

LEARN Community of Practice
Local Education Adult Resource Network

April 8, 2025
12:00 – 1:30 PM

Agenda

1. Welcome
2. Learning: Chelsea Mason-Placek, Workforce Development Director at the Washington State Labor Council
3. Discussion & Networking
4. Wrap Up

Meeting Schedule

Monthly, 90 minutes from 12:00 – 1:30 PM

- May 13, 2025
- *June 26, 2025: save the date in-person!*

Information: <https://wsac.wa.gov/LEARN>
Contact: AdultPathways@wsac.wa.gov

LEARN Session #9- April 8 Themes

Learning: Washington State Labor Council (WSLC)

- Highlighted the intersection with adult learners as it pertains to Workforce Development (i.e. rapid response program and support for laid-off workers)
- About Organized Labor in WA
 - “Labor is in your community”
 - WA has 3rd highest union density
 - WA State Labor Council +15 Central & Regional Labor Councils
 - Hundreds & hundreds of local unions, many also have statewide councils
- WSLC- Structure & Program
 - Largest Labor organization in the state
 - Policies, positions, and endorsements voted on by delegates at annual conventions
 - The Workforce Development Department intersects the most with adult learners*
 - Also focuses on legislative advocacy, political action, communications & media relations, race & labor training, naturalization legal services, and Project HELP- assistance with Workers Comp (L&I)
- WSLC- Workforce Development Department- What Our Department Does
 - Dislocated worker support (union & non-union)
 - Support for JATCs & state-recognized apprenticeship preparation programs
 - Support for other union training development (i.e. current hospitality training development w/ partners in the Tri-Cities)
 - Engage labor in advisory roles for community & technical colleges
 - Facilitate a network of labor members that sit on Local Workforce Development Boards
 - Lift up worker voice and union values on boards and committees- all CTCs have workforce advisory committees
- WSLC Dislocated Workers Support
 - Help workers (union and non-union) before a layoff, during Rapid Response and after a layoff- we’re advocates and navigators throughout worker’s journeys
 - Want workers to have access to all available resources (WIOA, Worker Retraining, Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)).
 - Heavily promote training and education opportunities
 - Rely on partnerships across the system to help workers access support and grow their careers
 - Community-based Unemployment Insurance Navigator (also heavily supports apprentices and workers in the building trades)
 - Facilitate and train Peer Outreach Workers* (one of the most successful models to help with transition from public workforce systems
 - Ex: In the event of a closure or large layoff, collaboration with the state and local labor unions allows for hiring a recently laid-off worker to serve as a peer support navigator. This individual helps colleagues navigate both the emotional

- and administrative aspects of the transition and connects them with the workforce system.
 - Peer Outreach Workers can guide others through challenges like filing weekly claims and connect them to WorkSource locations, where professionals offer help with resumes and job readiness.
- Presentation Highlights:
 - **Project HELP** supports workers impacted on the job by guiding them through the critical transition (i.e. workers' compensation, unemployment, etc.). Clear communication is essential to help workers understand their next steps, and there are many support resources available in Washington State to assist during this transition.
 - **Rapid Response:** WSLC is a partner in this program. This program is managed by each of the 12 WA Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs); state coordinates across LWDBs.
 - Response to announced layoffs- serves businesses and workers
 - Sometimes triggered by WARN (Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification) notice, oftentimes not.
 - Best Practice: Presentations on-site, during work hours, catered to that layoff. But that's not always possible.
- Challenges- Accessing Education For Dislocated Workers
 - Emotional/ Self- Perception, might not feel financially doable, UI Challenges- getting benefits going successfully, long approval process to go to school and receive UI (or keep going for apprentices), WIOA Dislocated Worker program can be hard to access & Worker Retraining is limited in funding, Congress let Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) go idle, Laid off workers don't always have access to Rapid Response or otherwise get the info they need to know they have support
- Success Stories



WORKER STORIES

Shane was laid off from a food processing company last year. He was a truck driver for the company.

With scholarships from Goodwill, he was able to get HAZWOPER (Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response) training at Clover Park Technical College to accompany his CDL.

