

Public Service

RECOGNITION AWARDS

Recognizing Excellence in State Service

May 2023



About the Awards

Each year we recognize state employees who consistently excel beyond expectations, with the Excellence in Washington State Government Leadership Award and the Extra Mile Award.

"Public Service Recognition Week is a time to acknowledge the hard work our state employees do each day to serve the millions of people living in the great state of Washington. Those who are called to public service make a big difference in people's lives and can take great pride in their work."

- Gov. Jay Inslee

2023 PSRW Award Winners

Leadership Awards

Antone (Tony) Bierward	Department of Labor & Industries
Ayanna Colman	Employment Security Department
Elyssa Tappero	Washington Military Department
Gary Urbas	Washington Military Department
Jessica Barr	Employment Security Department
Joanne Lee	Department of Enterprise Services
Karen Peterson	Department of Labor & Industries
Karen Jost	Department of Labor & Industries
Phillip White	Employment Security Department
Ricky Bhalla	Washington State Department of Transportation
Stacey McClain	Washington Military Department
Tammy Fellin	Department of Labor & Industries
Tennille Johnson	Employment Security Department
Tracy Wynder	Department of Labor & Industries

2023 PSRW Award Winners

Extra Mile Awards

Brian Maule	Department of Licensing
Bryant Karras	Department of Health
Catherine Pederson	Department of Labor & Industries
Civil Rights Program	Department of Labor & Industries
DSHS Afghan Arrivals Support Team	Department of Social and Health Services
Eric Shields	Department of Licensing
Helen Berry	Department of Natural Resources
Jason Gambill	Department of Agriculture
Lian Roberts	Washington State Department of Transportation
Piper Petit	Washington State Department of Transportation
Policy, Operations and Escalations (POE) Team	Department of Social and Health Services
Respectful Workplace Initiative curriculum developers	Department of Labor & Industries
Spokane License Servicing Office	Department of Licensing
Transportation Network Company Implementation	Department of Labor & Industries
Virtual Services Team	Employment Security Department

Antone (Tony) Bierward

Submitted by: Rachel Gschwend
Department of Labor & Industries

Tony Bierward is the ideal candidate for this nomination. He's spent almost three decades working in a variety of positions including as a field electrical inspector, and with E CORE and Electrical Plan Review. He pioneered the Virtual Inspection Program which helped us meet stakeholder's needs during an unprecedented pandemic. Then, he moved to supervising Region Four's very new electrical inspection team through a vaccine mandate that cost us 40% of our staff— including both leads— only to lose another interim lead to a different position months later. Throughout it all, Tony never said "quit." He never accepts excuses from himself or from his team. He approaches every challenge with the mindset of finding a solution. What's more, his relentless and high standards for himself push his team to always find the right gear to meet seemingly impossible challenges. But more than anything, I would like to nominate Tony for his integrity. He is the epitome of how one should lead. He champions diversity with one third of his field staff being female. He leads with no ego and will listen to any counterarguments because arriving at the right answer is more important than being "right." Numerous times, I have witnessed him change his mind because of an argument that he felt had merit. He is also unrelenting in his desire to support his team and provide training for his staff. When people talk about how real leaders lead by example, Tony is that perfect example. I would say most of his staff feel indebted to him. He always gives more than he takes. His word is as good as his bond. No matter how hard we work or strive to improve, Tony is always steps ahead of us.

Ayanna Colman

Submitted by: Jasper Marino
Employment Security Department

Ayanna is the director of ESD's Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion and she is a strong, caring, thoughtful and genuine leader. Ayanna's vision is rooted in people. Everything she does is with the purpose of creating an environment where historically marginalized people can belong, contribute fully, and be valued for who they are. Ayanna has worked for several state agencies and has strong values in public service. She is dedicated and community focused, having made strong contributions to the advancement of state government through the centering of historically marginalized communities and the removal of barriers those communities face. She is a strong leader and is actively involved in the statewide DEI council, the DEI conference planning group, and other groups that are advancing state government through an equity lens. Ayanna operates with the upmost integrity. Even when equity work is tough and the weight of all those who are harmed is heavy, Ayanna stays true to herself, her values, and is a vocal advocate for those who have historically been oppressed. Ayanna is more than committed to diversity, equity and inclusion— that is her drive, her anchor, her passion. She is leading ESD's work on the PEAR plan and our transformation to an anti-racist organization. Ayanna truly leads, centers equity and embodies DEI in everything she does. As a true community-oriented person she often does not take credit for the work she has done and the strong leader that she is. She always puts community first. She fully deserves to be recognized for her work and her commitment to Washington state and DEI.

Gary Urbas

Submitted by: Laurelle Lee
Washington Military Department

Gary Urbas lives the ideals of the Leadership Award. He is an outstanding and visionary leader, mentor, trainer and technical assistance provider statewide. He has shown the capacity for visionary leadership, as he has taken the complex Emergency Preparedness/Response and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) requirements and trained statewide to benefit all communities. His FEMA reimbursement knowledge, training, and technical assistance have been invaluable to all communities in ensuring that they can access needed resources—financial and otherwise—to deal with emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic response. My understanding is that he has delayed retirement so that Washington can respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, and additionally, to changing FEMA requirements. His personal integrity shines through in his trainings, mentorship, technical assistance and advising for operations and documentation for public assistance efforts. He generously shares his knowledge of how to navigate the landscape of federal reimbursements and avoid pitfalls. His work has helped to ensure that all Washington communities are prepared, and his work is significant to the entire state of Washington, as shown during the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic. His training for the community includes state and local government staff and others, and I know it certainly inspired my confidence in the state government’s ability to respond to emergencies. As a person of color, I have noted that Gary Urbas treats all others with respect, professionalism and unpretentiousness, regardless of their background, ethnicity or lack of experience in the subject matter. He is a great asset to the public service community, and to Washington state government and leadership. He deserves recognition for his many years of leadership in public service, and even more so this year as he leads us in navigating our way to the other side of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Jessica Barr

