

Workforce Services Division



The Connection!

— March 26, 2025 —

Welcome to Workforce Services Division (WSD) newsletter - *The Connection!* This newsletter focuses on sharing information to connect, engage, support and excel. You can read regular updates on projects and programs, and this month's message from Director Ismaila (Ish) Maidadi.

In 2025, we will look at how to improve our team communications and the newsletter name will be changing. If you have thoughts or suggestions, please send them to the [WSD Virtual Suggestion Box](#); and for newsletter article ideas and comments, you can share those by emailing the WSD Communications [inbox](#), and we'll be in touch with you!

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Message from Ismaila (Ish) Maidadi



Greetings, Team!

Every day, I am reminded of the incredible work you do and the positive impact you have on the lives of others. It's truly inspiring to see your dedication and passion in action. This month, I want to take a moment to share something that I hold close to my heart: the importance of personal and professional development.

I also want to acknowledge that this is a time of uncertainty, and I recognize the added challenges it brings to our work and our lives. Navigating these times requires resilience,

creativity, and teamwork—and I am constantly inspired by your dedication to stepping up in the face of adversity.

In our line of work, growth is not just a nice-to-have—it's essential. When we grow as individuals, we bring fresh perspectives, skills, and energy to our teams. When our teams grow, we elevate our collective impact and our ability to lead. Growth is a chain reaction – it makes us more innovative, collaborative, and resilient in everything we do.

I recognize, however, that this year comes with challenges. Due to the current budget freeze, our ability to offer formal training programs is limited. But I want you to know that this does not diminish my commitment—or that of our leadership team—to your development. In fact, it inspires us to think creatively and resourcefully about how we can support you.

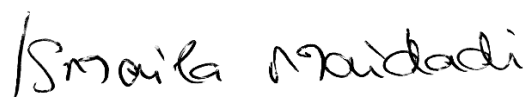
Here are a few ways we can continue to foster growth without breaking the bank:

- **Peer Learning:** We are surrounded by talent and expertise within our own teams. Let's create opportunities to learn from one another, whether through job shadowing, cross-training, or informal lunch-and-learn sessions.
- **Self-Paced Resources:** Many online platforms offer free or low-cost courses on a variety of skills—from leadership and project management to communication and technology. I invite you to explore these options with your supervisors.
- **Mentorship and Coaching:** ESD's mentorship program connects team members across divisions and geographic areas to share knowledge, guidance, and encouragement. Sometimes, the best lessons come from those who walk alongside us.
- **Reflection and Goal setting:** Growth also comes from within. I encourage everyone to take some time to reflect on your career goals and strengths and think about one or two areas where you want to grow this year. Consider discussing these with your supervisors so we can align our efforts to support you.

This commitment to growth is important because it strengthens not only our skills but also our sense of purpose and connection. When we invest in ourselves and each other, we build a culture of excellence, adaptability, and pride in what we do.

Thank you for your dedication, resilience, and willingness to grow—despite the challenges. I am incredibly proud to work alongside you and am inspired every day by the ways you go above and beyond to support our mission. Let's continue to find opportunities to grow together as individuals, as team members, and as leaders.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ismaila Maidadi". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ismaila (Ish) Maidadi, Director

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Leading through awareness and connection

Contributed by Ashley Palmer, Washington Service Corps director



This month's highlight is on Ashley Palmer, Washington Service Corps director. She answered a few questions giving us insight into her time with Washington Service Corps over the last seven years.

Thank you, Ashley, for your leadership; and congratulations on your 20-year anniversary in state service!

Since joining WSD, what do you consider significant accomplishments achieved in your current role?

In my current role as the director of Washington Service Corps (WSC), the significant accomplishments cross the spectrum from our team culture to securing state funds and increasing our member living allowances. In times like the present, when there is a lot of uncertainty, it's important to pause and reflect on all the amazing work we do and how far we have come. For WSC, our team has gone through trials and tribulations; and I'm proud of where we are and where we are going.

When I joined WSC in 2018, I heard that "WSC tends to fly under the radar here at ESD." It took me a while to understand what that meant. It's no secret that WSC's work is significantly different from the work of the rest of our division. We operate independently from the rest of the agency in almost all facets of our work. In many ways, this has worked well, and we operate with a high level of autonomy. The drawback came when we needed support or help from other divisions. We were so good at 'flying under the radar' that many people didn't even know our program existed, let alone what we did.

Over time, it was increasingly concerning; and when I stepped into the director role, I took the opportunity to change the narrative and worked on visibility and awareness for WSC. We've come a long way in four years; and with the amazing support of WSD and ESD leadership — we are not only more widely known within our agency — we have been strongly supported in funding opportunities, hosting members and partnership development.

