

# The WDC's Public Sector Panel

The Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County (WDC) is a nonprofit workforce think-tank and grant-making organization whose mission is to support a strong economy and the ability of each person to achieve self-sufficiency. The WDC works throughout the community, bringing employers, jobseekers, youth, educators, labor groups, and other nonprofits together to find and fund solutions for workforce gaps.

## The Public Sector

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The public sector is multi-faceted, comprised of many levels (local jurisdictions, state and federal government, public services such as libraries and ports) and lines of business (public safety, construction, health care, human services, infrastructure services, etc.). This creates unique challenges with regard to workforce development. In King County alone, many local jurisdictions, state and federal agencies, library systems, and major transportation and logistics entities comprise the “public sector.”

However, this sector is experiencing many of the workforce development challenges that other sectors in our community face – an aging workforce, a need to increase the pipeline and diversity of candidates to fuel the future workforce, a desire to market the unique benefits of working in the sector, etc. To this end, many in the sector are interested in developing strategies to increase awareness about the sector and build a future talent pipeline. In support of this interest, the WDC convened representatives of the public sector in 2013 to explore challenges and opportunities related to workforce development.

## Identifying the Challenges: Sector Panels

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A sector panel is a group of leaders in the community who come together to focus on workforce issues in one particular industry. The sector panel's goals are to identify the specific workforce issues to be addressed and recommend short and long-term solutions that can be undertaken by the members. Since its first sector panel with healthcare industry leaders in 2002, the WDC has convened sector panels in several other industry areas since, including manufacturing, maritime, interactive media, and, most recently, the public sector.

## Public Sector Panel

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The public sector panel convened in October 2013 and conducted its work over the course of six meetings, concluding with its final meeting at the end of June 2014. The panel was comprised of representatives from several municipalities and public agencies employing a workforce of more than 27,000 in King County. Panel members included human resources directors/managers from King County, Seattle Public Library, U.S. General Services Administration (NW Region), and the cities of Seattle, Bellevue, Redmond, and Kent.

The panel identified several **workforce challenges and goals** on which to focus its efforts, including:

- Harnessing veteran talent in building the public sector workforce;

- Increasing the pipeline and diversity of candidates for job openings; and
- Enhancing awareness of opportunities, pathways, and hiring processes and priorities in the public sector.

## Work Undertaken by the Public Sector Panel

- *Identification of resources and strategies to harness veteran talent in building the public sector workforce:* The panel hosted Lieutenant Colonel Christopher Ford of the Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at its January 2014 meeting. Lt Col Ford shared information and lessons learned about limitations inherent in traditional hiring practices and key areas of focus for becoming a “vet-ready” organization. He discussed resources and approaches to enhance veteran recruitment, hiring, on-boarding, and retention. He also shared that the public sector has a unique opportunity in hiring to connect with the “call to service” that motivates many veterans, suggesting a message of “thank you for serving our country, now join us in serving our community” would resonate in hiring. This meeting concluded with several resources and strategies for the panel to explore further, including connections to innovative initiatives at Joint Base Lewis-McChord and programs in the public workforce system (WorkSource) that support veterans employment.
- *Development of strategies to leverage public workforce system resources and services to increase the pipeline and diversity of candidates for job openings:* Over the course of several meetings the panel explored opportunities to leverage resources from the public workforce system to support outreach and hiring goals. The panel discussed linkages with the WorkSource Business Services Team, and strategies ranging from circulating job postings within WorkSource to generate candidate referral to specialized events to promote awareness of the public sector and provide direct hiring opportunities.
- *Expansion and enhancement of the WDC’s Map Your Career suite to increase awareness of the opportunities and pathways in the public sector:* The panel explored options for using visual tools like the WDC’s career maps ([www.mapyourcareer.org](http://www.mapyourcareer.org)) to promote greater awareness of employment and career opportunities within the public sector.
- *Dedication of resources to increase awareness of public sector hiring practices, priorities, and goals among staff in the public workforce system who interface with job seekers, and among job seekers themselves:* Past sector panel work undertaken by the WDC has in some cases led to dedicated resources to increase expertise and focus within the public workforce system on employment and pathways in particular sectors. Given both the complexity of the sector, and the broad array of employment opportunities, the panel explored options related to development of specialized staff within the WorkSource Business Services Team to focus on public sector hiring practices and career pathways.

## Strategies, Solutions & Sustainability

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The work of the public sector has led to several specific strategies and solutions, including the following:

- Several panel members have taken steps to implement strategies and leverage resources in support of veterans hiring, including visits to Joint Base Lewis-McChord, internal training in “vet-ready” practices, and connections to resources available through WorkSource such as Department of Labor Disabled Veterans’ Outreach Program Specialists (DVOPs) and Local Veterans’ Employment Representatives (LVERs), King County veterans program services, etc.
- Panel members have also participated in WorkSource events, such as a veteran’s hiring event in April 2014 and a public sector hiring event in June 2014. Panel members have been in discussions about possible future events, such as a session for WorkSource staff and job seekers on NeoGov and other public sector online application platforms.
- The WDC has identified resources to support a WorkSource Business Services Team member with particular expertise in the public sector; this individual will work with representatives of the public sector to support awareness of the sector among job seekers and the WorkSource staff that support them, to help increase the pipeline and diversity of candidates for public sector job openings, and identify other opportunities as they emerge.
- A public sector “map” is under development that will be added to and interact with other sector maps that are part of the WDC’s Map Your Career suite; that product is scheduled to be published in summer 2014.

The **Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County** ([www.seakingwdc.org](http://www.seakingwdc.org)) is a nonprofit workforce “think tank” and grant-making organization that oversees employment-related programs for youth, the adult workforce and employers in King County, with the goal of a strong economy and self-sufficiency for every resident.

The Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County is an Equal Opportunity Employer and provider of employment and training services.

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