



Meeting of the Board of the Whatcom Council of Governments

Wednesday, December 11, 2024, 3:30 p.m.

Gordon W. Rogers Conference Room

314 East Champion Street, Bellingham, Washington

Join using Zoom <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85223754880>

Or phone: (253) 215-8782

Page(s)

Agenda

A. Call to Order

B. Public Comment

Citizens may speak informally to the Board on matters pertinent to its statutory responsibilities and which are not the subject of a public hearing. Each speaker is allowed a maximum of three minutes.

C. Additions to the Agenda (if any)

D. Consent Agenda*

- 2-4 1. Minutes of the meeting of October 9, 2024
- 5-8 2. September through November 2024 claims
- 9 3. Proposed 2025 meeting calendar

E. Budget Report

- 10 Budget report for the period ending October 31, 2024.

F. Old Business (if any)

- 11-14 1. Final draft 2025 WCOG budget – Ron Cubellis and Hugh Conroy*
- 15-21 2. Draft 2025 Legislative Priorities – Hugh Conroy*
 - i) Consideration of adding an I-5 study request
- 22 3. Washington’s I-5 Master Planning project – Ron Pate, Program Administrator, Cascadia High-Speed Rail & I-5 Program, WSDOT (via zoom)

G. New Business

- 23-24 1. Consideration for adoption a revised WCOG personnel manual*
(Pages 30-82 of this document)
- 25-27 2. Consideration of a WCOG electronic funds transfer (EFT) policy*
- 28-29 3. Consideration of a resolution in support of increased, state-wide funding for Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs)*

H. Director’s Report – Hugh Conroy

I. Correspondence (if any)

J. Board Open Forum

K. Adjourn

* Action item

Persons with disabilities needing a special accommodation for this meeting should contact the WCOG office at (360) 676-6974, at least six (6) days prior to the meeting to receive assistance. Para asistencia en español, por favor enviar un correo electrónico a espanol@wcog.org.

DRAFT Whatcom Council of Governments
Board Minutes
October 9, 2024

In Attendance (In person or via Zoom):

Members *Voting:* **Bellingham:** Michael Lilliquist, Kim Lund; **Blaine:** Richard May; **Everson:** John Perry; **Ferndale:** Greg Hansen (Secretary/Treasurer); **Lake Whatcom Water & Sewer District:** Jeff Knakal; **Lynden:** Scott Korthuis (Chair); **Whatcom County:** Kaylee Galloway, Jon Scanlon, Satpal Sidhu;; **Sumas:** Bruce Bosch; *Ex Officio:* **PUD #1:** Atul Deshmane, Todd Lagestee

Guests Tom McBride (McBride Public Affairs)

Staff Lethal Coe, Hugh Conroy, Ron Cubellis, Melissa Fanucci, Emily Moran.

A. **Call to Order**

Mr. Conroy determined that a quorum was present, and Chairman Korthuis called the meeting to order at 3:01p.m.

B. **Public Comment**

None

C. **Agenda Additions**

Mr. Conroy requested insertion of a legislative update from Tom McBride just ahead of item F.3 (Draft 2025 legislative transportation priorities). Mr. Korthuis requested a motion to add. **Motion:** Mr. Hester moved, seconded by Mr. Williams. **Motion passed** with none opposed.

D. **Consent Agenda**

The consent agenda included the minutes of the meeting of January 17, 2024, and January-August 2024 claims. **Motion:** Mr. Hester moved to approve, seconded by Mr. Williams. **Motion passed** with none opposed.

Ms. Lund asked about U.S.Bank card charges listed in the claims. Mr.Cubellis explained that the claims-reporting process needs to show both the original transactions made by WCOG employees using their U.S. Bank purchase-cards *and* the subsequent, monthly total bills from U.S. Bank (monthly totals of previously listed, vendor-specific purchases).

E. **Old Business** (none)

F. **New Business**

1. Mr. Cubellis reported on the WCOG budget period January-August 2024.

2. Draft 2025 budget: Mr. Cubellis reviewed the draft budget. Questions were asked about why consulting costs are going down so much. Mr. Cubellis explained that WCOG doesn't have a typical pattern of using consultants and that 2024 happened to include a large grant from USDOT (for the border wait-time system design). A question was also asked about how salaries were going up a bit while the cost of health benefits were going

down. Mr. Cubellis explained that this was tied to a reduction in the number of employees' dependents (both children of employees turning 26 years of age and a new employee without dependents).

3. State legislative update from Tom McBride: Mr. McBride discussed upcoming changes to WA government in Olympia and other scenarios which depend on election results. A written summary of his update was requested. [*Mr. McBride sent that summary the next day and that is attached to these minutes.*]

4. Draft 2025 legislative transportation priorities

a) Mr. Korthuis introduced the 2024 **legislative priority list** in the packet. Mr. Korthuis asked that each member review the list for needed updates or additions and that discussion would continue. As in previous years, the intention is to identify a Whatcom County priority, a City of Bellingham Priority, a small-cities priority, and a Whatcom Transportation Authority priority. Mr. Conroy said that he would send another email to the Council Board with the current document – also including the TTAG representatives to coordinate review of projects for updates to funding needs and scopes.

b) **Interstate 5 discussion:** Mr. Korthuis recounted recent discussions, at the Whatcom County Business and Commerce Committee meeting, of concerns with deteriorating conditions on I-5 – primarily crashes and congestion – and questions of when addition of a third lane to I-5 in Whatcom County will ever be funded.

Mr. Sidhu noted that cross-border traffic is increasing, and that Hwy 9 should also be on the radar for improvement. Mr. Sidhu agreed that I-5 needs a third lane. Mr. Sidhu also discussed Slater Rd, reviewed some of the recent dynamics with funding that Lummi Nation has access to, other funding sources, and overall needs that, if taken together could become a \$200 million project that would include a Slater Rd. bridge replacement – which could also be considered for the legislative priority list.

Regarding Slater Road, Mr. Hansen noted the different assessments -- of available funding, appropriate scope, etc. – that remain.

Mr. Sidhu observed that if the U.S. House of Representatives shifts to a Democratic majority, then Rep. Larsen will be Chair of the Transportation Committee which could improve funding options for Slater Rd. After elections, we could update our project priority list.

Mr. Korthuis noted that we'd likely have to make a choice between \$200 million for a Slater Rd. project and an I-5 expansion project.

Mr. Lilliquist raised a question for Mr. McBride or staff asking whether or not past transportation investments that were funded, at least in part to reduce demand on I-5, might complicate efforts to now add capacity on I-5. Mr. McBride commented that there were probably too many factors involved to know how

future funding decisions would be influenced. Mr. Damitio commented that WSDOT’s approach, given available revenue, has been to manage demand. Mr. Scanlon asked an open question about Whatcom County and the state’s High Speed Rail initiative – wanting to make sure we don’t miss the right time to advocate for a stop in Whatcom County.

c) Statewide RTPO funding: Mr. Conroy gave a brief update on the collective efforts of directors of regional transportation planning organizations (RTPOs) around the state to advocate for increased funding for the RTPO program. (The WCOG Council Board has already voted to support this effort.) Mr. McBride has been asked to complement these efforts as opportunities arise related to the upcoming legislative session.

G. **Director’s report:** None

H. **Correspondence:** None

I. **Board Open Forum:** No discussion

II.

L. **Adjourn**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:44 p.m.

Greg Hansen
Secretary-Treasurer

Hugh Conroy
Director

Scheduled for approval on December 11, 2024

Whatcom Council of Governments
CLAIMS LISTING
September through November 2024

Date	Num	Source Name	Memo	Paid Amount
Sep - Nov 24				
09/01/2024	HC 072524	American Planning Association	Professional Development	290.00
09/01/2024	HC 072524	Indigo Park-Reservations	Travel	17.29
09/01/2024	HC 081624	VanillaGifts.com	Incentives	107.90
09/01/2024	HC 081624	VanillaGifts.com	Incentives	2,400.00
09/01/2024	MG 073124	Tim's Bike Shop	Repair & Maintenance	10.90
09/01/2024	MG 080524	Office Depot	Supplies	22.21
09/01/2024	MG 080624	Signs by Tomorrow	Supplies	349.57
09/01/2024	MG 081124	JoAnn Stores	Supplies	13.07
09/01/2024	BB 072524	Village Books	Supplies	38.88
09/01/2024	EC 072524	Tim's Bike Shop	Supplies	160.39
09/01/2024	EC 081524	League of American Bicyclists	Professional Development	75.00
09/01/2024	EM 080624	Bellingham Grocery Outlet	Supplies	7.14
09/01/2024	EM 080724	Bellingham Grocery Outlet	Supplies	5.85
09/01/2024	JM 072624	Amazon.com, Inc.	Supplies	139.52
09/01/2024	JM 073124	Amazon.com, Inc.	Supplies	10.98
09/01/2024	JM 073124	Amazon.com, Inc.	Supplies	26.03
09/01/2024	JM 082124	Pendragon Software Corporation	Office Equipment & Software	40.00
09/01/2024	MF 073024	Typeform	Office Equipment & Software	107.92
09/01/2024	MF 073124	GAPPS Experts Inc.	Office Equipment & Software	322.92
09/01/2024	MF 080224	Amazon Web Services	Communication Services	695.40
09/01/2024	MF 080624	GitHub.com	Communication Services	300.00
09/01/2024	MF 080624	Walmart	Supplies	41.37
09/01/2024	MF 081024	Safeway	Supplies	15.58
09/01/2024	MF 081124	Amazon.com, Inc.	Supplies	10.86
09/01/2024	MF 080924	Air North	Travel	191.29
09/01/2024	MF 081624	Cascadia Newspaper Company	Communication Services	450.00
09/01/2024	MF 082124	Pickford Film Center	Communication Services	250.00
09/01/2024	MF 082424	Mailmeteor	Office Equipment & Software	199.96
09/01/2024	RC 072624	Microsoft Corporation	Office Equipment & Software	104.55
09/01/2024	RC 072624	RightWorks LLC	Office Equipment & Software	250.94
09/01/2024	RC 080124	Google LLC	Office Equipment & Software	171.89
09/01/2024	RC 080124	T-Mobile US, Inc.	Communication Services	20.00
09/01/2024	RC 080224	Intuit Inc.	Office Equipment & Software	58.86
09/01/2024	RC 080724	Heroku Inc.	Communication Services	136.26
09/01/2024	RC 081224	T-Mobile US, Inc.	Communication Services	50.00
09/01/2024	RC 081424	Management Concepts	Professional Development	880.48
09/01/2024	RC 081524	Sanitary Service Corporation	Utilities	95.29
09/01/2024	RC 081624	Intermedia.net Inc	Communication Services	338.89
09/01/2024	RC 082524	Keeper Security	Office Equipment & Software	235.44
09/01/2024	RC 082524	Pitney Bowes	Office Equipment & Software	175.04
09/10/2024	3800	Applied Digital Imaging	Printing	330.19
09/10/2024	3801	Arcadis Professional Services Inc.	Professional Services	2,478.00
09/10/2024	3802	Bruce's Janitor Service	Janitorial	625.00
09/10/2024	3803	Cascade Natural Gas	Utilities	17.94
09/10/2024	3804	CenturyLink	Communications	75.00
09/10/2024	3805	Dharma Weller	Temp Staff Exp. Reimbursement	15.00
09/10/2024	3806	Express Services Inc.	Temp Staff	8,431.54
09/10/2024	3807	Let's Bike Bellingham, LLC	Contracted Services	800.00
09/10/2024	3808	McBride Public Affairs LLC	Professional Services	4,217.00
09/10/2024	3809	Puget Sound Energy	Utilities	246.61
09/10/2024	3810	US Bank	Purchase Card Charges	8,753.13
09/10/2024	3811	Whatcom County PW (vendor)	Project Pass-Through Funding	5,000.00
09/10/2024	3812	VOID	void: printed on in error.	
09/11/2024	EFT	WCOG Petty Cash	Petty Cash Refill	250.00
09/12/2024	EFT	QuickBooks Payroll Service	Deposit fees	7.00
09/12/2024	EFT	QuickBooks Payroll Service	Sales Tax	0.63
09/13/2024	EFT	Champion Building LLC	Office Lease	6,263.60
09/13/2024	EFT	Jaymes McClain	Expense Reimbursement	144.33
09/13/2024	EFT	Melissa Fanucci	Expense Reimbursement	632.89
09/13/2024	EFT	Michelle Grandy	Expense Reimbursement	198.70
09/17/2024	1175	Mitchell, Robert	Incentives	250.00
09/25/2024	EFT	HSA Bank	HSA Fees	1,500.00
09/25/2024	EFT	HSA Bank	HSA Fees	1,046.00
09/27/2024	EFT	QuickBooks Payroll Service	Payroll	54,124.04

