businesses, including tribal-owned businesses, noting that demand for the Business Accelerator Grant has consistently exceeded expectations.

B. NWC Performance – Presentation by Liz Gallagher, Workforce Policy Associate, Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (WTECB)

Liz Gallagher, representing the State Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board, visited the NW Workforce Development Area as part of a statewide tour focused on system integration and workforce system performance evaluation. Drawing on her extensive background in Title I programs and American Job Center one-stop operations, Liz praised Northwest's exceptional workplace culture, deep partner integration, and consistent statewide leadership in program performance and outcomes. She noted that Northwest is consistently one of three top-performing regions in the state, regularly exceeding performance targets by 10% to 30%, and in some cases doubling the expected outcomes, which ultimately lifts the state's overall performance. Despite rising costs and reduced funding, Northwest's commitment to continuous improvement and meaningful implementation of WIOA practices is setting the standard statewide. Liz emphasized that these outcomes are not only protecting Washington from federal sanctions but also serving as best practices. Her recommendation for the region was to explore opportunities to scale its successful efforts further - within available resources - to continue demonstrating impact and justifying future investment at both the state and federal levels.

C. Economic Pulse: Labor Market Trends in Our Region – Presentation by Toby Paterson, Regional Labor Economist, Employment Security Department (ESD)

Mark thanked Toby Paterson, Regional Labor Economist for the Northwest region, for joining the meeting and providing an overview of the region's economic trends and workforce dynamics.

Toby provided an overview of regional labor and economic indicators, noting signs of moderate growth accompanied by mixed employment trends and increasing affordability challenges. While unemployment rates across Island, San Juan, Skagit, and Whatcom counties remain relatively low, recent data indicates a slight upward shift, suggesting early signs of labor market cooling. In some areas, labor force contraction may also be contributing to this trend. Toby explained that regional GDP saw a post-COVID spike driven by federal stimulus, but has since stabilized or declined in most counties. Additionally, median household income has dipped

slightly at the state level, while inflation and rising costs continue to place pressure on both consumers and employers.

Toby also noted that initial unemployment claims remain generally stable, though there has been a slight uptick in Whatcom County. Industry data reflects month-over-month job gains across all four counties, with Whatcom leading the region by adding approximately 900 jobs. He emphasized that housing affordability continues to be a significant challenge, as median home prices have risen sharply—placing homeownership increasingly out of reach, particularly in San Juan and Whatcom Counties. For most residents, and especially first-time buyers, renting remains a more viable option than purchasing a home. Toby concluded by stating that while some economic uncertainty persists, job growth continues and overall unemployment remains low.

## V. Chair's/Executive Committee Report

### A. Updated local NWC Policies

*\*Policies required under [State WIN 0139, Change 1](#) in need of revision. Per the board's decision, the Executive Committee is responsible for executing this function of the board.*


- NWC Policy [WIOA 01-22, Rev 2](#): Property Management and Inventory  
Mark reported that the Executive Committee reviewed and approved a policy update increasing the equipment expenditure threshold requiring prior written approval from \$5,000 to \$10,000. This change aligns with the updated WA State Employment System Administration Policy #5260, Revision 5, which is now also referenced in the local policy.

### B. Selection of Annual Audit Firm

RFQ Release and Selection Timeline:

- February 3, 2025: RFQ Released
- February 3-28, 2025: Q&A Period
- March 7, 2025: Responses Due to NWC
- March 17-21, 2025: Evaluation Team receives and reviews Quotes
- June 11, 2025: Evaluation Team makes recommendation to Executive Committee
- **June 25, 2025: Board action on successful bidder**

Mark provided an overview of the Council's recent procurement activities for audit services, noting that a Request for Quotes (RFQ) was released in February 2025. He directed members to the memo in their meeting packets titled 2025 Audit Provider Procurement – Review of RFQ Responses and indicated that it was now time for the Council to take formal action on the selection of an audit provider. Mark reported that the Council received three proposals from qualified Washington-based firms, which were evaluated by a staff-led review committee and subsequently reviewed by both the Quality Assurance and Executive Committees. As detailed on pages 2 through 4 of the memo, Alegria & Co. received the highest evaluation score based on their extensive experience auditing WIOA-funded entities, the qualifications of their proposed staff, and a reasonable estimate of service hours. Based on these findings, the Executive Committee recommended Alegria & Co. for board approval as the Council's audit provider.