Submitted by: Christina Tovar-Hamernik
Employment Security Department

Jessica Barr values our people at the Employment Security Department, has an innovative vision and an expectation that our leadership implements systems where all staff and customers thrive. For example, her innovative vision and commitment to service led members of our North Sound Regional leadership to create a Regional RESEA approach. This allows our RESEA teams to support one another and better serve all customers across the region while facing challenges with recruitment. The result is a stronger Regional RESEA team that meets our RESEA goals and the needs of customers. Jessica Barr's personal integrity and commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) drives her significant contribution to the advancement of state government. She operates the North Sound Regional leadership with the expectation that our success is dependent on the success of all. Jessica Barr supported every decision of the North Sound Region Diversity Equity and Inclusion Committee (NSRDEI), which created a pattern of the NSRDEI leading DEI efforts across the agency. For example, the North Sound Regional leadership was the first to require all staff to complete the Embracing the Power of Equity Training. 99% of our personnel met the completion deadline. She recently initiated a requirement that all teams will complete the Raising the Purple Flag scaffolding exercise to normalize discussing microaggressions. Additionally, The North Sound Regional leadership piloted a Culture Committee in WDA-4 that provides a space for staff to grow cultural competence through shared experiences, build stronger relationships and ultimately help improve customer service. As a result, local leaders can hear directly from front line staff about the most urgent needs. Finally, with Jessica Barr's support, the NSRDEI committee is in the final stages of a DEI SMART Goal training guide for the North Sound Regional leadership, setting up leaders to easily implement new requirements and expectations.

Joanne Lee

Submitted by: Alfie Alvarado
City of Tacoma (Formerly Department of Enterprise Services)

I am honored to nominate Joanne Lee for her leadership and consistent, superior performance and contributions to state government. Joanne’s focus on the development of state employees through an equity lens is unparalleled. I have relied on her for advice and professional development for WDVA employees in areas such as Intergenerational Workshops and Bystander Intervention. Her experience in this area—having provided training for over 4,000 state employees—makes her a subject matter expert. She was chair for the Washington Immigrant Network (WIN), and through strategic planning and organization led this resource group to create successful events on equity-based celebrations and learning opportunities that brought hundreds of participants. Joanne currently manages its mentoring program, the first organized program for all seven BRGs. She created and presented the curriculum for bystander intervention and “Leading with Empathy”, which was presented in the 2022 Lean Conference. In addition to her state work, she also facilitated solidarity gatherings for Afghan, Ukrainian and Asian communities which bring credit to state government and its efforts to be the employer of choice. In this effort, her “You Belong” project focused on marginalized communities for recruitment and retention. This documentary brought to light the rich talent of Washington state employees and highlighted career opportunities for persons of color in our agencies. Joanne is a servant leader who is not afraid to seek honest feedback to improve and better serve all those she meets. She leads by example and has inspired a new generation of young people to seek professional development in order to attain upward mobility “in solidarity” as she always says. She is deserving of the Leadership Award recognition and I wholeheartedly recommend her selection.

Karen Peterson

Submitted by: Mike Ratko
Department of Labor & Industries

In 2022, Karen took a temporary role as project director to help lead the Workers' Compensation Systems Modernization project during a restructuring. This project will help streamline and automate business processes and is designed to reduce long-term disability which will lead to more efficiencies and better return-to-work outcomes for injured workers throughout the state of Washington. She made significant contributions, influenced peers, and made recommendations and decisions regarding the work to be performed, project governance and budget decisions. Karen was key in the success of operations and change management for the implementation of a multi-year technology project aiming to replace L&I's outdated "legacy" workers' compensation computer systems with a modern technical solution. Karen serves as a Chief Strategy Officer, and has been in state service for over 35 years leading with a true passion for public service, showing personal integrity, and motivating others to work toward a common goal and vision. She is skilled at communicating complex topics to leadership and stakeholders with varying degrees of knowledge about technology projects. She takes a thoughtful approach that is both inclusive and engaging. Additionally, Karen has served on L&I's Operational Leadership Team, Distributed Workforce Committee and Internet Connectivity Sub-Taskforce. She is an active member of our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Steering Committee and is Business Sponsor for our DEI Community of Practice Committee. Karen has developed exceptional strategic and leadership skills through a long line of successful experiences managing very large and diverse projects, including the Centralized Business Process Repository Project, Access Database Project, and the Portfolio Enhancement Phase Projects. She leads with a growth mindset, encouraging her staff to do their best every day and look for opportunities to grow and develop in their roles. She is an inspiration for everyone who works with her!