Thanks to a job tip from the Worker Retraining counselor at Clover Park, he started a new job with a hazardous materials recycling company last week. He makes a little more than he did at his previous job and has better benefits.

Travis was laid off from a pulp and paper mill in 2023. He graduates from a a HVAC & Refrigeration Technician program at Bates Technical College in June 2025 and starts with the Plumbers & Pipefitters Union Local 32 in September 2025.

His year-and-a-half long program wouldn't have been possible without receiving Training Benefits, an extension of Unemployment Insurance benefits for an additional 26 weeks. The application is very difficult. He was supported by the WSLC and the Worker Retraining counselor at Bates.

Discussion Insights

- **Income is foundational**—if workers can't pay their bills or address urgent financial needs, it limits their ability to access and persist in other programs or resources.
- The **Guided Pathways** model is utilized in some college campuses includes advising services helping students explore possible education and career choices including information regarding financial aid and financial literacy.
 - Connecting Workforce Development staff with Guided Pathways advisors could enhance awareness and access to financial resources available to laid-off workers.
- **Q: Are there resources available to help laid-off workers with taxes and healthcare costs?**
A: There's a need to connect workers with resources for tax prep and to understand costs of market health insurance plans. Many experience stress during tax season and may not be aware of available support—some unions are helping, but more outreach is needed.
 - **Links provided for tax resource/support:**
 - [United Way Free Tax Filing Support](#)
 - [Volunteer Income Tax Assistance - Goodwill](#)
- **Economic Vulnerability**– There is growing concern across the state about the impact of federal shifts, particularly on manufacturing. Additionally, any industry connected to public funding is increasingly at risk.
- **PDF Flyer: [Rapid ReEmployment Information Sessions for Federal Workers and Contractors](#)**
- **[Link to free virtual sessions for resources:](#)** Support for Federal Employees- Attend a no-cost presentation focusing on impacted federal workers in Washington State.
 - **Topics will include:**
 - Unemployment benefits, how to file and any assistance needs.
 - What to do about health care benefits.
 - Expanding your job skills through training and educational programs.
 - Career guidance, job search assistance, and other resources at no cost to you.
- **Digital Literacy Challenges:** Many individuals face barriers in using technology—such as computers or smartphones—to access essential services like unemployment benefits or filing claims, which can make the process overwhelming. Unemployment Insurance Navigators play a critical role in bridging this gap by offering hands-on support and guidance.



Local Education Adult Resource Network (LEARN) Community of Practice

April 8, 2025





Agenda

- Guest Presenter: Chelsea Mason-Placek, Workforce Development Director - Washington State Labor Council
- Small Group Discussion
- Wrap Up
 - Next Session
 - LEARN Convening



Guest Presenter: Washington State Labor Council



Chelsea Mason-Placek
Workforce Development Director



Emmanuel Flores
Workforce Development Director



Michael Pichler
Unemployment Insurance (UI)
Navigator



Small Group Networking, 20 minutes

- You will select the breakout room you want to attend.
- This is *networking*. You can move to different rooms at any time, as many times as you want.
- Use the first few minutes for introductions, or be sure to introduce yourself as you participate.
 - Who are you? What type of work do you do?

Breakout Room Topics

- Employee & Employer Outreach Strategies
- Parenting Student Retention Strategies
- Non-Credit Pathways
- “Untopic”



Wrap Up

- Next session – May 13th
 - Prep session for in-person convening
- Save the Date: June 26th at the University of Washington - Seattle

Contact email: adultpathways@wsac.wa.gov

Website: www.wsac.wa.gov/LEARN



LEARN Community of Practice: Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO

April 8, 2025



TOPICS

- About Labor Unions in Washington
 - [About the Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO \(WSLC\)](#)
 - What we do in the WSLC Workforce Development Department
 - [Our role in Rapid Response](#)
 - Our support for laid off workers (and apprentices) as adult learners
 - [Challenges & success stories](#)
 - Learning from all of you
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WHO WE ARE



