

Workforce Solutions Committee Meeting Minutes

February 18, 2026

Actions Taken:

- Approval of November 5, 2025 Workforce Solutions Committee meeting minutes

I. Call to Order:

The meeting was brought to order at 1:32pm by Mark Vorobik.

II. Minutes

Review and Approval of November 5, 2025 Workforce Solutions Committee Meeting Minutes. **John Sternlicht moved to approve, and Lynette Brower 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

i. Review of the 01/22/2026 meeting

Scott reported that the Business Engagement Strategies Task Force met on January 26 and included representatives from business, education, ports, and partner organizations. The group reviewed the YouthWorx essential skills training plan, designed to strengthen youth employability and better meet employer needs, and expressed strong interest in the program. Members noted that participants who complete the training would enter the workplace with stronger foundational soft skills. Success measures discussed included participant completion rates, job placement and retention outcomes, and employer feedback.

The Task Force also explored opportunities to expand services to better support local employers, particularly small businesses. Discussion included the potential for standardized monthly trainings and increased marketing of the Council's expertise and service offerings. Members shared their current recruitment practices and recommended broader outreach strategies, including collaboration with WWU's Small Business Development Center to identify service gaps and enhance coordination. Additional discussion focused on strengthening system alignment through a Business Solutions–focused subgroup of the Partner Management Team, as well as enhancing marketing and communications through participant success stories, testimonials, and short-form video content to increase employer engagement and visibility.

ii. Youthworx: NWC 6-week Enhanced Work Skills Training - Presentation by David Czuba, NWC Workforce Coordinator

Scott introduced David Czuba, an NWC Coordinator and member of the YouthWorx team, who presented an overview of the program and shared details regarding the

pilot and curriculum design. David explained that YouthWorx is structured to strengthen youth employability and work readiness by directly addressing identified skill gaps, including resume development, workplace attire, professional behavior, communication, and other essential workplace competencies.

He outlined the six-week curriculum and described how the program enhances practical skills to reduce early turnover, support long-term career growth, and contribute to overall community resilience. David noted that participants receive documentation and a certificate upon completion, providing employers with a clear understanding of the training received. He highlighted anticipated employer benefits such as reduced onboarding time and alignment with work experience and subsidized wage opportunities.

Committee members asked questions related to recruitment strategies, program structure, and potential enhancements. David clarified that participants must be enrolled in the WIOA Title I-B program, and that current recruitment efforts align with existing outreach practices, with Work Experience participants identified as a priority population. Discussion included consideration of incorporating aptitude assessments, clarification of the balance between weekly in-person and virtual training components and required meeting hours, and alignment with Work Experience requirements.

Members expressed support for developing tools to gather employer feedback on participants who complete the program. Staff agreed that systematic employer input will be important to support ongoing evaluation, continuous improvement, and validation of YouthWorx outcomes.

b. Rapid Response Activities

i. Federal, State Worker Virtual Rapid Response & NW Virtual Rapid Response Presentation by Levi Corbeil-Wild, NWC Coordinator

Scott reported that Rapid Response activities continue to provide timely information on WorkSource services, unemployment benefits, DSHS resources, training opportunities, and WIOA Title I-B Dislocated Worker services to individuals affected by layoffs. During the last quarter, staff delivered in-person presentations to Environ Cold Storage and PeaceHealth, reaching approximately 15 employees. He also noted plans to support statewide virtual Rapid Response efforts in response to potential large-scale layoffs, while continuing monthly local Virtual Rapid Response sessions, which average approximately 10 attendees. Scott then introduced Levi Corbeil-Wild, NWC Workforce Coordinator, to provide additional detail.

Levi presented an overview of the Rapid Response (RR) program, describing it as a proactive strategy designed to reach individuals and employers impacted by layoffs as early as possible. He outlined key components of the program, including a comprehensive “one-door” approach that connects individuals and businesses to workforce and partner resources through established collaborations. Levi noted that employers with 50 or more employees are generally required to file a WARN notice, meaning smaller businesses may not access the same formal supports, and emphasized the importance of providing assistance regardless of employer size. He highlighted benefits for both dislocated workers and businesses, including early engagement, streamlined referrals through a single application process, and improved conversion of attendees into enrolled WIOA Dislocated Worker participants.

Levi also shared that the team has begun collecting and analyzing data on industries and occupations most affected by layoffs, with early trends indicating impacts in office administration, payroll, healthcare, and seasonal construction. He noted ongoing efforts to strengthen outreach and follow-up processes, develop Spanish-language materials, and enhance tracking systems. Committee members discussed emerging trends in healthcare workforce shifts, and staff emphasized the long-term goal of increasing employer awareness and engagement so that Rapid Response services are utilized proactively - ideally before layoffs or closures occur.

ii. Outreach activities related to Rapid Response

Scott added a final note regarding Rapid Response, emphasizing that businesses in the region experiencing challenges, or considering workforce reductions, are encouraged to contact the Council early, as support options may be available to help avert layoffs. He noted that staff are developing outreach materials to share with employers and partner organizations to increase awareness of Rapid Response services, with additional information to be provided in the near future.

c. Northwest Partner Management Team Business Focus Group

Mark referred members to the 2025 Business Focus Group report included in their meeting materials and provided a brief summary of key findings. The report highlighted employer feedback on the value of workforce services, while also identifying ongoing challenges related to system navigation and program awareness. Employers expressed appreciation for training and wage reimbursement programs but noted concerns regarding program complexity, unclear roles among partners, and the need for updated job-matching tools.

