

Northwest Workforce Council Meeting Minutes

March 18, 2026

Action Taken:

- Approval of the Consent Agenda:
 - Approval of the December 18, 2025 Full Council Meeting Minutes
 - Annual Receipt of NWC Policy 01-37 Code of Ethics, Conflict of Interest and Protected Disclosure Policies
 - Executive Committee Action on behalf of the Full Council
 - New NWC Policy: WIOA 02-06 Increased Capacity Training
 - One Stop System Operator RFP Materials & Timeline
- Approval of the 2025 Annual Single Audit and Financial Statements
- Approval of the 2026 NWC Slate of Officers

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 1:34 p.m.

II. Consent Agenda

- A. Minutes of December 18, 2025, Full Council Meeting
- B. Annual Receipt of NWC Policy 01-37 Code of Ethics, Conflict of Interest and Protected Disclosure Policies
- C. Executive Committee Action on behalf of the Full Council
 - New NWC Policy: WIOA 02-06 Increased Capacity Training
 - One Stop System Operator RFP Materials & Timeline

Lori Province motioned to ratify the December 18, 2025, Full Council Meeting Minutes, the Annual Receipt of NWC Policy 01-38 Code of Ethics, Conflict of Interest and Protected Disclosure Policies, the New NWC Policy: WIOA 02-06 Increased Capacity Training, and the One Stop System Operator RFP Materials and Timeline. Peter Browning seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

III. Board Business

- A. 2025 Annual Single Audit and Financial Statements – Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (formerly A-133) Presented by: Gilbert Plascencia of Alegria and Co.

Mark stated that during the Executive Committee meeting, held on March 4, 2026, the committee voted to recommend Council approval of the annual audit. Representatives from Alegria, Gilbert Plascencia and Renee Arnits, were invited to attend the meeting to present audit findings to the full board.

Gilbert thanked the Council for the opportunity to present the annual audit results and noted that the process this year was smooth and consistent with prior years. He commended staff for their responsiveness, organization, and strong internal controls, which contributed to an efficient audit. A slight delay in completion was attributed to the federal government's late release of the compliance supplement required for the single audit; however, the audit was finalized promptly once it became available. He also provided a brief overview of the audit's purpose, explaining that it evaluates the accuracy of financial reporting, the effectiveness of internal controls, and compliance with applicable accounting and regulatory standards.

He reported that the audit resulted in an unmodified clean opinion, indicating no material misstatements or significant errors, and affirmed that the Board can rely on the accuracy and integrity of the financial information presented. As part of required communications, he highlighted auditor independence, standard audit risks such as revenue recognition, and key estimates within the financial statements, including the allocation of expenses across functional categories. He confirmed that no fraud or concerns related to fraud were identified. He then reviewed the Statement of Financial Position, noting a new custodial arrangement related to match savings accounts, where the Council holds participant funds with corresponding assets and liabilities, as well as a notable increase in revenue driven by Community Reinvestment and Economic Security funds.

Gilbert concluded by summarizing the single audit results, confirming a clean opinion on compliance with federal funding requirements, no internal control issues, and continued designation as a low-risk auditee. The Council's primary federal program, the WIOA cluster, was tested with no findings. Overall, the audit results reflected strong financial management, with no concerns identified.

Peter Browning moved approval of the 2025 Annual Single Audit and Financial Statements. Adele Skinner seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

B. PY 2025 Q2 Community Success Stories

Mark introduced Scott Iddings, Director of Program Strategy and Business Development, to present highlights from the most recent quarter's success stories. Scott directed the Board to the quarterly Success Stories included in the meeting materials for the period ending December 31, 2025. He highlighted the impact of the Council's programs through participant success, sharing an example of a WIOA Adult participant who, through engagement in Economic Security for All and Community Reinvestment programs, completed financial literacy training and a paid internship that resulted in full-time, unsubsidized employment. He noted that this transition from subsidized to unsubsidized employment reflects a key goal of the program.

Scott also emphasized the role of supportive services, including participation in the matched savings program that enabled an individual to purchase reliable transportation and maintain employment. Scott noted that these outcomes are representative of the broader impact achieved through the Council's programs and credited staff for their consistent efforts in supporting participants toward self-sufficiency.

