

Workforce Solutions Committee Meeting Minutes - Draft

November 5, 2025

Actions Taken:

- Approval of May 21, 2025 Workforce Solutions Committee meeting minutes

I. Call to Order:

The meeting was brought to order at 12:03pm by Robin Plume.

II. Minutes

Review and Approval of May 21, 2025 Workforce Solutions Committee Meeting Minutes. **Mark Vorobik moved to approve, and Kyle Jones seconded. The motion passed unanimously.** Approved NWC committee and board minutes are available on the Council's website www.nwboard.org.

III. Board Business

A. Employer Engagement & Industry Alliances

a. Business Engagement Strategies Taskforce – Updates

Scott provided an update on the work of the Business Engagement Strategies Task Force, which has met twice since the last Workforce Solutions Committee meeting - on August 5 and October 14, 2025.

At the August 5 meeting, the task force reviewed progress on career pathway development, noting that much of the foundational work has already been completed by entities such as the Associated General Contractors and Council staff. The primary challenge continues to be maintaining current and relevant information. Ongoing efforts are focused on identifying career pathways that align closely with regional business needs. The group also discussed business services related to Rapid Response, including strategies to proactively engage employers at risk of layoffs through Shared Work programs and incumbent worker training. Council staff have begun developing outreach materials and a new webpage to increase awareness of these layoff aversion strategies.

At the October 14 meeting, discussion centered on developing a regional communications and marketing strategy to highlight the benefits of business services and work-based learning models. The task force reviewed proposed timelines for key messaging, identified opportunities to engage sector stakeholders to better understand short- and long-term workforce needs, and discussed how these efforts align with WIOA reauthorization priorities. Members also explored new opportunities for participants to earn micro-credentials and industry-recognized certifications that meet current employer demand.

In addition, the task force received an update on Essential Skills Training, recommending the development of curriculum and lesson plans designed to help young adult participants strengthen core workplace competencies prior to program placement.

Council staff have been developing the YouthWorx pilot program, scheduled to launch in January 2026, offered both in-person and virtually. Training modules will cover topics such as prioritization, problem-solving, ethics, workplace communication, and the effective use of AI for information acquisition. The program is designed to equip participants with essential employability skills before entering Paid Work Experience opportunities, with mentoring incorporated where feasible. Following completion of the pilot, Council staff plan to adapt the model for older adults seeking to re-enter or reskill for the workforce.

b. Rapid Response Activities

Scott reported on several key developments related to Rapid Response, including the relaunch of the Federal and State Worker Virtual Rapid Response initiative, the Northwest pilot launch of localized virtual sessions, and expanded outreach activities to support affected workers and employers.

He shared that the consortium of Local Workforce Development Boards, the Washington Employment Security Department, and the Washington Workforce Association's Business Services teams recently re-launched statewide Virtual Rapid Response sessions for federal and state employees impacted by permanent or temporary layoffs. This initiative - originally launched earlier in the year and paused in June - was reactivated in response to the ongoing federal government shutdown. Virtual sessions held on October 23 and October 30 collectively reached more than 700 participants statewide, most of whom were Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) employees affected by the shutdown and related funding delays. Approximately 30 of those participants were from Northwest counties, many anticipating temporary layoffs.

Scott also provided an update on the region's localized Virtual Rapid Response pilot, developed to ensure timely outreach and access to resources for displaced workers from all sectors, including small businesses. Since its launch in September, the pilot sessions have served approximately 20 participants, several of whom have since applied for enrollment in the WIOA Title I-B Dislocated Worker Program, while others are pursuing unemployment benefits and related services.

c. Northwest Partner Management Team Business Focus Group

Scott reported that the Partner Management Team convened a Business Focus Group on October 15, 2025, at The Squalicum Boathouse in Bellingham, bringing together seventeen representatives from key industry sectors across the region. Invitations were distributed to businesses throughout the Workforce Development Area to ensure participation from a diverse range of employers and stakeholders. The session was moderated by One-Stop System Operator Patrick Baldoz and focused on gathering employer perspectives regarding familiarity with WorkSource, on-the-job training opportunities, labor exchange services, participant readiness, and job placement processes.

