
As the Employment Security Department (ESD) and our workforce system partners implement the vision and goals of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), ESD continues to make bold changes to the way we work with our partners to deliver services to customers. We launched a game-changing online job match and customer service platform as well as a successful veterans hiring initiative; redesigned office space to provide a more professional and welcoming environment for customers; and unveiled new tools to display workforce and labor market data on our website.

Innovative job match site transforms labor exchange in Washington

In May, ESD launched a new job match and client management system called WorkSourceWA.com, bringing exciting changes to the way Washington connects employers and job seekers. WorkSourceWA.com, built by industry veteran Monster.com and ESD staff, offers employers vastly improved recruitment tools, such as:

- Award-winning talent-management software to help them find qualified candidates faster.
- Unlimited job postings for free.
- The largest talent database in the state, including Monster's candidate pool for all of Washington and bordering cities in Oregon and Idaho.

Job seekers also will find fresh job hunting and career resources, such as:

- A new and improved resume builder to help them stand out.
- Advanced job search tools to find jobs more easily.
- Skill and interest assessment tools to chart a new career.
- Economic data and a budget calculator to make informed career decisions.
- Microsites for veterans, migrant seasonal farm workers and dislocated workers.

Since the site launched in early May:

- Nearly 2,700 employers have created approved accounts and 48,000 jobs have been posted;
- More than 21,000 job seekers have created self-service accounts; and
- More than 20,000 people have submitted nearly 157,000 applications—or roughly 8 applications each.

Washington's highly mobile workforce can view the new site on multiple devices, including smart phones and tablets, and it's accessible for people with disabilities. ESD is engaged in a comprehensive outreach campaign to share the new site with even more job seekers and employers — and we're already working with other state agencies and organizations to expand our reach.

New WorkSource locations: fresh, welcoming, modern and functional

With roughly 27 WorkSource office leases set to expire between 2015 and 2017, ESD facilities staff continue to work with WorkSource staff and partners to review these leases, improve our program delivery and reduce costs. Just this year, we've celebrated opening new locations in Lynnwood and East Wenatchee.

At WorkSource Wenatchee Valley, customers now enjoy a bright, customer friendly design with Wi-Fi and computer outlets, as well as rooms equipped to conduct job interviews via Skype.

At WorkSource Lynnwood, job seekers and employers also find a fresh new look, consistent with the WorkSource brand. The office is in a convenient central location with ample parking and Wi-Fi access. And instead of queuing at a reception desk, customers are now greeted by staff carrying tablets — a mobile front desk!

WorkSource and L&I help injured workers back to work

WorkSource Re-employment Specialists (RES) work with the Department of Labor and Industries to help workers return to work after filing a workers' compensation claim. The WorkSource RES team recently launched an internal awareness campaign at L&I to increase the number of referrals they were receiving so they could get more people back to work. As a result of the project, which included weekly displays on a staff bulletin board, overall referrals increased from 50 in May to 83 in June and claim staff referrals increased from 31 in May to 48 in June. All in all, the team helped 114 people return to work from January through June 2016.

Customers experience expanded service through new secure portal

As part of ESD's technological upgrades to the unemployment benefits system, we unveiled a secure customer portal to allow people to view their benefits information such as payment history, account balance, and wages reported by their employers.

Using an Agile development philosophy, ESD released secure messaging through the portal to allow people to send questions to claims center agents. Agents serve customers more quickly and accurately than email because they know exactly which claimant they're serving.

The portal also gives people easy access to their Washington wage history, which is helpful to those applying for other benefits, such as food stamps or housing. Previously, people needed to contact our public records unit or visit a WorkSource office to get their wage records. Now they can access the information themselves and simply print it off. This new capability also helps job seekers developing resumes or claimants applying for unemployment. Customers don't need to receive unemployment benefits to use the portal.

Tax & Wage Division reorg improves ability to serve

When the Unemployment Insurance Tax & Wage Division took on additional work, they reorganized the Account Management Center (AMC) to handle all incoming calls related to the division. This reorganization allowed them to handle an increase of over 4,000 calls per month and respond to more than 10,000 employer calls per month. The division also developed a number of additional process improvements to take on additional work from across the agency to help customers and improve services.

ESD joined with state representative and business owner Gina McCabe, the Department of Veterans Affairs and others on the YesVets hiring initiative. The project stemmed from House Bill 2040, passed by the Legislature during the 2015 session to connect employers with a highly skilled and ready-to-work transitioning military workforce.

YesVets team exceeds goals in just four months

Businesses interested in joining the initiative can sign up on the YesVets.org website. An ESD veterans employment representative follows up, and once employers hire a veteran, they receive a YesVets window cling to display.

The YesVets initiative launched in February 2016 with a pilot project based in the Yakima Workforce Development Area, where Rep. McCabe lives. Participation by other areas was strictly optional. By the time we held our Flag Day celebration in June to recognize participating businesses, the effort had spread statewide! As of July 27, we registered 269 employers who have hired 269 veterans.

Following a successful 2015 state employee survey, ESD conducted another one in January 2016 to make sure we continued our progress. Thanks to the hard work of our employee engagement team and staff across the agency, we continued to improve.

Employee engagement continues to improve

- Nearly 63% reported having opportunities to learn and grow at work. This is up from 60% in October and shows a 20-point increase from the 40% who felt that way in October 2014.
- Nearly 76% said a spirit of cooperation and teamwork exists in their workgroup — an increase from 73% in October and 59% in October 2014.
- More than 63% reported receiving clear information about changes within the agency — higher than 53% in October and 35% in October 2014.
- Nearly 54% said we use customer feedback to improve our work processes, which is up from 48% in October and 37% in October 2014.

New labor market tools bring data to life

ESD's labor market information, such as the monthly state and county employment reports, now has a new home on ESD.wa.gov. While previously the information lived on its own separate website, the integration into ESD.wa.gov will make it easier for people to find the information they need to make data-driven decisions about training and careers.

The new site uses Tableau technology and a dashboard format to present data in a more user-friendly manner, while still retaining all the source data in other popular formats, such as .pdf and .xls. Customers can also view a helpful video demonstrating how to use the new features.