Lori Province moved to approve Alegria & Co. as the auditor for  NWC. Jessica Barr seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

- C. WIOA PY 2025: Washington State's IB Annual Allocations for 1) Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth (Young Adult), and 2) Wagner Peyser (ESD) Programs, NWC Budget Funding Distribution, and PY 2025 Preliminary Operating Budget \*Pending receipt of finalized Local allocations

Mark asked Marissa to share an update on the PY 2025 Preliminary Operating Budget. Marissa provided a high-level overview of the WIOA PY 2025 allocations at both the state and local levels. She reported that Washington state experienced average reductions of approximately 10% in the Youth and Adult WIOA funding streams, consistent with national trends. However, Dislocated Worker funding increased significantly by roughly 30%, making Washington one of the few states to see a substantial increase. Wagner-Peyser funding remained largely flat, with a decrease of less than 1%.

At the local level, current projections for the Northwest region show a 1.5% decrease in Youth funds, a 4% decrease in Adult funds, and a notable 37% increase in Dislocated Worker funds for PY25. This results in an overall 7% increase in WIOA Title IB funding for the region. Total operating budget is estimated to be approximately \$5 million. The funding methodology remains unchanged, based on unemployment and economic disadvantage metrics.

**Tammie O'Dell motioned to approve the PY 2025 Preliminary Operating Budget. Jessica Barr seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.**

#### **VI. 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, rather than 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. The following reports were provided:

- A. WIOA Northwest Workforce Performance Reports ([available online](#))
  - 1. WIOA IB Programs (Operated by NWC)
    - WIOA Grant Summary YTD
    - Non-WIOA Grant Summary YTD
    - Measurable Skill Gain Briefing Paper

- C. One-Stop System Operator (OSSO) Performance/Monitoring Review

**Old Business – None**

#### **New Business**

**WorkSource Skagit Agriculturally Significant designation:** Jessica Barr (ESD) informed the Council that the U.S. Department of Labor has approved Washington State's request to reduce the number of Migrant Seasonal Farm Worker (MSFW) Ag Significant Offices (AGO's) from nine to six. As a result, WorkSource Skagit will no longer hold the Ag Significant designation. While outreach to farmworkers will continue under Wagner-Peyser requirements, the full-time position previously dedicated solely to outreach will be reduced. This change, supported by data indicating lower customer demand in the Skagit Valley, provides greater flexibility in how outreach is conducted - potentially involving multiple staff members. Notably, the current bilingual outreach staff person will remain in their role.

**Public Comment** – None

**Adjournment** The meeting was adjourned by Chair, Mark Vorobik at 3:11 PM.

**Attendance:**

***Board Members:***

Mark Vorobik, *Business Sector, Skagit County*  
Hart Hodges, *Business Sector, Whatcom 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*  
Dave Paul, *Higher Education, Skagit County*

***Local Elected Officials:***

Kari McVeigh, *San Juan County Councilmember*

***Guests:***

Elizabeth Gallagher, *State Workforce Board*  
Toby Paterson, *Regional Labor Economist (ESD)*  
Diane Miltenberger, *DSHS*

***NWC Staff:***

Marissa Cahill, *Executive Director*  
Malinda Bjaaland, *Director of Programming*  
Scott Iddings, *Workforce Programs Manager*  
Donna Sanchez, *Business Engagement Specialist*  
Liz Vaughn, *Executive Administrative Manager*