



EMPLOYMENT SECURITY DEPARTMENT

# Legislative

# 2025

# Priorities





## About the Employment Security Department

### When life events disrupt employment, we provide economic security to the people of Washington state

*The Employment Security Department helps people find jobs, bridges gaps in employment, provides paid family and medical leave, supports the state's long-term care fund and more.*

#### Bridging gaps in employment

*We run the state's Unemployment Insurance program, providing financial stability for workers and contributing to economic stability for businesses and the broader community during difficult economic times.*

#### Providing paid family and medical leave

*We run the state's Paid Family and Medical Leave program, providing workers peace of mind when they need to care for themselves or a loved one while ensuring employers remain stable.*

#### Supporting the state's long-term care fund

*In partnership with the Department of Social and Health Services, the Health Care Authority, and the State Actuary, we ensure all working Washingtonians can earn access to long-term care by collecting premiums and administering exemptions.*

#### Helping people find jobs and employers find workers

*We work with local partners throughout the state to provide services to job seekers and employers so that individuals and businesses in Washington can flourish and reach their full potential.*

#### More information:

[esd.wa.gov](https://esd.wa.gov) | [paidleave.wa.gov](https://paidleave.wa.gov) | [wacaresfund.wa.gov](https://wacaresfund.wa.gov) | [worksourceWA.com](https://worksourceWA.com)

# Our opportunities and challenges



*More than half of the funding our agency receives is federal, but that funding has declined in real terms over many years as costs have risen. We utilize state funding sources to make up the difference, but the gap continues to widen.*

*Employment Security's 2024-28 Strategic Plan outlines our intent to better serve Washingtonians, particularly marginalized communities. The pandemic highlighted the need to improve the customer experience and modernize our systems to drive better outcomes.*

*Our Unemployment Insurance program faces challenges with customer wait times, as well as sophisticated fraud attacks. Caseloads in Paid Family and Medical Leave are rapidly growing. Governor Inslee's proposed 25-27 budget provides resources to improve customer service, access, and program integrity.*

## Our priorities

### Stable agency funding

There is continuing uncertainty in Employment Security's federal funding, which accounts for about 60 percent of the agency budget. Additionally, rate setting for the Paid Family and Medical Leave program does not accommodate for the program's high popularity and need to establish a reserve. Employment Security will work with the Governor's Office and Legislature to ensure adequate resources are available for fiscal solvency.





### **Improving access to services**

*We are focused on making it easier for customers to access our programs. Employment Security's goal is for customers to receive equitable services at the right time and in the way they need it.*

### **Unemployment Insurance customer service improvement plan**

Under the proposed budget, Employment Security will add more staff to improve customer service for employers, workers and job seekers at call centers as well as WorkSource offices across the state. These staff would serve customers in person and on the phone to shorten wait times, help customers navigate barriers to services, and support prompt benefit payments.

### **Outreach, education and support**

Employment Security received federal funding for a pilot program to address inequities and reduce barriers in the unemployment insurance system for underserved communities. The proposed budget would fund community-based organizations doing this work for another year.

### **Employment Services for marginalized communities**

The proposed budget includes funding to help Washingtonians experiencing poverty reach economic self-sufficiency and to improve employment outreach to farmworkers. It also funds a pilot program to enhance employment services for Justice Involved Individuals.



## Innovative System Solutions

*We aim to improve the customer journey and experience for those accessing our programs. The following enhancements to achieve those goals are included in Governor Inslee's proposed 25-27 budget*

### **Unemployment Insurance system upgrade**

The proposed budget provides \$500,000 to conduct a feasibility study and produce a comprehensive roadmap for improving the unemployment insurance benefit payment system. Washington workers and employers expect a system that's clear and easy to navigate, provides one-on-one customer service when needed, and results in prompt and accurate benefit payments. Employment Security needs to modernize its technology system to be more usable and accessible, including mobile-friendly tools to apply for and manage claims and support for multiple languages. This funding is provided through federal Reed Act funds.

### **WorkSource Integrated Technology (WIT) implementation**

Employment Security is transitioning to a new, more efficient and effective case management and labor exchange (job matching) platform. The proposed budget provides funding to complete replacement of the WIT platform, which supports statewide workforce administration. The funding covers continued staffing, vendor costs and reimbursement for Local Workforce Development Boards participating in the project.