Securing state funding is critical to our mission, and I'm proud of all the work we put into submitting our Member Equity Enhancements decision package. For it to be funded and implemented is one of the biggest achievements. Current funding uncertainties won't diminish our pride in what we've accomplished by creating opportunities for folks to choose service.

Looking internally, the greatest contributor to my success is 100% my team. They make me a better leader. I'm very proud of my team's dynamic, and the culture we have developed and fostered over the years. We've

experienced our fair share of challenges but one thing that has never wavered is our collective commitment to the work we do and to showing up and supporting each other. When needed, we wrap our arms around each other; we problem solve and brainstorm collectively; and we are always ready for a good game of trivia 😊.

What's a piece of advice you would give to aspiring leaders?

There are a lot of amazing moments I've experienced as a leader — experiences that have helped me grow professionally and motivated me to keep going. There are moments that have really challenged me and at times caused me to question myself. It's in those challenging times that it's incredibly important that we are kind to ourselves and take care of ourselves. If you don't take care of yourself, then you can't be there fully and completely for your team.

Some thoughts on Ashley...

"Ashley always prioritizes the well-being of our team and as a leader she fosters a positive and inclusive environment where everyone feels valued and heard. Ashley also is an empathetic leader, and she actively listens to understand different perspectives while encouraging problem solving and collaboration. Ashley she really cares about our staff and our program, and I really appreciate her leadership during difficult times."

Brandon Rendon, WSC outreach and recruitment manager

"Ashley is a true leader. She focuses on the needs of the communities WSC serves and makes every decision, from operational to individual, with a care for that community. She's always adapting to the needs of the WSC team. Important lesser known facts: she's one of the funniest people I know; she never turns off her care for our community even outside of work, and she has some of the coolest tattoos. I'm so grateful I got to work for Ashley and that she continues to give her gifts to ESD."

Ariel Kay-Barto, ESD management analyst



Hilary Seidel, Ashley Palmer and Jason McLaughlin –First Day at the Capitol since 2020.

Project updates & Resources

Reentry Program update: Planning for Second Chances!

Submitted by Ty Reed, ESD Reentry Program manager, and Victoria Pruett, WSD communications consultant

Making a difference as champions and advocates for second chances



WSD Reentry Program ups the game for justice-impacted job seekers

According to the [Second Chance report](#) over 2.4 million people in Washington State have criminal records and approximately 1.7 million have convictions. The stigma that many employers attach to job seekers who have been impacted by the justice system makes it difficult for job seekers to find and keep living-wage employment.

Employment Security Department (ESD) provides services to help justice-impacted customers forge a new career path by utilizing federal grant awards and working with local partners.

- Based out of North Seattle College and led by Cameron Cassidy, the [Partners for Reentry Opportunities in Workforce Development \(PROWD\) program](#) is working with residents of the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) reentry centers in King and Pierce Counties to improve long-term employment outcomes and provides individualized peer navigation and referral services.
- From 2020 to 2023, WorkSource locations in Washington State provided employment services to almost 9,000 self-identified justice-impacted customers annually.

Reentry Manager Ty Reed endorses the power of these services, “As a previously justice-impacted individual, who used WorkSource services to help me on my reentry journey, I can tell you from personal experience that these services make a difference in people’s lives.”

Moving forward, the reentry vision at ESD is to 1) focus on a core set of reentry-specific services for justice-impacted customers, 2) partner more closely with community-based partners to grow our capacity to serve these job seekers, and 3) leverage more external resources to create more skills growth and employment opportunities for this very talented and often overlooked pool of workers.



Webinar sessions for Second Chance Month

In anticipation of National Second Chance Month in April, WSD Reentry Program has planned several learning opportunities that offer information and conversation forums to provide insights for supporting reentry and strategies for hiring justice-impacted workers. There are separate sessions tailored for workforce professionals (April 2) as well as job seekers (April 16 & 30) and employers (April 9 & 23).

For WorkSource staff and partners, webinar descriptions and meeting links are in the handout linked below. Please copy/paste this information to your calendars and share with partners: [Second Chance Webinars](#).

For job seekers and employers, there are special WorkSource branded digital flyers with meeting links for you to use in getting the word out:

- [Job seeker Second Chance webinar – April 16, Noon to 1 p.m.](#)
 - [Job seeker Second Chance webinar – April 30, Noon to 1 p.m.](#)
- and
- [Employer Second Chance webinar – April 9, Noon to 1 p.m.](#)
 - [Employer Second Chance webinar – April 23, Noon to 1 p.m.](#)

You can also direct them to [WorkSourceWA.com/Virtual Workshops](https://WorkSourceWA.com/VirtualWorkshops), where they will find complete webinar descriptions.

