



BOARD MEETING AGENDA

September 26, 2024 | 9:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. | Meeting No. 271

Location: Olympia Center

Address: 222 Columbia St NW, Olympia, WA 98501 | Multipurpose Room B, Floor 1

This is an in-person meeting – please register [here](#) for remote access.

- 9:00 a.m. Call to Order**
Welcome and Introductions
- 9:15 a.m. Chairs Report** **Tab 1**
Consent Agenda (**ACTION**)
1. Minutes from June 20, 2024, Board Meeting
Executive Director's Report
Legislative Endorsement Committee Process (handout)
Workforce Board Decision Package Submissions (handout)
- 9:30 a.m. Overview of DOC Approach to Improve Reentry Outcomes**
Secretary Cheryl Strange
- 10:00 a.m. State Partners Reentry Services Panel** **Tab 2**
1. Postsecondary Education Services Pre/Post-Release
Will Durden & Hanan Al-Zubaidy, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges
2. ESD's Services for Justice Impacted Individuals
Ismaila Maidadi & Ty Reed, Employment Security Department
3. Wraparound Services for Pre/Post Release
Louisa Erickson, Department of Social and Health Services
- *Technical Break***
The Voices of Lived Experience
Buffy Henson
Jim Chambers
Ramon Cazarez
Ricky Garcia
Sioeli Laupati
Equity in Education Coalition of Washington
Sharonne Navas & Program Participants

12:30 p.m. Lunch

1:15 p.m. Local Workforce Services for Justice-Involved Individuals

Tab 2

Gyanendra Subba & Joseph Ntumba, Workforce Development Council
of Seattle-King County
Kevin Williams, Spokane Workforce Council

2:15 p.m. Break

**2:30 p.m. TAP Workgroups—Response to Reentry Situation
Leadership of TAP Workgroups:**

Tab 2

System – Gary Chandler, Larry Brown, Mark Mattke w/ Kim Goutam & Liz Gallagher
Industry – June Altaras w/ Andrew Lenderman
Youth – Wade Larson w/ Joe Wilcox
Credential Transparency – Jane Hopkins w/ Marina Parr
Job Quality – Cherika Carter w/ Paulette Beadling
Performance Accountability – Cami Feek w/ Dave Wallace

4:30 p.m. Adjourn

Tab 1

Consent Agenda

PRESENTED BY: Workforce Board Co-Chair Gary Chandler

CHECK ONE:

Action Item

Possible Action

Discussion Only

SUMMARY:

The consent agenda enables the Board to approve items listed below together without discussion or individual motions. If any Board member believes an item does not belong on the consent agenda, you may at any time request the item be removed and considered for an individual discussion and vote at a later time, at the discretion of the Co-Chair(s).

BACKGROUND:

This consent agenda includes:

1. Minutes from the June 20, 2024, Board meeting

STAFF GUIDANCE & RECOMMENDATION:

Without dissent, the consent agenda items will be approved as drafted.



MINUTES OF MEETING NO. 270
June 20, 2024

Board Members Present:

Larry Brown, Co-Chair (remote)

Gary Chandler, Co-Chair

Wade Larson, Representing Business

Jane Hopkins, Representing Labor

Cherika Carter, Representing Labor (remote)

Dana Phelps for Secretary Jilma Meneses, Department of Social and Health Services

Commissioner Cami Feek, Employment Security Department (ESD)

Becky Wallace for Superintendent Chris Reykdal, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) (remote)

Paul Francis, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC)

Carolyn Busch for Director Michael Fong, Department of Commerce (remote)

Miriam Halliday for Mark Mattke, Spokane Workforce Council, Representing Local Government

Call to Order

Co-Chair Gary Chandler called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. in a hybrid meeting using Zoom for remote attendees. In-person attendees convened at the McGavick Conference Center Ballroom, Clover Park Technical College, 4500 Steilacoom Blvd. SW, Lakewood, WA 98499.

Welcome and Program Overview from Clover Park Technical College

Clover Park Technical College President, Dr. Joyce Loveday, provided an overview of the college, and mentioned successes with the Job Skills Program (JSP) and the new Male Engagement Center. She discussed details on current bachelor's degree programs and plans to offer a bachelor's degree in computer programming soon. Loveday stressed how the college helps prepare students for careers that change lives with a focus on economic and social mobility and noted that the college is looking for ways to further improve access and outcomes. Loveday shared some of the key partnerships that have been vital in creating pathways to success: Palmer Pathways, WorkForce Central, and Swedish Hospital with a focus on the connection between industry and education.

Jovan McCoy, Manager of Inclusive Excellence and Belonging, presented on the college's new Male Engagement Center and the challenges Black male students face in staying in school, making connections within the community, and not gaining sufficient economic advantage upon graduation. McCoy mentioned being one of 12 schools tasked to create a race and equity change effort and that Clover Park's work was featured at a recent conference. McCoy shared the transition of space utilized for the Male Engagement Center, sharing before and after pictures. McCoy also shared the development of their logo and the program checkpoints.

Consent Agenda

Gary Chandler briefly reviewed the Consent Agenda. It moved forward without any comments.

TAP Implementation Update

Alicia Koné of Koné Consulting, who facilitated the Workforce Board's May retreat at SageCliffe Resort near Quincy, provided an overview. Koné reviewed the three retreat goals, including addressing the state strategic workforce plan Talent and Prosperity for All (TAP) 2024-2028, as we head into the plan's implementation phase; how to approach the transition to a new governor following this November's election; and the 2025 Legislative Agenda. Koné shared the themed success stories brainstormed at the retreat. She also discussed the TAP Plan Guiding Principles and Strategic Priorities: System Integration, Industry, Youth, Credential Transparency, Job Quality, and Performance Accountability. Koné also touched on potential legislative priorities to consider from the Workforce Board Retreat, including the Washington Award for Vocational Excellence (WAVE), and Digital Literacy and IT Career Equity.

Later, Board members heard from Workforce Board staff who are heading up TAP strategic priorities and bringing together partners and stakeholders as part of work groups aimed at making progress in each of these areas over the next four years.

Benefits Cliffs

Terry Redmon, Assistant Secretary for the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) Economic Services Administration, and Lori Pfingst, PhD, Senior Director, Poverty, also with DSHS, presented on benefit cliffs. Redmond outlined the purpose of this presentation: build shared understanding of cliff effects in Washington; share and discuss opportunities to address benefit cliffs in the 2025-27 budget and discuss potential partnership with the Workforce Board to address cliff effects. Public benefit cliffs refer to a situation where someone loses access to public assistance programs, such as food, housing, or childcare assistance, when their income rises.

Pfingst further defined benefit cliffs as the sudden, and often unexpected, loss in financial support once a customer attains a small income gain. Through Pfingst's presentation she outlined the following: the slopes and cliffs in major public assistance programs; 'cliff' and 'hill' effects when receiving multiple benefits; and finished with proposed actions to mitigate benefit cliffs. Recipients of public assistance often feel stuck. They might avoid earning more or getting a better job because they fear losing their benefits. Pfingst finished the presentation sharing evidence-based effects of economic stability on the well-being of participants.

Local Workforce Development Board Plan Approval & Certification

Nova Gattman, Workforce Board Deputy Executive Director and Elizabeth Casey, Tax Policy Specialist at the Employment Security Department, gave an overview of the Local Workforce Development Board certification. An overview of the federal requirements for plan and board certification and the approval and certification process was detailed. The following motion was recommended: "The Workforce Board, as the Governor's designee for the strategic plan and local review process, recommends approval of the local strategic plans and certification of the Local Workforce Development Boards."

MOTION-2024-270-01

Commissioner Cami Feek made a motion to the recommendation to approve Local Workforce Development Board certification. Wade Larson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Talent and Prosperity for All (TAP) Workforce System Legislative Agenda draft

Nova Gattman presented on the TAP Workforce System Legislative Agenda. Gattman presented the vision of a unified agenda focused on TAP following key principles. Gattman shared the idea of common messaging and materials, and having an all-workforce system agenda that is supported by the Workforce Board and stakeholders. Gattman gave an example of how this worked successfully for the Washington College Grant.

Gattman outlined the five points of the TAP Agenda items for consideration. These are: 1) Job Skills Program (JSP); 2) Economic Security for All (EcSA); 3) Washington Award for Vocational Excellence (WAVE); 4) Digital Literacy and IT Career Equity and 5) Data Integration for Integrated Delivery.

Gattman shared the request of the Workforce Board to include review and discussion of items for inclusion on the TAP Legislative Agenda.

MOTION-2024-270-02

Wade Larson made the motion to adopt the five points of the Legislative agenda as proposed. Cami Feek seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 2:06 pm.

