



COVID-19 Workforce Update for Clark, Cowlitz & Wahkiakum Counties March 26, 2020

While the full ramifications of the COVID-19 Coronavirus pandemic will likely not be fully understood for many months, in the short-term as health and safety measures are implemented to help stem the spread of the coronavirus, the workforce system is seeing large impacts.

Current State

Since March 18, WorkSource and Next have been providing services virtually with their offices being closed to the public. Workshops and services are available online and staff are assisting customers via phone, email and video meetings.

Between March 16-20, our Business Services team was contacted by 27 businesses considering layoffs or work-hour reductions. The largest number of companies were in accommodation and food services, healthcare and social assistance, and construction. A total of 500 workers in these companies would be impacted. We expect to see these number rise in the coming weeks.

On the flip side, some sectors, such as grocery stores and long-term care facilities are scrambling to fill a large number of open positions. Companies that employ “Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers” are also struggling due to the volume of employees who aren’t able to come to work for a variety of reasons including fear of contracting the virus or bringing it home to loved ones, and many due to the lack of available childcare options.

We are working closely with our partners at WorkSource to quickly match individuals looking for jobs with open positions.

Top questions companies are asking us:

1. How does the Shared Work program work?
2. How does Standby work?
3. Is my industry considered “essential” or “non-essential” under Governor Inslee’s “Stay Home” proclamation?
4. How can my employees estimate their weekly unemployment benefit amount?

What we learned on 3.26.20

The number of new unemployment insurance claimants skyrocketed between week 10 (3/8-3/14/20) and week 11 (3/15-3/21/20)

Clark County saw an increase of 1,575% in UI claimants

Week 10: 373 Claimants

Week 11: 6,249 Claimants



Cowlitz County saw an increase of 1,030% in UI claimants

Week 10: 129 Claimants

Week 11: 1,458 Claimants

Wahkiakum County saw an increase of 533% in UI claimants

Week 10: 3 Claimants

Week 11: 19 Claimants

Washington State saw an increase of 843% in UI claimants between week 10 & 11

Week 10: 14,154 Claimants

Week 11: 133,464

By industry (For Washington State, county data not yet available)

Industry sectors experiencing the highest percentage of new claims during March 15-21 were:

- Accommodation and food services: 41,309 new claims; up 1,033 percent from previous week
- Health care and social assistance: 18,902 new claims; up 2,103 percent from the previous week
- Other services: 9,626 new claims; up 2,871 percent from the previous week
- Retail trade: 8,700 new claims; up 1,189 percent from the previous week
- Manufacturing: 5,276 new claims; up 434 percent from the previous week

The healthcare and social services industry is the biggest surprise in this data. Locally, our hospitals are not hiring or providing any clinical experiences for students, with the exception of experienced nurses. In addition, hospitals are looking at upskilling current medical assistants to become screeners, which will free up registered nurses to care for patients. Most major clinics are in a hiring freeze and they don't have many upskilling needs as there are not very many patients visiting the clinics. The long-term care sector needs certified nursing assistances, personal care assistants and food service. They are concerned the publicity around lack of personal protective equipment is impacting their ability to attract talent into these roles.

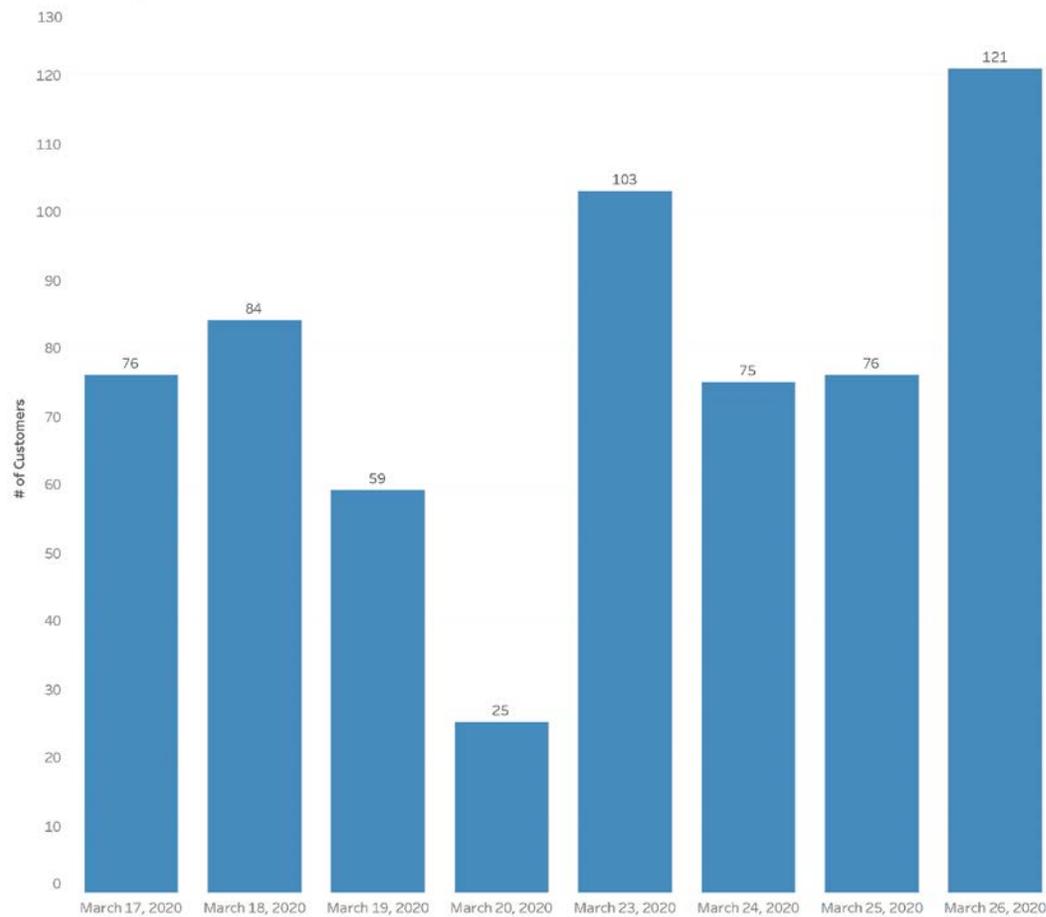
Governor Jay Inslee's "Stay Home. Stay Healthy" proclamation will have dramatic impact on a variety of industries, most especially construction which allows for construction in the following limited circumstances:

- A. Construction related to essential activities as described in the order
- B. To further a public purpose related to a public entity or governmental function or facility, including but not limited to publicly financed low-income housing
- C. To prevent spoliation and avoid damage or unsafe conditions, and address emergency repairs at both non-essential businesses and residential structures



Since moving to virtual service delivery on March 18, calls to WorkSource have nearly doubled:

Customer Appointments



Distinct count of Name for each Checkin Time Day. The marks are labeled by distinct count of Name. The view is filtered on Checkin Time Day, which excludes Null.

Our shared priorities with ESD

We are focusing on several key areas to best serve the region's businesses and workers:

- Quickly stand up a statewide solution for matching talent to jobs in essential industries such as grocery, healthcare and transportation.
- Support people and make unemployment insurance as accessible as possible to all who need it.
- Have staff available virtually at the local level to help job seekers navigate program options and connect to new job opportunities.
- **Staff** – WSW and all our subcontractors, including our local WorkSource and Next operations have moved completely remote. Except for a few essential staff, all staff are working remotely



to comply with Governor Inslee's guidance and help stop the spread of the virus. Safety and health of WSW staff, our subcontractor staff, and our partner staff are our number one priority.

- **Job Seekers** – Our shared goal locally and across the state is to remove as many barriers as possible for people impacted by COVID-19 to receive the financial support they need to meet their basic needs. We have successfully moved our entire menu of job seeker services online and continue to serve job seekers at full capacity through virtual means. As more and more job seekers hit our system after being laid off due to COVID-19, we are working with our partners at ESD to make sure we have the tools, systems, protocols, and contingency planning in place to serve every customer that needs our services. As many individuals in “non-essential businesses” lose their jobs, many essential businesses that must stay open need additional workers to meet the demand. We are working to place as many people as possible into the available positions.
- **Businesses** – As more and more businesses start seeing the financial and economic impact of COVID-19 we are working locally and with the state to ensure we are ready to respond to business needs promptly and consistently. As many sectors see mass layoffs, others see an immense uptick in open positions to meet demand. Our local business team is communicating with businesses daily to provide them with the services they need during these challenging times. Our team is also working closely with our partners at ESD and L&I to make connections for businesses in need of resources.

What our team is doing and working towards

- The Washington Workforce Association will be convening a statewide team of business services leaders from each WDC to create a solution to provide single-point-of-contact access to the public workforce system and align service delivery for statewide employers (examples: Providence, Boeing, etc.).
- Our business services team is focused on helping businesses with immediate hiring needs, providing information to companies about special unemployment programs like Shared Work and Standby designed to help them retain their workforce.
- WSW joined forces with our partners at CREDC and hosted Zoom calls on March 18 and 20 where we walked through local, state and federal assistance available for businesses impacted by COVID-19. Access the slides from those calls [here](#) and watch the [March 20 video](#).
- To help businesses and job seekers impacted by COVID-19 find resources they need, we put together a [list of sources of information, guidance and assistance](#). We will update it as information becomes available.
- Our team is working with local operations to troubleshoot and problem solve virtual service delivery. We have provided online tools and trainings to ensure service providers operate at full capacity. As a result, we have successfully moved all workshops and one-on-one services virtual. Staff are connecting with customers by phone, email and online tools such as WebEx, DocuSign, Facebook Live, etc.
- We are shifting our internship programs to place individuals with businesses that have remote-work needs, moving them away from discontinued in-person assignments.
- We have also adjusted our local policy and guidance to make virtual service delivery smoother and remove undue barriers for customers in need of immediate assistance.



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- Our WSW team is also working closely with our state partners to learn and share best practices in these unprecedented times. We are leading the way in the state for virtual offerings and are helping partners across the state up to speed by sharing our tools and content.
- Last but not least, we are continuously monitoring the workforce and economic fallout and outlooks that will result from this situation. We are prepared to mobilize our team and our resources to help businesses, job seekers and the economy.

We continue to work with and advocate on behalf of impacted businesses in Clark, Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties. We are here for you, please reach out.

We will provide updates as information becomes available.

Sincerely,
Kevin Perkey
Chief Executive Officer