Mark reviewed comparisons between current and prior feedback to demonstrate measurable progress in employer engagement and responsiveness. He also outlined continued opportunities to strengthen training alignment and talent pipeline development, and referenced the report's actionable recommendations aimed at improving employer access, communication, and overall workforce program effectiveness across the region.

B. Strategic Planning & Regional Alignment

a. 2024-2028 NWC Regional Strategic Plan – Process Update

i. [WIN 0160](#): One-Year Extension of Local Plan Modification

Marissa shared updates regarding recent state guidance and Direct Service Provider (DSP) authority. She noted that the state released Workforce Information Notice (WIN) 0160, extending the deadline for the 2024–2028 Regional Strategic Plan Update by one year, moving the submission date from June 30, 2026, to June 30, 2027. The extension allows time for updated state guidance and alignment with the forthcoming TAP plan.

Marissa also reported that the State Workforce Board formally acknowledged the Council's December 8, 2025 request to extend its DSP authority through June 30, 2028, consistent with the duration of NWC's local strategic plan. The request is scheduled for consideration at the April 3, 2026 State Workforce Board meeting. State staff intend to provide contextual background and a recommendation to approve the request, and based on the Council's recent performance review, no additional administrative requirements are anticipated at this time.

She further shared that, through recent discussions in the joint ESD/WWA Procurement Policy Workgroup, the state is exploring a broader extension framework for DSP authority. This approach could potentially align approvals with revised local planning cycles and transition toward a performance-based model for high-performing boards. If adopted, such a framework could provide greater stability, reinforce local control, reduce administrative duplication, and address prior concerns related to procurement requirements. Marissa indicated she plans to attend the April State Workforce Board meeting to receive additional information and policy direction firsthand.

b. DOL Disaster Recovery Dislocated Worker Grant

Scott provided an overview of the Disaster Recovery Dislocated Worker Grant awarded to the Northwest Workforce Council in response to the December 2025 flooding in Whatcom and Skagit counties. He described the ongoing long-term recovery needs in both counties and noted that local governments and community partners continue to experience capacity challenges as recovery efforts transition beyond the immediate emergency phase. Funding under this grant is specifically available to support recovery efforts in Whatcom and Skagit counties, and Northwest was one of only three Workforce Development Areas (WDAs) statewide to receive funding through this initiative.

The Council received just over \$300,000 in initial Emergency Disaster Recovery Employment funding as part of a statewide federal response, with the potential for additional funding in a second phase that could position Northwest for up to approximately \$2 million more, depending on demonstrated need and performance.

Scott then summarized the proposed scope of work, which will provide temporary employment opportunities for dislocated and long-term unemployed workers while delivering surge staffing support to recovery efforts. Priority activities will include coordination support, follow-up on damage assessments, stabilization and infrastructure assistance, rebuilding support for public and nonprofit facilities, and outreach to support local business recovery. Implementation will align with federal Dislocated Worker Grant requirements and applicable guidance to ensure coordination, oversight, and compliance.

Scott concluded by outlining the Council's implementation strategy, including collaboration with emergency management agencies, recovery task forces, municipalities, tribes, and community partners; targeted recruitment of eligible participants; establishment of compliant worksites with clear supervision and safety protocols; adaptive deployment based on evolving recovery needs; and ongoing monitoring and reporting. He emphasized that the grant both supports regional recovery efforts and advances the Council's mission to serve workers and communities.

C. Program Service Delivery Oversight

a. PY 2025 Q2 Community Success Stories

Scott directed attention to the quarterly mailout materials and Success Stories newsletter, themed "Bridging Pathways into Opportunities." He highlighted a feature story about a Dislocated Worker who attended Skagit Valley College and participated in a WIOA Title I-B funded On-the-Job Training with a yacht building company. He also noted additional program successes through Economic Security for All and the Community Reinvestment Program, including a recent graduation in Burlington where nine participants completed the EcSA Financial Literacy and Renters Education cohort in

partnership with Community Action - the first such cohort in Skagit County - and celebrated the participants' achievement and future potential.

b. NWC Information Sessions update

Scott directed members' attention to the WIOA Title I-B Information Sessions flyer included in the meeting mailout. He shared that NWC's coordinator team began offering virtual information sessions in January for individuals interested in career and vocational counseling, training opportunities, and other services available through WIOA Title I-B funding.

The sessions are held every other Thursday and provide an overview of the WorkSource partner network and system structure, available workforce services based on eligibility, participant expectations and responsibilities, and regional key industry sectors and associated training pathways. Scott reported that sessions are averaging approximately 30 attendees, with roughly half of participants proceeding to apply for program enrollment.

He further noted that the launch of these structured information sessions has significantly reduced staff time previously spent conducting cold-call follow-up with partner referrals, many of which resulted in limited engagement and very few eligible enrollments. By consolidating outreach into scheduled sessions, staff are now able to engage larger groups efficiently, improve applicant self-selection based on eligibility criteria, and increase overall enrollment conversion rates.

He noted that future plans include expanding the format to include in-person, hybrid, and Spanish-language sessions to increase accessibility and broaden participation across the region.

Old Business – None

New Business – None

Public Comment – None

Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned by Mark Vorobik at 2:46pm.

Attendance

Board Members: Mark Vorobik, Jessica Barr, Lynette Brower, John Sternlicht, Kyle Jones

Guests: Kevin Logan

Staff: Marissa Cahill, Scott Iddings, Liz Vaughn, David Czuba, Levi Corbeil-Wild