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WSD and PFML collaborate on service excellence

Submitted by Teri Holme, WSD Central Sound regional operations manager, Erin Bjork, Leave and Care ES Benefits specialist; and Victoria Pruett, WSD communications consultant

Bridging the gap: Collaboration between WorkSource and Paid Family and Medical Leave

Workforce Services Division (WSD) and Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML) have been working together to find better ways to serve our shared customers. That's why we're excited to tell you about our collaboration project to provide in-person services at select WorkSource locations around the state. We also want to thank all the WorkSource teams that participated in the rollout of the initial pilot and for helping smooth out our processes in assisting underserved customers.



This cross-collaborative partnership unites our two divisions to ensure equitable access to services, enabling every eligible worker to learn about PFML benefits and apply successfully, regardless of barriers. By collaborating, PFML staff are available to provide in-person support one day per week to assist with benefit claims, coverage elections, and employer reporting. Customers can schedule appointments by calling any of the WorkSource locations listed below:

- Auburn • Bellingham • Ellensburg • Everett (*Doors open April 7*) • Kennewick
- Pierce (Tacoma) • Rainier • Spokane • Thurston • Vancouver • Walla Walla • Yakima

In-person support resolves immediate challenges for customers, and it empowers them to become more self-sufficient, ensuring they receive the benefits they need during critical times. It is also advantageous for WorkSource, and community partners and provides information to widen our division's knowledge of [PFML benefits](#).



Maria Pedro, Guest Resource Specialist with WorkSource Vancouver, highlighted the value of having a PFML representative on-site:

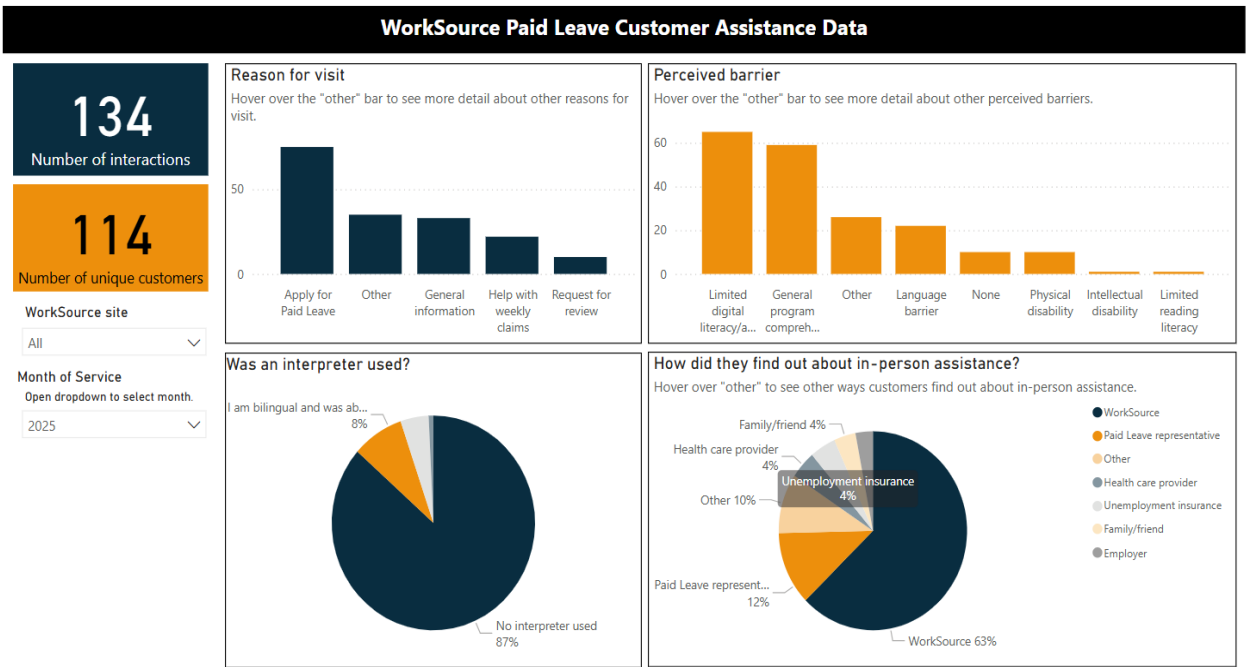
“Having a PFML representative in the office, brings significant benefits that promote inclusivity and enhances the support offered to staff at WorkSource Vancouver. This role helps reduce the overall workload and stress on the team, fostering greater collaboration and improving communication across partners. With over 100 customers a day, many facing barriers, having a dedicated PFML representative ensures compliance with legal standards, alleviates stress and strengthens our organizational culture and reputation... contributing to a more empathetic and supportive workplace.”