Executive Director's Report
Workforce Board Meeting
September 26, 2024
Meeting No. 271

Governor Inslee signs Reentry 2030 Executive Order at UW Tacoma, September 16

Reentry 2030 is a national initiative that aims to dramatically improve reentry success for people exiting prison and those under supervision. In the executive order, Gov. Jay Inslee directs the Department of Corrections and other agencies to ensure that gainful employment, secure housing, and adequate healthcare are available to reduce recidivism rates significantly. [Read the executive order here.](#)

Reentry Support Program 2024—One Time, One Year Funding Overview

The Legislature has tasked the Workforce Board to contract with an organization to provide reentry services for individuals within the prison system who are within three to five months of release for direct entry into a program or employment. This funding from the most recent state budget was received in response to the overarching Workforce Digital Pathways Initiative request. This effort includes public, private, state, and local partners working together, building on existing infrastructures, to narrow the digital divide in Washington, through expanded or enhanced career pathways leading to good jobs. For more details, please see the [one-page summary here.](#)

Workforce Board, Commerce host webinar on BEAD Program workforce issues

The Broadband Equity and Access Deployment program (BEAD) is funded under the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. The Washington State Broadband Office (WASBO), a division of Commerce, will administer \$1.3 billion to bring high-speed internet service to every Washington community. This will create thousands of jobs across the state. However, there is currently no clear or adequate training infrastructure. Board staff Paulette Beadling and I co-hosted a webinar with WASBO staff targeted to potential BEAD contractors/employers, and the full spectrum of education and training providers. One segment of the webinar was a "fishbowl" focus group with employers to learn about current and projected workforce needs when BEAD funding is allocated. A follow-up virtual event was attended by more employers expressing concerns about their inability to hire sufficient staff. Additional follow-up meetings are planned to connect employers with education and training providers to develop proposals for support.

Staff Highlights

New Workforce Policy Associate

Liz Gallagher is originally from Austin, Texas and moved here from Tennessee to join the Workforce Board in late July to serve as the new Workforce Policy Associate.

Liz, who lives with her family and two young children in Lakebay, is especially interested in understanding the WorkSource Centers and Title 1-B functions and dynamics. She is passionate about supporting local board and service provider teams through statewide policy development, with a special focus on how those policies are applied to best support the locals in their initiatives to support the community members seeking self-sufficiency through work.

Liz's extensive experience on Title 1-B service provider teams (as a Case Manager, QA, Youth Program Specialist & Lead Career Advisor) and experience as a One-Stop Operator, puts her in a unique position to understand and connect with local providers to address systemic challenges and compliance requirements.

In addition to understanding the State of Washington's policies and branches of ESD divisions, she is on track to visit all 12 local areas in the next 6 months to job-shadow customer-facing staff. These visits will provide opportunities to understand the systems at play and how to establish tangible goals toward the Integrate Service Delivery portion of the State-Wide TAP plan.

Workforce Board staff to present at November 12-14 WWA conference

Several Workforce Board staffers are presenting at the Washington Workforce Association's (WWA) Nov. 12-14 conference in Tacoma. Board staff Marina Parr and Joe Wilcox are co-presenting on our new state strategic workforce plan, Talent and Prosperity for All (TAP) 2024-2028, sharing key pieces of this plan with a particular focus on the Youth priority. The agency's Terje Gjertsen is heading up a conversation about the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) performance accountability process, meeting with representatives from regional Workforce Development Councils. And Board staffer Ilene Munk is presenting on how to bring clean energy, technology, and industry workforce development to Washington by partnering with business. Several Workforce Board members are also presenting on a range of topics, including Mark Mattke, Wade Larson, Cami Feek, and Mike Fong. There will also be a TAP Lounge again this year, where individuals will be able to stop in and talk with staff about how the 2024-2028 TAP plan may influence their work. More: <https://tinyurl.com/5dtx9bv7>

Workforce Board launches GovDelivery communication tool

If you've received recent emails from the agency, you'll have noticed a more polished and professional look for some of our outreach messages, including the workforce newsletter. The agency is now using GovDelivery for our email correspondence to broad audiences. This tool has allowed us to update the look and feel of our communications—including embedding graphics, logos, and photos for better branding and engagement. GovDelivery provides a popular format that's used at a wide range of public agencies, with fewer risks of being blocked by information technology security firewalls. This platform also helps us build our subscriber lists for a range of Workforce Board communications—Health Workforce Council, Clean Energy, Long-Term Care—through sign-up forms that enable users to subscribe to notifications on different topics. GovDelivery also comes with analytics and reporting features so we can better chart subscriber engagement and refine communication strategies to improve reader retention.

U.S. Department of Education Proposes Changes to Perkins V State Plans and Reporting

On September 11, the U.S. Department of Education posted [proposed revisions](#) to both the Perkins V State Plan Guide and the Perkins V Consolidated Annual Report (CAR) in the Federal Register for consideration and public comment. These new changes to [Perkins V state plan requirements](#) and [related annual data collections](#) seek to standardize the way that states and local Perkins V recipients collect and report information related to CTE student performance. Separately, these proposals would increase the broader information gathered by the department via state Perkins V state plans. These changes would require every state and territory to submit new or substantially amended four-year Perkins V plans by 2026—an effort and wider process states and territories just completed this year. Comments on these proposals are due back to the department no later than November 12, 2024. Agency staff will be working with our interagency partners, SBCTC and OSPI, to analyze these proposals and formally provide feedback to federal agencies and the Board.

Talent and Prosperity for All Work Group Updates

System Integration

The work group had a successful kick-off meeting to continue discussions around system integration and will reconvene in early October.

The work group has completed an overview of system integration needs and challenges; it will continue conversation to identify the priorities in the first year. These include (but are not limited to) implementing the pilot for the integrated data project funded

through WaTech's Innovation & Modernization Program, developing an advisory group made up of frontline staff and jobseekers for the Data Governance Council, and working towards a landscape analyses of local system integration practices and initiatives to guide best practices. The work group will finalize additional priorities for Year 1 of the TAP plan and identify task teams to begin tackling each of the identified priorities.

Job Quality

Over the past four months, the Job Quality Strategic Priority work group has been focused on developing a job quality survey. The group has worked collaboratively to set clear goals aimed at assessing the components of job quality in Washington State. Key tasks include identifying the target audience of the survey results, refining survey questions, and creating a targeted distribution list and plan to ensure comprehensive participation. Survey results will inform the strategy going forward and support messaging and recommendations on how to advance job quality in the state among workforce development practitioners, state agencies, policymakers, and employers. The survey is set to be released for distribution this fall.

Youth

The Youth strategic priority work group held its kick-off meeting in August and is continuing with monthly meetings to move implementation forward. To date, the group has established its leadership structure with two co-leads and Board staff to support the Workforce Board sponsor. The work group's early efforts have focused setting the strategic priority's goals and vision, initiating an environmental scan of existing workforce services and programs, and analyzing past and current trends for youth participation in education, training, and the workforce. Moving forward, the work group will build upon this information by looking to better more effectively connect youth with worker support services and programs, as well as understand gaps and barriers to attaining postsecondary credentials and to entering and remaining in the workforce.

Industry

Workforce Board and Washington State Labor Council staff met August 22 to discuss adding more organized labor members to the Industry Committee. While business response to the committee's effort is robust, it's critical to have a balance between both business and labor for this effort. Communications Manager Andrew Lenderman and I met with the council's Chelsea Mason-Placek and Joe Kendo to advance this effort. Additionally, agency staff are scheduled to connect with Washington Filmworks about recruiting more members from the creative arts industry.

Credential Transparency

The Credential Transparency Work Group is expected to hold its first meeting soon, following a direction-setting convening with the group's Board sponsor (anticipated in mid-October). The Workforce Board submitted a legislative request in early September that would take a substantial leap forward in ensuring that students, jobseekers, and employers can better understand what's contained within a credential—including skills, competencies, and experiences. To do this work, the Workforce Board is seeking legislative funding via a decision package that would pay for a technological build out of the credential fields on Career Bridge. This decision package also calls for hiring a project-based management analyst and part-time administrative assistant to oversee a pilot project with several WA higher education institutions that would receive micro-grants of around \$50,000 each to unpack credentials tied to in-demand industries.

Performance Accountability and Evaluation

The Performance Accountability and Evaluation Work Group held its first official meeting on September 10. The first meeting was largely a discussion on possible relevant high-level system-wide metrics as well as what evaluations agencies are currently doing and what they would like to do across the system. There was an interest shown to work with other priority groups to help them establish baselines and metrics. Going forward, the group plans to meet every other month as it works to developing meaningful workforce system metrics and evaluations.

Clean Energy Technology Workforce Advisory Committee

The Clean Energy Technology Workforce Advisory Committee (CETWAC) addresses current and projected workforce shortages in clean energy occupations and proposes strategies to address them. Agency staff have been building networks and relationships with business, education and labor partners through periodic check-ins and frequent communication. We are hosting our first in-person hybrid meeting on Sept. 24. The meeting is being held at The Evergreen State College in Olympia with lunch provided after the meeting to provide opportunities for CETWAC members to get to know each other a bit better and build working connections.

Long-Term Care Updates

The Long-Term Care (LTC) Workforce Initiative enters its third year. Currently, over 150 contributors routinely participate in four monthly subcommittee meetings and the leadership group. Nine recommendations are in development for inclusion in the 2024 annual LTC Workforce report to policymakers with others still being considered. The annual report, with research support, is in preparation, with an anticipated completion date in mid-November. A decision package for LTC was submitted in early September

asking for an additional four years of support to continue the momentum of the initiative.

