

Wyoming Workforce Development Council

2023–2026 Strategic Plan DRAFT

May 2023

Prepared by:



TheAlignTeam.org

Wyoming Workforce Development Council

Background

The Wyoming Workforce Development Council (WWDC), through its fiscal agent, the Wyoming Department of Workforce Services (DWS), contracted with Align to create a new strategic plan. Tiffany Comer Cook, from The Align Team, facilitated three strategic planning sessions for the WWDC as part of their quarterly meetings. The first occurred on September 7th and 8th, 2022 in Dubois, Wyoming. The second happened on November 2nd and 3rd, 2022 in Casper, Wyoming. The third and final session took place via Zoom on February 22nd and 23rd, 2023. During the first session, participants reviewed the current vision and mission, discussed the high and low points of the Council's history, provided ideas for a focus question to guide the strategic planning process, and completed a workshop determining the practical vision or what the Council wants to accomplish after four years. During the second session, participants reviewed the results of the listening sessions and survey of program and center managers, identified hurdles that are blocking the accomplishment of the vision, and created strategic directions that will mitigate those hurdles and lead to the achievement of the vision. During the final session, the Council made SMART goals and documented specific actions to be taken to accomplish the first-year goals.

Plan Highlights

The group discussed and decided on new vision and mission statements.

VISION

We envision a Wyoming where every employee and job seeker has an opportunity to secure purposeful and rewarding work and where employers can access a prepared workforce to help grow the state's economy.

MISSION

To take a lead role in supporting a workforce system that meets the current and future needs of Wyoming.

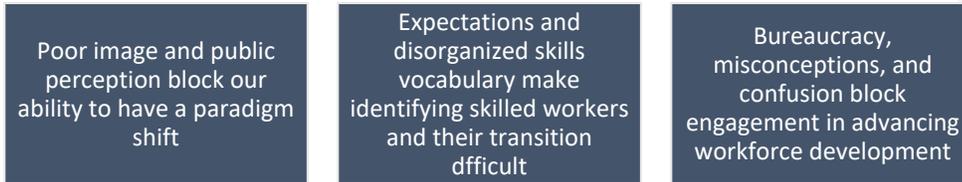
A focus question captures the specific need for planning. The focus question for this strategic planning process is: For the next four years, how can the Council coordinate Wyoming's workforce system to better meet the needs of current and future industries and workers in the state?

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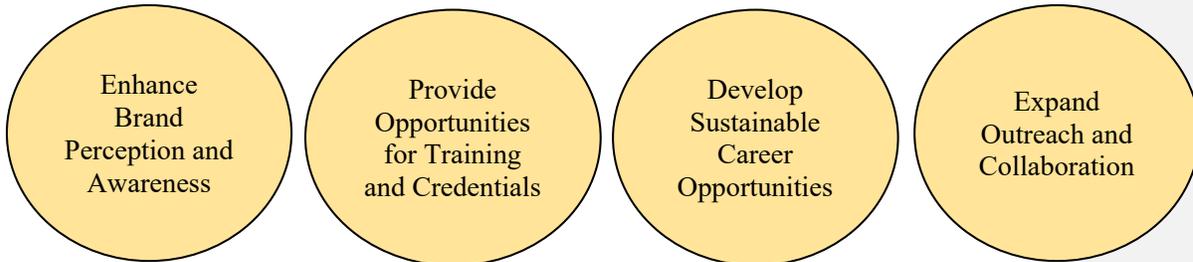
The answer to the focus question comes when completing the STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS.



Which, in part, overcome the UNDERLYING CONTRADICTIONS.



Which will lead to the accomplishment of the PRACTICAL VISION.



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Strategic Plan Goals – 2023 to 2026

Goal	2023	2024	2025	2026
Invent an Image				
Develop key messaging regarding the Workforce Development Council. Create a concise elevator pitch that can be tailored to each specific audience	X			
Work with DWS to drive a more effective relationship and consider rebranding/positioning workforce centers		X		
Identify ways to support business representatives and build their capacity			X	
Build council members' training/expectations/orientation processes to help develop effective members				X
Drive Collaboration with Partnerships				
Streamline terminology across agencies	X			
Each WWDC meeting, conduct a showcase of both internal DWS/Workforce Centers and external agencies/statewide efforts that will impact our various subpopulations like Wyoming's Tomorrow, Apprenticeship, or childcare	X			
Strengthen the "no wrong door" approach by developing an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the partnering agencies and the services they provide		X		
Enhance Access to Our Services				
Ensure the new MIS system will meet user needs	X			
Research, purchase, and install kiosks (likely tablet form) across the state for better remote access to DWS services		X		
Create and implement a plan to improve access to DWS services in remote locations			X	
Follow-up survey to measure success of initiatives				X
Engage in Community Outreach				
Fund and research best methods for engagement/outreach	X			
Use large community events and social media based on the research, evaluate our success, define where the materials are, and how they are distributed. Refine the offering and repeat		X		

