



SPOKANE WORKFORCE COUNCIL

MINUTES

February 8, 2023 – 7:30-9:30am

Meeting held in-person at the Ruby River Hotel, 700 N Division St – Shoreline A Ballroom and via Zoom

<p>MEMBERS PRESENT:</p> <p>Jeff Bosma Kevin Brockbank Toby Broemmeling Kelley Charvet Rebecca Cook Mary Crago Robert Duron Christi Harter Lori Hunley</p> <p>Machelle Johnson Dr. Shari McMahan Tina Morrison Diane Quincy Derek Tyree Christina Vigil Gross Jennie Weber Joel White Diana Wilhite</p> <p>Chief Elected Officials - Josh Kerns Steve MacDonald (designee) Ron Valencia (designee)</p>	<p>MEMBERS ABSENT:</p> <p>Doug Edmondson Dan Evans Luis Licea Kimberly Myles Katy O’Connor</p> <p>Chief Elected Officials Absent - Nadine Woodward</p>
<p>OTHERS PRESENT:</p> <p>Cami Eakins Kathy Hammonds Kayci Loftus Stephanie Mark Jenni Martin</p> <p>Jen Morris Terrance Nixon Brett Oliveri Lori Veitenheimer Beckie Sommerville</p>	
<p>STAFF PRESENT:</p> <p>Jessica Clayton Jeanette Facer Bianka DeSure Andrea Hixson Dawn Karber Liz Laubscher</p> <p>Mark Mattke Mike McBride Victor Rapez-Betty Tim Robison Melissa Voelker Kevin Williams</p>	<p>STAFF ABSENT:</p> <p>-All present-</p>

Chair Kelley Charvet called the meeting to order at 7:33am with a quorum of members present.

MEETING THE MISSION

Mark Mattke, SWC Chief Executive Officer

Mark gave an introduction on the current refugee and immigrant situation in Spokane County and introduced SWC Division Executive for System Advancement Kevin Williams to share information regarding a recent event held by our Talent Solutions Team and WorkSource in partnership with Thrive International to connect new arrivals to employment opportunities and resources in our community. Thrive currently serves about 1000 individuals and has a waitlist of 40 to 50 families hoping to obtain a room at their facility.

Kevin indicated that there are approximately 50,000 Slavic immigrants in our community, many whose country of origin is Ukraine and there are about 45 families per week still arriving here. WorkSource is reaching out through faith-based organizations to learn about emergent needs and how best to provide employment services. Lack of English language proficiency has been a barrier for many as they seek to integrate in our community.

Kevin introduced Lori Veitenheimer, our One-Stop Operator, Valentyna Tsema from WorkSource, and Brett Oliveri from the Talent Solutions Team. This hiring event was inspired by their discussions with an employer at our annual Access Job Fair in October and was designed for individuals for whom English is their second language. They had started by asking Thrive what these communities needed and then they focused on entry-level positions, limited English opportunities for promotion, and then found employers based on those things which helped make the event so successful. Ultimately, we hosted over 200 jobseekers, six employers, and three resource employers.

To help employers make good connections, Valentyna provided education sessions so they understand who the job seekers are and what their different situations and capabilities are. All the employers were very friendly and open-minded, and took the tips truly to heart, which helped cut back on culture shock and misunderstandings because of different expectations and experiences.

Brett shared positive feedback received and how much the participants appreciated the event. Valentyna offered some of her personal history about coming to America from the Ukraine and her own challenges that she overcame. While she and her family were volunteering at the Mexican border, she learned that people don't have a clear idea where to go or what to do upon arrival and they need access to resources in order to progress and become established. In Spokane, new arrivals have been coming to WorkSource and since employment authorization can take as long as eight or nine months so they need to understand the steps they can take along the way, including what types of jobs they are eligible for and how to complete the necessary paperwork. People waiting many months to get work authorizations face barriers including language skills and figuring out how to navigate the various systems. To assist, we have been partnering at the Resource Center of Spokane County and WorkSource to engage people and inform them of the array of services we have available. They're also working on creating groups to help people with specific needs based on their career plans and prior work experience and credentials.