### Customer Compliance integration

Employment Security is the entrusted steward of the Unemployment Insurance, Paid Family and Medical Leave, and WA Cares programs. An essential function of these programs is ensuring benefits are available when needed and paid to the right people, at the right time and for the right reasons. The proposed budget provides resources to proactively guide claimants with complex benefit needs to the right program while making it easier for employers to do business, eliminating duplicative reviews and adding efficient and effective protections against fraud.

### Completion of Paid Family Medical Leave and WA Cares systems

Employment Security's funding to complete the development of the two information technology systems is included in the proposed budget. In addition, funding is provided for staff to implement the WA Cares program, which will be fully implemented in the 2025-27 biennium.

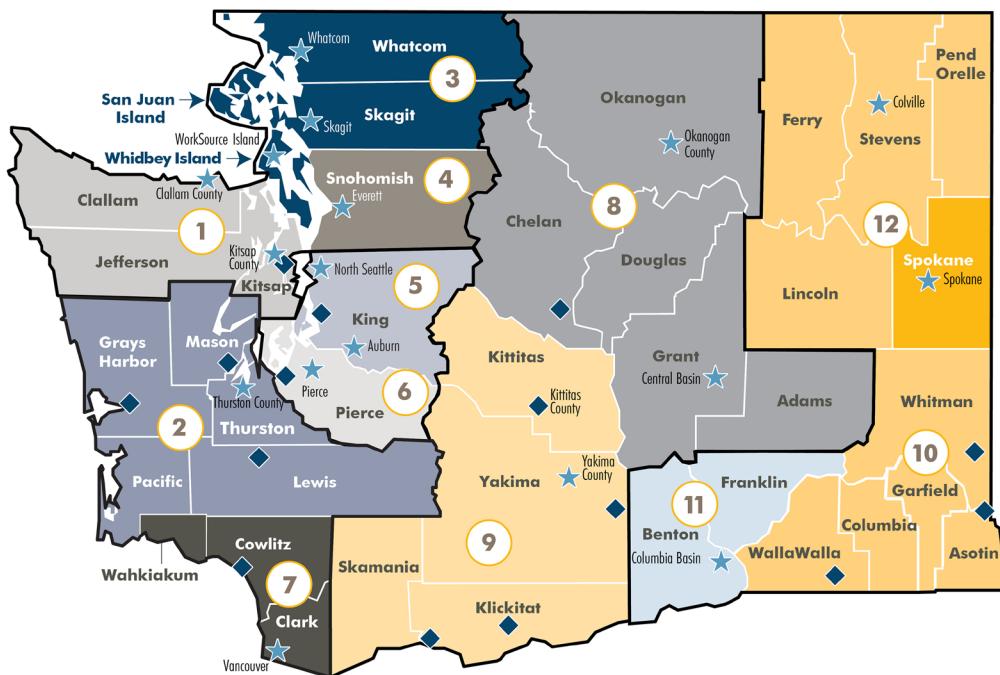




# Workforce Development Areas (WDA) Regions | Centers | Affiliates

Workforce Development Areas (WDA)	ESD Region
1 Olympic	North Sound
3 Northwest	
4 Snohomish	
5 SeaKing	Central Sound
6 Pierce	
2 Pac Mountain	Southwest Coastal
7 Southwest	
8 North Central	Central
9 South Central	
10 Eastern	Eastern
11 Benton Franklin	
12 Spokane	
★ WorkSource center = 17	
◆ WorkSource affiliate = 15	

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**Cami Feek**  
Commissioner

*Cami Feek was reappointed commissioner for the Employment Security Department (ESD) by Governor-elect Bob Ferguson in December 2024. She was first appointed Commissioner by Gov. Jay Inslee in June 2021. Prior to that, she served as ESD's acting commissioner, deputy commissioner and chief operating officer. Cami understands that achievement comes from cooperation and a shared vision. She translates these principles to her professional leadership, focusing her career on strategic systems design and innovative and effective operations. She knows first-hand that good government is key to bringing about quality services that Washingtonians deserve and expect.*