Chelsea Mason-Placek
WSLC Workforce
Development Director



Emmanuel Flores
WSLC Workforce
Development Director



Michael Pichler
WSLC Unemployment
Insurance (UI) Navigator



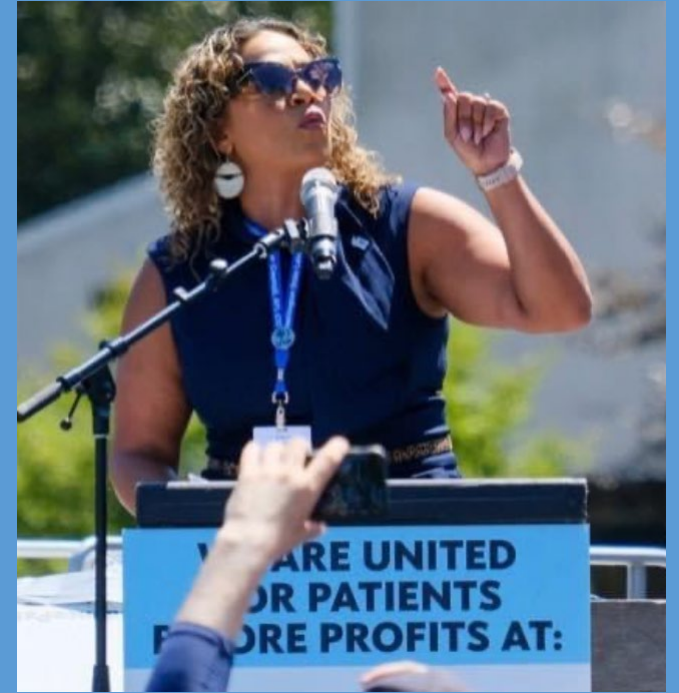
ABOUT ORGANIZED LABOR IN WASHINGTON

- WA has 3rd highest union density
 - Public & private sector; across geographical regions, occupations & industries
 - WA State Labor Council + 15 Central & Regional Labor Councils
 - WA State Building & Construction Trades Council + 8 Regional Building & Construction Trades Councils
 - Hundreds & hundreds of local unions, many also have statewide councils
 - Roughly 65% of state-registered apprenticeship programs are jointly managed by employers and unions in WA
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WA STATE LABOR COUNCIL – OUR STRUCTURE

- Largest Labor organization in the state
 - Made up of 650 local union affiliates
 - Affiliates represent 600,000 rank-and-file members
 - Governed by 2 elected officers and 32 elected VPs (including 8 constituency groups - Pride at Work, Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, Casa Latina, and others)
 - Policies, positions and endorsements voted on by delegates at annual conventions
-





WA STATE LABOR COUNCIL – OUR PROGRAM

- Legislative Advocacy
 - Political Action
 - Communications & media relations
 - Race & Labor training
 - Naturalization legal services
 - Project HELP – assistance with Workers Comp (L&I)
 - **Workforce Development Department – where we intersect most with adult learners**
-



WSLC WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

WHAT OUR DEPARTMENT DOES

- Dislocated worker support (union & non-union) – more to follow
- Support for, and promotion of, joint labor-management state-registered apprenticeship programs (JATCs) & state-recognized apprenticeship preparation programs
- Support for other union training development, e.g. current hospitality training development with partners in the Tri-Cities
- Engage labor in advisory roles for community & technical colleges
- Facilitate a network of labor members that sit on Local Workforce Development Boards
- Lift up worker voice and union values on boards and committees (SBCTC, WA State Training & Education Coordinating Board and others)



DISLOCATED WORKERS SUPPORT

RAPID RESPONSE

WHAT IS RAPID RESPONSE?

- Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA) program
- Managed by each of the 12 WA Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs); state coordinates across LWDBs
- Response to announced layoffs – serves businesses and workers
- Sometimes triggered by a WARN (Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification) notice, often times not
- Starting point: is there a path to save jobs (layoff aversion)?
- If not, how to best bring support resources to workers?
 - Best practice: presentations on-site, during work hours, catered to that layoff. But that's not always possible.
- Key partners/presenters: WSLC, WorkSource, ESD (Unemployment Insurance), community & technical colleges (Worker Retraining), WA Health Benefit Exchange, OIC of WA and others.