Whatcom Council of Governments
CLAIMS LISTING
September through November 2024

Date	Num	Source Name	Memo	Paid Amount
09/27/2024	EFT	Empower Retirement	Retirement	468.00
09/27/2024	EFT	Empower Retirement	Retirement	334.52
09/27/2024	EFT	Empower Retirement	Retirement	300.00
09/27/2024	EFT	WA Dept of Retirement Systems	PERS Contribution	3,780.35
09/27/2024	EFT	WA Dept of Retirement Systems	PERS Contribution	4,390.00
09/27/2024	EFT	WA Dept of Retirement Systems	PERS Contribution	724.08
09/27/2024	EFT	AFLAC	Employee Paid Coverage	129.56
09/27/2024	EFT	AWC via Vimly	Benefits	181.00
09/27/2024	EFT	AWC via Vimly	Benefits	70.95
09/27/2024	EFT	AWC via Vimly	Benefits	9,351.36
09/27/2024	EFT	HSA Bank	HSA Fees	11.25
09/30/2024	E-pay	Internal Revenue Service	Payroll taxes	8,177.00
09/30/2024	E-pay	Internal Revenue Service	Payroll taxes	1,153.77
09/30/2024	E-pay	Internal Revenue Service	Payroll taxes	1,153.77
09/30/2024	E-pay	Internal Revenue Service	Payroll taxes	0.00
09/30/2024	EFT	United Way	Employee Contributions	528.00
09/30/2024	EFT	QuickBooks Payroll Service	Deposit fees	1.75
09/30/2024	EFT	QuickBooks Payroll Service	Sales Tax	0.16
09/30/2024	EFT	WA Dept of Retirement Systems	PERS Contribution	4,752.64
09/30/2024	EFT	WA Dept of Retirement Systems	PERS Contribution	6,807.62
10/01/2024	HC 091324	Vancouver Airport Authority	Travel	74.10
10/01/2024	HC 091324	Sternwheeler Hotel	Travel	551.43
10/01/2024	MF 082824	Marriott	Travel	907.41
10/01/2024	MF 0830	Typeform	Office Equipment & Software	107.92
10/01/2024	MF 090124	Mailgun Technologies	Communication Services	12.97
10/01/2024	MF 090224	Amazon Web Services	Communication Services	703.27
10/01/2024	MF 090424	Jivrus Technologies	Office Equipment & Software	290.00
10/01/2024	MF 091024	Amazon Web Services	Communication Services	779.35
10/01/2024	MF 091324	Sternwheeler Hotel	Travel	551.43
10/01/2024	MF 091624	Cascadia Newspaper Company	Communication Services	319.31
10/01/2024	MG 091624	Office Depot	Supplies	67.00
10/01/2024	EM 090524	Amazon.com, Inc.	Supplies	20.51
10/01/2024	JM 092124	Pendragon Software Corporation	Office Equipment & Software	40.00
10/01/2024	RC 082624	RightWorks LLC	Office Equipment & Software	77.07
10/01/2024	RC 090124	Google LLC	Office Equipment & Software	152.12
10/01/2024	RC 090124	T-Mobile US, Inc.	Communication Services	10.00
10/01/2024	RC 090224	Intuit Inc.	Office Equipment & Software	58.86
10/01/2024	RC 090524	DocuSign Inc.	Office Equipment & Software	68.78
10/01/2024	RC 090924	Heroku Inc.	Communication Services	136.26
10/01/2024	RC 091624	Intermedia.net Inc	Communication Services	338.89
10/01/2024	RC 091624	Sanitary Service Corporation	Utilities	95.65
10/01/2024	RC 091724	GoDaddy	Communication Services	24.16
10/01/2024	RC 091724	GoDaddy	Communication Services	24.16
10/01/2024	RC 091724	GoDaddy	Communication Services	25.27
10/01/2024	RC 091824	Intuit Inc.	Office Equipment & Software	2,442.47
10/07/2024	EFT	LAURA B. BYBEE	2024 Wellness benefit - payroll adjustment	100.00
10/07/2024	EFT	LAURA B. BYBEE	QB fee	1.91
10/08/2024	1176	DePoppe, Nancy	Incentives	250.00
10/08/2024	1177	Bailey, Georgie	Incentives	1,000.00
10/09/2024	3813	A-1 Shredding, Inc.	Shredding	45.00
10/09/2024	3814	Applied Digital Imaging	Printing	518.12
10/09/2024	3815	Bruce's Janitor Service	Janitorial	625.00
10/09/2024	3816	Cascade Natural Gas	Utilities	30.33
10/09/2024	3817	CenturyLink	Communications	75.00
10/09/2024	3818	Good Eye Design	Professional Services	2,916.50
10/09/2024	3819	Lithtex NW	Printing & Postage	10,672.20
10/09/2024	3820	Lockersoft, LLC	Consultant	500.00
10/09/2024	3821	McBride Public Affairs LLC	Professional Services	4,217.00
10/09/2024	3822	Puget Sound Energy	Utilities	195.01
10/09/2024	3823	Transpo Group	Planning Consultant	81,182.00
10/09/2024	3824	US Bank	Purchase Card Charges	6,297.13
10/10/2024	EFT	WCOG Petty Cash	Petty Cash Refill	250.00
10/11/2024	EFT	QuickBooks Payroll Service	Deposit Fees	7.00
10/11/2024	EFT	QuickBooks Payroll Service	Sales Tax	0.63
10/15/2024	EFT	Champion Building LLC	Office Lease	6,263.60

Whatcom Council of Governments
CLAIMS LISTING
September through November 2024

Date	Num	Source Name	Memo	Paid Amount
10/15/2024	EFT	Emily Moran	Expense Reimbursement	132.74
10/15/2024	EFT	Hugh Conroy	Expense Reimbursement	256.66
10/15/2024	EFT	Lethal Coe III	Expense Reimbursement	2,107.85
10/15/2024	EFT	WA Dept of Employment Security	Payroll Taxes	1,206.37
10/15/2024	EFT	WA Dept of L&I	Payroll Taxes	974.99
10/15/2024	EFT	WA Dept of Employment Security	Payroll Taxes	788.93
10/28/2024	EFT	HSA Bank	HSA Fees	9.00
10/30/2024	EFT	AWC via Vimly	Benefits	9,351.36
10/30/2024	EFT	QuickBooks Payroll Service	Payroll	54,065.60
10/30/2024	E-pay	Internal Revenue Service	Payroll taxes	8,177.00
10/30/2024	E-pay	Internal Revenue Service	Payroll taxes	1,150.84
10/30/2024	E-pay	Internal Revenue Service	Payroll taxes	1,150.84
10/30/2024	E-pay	Internal Revenue Service	Payroll taxes	0.00
10/30/2024	EFT	Empower Retirement	Retirement	468.00
10/30/2024	EFT	Empower Retirement	Retirement	334.52
10/30/2024	EFT	Empower Retirement	Retirement	300.00
10/30/2024	EFT	AFLAC	Employee Paid Coverage	129.56
10/30/2024	EFT	AWC via Vimly	Benefits	181.00
10/30/2024	EFT	AWC via Vimly	Benefits	70.95
10/30/2024	EFT	HSA Bank	HSA Fees	1,500.00
10/30/2024	EFT	HSA Bank	HSA Fees	1,046.00
10/31/2024	EFT	WA Dept of Retirement Systems	PERS Contribution	3,780.35
10/31/2024	EFT	WA Dept of Retirement Systems	PERS Contribution	4,378.29
10/31/2024	EFT	WA Dept of Retirement Systems	PERS Contribution	710.76
10/31/2024	EFT	WA Dept of Retirement Systems	PERS Contribution	4,740.63
10/31/2024	EFT	WA Dept of Retirement Systems	PERS Contribution	6,790.42
11/01/2024	EFT	QuickBooks Payroll Service	Deposit Fees	1.75
11/01/2024	EFT	QuickBooks Payroll Service	Sales Tax	0.16
11/01/2024	LC 100824	WA St Assn of Boundary Review Boards	Professional Development	200.00
11/01/2024	HC 101624	Meydenbauer Center	Travel	17.00
11/01/2024	MF 093024	Amazon.com, Inc.	Supplies	106.70
11/01/2024	MF 093024	Port of Bellingham	Supplies	475.00
11/01/2024	MF 100224	Mailgun Technologies	Communication Services	10.19
11/01/2024	MF 100224	Amazon Web Services	Communication Services	623.12
11/01/2024	MF 101624	Fred Meyer	Supplies	65.63
11/01/2024	MF 101724	The Bagelry	Supplies	64.84
11/01/2024	MF 102324	Starbucks	Supplies	70.40
11/01/2024	MG 100824	Eurmax Canopy	Repair & Maintenance	39.86
11/01/2024	MG 100824	Gemplers	Supplies	107.01
11/01/2024	MG 102124	META (Facebook) Inc.	Communication Services	89.74
11/01/2024	BB 092924	Big Wallys 76	Travel	36.58
11/01/2024	BB 100124	ARCO	Travel	10.48
11/01/2024	BB 100124	Hanks Mini Market	Travel	25.11
11/01/2024	BB 100124	Centennial Hotel	Travel	316.54
11/01/2024	BB 100124	Centennial Hotel	Travel	349.24
11/01/2024	BB 100224	Enterprise Rental	Travel	283.58
11/01/2024	EM 101724	WA St Assn of Boundary Review Boards	Professional Development	100.00
11/01/2024	EM 102224	McKay's	Supplies	344.08
11/01/2024	EM 102224	Haggen	Supplies	80.67
11/01/2024	JM 102124	Pendragon Software Corporation	Office Equipment & Software	40.00
11/01/2024	RC 092624	RightWorks LLC	Office Equipment & Software	180.94
11/01/2024	RC 100124	Google LLC	Office Equipment & Software	134.40
11/01/2024	RC 100224	Zoom.us	Office Equipment & Software	762.79
11/01/2024	RC 100224	T-Mobile US, Inc.	Communication Services	40.00
11/01/2024	RC 100724	Heroku Inc.	Communication Services	136.29
11/01/2024	RC 100824	Society for Human Resource Management	Professional Development	264.00
11/01/2024	RC 101524	Sanitary Service Corporation	Utilities	95.65
11/01/2024	RC 101524	Hardware Sales	Supplies	47.24
11/01/2024	RC 101724	Intermedia.net Inc	Communication Services	338.91
11/04/2024	EFT	United Way	Employee Contributions	528.00
11/08/2024	3825	Bruce's Janitor Service	Janitorial	625.00
11/08/2024	3826	Cascade Natural Gas	Utilities	154.15
11/08/2024	3827	CenturyLink	Communications	75.00
11/08/2024	3828	Good Eye Design	Professional Services	577.50
11/08/2024	3829	Let's Bike Bellingham, LLC	Contracted Services	800.00

