



Employment Security Department
WASHINGTON STATE

2023

Legislative

PRIORITIES



ABOUT EMPLOYMENT SECURITY DEPARTMENT (ESD)

When life events disrupt employment, ESD provides economic security to the people of Washington in every corner of the state. We help people find jobs, bridge gaps in employment, provide paid family and medical leave, support the state's long-term care fund and more.

Helping people find jobs. As a main partner in the state's workforce development system, we collaborate with WorkSource to connect employers and job seekers. [Learn more on our website.](#)

Bridging gaps in employment. We administer the state's Unemployment Insurance program by collecting taxes from employers and providing benefits to workers. [Learn more on our website.](#)

Providing paid family and medical leave. We administer the state's Paid Leave program. Our team strives to provide an easily accessible benefit that helps employers and employees maintain economic stability and peace of mind in challenging times. [Learn more on our Paid Leave website.](#)

Supporting the state's long-term care fund. ESD is responsible for collecting premiums, offering an elective coverage option, determining vesting status and processing exemption applications for the WA Cares Fund. Our partner agencies include the Department of Social and Health Services, Health Care Authority and the State Actuary. [Learn more on the WA Cares website.](#)



DECISION PACKAGES

Project to replace the WorkSource Integrated Technology (WIT) platform

\$11.6 million to complete the WorkSource Integrated Technology replacement project.

This statewide initiative is critical for delivering re-employment services to employers and job seekers. It's also necessary to meet requirements for both state and federal reporting. The scope includes replacing the public facing WorkSource WA labor exchange system, which job seekers and employees use to access WorkSource system services. It also includes replacing the WIT case management system for WorkSource system staff, which include ESD employees, partners and stakeholders.

Continuous improvement team for unemployment

\$3.1 million for a "Continuous Improvement Team" to enhance our Unemployment Insurance (UI) program. The team would work on improving the experience for claimants and employers, with a focus on delivering services equitably.

Information security

\$1.6 million for more information security staff. ESD needs more staff to proactively address critical security vulnerabilities, audit findings and process gaps.

WA Cares Fund implementation

\$15.4 million to complete the second phase of the WA Cares Fund. During the second phase, ESD will build a "qualification checker" (or eligibility service) for the WA Cares program that will track a benefit recipient's status from initial premium payments all the way through benefits administration. We expect this service to enable an improved customer service experience for benefit recipients.

Paid Leave outreach to underserved communities

\$3.1 million for the Leave & Care Division to increase outreach about the Paid Leave program to underserved communities. The funds also would allow staff to evaluate program performance, manage data, perform necessary fiscal functions and enhance customers' experience.

Stipend increase to keep Washington Service Corps AmeriCorps members out of poverty

\$7.9 million to increase the stipend for Washington Service Corps AmeriCorps members who enter service with incomes below 200% of the federal poverty level. This means 583 members serving in the Washington Service Corps would receive the maximum monthly stipend allowed by AmeriCorps, or \$26,758, for their term of service. This enhancement would help ensure that joining AmeriCorps does not require members to remain in or enter poverty during their service term.

Economic Security for All

Economic Security for All (EcSA) is a poverty reduction program that supports low-income Washingtonians in their pursuit of self-sufficiency. The program is designed to coordinate existing systems through intensive program navigation, local innovation, and flexible support that fills gaps and meet needs within existing programs and regulations. At the local level, EcSA is run by partnerships of community service providers, includes the voices of who have experienced poverty, and is convened and coordinated by Local Workforce Development Boards.

AGENCY REQUEST BILLS

ESD requests:

Continued support of \$12.4 million ongoing funding in the maintenance budget serving individuals with family income below 200% of the federal poverty line (FPL).

\$5.3 million to expand workforce services provided by the Economic Security for All program to increase economic stability for working families earning above 200% FPL. Participants of the program must demonstrate financial need and may receive up to \$5,000 per year in support services and assistance with training or education costs necessary to maintain or secure employment.

Business navigators

\$2.9 million supports business recruitment and retention. Ten new business navigators in each Workforce Development Area (WDA) will increase local talent acquisition, upskilling and retention needs, and develop a pathway to employment for job seekers.

Audit coordination

\$600,000 to fund two project managers for only the 23-25 biennium. These positions will coordinate work related to the increased number of state audits.