Commented [TCC1]: *Engage in Community Outreach* needs additional discussion with the communications subcommittee (Danny Burau). Read the bullets that created the category (page 9). What 1-year, 2-year, 3-year, 4-year goals capture those ideas? Do we need to create new goals to capture the essence of "community outreach"?

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First-Year Action Items

Strategic Direction: Invent an Image		
Goal: Develop key messaging regarding the Workforce Development Council. Create a concise elevator pitch that can be tailored to each specific audience		
<i>Action Items</i>	<i>Assigned to:</i>	<i>Due Date</i>
Develop and review concise brand messaging for WWDC that is crafted by audience that includes a specific Call to Action (CTA) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council • DWS Staff • Workforce Center Staff • Industry • NGS Partnerships 	Communications Committee, Daniel	April 2023
Present for approval to Council	Communications Committee, Daniel	May 2023
Align platforms with messaging (site/social/Council orientation)	Kari	June 2023
Develop Key Performance Indicators to measure effectiveness	Fabian	June 2023
Provide quarterly updates of KPI to Council	Fabian	Quarterly

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Strategic Direction: Drive Collaboration with Partnerships		
Goal: Streamline terminology across agencies		
<i>Action Items</i>	<i>Assigned to:</i>	<i>Due Date</i>
Agencies from Title 1, 3, and 4 develop standardized terms	Nicky Harper, Denise Rodriguez	April 2023
Education Department reviews terms and adds/clarifies as necessary	Dr. Aldrich	May 2023
Title partner review to incorporate remaining comments	Dr. Caldwell	June 2023
DFS, DOC, etc., review and collaborate	Director Schmidt	July 2023
Review of terms and pathways by industry	Ron Wild, Katie Hogarty, Larry Fodor	August 2023
Distribute to agencies for final review	Nicky Harper, Denise Rodriguez	September 2023
Review by the public (students, parents) to ensure clear understanding	Katie Hogarty	October 2023

Strategic Direction: Enhance Access to Our Services		
Goal: Ensure the new MIS system will meet user needs		
<i>Action Items</i>	<i>Assigned to:</i>	<i>Due Date</i>
Scope the MIS to ensure we are reaching all of our audiences: clients, businesses, workforce center staff, and program team	WIOA program team and MIS leadership team	March 2023
Provide new and improved MIS system to clients, businesses, and DWS staff	WIOA program team and MIS leadership team	December 2023
Survey stakeholders after launch to see if MIS is meeting needs	WIOA program team	December 2024
Revise system per survey results	WIOA program team	June 2025

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Strategic Direction: Engage in Community Outreach		
Goal: Fund and research best methods for engagement/outreach		
<i>Action Items</i>	<i>Assigned to:</i>	<i>Due Date</i>
Visit with Jennifer Wilch about possibility of creating an RFP for researching best engagement and outreach	Strategic planning and finance subcommittee	March 2023 subcommittee meeting
Release RFP	DWS fiscal	June 2023
Contract awarded	DWS fiscal	August 2023
Evaluate report	Special committee formed— engagement & outreach	February 2024
Determine outreach/engagement methods to be funded by council	Strategic planning and finance subcommittee	April 2024
Solicit vendors for creation of outreach tools. Restart RFP process?	Strategic planning and finance subcommittee	June 2024

Commented [TCC2]: This goal needs additional discussion with the communications subcommittee (Danny Burau). Read the bullets that created the category (page 9). What 1-year goal and action items capture those ideas? Is an RFP going to increase community outreach? If so, we need more details on what the RFP will do and say. Or do we need to create new goals to capture the essence of "community outreach"?

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The following tables provide the ideas generated during the strategic planning session, which led to the categories for each workshop.