Whatcom Council of Governments
CLAIMS LISTING
September through November 2024

<u>Date</u>	<u>Num</u>	<u>Source Name</u>	<u>Memo</u>	<u>Paid Amount</u>
11/08/2024	3830	McBride Public Affairs LLC	Professional Services	4,217.00
11/08/2024	3831	Puget Sound Energy	Utilities	187.60
11/08/2024	3832	Robeks Fruit Smoothies	Incentives	308.05
11/08/2024	3833	US Bank	Purchase Card Charges	5,355.99
11/08/2024	3834	Whatcom County Admin Services	Project cost-share	3,711.50
11/08/2024	EFT	Pitney Bowes	Postage	1,212.75
11/08/2024	EFT	WCOG Petty Cash	Petty Cash Refill	1,250.00
11/12/2024	EFT	QuickBooks Payroll Service	Deposit Fees	5.25
11/12/2024	EFT	QuickBooks Payroll Service	Sales Tax	0.47
11/12/2024	1178	McElroy, Aaron	Incentives	250.00
11/13/2024	EFT	Champion Building LLC	Office Lease	6,263.60
11/13/2024	EFT	Jaymes McClain	Expense Reimbursement	33.73
11/13/2024	EFT	L. Blanche Bybee	Employee Reimbursement	90.00
11/26/2024	EFT	HSA Bank	HSA Fees	9.00
11/26/2024	EFT	AFLAC	Employee Paid Coverage	129.56
11/26/2024	E-pay	Internal Revenue Service	Payroll taxes	8,153.00
11/26/2024	E-pay	Internal Revenue Service	Payroll taxes	1,147.23
11/26/2024	E-pay	Internal Revenue Service	Payroll taxes	1,147.23
11/26/2024	E-pay	Internal Revenue Service	Payroll taxes	0.00
11/26/2024	EFT	HSA Bank	HSA Fees	1,500.00
11/26/2024	EFT	HSA Bank	HSA Fees	1,046.00
11/27/2024	EFT	QuickBooks Payroll Service	Payroll	53,765.75
11/27/2024	EFT	AWC via Vimly	Benefits	181.00
11/27/2024	EFT	AWC via Vimly	Benefits	70.95
11/27/2024	EFT	AWC via Vimly	Benefits	9,351.36
11/27/2024	EFT	Empower Retirement	Retirement	468.00
11/27/2024	EFT	Empower Retirement	Retirement	334.52
11/27/2024	EFT	Empower Retirement	Retirement	300.00
11/27/2024	EFT	WA Dept of Retirement Systems	PERS Contribution	3,780.35
11/27/2024	EFT	WA Dept of Retirement Systems	PERS Contribution	4,357.83
11/27/2024	EFT	WA Dept of Retirement Systems	PERS Contribution	710.76
11/29/2024	EFT	WA Dept of Retirement Systems	PERS Contribution	4,740.63
11/29/2024	EFT	WA Dept of Retirement Systems	PERS Contribution	6,799.53

Sep - Nov 24

502,463.72



whatcom council of governments

Memo

To: WCOG Council Board
Date: December 4, 2024
From: Hugh Conroy, Director *HC*
Subject: Proposed 2025 WCOG Meeting Calendar

The proposed 2025 schedule of meetings of the Council Board, Executive Committee and Whatcom Transportation Policy Board follows for the Board’s consideration:

Jan	15	3:00	Council Board
		3:30	MPO/RTPO Policy Board
Feb			
Mar	12	3:30	MPO/RTPO Policy Board
Apr			
May	14	3:00	Council Board
		3:30	MPO/RTPO Policy Board
Jun			
Jul	9	3:30	MPO/RTPO Policy Board
Aug			
Sep			
Oct	8	3:00	Council Board
		3:30	MPO/RTPO Policy Board
Nov			
Dec	10	3:00	Executive Committee
		3:30	Council Board

All meetings will be hybrid: both held at the WCOG office at 314 East Champion Street, Bellingham, WA and virtually on Zoom.

Please be aware that Executive Committee meetings may be called when needed in those months when no Council Board meeting is scheduled.

Suggested motion

“Approve the proposed 2025 WCOG meeting calendar as presented.”

Whatcom Council of Governments
Board Budget Report
 January through October 2024
 (83% of the year)

	<u>Jan - Oct 24</u>	<u>2024 Budget</u>	<u>% of Budget</u>
Income			
333 · Federal Grants	1,208,022	1,614,228	75%
334 · State Grants	285,105	194,422	147%
337 · Local Grants	94,030	114,859	82%
361 · Interest Income	10,461	5,000	209%
367 · Contributions & Donations	18,599	18,000	103%
368 · Membership Dues	195,315	195,304	100%
369 · Other Income	1,880	3,000	63%
Total Income	<u>1,813,412</u>	<u>2,144,813</u>	<u>85%</u>
Expense			
505 · Communication Services	28,559	59,600	48%
510 · Consultants & Contract Services	430,078	576,598	75%
515 · Incentives	17,502	18,000	97%
520 · Insurance- Property & Liability	11,997	12,360	97%
530 · Office Equipment & Software	39,151	29,560	132%
535 · Pass-Through Funding	18,623	45,000	41%
545 · Printing	45,056	36,000	125%
550 · Professional Development	8,871	8,000	111%
555 · Rent	73,923	74,967	99%
560 · Repair & Maintenance	409	3,000	14%
565 · Payroll - Salaries & Wages	734,541	899,113	82%
566 · Payroll - Taxes & Benefits	253,523	331,253	77%
575 · Supplies	13,953	26,700	52%
580 · Travel	18,972	12,000	158%
585 · Utilities	11,824	16,000	74%
590 · Miscellaneous Expense	2,366		
Total Expense	<u>1,709,348</u>	<u>2,148,151</u>	<u>80%</u>
Net Increase (Decrease) in Cash	<u>\$104,064</u>	<u>(\$3,338)</u>	

Balance Sheet as of:

	<u>1/1/2024</u>	<u>10/31/2024</u>	<u>Cash & Investments</u>	
Cash on hand	\$ 24,328	\$ 170,528	Target (4 mos.)	\$508,851
Investment Account	335,821	291,536	Available	\$462,064
Accounts Receivable	208,875	237,057		
Total	\$ 569,024	\$ 699,121		
Accounts Payable	38,976	18,023		
Net Equity	<u>\$ 530,048</u>	<u>\$ 681,098</u>		



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Memo

To: The WCOG Council Board
From: Hugh Conroy, Director *HC*
Date: October 3, 2024
Subject: Proposed 2025 Budget – First Draft

Attached to this memo please find the first draft of the proposed 2025 Budget for your review prior to the Council Board meeting next week. I draw your attention to the following:

Dues

Dues are determined using both population and the average cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) of the member jurisdictions, as is WCOG's adopted practice. Annual population change is drawn from Office of Financial Management estimates for Whatcom County, the seven cities and the Lummi Nation. For the purposes of this draft budget, the 3.6 percent COLA staff received this year is used as an estimate for 2024, in accordance with the Council Board's budget guidance of September 17, 2008. The Port's dues increase is the average increase of the nine jurisdictions. When the members determine their COLAs later in the fall they will be averaged and incorporated into the final draft of the budget that will be presented to the Council Board for its adoption in December.

Notable Other Expenses

Three projects in 2025 will include significant *passthrough to partners*. The IMTC cross-border personal vehicle survey will include hiring WWU students as surveyors. The state-funded, vehicle miles traveled (VMT) data collection improvements involve installation of vehicle detectors/counters with WSDOT. And, WCOG is contributing \$20,000 to planning studies associated with the 2025 comprehensive plan updates and urban-growth area review.

Ron and I look forward to discussing the draft 2025 Budget with you next week.