Workforce Board staff are working closely with partners to create a new long-term care apprenticeship program. The Washington Health Care Association (serving as the apprenticeship sponsor) will appear before the Oct. 2024 meeting of the Washington State Apprenticeship and Training Council to receive approval of the first LPN registered apprenticeship in the state and will launch a first cohort of LPN apprentices this fall with six employers and about 10 apprentices.

Following the July LTC Workforce Summit, the initiative broadened its scope to include a focus on services to individuals with disabilities as well as the state's aging population. The initiative has also reached out to officials from Michigan, Maine, and California to share information about this effort and hear from other states about their efforts to address LTC workforce challenges.

Health Workforce Council Updates

The Workforce Board and the Health Workforce Council held a two day in-person meeting in Yakima on June 26. Workforce Board Health and Social Policy Associate Renee Fullerton staffs the Council. The agency hosted a health workforce listening session in conjunction with the Allied Health Center of Excellence and Greater Health Now at Yakima Valley College. The meeting was an interactive session where healthcare employers, consumers, and businesses were encouraged to talk with state health workforce planners, educators, and policymakers about their experiences with what's working and what's not for students, employees, facilities, and communities. State Rep. Joe Schmick and Central Washington Director Raquel Crowley from U.S. Sen. Patty Murray's office also attended. On June 27, the Health Workforce Council hosted an in-person meeting at Pacific Northwest University of Health Sciences in Yakima. Discussion topics included:

- Presentations about the greater Yakima-area community and health workforce demographics, diversity, and reflections from the June 26 listening session.
- Panel discussion about local health workforce education success.
- Panel discussion from students and recent graduates about their pathways into the health workforce.
- Pilot-program results from the Greater Health Now Area Accountable Community of Health efforts to support behavioral health employers with workforce development.

The Health Workforce Council held a [virtual health workforce council meeting on Sept. 19](#). Council staff presented information gathered during the Yakima in-person meeting

to continue a discussion into rural workforce and worker and student experiences. Small breakout discussions reviewed initial findings and discussed development of next steps.

Topics for the day included:

- Presentation of the Health Workforce Planning Decision Package and Health Workforce Sentinel Network Evolution.
- Rural Health Workforce Strategies: Initial Findings, Discussion and Next Steps.
- Worker and Student Experience Findings: Discussion and Next Steps.
- First Look and Discussion of the 2024 Health Workforce Completion and Licensure Data.

To follow along with Health Workforce Council activities, [sign up for our GovDelivery updates here](#).

Opportunity Partnership Program

Workforce Board Program and Research Analyst Colleen Seto continued work with partners across the state on the Opportunity Partnership Program (OPP). OPP provides mentoring opportunities for interested Opportunity Grant (OG) recipients. SBCTC's Opportunity Grant program provides financial aid and services to students 200% below the federal poverty rate. OPP services focus on supporting (OG) recipients enrolled in high-demand programs at state community and technical colleges by offering work-based mentoring activities relevant to academic coursework, while also developing valued work skills and professional connections. For the 2024-25 fiscal year, agreements were recently signed with the Northwest, South Central, and Spokane Workforce Councils. Colleen began in-person engagements with these councils in August, starting with South Central, and will continue through the fall in Spokane and Northwest. These engagements involve collaboration between workforce council project managers, subcontractors, community and technical college program managers, financial aid personnel, and regional mentors, aiming to enhance students' academic and professional development.

Career Bridge undergoes usability testing

As we work to modernize Career Bridge to make it a more dynamic, user-friendly experience through planned design and technical updates to the site, we are also field-testing how users find what they need through a series of navigation prompts and structured one-on-one conversations. Much of this work has been focused on key users, including high school and career counselors, high school and college students, adult workers, and training providers who post their postsecondary programs to the site. The next round of testing will center on a prototype of the new site where users will be asked to interface with the mobile version of the updated site. It's slated for mid-

October. This work is being conducted by Anthro-Tech, one of the two vendors working closely to finish key updates and improvements to Career Bridge through June of next year, including more closely aligning the site to High School and Beyond Planning requirements and creating a digital portfolio for students and jobseekers to save their career and education searches.

Conferences and Events Attended

Washington Association of Career and Technical Education, Aug. 4-7, Spokane

Workforce Board staff, including Career Bridge Manager Julie Mix-Stark, Joe Wilcox, Paulette Beadling, and Marina Parr, provided presentations, staffed a booth (with plenty of free Where are You Going? career guides), attended sessions, and networked with over 1,000 attendees at this multi-day annual conference that draws CTE teachers and administrators, along with other education and workforce professionals. This conference not only drew many attendees, it also provided us with the opportunity to showcase the Workforce Board's efforts to provide updates on Career Bridge usability and technology and what lies ahead with the projected launch of a new application portal for the Washington Award for Vocational Excellence (WAVE) scholarship.

National Career Pathways Leadership Summer Institute, June 17-18, Denver

The National Career Pathways Leadership Summer Institutes were held as an in-person workshop in Denver, Colorado in June. In attendance were agency staff Joe Wilcox and Paulette Beadling. This workshop brought together professionals from across the nation from career and technical education, community-based organizations, adult education and workforce development. The focus was around building career pathways that are industry-informed and learner-focused.

The Career Pathways team brought back an action plan focused on strategic pathway implementation and received a toolbox of resources to engage with P-20, adult education, community, and employer partners. The action plan that was produced during the workshop centers on Perkins/CTE efforts, Career Bridge, credit for prior learning, as well as TAP implementation.

State WorkSource System and WIOA Title I-B Policies Updates

The table below presents an update on State WorkSource System and WIOA Title I-B Policies. We will be including this information in every Executive Director's report to keep the Board informed of both upcoming items for future review as well as recent policy developments. This will ensure that our collective decisions and strategies remain aligned with the latest regulatory standards and operational practices.

State WorkSource System and WIOA Title I policies issued since the June 20 Workforce Board meeting

Policy	Description	Issued
WorkSource Information Notice 0107, Revision 10	Temporary suspension of WorkSource System Policy 1101 (CASAS for Basic Skills Assessment) to allow alternative documentation of basic skills deficiency in WIOA Title I-B programs	06-21-24
WorkSource Information Notice 0108, Revision 11	Temporary suspension of the 30 percent limit on transfers of formula grant funds between the WIOA Title I-B adult and dislocated worker programs to allow up to 100 percent transferability	06-21-24
WorkSource System Policy 1027, Revision 1	Stevens Amendment Language Requirements	07-09-24
WorkSource System Policy 1028, Revision 1	Local Workforce Development Board Required Policies	07-26-24
WorkSource System Policy 1036	Creating accounts in ETO when individuals do not provide Social Security Numbers	08-07-24
WorkSource System Policy 1035	State Policy Development Process and Structure	08-08-24
WorkSource System Policy 1019, Revision 10	Eligibility Policy and Handbook	08-12-24
WorkSource System Policy 1020, Revision 2	Data Integrity and Performance Policy and Handbook	09-10-24
WIOA Title I Policy 5414, Revision 2 (link pending release)	Compliance Monitoring of WIOA Title I-B and Related Discretionary Grants	09-23-24 (pending)

Reentry Support Program 2024 – One Time, One Year Funding Overview

In the State Supplemental Operating Budget (ESSB 5950, 2024), the Workforce Board was tasked to contract with an organization to provide reentry services for individuals within the prison system who are within three to five months of release for direct entry into a program or employment.

This reentry services program aims to eliminate obstacles to economic success and reduce recidivism rates for individuals reentering society after incarceration in Washington's corrections system. The focus of this program is preparing incarcerated individuals for IT-Based, IT-enabled, or IT-adjacent jobs proliferating across our state, or for training and education that will lead to these jobs. The goal of this program is to not only make strides towards bridging the digital divide but also to expand the workforce pipeline. A Port Angeles based company, ETA Media Inc., is carrying out this project.

Project Approach

Phase 1: Soft skills development in a remote real-world work setting, working on live projects.

Phase 2: Problem-solving and critical thinking training.

Phase 3: Course to prepare participants for the CompTIA A+ Core 1 Objectives exam.

Phase 4: Course to prepare participants for the CompTIA A+ Core 2 Objectives exam.

Phase 5: Job interview and resume preparation, transition into ComputingforAll.org career prep portal and services.

WHY ARE REENTRY PROGRAMS IMPORTANT?

Digital skills training and employment services are essential for individuals nearing the end of incarceration, as they help overcome reentry challenges, promote successful reintegration, and reduce the risk of recidivism by providing skills, financial stability, and purpose.

Project Facts

The contract kicked off in August 2024 and ends in June 2025. Ongoing legislative funding has been requested in the 2025 session to further narrow the digital divide. This work would be done by increasing digital literacy among disadvantaged and marginalized populations and enhanced training and education pathways to IT-related or IT-enhanced jobs.

Legislative Updates and Partner Agency Endorsement Process

PRESENTED BY: Nova Gattman, Workforce Board

CHECK ONE:

Action Item

Possible Action

Discussion Only

SUMMARY:

The Workforce Board has a statutory responsibility to review state agency funding requests for alignment with the state strategic plan. The Board's Endorsement Committee is soliciting requests for potential endorsement. The final list will be shared at the Board's November 7 meeting.