C. WorkSource Integrated Technology (WIT)

- i. Timeline:
 - January 2026 – Super Users training commenced

- March 2, 2026 -- Training Prerequisites start
- Mid-March 2026 – Scheduling for all WorkSource staff training
- March 23, 2026 – First training cohort begins
- May 8, 2026 – All training completed and users prepare for go-live
- May 19, 2026 – Go live

Scott Iddings provided an overview of the state’s WorkSource Integrated Technology (WIT) project, describing it as a multi-year collaborative effort involving state and local partners to modernize the workforce system. He explained that the project includes two primary components: replacing the current case management system, Efforts to Outcomes (ETO), with a new platform called WAWorks, and redesigning the public-facing WorkSource website to improve accessibility and user experience for both job seekers and businesses. He noted that the existing systems have long presented challenges, including limited functionality, complex navigation, and redundancy in data entry, prompting the need for a more efficient and user-friendly solution.

Scott highlighted several anticipated improvements with the new system, including streamlined processes for staff and customers, reduced duplication of data entry, enhanced data transparency, and improved reporting capabilities. He explained that the new platform will incorporate built-in safeguards to reduce compliance errors and provide a more intuitive interface, allowing staff to serve customers more efficiently. Additional enhancements include automated workshop attendance tracking, expanded capacity for participant resumes, improved business engagement tools, and better coordination across partners to reduce redundant outreach. He emphasized that these changes are expected to significantly improve service delivery for job seekers, businesses, and WorkSource staff alike.

He also outlined the implementation and training plan, noting that staff training is currently underway across the state using a combination of self-directed, blended, and instructor-supported approaches. Designated “superusers” are being trained to support broader staff adoption. The system is scheduled to go live on May 19, with an anticipated adjustment period following launch and full functionality expected by early July. Scott concluded that the new system represents a major step forward in modernizing the workforce system and positioning it to deliver more efficient, high-quality services.

D. Monitoring Activities

i. WIOA PY25 Q2 Program Monitoring was conducted 3/2/26 – 3/6/2026

Mark reported that the Internal PY25 Q2 program monitoring took place March 2–6. He noted that progress is on track with no concerns and that a final report is expected at the next scheduled meeting. Marissa Cahill, Executive Director, shared that the exit meeting with the monitor occurred the previous Friday afternoon. The monitor described the review as one of the strongest she has conducted to date, highlighting staff’s solid interaction with customers and accurate data entry. Marissa acknowledged the program management team, noting that clear and supportive leadership contributes to stable program performance.

ii. Annual PY24 Equal Opportunity Monitoring conducted August 19-20, 2024

Liz Vaughn, EO Officer, reported that the draft report from the State-Level Equal Opportunity (EO) Office has been received, confirming that the review took place August 19–20, 2024. The assessment included document audits, interviews, and facility walkthroughs at WorkSource

Island and San Juan Career Center. Minor updates were noted in contract assurance language and policy links, which have since been corrected.

The Council's outreach and partnerships, particularly with local tribes and services for the Latine community, were highlighted as strong examples of EO compliance, along with extensive customer engagement in the EcSA program. All recommended changes for the San Juan location have been completed, and physical accessibility updates at the Island facility are being addressed through the current lease renewal. The review confirms that the Council maintains effective nondiscrimination practices and meets federal EO standards. A final report will be provided once Island facility updates are confirmed.

iii. Annual PY25 Equal Opportunity Monitoring conducted 10/14-16/2025

Liz reported that the State-Level Equal Opportunity (EO) Office conducted a follow-up visit October 14–16, 2025, and commended the Council's commitment to ensuring equal access to WorkSource services. The visit included completion of required EO Officer training, hands-on monitoring at WorkSource Whatcom, an ADA walkthrough, staff and customer interviews, and a review with the program manager.

Liz noted that the 2025 internal monitoring she is conducting across all local Centers will address any compliance issues, including accessibility updates at the Island facility through the current lease renewal. The follow-up letter highlights the Council's proactive approach to EO compliance and its strong partnership with the State EO Office.

IV. NWC Committee Reports

Quality Assurance Committee Meeting Report (02/18/26)

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.

Lori Province shared highlights from the most recent Quality Assurance Committee meeting.

Members reviewed the Northwest Workforce Council's PY25 Q2 performance report. Staff noted that Youth enrollment and spending trends continue to reflect prior-year carryover and are expected to level out by program year end. Discussion included Measurable Skill Gains, with staff explaining early-year reporting challenges and emphasizing that the cumulative nature of the metric positions the Council to meet required targets as documentation is received.

The One-Stop System Operator report highlighted ongoing regional coordination, employer engagement, certification workplan progress, and preparation for updated partner agreements to strengthen alignment and service delivery. Findings from the 2025 Business Focus Group reinforced the value employers place on workforce services while identifying opportunities to simplify navigation, clarify partner roles, and strengthen talent pipeline alignment. Customer satisfaction results reflected consistently positive experiences across WorkSource Centers, with survey feedback informing continuous improvement, staff training, and process refinements.