Whatcom Council of Governments
2025 Budget DRAFT 12-04-2024

<i>CONSOLIDATED</i>	
Beginning Net Cash and Investments	\$ 400,000
REVENUE	
Programs & Projects	
Local	\$ 128,150
State	271,134
Federal	1,391,326
Canadian	25,000
Miscellaneous (foundations, classes, rebates)	3,000
Total Programs & Projects	\$ 1,818,610
Dues	
Bellingham	\$ 70,034
Blaine	4,666
Everson	2,261
Ferndale	11,830
Lummi Nation	4,193
Lynden	12,031
Nooksack	1,202
Sumas	1,321
Whatcom County (unincorporated)	63,822
Port of Bellingham	30,961
Lake Whatcom Water & Sewer	250
Opportunity Council	150
Public Utilities District #1	150
Sudden Valley Association	150
Western Washington University	150
Total Dues	\$ 203,171
Other Revenue	
Interest Income	7,000
Total Other Revenue	\$ 7,000
Total Revenue	\$ 2,028,781
EXPENSES	
Salaries & Benefits	
Salaries	\$ 940,923
Dental Insurance	11,278
Disability Insurance	3,980
Health Insurance	132,549
Life Insurance	810
Retirement Contribution	85,718
Social Security Equivalent	71,936
Vision Insurance	2,002
Workers Compensation Insurance	3,994
Total Benefits	\$ 312,267
Total Salaries & Benefits	\$ 1,253,190

Office Equipment & Software Expenditures

	Quantity	Total Cost
Office Equipment		
Postage Meter Lease	1	\$ 700
Workstation/Laptop additions/replacements	1	3,200
Monitor additions/replacements	2	800
Contingency		1,000
		\$ 5,700
 Software		
Accounting & Payroll updates	2	\$ 5,480
Antivirus license & updates	10	600
Adobe licenses & updates	10	4,021
Cloud computing & storage	10	2,250
GIS licences & updates	3	12,000
Tableau licenses	3	3,000
Microsoft licenses & updates	10	1,500
TransCAD Transportation Modeling licenses & updates	2	4,000
Website & web-based applications		7,000
Contingency		2,000
		\$ 41,851



whatcom council of governments

DRAFT MEMO

December xx, 2024

To: Whatcom County State Legislative Delegation
From: Hugh Conroy, Director *HC*
Re: Transportation Priorities of the Whatcom County region, 2025

At its December 11 meeting, the Whatcom Council of Governments unanimously adopted the following list of regional transportation funding requests for 2025 and respectfully seeks your support for these important projects in this year's session of the State Legislature.

While this list includes **XX** projects, WCOG has identified four project categories with a prioritized project for each: City of Bellingham, Whatcom County, small cities, and a Whatcom Transportation Authority (WTA) public transit project.

Thank you for considering opportunities to support these important needs.

Whatcom County Priority

Pavement Rehabilitation for Major Collector and Arterial Roads

This project will replace aged road surfaces on sections of four major collectors/arterials: Birch Bay-Lynden Road, Axton Road, Everson-Goshen Road, and Northwest Drive. These roads have heavy volumes of commercial and commuter traffic and, additionally, were severely damaged by flooding in the winter of 2021-22. Work will include repaving, minor safety upgrades, and updates to ADA facilities. Pavement rehabilitation projects require only minor environmental permitting, straightforward engineering design, and minimal or no land acquisitions. Request: **\$6.5 million**

City of Bellingham Priority

Meridian Street/Birchwood Avenue Roundabout

The existing signalized intersections at Meridian/Birchwood and Meridian/ Squalicum Parkway serve as a critical freight route and multimodal transportation link between the industrial Bellingham waterfront and the U.S.-Canada border via Interstate 5 and State Route 539. With the completion of the Orchard Street-Birchwood extension, traffic volume, as well as the volume of bicyclists and pedestrians, will increase, further congesting these corridors' closely spaced intersections.



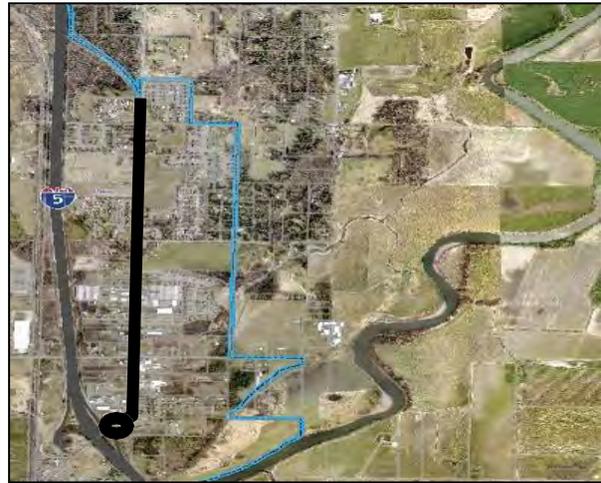
Bellingham's *Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan* calls for sidewalks and bicycle facilities, while the Park and Recreation Plan calls for a multiuse trail on the vacated railroad bed. Additionally, the Whatcom Transportation Authority has indicated that Meridian Street-SR 539 is a candidate corridor for future high-frequency GO Line transit service.

This project must be completed in two distinct but interrelated phases. Phase 1 – which is funded – would merge the Squalicum Parkway truck-freight route with Birchwood Avenue on the west side of Meridian while decommissioning the Meridian/Squalicum traffic signal. Phase 2 would reconstruct the Meridian/Birchwood intersection as a multimodal roundabout. The City seeks funding for Phase 2. Request: **\$7-million (Reduce to \$5 million after recent STBG award of \$2 million?)**

Small Cities' Priority

Portal Way Entry Roundabout and Corridor Improvements (City of Ferndale)

Provide missing multi-modal access along one of Whatcom County's fastest-growing multifamily/ mixed-use areas by reconstructing and widening critical transportation infrastructure along approximately 3,500 feet of the approximately 7,500 feet of the Portal Way corridor. Improvements will include two 11-foot travel lanes, a 12-foot center turn-lane, bicycle lanes, and sidewalks. Improvements to an existing compact roundabout at the northbound Portal Way exit (Exit 263) to include a slip lane or other improvements are also anticipated.



Portal Way is the primary north-south surface street in Ferndale and is the only arterial street serving one of the fastest-growing mixed-use areas in Whatcom County, including several residential neighborhoods, commercial and medical uses, and job-producing industries. Growth in the area is expected to triple the number of employees and double the number of households by 2036.



Approximately 750 residential units have been constructed within the last two years or are proposed to be constructed within the next three years, and about 500,000

square feet of commercial/industrial space have been constructed within the last five years or is proposed to be constructed within the next three.

The existing corridor has lacked improvement since the inception of Interstate 5 and does not include non-motorized transportation options.

Increased development along the corridor will continue to exacerbate conflicts between motorized and non-motorized transportation. Piecemeal reconstruction of the corridor by private development will not yield a coordinated transportation corridor.

Request: **\$11 million**

Whatcom Transportation Authority (WTA) Priority

Bellingham Station Pre-development phases

WTA is seeking **\$500,000** for pre-development funding to support our expansion of Bellingham Station. Expanding Bellingham Station will provide the following community benefits: 1) Capacity needed to support new routes, and increased frequency on existing routes; 2) Charging infrastructure for zero-emission buses; 3) Features of Transit Oriented Development, for example convenient transit collocated with bicycle and pedestrian improvements, a mix of affordable and marketing rate housing, office space, childcare or other services, and vibrant public spaces.

Other Whatcom Region Projects (not prioritized)

Sumas Emergency Evacuation Route

In response to the catastrophic flooding that took place in Sumas in November 2021, the City has identified the need for a flood-resistant travel route that would allow emergency evacuation of its residents and others from the City and surrounding area when all current transportation routes are unavailable during a major flood event. In the November 2021 flood, flood waters cut off access to all routes out of the city except the international border crossing, which was also closed. Citizens were trapped in an area near the northwest corner of downtown Sumas and could not travel west to higher ground elsewhere in Whatcom County. The City is proposing to elevate and reconstruct an approximately 1.5-mile emergency evacuation route that would include Kneuman Road from Garfield Street (near the BNSF rail crossing) to Barbo Road, and Barbo Road from Kneuman Road to West Front Street (near Halverstick Road). These roadways would be elevated to the height of the 100-year flood to allow evacuation and safe passage out of the City, including evacuation of federal employees at the Sumas Port of Entry. This route would also provide an access route into the City for emergency services during and immediately following a major flood event. Request: **\$2.2 million**

Lummi Island Ferry System Modernization and Preservation (Whatcom County)

The *M/V Whatcom Chief* (built in 1962) and its terminal facilities exceeded their design lives long ago. The system often experiences unplanned service disruptions and faces growing maintenance costs and major facility replacements, including a complete and unavoidable repower by 2029 to comply with EPA Tier 3 emissions requirements for marine diesel engines. This repower would require substantial and expensive reconfigurations belowdecks and puts at risk the vessel's "grandfathered" status, especially because it also does not meet present-day safety, ADA or service standards. Replacement of the vessel will avoid those costs and prevent months of service disruption that would result during the repowering process.

The Whatcom County Council conducted a systematic, publicly-informed design process for a hybrid diesel-electric replacement that meets all current standards and will meet the needs of residents, emergency services, taxpayers, crew members and the environment for decades to come. This project must be advanced immediately, since construction of the vessel requires two years, followed by another two years to upgrade the terminal.

The County was awarded a federal RAISE grant for ferry modernization for \$25-million -- of the required current total estimated project cost of \$90 million. The County has also received \$5.3 million in state Move Ahead Washington funds and the State Legislature has also approved \$10 million of County Roads Administration Board (CRAB) County Ferry Capital Improvement Program

(CFICP) funding. Completion still requires \$49.7-million.

Request: **Legislative appropriation of an additional of \$49.7 million to complete the project**

Benson Road Complete Street Improvements (Lynden)

Benson Road between Sunrise and Badger Road (SR-546) is only 20-22 feet wide with narrow shoulders, a deep fish-bearing ditch on one side and no bike or pedestrian facilities. A new PeaceHealth North County Medical Facility is being constructed in the southeast corner of Benson and Badger. To the south is Isom elementary school which uses Benson Road as its primary access. The properties to the west are currently being annexed into the City for residential and multi-family development. There is also a small commercial overlay zone in this area. Finally, this area includes 40 acres of Public Use zoned land to be used as a multi-faceted regional park facility. All these managed growth requirements will greatly increase traffic on Benson Road, an old rural county road badly needing to be upgraded to a “complete” street. The proposed project will construct an all-weather arterial street, 36 feet in width with bike lanes, curb, gutter, and sidewalk where none exists. This project will create a true Complete Street providing for multi-modal travel. This widened cross-section will occur to the west to avoid impacting the fish-bearing roadside ditch on the east. The State Department of Transportation is currently scheduled to improve the intersection of Badger Road (SR-546) with Benson Rd to a compact roundabout in 2024.