Lori summarized the overall feel of the event as heartwarming and welcoming and that WorkSource and our partners will continue to look for ways to engage with our refugee and immigrant populations to connect them to training and employment in our area.

Board Member Recognition - Workforce Champion Award

Mark announced Spokane County Commissioner Josh Kerns as the winner of our inaugural Workforce Champion Award.

This award recognizes members of our community for their leadership and contributions to the success of our local workforce system. The workforce system only functions well when we have strong relationships at all levels, including the businesses that drive our economy, the groups that represent our workers, educational institutions, community-based organizations, and agencies that provide services, and our local elected officials. Our system can often fly beneath the radar and has many unsung heroes who do amazing work every day to connect people to opportunities and business to talent.

We are fortunate to have Commissioner Kerns as a SWC board member who understands the impact of the workforce system in our community and has advocated on our behalf, helped to secure funding for

our system, provided insightful governance and guidance, and taken time every year to be present at our Workforce System Conference and on our campus during Workforce Professionals Month to celebrate our staff and their work to support our community. Mark thanked Commissioner Kerns for his efforts to support our system and our staff and advance the mission of the Spokane Workforce Council. Comm. Kerns expressed his thanks to Mark and the team for receiving this honor. He observed that he serves on a lot of boards throughout community that do important work, and that this board changes the world for every single person who comes in seeking services, that this is a board he looks forward to coming to as the success stories and discussions demonstrate real change in our community.

ITEM #1 – REVIEW OF DECEMBER 14th MEETING MINUTES

Kelley Charvet, Board Chair

A review was done of the meeting minutes from the December 14, 2022, board meeting.

ACTION: Motioned and second to approve the December 14, 2022, meeting minutes.

Approved unanimously.

ITEM #2 – LABOR MARKET UPDATE

Mark Mattke, SWC Chief Executive Officer

Mark began this item with an introduction to inflation and its effect on our current economy. Even though job growth is strong employers are facing ongoing challenges in a very tight labor market trying to find and retain skilled employees Mark introduced Mike McBride, business and industry analyst for SWC, who gave a presentation with more details.

National numbers released the Friday before the meeting showed that the country currently has the lowest unemployment rate since 1969. 5017 jobs were added nationally in January, but we are not returning to pre-pandemic labor force participation rates, and there's no current expectation that will go up.

Spokane county has an unemployment rate of 5.2% compared to 6% in December 2022. The total unemployed is 14,007, the total employed is 254,410. These numbers are based on models of traditional employment and do not include gig workers and other contract labor employees.

Are retirements accelerated during the pandemic at a much higher rate than was expected for example, 5 million more people considered are now considered not in the labor force compared to pre-pandemic levels. Childcare availability in affordability has impacted prime age workers' ability to enter the labor force or return to the labor force. Spokane has been slightly more insulated from workforce shortages as our population has been growing strongly, unlike many other areas.

The cost of living has skyrocketed in Spokane, with one in five adults living in an intergenerational household due to higher costs. More people are retiring and not coming back once retired, even with the cost-of-living increases, which was unexpected.

Our area should have over 2000 childcare workers if following national averages and we are 667 short of that number. There was a discussion in the room if the wage differential between our county and close by counties in Idaho and other areas are driving workers here instead of there, or if they are causing wages to be higher there. Mike explained that with the age difference in population from Kootenai county to Spokane county, the demand is much lower for childcare there. While we are still seeing more men in the current workforce women are now higher educated, and have higher income earning potential, and will be have higher earning jobs in the future. Men have not returned to the labor force as much as women have after the pandemic. Men without degrees are falling out of the labor force in large

numbers and they are not coming back even for trade schools or apprenticeships. Traditional jobs held by women, e.g., childcare and teaching, were the heavily impacted by the pandemic, but within the last 4 to 6 months many of those women have gone back to work.

Employers will benefit by understanding better how to engage people in returning to the labor force. With so many currently living with their parents (at least 50%), they don't necessarily need a regular occupation and they are doing lots of job hopping or gig work or having one or two part-time jobs instead of one full-time job with a lot of flexibility.