Karen Jost

Submitted by: Mike Ratko
Department of Labor & Industries

With more than 30 years of experience in public service, Karen successfully led the implementation of a new interpreter scheduling system for medical providers and injured workers in Washington. Her leadership on this project required careful, skillful navigation to meet the needs of different interest groups while improving service. Her drive to create a better system for interpreters came from knowing that injured workers with limited English proficiency may have skipped medical appointments in the past because there were no interpreters available. This caused an inherent health equity issue for these workers. Karen excels at relationship building and communicating with disparate stakeholders. Over the last several years, she used these skills to ensure a successful implementation of this new system that now averages 12,000 appointments a month. She engaged in constant dialog with wide and diverse audiences, including interpreters from all over the state, union representatives, medical providers, and many others. Creating the new system was fraught with competing views, but Karen encouraged the open exchange of ideas and concerns while fostering an atmosphere of respect. A crucial element of her strategy was explaining not only why we had to make a change, but also how a new scheduling system would be a marked improvement. Karen is a compassionate leader, stemming from her background as a licensed physical therapist. Her health care background inspired her to create an equitable workers' compensation system for all. She guides her staff to "do no harm" when creating health care payment rules and policies. This DEI commitment and Karen's vision of equitable access to interpreters has been an inspiration for everyone who has been involved in this key project at L&I. The agency can now offer a modern interpreter scheduling system that ensures access to medical care for all injured workers.

Phil White

Submitted by: Adrienne Lemcke
Employment Security Department

Phil White is the most incredible leader I have had the opportunity to work with; though I could focus on any of ideals of the PSRW, I will be sharing his work and devotion to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. Phil steps in front of this work as a member of a marginalized community himself. He takes his vulnerability, honesty, and history of injuries from a system that was built on a foundation of exclusion, inequity and racism, into public forums to allow others to learn, grow, and face the truth of this work and why it is so critical. He walks into this work with humility, kindness and above all else, love. He has created space for organic conversation among our employees, where individuals can share their "truth" and learn from the lived experiences of others. Under his leadership, roughly 70% his division leadership team received EDI Executive Certifications. He has created avenues and platforms to amplify the voices of marginalized communities *and* created safe spaces for communities of privilege to learn, ask questions, and engage the difficult conversations that are essential for real growth and change. He created an equitable and inclusive approach to hiring/interviewing that continues to receive positive responses in how it has leveled the playing field for applicants. He challenges our Executive Leadership Team when we miss the mark and revert to routine behavior that steps outside of our values and dedication to EDI. He invites others into this work, creating both formal and informal leaders throughout our organization- who have been invaluable in moving the needle. He aims to change the world by making it a better place, a safe, equitable, inclusive and loving place for ALL! He is selfless, brave and unshakably loving.

Ricky Bhalla

Submitted by: MaryLou Shannon
Washington Department of Transportation

Ricky's commitment to excellence is demonstrated in every action that he takes. Throughout his over 20 years at WSDOT, he consistently models a commitment to public service, innovative leadership, inclusion and personal integrity. Most recently, Ricky has used his open and strategic leadership approach to develop and implement the first progressive design-build (PDB) project at WSDOT. This project will correct 29 fish passage barriers through a collaborative, negotiated contract. This is an innovative delivery method that is critical to WSDOT's successful correction of fish passage barriers by 2030 as required by the federal injunction. Ricky researched national best practices and how to implement them in strict compliance with Washington state laws. He led the effort to gain approval from the Capital Project Advisory Review Board and gathered a team of experts to put together a quality, first-of-its-kind contract. He and his team led the procurement, selected the contractor team and are now executing the work. They have processed over 1000 submittals and negotiated the first bundle of five barriers that will be constructed this year. Ricky focuses on developing his staff. He provides excellent mentorship opportunities with new managers. He gives them opportunities to develop and grow while skillfully sharing the lessons he has learned through developing and delivering this first PDB contract. This is especially crucial as WSDOT begins the procurement of the second PDB contract which will correct another 29 barriers.

Stacey McClain

Submitted by: Troy Newman
Washington Military Department

Stacey McClain demonstrated exemplary leadership and care for employees as the Operations Manager and State Coordinating Officer for the Emergency Management Division. A visionary leader, Stacey recognized the need for greater synchronization of various elements of the Operations Section. He effected the change by encouraging the sections and programs to collaborate at a deeper level on specific topics. This resulted in increased synergy across the department, a collective awareness of other opportunities, and a common understanding of the challenges. Stacey prioritized timely response to external stakeholders as a business practice across the Operations Section. This practice amplified customer service inside the organization, improved relationships with a number of external organizations, and further strengthened the efficiency and effectiveness of the team. Over the course of 2022, Stacey led multiple response, recovery, mitigation and preparedness activities. This included responses to floods, wildfires, the COVID-19 pandemic, Avian influenza, European Green Crab infestation, and a host of other disasters. His team established a separate Joint Field Office with the Federal Emergency Management Agency to support those affected by disasters. Under Stacey's leadership, his team delivered a multi-agency exercise focused on the Cascadia Fault earthquake and delivered tireless support to the counties and tribes of our state. A leader of integrity, Stacey always asked the hard questions and looked for second and third order impacts before making a decision. His commitment to excellence and personal investment in the reputation of the agency was evident in each conversation. Stacey prioritized a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion in his personal decision-making and required a commitment to these ideals across the operations unit. His care for employees recognized team members as individuals and as part of an effective team. In short, Stacey walked the walk and ensured his leaders did the same.

Tammy Fellin

Submitted by: Joel Sacks
Department of Labor & Industries

As L&I's one-person Office of Legislative Liaison, Tammy Fellin works daily with stakeholders in and out of the Capitol Building. She does so with uncompromised integrity, a reputation for honesty, and a desire to help people resolve the issues they face. Tammy works with 147 legislators, each of L&I's divisions and programs, and a stakeholder community as diverse as the state itself. Tammy's leadership benefits L&I and those she works with outside the agency. When asked to help with an issue, rather than say, "No, we can't," she works to understand the request, and then determines the best way to solve the issue. No problem is too big or too small. She's able to detach the politics and look at the issues people want to resolve. This commitment to service is guided by her strong belief in the good government can do. Tammy makes state government better with every personal interaction. Trust is the commodity you trade in when you work in the legislative arena. Tammy has earned that trust because she knows how to listen, not just talk. As she works on legislation, inclusion is top of mind. Tammy looks out for those who don't naturally have a voice in the process. She will ask whose voice are we not hearing and what we can do to make sure they are not lost in the discussion. Tammy could take her skills and work for any private lobbyist. She chooses to serve the people of Washington by working for an agency with a mission she believes. She is a brand ambassador for L&I. As a result of her work, legislation is strengthened, stakeholders are an integral part of the process, and the public is undoubtedly safer and more secure in their workplace rights. She is keeping Washington safe and working.