The Workforce Board's agency decision packages have been submitted through the Governor's request process. These requests are detailed in this packet.

BACKGROUND:

Partner Agency Endorsement Process

RCW 28C.18.060(5) directs the Board to "... review and make recommendations to the Office of Financial Management (OFM) and the Legislature on operating and capital budget requests for **operating agencies of the state training system** for purposes of consistency with the state comprehensive plan for workforce training and education."

This statutory requirement provides the framework for the review of workforce system agency requests. The implementation of the state's strategic plan for workforce development, Talent and Prosperity for All (TAP), allows for a focus on system-specific legislative requests that could move the workforce system toward one or more of the goals and strategies outlined in the TAP plan.

The Board created an Endorsement Committee in 2022 to review partner agency requests for alignment with TAP and ensure that there is consensus on each request among all three caucuses of the Board. The Endorsement Committee included one representative from each caucus of the Board—business, labor, and government. The Workforce Development Councils nominated a member in 2022 to act as the government representative to eliminate a potential conflict of interest in having a state agency on the group. Endorsement

Committee recommendations will be brought before the full Board for consideration at the November meeting. Endorsed items are included in communications with the Governor and legislators and are actively part of Board staff and Board members' legislative advocacy efforts.

Board staff is recommending a similar process for the 2025 Legislative Session requests. The current membership of the Endorsement Committee reflects the three voting caucuses of the Board. Without objection, the current membership is as follows:

- **Business:** June Altaras
- **Labor:** Cherika Carter
- **Government:** Amy Martinez
- **Co-Chair Support:** Gary Chandler & Larry Brown
- **Board Staff:** Nova Gattman

Board staff will also be reaching out to all state workforce partner agencies to ensure that they are aware of the opportunity to submit endorsement items for consideration. Requests are due to Board staff no later than October 8 at 10:00 am. The form for requests is included in this tab following this coversheet.

Workforce Board Agency Requests

The agency of the Workforce Board has submitted our 2025 agency requests. A select list of this requests is detailed in this packet item.

While many of the items align, these requests are a separate process from the TAP Workforce System Legislative Agenda, which was set in June and includes the following items:

- Increased funding for the Job Skills Program
- Ongoing, full funding for the Economic Security for All program
- WAVE Scholarship matched to Washington College Grant award levels
- Digital Workforce Pathways Initiative
- "No wrong door" workforce data sharing

STAFF GUIDANCE & RECOMMENDATION:

Board members are encouraged to review the materials in this tab. Please let Nova know if you have any questions about any of the submissions or the agency endorsement process.

For the state agency members of the Board, please work with your staff to submit any decision packages that you would like to have the Board consider endorsing at the November meeting.

Workforce Board 2025 Legislative Session

Potential Agency Endorsement Requests

Instructions:

This form is to be completed by state agencies interested in the Workforce Board members potentially endorsing their decision package(s) or agency request legislation for inclusion on the Board's workforce system endorsement list for 2025. Please use a separate form for each project.

Submission Details & Due Date:

All requests for consideration of endorsement must be sent to nova.gattman@wtb.wa.gov **no later than 10:00 am Oct. 8, 2024**, to ensure timely review by the Endorsement Committee. Late submissions will not be accepted.

The Endorsement Committee will review all proposals for alignment with TAP goals and those with the potential for broad consensus across Board partners. The Committee may invite a short presentation and Q/A. The final list for consideration will be reviewed at the Nov. 7 Workforce Board meeting for full Board approval.

1. Proposal Title:
2. Workforce Board Member Sponsor Name (if relevant):
3. Staff Contact for the Proposal:
4. Short Proposal Description (ideally, 100 words):
5. What is the proposal?
6. Estimated Cost, Fund Source, & FTE Needs:
7. Potential Leveraged Resources:
8. Responsible Entities:
9. Proposal Format (proviso, statutory change, other):
10. What has been done by your organization regarding this work in the past? (If proposal would add to or continue an existing initiative. Answer N/A if not relevant.)
11. Why is this needed now and what is the impact?



Workforce Board Agency 2025 Policy/Funding Requests

Overview

State agency funding requests and draft legislation were due to Governor Inslee on Sept. 10 and Sept. 13, respectively. Below is a summary and a link to select requests from the agency that may be of interest to the workforce system. The full list is available [here](#). To review requests from all state agencies, see <https://abr.ofm.wa.gov/>.

Career Bridge Modernization

[Decision Package](#)

Washington's public-facing, career and education planning portal, Career Bridge, has been undergoing modernization with legislative investment. Procurement delays pushed some updates past the project deadline. Funds are needed now to finish Phase 1, ensuring data moves through data loaders and APIs, not manual updates. Additional site improvements will enhance how information is consumed and improve the user interface. Enhanced, ongoing site maintenance and further upgrades require that two current project positions (2 FTEs) be made permanent. Another 1.5 FTE project staff will oversee Phase II enhancement and four related pilot projects with education and industry partners.

No Wrong Door Integrated Data

[Decision Package](#)

A lack of data sharing across the workforce system creates challenges for Washington job seekers and employers. This inefficient and disconnected service delivery has resulted in negative experiences and disengagement for job seekers, ultimately affecting retraining and employment outcomes. The Workforce Board and its partners seek to leverage modern and innovative practices to meaningfully address these longstanding challenges. Through the "no wrong door" approach, shared information across the full lifecycle of service delivery will help job seekers find meaningful work, connect employers with skilled workers, and strengthen economic stability and quality of life in Washington.

Workforce Digital Pathways

[Decision Package](#)



Many marginalized communities in Washington face barriers to accessing quality jobs in the digital economy due to a lack of affordable and reliable internet, devices, skills, and support, with the digital divide disproportionately affecting the participation and opportunities of vulnerable groups. Continuing the 2024 state budget investment, public, private, state, and local partners will work together, building on existing infrastructures, to narrow this digital divide through expanded or enhanced career pathways leading to good jobs through the Workforce Digital Pathways Initiative. Initiative solutions include digital literacy education and credentials, rapid response skills gap programs to support training for new jobs created from federal Infrastructure Investment grants, targeted reentry programs, work-based training and supports, and career readiness resources and tools.

WAVE Funding **Decision Package & Agency Request Legislation**

In a time of rising college costs and skilled labor shortages, the Washington Award for Vocational Excellence (WAVE) celebrates top CTE students at Washington high schools and community and technical colleges. The scholarship pays for two years of tuition or other expenses for up to 147 awardees each year—three from each Legislative District. Students may attend an institution of their choice, as well as registered apprenticeships under a new policy bill. This scholarship program has been significantly underfunded since its 2022 relaunch. Additional funding is needed to match the rising cost of postsecondary education.

The agency has submitted request legislation that pairs with this decision package to make WAVE a guaranteed entitlement and not subject to fluctuations in state budget appropriations. Under the bill, WAVE awards would match the same levels as the Washington College Grant for participants' institutions of choice. Registered apprentices receiving their related supplemental instruction at a community and technical college are also specifically added to eligible applicants.

Health Workforce Planning **Decision Package**

Policy efforts related to the healthcare and behavioral health workforce have significantly expanded, even as funding has decreased due to the expiration of a budget proviso. The remaining funds appropriated to the Workforce Board for staffing the



Health Workforce Council, supporting related behavioral health workforce projects, and maintaining Washington’s Health Workforce Sentinel Network are insufficient to continue the data collection, analysis, and policy work required by the Council’s statute (RCW 28C.18.120 and ESSB 5950). To address this gap, the Workforce Board requests ongoing funding for an additional 1.65 FTE (for a total of 2.5 FTE dedicated to Council work) and an increase to the funds for the Sentinel Network to support healthcare and behavioral health workforce research and policy development in the state.

Long-Term Care Initiative Continuation

Decision Package

Long-term care (LTC) staffing challenges are creating situations that place those needing this critical care at risk. These challenges are expected to worsen due to an increased demand for services coupled with a shrinking workforce. The LTC Workforce Initiative is a multiorganization collaborative of professionals that has spent the last two years focused on LTC policy development, comprehensive research, and the launch of a pilot LPN registered apprenticeship. Funding for this work ends in June of 2025. This request is seeking funding to continue the focused efforts of the Initiative, including continued support for prerequisite courses for potential LPN apprentices.

Federal Perkins CTE Match Funds

Decision Package

The Workforce Board requests a maintenance budget adjustment to support critical activities and functions necessary to comply with federal and state mandates to administer the federal Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education (CTE) program. Currently, insufficient state administrative funding is hindering the Perkins program’s ability to reach its full potential. This limitation prevents the program from meeting the required dollar for dollar match, which is necessary to fully utilize federal CTE grant funds. By providing state specific CTE funding to match to federal outlays, the state can ensure that all federal grant allocations are effectively deployed, and that Washington doesn’t forfeit any unspent funds.

Tab 2

State Partners Reentry Services Panels

PRESENTED BY: System Partner and Program Participant Panels

CHECK ONE:

Action Item

Possible Action

Discussion Only

SUMMARY:

Our state and nation have new opportunities to support formerly incarcerated people as they work to reenter society. This population is often vulnerable, and too many are unable to successfully complete this journey. This is a missed opportunity for the formerly incarcerated, their families, employers who need skilled workers, and taxpayers. Fortunately, policy and industry leaders are focused on reforms to improve this longstanding challenge.

