



The Workforce Wire - March 2026 Edition

Workforce Southwest Washington Receives Federal Support to Strengthen Regional Skills Pipeline



Workforce Southwest Washington has secured federal funding championed by Senator Patty Murray as part of the recently passed appropriations package supporting investments across Washington state.

This funding will enable WorkSource and Partners in Careers to provide comprehensive career services and case management to 206 individuals, helping at least 154 participants obtain and retain quality employment.

The investment will also help launch a Welcome Back Center at Clark College, offering individualized education and career planning,

resume support, guidance on professional licensing, and referrals to training and employment resources.

We are grateful to Senator Murray for securing these funds for our region. This investment will expand access to education, employment, and training services and strengthen workforce opportunities across Southwest Washington.

Read our blog to hear from our partners about the impact of this funding.

[Learn more](#)

Bill Passed to Codify the Community Reinvestment Program



House Bill 2523, which ensures the Community Reinvestment Program (CRP) remains a key part of Washington's efforts to increase equity and expand economic security, passed the Legislature with strong bipartisan support, 88–9 in the House and 45–3 in the Senate.

Sponsored by Rep. Kristine Reeves, the bill strengthens and codifies the CRP, creating a lasting pathway for investment, restoration, and opportunity in communities harmed by decades of inequitable policy.

For Workforce Southwest Washington, this means we can continue investing CRP funds into small businesses and supporting individuals pursuing training and entering stable employment.

The bill now awaits the signature of Governor Bob Ferguson.

[Learn more](#)

Employment Goals Exceeded Through Healthcare Grant Investments



Healthcare Workforce Wins!

Through the Washington Jobs Initiative grant, in partnership with our service providers at WorkSource, we have exceeded our healthcare job placement goal by 110% and enrolled 220 individuals in training programs to strengthen our local talent pipeline.

Read our latest blog to learn more about the program's impact

[Learn more](#)

Washington Governor Appoints WSW CEO to the Washington Workforce Board



Governor Bob Ferguson has appointed new members to the Washington Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board, including our CEO, Miriam Halliday.

In this role, Miriam will represent local elected officials and collaborate with the Workforce Board to help shape statewide workforce policy, research, and evaluation that guide Washington's workforce development strategies and strengthen opportunities for workers and employers across the state.

[Learn more](#)

Local Partners continue to serve NEXT Success



We're excited to share that the NEXT Careers Consortium will continue its partnership in delivering NEXT Success services. The consortium brings together local partners [Partners in Careers](#) and [Career Path Services](#), who have been key collaborators in helping young people access workforce opportunities.

The partnership began in April 2023, with direct services to youth launching in July 2023. Since then, the consortium has served nearly 500 young people, helping connect them to training, education, and career pathways.

We're grateful for their continued collaboration and commitment to supporting youth across our region.

[Learn more about NEXT Success](#)

Meet our Team: Jim Ashley-Walker



Meet Jim!

Jim is our talented accounting specialist. He has been with WSW since 2024, but before joining our team he was on the board for a very fascinating organization called Sisters of the Road. We asked Jim to share a little bit about his experience.

"I knew Sisters of the Road due to their decades-long work with the unhoused population in Portland, and became even more interested when I learned about their strong pay equity and employee protections. I started getting involved by volunteering in their cafe. This was key to learning the direct work that the organization does, and getting to know the people that I live alongside and that make up our community. The organizational values were very impressive to me, connecting to the humanity in everybody, learning not to make assumptions, and highlighting the knowledge and experiences of people who have lived unhoused and in dire poverty. I was invited to join the Board of Directors, and appreciated it being composed of people from different walks of life, not just accountants and other office professionals. During seven years there I took on various roles including Board Treasurer and Board President. The roles tended to come with more responsibility than power, as the organization practiced consensus decision making in all areas. The work there was hugely challenging, and at times overwhelming or uncomfortable. But overall it was one of the most rewarding things I have done in my life.

The feeling of working towards societal goals with a diverse group of likeminded people is very important to me. To this day I am still trying to model the values that Sisters of the Road helped me to hone. I'm still trying to learn better when to step back and when to step forward. How to better use the skills and advantages I do have, but also how to make space for and support others who are better placed or experienced to be doing the work. There is so much work to be done."

Washington State Minimum Wage Increases in 2026



On January 1 of this year, Washington State's minimum wage increased by 2.8%, rising from \$16.66 to \$17.13. This represents a 0.5% larger increase than the 2.3% adjustment in 2025.

Read our blog to learn more about the updated wage, how it compares to surrounding areas, and how your company can move toward providing self-sufficient wages for employees.

[Read the blog here](#)

Make an impact! Join our board and help shape the future of Southwest Washington's workforce.



Join our WSW Board of Directors and help shape a workforce that truly represents Southwest Washington. We're looking for leaders, community members and industry voices who want to make a real impact for workers, jobseekers and local

businesses. By joining us, you'll help guide programs, shape strategy and ensure our region's workforce reflects the people who live and work here. If interested please fill out the board application below.

[Apply to join our Board](#)

Partner Events

Next Workshops | 2901 E Mill Plain Blvd,
Vancouver, WA 98661

[Schedule of events at Next](#)

WorkSource Vancouver Hiring Event | March 18,
2026 | 10 a.m. - 12 p.m. |
204 SE Stonemill Drive, Suite 215, Vancouver, WA
98684

WorkSource Vancouver Meet the Employer -
Military Sealift Command |
April 1, 2026 | 8 - 10 a.m. | 204 SE Stonemill
Drive, Suite 215, Vancouver, WA 98684

WorkSource Vancouver Hiring Event | April 15,
2026 | 10 a.m. - 12 p.m. | 204 SE Stonemill
Drive, Suite 215, Vancouver, WA 98684

WorkSource Vancouver Meet the Employer -
Oregon Tradeswomen | May 6, 2026 | 8 - 10 a.m. |
204 SE Stonemill Drive, Suite 215, Vancouver, WA
98684

WorkSource Vancouver Hiring Event | May 20,
2026 | 10 a.m. - 12 p.m. | 204 SE Stonemill
Drive, Suite 215, Vancouver, WA 98684

Workforce Southwest Washington (WSW), a 501c3 nonprofit and the Local Workforce Development Board for Clark, Cowlitz, and Wahkiakum counties, is dedicated to leading a regional workforce development system where every individual has access to quality employment and every business has access to a highly skilled workforce. WSW designs, coordinates and funds workforce programs and services in collaboration with local partners. Our initiatives aim to equip both youth and adults with the essential skills, training, and education required for employment and career advancement. We aid in business growth by funding and collaborating with quality companies to facilitate recruitment, training, and retention of skilled employees.

[Read our Blogs](#)

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