Elyssa Tappero

Submitted by: Steven Friederich
Washington Military Department

Elyssa Tappero is a self-professed “disaster nerd” with a heart of gold and the deepest knowledge of tsunamis and what it would take to make everyone’s life safer in Washington state. A tsunami is a series of extremely long waves that threaten people and property along shorelines. She helps manage the state’s tsunami program for the Washington Emergency Management Division, a position she’s held since 2019. This past year, Elyssa has tutored a colleague and helped hire another tsunami program coordinator. As more people leave the agency, Elyssa has stayed and become an inspiring force. She teaches. She recruits. She travels across the country and ensures lessons we’re learning can be experienced by others. When the state underwent a tsunami scare in January 2022, Elyssa helped make sure local, state and federal partners had the information they needed to make critical decisions in a timely manner. In the wake of the incident, she has also led the charge to ensure that future messaging shows a commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. This means making sure content is in other languages and ensuring all graphics include “alt text” making them accessible to those using screen readers or are color blind. Making sure *all* people have critical lifesaving information is important. This is a lesson that Elyssa not only understands but she preaches and believes in. Her integrity is unquestionable. Elyssa could certainly find a better paying job elsewhere, but she is so passionate about her work that she has stayed on at the agency and continues to learn and grow, accepting more and more responsibilities and continuing to earn the respect of her peers.

Tennille Johnson

Submitted by: Marie Burrows
Employment Security Department

Tennille is always keeping the goals of the agency at the forefront of her leadership. She is not afraid to “be the voice” in the room to and inspires folks to ensure that the goals are not lost or watered down. She takes time to make sure that what is being worked on is favorable for the team, group and agency. She embodies the vision of leadership in the way she leads people. Tennille continues to find a way to serve our agency and our Black community as a senior leader in the organization *and* because she wants to live up to her values of service to our staff. She repeatedly advocates for her team, customers and community members. Tennille constantly pushes for our organization to better serve the public not only from within, but in our partnership with community organizations so that we can reach our goals more quickly and effectively. Tennille consistently raises her hand and shares ideas on how we can break down barriers to get our customers the services they need, when they need it. I have witnessed Tennille being very thoughtful about the power she has in this agency, using it to advance a collective agenda where everyone can “win” and thrive here as employees. She always treats people the way that we all would love to be treated by our leadership. She is always willing to go above and beyond to take the burdens off others. Tennille has been the president of our ERG for Black employees for two years. She supports other employee groups when they reach out for connection or assistance, and provides an empathetic, welcoming space for all people to share ideas and discuss our journey toward growing more equitable outcomes in Washington state.

Tracy Wynder

Nominated by: Heather Normoyle
Department of Labor & Industries

Tracy Wynder is the Labor Relations Manager for the Department of L&I. She is a senior contributor to our HR leadership team. Her depth of knowledge, experience with past decisions and her continued learning mindset is instrumental in having a successful HR Division and overall agency. Tracy leads with vision and continues to reevaluate and adjust the vision as needed. Tracy is a role model of a servant leader with a commitment to service. She meets with her team individually one-on-one weekly. She advocates for her team, and they feel supported by her. Tracy supports her team taking on developmental job assignments, higher level duty opportunities and non-perm assignments. Tracy's great leadership shows with her team having zero percent turnover. Tracy assumes many roles: Safety Committee Leader for OHR, Operations Leadership Team and OLT Policy Committee. Tracy also received kudos from OFM for leadership during labor negotiations for 23-25. They said they found her to be a great resource for matters related to L&I and very helpful overall while the team worked to develop proposals and strategy. Tracy's personal integrity is top notch. She is a role model for employees in state government. She is professional, cares about others and always works extremely hard to do the right thing. Tracy leads with a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion mindset. She attends DEI learning labs, listening sessions and ensures that L&I employees can bring their full self to work. Tracy's team saved \$1.4 million in retrospective funds. The L&I experience rate dropped to .9072 from 1.0405—experience rate has not been below 1.0 since 2018. Her team decreased the number of L&I workers compensations claims received by 25% due to previous year, and decreased the number of time loss compensation claims by 42%.

Brian Maule

Submitted by: Paul Noyes
Department of Licensing

Brian Maule's superior sustained performance as the Bremerton Staff Supervisor make him eminently qualified for the "Extra Mile" award. Spending much of 2021 dual-hatted as LSO Supervisor due to numerous pandemic-induced staffing modifications, he adroitly supported the morale, welfare and training of his highly productive, "customer-first" team. A champion of the key organizational objective to provide "easy and equitable access to great service," Brian's dynamic, hands-on leadership approach inspired his team to maximize the number of residents they assisted during the pandemic's peak. From creating additional space in the appointment "margins" for walk-in customers, to generating a ticket system that gave frustrated customers hope, they regularly removed all barriers to access by supporting walk-in customers at an average rate 90% above their daily appointments. Brian seamlessly manages staff operations while also providing first-rate instruction to eager new LSRs who join the team. An effective teacher and mentor, he successfully conveys his in-depth understanding of the myriad complex situations an LSR will evaluate and adjudicate every day and ensures they are well-prepared for their role as the "face of Washington government." A passionate architect of inclusivity, Brian never misses an opportunity to acknowledge the value of his team, individually or collectively, through numerous self-funded, team building and culturally diverse celebrations and recognitions that are enormous morale-boosters. His commitment, maturity, empathy, and initiative noticeably set him apart from his peers, while his incredible knowledge of driver licensing make him a valuable resource to the entire DE leadership team. Never avoiding uncomfortable conversations, he tactfully provides thoughtful, well-developed advice, filtered through the lenses of diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging, to achieve the best possible outcome from every situation. Brian is a forward-thinking innovator who tirelessly works at improving every process to streamline the delivery of first-class customer service for every Washington resident.

