

The Navigator Model: Connecting Customers to Employment



The Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County (WDC) is a nonprofit workforce think-tank and grant-making organization whose mission is to support a strong economy and the ability of each person to achieve self-sufficiency. The WDC works throughout the community, bringing employers, jobseekers, youth, educators, labor groups and other nonprofits together to find and fund solutions to workforce gaps. The following list is a sampling of the WDC's tools and models developed through industry collaboration and outcomes-based research.

Briefing

The Navigator Model: Connecting to Employment

Executive Committee Briefing, Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County Board | January 2012

Background: Career navigators can make existing systems work better together, leading to greater efficiency as well as fewer hurdles for jobseekers and students. This new report highlights the incredibly effective role of the navigator to link between systems, industries and agencies to support students and staff alike, illustrated with two proven models:

Customer Resource: The navigator works to directly support people in training. An analysis of the WDC's partnership with Shoreline Community College to create the Automotive Career Pathways program proved that students who worked with a navigator were far more likely to finish their automotive training courses and get jobs in a related field—as well as stay in their jobs.

Staff Resource: The navigator is a resource and relationship builder among agency staff and employers. The WDC's Homeless Employment Navigators trained WorkSource Seattle-King County staff to work better with homeless jobseekers. Navigator's also helped people living in transitional housing sites to bridge to WorkSource employment services and job training.

The Navigator Model: Connecting to Employment highlights what the WDC has learned about the unique role of navigators in supporting students, jobseekers and staff for maximum impact.

Print Deliverable

Side 1

**Customer Resource Model:
Automotive Career Pathways**

Through a grant from the Aspen Institute, the WDC partnered with Shoreline Community College to create the Automotive Career Pathways program.

Students in the General Service Technician program learn technical automotive skills in Shoreline's state-of-the-art Automotive Training Center while being supported by a career navigator. The navigator works on site with students, but is employed by Pacific Associates, a WorkSource partner—thus bridging the gap between the college and the workforce systems.

Each student forms a personal connection with the navigator, who:

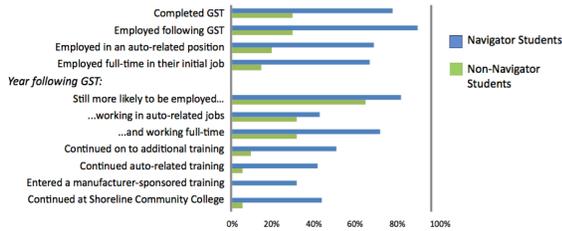
- Facilitates college enrollment and registration.
- Helps the student identify financial aid from multiple sources (including the college, WorkSource, and

scholarships) and access these resources.

- Can help to cover emergency expenses that might otherwise derail a student's training.
- Connects students with other services available in the community for multiple needs.
- Works closely with employers to chart career ladders and develop internship opportunities.
- Keeps in touch with students as they graduate and gain employment, helping them continue to learn and advance in the field.



Results: An evaluation by the Aspen Institute showed that students who enrolled in navigator services were much more likely to finish the General Service Technician program, and afterwards, were more likely to be employed, working in an auto-related field, and working full-time, as shown in the chart below:



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**The Navigator Model:
Connecting to Employment**

Revised July 2014



The Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County (WDC) has found that Navigators make a big impact when it comes to training programs—in student retention, successful completion of training, and securing employment.

In one example, the WDC found that students who worked with a navigator during their automotive training finished the course at a rate of 81%—compared to 30% of trainees who didn't. After the program, they were far more likely to be employed, working in an auto-related field, and working full-time.

At its core, the navigator's job is to link between and within systems and industries in order to help an individual succeed at all the steps in his or her career path and become more self-sufficient.

This report shares what the WDC has learned about the navigator's unique role in supporting students, jobseekers and staff for maximum impact.

Inside:

- What are navigators?
- Two models of navigator services
- Case studies of successful programs



Side 2

**Background and Definitions:
What Does a Navigator Offer?**

Knowledge

- Labor market
- Industry sector(s)
- Sector(s) hiring practices and employment needs
- Insider knowledge of procedures, resources and components of multiple systems, including education, workforce, disability, housing systems, etc.

Skills

- Cultural competency
- Go-getter, self-starter, self-motivated
- Problem solver for variety of demands faced by customers (jobs, families, personal issues, financial/housing instability, transportation)
- Address misconceptions by systems/customers
- Communicator, relationship builder/maintainer

Activities

- One-on-one assistance
- Work with client to develop education and career plan
- Support persistence in gaining access to services, etc.

