
Putting the Customer First is not just a tagline, it's a way of life at the Employment Security Department. In 2016, the Employment Security Department (ESD) launched a game-changing new online job match tool, new labor market information pages on its web site and a new agency-wide approach to customer-centered design called Customer First. Customer First is a logical extension of the work ESD has been pursuing for years to transform into a Lean adaptive culture that uses customer feedback and engages employees to continuously improve service and employment outcomes.

Employment Connections Division kicks off Customer First in Eastern Washington

In Summer 2016, ESD's Unemployment Insurance (UI) Tax & Wage, UI Benefits and Employment Connections divisions embarked upon a new "Customer First" journey, designed to improve the customer experience for businesses, job seekers and the unemployed by infusing more customer feedback and design into our everyday work.

ESD's Employment Connections Division kicked off the effort in Eastern Washington last fall with intensive training for staff and partners in Human-Centered Design. Human-Centered Design is an "activities-based way of creative problem-solving that focuses on people above other factors," according to our training organization, LUMA Institute.

WorkSourceWA.com producing impressive results, winning national recognition

In May 2016, ESD launched WorkSourceWA.com, an innovative new job match site powered by industry expert, Monster.com. Since the site went live:

- Job searches are up significantly—from more than 625,000 to 1.1 million.
- Job applications are up from 38,521 to 48,355 per month.
- Number of WorkSource jobs posted are up from 19,436 to 20,609 per month.
- Resumes posted are up significantly from 5,349 to 8,999 per month.

Based on this success, ESD was selected by Monster's Customer Advisory Board to win the 2016 Monster Innovation Award, celebrating exceptional work by Monster customers who have met workforce challenges with innovative Monster solutions.

YesVets exceeds expectations

ESD collaborated with the Legislature and the state Department of Veterans Affairs to launch the YesVets initiative in February 2016 with a pilot project based in the Yakima Workforce Development Area. In the second half of 2016, efforts continued statewide with participation in job fairs, at chambers of Commerce and individually.

The Governor declared November Washington's Hire-a-Veteran Month and the ESD veterans program honored 12 Washington employers with the annual Hire-a-Vet Award.

By December, 397 employers had joined the YesVets team and 887 veterans had been hired. The project won the 2016 Outstanding Service to Veterans Award presented by the Governor's Veterans Advisory Committee as well as recognition at the Public Relations Society of America Puget Sound Chapter Totem Awards.

Lean problem solving brings improvements for customers

In the second half of 2016, ESD's Office of Lean Transformation certified 62 Daily Management Boards for visual communication throughout all of the divisions and documented 488 improvements in our improvement inventory. This work brought more solutions for our customers and better teamwork and problem-solving in our divisions.

ESD also created a five-day Green Belt Certification class, attended by 11 people. In addition, we sent 15 people through the Lean Facilitation Train conducted by the state's Dept. of Enterprise Services.

Employee engagement efforts continue

ESD's Employee Engagement Advisory Team (EEAT) and the focus group that gathered to help inform them suggested many of the improvement activities in ESD's strategic plan, including:

Enhanced leadership development: ESD added a new leadership learning and development manager to develop new training on leadership, coaching, succession planning and performance management. We launched respect training in March 2016 with an initial emphasis on managers and supervisors.

More training opportunities: We reinstated the tuition reimbursement program and continued to support self-study programs through Lynda.com and educational conferences including ones by the International Association of Workplace Professionals.

Rumor Busters: Employees sought a place where they could share rumors and fears and get a straight answer. The new Rumor Busters feature on Inside ESD is one of the most popular ways we communicate with staff.

Improving health & safety for employees

Improving the health, safety and security of the ESD staff not only improves employee engagement, it's the right thing to do. The 2016 safety survey revealed that sedentary work and indoor air quality were two top employee concerns, so we:

- Transitioned more than 530 ESD employees to sit-stand work surfaces to increase mobility and reduce the risk of musculoskeletal disorders; and
- Purchased air quality testing equipment for the safety office to ensure all facilities have proper indoor air quality for employees statewide.

Optimizing space, saving money

In an effort to continuously reduce costs and make the most of our available space, ESD's facilities unit reduced the agency's facilities portfolio by nearly 20 percent from 518,787 sq. ft. to 420,067 sq. ft. in 2016. This included improving the efficiency of our headquarters building and consolidating Thurston County staff from four buildings into two—all while agency staffing remained stable at roughly 1,400 employees.

ESD also reduced printing costs from \$1.17 million in FY12 to \$541,763 in FY16 by fully implementing managed print services.

Unemployment drops, more jobs added

- **State economy remains strong:** Washington added an estimated 82,300 new jobs from December 2015 to December 2016, not seasonally adjusted. The private sector grew by 68,300 jobs, and the public sector increased by 14,000 jobs. Over that same period, 11 of the state's 13 industry sectors added jobs. The three industry sectors with the largest employment gains were education and health services (20,800); government (14,000) new jobs; and leisure and hospitality (11,300).
- **WorkSource:** For the latest reporting period (people exiting Oct. 2014-Sept. 15), WorkSource helped 93,121 jobseekers find jobs, exceeding our federal Department of Labor entered employment target. In 2016, WorkSource helped 9,698 employers seeking to fill 238,633 jobs. WorkSource staff also provided one-on-one job search services to 104,778 jobseekers. More than 115,400 jobseekers used our self-service tools (WorkSourceWA) to post their resumes, apply for jobs and more.
- **UI benefits:** Unemployment in Washington dropped from 5.8 percent to 5.2 percent in 2016. ESD paid more than \$1 billion in UI benefits to 210,554 individuals to assist them during transition to a new job. This has dropped from nearly 221,000 in 2015.
- **Shared Work:** To help prevent layoffs, ESD's Shared Work program gives businesses the option to reduce workers to part-time and allows those workers to collect partial unemployment benefits to replace a portion of their lost wages. In 2016, ESD approved more than 950 employers and 17,700 workers to participate in Shared Work, preventing nearly \$13.4 million in additional unemployment insurance benefit payouts, allowing workers to remain employed and letting employers keep their skilled workers until business improves.
- **UI Fraud Prevention:** In 2016, the Office of Special Investigations (OSI) investigated almost 20,000 cases of possible fraud. Through that work, OSI prevented the loss of \$7.4 million in unemployment insurance benefits, and an additional \$13.5 million was turned over to the agency's collections division for recovery.