An accessibility update confirmed lease language revisions to ensure continued Equal Opportunity and ADA compliance at the Island Center. Staff also introduced YouthWorx, a six-week enhanced work skills training program developed in response to employer feedback to strengthen

foundational workplace skills and improve outcomes for young adults participating in WIOA-funded work experiences.

Workforce Solutions Committee Meeting Report (02/18/26)

Convenes leaders of business and industry across the region to organize and drive economic and workforce development. Directs and manages activities that provide and expand services to youth and other individuals with barriers to employment as defined in WIOA Section 3(24).

Scott Iddings shared highlights from the most recent Workforce Solutions Committee meeting.

- **Business Engagement Strategies Taskforce - Update**

Scott reported that the Workforce Solutions Committee discussed initiatives related to Business Solutions, including the Business Engagement Strategies Taskforce (BEST). BEST, chartered in November 2024, includes stakeholders from business, economic development, K–12, community and technical colleges, and key WorkSource partners.

Utilizing feedback from BEST and the Workforce Solutions Committee, along with the updated Regional Business Services Plan, staff developed YouthWorx, a six-week essential skills training program for young adults. The program strengthens youth employability and aligns with employer needs identified through BEST and committee discussions. A presentation on the pilot cohort is planned for the June board meeting, with a staff member invited to present.

The taskforce also provided feedback on marketing strategies for outreach, job fairs, employer-of-the-day events, and other initiatives designed to raise public awareness of workforce development efforts in the region.

- **Northwest Partner Management Team Business Focus Group**

Scott reported that the Northwest Partner Management Team Business Focus Group was held in the fall, facilitated by Patrick Baldoz. The session gathered employer feedback highlighting the value of workforce services, as well as challenges in system navigation and program awareness. Employers praised training and wage reimbursement programs while offering recommendations to simplify business engagement. The feedback included actionable suggestions to improve employer access, communication, and overall workforce program effectiveness across the region.

- **WorkSource Partner Business Solutions Team (PBST)**

Scott presented on the WorkSource Partner Business Solutions Team (PBST), an initiative stemming from the WorkSource Partner Management Team, focused on enhancing how partners engage with business customers across the region. The PBST includes business engagement professionals from all Northwest workforce partners and is designed to create a unified, partner-driven strategy that streamlines outreach, marketing, and service delivery to businesses.

The team’s approach emphasizes coordinated efforts to reduce redundancies, ensure consistent messaging, and provide a single point of contact for employers. Feedback from the WorkSource Business Focus Group and the Board’s Business Task Force highlighted the need for a unified system, confirming the importance of integrated business services. Through shared employer intelligence, coordinated outreach, joint event planning, and consistent follow-up, the PBST aims to strengthen employer trust, improve responsiveness, and enhance the overall business services ecosystem.

Scott noted that this alignment supports sector strategies, ensures timely and demand-driven workforce services, and enables partners to collectively identify, prepare, and connect job seekers to

employer needs. The team will also manage shared tools, facilitate partner meetings, monitor outcomes, review employer feedback, and adjust strategies to maintain a relevant, effective, and customer-centered business services system. The model prioritizes collaboration, shared accountability, and continuous improvement without creating new programs, focusing instead on optimizing existing resources and partnerships.

V. Chair's/Executive Committee Report

A. State Workforce Board response to NWC's Request to continue provision of WIOA IB Youth, Adult, and Dislocated Worker Program Services Directly.

Mark reported that on February 11, 2026, the State Workforce Board (WTB) formally acknowledged Northwest's December 8 request to extend its authority to continue serving as the Direct Service Provider (DSP) through June 30, 2028. The WTB will review the request at its April 3, 2026 meeting, with staff providing context and a recommendation for approval; final action rests with the Board. The letter noted that, based on recent performance and the Direct Service Provision review, no additional administrative requirements are anticipated at this time.

Emerging state direction, shared through recent discussions with Liz Gallagher, indicates that the state is exploring extending DSP authority potentially through 2033 in four-year increments, contingent on strong performance. This approach would align approvals with the revised local plan cycle (next plans due in 2029) and allow high-performing, compliant boards to continue direct service delivery without full reapplication or procurement each cycle.

Mark noted the strategic implications if the proposal is adopted, including increased stability and continuity of services, reinforced local control, continued emphasis on performance and accountability, and reduced administrative duplication. Members welcomed the possibility of a visit from Liz Gallagher to present on local performance levels and reaffirm Northwest's authority to deliver program services directly. Marissa will attend the April state board meeting to hear the full policy direction firsthand.