- Facilitate advancement
- Connect to resources for job placement, career progression, continued training
- Onsite presence and regular interaction in collaborative meetings and task forces within systems and their administrators, staff, faculty, etc.
- Work collaboratively with 'service team' members, including social services, education providers, job developers, employers

Location

- Success hinges on accessibility, so location matters
- **Education** – Located on campus
- **Employment** – Located at an employer site or at a WorkSource site
- **Social Services** – Travels between two or more WorkSource sites
- **Combination** – Provides navigator services to access two or more systems (e.g., Education/Workforce/Employer; Social Services/Education/ Workforce)

**Staff Resource Model:
Disability Resource Coordinator**

In 2012, the WDC was the recipient of Disability Employment Initiative (DEI), which funded Disability Resource Coordinators (DRCs), through a jointly sponsored project by the U.S. Department of Labor and the Social Security Administration.

DRCs act as navigators to provide expertise and resources to staff in the WorkSource systems and jobseekers with disabilities. The DRCs work with WorkSource partners in Integrated Resource Teams to address the needs of persons with disabilities seeking training and employment opportunities.

Working in tandem with the Governor's Committee on Disability Issues and Employment and CARES of Washington, the DRCs also serve jobseekers with

disabilities who qualify for the National Ticket to Work Program (TTW). TTW can help social security beneficiaries go to work, advance in their careers, save money, and become financially independent, all while keeping their health coverage.

The DRCs have established desk space and hours at W six WorkSource sites, furthering cross-system coordination and service provision as they attend WorkSource partner and team meetings.

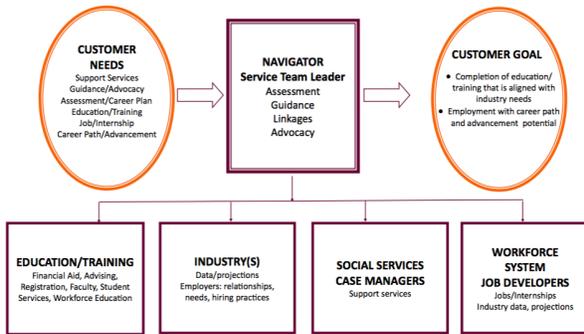
Thanks to the three Disability Resource Coordinators working within the WorkSource Seattle-King County System, over 200 jobseekers have received assistance in finding employment since the grant began.

Two Navigator Models

Navigators in the WorkSource Seattle-King County system may serve as either a **Customer Resource** or **Staff Resource**.

Services Provided	Customer Resource <i>The Navigator serves as the leader of a customer's integrated "service team," eliminating duplication of services and stretching resources.</i>	Staff Resource <i>The Navigator serves as a knowledge resource and relationship broker to staff members and employers.</i>
Assessment	Develops a career plan with clear education goals (including financing), and employment goals; if barriers are identified, provides connections to a case manager	As requested, reviews assessments developed by case managers and makes recommendations to achieve plans/goals
Guidance	Tracks progress of plan, supports persistence, and facilitates advancement and career progression	Provides training to staff about system components, processes, labor market, industries, employers, career paths
Linkages	Connects client as needed to support services, education/training providers and components, career and industry information, and job opportunities	Informs job developers about industry hiring practices and needs, and provides connections to employers
Advocacy	Serves as a liaison between client and the 'systems' being accessed (social services, education/training, industries and employers) and their components (e.g., housing, financial aid, advising, student services, HR, etc.)	Provides employers with information about system resources

Staff Resource Model: How It Works



The Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County (www.seekingwdc.org) is a nonprofit workforce think tank and grant-making organization that oversees employment-related programs for youth, the adult workforce and employers in King County, with the goal of a strong economy and self-sufficiency for every resident. The Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County is an Equal Opportunity Employer and provider of employment and training services. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. Washington Telecommunications Relay System, 800.833.6384 or 7-1-1.

Case Example: Healthcare

Job Description, Healthcare Career & Education Navigator

Description: Navigators will rotate between various worksites throughout King County. Each navigator will have regular office hours and days at sites in a specific geographic area, i.e., Auburn, North Seattle, etc... Sites will include: WorkSources (Redmond, North Seattle, South Seattle CC, Renton and Auburn), DSHS CSOs (King East, King North, Rainier, White Center, Renton, Kent, and Auburn), and colleges (Bellevue, Shoreline, NSCC, SVI, SCCC, RTC, Highline, and Green River).

Type: Full-Time (1) and Part-Time (6). Part-Time Navigators will work in other programs to constitute a full-time employee.

Function: Under the supervision of the program supervisor and the program manager, navigators will be responsible for recruiting, assessing, and enrolling customers. They will develop employment plans, refer customers to cohort trainings, coordinate with training providers, assist participants to transition to employment, and support career and wage advancement.

