



**COMMISSION  
AGENDA MEMORANDUM**

**Item No.** 10c

**ACTION ITEM**

**Date of Meeting** September 9, 2025

**DATE:** September 2, 2025

**TO:** Stephen P. Metruck, Executive Director

**FROM:** Robert Brown, Program Manager & Data Analyst for Maritime & Green Jobs,  
Workforce Development  
Anna Pavlik, Director, Workforce Development  
Bookda Gheisar, Senior Director, Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

**SUBJECT: Evaluation of Youth Maritime Career Launch Pilot and Authorization Request for Maritime Workforce Investments Phase 1**

**Amount of this request:** \$2,170,000

**ACTION REQUESTED**

Request Commission to authorize the development and implementation of an Expanded Maritime Workforce Investment Strategy and authorizing the Executive Director to execute contracts for the first phase of a new maritime workforce investment strategy for the next three years (2026 – 2028). This delegation of authority will direct the Port of Seattle to contract up to a total of \$2.17 million to organizations providing recruitment, employer engagement, job training, and career services in the maritime industry.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Expiring in October 2025, the three-year Youth Maritime Career Launch pilot experienced both successes and challenges in creating career pathways for youth (18-24) in the maritime industry. Based on this pilot, the Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (OEDI) is recommending a strategy shift, moving away from building maritime career awareness through internships to investing in credential training and career services with increased employer commitment. OEDI also recommends expanding services to all adults in near-port communities, and to do so, would contract with training provider(s), community-based organizations, and an industry liaison to provide community outreach, recruitment of job seekers, employer collaboration, maritime job training, and ongoing career support. The partners will deliver a model that aligns in-depth training with industry needs, develops sector-specific career services (e.g., shoreside and

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underway employment tracks), and provides continuous career support while participants are in training, looking for work, and after they are employed.

### **JUSTIFICATION**

OEDI staff evaluated the outcomes of the Youth Maritime Career Launch and met with current partners, Port staff, industry associations, training providers, and the Northwest Center of Excellence for Marine Manufacturing & Technology to determine what an expanded program could look like. Incorporating this feedback, OEDI proposed funding and programming will serve both of the Century Agenda's Workforce Development goals – (1) to create equitable access to port-related careers and (2) to leverage Port impact and innovation by both increasing the supply of diverse workers prepared to work in the maritime industry and increasing the supply of employers willing and prepared to hire and support those workers. This investment strategy will help meet the interests and needs of maritime employers while also preparing community members for quality, family-wage careers in the maritime sector, not just jobs.

### **DETAILS**

#### ***Youth Maritime Career Launch Evaluation***

In February 2022, the Commission enacted a three-year Youth Career Launch Order (2022-02) to determine how to implement a permanent and sustainable maritime youth employment program for young people between the ages of 16-24; to provide Workforce Development preparation and launch opportunities in port-related industries; and to align with other Port, regional, and state priorities. In April 2022, the Commission added \$2 million to the pilot fund from the Maritime Division, bringing the total to \$4.1 million (2022-05) and directed Port staff to return in 2024 to report on program evaluation and recommendations. In October 2024, the Commission extended the pilot through December 2025 (2024-11).

The Youth Maritime Career Launch pilot was developed during COVID as part of the Opportunity Youth Initiative and sought to provide an entry point for diverse youth ages 18-24 into the historically male, white dominated maritime industry. The pilot taught youth about maritime careers, offered 1–2-week trainings for OSHA and STCW credentials, and provided a 3-month paid internship to participants based on training completion and employer availability. Participants exited the program with new skills, work experience, and entry-level industry credentials. The pilot offered some support for alumni, but it did not result in the permanent hire of many participants (5 reported). The contracts with Washington Maritime Blue and Urban League expire in October 2025.

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Outcomes from the work include the following:

<b>Youth Maritime Career Launch</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024*</b>	<b>2025 YTD</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Enrollments	40	33	30	100
Training Completions	25	28	30	83
Youth in Internships	18	24	23	65
Internship Sites	10	9	12	18
Hourly Intern Wage	\$19.14	\$21.09	\$21.09	\$20.60

*\*Two cohorts*

<b>Youth Maritime Career Launch by Race and Gender (2023 - 2025)</b>	<b>Percentage of Enrollments</b>
Black/African-American	69%
Asian	7%
Latinx	12%
Two or more races	7%
Male	78%
Female	20%
Non-binary	2%

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***Lessons Learned***

Below is an overview of the lessons learned from the Youth Maritime Career Launch pilot.