The Board expressed strong interest in how to best serve underserved and marginalized communities at the 2024 strategic retreat, which focused on our state workforce plan, Talent and Prosperity for All. To support this request, today's meeting will take a detailed look at how our workforce system serves people formerly incarcerated as they work to reenter society and contribute to their communities.

Today the Board will hear from agency leaders, program staff, direct service providers and program participants to gain a comprehensive picture of Washington's reentry services, including successes and challenges. The morning's schedule is focused on candid conversations with system partners and program participants. The afternoon features a discussion about what we've learned through the lens of the state workforce plan, and where the Board may want to engage and support reentry services for people impacted by the justice system.

BACKGROUND:

Workforce development for reentry and justice-involved populations is rooted in the Board's guiding principles: closing economic disparities for marginalized populations and providing comprehensive support for those facing barriers to employment. In alignment with Gov. Jay Inslee's [Executive Order 24-03](#), we are focused on building safe, strong, economically robust communities through successful reentry and continued support. Our strategic framework targets the creation of equitable training and employment opportunities, recognizing the unique challenges and barriers individuals face as they reintegrate into society and overcome biases, including housing discrimination, homelessness, and systemic racial

disparities. Efforts to end these disparities are critical. Our strategy is to employ a multi-pronged approach that leverages federal funding, provides comprehensive support services, evaluates and builds on existing programs, creates customized employment pathways, fosters collaboration among various stakeholders, and involves the community in supporting the reintegration of justice-involved individuals. This approach will not only help individuals successfully reenter society but also contribute to their continued success and the overall economic and social wellbeing of our communities.

STAFF GUIDANCE & RECOMMENDATION:

Discussion only. Board members who chair the Talent and Prosperity for All Strategic Priority committees will participate in a panel discussion after a series of presentations.

Board Briefing: Reentry Outcomes of Justice Involved Persons in Washington State

Washington's strategic workforce plan, Talent and Prosperity for All (TAP), demonstrates the Board's and the system's commitment to helping underserved and marginalized communities succeed economically. TAP spotlighted justice involved individuals as a population that is furthest removed from economic success, especially those individuals with an incarceration history.

According to the nonpartisan Prison Policy Institute, Washington on average incarcerates about 373 per 100,000 people (including prisons, jails, immigration detention, and juvenile justice facilities).¹ While there is no easy way to ascertain how many people have a history of either justice involvement or incarceration, the FBI estimates that about 29.5% of the U.S. adult population has a criminal record due to a felony arrest. In Washington, this would calculate to over 2.3 million people.

Every year about 8,000 individuals are released from Washington state prisons. The recidivism rate for individuals (those who return to jail or prison after being released) in Washington is 30% within three years of being released from prison facilities, and 68% at a national level. Although these numbers are bleak, U.S. reincarceration rates are 23% lower today than in 2008.

Formerly incarcerated people face extraordinary unemployment rates and wage losses, [research from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce shows](#). Six of every 10 people were jobless from the time of release to four years after release, the chamber reports. And formerly incarcerated people lose over half of their wages (51.7 %) on average in potential lifetime earnings.

The enormity of this situation motivated Governor Jay Inslee to sign the second Executive Order of his administration specifically designed to improve outcomes for individuals being released from the state's prisons. Governor Inslee signed the order earlier this month, on September 16, directing the Department of Corrections and many other state agencies to strengthen Washington's reentry efforts and formalizes the state's commitment to Reentry 2030, a national effort focused on removing barriers for people leaving prison, Inslee's office reports.

Challenges for the formerly incarcerated mean opportunities to help

The inability to connect to gainful, secure employment represents many missed opportunities for the formerly incarcerated, which in turn impacts their families,

¹ Prison Policy Institute, [Washington State profile | Prison Policy Initiative](#)

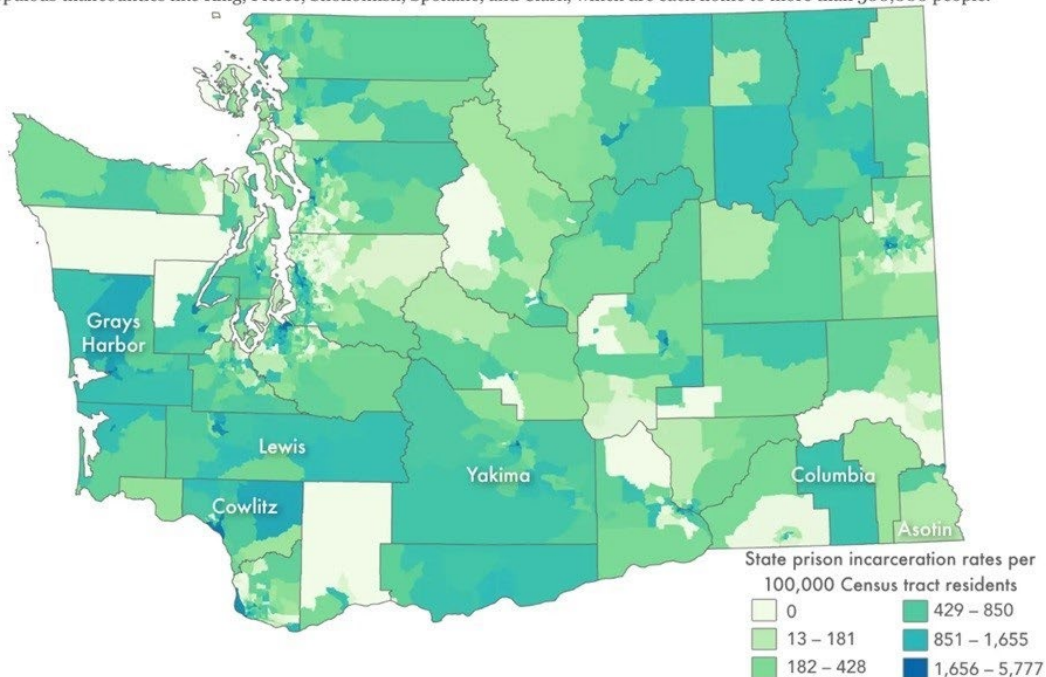
employers who need skilled workers, and, ultimately, taxpayers. Yet many formerly incarcerated people remain unemployed, churning through low-wage jobs, suffering lower lifetime earnings, and too often ending up back in prison. About 30% of formerly incarcerated individuals reoffend and are reimprisoned within three years after release.

The state's workforce development system can play a significant role in changing the economic dynamics for this population, while elevating an untapped labor pool for the state's businesses. Business leaders are focused on addressing the nation's ongoing skilled labor shortage, including creating new opportunities for people formerly incarcerated. A September 18 report from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce concludes that "increasing employment of millions of formerly incarcerated individuals, or those with a criminal record, would bolster the country's workforce and create opportunities for those who need a second chance."

Creating the infrastructure for success, however, has many challenges. For instance, the prison population comes from and is released to every county in the state. But research from the Prison Policy Institute indicates that the distribution is disproportionately higher in our most under-resourced, often rural communities.

Every county in Washington state is imprisoning people, with the highest imprisonment rates in some of the less populated counties

Six counties with the highest imprisonment rates have populations ranging from 3,900 to 257,000, but these counties are far less populous than counties like King, Pierce, Snohomish, Spokane, and Clark, which are each home to more than 500,000 people.



Limited resources or connections hinder community reintegration for justice involved people:

People exiting prison from long-term confinement need stronger support around them. Many people exhibit a low crime risk but have high psychological, financial, and vocational demands that have been greatly exacerbated by their lengthy incarceration.²

Unemployment rates are particularly high for reentrants:

Formerly incarcerated people are unemployed at a rate of over 27 percent higher than the total U.S. unemployment rate during any historical period, including the Great Depression.³

As a result of systemic racism and BIPOC community disenfranchisement, racial disparities concerning correctional control are high. Compared to White adults, Black adults in Washington are 3.3 times more likely to be arrested, 2.5 times more likely to be on probation, 5.2 times more likely to be in prison, and 4.3 times more likely to be on parole. Latino adults are 1.5 times more likely to be in prison, and 1.4 times more likely to be on parole than White adults. American Indian adults are 1.5 times more likely to be arrested and 4.9 times more likely to be in prison than White adults.⁴

There is a great deal of research on programmatic interventions that improve outcomes. But the programs are often pilots or at a small scale, with uncertain funding. One report identified three domains of programming as the most promising at reducing recidivism:⁵

- Substance abuse and addiction treatment programs.
- Life skills programs, counselling, and coping strategies.
- Work training/vocational programming to assist offenders in learning skills.

Research published in 2021 by the Brookings Institute finds, "Increasing access to quality academic education and occupational skills-based training that builds a skill base to

² Nellis, A. *A New Lease on Life*. The Sentencing Project, June 30, 2021. <https://www.sentencingproject.org/publications/a-new-lease-on-life>.

³ Kopf, D., and L Couloute. *Out of Prison & Out of Work: Unemployment among Formerly Incarcerated People*. Prison Policy, July 1, 2018. <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/outofwork.html>.