Duties:

- Recruit TANF, low-income, and other adults and youth with incomes above 175% FPL with extenuating circumstances
- Assess all referred individuals utilizing healthcare career navigator assessment tools and assessment results already gathered by service providers
- Enroll between 10 and 25 customers (depending on % assigned to program) by September 30
- Develop individual healthcare career and education plans with enrolled customers
- Coordinate with training partners procured through the WDC for this grant
- Assist participants with leveraging support and resources and administer support services to fill gaps for participants
- Work as a team with other navigators and the Systems Integration Coordinator
- Collect and report participant demographic, activity and outcome data and report in eJAS and other systems as necessary
- Work with employer / industry partners to inform participant planning and facilitate employment placement, retention, and advancement
- Support participants in planning and making transitions back to education and training once employed

Qualifications:

- Bachelor's degree required
- Master's degree in counseling, rehabilitation or education preferred
- Knowledge of healthcare career pathways and 2 years' experience as a vocational counselor / case manager required
- Experience working with TANF clients required; knowledge of eJAS preferred
- Demonstrated computer proficiency, including internet use focused on job search, resume writing skills, and professional networking techniques
- Ability to function effectively both independently and as an integrated team member
- Demonstrated ability to collect, input and report data to maintain records
- Ability to solve problems creatively and effectively

This job description is intended as a summary of the primary responsibilities of and qualifications for this position. The job description is not intended as inclusive of all duties an individual in this position might be asked to perform or of all qualifications that may be required either now or in the future.

Case Example: Aerospace

Excerpt from Program Summary Document:



...Some colleges had to recruit not only faculty but students. That was not a problem for programs with waiting lists, yet for new courses like that of the Air Washington programs, a challenge was to quickly sign up students for programs that they didn't know existed. That's where the state's Work Force Development Councils made one of their many crucial contributions. "They brought students to the classrooms," said Weigand. "They were out pounding the pavement saying, 'There are aerospace degrees, aerospace jobs. You need to get retrained and get in the class. Get retrained and we'll get you a job.'"

These Air Washington "**navigators**"—advisors whose responsibility was to help students complete the program, get a job, and sometimes help them keep it—were making the program work in a variety of ways. "They were bringing the students to the programs, helping them stay in the program with funding, and then helping them get jobs on the back end. So they were a real integral piece to this puzzle," Weigand said.

Air Washington's first **navigator**, Mary Stanton, who would hold that job in Spokane throughout the grant, compared her job to that of a "concierge" or a "triage nurse." Her clients were both students and employers. "If they come in and say, 'What do you do?' I respond, 'What do you need?'"

The **navigator** concept was one of the true inspirations in the Air Washington grant. It had been used successfully since 2000 by the Workforce Development Council of Seattle–King County and other state councils, yet rarely to the extent that Air Washington used it, and never before for the aerospace industry. "We were well-versed in how, sometimes, you need a 'glue' person to make sure that there is coordination happening between all of the local players," said Marlena Sessions, chief executive officer of the Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County. "... It was very important to us and for the folks who wrote the grant to put the **navigator** model into the grant. I think that was the hallmark of the piece." Mark Mattke, chief executive officer of the Spokane Area Workforce Development Council, said that Stanton and the other **navigators** created the crucial link that connected all three branches of Air Washington: the students, the colleges, and the employers. "She has a foot in each of those three worlds and helps to bridge that gap... across three different systems," said Mattke.

The **navigator's** job was not only to connect students with jobs, but also to improve student retention. All too often, community college students need assistance just to stay in school. Many have families and bills to pay. "A lot of things happen to students: Your child care falls through, your car breaks down, so you don't go to school that day," said Mattke. "And pretty soon it's a week. And pretty soon you're out of the program. Whereas, the **navigator** can help you work through some of those things." Cox later called **navigators** "the tough-love moms to the students that need it." The **navigators** helped with a variety of other issues, too, including lessons in English as a second language and food stamps. "If they are worried about food in their belly, they are not going

to make it to class,” said Stanton. Sometimes, Stanton helped students who couldn’t supply even their own paper and pencils. The **navigators** also assisted the many students who needed help finding tuition grants or loans. This could be a baffling process, particularly for students who were the first people in their families to go to college. “Anybody who’s financially unable to go to college, *can* go to college,” said Weigand. “The resources are out there to support anyone.” Yet the process is daunting, and the **navigators** knew how to cut through the tangle of forms.