There are approximately three open jobs for everyone new unemployment claims locally. 2022 was the true great resignation with about 50.5 million people quitting their jobs testing. Most of these people are quitting their jobs and moving into new jobs at higher wages and better benefits, rather than exiting the labor force completely. Five target industries in the area designated by the Spokane Workforce Council – finance and insurance, healthcare and social assistance, manufacturing, professional, scientific, and technical services, and transportation and warehousing. Construction and education are also considered watch industries locally. Most of the local workforce dollars are investment in talent development within these industries because there are many jobs locally with strong projected openings jobs that typically pay a living wage, and there are numerous career entry points at the certificate or two-year degree level.

Overall Spokane employment is projected to grow by 13,593 new jobs by 2025, which outpaces state and national projections. Three of Spokane's target industries are projecting very high new job growth rates with transportation and warehousing at 17% or 1800+ new jobs, healthcare, and social assistance at 7% or 3000+ new jobs, and professional scientific and technical services at 8% or 985 new jobs.

There was a very animated discussion throughout the room during Mike's presentation. Questions covered included the anomaly of why people aren't coming back to the workforce and not responding in a normal fashion after a recession, if people working multiple jobs is affecting the data we are shown, and what men are doing if they aren't going back to work. Mike took the time to give detailed responses to all of these questions.

ITEM #3 – WORKFORCE TRAINING: COMMUNITY COLLEGES OF SPOKANE

Mark Mattke, SWC Chief Executive Officer

Mark introduced our Spokane Community College partners – SCC President Dr. Kevin Brockbank and SCC Vice President of Instruction Jenni Martin.

Dr. Brockbank provided an overview of our local community college system and some of the demographic factors contributing to their student population. They are seeing a higher proportion of women achieving higher educational attainment levels and commensurately getting better jobs. They serve not just matriculating high school seniors but also focus on adults in our population, e.g., refugees and underemployed individuals. SCC and SFCC are possibly the most comprehensive community colleges in the state and have helped build the workforce backbone of the Spokane region for over 60 years, offering technical and transfer degrees. Their largest partner for students going on to baccalaureate programs is Eastern Washington University.

Jenni Martin shared information about how SCC is responding to a range of workforce needs, including adding capacity to their nursing program and providing English as a Second Language instruction to the influx of refugees – which increased from 400 students fall 2021 to 900+ students in the fall of 2022. Many of whom are highly educated but lacking English skills and needing to figure out next steps to

move from learning English to returning to the workforce and leveraging their prior degrees and credentials. SCC has launched a new Bachelor of Applied Science “DevOp”’s degree, the first such degree in state, and working to expand their CDL program to buy more trucks and increase the number of qualified drivers in this in-demand field.

SCC is focused on re-engaging adults and a high school completion with dual credit for adults program will launch in fall 2023. A student earns a 2-year degree from CCS which also counts as a high school diploma. In spring of this year, a new FastTrack degree program starts that turns a two-year AA degree program into one year and is the first in state at community college. These type of fast-track programs nationwide are helping with the re-engagement of men in higher education.

ITEM #4 – GRANTS & CONTRACTS

Dawn Karber, SWC Chief Operations Officer

Dawn brought three grants to the board for action and provided information about two others. -

WIOA Youth - Increase Award

The state is in the process of obligating the rest of their PY21 WIOA Formula funds, and there are extra funds available in the WIOA Youth Program at the state level that must be spent by 6/30/2023. Spokane is eligible to receive up to \$40,000 in Program and Administrative funds. After analysis, we have determined that we will be able to spend these funds by 6/30 and meet our spending requirements for work-based learning expenditures.

Employment Recovery Dislocated Worker Grant – Increase Award

We have been operating a COVID-19 National Dislocated Worker grant since August 2020 called Employment Recovery. This is a statewide grant, and the SWC has had several opportunities throughout the grant timeline to apply for additional funding as other areas returned funding due to under-spending and/or ending contracts early. The Grants Management Office of Employment Security Department recently released some of their own funding that they have not expended to be available for Local Boards to apply for. Spokane has the opportunity to receive \$160,000 in additional funding, to be spent by June 30, 2023. \$96,000 of the award is being requested by WorkSource to serve our already enrolled customers with additional supportive services and training funds. Existing funding has not been adequate to meet customer need, as prices have risen both for training programs and for other supportive services, such as gas. The rest of the award will support operations and staffing expenses at the Talent Solutions Team and the SWC as we finish out the grant year, allowing us to take some of the pressure off of our WIOA Formula funds, which can carry into the new program year July 1.