Bryant Karras

Submitted by: Chris Baumgartner
Department of Health

At his current position in the Executive Office of Innovation and Technology, Bryant guides the agencies interoperability work and contributes meaningfully to ongoing national and state-wide discussions on data modernization. He is a physician, an engineer and Public Health Informatician. He has a technical business process and problem-solving approach informed by a background in Internal Medicine/Chief Resident (University of Wisconsin), Biomedical Engineering (University of California San Diego), and a Medical Informatics Fellowship (Yale). He has been a member of AMIA since 1998 when he was an NLM/NIH Fellow. He serves on the Office of the National Coordinator (ONC) Health Information Technology Advisory Committee (HITAC) through GAO verification. As Informatics Officer for Washington State's Department of Health, he guides the informatics and interoperability of enterprise-wide agency efforts. This includes utilizing innovative technologies such as Bluetooth Exposure Notification and SMART Health Cards that were essential during the COVID-19 pandemic. He also attended a UN G20 meeting to explore international reciprocity around SMART Health Cards. He has also been instrumental in automating our clinical data exchange with clinical partners— which is crucial to our public health work. This led to a large increase in data exchange electronically (vs fax). In 2019 our agency exchanged 50 million records through our HIE and by 2022 we surpassed 116 million. Bryant is passionate about improving use of Health Information Technology in Washington state. He is also helping public health agencies at the national, tribal, state, and local level with informatics issues. He has served here for over a decade. For more on his amazing leadership and innovative spirit please see: <https://phii.org/episodes/the-dynamic-informatics-career-of-dr-bryant-karras>.

Catherine Pederson

Submitted by: Mike Ratko
Department of Labor & Industries

Catherine has served as a subject matter expert and liaison for over a year in the Workers' Compensation Systems Modernization (WCSM) project. This project will modernize more than 100 interconnected systems that use more than 40 programming languages — some obsolete because they were developed in the mid-1980s. Overall, the goal is to modernize technology and business processes so L&I can help injured workers heal and return to work. Catherine was selected for this role not only because of her knowledge and experience, but also because she is a trusted and respected leader in our division. She has been deeply involved in technology assessments, business journey mapping sessions, an updated solution strategy, a market scan analysis, and a feasibility study. She has been instrumental in working with vendors and the project team to ensure the right information is identified, captured, and prioritized for our workers' compensation applications. She has done all of this while still serving as the operations manager for Coaching, Training, FileFast, Pension, Social Security Offset and Case Reserve within the Claims program, which directly contributes to L&I's mission and objectives. As the Claims Specialty Services Program Manager, she has a natural connection with her peers, stakeholders and work groups and is thoughtful, inclusive and caring. She is consistently patient, and willing to take the time to go above her day-to-day tasks to see others succeed. She cares about her work, the people who work for her, and achieving L&I's mission. Catherine is a dedicated and exemplary L&I employee, has a true commitment to public service, and has made significant contributions to help advance Washington state government.

Civil Rights Program

Submitted by: Tisa Soeteber
Department of Labor & Industries

Since 2018, this team has been the driving force behind the development and expansion of L&I's Civil Rights Program, and its accomplishments in 2022 continued to help the agency identify organizational needs and implement meaningful changes that promote access, equity and respect for L&I customers. Program activities include providing advice, consultation, and policy guidance to the agency and business areas in compliance with Title IV of the Civil Rights Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and all other protected class laws, rules and requirements. The team also provides policy support to the director and executive leadership on all civil rights and protected class issues. In addition, the team completes independent and objective investigations of complaints against the agency related to discrimination and civil rights. The team leads a variety of efforts to identify gaps in services, outline risks, and recommend viable solutions to all agency divisions and programs. A common complaint was lack of customer awareness of the civil rights services that L&I provides. The team collaborated with programs across the agency to think critically and solve this problem. This work spawned the creation of the first ever L&I Non-Discrimination Notice for existing business processes to ensure customers understand their rights and how to file a complaint if they believe their rights were denied. The team created the Interagency Protected Class Network, which is a collection of 15 state agencies that meet to share ideas, best practices, and strategies to help the state become more effective and proactive at removing barriers and implementing new service models. To enhance that work, the Civil Rights Program team leads initiatives to improve access to services through translation of important civil rights materials in more than 15 languages. The Civil Rights Program is the first in the state of Washington to develop and promote Human Trafficking Awareness training for L&I staff. This training helps staff become aware of the red flag indicators of potential human trafficking activities and informs them how to refer such incidents to the Civil Rights Program that, in turn, reports to the Office of the Attorney General and the appropriate law enforcement entities.