⁴ US Bureau of Justice Assistance and the Council of State Governors | Justice Center. *Washington Criminal Justice Data Snapshot Report*, December 2023. https://justicereinvestmentinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Washington-Criminal-Justice-Data-Snapshot_accessible.pdf

⁵ Criminon. *Criminal Justice and Rehabilitation in Washington*. <https://www.criminon.org/where-we-work/united-states/washington/>

meet the needs of the current labor market will significantly increase access to sustainable post-prison employment opportunities.”

U.S. Chamber issues major report that supports second chance hiring

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce highlights a significant opportunity for both employers and workers: There are millions of formerly incarcerated people who need good jobs, and a major skilled labor shortage across many industries.

The [chamber’s September 18 report](#) provides context at the national level, including:

- One in three adults have a criminal record.
- 448,000 Americans were released from incarceration in 2022.
- 1.25 million Americans are in prison.
- 3.7 million Americans are on probation or parole.

And the nation’s labor shortage continues. This shortage limits the ability of employers to expand, grow, and create new jobs.

“This shortage is affecting all industries across nearly every state,” the chamber reports. “Even if every unemployed worker filled an open position in their industry, well over a million jobs would still remain vacant.”

The U.S. has the highest number of incarcerated people in the world, the chamber notes. The majority are working-aged men.

“A significant portion of our potential workforce is sidelined due to high conviction rates, community supervision, and imprisonment...More people in prison means less people working,” the chamber reports.

But the numbers show that formerly incarcerated people want to work, the chamber notes. More than 93% of this group between the ages of 25 and 44 are actively working or looking to work, compared to 84% for a broad population of people in a similar age group.

The chamber also notes the “profound” effect a criminal record has on job opportunities.

"This often-overlooked talent pool is exceedingly large and requires employment to reduce recidivism rates," the report notes. "Stable jobs for the formerly incarcerated reduce recidivism and benefit society."

Learn more at the chamber's [Second Chance Hiring Guide](#).

Inslee focuses on corrections reform

Governor Inslee has challenged state agencies, boards and commissions to better help formerly incarcerated people successfully reenter society. He signed [Executive Order 24-03](#) September 16 in Tacoma.

The order specifically directs several state agencies to address common barriers around employment, housing, food assistance, identification, healthcare, and more.

Inslee is clearly passionate about successful reentry in his final year in office. The order calls for developing a "comprehensive entry and exit process" tailored to each person's needs, [reporter Jerry Cornfield of the Washington State Standard wrote](#).

"The best prison, in the view of Governor Jay Inslee, is one where people leave and don't come back," the Governor's Office reports.

For each dollar invested in corrections education, nearly \$20 is saved from reduced recidivism, [Inslee's office reports](#). Each dollar invested in prison work programs leads to \$12.68 in savings. More than 3,000 incarcerated people completed their GEDs in Washington state prisons from 2018-22.

In summary, successful reentry, second chance hiring and new opportunities for the formerly incarcerated are consistent with the Workforce Board's vision: Every Washington community is thriving, inclusive and economically resilient.



Ismaila Maidadi, Employment Connections Director at the state's Employment Security Department, top right, is among 23 managers honored by Gov. Inslee for outstanding leadership earlier this month. Maidadi's work on reentry reform was cited in his award.

Supplemental Data Resources

Agency research staff reached out to data contributors for the Board's workforce program evaluation asking what data is available regarding workforce program participants and those involved with the justice system. Research staff do not currently ask for data elements on justice involved so we sought to map what might be available either directly (readily available) or indirectly, by proxy.

All workforce programs contained within the quarterly report to the U.S. Department of Labor in the report known as the PIRL (Participant Individual Record Layout, or ETA 9171) have more than one data element on this topic. In the table below this is laid out in the x in the column 'Available.' Not all programs have data elements on justice involved readily available, but could produce one by combining other information, indicated by 'Available By Proxy.'

Data Availability in WA State Administrative Systems by Workforce Program

Program	Unknown	Available	Available By Proxy	Not Available
		x		
WIOA Title I - Adult		x		
WIOA Title I - Dislocated Worker		x		
WIOA Title I - Youth		x		
WIOA Title II - Basic Education for Adults			x	
WIOA Title III - Wagner Peyser		x		
Jobs for Veterans State Grants		x		
Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment		x		
WIOA Title IV - Division of Vocational Rehabilitation		x		
WIOA Title IV - Department of Services for the Blind		x		
Secondary Career and Technical Education	x			
Postsecondary Professional Technical Education			x	
Trade Act - Trade Adjustment Assistance		x		
Training Benefits Program		x		
WorkFirst	x			
Worker Retraining			x	
Apprenticeship	x			
Private Career Schools				x

In using available data elements, five programs already report the number and share of participants who voluntarily report justice involvement. In the table below we can see that those who report being ex-offenders make up between 5 and 10% of participants served in the Trade Adjustment Assistance, WIOA Title I, and WIOA Title III programs. These data points are drawn from the PIRL. Employment outcomes by ex-offender status is not currently reported out, but further query of administrative data should make labor market outcomes available.

ETA Performance Report, Program Year 2023: Ex-offender Counts in select Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs

<i>Program Year 2023 (7/1/23-6/30/24)</i>			
	Participants Served	Ex-Offenders	Percent'
<i>WIOA Title I - Adult</i>	12,058	1,193	10%
<i>WIOA Title I - Dislocated Worker</i>	5,302	374	7%
<i>WIOA Title I - Youth</i>	2,823	257	9%
<i>WIOA Title III - Wagner-Peyser</i>	82,953	5,086	6%
<i>Trade Adjustment Assistance</i>	290	15	5%

Source: ETA 9173 Performance Reports (aka Quarterly Performance Reports QPR)
 PY 2023 Qtr. 6/30/2024

[Skip to content](#)

Local News

The Seattle Times

WA prisons sent 100 staffers to Norway. The goal: A humane system

Sep. 15, 2024 at 6:00 am | Updated Sep. 15, 2024 at 6:00 am



1 of 5 | Men incarcerated at Stafford Creek Corrections Center in Aberdeen wave goodbye as a counterpart at Norway's Romerike prison leaves a video call. A group from each prison speaks once a month to talk about their lives and conditions in their respective prisons. (Ellen M. Banner / The Seattle Times)



By **Nina Shapiro**

Seattle Times staff reporter

ABERDEEN — Sgt. Alexandra Collecchi knows all about the dangers of prison.

She works in a solitary confinement unit at Stafford Creek Corrections Center on the Olympic Peninsula. Her parents worked in the California correctional system, where her mother was assaulted by an incarcerated person. Among her injuries were a broken nose and three herniated discs in the neck.

“I watched her struggle with pain,” Collecchi said.

Last year, the sergeant was offered the chance to head a team that is part of a multimillion-dollar effort advocates believe will make Washington’s prisons safer. It does not involve tighter restrictions, heightened surveillance or more fencing. Its operating principle: humanity.



Sgt. Alexandria Collecchi shows an “outdoor” yard in a solitary confinement unit at Stafford Creek Corrections Center. The yard is not really outdoors but lets in some light. Inside the... (Ellen M. Banner / The Seattle Times) [More](#) ▾

“I didn’t hesitate,” Collecchi said. Her six-person “resource team” works to develop social skills and a positive mindset among men in solitary, aiming to transition them to the prison’s general population.

The effort looks to Norway, which in the 1990s transformed its prison system in response to frequent riots and high recidivism. Rehabilitation became the goal. A new concept of “dynamic security” took hold, focused on officers cultivating a relationship with those in their charge. Violence and recidivism dropped.

Washington’s prison system has been plagued with problems over the years: inadequate medical care leading to [legal settlements](#); [widespread use of solitary confinement](#) despite a pledge to limit it; understaffing fed by stress and assaults; and an old-school, command-and-control culture among many staffers that arguably serves neither them nor incarcerated people.



Incarcerated people walk the grounds at Stafford Creek Corrections Center. (Ellen M. Banner / The Seattle Times)

The state has introduced periodic reforms before. Gov. Jay Inslee credits improvements in education and vocational training, as well as support for people with addiction, for cutting recidivism [by a third](#) since 2015. The rate, measured as a return to a state facility within three years, is now 22%, much lower than [many states](#) with available data.

Inslee said he believes the Norway initiative will slash recidivism even further.

The effort aims to be a sweeping reform, perhaps not solving all of the system's problems but improving outcomes and increasing safety for incarcerated people *and* staff. Money and buy-in are required, however. And skepticism runs deep about whether there will be enough of both to overhaul an entrenched culture and bureaucracy.

Still, so serious is Washington's Department of Corrections about following Norway's lead that, with the help of a University of California program called [Amend](#), it has brought more than 100 staffers to the Scandinavian country on 10 trips. The latest was this month, and another is planned for spring.