Economic Security for All (EcSA) Federal – Increase Award

After the EcSA pilot project ended in April of 2022, new grants were made available to all areas of the state, under two funding streams: WIOA (federal) funding from the Governor’s discretionary WIOA budget, and State funding approved by the legislature. Part-way through the year, the Governor increased the proportion of his discretionary WIOA budget that he was investing in the EcSA program, and additional funds have been released statewide for areas to apply for. Because Spokane has met or exceeded performance and expenditure targets for this program, we are eligible to apply for funds right away. These funds don’t expire until March of 2024, and will allow us to round out the staffing plan through the end of the grant term (currently staff only had enough EcSA funding to last through the end of the current program year). Our original reduced award was not large enough to support more than one subcontracted agency and these funds will also allow us to bring ESD back into the project as a service provider. We are expanding the partnership on this grant between the Resource Center and

WorkSource Spokane, and ESD will be supporting work at both the Financial Resource Management team and the Continuous Engagement Teams at WorkSource.

On a motion and a second, the board unanimously approved the following actions:

- *Accept up to \$40,000 in PY21 WIOA Youth funding and subcontract up to the full award it to the WorkSource Consortium.*
- *Accept \$160,000 in additional ER-NDWG funding and subcontract up to \$140,000 of it to the WorkSource Consortium. The total award since the contract began will be \$2,154,874.*
- *Apply for an additional \$354,465.83 in Federal EcSA dollars and subcontract up to \$320,000 to Career Path Services and Employment Security Department. The entire award for the Federal EcSA contract will be \$786,096.64.*

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Addition of \$564,465.83 to the operating budget.

Information only

BACKGROUND

Columbia Bank Award

Columbia Bank provided us with a \$25,000 grant in 2022 to support work at the Resource Center of Spokane County. The funding supported staff professional development, helped pay wages for a guest services position, supported rent, and allowed us to support staff with break room supplies and other items. We had no indication whether we would receive future awards from the bank, especially since they were acquired by Umpqua and have been going through the merger process over the past year. However, just before Christmas they reached out to let us know they can fund us again in 2023 and increased the award to \$40,000. This incredible, flexible funding will allow us to offer additional supportive services to customers, round out some planned services for refugee/limited English customers, and support operations costs at the center. We're thankful for the amazing work the staff at the center do – the success stories and reporting we were able to share with these partners showcased our amazing work and made it possible to get an increased award this year.

Finalized Department of Social & Health Service Food Assistance Program Office of Refugee & Immigrant Assistance Employment & Training Briefing

In December, the Executive Committee voted to approve funding from DSHS Office of Refugee & Immigrant Assistance (ORIA) to serve refugee and immigrant community members at the RCSC. This is an update to let you know the final award amount was \$68,396.00 to serve 25 participants over a 6-month timeline. This is a pilot project, and if we are able to meet enrollment targets, the project may be extended. We are subcontracting with Career Path Services to provide navigation and case management services for this population at the RCSC on behalf of the entire campus, and we're thankful to have a fund source dedicated to serving a population for whom we have seen an increase in numbers and need without a previous mechanism to provide them services.

ITEM #5 – SYSTEM PERFORMANCE ANALYTICS

Mark Mattke, SWC Chief Executive Officer

Mark introduced a new performance dashboard with analytics created by Liz Laubscher, SWC program coordinator, being used to help track and report our workforce system outcomes. This will help our efforts to analyze and continuously improve our services.

Jessica Clayton and Andi Hixson reviewed the program outcomes and expenditure data and customer demographics for each of our core WIOA programs and at both WorkSource and the Resource Center of Spokane County (RCSC).

Jessica shared the performance letter received from ESD with kudos to all staff and providers for meeting and exceeding almost all program targets.

