



**COMMISSION**  
**AGENDA MEMORANDUM**

**ACTION ITEM** Item No. 8e

**Date of Meeting** February 10, 2026

**DATE:** February 10, 2026

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

**FROM:** A Boungjaktha, Managing Director, Economic Development Division  
Anna Pavlik, Workforce Dev. Director, Economic Development Division  
Robert Brown, Program Manager, Economic Development Division

**SUBJECT: Maritime Workforce Recruitment – Competitive Exemption**

**Amount of this request:** \$0

**Total estimated project cost:** \$600,000

**ACTION REQUESTED**

Commission determination that a competitive process is not appropriate or cost effective consistent with Revised Code of Washington 53.19.020(5) and authorizing the Executive Director to execute a contract with the Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County, a non-profit agency, to advance maritime workforce recruitment and case management. The contract duration potentially extends through 2028 at the rate of up to \$200,000 annually, totaling a budget of \$600,000.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Port Commission authorized \$2.17M in funding for maritime workforce investments in the Sept. 9, 2025 meeting. The Economic Development Division (EDD) has identified an opportunity to partner with the Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County (WDC) to reduce the need for Port maritime recruitment funds and increase access for jobseekers to other critical services provided via the WDC and WorkSource system.

The WDC is uniquely positioned to partner with the Port as the sole organization in King County that receives both Washington state Economic Security for All funds and federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act funds. When combined with Port funds and directed toward maritime workforce recruitment and case management, these federal and state resources can leverage the Port's expenditures on workforce development for maximum impact.

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## **BACKGROUND**

Port Commission approved Phase 1 of the maritime workforce development strategy and budget on Sept. 9, 2025. Port workforce development staff are in process of procuring partners for:

1. jobseeker recruitment and case management,
2. maritime training and
3. job placement services.

All three scopes are necessary to increase the pool of qualified maritime workers and effectively connect them to maritime employers.

During the procurement planning phase, EDD identified an opportunity to leverage state and federal funding designated for workforce development councils across the state, including the WDC of Seattle-King County. These funds support jobseekers to explore career options, address barriers to employment and offer financial incentives while jobseekers are in training and looking for work. The WDC currently receives these federal and state funds and distributes them to a number of community-based organizations, including but not limited to ACRS, Neighborhood House, YWCA and TRAC Associates.

If approval is granted, EDD will contract with the WDC to outline how Port funds will augment state and federal dollars for recruitment, case management and financial incentives. The portion of Port funding required for the contract will be dependent on contract negotiations and available state and federal funding.

## **JUSTIFICATION**

EED staff propose a competitive exemption contract with the WDC, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that serves as the local workforce development board under the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). The WDC operates as a regional workforce development backbone organization by convening stakeholders, shaping policy, and investing in solutions that reflect community needs and priorities.

The WDC is uniquely positioned to partner with the Port of Seattle as the only organization in King County that receives both federal Title I [Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act](#) (WIOA) formula funds and Washington State [Economic Security for All](#) (EcSA) funds. No other entity in the region holds this combined statutory authority, geographic jurisdiction, and fiduciary responsibility. The WDC serves as the federally designated Local Workforce Development Board for the Seattle–King County region under WIOA and is governed by a cross-sector board of directors appointed by the Chief Local Elected Officials—the King County Executive and the Mayor of Seattle. In this role, the WDC administers and oversees WIOA formula funding and EcSA investments on behalf of the region. Under WIOA, only a designated Local Workforce Development Board may administer formula workforce funds within a given local area.

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Because of the WDC's unique role, a competitive process is not appropriate or cost effective, and a competitive exemption is appropriate in accordance with RCW 53.19.020(5). The WDC service providers are part of the WorkSource network which also creates efficiencies in service delivery through the WDC's established network of community-based providers and WorkSource partners. Services will be begin sooner and avoid a time-consuming competitive procurement process that would waste the time of community organization who may apply but be disadvantaged by not having similar funds to leverage.

**ALTERNATIVES AND IMPLICATIONS CONSIDERED**

**Alternative 1)** Do not authorize agreement with WDC and require competitive solicitation for recruitment and case management services.

**Pros:**

- Provides an opportunity for more organizations to apply.
- Puts the Port in a more direct management role of the recruitment and case management services.

**Cons:**

- Spend more Port tax levy resources on services that could be provided using state and federal dollars.
- Services would start later due to the time it takes to solicit recruitment and case management services.
- Funded organizations may not be connected to other critical services offered through WorkSource.

**Alternative 2** – Authorize a \$600,000 three-year competitive exception contract with the Workforce Development Council to implement maritime recruitment and case management at a cost not- to- exceed \$600,000.

**Pros:**

- Takes advantage of available federal and state workforce development dollars and reduces the Port's 2026 - 2028 expenses.
- Creates efficiencies in service delivery through the WDC's established network of community-based providers and WorkSource partners.

**Cons:**

- Limits the ability of other organizations to apply.
- Reduces the Port's direct influence over the organizations conducting the recruitment since they will have a contract with the WDC and not the Port.

**This is the recommended alternative.**

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**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

<i>Cost Estimate/Authorization Summary</i>	<b>Capital</b>	<b>Expense</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>COST ESTIMATE</b>			
Original estimate	\$0	\$600,000	\$600,000
<b>AUTHORIZATION</b>			
Previous authorizations	0	\$600,000	\$600,000
Current request for authorization	0	0	0
Total authorizations, including this request	0	\$600,000	\$600,000
Remaining amount to be authorized	\$0	\$0	\$0

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

Annual budget is \$200,000. The source of funds is the King County tax levy and is one previous authorization of \$2.17M that is inclusive of three scopes of work (recruitment, job training and job placement services).

**ATTACHMENTS TO THIS REQUEST**

None.

**PREVIOUS COMMISSION ACTIONS OR BRIEFINGS**

September 9, 2025 – Commission approved maritime workforce investments through 2028 at \$2.17M total.