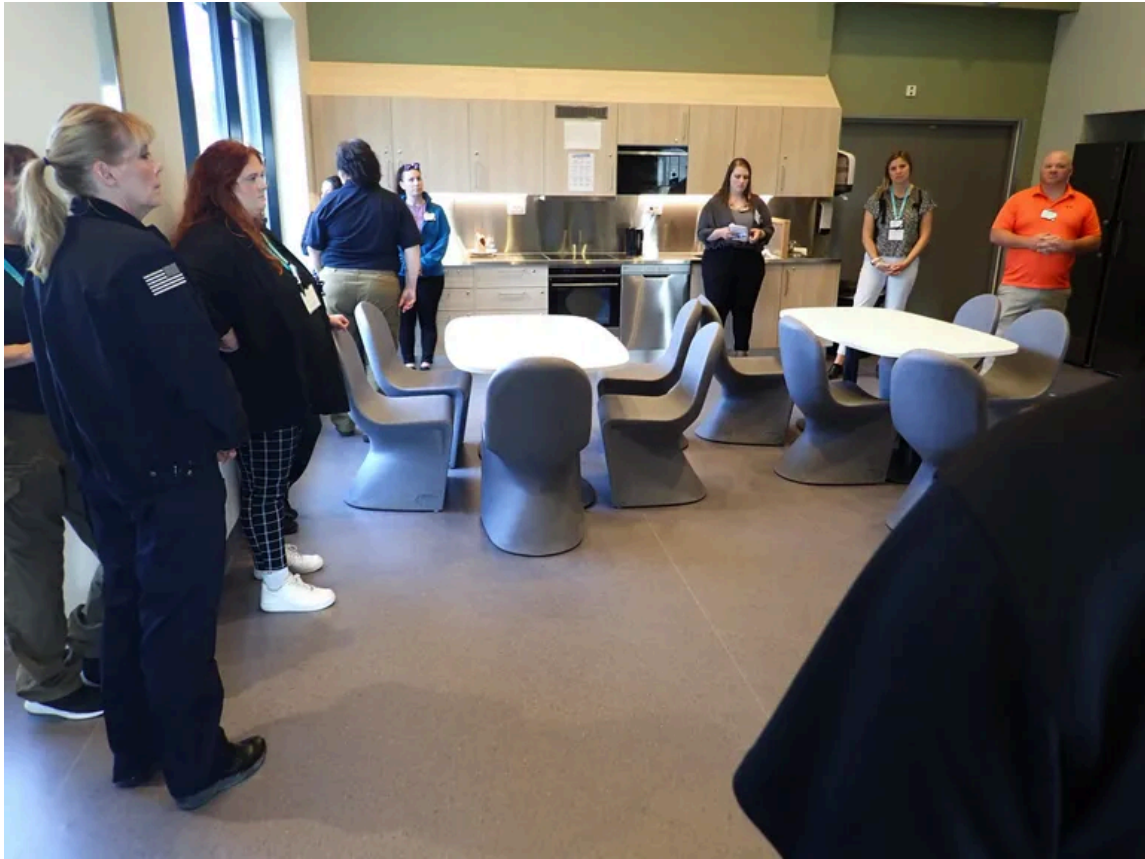
1 of 2 | Washington Corrections staff visit a high-security yard in Norway's Ringerike prison. They learned table tennis is used to counteract the harmful effects of isolation, such as losing depth... (Courtesy of the Department of Corrections) [More](#) ▾

Elected and other state officials often tag along, and [Inslee visited Norway's prisons](#) during a 2022 trade mission. Norwegian officers also fly here to help conduct trainings, as two did in July for a weeklong session with dozens of corrections staffers.

The state bears the overall costs of reforms; the Legislature has allocated \$6 million through next June. But expenses for the Norway trips, about \$500,000 to date, have almost entirely been paid for by Amend, which is working with Washington and several other states to take a public health approach to incarceration.

Amend's backing has allowed the DOC to bring rank-and-file officers as well as brass.

"In order for long-lasting culture change to work, we need pressure from the ground up ... as well as the top down," said Kelsey Engstrom, Amend's Washington program manager.



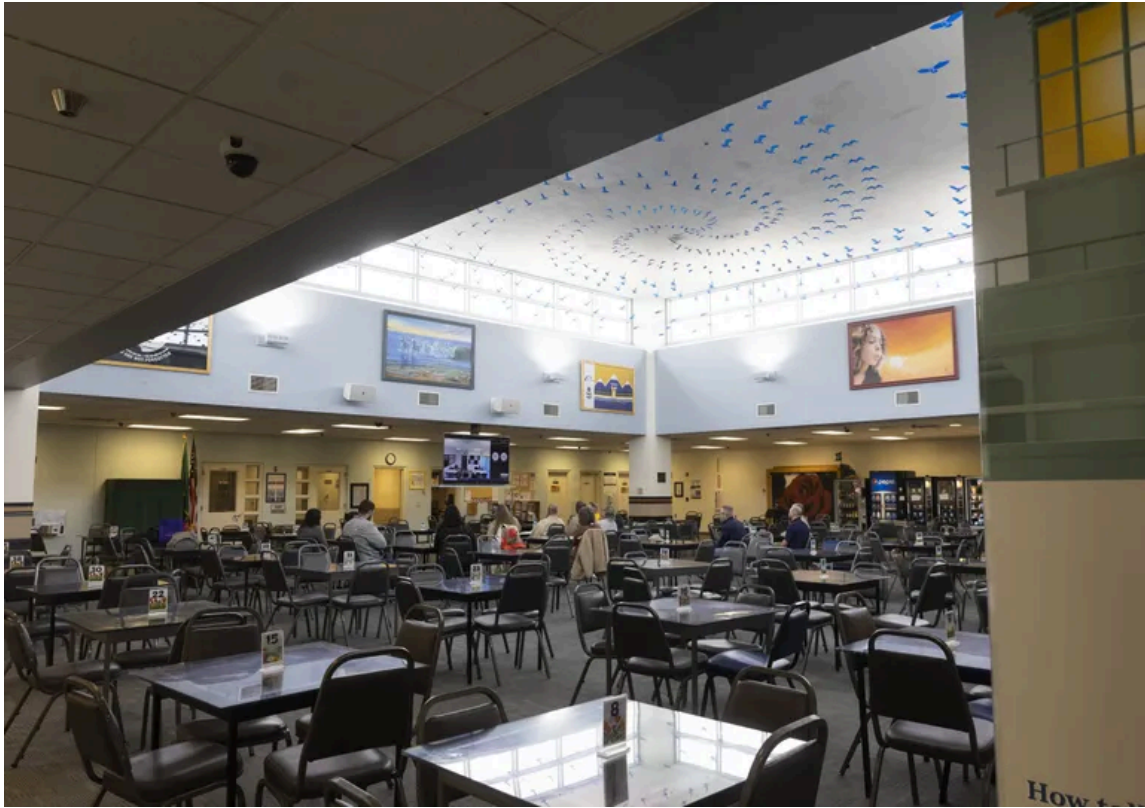
Corrections staff from Washington and Oregon, along with Kelsey Engstrom (second from left), a manager with the University of California program Amend, visit a unit in Norway's Ila prison that... (Courtesy of the Department of Corrections) [More](#) ✓

She sees that happening here and said the state could become a national leader in prison reform. Yet, it is also part of a broad movement across the country — from California, which is working with Amend to turn the [San Quentin state prison](#) into a rehabilitation center, to Pennsylvania, which overhauled one men's unit for a [Scandinavian-inspired research project](#).

“It’s exciting,” said Jacqueline Helfgott, director of Seattle University’s [Crime and Justice Research Center](#). In a career spanning more than three decades, she said she’d never before seen such widespread reforms.

Launched in 2020 right before the pandemic hit, Washington’s Norway initiative, dubbed [The Washington Way](#), took years to get off the ground. By late August, four of Washington’s 11 prisons — Stafford Creek, Washington State Penitentiary, Washington Corrections Center For Women and Mission Creek Corrections Center — had related programs.

They range from teams like Collecchi’s, to attempts to make prison furniture less stark, to a monthly video call between incarcerated people in Washington and Norway.



Incarcerated people at Stafford Creek Corrections Center speak on video with counterparts at Norway's Romerike Prison. (Ellen M. Banner / The Seattle Times)

Reforms have come piecemeal, rather than transforming an entire prison or even unit. Stafford Creek's resource team, for instance, handles a caseload of 10 to 12 men at a time — roughly one-seventh of those currently in solitary confinement at Stafford Creek.

Some say the initiative has barely made an impact.

"It's talking points when the cameras are rolling. The reality is zero, nothing," said Jacob Schmitt, director of Just Us Solutions, which works to better the lives of current and formerly incarcerated individuals. He was released in September 2023 from the Monroe Correctional Complex, where he spent nine years on a robbery conviction.

He called the Norway model a "beautiful concept" but one impeded here by longtime staff prone to petty cruelties, like opening a door in a chow hall to blast winter air on incarcerated people as they eat.

Yet, the Norway effort is picking up momentum over the next year, incorporating four more prisons: the Monroe Correctional Complex and the Clallam Bay, Coyote Ridge and Cedar Creek corrections centers. DOC officials say they're committed to the concept, as is a network of motivated front-line staffers across the system.

"I believe we're at the tipping point," said DOC Deputy Secretary Sean Murphy.