DSHS Afghan Arrivals Support team

Submitted by: Sarah Peterson
Department of Social and Health Services

In August of 2021, the United States rescued more than 80,000 Afghans in an emergency evacuation through Operation Allies Welcome. I am writing to nominate the Washington state employees that joined efforts with our Afghan American community and local resettlement partners to resettle more than 3,200 Afghans here in Washington. The Afghan Arrivals Support team brought together a group of professionals from across DSHS to provide support and coordination for Washington's local resettlement partners, and to directly resettle over 200 Afghans through the Washington State Afghan Placement and Assistance Program. The team consisted of leaders from DSHS Emergency Management Services and the DSHS Office of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance working alongside representatives from across the Economic Services Administration and other administrations. The team established a transitional welcoming center at the Double Tree hotel in SeaTac, arranged for a community-based organization to provide culturally responsive and linguistically appropriate staffing, worked with World Central Kitchen to arrange the distribution of food, and provided community orientation through an Afghan American partner to all the guests. We contracted with nonprofit organizations to provide case management services and long-term housing placements. Our welcome and reception team recruited over 50 volunteers from DSHS staff members to greet 200 Afghans at the airport that arrived within a two-week time period. We partnered with the Department of Health to facilitate an onsite health screening clinic and a dental van. CSD's Mobile CSO assisted in enrolling all the families at the hotel in public assistance programs. This emergency operation required collaboration and coordination across the Department. It demanded innovation to move quickly and work within systems to meet the needs of these Afghans seeking a new home. They team went the extra mile to provide safety, security and a warm welcome to our newest Afghan neighbors.

Eric Shields

Submitted by: Debbie Dunn
Department of Licensing

DOL holds and shares more personal information than other agencies. Eric is responsible for the program that audits and holds data recipients accountable to contractual requirements. In doing so, Eric has gone the extra mile in several ways. He has excelled at developing the most comprehensive compliance program that we know of across all 50 states, and continually strives to make it even better. This included the development of the first-ever permissible use audits which audit data recipients to ensure they're only using the personal information as authorized in their data sharing agreements. No other state does this. Eric regularly takes the initiative to improve and champion DOL's efforts in promoting privacy. For example, he recognized a gap in how the agency response to data incidents and assembled a cross-divisional team of subject matter experts which established the agency's policies and processes for incident response. He currently leads a team that evaluates reports of unauthorized access or misuse of personal information and takes appropriate action to mitigate risk, educate and/or hold violators accountable. He has built productive and respectful relationships with our data customers, which isn't an easy task, given that it's his job to hold data recipients responsible for compliance. Eric continually strives to find balance between the business needs of our data customers and residents' privacy expectations. And as such, our data customers respect Eric and often seek out his knowledge and expertise. He is a consummate promoter of employee recognition as demonstrated by the "Auddie Awards" – an annual event Eric coordinates to recognizes every team member for their individual contributions during the previous year. Each awardee receives a prize uniquely tailored to them.

Helen Berry

Submitted by: Jeff Gaeckle
Department of Natural Resources

I would like to nominate Helen Berry for her outstanding Public Service contribution over the last 25+ years as an ecologist who has focused on monitoring and protecting nearshore habitat in Washington state. Early in her career with the Nearshore Habitat Program, Aquatic Resources Division, Helen cataloged the diverse habitat types of the entire marine shoreline of the state using a helicopter for the ShoreZone Inventory. ShoreZone established a general understanding, but Helen envisioned the need to expand the state's knowledge of specific foundational habitats in nearshore systems that support higher trophic level species in the region. In the early 2000s, Helen collaborated with colleagues to develop the Submerged Vegetation Monitoring Program, a Puget Sound-wide Seagrass Monitoring Program - now recognized as one of the largest and most continuous seagrass monitoring programs in the United States. But Helen's passion and vision has always been focused on kelp, particularly the status and trends of floating kelp, the stressors that affect kelp, and how to inform and bring together diverse stakeholders to guide policy to conserve and protect this valuable habitat. Over the past five years, Helen guided a dedicated and diverse team of colleagues, working closely with First Nations, academics, local, state, federal, and international participants to create the Kelp Research and Monitoring Workgroup. Helen's commitment has most recently culminated in the development of the Washington Floating Kelp Indicator, a Puget Sound Partnership Vital Sign, to track the health of floating kelp in Washington state and make policy recommendations to protect this important habitat. Helen's overwhelming support of colleagues and her demonstrated commitment to conserve and protect natural resources of the state makes her a perfect candidate for the Extra Mile Award.

Jason Gambill

Submitted by: Ron Hussung
Department of Agriculture

Jason Gambill is highly respected and considered by many— in and out of state government— as the cornerstone for excellence in safety. Jason had a vision to bring new technology into state agriculture by incorporating unmanned aerial systems (UAS). He volunteered to be the drone coordinator and developed a policy and practice to include licensing employees through the FAA. This effort allowed us to expand our capabilities by flying drones to locate and eradicate the Northern Giant Hornet (murder hornet). As a critical thinker, Jason noticed throughout the pandemic our employees had been struggling with so many issues related to the impact of this historic event. Jason noticed employees were stressed with ergonomics, so he developed a plan to professionally resource assessments through a business that provided training for employees who were suddenly working from home. This forward thinking allowed WSDA to reduce our ergonomic workplace injuries and those results were noticeably positive in the state-wide safety survey. Additionally, many were experiencing increased mental health concerns, resiliency challenges, toxicity, and the lack of social connectivity. Therefore, he put together a campaign of training sessions throughout 2022 that were professional sourced covering: Building Resiliency in the Workplace; Cultivating Stress Resiliency; Overcoming Toxic Stress and Trauma; Mental Health First Aid Course; and in 2023, a 12-month professionally sourced training event for restoring health and wellness to individuals through workplace coaching, habit change science and lifestyle medicine. Jason truly embraces and understands the importance of supporting diversity, equity and inclusion. By ensuring many of these events provided resources that had the ability to change our conversations and remove unconscious bias, Jason played a large part in making it safer for all employees to participate in employee work groups that were specifically related to safety, health and wellness in alignment with our agricultural mission.