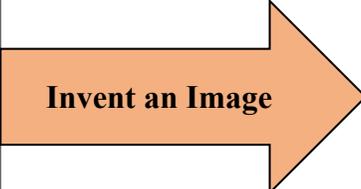
Practical Vision			
Enhance Brand Perception & Awareness	Provide Opportunities for Training & Credentials	Develop Sustainable Career Opportunities	Expand Outreach & Collaboration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Rebrand public image of workforce services -Education component for state leaders—basic needs for workers -Seen as critical partner -WY workforce resources utilized -One-Stops fully utilized 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Workforce needs defined for individuals -Effective training for new employees -Opportunity to succeed in chosen career path -Current industry defined -Virtual skills passport/micro credentials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Reduction of % of citizens living below poverty level -Industry growth spurs community growth -Understand new industries -Job growth increased % -Retain/attract younger workers -WY job opportunities draw large applicants from in and out of WY 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Industry channel/concierge service -Improved collaboration -Active council; presence and relationships -Share knowledge -Synchronization with employers, job seekers, and DWS -Increase business participation -Reduce redundancy and effort -Internal intranets -Attract new industries -National leader in green energy -Starlink rural broadband program

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Underlying Contradictions

Poor image and public perception block our ability to have a paradigm shift	Expectations and disorganized skills vocabulary make identifying skilled workers and their transition difficult	Bureaucracy, misconceptions, and confusion block engagement in advancing workforce development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Temporary name for this category: Need Paradigm Shift -Historical perception -Legacy perception “UI Office” -Uncoordinated, obsolete, narrow -Disjointed identity -Low wages -Confusing array of providers -One-Stop does more?? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Temporary name for this category: What skills do I need (employers & employees)? -Increasing rate of change/demand for skills -Confusing RE: current and future workforce needs -Confusing array of credentials for learners/employers -Expectations of sustainability have changed -Fragmented acceptance of credentials -Uncoordinated runway timeframes for incoming industries -No control over needed jobs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Temporary name for this category: Low Engagement -Lead a horse to water but can’t make ‘em drink! -Difficulty of participation of everyone -Confusing array of providers -Status quo is fine! Why collaborate? -Too many meetings -Reluctance to advocate on policy

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Strategic Directions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Restart marketing prior to pandemic to achieve paradigm shift -Community that One-Stop also helps career advancement -One sheet explanation of services for businesses and job seekers -Eliminate language that impedes communication -Training for council members (learn what we're supposed to know) -Branding campaign -Develop a new name to change the paradigm 	 <p>Invent an Image</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Drive consistency between agencies -Utilize our partnerships with DOE, DFS, WBC, and others to achieve engagement -Create agreed-upon criteria to verify skills/competencies -Establish vision for future economy -Establish skills/competency dictionary/glossary -Create a sense of shared responsibility 	 <p>Drive Collaboration with Partnerships</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Use kiosks to go to people where they are -Request DWS find support to improve IT platforms -Chat access for DWS services -Build an app that is user-friendly -Mobile app <p><small>*Note: This category was initially titled "Create User-Friendly Technology" but was later changed by the planning team to comprise a broader scope of "access to services," including and beyond technology.</small></p>	 <p>Enhance Access to Our Services</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Work with community colleges to connect with students at-risk of dropping out -Approachability and fun with our communities -Training for employers to learn how to access funding -Don't have to come to us—but it is our duty to go to them -DWS develop relationships with school counselors -Mobile workforce center -One-Stop open house with <u>pizza and Mountain Dew</u> -Drive direct engagement -Host after-hours industry mixers -Building community partnerships -Use large community events (CFD, Business Forum, etc.) to get message out -One-Stop should do HS/JH outreach 	 <p>Engage in Community Outreach</p>

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Session #1 Notes

Tiffany led the group in a discussion about the vision and mission. Based on that discussion, a small planning team (Fabian Lobera, ET Trowbridge, Robin Sessions Cooley, Kari Eakins, Jennifer Wilch, and Tiffany Comer Cook) proposed the following mission and vision statements. The full council agreed to these at the second strategic planning session.

Vision: The Wyoming Workforce Development Council envisions a Wyoming where every employee and job seeker has an opportunity to secure purposeful and rewarding work and where employers can access a prepared workforce to help grow the state's economy.

Mission: The mission of the Wyoming Workforce Development Council is to take a lead role in supporting a workforce system that meets the current and future needs of Wyoming.

Highs and Lows in WWDC History

In small groups, participants discussed the successful and less-successful moments in the WWDC's history. After writing ideas on cards and putting them on the magic wall, the group discussed themes within each category. New members and the board's composition were identified as high points, whereas aimlessness/need for strategic direction were themes within the low points.