ITEM #6 – STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS

Kelley Charvet, Board Chair

Kelley pointed out tab 6 and Executive Committee actions taken in December.

- **Executive Committee**

At its 12/22/22 meeting the Executive Committee took action on the following items:

Spokane Community College – FAFSA Completion Initiative

FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) completion has been shown to have a direct correlation to postsecondary attendance. To support more students seeking higher education, and to increase the number of FAFSA applications in Washington state, the legislature has allocated for community colleges and community-based organizations also working towards these goals. Spokane Community College and the SWC submitted a funding proposal that would see more staff time across the WorkSource campus devoted to promoting FAFSA completion. It would also provide funding for virtual and in-person workshops and campaigns to promote the FAFSA, with the goal of 100 FAFSA completions by June 30, 2022.

ACTION: Motion and Second to authorize the SWC to accept \$50,000 from Spokane Community College and subcontract up to \$35,000 to the Spokane Workforce Consortium. Approved unanimously.

Economic Security for All (EcSA) Federal – Increased Reward

After the EcSA pilot project ended in April of this year, new grants were made available to all areas of the state, under two funding streams: WIOA (federal) funding from the Governor’s discretionary budget, and State funding approved by the legislature. One of the areas that received a federal-funded EcSA contract has not expended their funding, and recently had a portion of their funding re-captured. As one of only three areas that are on track with both expenditures and performance so far this program year, Spokane was offered \$62,000.81 of those recaptured dollars. They are from a previous program year and expire in March. We are one of only three areas of the state positioned to be able to expend them in time. We will seek to subcontract the full amount to Career Path Services to be used for supportive services and training for customers and supplement our direct client budgets that are very tight this year due to reductions in WIOA formula funding.

ACTION: Motion and Second to authorize the SWC to accept \$62,000.81 in Federal EcSA funding from Employment Security Department and subcontract up to the full amount to Career Path Services. Approved unanimously.

Anticipated Award – DSHS FAP ORIA E&T

The SWC anticipates receiving up to \$70,000 from DSHS to serve refugees and immigrants on food assistance who have not yet received their work permits. Over the last year, we have seen a significant increase of refugees on our campus, but without a work permit we are very limited in what services we can offer. Across our sites, we have staff who speak over 10 languages, and are well positioned to provide services to this population if we had funds to do so. SWC staff are in the middle of negotiating a contract with DSHS to serve approximately 30 refugees through the end of this program year. We will hire a Navigator at the RCSC to provide wraparound pre-employment services and the ability to assist

this vulnerable population until they are able to legally work. We will subcontract up to the full award with Career Path Services.

ACTION: Motion and Second to authorize the SWC to accept up to \$70,000.00 in FAP ORIA E&T funds from DSHS and subcontract up to the full amount to Career Path Services. Staff will brief the Executive Committee at its next meeting about the status of these funds and if they were received as anticipated. Approved unanimously.

OTHER BUSINESS

Kelley Charvet, Board Chair

Derek Tyree has agreed to take on the role of chair of our Youth Career Readiness Network.

Action: Nominate Derek Tyree as chair of YCRN. Motion and a second, approved unanimously.

Hiring and Retention Strategies, Wednesday, 4/19

The SWC is partnering with GSI, the Greater Spokane Valley Chamber of Commerce, Journal of Business, Optimal Talent Dynamics, the City of Spokane Valley, and INSHRM to convene a Hiring and Retention Strategies event at CenterPlace on April 19th. This is designed for businesses and HR professionals to attend and walk away with strategies to navigate the current labor market. Panelists will include local businesses who will share their successes in attracting and retaining talent in this post-pandemic economy. The event will be from 7:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m. with breakfast served. Please watch for more information and register.

Toby Broemmeling – on March 11th, Skills'kin is holding an event to help caregivers and parents bring awareness of how we help those with disabilities get into or back into the workforce.

The meeting was Adjourned at 9:29am by Kelley Charvet.

NEXT MEETING:

The next Full Board Spokane Workforce Council Meeting will be held in-person (and via Zoom) at the Ruby River Hotel, 7:30-9:30am, on April 12, 2023.