Lynden has used local funds to complete survey and preliminary design. Based on this work, the City has obtained \$1,866,000 in federal Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) funding which requires a match of \$291,225 in City funds. Current estimates have the total project cost at \$3.22 million dollars, leaving a funding shortfall of \$1,063,775 million dollars. This difference requires the City to seek additional funding which can be matched with local traffic impact fees. **Request: \$850,000 (Still needed after STBG award of \$1.45 million)**

Birch Bay-Lynden Road Arterial Preservation (Lynden)

Birch Bay-Lynden Road is a primary all-weather road that provides access to Lynden from I-5 and State Route 539 (Guide Meridian Road), the latter being the primary freight connection to the Lynden-Aldergrove border crossing as well as to the Sumas-Huntingdon port-of-entry via SR 546. Most west Lynden commercial and industrial businesses – including Lynden Door, Scholten Equipment, Preferred Freezer and Oxbo International – use Birch Bay-Lynden Road as their primary access to I-5. Despite the City’s diligence in maintaining the roadway (chip sealing, asphalt patching, etc.), this critical corridor is reaching the end of its useful life and requires a structural grind and overlay to restore it to a state of good repair. Request: **\$750,000**

Birch Bay-Lynden Road/Blaine Road Roundabout (Whatcom County)

This project involves the construction of a roundabout to ensure that this intersection, which is projected to experience a significant increase in traffic volume, will operate at an acceptable level of service. The design incorporates safe-pedestrian paths that meet ADA requirements, provide bike lanes, upgrade lighting and improve site drainage as required by the Department of Ecology. (Click [here](#) for current information on this project.)

Request: **\$3.5 million**

Marine Drive Improvements, Phase Two (Whatcom County)

Marine Drive is an important regional corridor for commuters and recreational bicyclists. The roadway parallels the bluff on the north shore of Bellingham Bay from Bellingham and crosses the Nooksack River delta on its way to the Lummi Nation. This project between Locust Avenue and Alderwood Drive is the second of a three-phase project to improve bicycle and pedestrian safety from the Bellingham city limits across the BNSF railway. (Additional information can be found [here](#).) Request: **\$2.5 million**



T h

Blaine Marine Drive (Blaine)

The City of Blaine’s economic vitality is supported by maritime trades, border traffic and recreational tourism. The Wharf District within the City is a key driver of these industries, offering breathtaking views, water recreation, bird watching, marine wildlife viewing and serving as a major hub for commercial fishing in the region.

The City, in partnership with the Port of Bellingham, has undertaken several efforts to improve the vitality of the Wharf District, culminating in a new Wharf District Master Plan completed in 2020. One of the key initiatives identified in the plan is the restoration and improvement of Marine Drive and Jorgensen Pier, both of which serve the activities and businesses in the Wharf District. The wharf area and Jorgensen Pier are also historic, having been in commercial use before Washington became a state in 1889. The access to Jorgensen Pier has been severely limited due to failure of the roadway leading up to the pier; since 2015, this section of Marine Drive has not been usable for vehicle traffic. The southern half of the roadway is structurally unstable (and is now fenced off) and the northern half is open for pedestrian access only.



Significant road and pedestrian improvements are needed to Marine Drive to improve access and mobility; as well as enhance the safety and security of this important transportation linkage between downtown Blaine and waterfront, particularly for those with mobility challenges and for maritime businesses operating at the pier. These improvements will improve the quality of life in the City, promote community health providing active recreational opportunities, and assist with economic recovery, which has been significantly impacted by the closure of the border that resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic. The City has invested \$2.4 million for Phases 1 and 2 and is seeking \$4.0-million for the final phase of the project.

Request: **\$4.0-million**

Bell Road and Peace Portal Road Grade Separation Project (Blaine)

For many years, traffic congestion and safety concerns at the intersection of Bell Road and Peace Portal Road caused by the at-grade BNSF crossing, U.S. Customs and Border Protection's VACIS train inspection system and the four-way stop at the intersection has resulted in long backups and long wait times (sometimes exceeding 45 minutes). Several projects and redesigns of the intersection have been proposed and rejected over the years. Most recently, in 2019, WSDOT determined that the proposed grade-separation project (without replacement Dakota Creek bridge) was too large and expensive to design and construct. That project was replaced by an electronic signal and lane improvement project. In late 2022, City of Blaine and BNSF leadership staff met and learned about BNSF's strong interest in the previously proposed grade-separation project, including a new Dakota Creek

bridge. It is BNSF's position that the highest level of safety is attained when vehicles and trains are separated and is the best way to eliminate train and vehicle collisions. The funds for the design and construction of the grade-separation project, including a new Dakota Creek bridge, would be acquired from federal grants (requiring a 20 percent non-federal



match) that are designed to improve railroad crossings and vehicle safety. The City has contracted with David Evans and Associates to develop the grant applications with support from BNSF and WSDOT. The first application, due February 2023, is for the design, engineering, and permitting of the project. The construction grant application grant will follow.

BNSF has offered to match WSDOT funding support for the project on a dollar-for-dollar basis. This is a very generous offer which the City of Blaine wishes to maximize. Request: **Legislative support in a manner and amount to be determined**

For more information on any of these requests, please call **Tom McBride** of McBride Public Affairs, at (360) 481-1824, or **Intisar Benghe** at (206) 387-8368. On behalf of the Whatcom Council of Governments, thank you again for your ongoing support and consideration.

WCOG Priority

I-5 Bellingham to Ferndale Phase II Mobility and Safety Alternatives Study

This request is for the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) to be funded to complete a Phase II study of I-5 in Whatcom County. WSDOT completed the *I-5 Operations & Transportation Demand Management Analysis* in 2020 which identified strategies to improve safety and travel-time reliability. WSDOT's 2023-2025 *Biennium State Planning and Research Work Program* describes a project (unfunded) to continue this work. The elements of that project description are included in the following project

Location: Bellingham/Ferndale urban areas.

Scope elements: Public & stakeholder engagement; update of baseline conditions & objectives; travel demand forecast; identification, evaluation, & prioritization of alternatives; and coordination with the U.S. Federal Highway Administration.

Guiding policies:

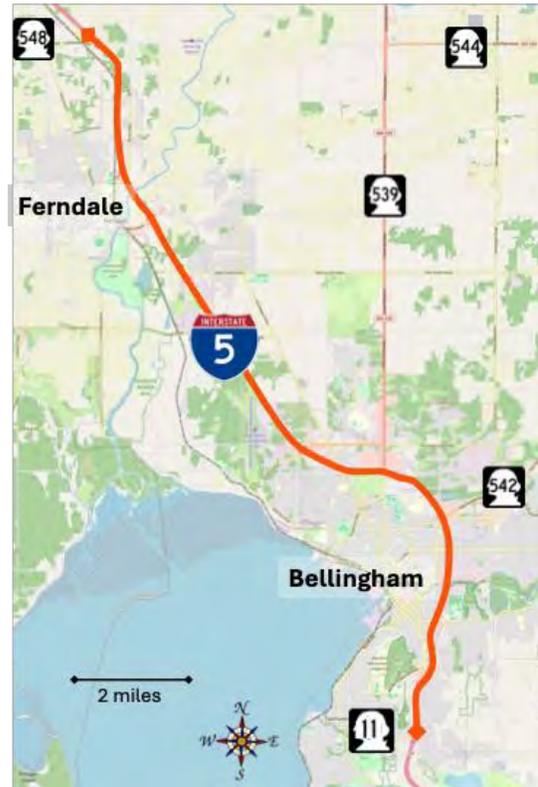
WSDOT Practical Solutions: Development of alternative strategies that emphasizes system-wide benefit-cost and considers investments in state *and* local facilities & operations.

Multimodal Performance: Benefit-cost evaluation will pertain to all types of transportation – Active transportation (walking, rolling, biking), transit, vehicles (personal vehicles, commercial vehicles).

Estimated cost: \$1.4 million.

WCOG clarifications: In addition to asking that WSDOT be funded to advance this planning project, WCOG requests that:

- The study will be I-5 from SR 11 (Old Fairhaven Pkwy.) to SR 548 (Grandview Rd.).
- The study's alternatives analysis will include a feasibility evaluation and plan-level cost estimate for addition of a third lane through the study-area.





MEMORANDUM

To: The Council Board
From: Ron Cubellis, Deputy Director
Date: November 26, 2024
Subject: **Personnel Manual update**

Why now? As work patterns stabilized following the pandemic, staff knew it was time to address areas in the manual such as remote work and scheduling options. Additionally, WCOG's personnel policies had not been comprehensively reviewed by a third-party expert in over 15 years.

Hugh and I took the first read through of the existing manual looking for policies and procedures that just don't make sense anymore. Then we asked Summit Law Group to do a thorough review for state and federal compliance as well as best practices. Summit is Washington Cities Insurance Authority's human resources training provider. Their feedback was quite extensive and very informative. After incorporating Summit's suggestions, Hugh and I then went back through the document once more.

The draft presented is not in strike-through & underline format. The changes were far too numerous for that to be readable. Many of them were word-choice changes by the attorney and/or Hugh.

The more substantive changes are as follows:

1. Added in-office/remote hybrid work arrangement language to replace language that focused exclusively on fixed, in-office work schedules.
2. Added Juneteenth as a paid holiday now that the majority of WCOG members have done that too.
3. Smoothed out the vacation accrual schedule. The current schedule climbs for five years, plateaus for five and then climbs for another five. The proposed schedule starts and ends at the same places as the existing schedule. It just gets from A to B in a straight line. Three employees would lose a day with the new schedule. Therefore, we would keep them where they are if the new schedule is adopted as presented.
4. Deleted the compassionate shared leave program now that Washington State's Paid Family and Medical Leave program is available.

5. Deleted the furlough section. This was added for the few months during the pandemic when school districts and most small employers were closed. The specific program funding we had that year to work with those groups could not be accessed. We do not anticipate that combination of circumstances occurring again.
6. Deleted the wellness program. This program was possible when we had 3 admin staff members, and one had time to administer the program. That is no longer the case with just 1 admin staff member.

The draft personnel manual follows this memo.

SUGGESTED MOTION: I move to adopt the Personnel Manual as presented effective January 1, 2025.



MEMORANDUM

To: The Council Board
From: Ron Cubellis, Deputy Director
Date: December 4, 2024
Subject: **Electronic Funds Transfer Policy**

Staff recommends adoption of the Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) policy.