High Points

- Diversity of thought
- Access to experts and ideas
- Revision of bylaws
- Quickly pivot to meet needs
- Statewide viewpoint
- Next Gen
- Road Trip Nation influence good
- Great new council members!
- Board software
- NGSP project focus
- Client-centric
- Whole group working for positive impact
- Next Gen kick-off good
- Fully staffed board

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- Board composition
- Full council
- Access to ideas for workforce development

Low Points

- Lack of actionable items
- Onboarding of new members
- Road Trip Nation overview limited
- Onboarding—more history/culture/impact
- Statewide outreach
- Improper spending of council WIOA funds
- Next Gen COVID stall
- Clarity of purpose
- Staff/board turnover
- DWS turnover
- Visibility of council
- Reliance on volunteers
- Institutional council knowledge loss
- No in-person meetings during COVID

Focus Question for the Strategic Planning Process

A focus question captures the specific need for planning. Tiffany split participants into small groups to discuss the subject area, the rational and experiential aims, stakeholders, participants, and the timeframe and geographic scope. The small groups then summarized their discussions with the larger group. Based on that conversation, Tiffany created this focus question. The group agreed on it the following day.

For the next four years, how can the Council coordinate Wyoming’s workforce system to better meet the needs of current and future industries and workers in the state?

Practical Vision

Tiffany presented the workshop question, “What do we want to see in place in 4 years as a result of our actions?” She then led the group through a visualization exercise. Imagine the year 2026. The success of the Council is featured in a statewide newspaper. What does the headline say? What is mentioned in the article? What has happened? Write down your answers individually and star your best 3-5 ideas. With a neighbor, discuss your ideas. Together, develop 4-5 ideas you want to share with the group and write them on cards, answering the workshop question.

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Tiffany gathered the cards and placed them on the wall. Then, we grouped similar ideas and named them. The planning team word-smithed the category names. The entire Council further refined them in the second session. The categories and associated notecards follow.

Enhance Brand Perception and Awareness

- Rebrand public image of workforce services
- Education component for state leaders—basic needs for workers
- Seen as critical partner
- WY workforce resources are utilized
- One-Stops fully utilized

Provide Opportunities for Training and Credentials

- Workforce needs defined for individuals
- Effective training for new employees
- Opportunity to succeed in chosen career path
- Current industry defined
- Virtual skills passport/micro credentials

Develop Sustainable Career Opportunities

- Reduction of % of citizens living below poverty level
- Industry growth spurs community growth
- Understand new industries
- Job growth increased %
- Retain/attract younger workers
- WY job opportunities draw large applicants from in and out of WY

Expand Outreach and Collaboration

- Industry channel/concierge service
- Improved collaboration
- Active council—presence and relationships
- Share knowledge
- Synchronization with employers, job seekers, and DWS
- Increase business participation
- Reduce redundancy and effort
- Internal intranets
- Attract new industries
- National leader in green energy
- Starlink rural broadband program

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Session #2 Notes

Tiffany summarized the first session, presenting the strategic planning focus question. After some discussion, the group added “and workers” to the question. Tiffany presented the new vision and mission statements based on the work of the small planning team. The Council discussed the definition of “purposeful and rewarding work.” Good wages and compensation are critical to workers, as are training, rewards, recognition, and job satisfaction. The Council agreed that “purposeful and rewarding work” captures these ideas. The Council agreed to move forward with the new vision and mission statements, as presented. Tiffany presented the practical vision. The group changed *Provide Industry-Recognized Training and Credentials* to *Provide Opportunities for Training and Credentials*.

Stakeholder Feedback

Tiffany then discussed the results from the center and program managers’ survey and listening sessions (the handout is in the appendix to this report). Notes from this discussion include the following:

- Good points made
- Our best results are on our mission statement; it’s concise
- As a council, we have a B-; we need to move to a B+ or an A-
- We’re doing what the questions are asking but not overwhelmingly well
- We understand their viewpoints
- Could consider onboarding procedures for new Council members
- Need to get the center managers/staff more engaged in Council meetings
- Consider the frequency and structure of Council meetings
- Our Council has become more action-oriented and more hands-on—we should continue in this direction

Underlying Contradictions

Tiffany presented the workshop question: What is blocking us from moving toward our vision? Underlying contradictions are unquestioned assumptions, mindsets, beliefs, and practices that oppose the vision. The images, attitudes, structures, and trends that keep these negative patterns alive are integrated into our experience; we do not recognize them for what they are. As we discuss underlying contradictions, think about the root causes of the blocks or hurdles that get in your way. Like an unwanted dandelion in our yard, we want to identify the root cause and pluck it out.