DISLOCATED WORKERS SUPPORT

WSCL

WSLC SUPPORT FOR LAID OFF WORKERS

- Help workers (union and non-union) before a layoff, during Rapid Response and after a layoff – we're advocates and navigators throughout workers' journeys
- Want workers to have access to all available resources (WIOA, Worker Retraining, Trade Adjustment Assistance, etc.). Note – we lead in filing almost all TAA petitions.
- Heavily promote training and education opportunities
- Rely on our partnerships across the system to help workers access support and grow in their careers
- Community-based Unemployment Insurance Navigator (also heavily supports apprentices and workers in the building trades)
- Facilitate and train Peer Outreach Workers



CHALLENGES – ACCESSING EDUCATION FOR DISLOCATED WORKERS

- Emotional / self-perception barriers
 - Might not feel financially doable
 - UI challenges – getting benefits going successfully, long approval process to go to school and receive UI (or keep going for apprentices)
 - WIOA Dislocated Worker program can be hard to access & Worker Retraining is limited in funding
 - Congress let Trade Adjustment Assistance go idle
 - Laid off workers don't always have access to Rapid Response or otherwise get the info they need to know they have support
-



SUCCESSES

WORKER STORIES

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WE'D LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU...

Do our experiences with laid off workers resonate with yours?

Have you found strategies to help laid off workers be successful adult learners that we can learn from or partner on?

THANK YOU!

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Presenter Bios

Chelsea Mason-Placek



Chelsea (she/her) is a Workforce Development Director for the WA State Labor Council, AFL-CIO (WSLC). Her primary work, with others at the WSLC, is helping unions and workers access resources to help avert layoffs, and when layoffs and closures can't be avoided, helping affected workers access re-employment and training opportunities via the public workforce system.

Previous work included an earlier stint at the WSLC and time spent working for U.S. Rep. Adam Smith, the Society of Professional Engineering Employees in Aerospace (SPEEA)/IFPTE 2001 and the International Association of Machinists (IAM) District 751.

She currently sits on the State Board for Community & Technical Colleges board, as well as others. And previously served two terms on the USDOL Workforce Information Advisory Council. She loves that her work allows her to connect with every day workers and bring their voices and experiences to boards, committees, advocates and decision makers.

Emmanuel Flores



Emmanuel Flores currently serves as the Workforce Development Director at the Washington State Labor Council (WSLC), AFL-CIO, where he leads initiatives to support Washington's working families from initial workforce entry to career transitions and job loss. With nearly two decades of experience in labor advocacy and almost a decade in workforce development, Emmanuel is dedicated to enhancing educational and career opportunities for all Washingtonians.

Before joining WSLC in 2018, Emmanuel entered the Registered apprenticeship program for the Inside Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 73 in Spokane through the Helmets to Hardhat program after serving in the USAF. In 2013, he became an 01 electrician in Washington State.

Continuously leveraging their union educational programs, they obtained their Associate of Arts (AA) degree as a first-generation college student, graduating in 2022 as Summa Cum Laude.

Emmanuel's partner and spouse live in South Puget Sound and hope to see their three children's outcomes go further than they can dream.

Michael Pichler



Michael Pichler serves as the Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO Unemployment Insurance (UI) Navigator as part of a pilot project in collaboration with the Employment Security Department and the U.S. Department of Labor to assist individuals in navigating the complexities of the UI system.

Michael is a third-generation mill worker who operated Continuous Digesters at the WestRock paper mill in Tacoma for 15 years. The last five of which, he served as Recording Secretary for his union, United Steel Workers Local 237. When the WestRock mill abruptly closed in 2023, Michael served as a Peer Outreach Worker, helping former mill colleagues access UI and get support from WorkSource and the community and technical colleges.

As the WSLC's UI Navigator, Michael provides direct assistance to individuals seeking Unemployment Insurance benefits and conducts UI training sessions for unions and community-based organizations.