Job search monitoring

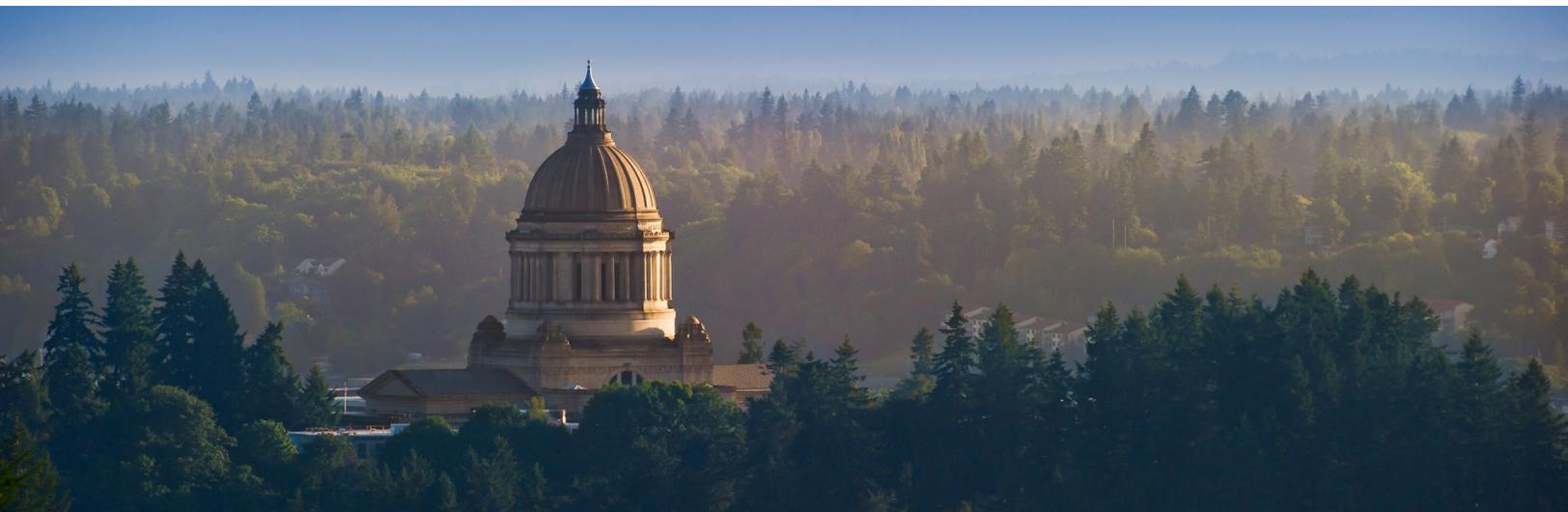
In RCW 50.20.240, ESD was granted temporary flexibility regarding work search requirements for UI claimants. That flexibility will sunset in 2023. ESD requests making this flexibility permanent so the agency can better adapt to economic conditions while also providing more effective work search support to people who are likely to run out of unemployment benefits. For more information, see the 2022 legislative report on work search flexibility.

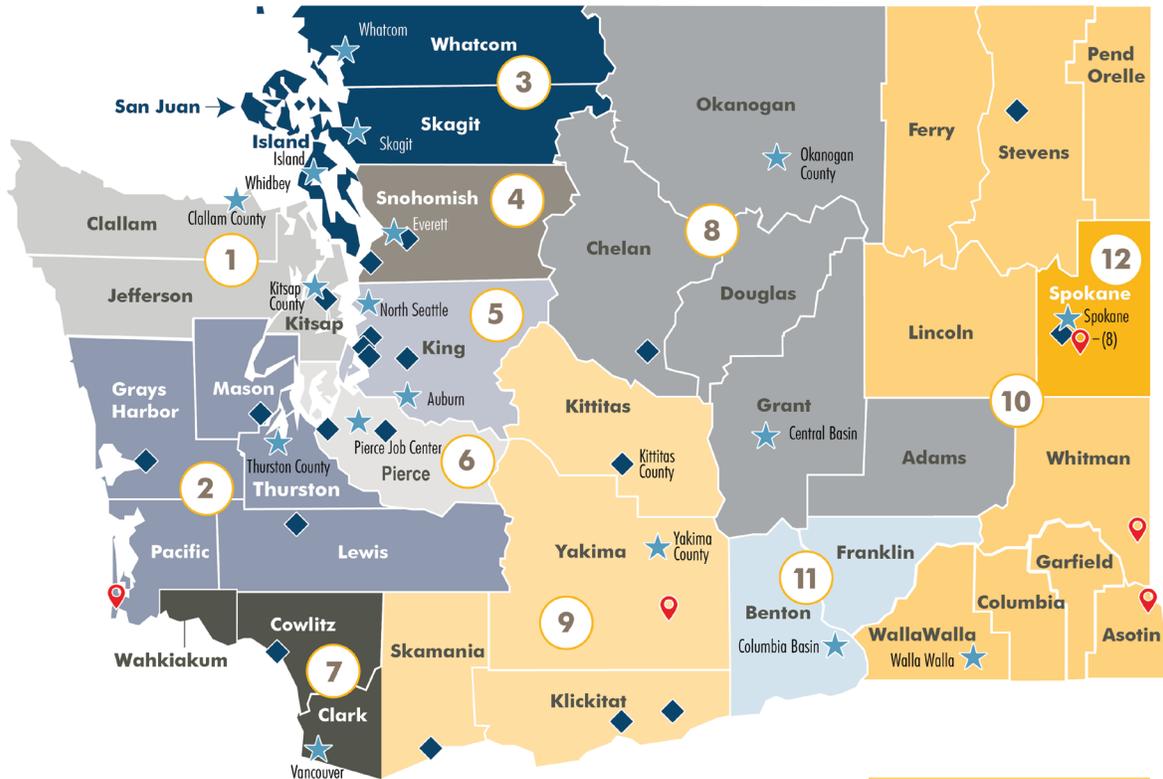
Appeals at the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH)

Remove the section of RCW 50.32.040 that requires the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH) to consider availability issues on each case it reviews, even when availability is not an issue addressed by ESD in the determination letter. In practice, this poses a confusing and unexpected barrier for claimants, judges and employers. Removing this portion of the statute will also reduce unnecessary bottlenecks in the appeals process.

Removing the terms "master" and "servant" from Titles 50 and 50A

UI and Paid Leave describe the employment relationship to include "the relationship of master and servant." ESD seeks removal of this outdated, racist terminology. The description should simply be "any employment relationship."





1 Numbers represent Washington Workforce Development Areas (WDAs)

- ★ WorkSource center = 17
- ◆ WorkSource affiliate = 20
- 📍 WorkSource connection site = 12

EMPLOYMENT SECURITY COMMISSIONER



Cami Feek | Commissioner

Cami Feek was appointed commissioner for the Employment Security Department (ESD) 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.