**Successes:**

- More employer hosts in years 2 and 3, including better commitment with shoreside employers and employers with aligned missions.
- Partnerships with community-based organizations helped build trust and connect youth to maritime opportunities.
- Hands-on exposure to maritime careers sparked genuine interest and helped youth see themselves in the industry.

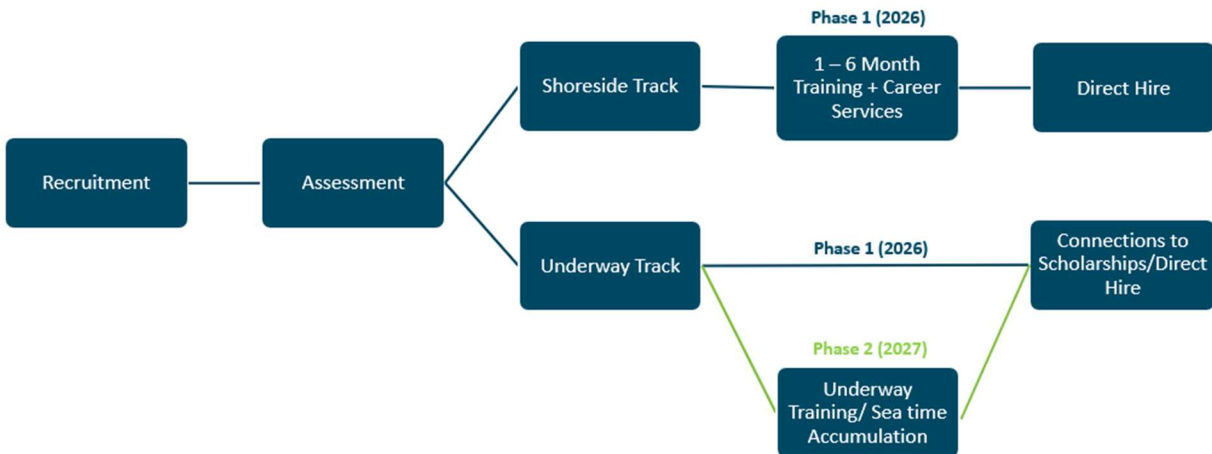
**Challenges:**

- Hard to gain buy-in for "at sea" employers due to internship parameters (schedule, stipend amount, relevant training prior).
- Participants needed more hands-on technical training upfront, as employers had limited capacity to train from the ground up or onboard interns without prior skills.
- Youth face accessibility and cultural barriers to employment.
- Contract deliverables could have been tied to performance-based outcomes.
- Difficult for non-profit community partners to build relationships in a historically white, male-dominated private industry.

***Proposed New Model***

The Port seeks to hire several partners to build off lessons learned in YMCL and increase near-port community access to maritime careers and meet employer demand. OEDI is proposing to shift from building maritime career awareness through internships to providing career navigation services and additional training to connect near-port community members to maritime careers. In Phase 1, OEDI will solicit partners in 2026 to focus on training and placing individuals in shoreside maritime careers. OEDI is also preparing for a longer-term plan which will be reviewed by commission separately in Phase 2. We are exploring the development of additional hands-on training opportunities for underway careers in Phase 2. This future phase would also leverage our community partners to provide guidance for participants pursuing advanced underway maritime education, including support with scholarship applications. As this concept evolves, we will work with our community partners to identify opportunities and resources that strengthen underway training and maritime career awareness building.

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### Recruitment, case management, and career preparation services

OEDI is positioned to contract a community-based organization(s) to recruit, build maritime career awareness, assess career pathway options, and prepare participants for training and employment to transition from low-wage jobs to higher-paying maritime careers. Our partnership with Washington Alliance for Better Schools (WABS) supports the development of STEM curriculum for elementary and middle school students, enabling educators to introduce and sustain maritime career awareness in the classroom. Through Core Plus Maritime, we are also advancing STCW-aligned curriculum for grades 6–12 to prepare students for the 40-hour basic training required for entry-level deck positions upon turning 18. Under this model, community based organization(s) will recruit from Maritime High School, the Suquamish and Muckleshoot nations, Duwamish residents, as well as South King County Community Impact Fund recipients and other workforce development partners, to deepen recruitment efforts and connect community organizations providing career awareness programming with these more intensive job training and career placement services.

