

## Recession readiness and rapid response to mass layoffs

The federal [Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act](#) requires each state to establish a rapid response system. In Washington state, that system is a collaboration between the Employment Security Department (ESD), Washington State Labor Council (WSLC), and Washington Workforce Association (WWA).

At the heart of rapid response and recession readiness are local teams (one in each Workforce Development Area) that quickly help employers and workers after the announcement of a permanent closure, mass layoff or disaster that results in a mass job dislocation.

When a major layoff is announced, the state's rapid response team quickly contacts the employer and locally based rapid response partners. After state and local partners assess the immediate needs of the workers and employer, they establish appropriate first steps and strategies, including:

- Onsite meetings with the employer and applicable unions to gather information and schedule pre-layoff workshops for the dislocated workers.
- Obtaining the commitment of company management and applicable unions to actively participate in planning and implementing key tasks, such as a worker survey; and pre-layoff workshops about unemployment and re-employment services.
- Placing rapid response staff onsite to deliver transition services and outreach activities.
- Forming a transitional or labor management committee to help guide the process and make sure workers get the services they need.

**Recession readiness prepares the workforce system to respond to economic changes, helping employers and employees to plan for the future.**

### How rapid response works

Two major events trigger rapid response activities:

1. When a notice is filed under the federal [Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification \(WARN\) Act](#). The WARN Act requires employers with over a certain number of employees to provide notice 60 days in advance of plant closings and mass layoffs. This notice must be provided to affected workers or their representatives, local government and ESD.
2. When a petition is filed under the federal Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Act. The filing requires the state workforce agency to ensure that





rapid response assistance and appropriate career services are made available to workers covered by the petition. If the TAA petition is certified (approved) by the U.S. Department of Labor, eligible workers are entitled to additional benefits and training opportunities to help them return to work. (See [TAA frequently asked questions](#) for more details.)

### Services to employers and workers

**Employers** receive confidential help to understand WARN requirements, possible layoff alternatives and how to conduct an orderly shutdown, if necessary. Employers also get information about pre-layoff services that can help their employees get back to work sooner, how to maintain worker morale and productivity during the transition, and what types of employment services are available to workers through local WorkSource centers.

**Workers** receive an orientation about employment and training services available to help them get back to work. Services are customized to meet the specific needs of the individuals being laid off. Workers also receive information about unemployment benefits and help completing unemployment applications.

### Rapid response partners

- Employment Security Department
- Workforce Development Councils (locally based)
- WorkSource centers
- Unemployment Insurance Program (Employment Security Department)
- Trade Act representative when applicable (Employment Security Department)
- Washington State Labor Council and local labor affiliates
- Community and technical colleges
- Re-employment support centers (when applicable), which provide services aimed at addressing emotional, physical, medical and financial barriers that keep dislocated workers from finding work.