Caitlin Burrows, Employment Security Specialist with Leave and Care, shared one of her experiences at WorkSource Thurston:

“A client applied for Paid Leave back in 2020 but couldn’t access his account due to a forgotten username. Many clients accidentally create duplicate accounts, leading to errors like ‘your SSN is attached to another claim.’ We worked together to recover his username, submit his application, and provide the necessary medical certification forms. The client was so grateful because he isn’t computer literate. Now, he has the tools to apply for benefits independently in the future.”

Proof is in the customers served

WSD is working with PFML to track service results so that we are informed and can adjust and improve how best to meet PFML customers’ needs. Data collected for Jan. 16 to Feb. 28 shows that PFML staff at WorkSource offices helped 114 PFML customers. Most customers needed assistance with how to apply. The data tracking information below is being enhanced, and we hope to have more information available on the Workforce Professional Center soon. The project team is also launching a Customer Feedback Survey and will have data to share in the coming month!



The above data comes from a customer tracking form that ESD created for specialists to fill out every time they meet with a customer at WorkSource. It asks a series of questions that enable us to identify them in our data (if they have recently or in the past submitted claims). It also asks questions about why they sought in-person assistance. Source: Paid Leave Customer Tracking Form, 1/16/2025-2/28/2025

This WorkSource and PFML collaboration is just the beginning. By working together across divisions, we're bridging knowledge gaps, empowering workers, and fostering a culture of inclusivity and support. Together, we are driving positive change — one WorkSource, one customer, one day at a time. Stay tuned for updates as our collaboration evolves and continues to make a difference.



2024 WorkSource Vancouver Pilot Project Team collaborates on Halloween costumes as Minions. From left to right: Miho Schnee, Marra Johnson, Kristin Yoshimura, Maria Pedro, Erin Bjork, and Gru, aka Becky Ford-Sullivan.

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Management tips

Empowering personal and professional development

Submitted by Victoria Pruett, WSD communications consultant

Fostering growth through self-awareness and humility.



As leaders, our journey toward fostering personal and professional development begins with self-awareness. Understanding who we are as leaders not only grounds our decisions but also sets the tone for the culture within our teams. One approach is to start by reflecting on your values, strengths, and areas for growth. Are you empathetic? Do you actively listen? Are you a constant learner?

Self-awareness inspires trust and drives connections, creating a foundation for meaningful interactions within our teams and colleagues. Once you are centered and aware of your strengths and where you want to go, inspiring those you lead will feel more effortless and authentic. Draw on practical strategies and lead by example. When you pair inspiration with humility, you unlock the power of humble leadership. Leading with humility values collaboration over control, embraces feedback, and shows

vulnerability when appropriate. Humility fosters an environment where individuals feel empowered to grow alongside you.

Leadership isn't about perfection—it's about authenticity.

As leaders, if we continuously look for new insights and growth, we gain competence and confidence in accomplishing our goals and achievements. Prioritizing our own growth and self-awareness not only enhances our leadership journey but also empowers others to thrive alongside us.

If you are interested in a deeper dive and learning more, here are a few top articles from Harvard Business Review:

- [Who Are You as a Leader?](#)
- [The Power of Humble Leadership](#)
- [Four Ways to Become a More Inspirational Leader](#)

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March – It's officially spring!

Welcome vernal equinox! The first day of spring 2025 was Thursday, March 20. This is the astronomical beginning of spring in the Northern Hemisphere and the autumn season in the Southern Hemisphere.



Image courtesy of FarmersAlmanac.com

Things to do in and around the state

Check out the Washington State Tourism team's amazing calendar of annual events:

- [Major annual events – Check out April festivals](#)
 - o [Skagit Valley Tulip Festival](#), Mt. Vernon, April 1-30
 - o [Daffodil Festival](#), Pierce County, events April 5–July 12
 - o [Apple Blossom Festival](#), Wenatchee, April 24-May 5
 - o [WA State Spring Fair](#), Puyallup, April 10-13 & 17-20
- [Spring Yakima Valley Itinerary: Festivals, Hikes and more](#)

Do you have a favorite “spring thing” you like to do? We'd love to share favorite places and ideas. All shares are welcome! ESDGPWSDComms@esd.wa.gov

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