A group including Washington corrections staff walk toward cottages where incarcerated people live at Norway's Bastøy prison. People held at the prison, which has no fences, are serving the... (Courtesy of the Department of Corrections) [More](#) ▾

Softly closing doors

Corrections officers traveling to Norway may visit [Bastøy prison](#), a place of fascination for many. No fences surround the facility, situated on an island. People held there, serving the final years of their sentence, live in group cottages and roam the island as they perform jobs like farming and ferry operation.

Even Norway's high-security prisons exhibit big differences from their American counterparts. Washington Way administrator Courtney Grubb marveled at how incarcerated people could shop for food at grocery stores and cook for themselves.

She understands the logic: Most incarcerated people will eventually leave prison and become our neighbors. "We need to prepare them," Grubb said.

Norway codifies this reasoning into a principle called "normality."



A store inside Norway's Bastøy prison where incarcerated people can shop and cook for themselves. (Courtesy of the Department of Corrections)

“During the serving of a sentence, life inside will resemble life outside as much as possible,” reads the website of the country’s correctional system. It also proclaims this: “The punishment is the restriction of liberty; no other rights have been removed by the sentencing court.”

Prison systems around the world have wrestled with whether incarceration should be designed to punish or rehabilitate. The answer is usually a mix, but how much emphasis is placed on each varies by place and time.

As Norway leaned heavily into rehabilitation, it transformed the role of corrections officers, noted Synøve Andersen, a University of Oslo sociologist who studies the criminal legal system. They went from being guards to, essentially, social workers, tasked with helping incarcerated people fulfill goals that ready them for the outside world.

The officers carry no arms — almost unimaginable in an American system and not something under consideration in Washington, according to Grubb.

As different as that is, what often strikes visiting Washington prison staff are small gestures.

“I saw staff close doors softly,” recalled Phylisha Lewis, a psychology associate at the Monroe Correctional Complex who got back from a nine-day visit in June. When she asked why, Norway officers looked befuddled. You don’t slam doors in normal life, they said. Why would you in prison?

Lewis walked into one unit at a high-security prison and smelled apple cake baked by an incarcerated man. “Is that your grandma’s recipe?” a corrections officer knew enough to ask.

She observed something else: “Every single staff member we passed was smiling and saying hello.”



Gardens at Stafford Creek Corrections Center are often maintained by incarcerated people. (Ellen M. Banner / The Seattle Times)

American corrections officers, working highly stressful jobs that pit them against incarcerated people, are not known for their cheerfulness. Their working conditions take a toll on their physical and mental health.

They risk being assaulted. There were 22 attacks on Washington prison staff resulting in injuries and medical treatment in 2023, though such incidents dropped to four in roughly the first half of 2024.

The average life expectancy for American corrections officers is 59, compared with 75 in the general population, according to the [Vera Institute of Justice](#). Officers also experience higher than average rates of depression, PTSD and suicidality.

It was these bleak statistics that in 2019 drove Washington's corrections secretary at the time, Stephen Sinclair, to explore the Norway model after hearing an Amend presentation at a conference.

Like other states, Washington's intention has been to adapt elements of Norway's system, rather than create a carbon copy, and to empower staff and incarcerated people to come up with ideas.

"It's very fluid and dynamic," Grubb said.

At Washington Corrections Center for Women near Gig Harbor, a counselor is sitting down over coffee with incoming residents. Flower baskets designed by incarcerated men hang at the state penitentiary in Walla Walla, brightening, at least a little, a landscape dominated by concrete, gravel and brick.

At Stafford Creek, incarcerated men, provided audio equipment and training, are developing a podcast. (A separate podcast produced by incarcerated men, technically unaffiliated with the Norway project though related in spirit, is underway at the penitentiary).

The Aberdeen prison is one of the best places to see the Norway effort in action — particularly if you go into the prison's darkest corner: solitary confinement.

Interacting as people

Matthew Hastings' hands and legs were unrestrained.

The 45-year-old, who wounded a police officer during a [2007 standoff](#) in Vancouver, Wash., was calmly sitting at a table with the resource team, taking turns drawing from a pile of cards. He had been put in solitary confinement about 10 months before for "blowing his cool," as he put it, not wanting to specify further.

To understand how remarkable this morning's scene was, consider that people kept in solitary confinement typically spend 23 hours a day in their cells. When they leave to go to the shower or an "outdoor" yard — a rectangular space that is not, in fact, outdoors but lets in bits of daylight through a grated ceiling — they do so in handcuffs and shackles. The restraints come off only when they have reached their destination and a door closes.

Yet here Hastings was, not only sitting freely but in a large room with homey touches: a couch and chairs, plants, a patterned carpet, landscape paintings, a basketball hoop. Into this room, and on a patch of grass that is actually outside, Collecchi's team brings people held in solitary, one at a time, for a few hours once or twice a week.

They shoot hoops, play cornhole, eat together or talk about what drives the incarcerated men to act the way they do.

On this May day, team members and Hastings were doing an exercise designed to get people talking about what values are important to them. Each card they drew had a word printed on it, like "forgiveness," "comfort," "independence." They went around the table, describing their attitudes toward the word.

When "comfort" came up, an officer asked Hastings how long it had taken him to get comfortable with the team. A few weeks, Hastings said. "Trust is a big thing," he explained. He was suspicious when the team started working with him about five months before. But he said he came to believe team members were "caring and trying to make my life a little better."

Hastings' trust was evident in jokey exchanges with team members, as well as an admission he was scared to return to the prison's general population. "Not scared physically but scared mentally," he said. "I'm just worried I'm going to go out there and do bad."

He wasn't the only one opening up. As the exercise progressed, Collecchi revealed she had once lived in a car. Another officer said he felt uncomfortable with the way he looked. A third talked about being dependent on his wife.

Part of Norway's philosophy is encouraging officers to interact as people, sharing aspects of their lives with incarcerated people without divulging sensitive information. It goes so deeply against the grain in U.S. prison culture that Grubb said she had to write into policy that it's OK, just as she had to explicitly tell officers they can shake hands with incarcerated people.

Contributing to a sense of shared humanity, two members of the resource team are incarcerated themselves.

They don't work *for* the resource team, they are part of the team, said one of the "peer mentors," Don Bango, a veteran who is serving time on a drug-related second-degree murder conviction. "They completely incorporate us into the planning."

Bango said he suggested the card exercise, something he remembered from studying psychology in college.

Exercises like these have dramatically changed Hastings' demeanor, team members said. He used to throw fits when something went wrong and threaten violence. Now, Collecchi said, he's what is considered "an easy keep."

Team members and veteran officers Christopher Church and Mark Schnoor said their jobs had become much more satisfying.

"I feel like I'm doing something meaningful," Schnoor said.

Yet, they also said their work is often misunderstood by fellow officers, who see them shooting hoops or playing cornhole and believe they're not really working.

Another pervasive belief is that the Norway-inspired approach amounts to coddling.

But perhaps the most trenchant critique holds that the whole enterprise is doomed to failure.

How far can reforms go?

"We're never going to get there," said Sarena Davis, of Teamsters Local 117, which represents the state's more than 3,200 corrections officers.

She was talking about the distance between Norway's system and what she believes Washington is capable of without vastly more resources.

Davis pointed to a huge difference in training for officer recruits. Norway's lasts between two and three years. Washington's takes six weeks, just two hours of which deal with Norway-inspired principles.

Staff members get four more hours of training annually in those principles and officers taking on new roles get more. But such training typically occurs in days, not years.

And there's simply more staff in Norway, proportionally, to implement a philosophy devoted to meaningful engagement with incarcerated people. With a tiny prison population of 3,200, Norway has a staff-to-incarcerated-person ratio approaching **1 to 1**.

Washington, with **13,000 people in prison**, has a staff-to-incarcerated-person ratio of roughly 1 to 2. That includes medical staff and others not counted in Norway's ratio.

Criticisms like the union's are true in a way but also not the point, argued Jordon Hyatt, a Drexel University associate criminology professor associated with Pennsylvania's Scandinavian prison project. "The appropriate comparison isn't with the Scandinavian countries," he said. "It's what we were doing here in the United States before the reforms."

How far Washington's reforms go will depend on legislative funding, DOC's Murphy said. They also depend on buy-in of whoever is elected governor in November.

There was a hopeful air one morning as six incarcerated men filed into Stafford Creek's visiting room for a video call to Norway's Romerike prison. Two incarcerated men at the Aberdeen prison had proposed the monthly video exchange and, somewhat to their surprise, it was accepted.

"This is a big deal on our end," one of the Stafford Creek men said as the call got underway with three men seated at a table in a white-walled prison room near Oslo.

At one point, a Romerike staffer brought a pitcher of water to the table, the kind of subtle, humane gesture characterizing Norway's system. Another enlightening moment came when one of the Norwegians talked about going home for a furlough, a practice that doesn't exist in Washington.

But the Stafford Creek men did much of the talking. They said they know Norway's system isn't perfect, citing limited calls to family and friends, and offered solidarity. One showed off a dog he has been training, another brought a self-help book.

The men were convicted of the kind of crimes that made much of society give up on them and resulted in decadeslong prison sentences: rape, murder, kidnapping. Collectively, they had left a trail of victims.

What the calls represent to them, they said later, is a belief they are capable of change. Even in prison, they added, they were part of a community, and they want to contribute to it.

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