The State Auditor’s Office found nothing wrong with the way we are currently handling EFT transactions during our last accountability audit. However, they recommend that WCOG adopt an EFT policy to document the internal controls we have in place to protect EFT transactions from internal and external threats. Listing these controls in policy instead of a procedure document aligns with state guidelines.

The draft policy follows this memo.

SUGGESTED MOTION: Move to adopt the Electronic Funds Transfer Policy as presented.



Document: **Electronic Funds Transfer Policy**
Draft: **December 4, 2024**

Electronic Funds Transfers

The Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG) recognizes various electronic payment methods as safe and efficient ways to process certain disbursements. The WCOG is committed to establishing controls and procedures for making electronic funds transfers (EFTs). Accordingly, WCOG has developed this policy to ensure that proper protocols are followed, and that applicable oversight is in place for the use of EFTs.

The primary goal of this policy is to ensure EFTs are initiated, executed, and approved in a secure manner. This policy establishes general guidelines for using EFTs for payables and receivables. The procedures outline which electronic funds transactions WCOG may engage in and the accounting procedures to be followed in accordance with Washington State Auditor's Office requirements and RCW 39.58.750. The Executive Director shall implement and administer the following procedures and processes related to the use of EFTs.

1. The procedure to initiate, approve, and record an EFT payment is subject to the same financial policies, procedures, and controls that govern disbursements made by any other means.
 - Review of transfers by a Council Board Officer and the Executive Director.
 - Review and approval of the transfers by the Council Board retroactively.
 - Reconciliations of bank activity to the General Ledger performed in a timely manner with all exceptions resolved.
2. A list of payees that may be paid via electronic transfers and payors that may pay WCOG via EFTs will be maintained by the Executive Director.
3. EFT transactions will not be made without proper authorization of affected parties in accordance with federal and state statutes and accepted business practices.
4. All EFT payments should be initiated on secure computer-based systems that use duo security authentication.
5. The Executive Director shall serve as primary administrator to manage and control access to the systems used to process EFT transactions. The administrator shall ensure that adequate separation of duties exists in accordance with accepted internal control standards. In addition, the administrator shall ensure approval and maintenance of user system IDs, user permissions, including authorized representatives and their associated transfer limits. The Deputy Director shall serve as backup administrator.

6. Because EFTs between WCOG bank accounts have reduced risk, the Executive Director may use EFTs on a routine basis to concentrate funds for payment and investment purposes. Although the risks are minimal for transfers between WCOG accounts, reasonable controls should exist with regard to authorization, reconciliation, and review of these transactions.
7. EFT payments are limited to employee expense reimbursement, payroll, payroll benefits, and vendor claims, transfers between WCOG bank accounts, and to receipt of incoming payments
8. Employees must submit a hard copy of the completed Direct Deposit Authorization Form to the Executive Director. No electronic signatures will be accepted. Any change to banking information will require a newly completed form. If an employee submits a change request without enough time for authorization and entry prior to payroll, payment will be made by check until such time as the information can be verified and entered into the payroll system.
9. Vendors wanting to be paid by direct deposit transfer must submit a completed Vendor Direct Deposit Form or equivalent authorization to the Executive Director.



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Memo

To: WCOG Council Board
Date: December 4, 2024
From: Hugh Conroy, Director *HC*
Subject: Proposed resolution in support of state-wide funding increase for the Regional Transportation Planning Program (RTPOs).

At your December 2023 meeting, the WCOG Council Board agreed to be supportive of emerging efforts by Washington’s regional transportation planning organizations (RTPOs) to submit a coordinated request for a significant funding increase for the RTPO program. The Board approved of the Chair or the Director confirming this support in future correspondence.

In July, WCOG Chair, Mayor Korthuis wrote a letter to the Peninsula RTPO, at their request, in support of the proposed, state-wide request copied below.

“Increase Washington’s base RTPO funding program by \$6.8 million, bringing the RTPO funding program total to \$11.7 million in the SFY 2026-2027 biennium and thereafter, adjusted periodically for inflation. If successful, this request will result in a minimum of \$400,000 per biennium per RTPO, with some RTPOs receiving much more. This is the minimum needed to ensure that all 17 regions in the state can afford the basic forum for regional transportation coordination, cooperation, and collaboration that RTPOs are meant to provide, in compliance with the statutory requirements currently in RCW 47.80.”

(June 28, 2024, Lindsey Schromen-Wawrin, Chair, Peninsula RTPO)

As RTPOs are preparing a request for the upcoming legislative session, many are documenting support for the above request as a resolution. Whereas that is likely a more impactful way to show support, please consider resolving to adopt WCOG Resolution 2024-02 (draft on the following page).

Suggested motion

“Approve WCOG Resolution 2024-02 in support of a statewide funding increase for Washington’s regional transportation planning program as presented.”



RESOLUTION NO. 2024-02

**SUPPORT FOR INCREASED FUNDING FOR WASHINGTON STATE'S
REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING PROGRAM**

WHEREAS the Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG) is the federally-recognized metropolitan planning organization (MPO) and the state-designated regional transportation planning organization (RTPO) for the Whatcom County, Washington, transportation planning area, and

WHEREAS in 1991-93 the Washington State Legislature established the Regional Transportation Planning program with a \$3.4 million biennial appropriation to support 15 regional transportation planning organizations (RTPOs), and

WHEREAS today, 30 years later, a \$4.9 million appropriation supports 17 RTPOs, and

WHEREAS this current appropriation is critically insufficient to support the legislated planning activities and local and state coordination functions assigned to RTPOs (RCW 47.80), having been diminished by decades of inflation, addition of two RTPOs, and legislated additions of RTPO responsibilities, and

WHEREAS increasing state RTPO funding to provide each RTPO with a minimum of \$400,000 per biennium, which supports the one full-time position and overhead costs, can ensure the needed capacity to meet RTPO requirements state-wide, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED that the WCOG, supports the increase of Washington State's RTPO biennial funding to \$11.7 million with subsequent periodic adjustment for inflation.

Adopted this eleventh day of December 2024, in the City of Bellingham, Washington, a quorum being present.

Greg Hansen, Secretary/Treasurer

Hugh Conroy, Director



PERSONNEL MANUAL

Adopted November 5, 1987, Resolution No. 1-87
Amended January 18, 2023

November 26, 2024
Draft

WHATCOM COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
314 East Champion Street
Bellingham, Washington 98225

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1.0 GENERAL PROVISIONS

1.1 PURPOSE AND INTENT

The Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG) Personnel Manual describes the policies and procedures guiding the WCOG's employment of staff. This manual applies to all employees and to board and committee members when conducting WCOG business. It is intended to guide any aspect of staffing and personnel management under routine or unusual situations and thus foster a professional working environment.

The personnel policies of the WCOG are intended to:

- a. Establish and maintain uniform personnel practices for recruitment, classification, changes in employee status, assignments, and employee benefits.
- b. Establish the WCOG code of ethics.
- c. Assure open communication and cooperation among staff members.
- d. Establish and maintain job-performance and compensation practices in regard to hours worked, deductions, application of vacation and sick leave regulations, and compensation adjustments.
- e. Assist in planning for the personnel requirements of current and future WCOG programs.
- f. Provide a positive and supportive organization that encourages employees to develop their potential.

1.2 NATURE OF EMPLOYMENT

While WCOG hope to maintain long-term and mutually beneficial relationships with its employees, employment with WCOG is "at will." This means that either an employee or WCOG may terminate the employment relationship at any time with or without cause, and with or without advance notice. WCOG does not promise or guarantee that any individual will be employed for any specified length of time. No one at WCOG has any authority to alter this at-will employment relationship other than through a written agreement that must be signed by the Executive Director, or by the Board Chair for an agreement covering the Executive Director.

1.3 RIGHTS OF MANAGEMENT

In order to retain flexibility in the administration of policies and procedures, WCOG reserves the right to change, revise, interpret, or eliminate any of the policies and/or benefits described in this Manual, with the exception of the at-will nature of your

employment which will remain in effect. Neither WCOG's current policies, benefits, nor terms and conditions of employment reflected herein, nor changes thereto, require approval by an employee or employee group and should not be construed to be a contract or employment agreement.

1.4 DISCRIMINATION & HARASSMENT

WCOG will not tolerate discrimination in the workplace and will strictly enforce the following rules.

Anti-Discrimination

WCOG strictly prohibits discrimination based on gender, gender identity or expression, race, ethnicity, color, religion, national origin, age, marital status, pregnancy, disability, sexual orientation, military or veteran status, genetics/genetic markers, or any other legally protected classifications. WCOG also prohibits the harassment of any individual based on these protected classifications, as set forth below. WCOG requires its employees to abide by this policy in practice and in spirit. WCOG encourages its employees to address any questions or concerns about this policy directly to the Executive Director. Employees may do so without fear of reprisal.

Prohibition of Harassment

WCOG does not tolerate unlawful harassment in the workplace. Harassment encompasses unwelcome and offensive conduct, whether verbal, physical, written, or electronic, that is based upon a person's protected status (or perceived protected status), such as gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, color, race, ethnicity, religion, national origin, age, disability, marital status, veteran or military status, citizenship status, or other protected group status. WCOG strictly prohibits harassing conduct that affects tangible job benefits, that interferes unreasonably with an individual's work performance, or that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment. Sexual harassment is one form of unlawful harassment, and may include unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, other verbal, visual or physical conduct of a sexual nature, sexually suggestive objects or pictures, sexually explicit or offensive jokes or objects, or engaging in any sexually oriented conduct which interferes with another's work performance or creates a work environment that is intimidating, hostile or offensive.

Employee's Response to Misconduct

WCOG requires any employee who feels that they or others may have been subject to discrimination or harassment to bring the matter to the immediate attention of the Executive Director who will initiate an investigation. To assist in the prompt resolution of

the complaint, employees should provide any supporting documents and identify any person who may have knowledge regarding the allegations. Allegations for harassment will be promptly investigated and appropriate corrective action will be taken. In the case of allegations that involve the Executive Director the Chair of the WCOG should be notified and he/she will initiate an investigation.

WCOG Investigation

WCOG will take all reports seriously and conduct an appropriate investigation. WCOG will require that you cooperate in any investigation, whether you are directly involved or not. WCOG will attempt to keep the facts and results of investigations confidential, although that is not always possible. Additionally, employees are expected to refrain from discussing investigatory matters with other individuals. WCOG may take appropriate disciplinary action against an employee found to have violated the policy, up to and including termination of employment.

