

ACTION ITEM MEMO

Port of Tacoma Commission



Item No: 5C
Meeting Date: 5/7/26

DATE: April 23, 2026
TO: Port of Tacoma Commission
FROM: Eric Johnson, Executive Director
Sponsor: Sean Eagan, Director of Government and Community Affairs
Project Manager: Sean Eagan, Director of Government & Community Affairs
Leslie Barstow, Manager of Community Affairs & Workforce Development
SUBJECT: Workforce Development Strategy 2026 Update

A. **ACTION REQUESTED**
Approval of the 2026 update to the Port of Tacoma’s Workforce Development Strategy

Strategic Plan Initiative: WD 1-4.

B. **BACKGROUND**
RCW 53.08.245 authorizes port districts in Washington state to contract with nonprofit corporations and private and public entities that provide training systems as defined in RCW 28C.18.010 and promote workforce diversity in furtherance of this and other acts relating to economic development.

In February 2022, the Port of Tacoma Commission adopted Resolution 2022-03 in which it found that workforce development is critical to achieving the Port’s primary mission to serve as an economic development agency generating quality, family-wage jobs and economic growth for the region and increasing operational efficiency and economic mobility. The resolution found the Port of Tacoma’s over-arching workforce development objective is to ensure that the maritime industry have access to workers who have the necessary skills to provide safe and efficient maritime services and that the workers have opportunities to acquire the skills and education they need to secure increasingly complex and better compensated jobs.

Resolution 2022-03 directed the Executive Director to develop plans and policies to complete a workforce development strategic plan and implementing policies to improve upon and expand current efforts in port-related sectors, develop new partnerships with regional stakeholders, work with labor partners in such efforts, and establish contracts with service providers as necessary to deliver on the plan for formal consideration by the Port Commission. The resolution also directed the Executive Director to focus on well-paying jobs that do not require a

four-year college degree in the following fields: building trades, manufacturing trades and transportation and logistics trades.

Later that same year, the Commission adopted a 10-point Workforce Development Strategy. The plan included a mix of strategies and tactics. Some items have evolved over time and are no longer accurate in terms of the work being performed.

In 2025, the Commission updated the Port's Strategic Plan. As part of that effort, it elevated Workforce Development from an Economic Vitality strategy to its own separate goal area. This elevation included the adoption of four specific strategies.

C. **SCOPE OF WORK**

Staff requests the Commission adopt an updated Workforce Development Strategy that aligns with the Port of Tacoma Strategic Plan adopted by the Commission in 2025. The updated Workforce Development Strategy would contain four goal areas:

- **WD 1 Identify opportunities to utilize Port-owned properties in partnership with local and regional organizations to facilitate maritime industry career development.**
Examples would include the Port's lease of property to the Tacoma Youth Marine Foundation and the Maritime 253 Skills Center. Future opportunities would come to the Commission for consideration under the terms of the Port's Master Policy Resolution
- **WD 2 Partner with government and local and regional organizations to facilitate career development through financial investments.**
Examples would include the Port's interlocal agreement with Tacoma Public Schools helping fund their summer certification program or the Port's contract with Workforce Central. Contracts over \$350,000 and ILAs are subject to Commission approval.
- **WD 3 Identify opportunities to utilize the Port's procurement processes by prioritizing contracts with organizations that facilitate maritime industry career development.**
The Port currently requires 15% Apprenticeship Participation for all public works projects estimated to cost \$1 million or more.
- **WD 4 Promote awareness of career pathways in the maritime trades.**
Examples include the title sponsorship of the annual Pierce County Career Day, participation in high school career fairs.

E. **FINANCIAL SUMMARY**

There is no cost associated with the adoption of the new Strategic Plan itself. However, it does provide guidance as to potential Port investments for Commission consideration in the future.

F. **NEXT STEPS**

Staff will implement actions identified under the Strategic Plan 2026 Implementation Plan specifically tied to the Workforce Development Goal Area. Commissioners will be briefed on results through the quarterly Strategic Plan update as well as the Workforce Development Annual Report.