B. 2024-2028 NWC Strategic Plan – Process Update

Mark reported that the state released Workforce Information Notice (WIN) 0160, providing local areas a one-year extension for the 2024–2028 Regional Strategic Plan Update. The submission deadline has moved from June 30, 2026, to June 30, 2027. The extension allows state staff time to update the TAP plan and provide additional guidance to local areas for their plan updates.

C. DOL Disaster Recovery Dislocated Worker Grant

Mark reported that the Executive Committee recently discussed the DOL Disaster Recovery Dislocated Worker Grant (DRDWG), including concerns regarding the proposed allocation methodology, the state's application strategy, and the use of funds for activities not directly tied to local recovery efforts. As a result, the Executive Committee supported a joint letter from the Whatcom and Skagit County Commissioners and the NWC Board Chair to ESD Commissioner Cami Feek, with a copy to Governor Ferguson, outlining these concerns and requesting reconsideration of the funding methodology.

Marissa provided background on the grant, noting that severe flooding in Whatcom and Skagit counties in December 2025 resulted in a Governor's emergency declaration and eligibility for DRDWG funding. She shared concerns raised during the application process regarding the

proposed allocation methodology and the earmarking of funds for mobile WorkSource units without local input. Following discussions with Commissioner Feek and the participating local workforce areas, responsibility for developing a local allocation methodology was returned to the three impacted workforce regions. Northwest, Snohomish, and Seattle-King subsequently agreed to a temporary distribution approach for the initial funding while awaiting additional county impact data and final award determinations from the U.S. Department of Labor. Once the final award amount is known, the three local areas will reconvene to determine an equitable allocation methodology for the remaining funds.

Scott reviewed the region's implementation strategy, which focuses on two primary objectives: providing temporary employment opportunities for dislocated workers impacted by the flooding and supplying surge staffing to support local recovery efforts. He highlighted partnerships with local governments, tribes, nonprofits, and emergency management organizations, as well as the emphasis on targeted deployment, accountability, and compliance.

Scott concluded by noting that the grant will support both economic recovery for affected residents and long-term community recovery efforts, while positioning the region for future federal disaster recovery investments.

VI. NWC 2026 Slate of Officers

Election: Slate of Officers: Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, and at-large members to serve on the Executive Committee of the Council for 2026

Mark noted that, per the By-laws, the election of the board's slate of officers, which constitutes the Executive Committee, occurs annually during the last or first Full Council Meeting of the calendar year. He invited Lori Province to share the proposed slate.

Lori reported that for 2026, the Executive Committee is proposed to include three private sector members, one labor member, and the Chief Local Elected Official (LEO). The suggested slate of officers is as follows:

Mark Vorobik – Board Chair
Kevin Corrigan – Vice Chair/Treasurer
Lori Province – Secretary
Hart Hodges – At-Large Member
Satpal Sidhu, Whatcom County Executive – Chief LEO

Lori noted that Whatcom County Executive Satpal Sidhu was elected by the Consortium Committee to continue as the Chief LEO through 2026. She reviewed the relevant By-law provisions regarding the composition and election of the Executive Committee and then asked if there were any nominations from the floor and there were no other nominations.

Lori Province moved to Elect the Slate of Officers as Presented. Peter Browning seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Old Business – None

New Business – None

Public Comment – None

Adjournment The meeting was adjourned by Chair, Mark Vorobik at 3:02 PM.

Attendance:

Board Members:

Mark Vorobik, *Business Sector, Skagit County*
Adele Skinner, *Business Sector, Skagit County*
Lynette Brower, *Higher Education, Skagit County*
Kevin Corrigan, *Business Sector, Island County*

Jessica Barr, *Public Employment, Regional*
Dave Paul, *Higher Education, Skagit County*
Lori Province, *Labor, Whatcom County*
Tammie O'Dell, *Labor, Skagit County*
John Sternlicht, *Business Sector, Skagit County*
Victoria Compton, *Econ Development, San Juan County*

NWC Staff:

Marissa Cahill, *Executive Director*
Scott Iddings, *Workforce Programs Manager*
Polly Carpenter, *Data & Accounting Specialist*
Elena VanVoorhees, *Financial Manager*
Liz Vaughn, *Executive Administrator*

Local Elected Officials:

Peter Browning, *Skagit County Official*

Guests:

Gilbert Plasencia, *Alegria Advisors*
Renee Arnits, *Alegria Advisors*
Michael Reese, *Higher Education, Skagit County*
Kyle Jones, *DSHS Division of Vocational Rehabilitation*
Samantha Paxton, *Snohomish Future Workforce Alliance*
Kristina Hines, *Island County EDC*