



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Pacific Mountain Workforce Development Council Awarded \$1.5 Million for Veterans' Workforce Development

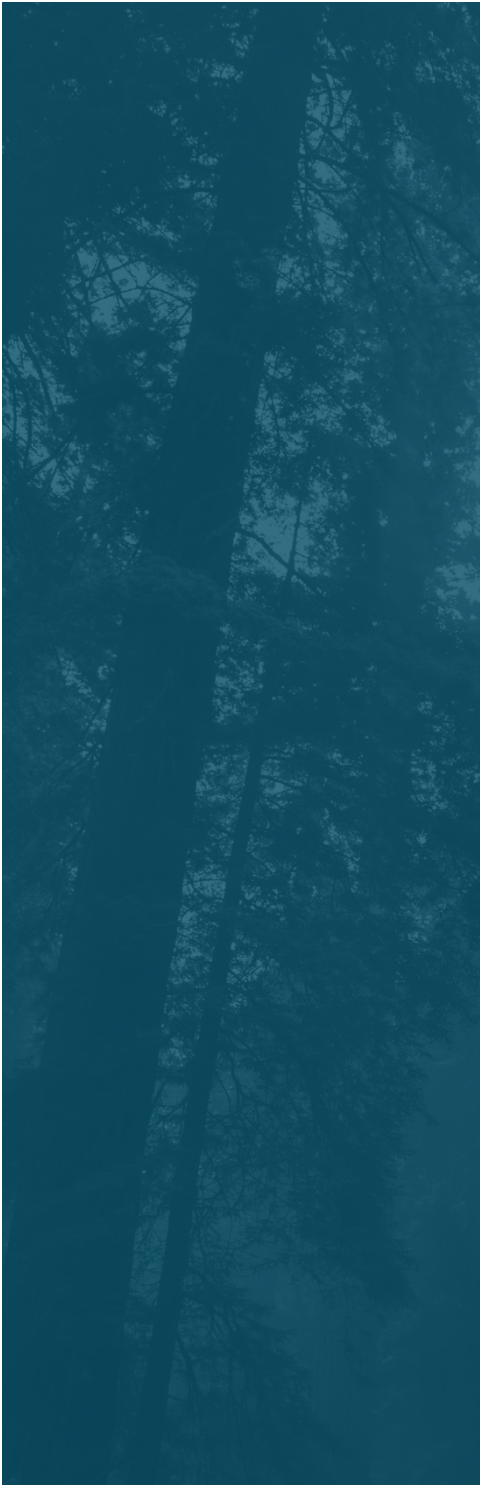
Olympia, August 2, 2023 - The Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration has announced the award of \$1.5 million to the Pacific Mountain (PacMtn) Workforce Development Council for its innovative workforce development services targeting transitioning service members, spouses, and veterans.

Led by PacMtn Workforce Development Council, in collaboration with organizations including Thurston County Chamber of Commerce, Joint Base Lewis McChord SkillBridge-CareerSkills Program Administration, Aerospace Joint Apprenticeship Committee, and the Office of Naval Research, this project aims to address the lack of skilled labor in the aerospace, aviation, and advanced manufacturing industries while providing valuable support to transitioning service members and their families. Through well-designed bridge programs like WorkEx Military (WorkEx), participants will gain valuable civilian workforce experience and create pathways for meaningful employment through training and mentorship.

The current labor market continues to tighten, with the U.S. economy adding 431,000 jobs in March and February, pushing the 3-month average gain to 562,000. This growth creates challenges for businesses to keep up with marketplace demands and find qualified workers. The lack of skilled labor not only hampers business growth but also poses less obvious risks such as workplace injuries and project delays.

"The military is not only the most skilled workforce in the nation but also the most diverse," said William Westmoreland, CEO at PacMtn Workforce Development Council. "By tapping into the expertise and diversity of our transitioning service members, we can address the labor shortage and create a more inclusive workforce, benefiting both businesses and veterans."

WorkEx, an approved SkillBridge-CareerSkills Program at Joint Base Lewis McChord, is a strategic partnership between the Thurston County Chamber of Commerce and PacMtn Workforce Development Council. The WorkEx program provides access, navigation, support, and employment placement for eligible participants and employers. In 2022, the program successfully placed 199 interns with an 87% completion rate, with participants averaging a \$78,000 salary upon hire.



As part of the funding, WorkEx will engage more than 2,000 service members, family members, and veterans, and develop a minimum of 230 internships supported by employer training partners. The program's success will be evaluated based on the total number of skill and wage attainments. Additionally, the Department of Labor and the Department of Defense will closely monitor and evaluate the program's outcomes.

"We recognize the immense impact of the JBLM community members who call Thurston County home," said David Schaffert, President/CEO at the Thurston County Chamber of Commerce. As an integral part of our community, it is our responsibility to care for them and create opportunities for their success. By fostering an environment that supports and nurtures their talents, we not only retain a valuable workforce but also contribute to the growth of industries that drive prosperity in our region and state."

"I am thrilled to see the Department of Labor's investment in the Pacific Mountain Workforce Development Council's efforts to support our transitioning service members and veterans," said Carolina Mejia, Thurston County Commissioner. "This funding will not only address the labor market challenges but also create meaningful opportunities for our diverse and highly skilled military community. It's a step towards a more inclusive and prosperous future for Thurston County and our nation as a whole."

Senator Patty Murray has championed the inclusion of this project as part of the Fiscal Year 2024 Appropriations Request, recognizing the significance of priority of service to veterans and eligible spouses in qualified job training programs. The Jobs for Veterans Act (JVA) establishes a priority of service requirement, and the Department of Labor's strategic vision emphasizes the importance of comprehensive services to support covered persons, including veterans and their families.

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About PacMtn Workforce Development (PacMtn)

PacMtn is a nonprofit organization that is the recognized convener of regional workforce development efforts. The PacMtn Board of Directors, PacMtn elected Official Consortium, and all staff are dedicated to the development of a workforce system that supports business, industry, and all levels of employers and job seekers. PacMtn oversees the regional network of American Job Centers, called WorkSource, which house the demand-driven and integrated system of partners dedicated to developing community prosperity, one job seeker and one employer at a time.

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