Non-Retaliation

WCOG prohibits retaliation because of an employee's good faith report of discrimination or harassment or participation in an investigation of such a claim. Any individual who is found to have engaged in retaliatory conduct will be subject to appropriate corrective action, up to and including termination of employment. Employees who believe that they have experienced such retaliation should notify the Executive Director or the Chair of the WCOG if the Executive Director is involved.

1.5 ACCOMMODATION OF DISABILITIES, PREGNANCY, OR RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

Reasonable Accommodation of a Disability

WCOG prohibits discrimination on the basis of a disability and is committed to providing reasonable accommodation to any qualified individual with a disability who needs such accommodation to perform the essential functions of their job. Any employee who has a disability and wishes reasonable accommodation should promptly contact the Executive Director. WCOG will work with the employee and their health care provider to explore the extent to which we can provide reasonable accommodation without undue hardship to the organization.

Pregnancy Accommodation

An employee who needs accommodation due to pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions may be afforded reasonable accommodation. Depending on the requested accommodation, WCOG may seek input from the employee's health care

provider. Please contact the Executive Director if a pregnancy-related accommodation is needed. As addressed elsewhere in this manual, WCOG also allows ensures that employees may take lactation breaks following the birth of a child, consistent with state and federal law.

Accommodation of Religious Beliefs

WCOG will also reasonably accommodate the sincerely held religious beliefs of an employee, unless accommodation would result in undue hardship. An employee seeking religious-based accommodation should promptly contact the Executive Director with their request.

1.5 CONFIDENTIALITY

WCOG obtains confidential information about its constituents and certain community members by virtue of its functions. WCOG notes that its employees are privy to this confidential information. WCOG requires its employees to safeguard this confidential information by abiding by the following strict rules of conduct.

- a. Other than as necessary and appropriate in carrying out their job duties, or where disclosure is required by law, employees may not disclose confidential information (including that which the employees create) either during or after their employment to any person or entity who is not a WCOG employee or who is not confidentially bound to WCOG. If an employee is in doubt as to whether a specific disclosure is permissible, they should seek guidance and approval from the Executive Director. WCOG employees may not at any time permit third parties to use, examine and/or make copies of any documents, files, data, information sources or work product which contain WCOG confidential information.
- b. WCOG employees may not use confidential information either during or after their employment for any purpose not directly related to WCOG functions, including for their own personal benefit or the benefit of any third party.
- c. WCOG employees must return all WCOG properties in their possession or control upon WCOG request including but not limited to all documents, files, data, information sources, or work product (including that which the employees themselves conceive) which contain or are derived from confidential information.

1.6 CONFLICT OF INTEREST

WCOG employees, officers and agents have a responsibility to be entirely free of any influence which might conflict, or appear to conflict, with the interests of WCOG. Areas where a conflict of interest might exist include, but are not limited to, the following situations:

- a. You or an immediate family member have a substantial financial interest in, or are involved directly or indirectly in the management of an organization which deals directly with WCOG as a supplier, contractor, purchaser or distributor of WCOG's products.
- b. You are employed outside WCOG, and such employment interferes with the proper and efficient performance of your duties for WCOG.
- c. You or an immediate family member buy, sell, or lease any kind of property, facility or equipment from or to WCOG or renders service to WCOG other than as an employee.
- d. You provide services of another organization as an employee or consultant for an organization doing or seeking to do business with WCOG or competing with WCOG or its members.
- e. You use confidential information about WCOG or its customers to derive personal financial gain.
- f. You are romantically involved with a WCOG staff member over whom you have supervisory responsibility.

In addition, WCOG prohibits WCOG staff from working for other employers (including self-employment) using time that they are expected to use to work for WCOG. It is the employees' responsibility to recognize and avoid these or other situations which may pose actual or perceived conflict of interest. If you are in doubt as to what should be done in a particular situation, you should discuss it with the Executive Director prior to taking any action.

Disciplinary actions resulting from violation of this policy are listed in Section 9.2 DISCIPLINE GUIDELINES.

1.7 WHISTLEBLOWER

It is the policy of WCOG to: (1) encourage reporting by its employees of improper governmental action taken by WCOG Board members or employees and (2) not to retaliate against WCOG employees who have reported improper governmental actions in accordance with WCOG policies and procedures.

Definitions

Improper governmental action - any action by a WCOG official or employee:

1. That is undertaken as an activity of WCOG whether or not the action is within the scope of the employee's or board members' specific WCOG duties; and/or
2. That is in violation of any federal, state, or local law or rule, is an abuse of authority, is of substantial and specific danger to the public health or safety or is a gross waste of public funds.

Improper governmental action does not include personnel actions, which include but are not limited to employee complaints, appointments, promotions, transfers, assignments, reassignments, reinstatements, restorations, re-employments, performance evaluations, reductions in pay, dismissal, suspensions, demotions or reprimands.

Retaliatory action - means any adverse change in the terms and conditions of a WCOG employee's employment.

Emergency - means a circumstance that if not immediately changed may cause harm or damage to people or property.

Procedures for Reporting

WCOG employees who become aware of improper governmental action are encouraged to notify the Executive Director. Improper government actions involving the Executive Director may be reported to the WCOG Board Chair. In addition to however initial reporting is initiated, a reporting employee should submit a written report stating in detail the basis for the employee's belief that an improper governmental action has occurred. In an emergency, where the employee believes that personal injury or property damage may result if action is not taken immediately, the employee may report the improper governmental action directly to the appropriate government agency with responsibility for investigating the improper action, such as the Whatcom County Prosecuting Attorney, the Washington State Attorney General, or the U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Washington. Upon receipt of a report, the Executive Director or Board Chair will promptly initiate an investigation. Once the investigation is complete, the Executive Director or Board Chair will provide the employee with a written summary of the results of the investigation. Personnel actions taken because of the investigation may be kept confidential. WCOG officers and employees involved in the investigation will keep the identity of the reporting employee(s) confidential to the extent possible under law, unless the employee authorizes disclosure of his or her identity in writing. WCOG employees must follow WCOG procedures and policies with respect to reporting improper governmental action. Any employee who fails to make a good faith attempt to

follow this policy will not receive the protections of the Local Government Employee Whistleblower Protection Act as codified in chapter 42.41 RCW.

Employees may report information about improper governmental action directly to the appropriate government agency with responsibility for investigating the improper action if the employee reasonably believes that an adequate investigation was not undertaken by WCOG to determine whether an improper governmental action occurred, or that insufficient action was taken by WCOG to address the improper action, or that for other reasons the improper action is likely to recur.

Protection against Retaliatory Actions

It is unlawful for any local government official or employee to take retaliatory action against a local government employee because the employee provided information in good faith that an improper governmental action occurred. WCOG officials and employees who report improper governmental actions are protected from retaliation pursuant to RCW 42.41.040.

1. In order to seek relief from suspected retaliatory action, the employee will provide to the WCOG board a written notice detailing the suspected retaliatory action and the relief requested.
2. The charge will be delivered to the local government no later than thirty days after the occurrence of the alleged retaliatory action. WCOG has thirty days to respond to the charge of retaliatory action and requested relief.
3. Upon receipt of either the response of the local government or after the last day upon which the local government could respond, the local government employee may request a hearing to establish that a retaliatory action occurred and to obtain appropriate relief. The request for a hearing will be delivered to the local government within fifteen days of delivery of the response from the local government, or within fifteen days of the last day on which the local government could respond.

Responsibilities

The Executive Director is responsible for ensuring that this policy and these procedures (1) are posted where all employees will have reasonable access to them, (2) are made available to any employee upon request, and (3) are provided to all newly hired employees. Violations of this policy and these procedures may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

1.8 DRUG FREE WORKPLACE

WCOG is committed to providing and maintaining a safe and productive work environment that is free from the adverse effects of drugs, alcohol, and other job-impairing substances. Our concern is to ensure that employees report to work in condition to perform their duties safely and efficiently in the interest of the organization and the communities it serves. In addition, various federal and state laws prohibit the possession, distribution, and use of controlled substances, unless in compliance with licensing requirements or a physician's prescription. Violations of federal and state laws may result in legal sanctions, including criminal prosecution.

Prohibitions

This policy prohibits the following:

- Reporting for work or performing work while impaired by illegal drugs or impairing levels of alcohol or other legal substances
- The unlawful use, possession, manufacture, distribution, dispensing, transfer or trafficking of alcohol, drugs or controlled substances in any amount or in any manner on WCOG property at any time, whether or not engaged in WCOG business.
- The use, in any way, of WCOG property, equipment or the employee's position to make or traffic alcohol, drugs or controlled substances.
- Any other use, possession or trafficking of alcohol, drugs or controlled substances in a manner which is detrimental to the interest of the organization, creates a safety concern or unduly interferes with job performance.
- Tampering with a test sample or obstruction of the test process.

Employees may use or consume prescription drugs while on the job when taken pursuant to a valid physician's order, or over-the-counter drugs when taken as appropriate, only when there is no possibility that such use may impair the employee's ability to safely perform his or her job or may adversely affect his or her safety, public safety or the safety of other employees. It is the employee's responsibility to be aware of the effects of any medication that he or she may be taking and to be alert for any evidence of impairment. Employees taking medication which may affect their performance, safety, or abilities must advise their supervisor of this fact so that accommodations may be considered.

Violations of these prohibitions will lead to discipline, up to and including termination.

Testing

1) Reasonable Suspicion Testing

WCOG may require drug and/or alcohol testing when it has a reasonable suspicion of violation of this policy. Reasonable suspicion is suspicion based on specific personal observations of the employee's appearance, behavior, speech or odor. The following is a non-exhaustive list of examples of when WCOG may conclude there is reasonable suspicion that an employee is in violation of this policy:

- (a) Erratic job performance coupled with additional evidence suggesting a policy violation, e.g., slurred speech, stumbling, disheveled appearance, etc.
- (b) Physical symptoms consistent with illegal or unauthorized substance use.
- (c) Evidence of illegal substance use, possession, sale or delivery.
- (d) Fights (meaning physical contact) or physical assaults.
- (e) Flagrant violations of established security, safety or other operating procedures.

2) Requests for Retesting

An employee who tests positive will not be paid for the time lost from work during the period of testing and receiving the test results. Should a positive test be disputed, the employee may request a re-test of the same sample must be made within forty-eight (48) hours. The expense for re-testing must be pre-paid by the employee. Employees who test negative will be paid for time lost from work and reimbursed for the cost of the retest.

3) Type of Tests

WCOG-designated lab has the discretion to determine its testing methods and the standards for determining whether a test is "positive" or "negative." WCOG and laboratory will provide quality control procedures and will assure maximum confidentiality and chain of custody.