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One rule for this workshop is that we cannot use “lack of.” Instead of “lack of funding,” it might be “competition for revenue blocks development of community services.” Let’s challenge the notion that we have a deficiency. Is there enough for you to achieve your vision? If so, the answer is not “lack of.”

We are looking for patterns, attitudes, structures, and blocks we encounter. We’re looking for what’s there, not what’s missing. It’s like working in your garden, watering plants, and the water suddenly stops running through the hose. Do you stare at the hose and shout, “There’s no water!” (a lack of)? No, you turn to check for a kink in the hose. We’re looking for kinks or blocks rather than announcing what’s not there.

Tiffany had each individual list 5-8 obstacles blocking the vision, with the goal of writing at least one block per vision statement. She then shared a story to illustrate good strategies for identifying underlying contradictions. One day a car was driving down a deserted road when suddenly it had a flat tire. The passengers got out, opened the trunk, and discovered to their dismay that there was no jack. They decided they needed a jack to change the tire, so they started walking down the road to find a gas station to borrow a jack.

Moments later, another car came down the deserted road. It too had a flat tire. The passengers got out, opened the trunk, and discovered there was no jack. They thought for a while and decided they needed a way to lift the car to change the tire. They found a big rock and a log. Using the rock and the log, they raised the side of the car and changed the tire. While the passengers of the first car were still walking down the road looking for a gas station, the passengers in the second car had already changed the tire and were continuing along to their destination. Why were the passengers in the second car able to resolve the flat tire problem first? The first group named the problem in terms of a solution—no jack—so their only option was to leave to find a jack. The second group, however, named the underlying contradiction—no way to lift the car—and were able to find a creative solution within their situation. Naming the real problem is the key to finding a solution.

People shared their ideas in small groups. Together, they came up with 4-5 ideas they wanted to share with the group and put them on notecards. Tiffany gathered the cards and placed them on the wall. Then, we grouped them based on similar root causes and named them, starting with a 2-4-word title that captured the category. Then the group provided a complete name for each contradiction based on identifying the block, how it blocks, and what it blocks. The named categories and associated notecards under each are listed on page 8 of this report.

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Strategic Directions

Tiffany presented the workshop question: What innovative, substantial actions will resolve the underlying contradictions and move us toward our vision? Tiffany shared five things to keep in mind for this workshop.

1. Be aware of the negative implications of not changing. What would happen if we didn't address the need for a paradigm shift?
2. Think proactively, like a chess player. Engage in proactive, not reactive, thinking. Generate different possible futures. Develop multiple scenarios and ideas. Anticipate the moves of the players in your environment. Be at the right place at the right time.
3. Opposites can work together. Research shows that 85% of us will orient ourselves toward conservative, familiar actions if left to our own devices. Look for actions that are both venturesome and conservative, big picture and narrow focus, bold new ideas and tried and true.
4. Try thinking catalytically, like a bowling ball. We're looking for actions that can impact more than one underlying contradiction. We want actions that have a multiplier effect, leverage the actions of others, affect more than one issue, or are related to ongoing efforts by other individuals or groups.
5. Have persistence. The Wright brothers made 147 attempts before their first plane got off the ground. That first flight was seven seconds long. 805 is the number of times Thomas Edison tried out different filaments before his light bulb worked. Mistakes are an essential part of the learning process and integral to success.

Tiffany asked the group to individually brainstorm actions to deal with the underlying contradictions, with at least one action per underlying contradiction. Include actions that will put the vision in place. Think of both venturesome and conservative actions. In small groups, share ideas and write on cards. We want 5-6 cards per group. Tiffany gathered the cards and placed them on the wall, within paper boxes. Then, we grouped them based on similar intents. We named each box, starting with a verb. The named categories and associated notecards under each are listed on page 9 of this report.

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Session #3 Notes

Tiffany summarized the strategic planning process and decisions made to date. We reviewed the planning model, revealing that we were at the “focused implementation” phase. The question for this phase is: What will be our specific, measurable accomplishments? Tiffany instructed the group that they will be creating SMART goals, defining them as Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound. Participants then chose which strategic direction to work on and joined the appropriate breakout room. The smaller groups were instructed to create four SMART goals for their strategic direction, one for each year of the strategic plan. After about 30 minutes, everyone joined the main Zoom room, reporting on the goals they had created. The group then provided feedback and refined the goals further.