Key takeaways from the discussion included ongoing confusion about the "WorkSource" brand and the specific business services offered by NWC and its partner agencies. Employers also emphasized the need for enhanced soft skills and digital literacy training among job seekers, as well as difficulties navigating the WorkSourceWA.com website when posting job opportunities. A comprehensive summary of the session will be compiled by Patrick, where he will provide additional insights in his final report. This will be shared with the board as soon as it is received.

B. Strategic Planning & Regional Alignment

a. 2025-2028 NWC Regional Strategic Plan – 2026 Update

Liz reported that, in accordance with WIOA Section 108 and 20 CFR 679.580, local and regional workforce plans require a midpoint review and update. For NWC's 2024–2028 Regional Strategic Plan, a two-year update is required in 2026. She noted that these mid-cycle updates are typically lighter, with more substantial revisions occurring during the four-year submission. The update will reflect current economic and labor market conditions, incorporate state policy changes and new strategic priorities, and revise partner commitments, funding strategies, and performance goals as needed. The draft timeline includes a planning kickoff and state guidance review in January/February 2026, drafting and partner input in March/April, and public posting, board review, and state submission in May/June.

b. Alignment with K-16 Education & Economic Development Partners

Scott reported that the Northwest Education and Workforce Coalition held its semi-annual meeting on October 9 to discuss alignment and coordination among K–16 education, economic development partners, and workforce development. Sponsored by Career Connect Northwest and Northwest Educational Service District 189, the meeting included an overview of the K–12 system presented by NWESD 189 Superintendent Dr. Ismael Vivanco, focusing on strategic alignment with postsecondary education and regional economic goals.

The session also included discussions on career pathway alignment between K–12 and postsecondary institutions, an update from Western Washington University on its Guaranteed Admissions program, and a presentation by the Association of Educational Service Districts' technology lead on a statewide initiative to provide digital student transcripts aligned with postsecondary and workforce needs.

C. Program Service Delivery Oversight

a. PY 2025 Q1 Community Success Stories

Scott highlighted the mailout materials and the quarterly Success Stories newsletter, which focused on the theme "Transforming Support Into Self-Sufficiency." He noted that Council staff work to identify opportunities that help participants achieve self-sufficiency. The newsletter features several Economic Security for All (EcSA) participants who have completed financial literacy training and are progressing toward independence. One featured story highlighted a radiologic technology student who attended Bellingham Technical College, became credentialed, passed her boards, and secured employment at Skagit Regional Health, achieving self-sufficiency and launching a new career.

b. Information Sessions update

Scott reported that Council staff will be launching monthly 90-minute information sessions, held in-person at each WorkSource Center⁰ and virtually, to provide potential participants with an overview of WIOA IB programs. The sessions will cover program expectations, available training and support services, and career and vocational counseling opportunities. These sessions are scheduled to begin in January 2026.

c. Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) update

Scott reported that Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) has been re-opened for individuals previously laid off from TAA-certified companies who remain eligible. Kevin Logan (ESD) explained that the program has been ongoing but is now being reintroduced locally, with a staff member providing services to eligible participants. He noted that the Department of Labor has remaining TAA funds, which states can request to provide

support services for previously certified individuals who may not have accessed them before. No new certifications are being issued; outreach will focus on reconnecting eligible participants with available services.

D. Voice of the Customer

Scott informed members the Business Customer feedback survey was in need of review, members agreed to push this item to their next quarterly meeting.

Old Business – None

New Business:

- Liz noted that the 2026 meeting calendar was included in the mailout and asked members to identify any significant issues so they could be reviewed and addressed as needed.
- Kyle Jones, with DVR, informed the committee that all DVR services will close to new applicants on December 8, 2025, at which point all new applicants will be placed on a waitlist. Depending on their order of selection, it could take years for some to be released from the waitlist as eligibility and plan completion processes typically take around 90 days. He noted that with the federal government shutdown, the agency has enough funding to remain open until March 2026, after which services could cease if the shutdown continues.

Despite the pending closure, Kyle shared that his office has approval to hire a new Rehabilitation Technician to replace a recent vacancy. The position is entry-level, requires a high school diploma and transferable office skills. Kyle encouraged referrals of qualified candidates, noting that he will be making the hiring decision.

Public Comment – None

Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned by Robin Plume at 12:46pm.

Attendance

Board Members: Robin Plume, Mark Vorobik, Victoria Compton, Adele Skinner, Kyle Jones

Guest: Kevin Logan

Staff: Scott Iddings, Liz Vaughn