The **navigators** also served as a conduit for jobs, as a free service to both the employers and the students. Stanton said she had “navigated” well over three hundred students in the first two and a half years of the grant. At the same time, she was serving what she called “probably my biggest customer,” industry, and providing employers with skilled labor. Sometimes, employers came to her with job descriptions and openings and Stanton connected them with qualified students. Other times, it happened in serendipitous ways. Once, Stanton brought in a speaker representing a Spokane fabrication company that builds seatbacks and overhead bins for airplanes. The company representative told the students about the kinds of skills her company needed. As it turned out, that wasn’t all she did. “When all was said and done, she ended up hiring one [student] ... out of the classroom ... and he is now working for her,” said Stanton. Finally, the **navigators’** work didn’t necessarily end when the students landed a job. Sometimes, they continued to provide advice and assistance. “They *keep* them hired,” said Rob Watt, Renton Technical College’s Air Washington grant manager. “That’s a big piece.” **Navigators** stayed in touch with graduates in the workforce through phone calls and e-mails and offered advice on how to maneuver through the working world.

...“I think you’ll see that Air Washington students are, far and away, way up and beyond [the typical community college retention] rate,” said Mattke. Marlena Sessions of the Workforce Development Council of Seattle–King County said that her organization tripled or quadrupled its retention goals. The latest overall numbers show a retention rate for Air Washington at more than 80 percent, compared with the average community college rates of 50 percent or below. Mattke and Sessions both credited the **navigators** with keeping the completion rate so high.

...When Dave Cox testified in 2014 before the U.S. House subcommittee on aviation, he told the lawmakers that Air Washington has “set a great example” not just for the state, but for the nation. “Our results are proof of that,” he told them. Air Washington had shown everyone “how to do one of these projects,” he said. What, exactly, had Air Washington done right? Cox told the lawmakers that Air Washington’s success was due to five major factors:

- >> The project addressed an urgent economic need specific to its state: Training a skilled aerospace workforce.
- >> It included the aerospace industry as a partner from the beginning.
- >> It complemented the state government’s similar efforts, which would help sustain the program after the grant expired.
- >> It was managed openly, transparently, and efficiently. Keeping track of solid, verifiable data was a priority.
- >>The **navigators** were the “linchpins” making it possible for students to find the program, stay in the program, and obtain jobs in the industry.

...**The navigator role is crucial:** Many of the people involved with Air Washington described the **navigators** as the most significant contributors to the program’s success—in Carol Weigand’s words, the “real integral piece of the puzzle.” Every college had at least one **navigator** and it is no exaggeration to say that they made the program work at every step. Many of the successful graduates cited a specific **navigator** as the reason they found out about the program in the first place. Then they credited the **navigator** for helping them resolve sometimes perilous problems while in school. Finally, most credited the **navigator** with guiding them directly toward the jobs they got. “Having a person to go to for feedback and questions is a big help when faced with the challenge of getting into a new career field without much experience,” said student Nic Reisert of North Seattle College,

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referring to **navigator** David Duché. The **navigators** weren't just crucial to the students; they were also crucial to the aerospace companies. When employers needed to find a trained worker, they turned to the **navigators**. Air Washington did not invent the **navigator** concept. It had already been used in other programs. However, Mark Mattke of the Spokane Workforce Development Council said that Air Washington used **navigators** more extensively and more effectively than ever before. His organization benefited from that experience. "It has now become a key part of our business model," said Mattke. "We have actually institutionalized the **navigator** as a key function for our business-service deliveries." He said that he now has **navigators** dedicated to the region's five most important industrial sectors: manufacturing, health care, transportation–logistics, finance–insurance, and professional–scientific–technical services. "Air Washington allowed us to more fully fund that effort, and to test it, and to pilot it as a proven structure that makes sense," said Mattke. "... It needs to be sustained, because employers have come to view this as an intrinsic part of the system: They have someone, a **navigator**, who they can pick up the phone and call, and will know what their needs are." In Seattle, Sessions had already used **navigators** in previous projects, but she used the word "intensive" to describe Air Washington's application of the concept. "Frankly, without that intensity, I don't know if we could have continued to coordinate well with the three different colleges (in King County)," she said.

State Plan References to Role, Excerpts

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They meet, or are connected technologically, to an individual navigator or team of navigators with a broad knowledge of available education, training, and support services. These navigators are trained to provide culturally competent services, ensuring that all current and future workers have a roadmap to achieve their goals.

They ensure that all individuals can access and are enrolled in every program that can help meet their needs, in a way that is transparent to the customer.

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Triage and Follow-up

Based on intake information, a navigator or navigation team will evaluate a customer's need for support services, readiness to pursue education, training, employment, or a combination, and make appropriate referrals. The navigator or navigation team will follow up with the customer to ensure smooth transition, or to redirect the customer if needed. Partners will work together beyond the points of program transition to braid funding and services across organizations for the benefit of the customer.