The next day, Tiffany provided instructions on how to create the action plan. The workshop questions are: What tasks need to be completed to accomplish your first-year goal? Who is responsible for making it happen? When is it due? In the same small groups, participants created action plans with tasks, responsible person(s), and timelines. The small groups then reported their work to the larger group. The goals and action plans are included on pages 3-6 of this report.

Wyoming Workforce Development Council

Council Members

Fabian Lobera, Council Chair	Nicky Harper
Eric “ET” Trowbridge, Council Co-Chair	Katie Hogarty
Michelle Aldrich	Tamsin Johnson
Senator Fred Baldwin	Michael Kercher
Danny Bureau	Travis Lawrence
Michelle Butler	Katie Legerski
Sandy Caldwell	Mark Madsen
Tina Conley	Ivy McGowan-Castleberry
Cathy Connolly	Brenda Morgan
Robin Sessions Cooley	Ben Moritz
Phillip Cornella	Korin Schmidt
Tony Cross	Brian Schroeder
Josh Dorrell	Robert Short
Jim Engel	Dick Smith
Larry Fodor	Stacy Strasser
Governor Mark Gordon	Ron Wild
Ron Gullberg	Nathan Williams
Matt Hall	Charlie Wilson

Staff

Kari Eakins, Administrator for Policy, Research, & Communications, WDWS
Trevor Mansfield, Deputy Administrator of the Program Strategy Team, WDWS
Ty Stockton, Chief Deputy Administrator for Policy, Planning, & Communications, WDWS
Jennifer Wilch, Wyoming Workforce Development Council Liaison, WDWS

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Survey/Listening Session Results



WWDC: Strategic Planning
November 2, 2022

Department of Workforce Services Program Managers and Workforce Center Managers

19 people were invited to participate in both the survey and the listening sessions; 9 responded to the survey; 8 attended listening sessions

Strengths of WWDC

- Diverse representation of sectors and communities
- Good dialogue and decision-making
- Invested in DWS and the workforce system statewide
- Willingness to learn and eager to improve things
- Funding training opportunities for the centers has been outstanding
- Council members are attentive, engaged, and respectful

Weaknesses of WWDC

- Gaps in knowledge of One Stops, WIOA, and the daily operations of the Workforce Centers; suggest more job shadowing and site visits
- Council meetings involve many presentations, without actionable steps or follow-through
- Should provide support, guidance, and assistance to all WIOA core partners, including education

The Council is considering adopting the following vision statement:

We envision a Wyoming where every employee and job seeker has an opportunity to secure purposeful and rewarding work, and where employers can access a prepared workforce to help grow the state's economy.

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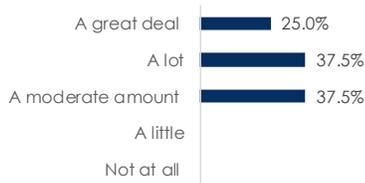
How well does this statement capture the vision of the Council?



The Council is considering adopting the following mission statement:

The mission of the Wyoming Workforce Development Council is to take the lead role in supporting a workforce system that meets the current and future needs of Wyoming.

How well does this statement capture the purpose of the Council?



How could these vision and mission statements be improved?

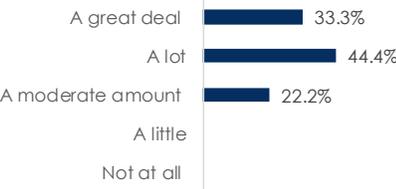
- On the vision, replace "rewarding" with "sustainable"
- Integrate all WIOA partners' objectives/vision/mission statements

The Council has recently decided on the following strategic priorities:

- (1) Enhance Brand Perception and Awareness
- (2) Provide Industry-Recognized Training and Credentials
- (3) Develop Sustainable Career Opportunities
- (4) Expand Outreach and Collaboration

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In your opinion, how well do these priorities coincide with what you think the Council should be doing?



How can the Council better help you in your work?

- Need more opportunities for staff to interact with Council members, opportunities for meaningful conversations and networking will help lead to actionable steps
- Spend more time in workforce centers
- Better understanding of what we are and what we're doing, hear from people in the field/students/other stakeholders
- More marketing so people know what we do