Lian Roberts

Submitted by: Mike Bjordahl
Washington Department of Transportation

Lian uses innovative technology (Miovision TrafficLink/TraffOp) to gather Automated Traffic Signal Performance Measures (ATSPM) for retiming signalized corridors in the Spokane region to reduce delay while increasing reliability, efficiency, and safety for the traveling public. She has led the retiming effort on state routes and has also partnered with the City of Spokane Valley (CoSV) on the shared routes in their city. A specific example was collaborating with CoSV on the retiming of a corridor adjacent to a shopping mall to relieve congestion during the Holiday season. The technology—both equipment and hardware—was in place and available for use, but was not being utilized until Lian started exploring it and uncovered its potential. She has worked closely with the developer of the technology and they have even asked to use her expertise in testing some of their upcoming technology. She has shared her success with others through presentations and bi-weekly updates to the Eastern Region TSMO group. This has increased the confidence and acceptance of the more skeptical employees to the new technology, to the point where they support building onto the technology. She has taken Eastern Region's signal technology to the 21st century. Lian also stepped up and volunteered— without being asked— to continue the Traffic Office's involvement in the Salvation Army's Adopt-A-Family program after the previous organizer retired. The program provides gifts to underprivileged families, which allows participating WSDOT employees to exercise our partnership in the communities we serve and better understand their needs. Lian is outstanding in customer service as she is quickly responds to any inquiries from the public that involve signal timing in the region, investigates whatever the issue was, and corrects it if needed.

Piper Petit

Submitted by: Dave Bierschbach
Department of Transportation

Piper exemplifies ideals of an outstanding leader, going the extra mile to do so. Her innovative techniques and methods are demonstrated by her always looking at ways to improve fish passage projects. This is exemplified by her work with the tribes and WDFW to find a solution to a particularly challenging stream design that did not meet stream guidelines. The solution was uniquely innovative and not previously used at the state. Piper accomplished this because she has laid the groundwork for trust with project partners. Piper leads her team by forming strong relationships, engaging the whole group to solve difficult problems. As project delivery methods shifted in the last year, Piper was able to guide her team through these changes and to deliver projects on time. Piper demonstrates visionary thinking by helping develop future WSDOT employees. She has led the effort in the region to engage STEM students, creating productive collaborations such as this winter's Occupation Exploration— an event for students grades 6-12 and into college— inviting students into WSDOT to learn about our work and how to become a future WSDOT employee. Of her many leadership qualities, commitment to DEI may be Piper's strongest value. Piper is a leader on our regional Diversity Advisory Group, mentors other engineers, and is WSDOT's lead for the MESA (Math, Engineering, Science, Achievement) program at Wenatchee Valley College. She has also started a statewide Fish Passage networking group to help fish passage engineers across the state. Finally, Piper understands and uses the power of customer service to build relationships with stakeholders. She works with them to genuinely understand their goals and help them understand the project itself. From her staff to project stakeholders, all feel respected.

Policy operations and Escalations Team

Submitted by: Christian Carvajal
Department of Social and Health Services

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in spring 2020, millions of children were sent home from preschools and schools. Many such households relied on SNAP and other nutritional programs to make ends meet. Washington DSHS was tasked with implementing the USDA's new Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer program (P-EBT), loading millions of dollars of food assistance onto P-EBT cards sent to thousands of families. These cards work the same as a regular EBT card, in that they can be used as payment for most unprepared food items. Within the first six months of Washington's P-EBT program, this hardworking, innovative team was able to distribute close to a billion dollars in food assistance to over 600,000 children. As of July 2022, it could extend P-EBT food benefits to children younger than age 6. Under the leadership of project management administrator Bryan Banks, the DSHS P-EBT team—aka the Policy, Operations and Escalations (POE) Team—quickly realized it needed data on which families needed assistance most. That task called for collaboration with numerous state and federal relief agencies. Unable to access student information directly from OSPI, the POE Team first created a new, online application process. Then, when that ad hoc system proved burdensome to overwhelmed families, the team collaborated with partner agencies to customize an automated "P-EBT Solution" program developed by Accenture. Among other advantages, this new software allowed school administrators to upload information directly about which children were in direst need. Angela Aikins and Troy Burgess led team efforts to draft straightforward policies and project documentation. Meanwhile, to help families find and understand P-EBT assistance, the team launched a new, contracted customer contact center in only six weeks. The POE Team's indefatigability, willingness to innovate, and commitment to collaborate helped keep food on the table for thousands of families through unprecedented hardship.