### Job Training

In Phase 1, OEDI is prepared to contract a training program(s) to offer 1 – 6-month industry-recognized, post-secondary education to prepare participants to be hired into the industry. Examples include:

- Maritime Shipyard Training Programs
- Pre-Apprenticeships
- Additional trainings, certifications, and qualifications (i.e., TWIC, MMC, SCTW, OSHA 10, sea time accumulation)

Individuals with maritime industry experience who are not in need of training will be directly sent to the industry liaison for career placement services.

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### Career placement services

OEDI plans to engage employers throughout the assessment, training, and job placement phases to ensure participants are fully prepared for direct hire. OEDI anticipates hiring an industry liaison to work closely with industry associations and individual employers to engage them in planning with community-based organization(s) and training provider(s).

### ***Schedule***

OEDI's goal is to release solicitations as soon as possible for Phase 1 services and enter in contract in Q2 2026 with services provided Q3 2026 – Q4 2028. OEDI will report outcomes annually in the annual workforce development report, return to commission for Phase 2 and continue to monitor impact with internal and external stakeholders.

## **ALTERNATIVES AND IMPLICATIONS CONSIDERED**

**Alternative 1** – Do not release these funds.

Cost Implications: Up to \$2.17M in the next three years.

### Pros:

- (1) Reduces staff time for project delivery support, potentially freeing time for other efforts.
- (2) Allows resources to fund other priorities or programs.

### Cons:

- (1) The Port would be challenged to meet our workforce development policy directive and Century Agenda goal to offer workforce development recruitment and career services and support in the maritime industry.
- (2) The Port would miss an opportunity to develop cohorts of local skilled workers ready to fill maritime workforce needs.

This alternative is not recommended.

**Alternative 2** – Continue the Youth Maritime Career Launch program by resoliciting for the same services.

Cost Implications: Funding remains limited to youth internships instead of meeting employer demand, however, there would be no new associated costs.

### Pros:

- (1) Provides career awareness and work experience for young people in maritime occupations.
- (2) The brand of the “Youth Maritime Career Launch” has gained visibility within the community and among some employers, which helps outreach, participant recruitment, and reduces startup time.

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Cons:

- (1) Does not result in many residents being placed in maritime careers.
- (2) The disconnect between training activities and actual maritime job opportunities continues. Participants may complete the program without clear or immediate opportunities for employment.
- (3) Maritime employers cannot often host short-term interns and prefer hiring individuals with technical training, making the current internship-first model hard to sustain.

This alternative is not recommended.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The request of \$2.17 million for the next three years of Phase 1 (2026 – 2028) is a decrease in budget compared to past funding of \$4.1 million over the course of four years (2022 – 2025). However, overall spend for the YMCL pilot was much lower at \$1.6 million to date so the proposed Phase 1 budget is projected to be an increase over past spending. Phase 2 will be budgeted and authorized separately.

***Cost Estimate/Authorization Summary***

Capital

Expense

Total

<b>COST ESTIMATE</b>			
Original estimate	\$	\$2.17 million	\$2.17 million
<b>AUTHORIZATION</b>			
Previous authorizations	0	\$4.1 million (2022-05)	\$4.1 million (2022-05)
Current request for authorization	0	\$2.17 million	\$2.17 million
Total authorizations, including this request	0	\$6.27 million	\$6.27 million
Remaining amount to be authorized	\$0	\$0	\$0

***Annual Budget Status and Source of Funds***

The Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion intends to use tax levy funds to pay for these services. The 2026 portion of \$670,000 is already included in the 2026 baseline budget.

**ATTACHMENTS TO THIS REQUEST**

- (1) Presentation Slides

**PREVIOUS COMMISSION ACTIONS OR BRIEFINGS**

- 1) February 8, 2022, the Commission enacted a three-year Youth Career Launch Order (2022-02) to determine how to implement a permanent and sustainable youth employment program that connects young people between the ages of 16-24.

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- 2) April 12, 2022, the Commission added \$2 million to the pilot fund to bring the total to \$4.1 million (2022-05) and directed Port staff to return in 2024 to report on program evaluation and recommendations.
- 3) October 8, 2024, the Commission extended the pilot through Dec. 2025 (2024-11).