Respectful Workplace Initiative Curriculum Developers

Submitted by: Amy Reynolds
Department of Labor & Industries

Mindy Stokes and Ingrid Goebel are working to move the needle on diversity, equity and inclusion at the Washington State Department of Labor & Industries (L&I). L&I's Respectful Workplace Policy states that all L&I personnel, contractors, and volunteers are responsible to contribute to a respectful work environment. Training to support those behaviors is an important requirement of the policy. L&I's efforts to create the training were delayed by the pandemic and budgetary constraints prohibited hiring a vendor. After learning about the need, Mindy and Ingrid crafted an innovative proposal. Why not use their academic backgrounds and lived experience, along with data from L&I's employee survey and core values work to create a robust curriculum in-house? They modeled equity and inclusion during the training's creation, hearing from those who previously worked on the effort, and recruiting new voices to ensure the training is valuable to employees who have historically felt unsafe or undervalued at work. Ingrid and Mindy also piloted the training with more than 60 employees, refining and improving the curriculum based on participant feedback. The result is curriculum that covers a wide variety of important topics, including identifying and reducing biases and micro-aggressions, inclusive brainstorming, positionality in the workplace, and much more. Mindy and Ingrid developed a long-term plan to deliver the training to every L&I employee, starting with leaders. They also built a succession plan to train additional trainers, ensuring this important work is sustained. This work was completed in addition to their regular duties. We expect the training and plan to receive final approval from L&I leaders in the spring of 2023. L&I will strongly benefit from Ingrid and Mindy's leadership and their ability to model and teach DEI values through meaningful curriculum. They are very deserving of an Extra Mile Award.

Spokane Licensing Service Office

Submitted by: Christopher Rueckert
Department of Licensing

District 7 (D7)-Spokane License Servicing Office (LSO) is the epitome of exemplary public service! In 2022, staff served 62,313 customers obtaining vital drivers licenses and identification cards enabling residents to live, work, drive and thrive. The LSO possesses D7's highest performing staff member, out of 59 LSR's in D7, with 4,534 issuances and an unfathomable zero EDL audit findings! As staffing increased from 72% to 100%, they meticulously tackled intense training requirements completing 136 classes, certifications and objectives while simultaneously, customer volume surged 93%—embodying the heart of innovation. Staff created a Factory Pull process for customers experiencing barriers with postal deliveries, reducing the delivery time to a customer by 15 days (59%), which is set for state-wide implementation in 2023. Additionally, staff developed a tracker to streamline training, resulting in 100% of eligible staff being certified to run an LSO. This allows flexibility, provides relief and staffing at local LSO's, and allowed the Newport LSO to reopen. Finally, staff revamped Newport and Davenport's drive test routes increasing grading clarity for staff and customers. The office is crafted around going the "extra mile." At the call of Governor Inslee to assist more than 600 homeless Washingtonian's living in Camp Hope, more than half of the staff volunteered. Over five weeks, staff provided meaningful access to information and issued identification cards to over 400 homeless community members. This innovation spawned department strategic plan adjustments by developing initiatives to meet underserved communities. The team coordinated internally and externally for all district personnel to receive True Colors International training for personal and professional self-development and received approval for D6/D7 supervisors to attend an Emotional Intelligence course in 2023. The office hosts an eight-member morale committee which organized 17 group events including Spokane Chief's Hockey and Indian's Baseball, allowing staff to further build lasting relationships with one another.

Transportation Network Company Implementation

Submitted by: H. Randy Littlefield
Department of Labor & Industries

The 2022 Legislative session was busy for the Department of Labor & Industries (L&I), with new legislation creating roles and responsibilities for the agency. Among the most significant laws passed in 2022, the Transportation Network Companies worker protection bill creates worker protections for Ride Share drivers of companies such as Uber and Lyft. These drivers will now receive such worker protections as minimum compensation, paid sick leave and worker compensation coverage, as well as protections against retaliation for exercising any of these rights. The new law establishes a Driver Resource Center to help drivers access these rights, report workers compensation premiums, and mediate driver deactivations. L&I's responsibility to implement this new and innovative law by January 1, 2023, took an enterprise-level effort of immense proportions. It required the L&I team to complete a massive scope of work, with an anxious nation watching — and the team had to do all of this on a short timeline. This team of dedicated folks had to find the time and space to complete this huge task while continuing to manage their other important work. The team created a new worker rights complaint form, translated it into 15 languages, and informed affected workers of their rights using a marketing plan with online content, social media, bus ads and more. This was incredibly difficult and broadly affected many different divisions within L&I. Many people worked hard on various tasks to implement this legislation, yet the team members we've listed rose up to ensure a successful implementation of what seemed like an impossible task. This team is highly deserving of the Extra Mile Award for exceeding expectations by a wide margin, often working weekends, late evenings, and showing incredible commitment to creating and protecting the rights of these drivers — an estimated 85,000 workers who are now protected.

Virtual Services Team

Submitted by: Shawn Brookshier
Employment Security Department

The Virtual Services team was brought together through the work of several individual projects and as a response to a sudden increase in workload demands stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic. The team quickly learned to work collaboratively with staff from a variety of programs around the state. The accomplishments and results of the services provided by this team have led to consistently high customer satisfaction rates. The culture of this team has led to service delivery improvements and agility. The team has proven its ability to quickly shift to cover last minute needs of local offices, while building a future structure that anticipates those needs and simplifies processes that make assistance quick and reliable. This allows our system to provide customer services that would have been cancelled in the past. This has meant that the team has expanded their knowledge and training in different areas to be extremely mobile. This team has produced a strong culture that is inclusive, equitable, stable, empowering, adaptable, highly productive and has an incredibly low turnover rate. The Washington State Employment Security Department's Virtual Services Team is nominated for going above and beyond expectations for: 1) exemplary public service by using innovative techniques and methods to support several programs, including Live Chat, Job Hunter and other workshops, TAA, RESEA and WorkFirst; 2) outstanding leadership to ensure all staff receive ongoing training, support, and resources needed to sustain and increase customer success; 3) visionary thinking to foster and support continuous improvement initiatives and system modernization to improve service quality; 4) presentations, discussions, and articles to spark awareness around a greater commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion, especially to those in marginalized communities; 5) trainings, customer surveys, and ongoing monitoring to ensure the highest level of customer service is provided to the citizens of Washington state.