Confidentiality/Privacy

The fact that a drug and/or alcohol test has been requested or administered, the results of that test, and communications with the employee regarding substance use and abuse, are considered private and confidential.

Policy Violations

Employees are subject to appropriate discipline and/or termination for violating this policy as described earlier. Policy violations also include:

1) Refusal to Allow Test

WCOG may request an employee to consent to testing, permit the test results to be analyzed, and to release such results to authorized company representatives, subject to

any applicable state or local laws and regulations. An employee's failure to consent and submit to the requested testing will subject the employee to disciplinary action including termination.

2) Positive Test Results

An employee who tests positive for illegal or unauthorized substances, or impairing levels of legal substances, will be subject to disciplinary action including termination.

c. Off-The-Job Conduct

- An employee's off-the-job use of illegal drugs or unlawful or unauthorized substances which adversely affects the employee's job performance or jeopardizes the safety of other employees or the security of WCOG's premises also violates this policy.
- An employee who is convicted of or pleads guilty or no contest to off-the-job manufacture, sale, purchase, transfer, use or possession of illegal drugs or unauthorized substances will be subject to disciplinary action including termination if, in the view of management, the circumstances warrant.
- Any employee convicted of a violation of a criminal drug statute that is workplace-related must notify the Executive Director within five working days of the conviction.

Employee Assistance and Rehabilitation

WCOG offers an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to its employees as an additional benefit. The EAP provides professional, confidential counseling to employees experiencing personal issues. WCOG will not discipline or terminate an employee who voluntarily seeks EAP assistance before there is a performance problem or positive drug or alcohol test result. For more information on WCOG's EAP program or benefit coverage for rehabilitation, please see your benefit information or contact your HR representative.

All employees (including those seeking EAP assistance or rehabilitation) must be free of drugs at work and comply with WCOG's other work rules and performance standards. Alcohol consumption is permitted on occasion in connection with WCOG social activities, or while attending professional conferences and events. When employees are on duty and/or representing WCOG, however, employees who elect to consume alcohol must nevertheless ensure that they always conduct themselves responsibly.

1.9 WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

Employees that feel threatened should contact local law enforcement.

WCOG prohibits violence in the workplace including verbal or physical threats, intimidation, and abusive statements or any conduct that causes others to feel intimidated or unsafe.

To the extent permitted by law, employees are prohibited from bringing weapons WCOG premises, WCOG reserves the right to inspect, with or without notice, all persons' packages and other items that come on to WCOG property. WCOG further reserves the right to inspect all WCOG property with or without notice. WCOG encourages its employees to raise workplace concerns with their immediate supervisor or the Director. If the supervisor is unavailable, or if the complaints remain unresolved after talking with the supervisor, or if the nature of the complaint is such that the employee does not feel he or she can discuss the complaint with his or her supervisor, the employee may make a complaint to the Executive Director.

WCOG prohibits the following by way of example:

- Any act or threat of violence made by an employee against another person's life, health, well-being, family or property.
- Any act or threat of violence, including, but not limited to, intimidation, harassment, or coercion.
- Any act or threat of violence that endangers the safety of employees, clients, vendors, contractors or the general public.
- Any act or threat of violence is made directly or indirectly by words, gestures or symbols.
- Use or possession of a weapon on the organization's premises.

Following an incident of violence or upon receiving a complaint about a violent act in the workplace, WCOG will promptly investigate the matter to determine relevant facts and circumstances. Information about any complaint will be treated as confidentially as possible, consistent with proper investigation and responsive action. Based on its investigation, WCOG will take immediate and appropriate corrective action. Individuals who lodge good faith complaints or who participate in a WCOG investigation will not be retaliated against or otherwise treated adversely for having done so. behavior.

2.0 WORK HOURS & COMPENSATION

2.1 PAY PLAN & ADJUSTMENTS

WCOG has established its compensation program to attract and retain qualified employees and to motivate its employees to perform their duties and tasks in the most effective manner. To meet these objectives, WCOG strives to achieve internal equity (meaning compensation that relates to actual job responsibilities) and external competitiveness (meaning compensation that is competitive with other similarly situated agencies) in setting compensation. WCOG will use the following methods to adjust an employees pay:

Salary Step Increase

A new step within the salary range schedule occurs at the anniversary date of employment. Such step increases, if approved by the Executive Director, will commence on the first of the month closest to the employee's date of hire or reclassification.

Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA)

Based upon the market and the WCOG's budget, the Executive Director may propose, for the WCOG Board's consideration, a pay adjustment (cost of living increase) increasing the salary matrix (and individual salaries) by a specified percentage.

Market Review

From time to time, comparative studies of multiple factors affecting salary levels may be requested by the Executive Director or the Chair of the WCOG Board. The WCOG Board may approve a salary matrix adjustment based on the outcome of the study.

Position Adjustments

The Director may authorize individual salary grade increases based on their assessment of an employee's increased responsibilities. Such an adjustment will take effect the month following Board notification.

2.2 NEW APPOINTMENTS

New employees will usually start at the minimum step for their salary range. However, the Executive Director may authorize a higher rate when the employee's experience, training or proven capability warrant, or when prevailing market conditions require a starting rate greater than minimum step. When determining the placement of new employees into the salary range, WCOG will consider internal equity.

2.3 WORKWEEK, HOURS & PAY PERIODS

WCOG pay periods run from the 1st of the month to the end of each month with the individual workweeks being Sunday through Monday. Employees will be paid once per month, normally on the last working day of the month that services are performed.

Because of the varied nature of the work at WCOG, employees have more flexibility over their work schedules as long as performance expectations are being met (e.g., projects are completed, turnaround times are within acceptable parameters, employees are available for work meetings). Employees are expected to use good judgment in managing their workloads and work schedules. An employee who is receiving compensation for a full-time job is expected to provide full-time effort to WCOG, and work hours commensurate with a full-time schedule. It is also generally expected that employees will communicate, in advance, with their supervisor about absences or modifications to their normal working hours to minimize disruption to operations.

Notwithstanding the greater flexibility employees have regarding hours of work, unless otherwise approved by the Executive Director, salaried employees that don't work at least 30 hours (or their FTE percentage of 30) in a workweek must allocate the balance of their non-working hours to sick or vacation time unless they have an accommodation for extraordinary circumstances approved by the Executive Director.

2.4 TIME RECORDS

Each employee is responsible for accurately completing their time record and submitting it by the last day of the pay period. The Executive Director shall review time records to verify hours, project numbers, work elements, appropriate signatures and thereafter sign approval.

2.5 PAYROLL DEDUCTIONS

Normal employee deductions, such as Social Security, Medicare, federal income tax, state retirement, state payroll taxes and medical premium payment share shall be deducted.

2.6 HYBRID WORK

WCOG considers hybrid work, a blend of remote work and work at WCOG's office, to be a viable work arrangement in cases where the job and the individual are well-suited to such an arrangement. Suitability for hybrid work is based upon the job assignment and is

to be determined in consultation with the employee's supervisor and Executive Director. Not all positions and individuals may qualify for hybrid work.

Informal hybrid work arrangements, such as working during business travel or a one-day event, do not require completion of a Hybrid Work Agreement form.

WCOG reserves the right to terminate a hybrid work arrangement at any time, whether for operational, performance, or other reasons. Reasonable efforts will be made to provide advance notice of any changes to accommodate commuting and other issues that may arise from the termination of the hybrid work arrangement.

Expectations

Employees are expected to follow all WCOG rules, policies and procedures regardless of where work is being done. Any employee in violation of the Hybrid Work Policy is subject to the termination of hybrid work as well as discipline up to and including termination of employment.

Employees approved for hybrid work will be expected to perform the same work they would in the office with the same performance expectations.

Employees are expected to answer phone calls, monitor their voicemails, emails and return the same as when working in the office.

Employees are expected to maintain safe working conditions, practice appropriate safety habits and keep the work area free from hazards. If an injury occurs while working, employees must notify their supervisor immediately.

Eligibility

When evaluating a request for a hybrid work arrangement, WCOG will consider the following:

- Nature of employee's position and extent to which duties can be performed effectively when working remotely,
- Operational needs, including the impact of the arrangement on other employees,
- Employee's ability to work independently,
- Equipment needs, and
- Other factors relevant to a particular situation.

Equipment and Supplies; Workspace

Employees must establish an appropriate work environment within his or her home or alternative location for work purposes. WCOG will not be responsible for costs

associated with the setup of the employee's home office such as remodeling, furniture, lighting, rent or insurance, or for repairs or modifications to a home office space. WCOG will provide equipment and supplies the employee needs to perform job duties.

Security

Employees who are working remotely must ensure the protection of confidential information accessible from their remote work location. Steps include locking the computer when leaving the work area, regular password maintenance, installation of updates as they become available, secure handling and disposal of physical documentation, ensuring secure (password protected) internet service, and any other measures appropriate for the job and the environment.

Safety

Employees are expected to maintain their remote workspace in a safe manner, free from safety hazards. Injuries sustained by the employee in a remote location and in conjunction with his or her regular work duties are normally covered by the WCOG's workers' compensation policy. Employees working remotely are responsible for notifying their supervisor of such injuries as soon as practicable. WCOG is not liable for any injuries sustained by personal visitors to the employee's remote worksite.

Time Worked

Employees approved for hybrid work must work their assigned work schedule, as approved by their supervisor and accurately record all hours worked. Employees in non-exempt positions must also observe regular lunch and rest breaks.

A remote work arrangement is not designed to be a replacement for child or dependent care. The employee's remote work environment must be free from disruptions and distractions that may affect the performance of job duties or present a less than professional environment when attending phone or video calls.

Availability

If an employee's in-person presence is needed in the office or meeting outside the office, the employee must remain willing and able to come to the office or meeting location. WCOG will make a reasonable effort to provide advance notice of any required, in-person meetings, but advance notice will not always be possible.

2.7 EXEMPT POSITION EMPLOYEES

Employees in exempt positions as defined by the Fair Labor Standard Act (FLSA) are exempt from overtime payments for hours worked beyond 40 hours in a workweek. Such employees will be paid on a salary basis and will generally not have their pay

reduced for variations in the quantity or quality of work performed. While the basic schedule of full-time exempt employees is 40 hours per week, exempt employees are expected to work the hours needed to perform the duties of their respective positions. Depending on operational needs, an individual's efficiency and other factors, the actual hours required to complete job assignments may vary, and working irregular hours, evenings and/or weekends may be required.

2.8 NON-EXEMPT POSITION EMPLOYEES

The following working hours and overtime pay provisions apply to hourly employees in **non-exempt** positions:

- Full-time employees typically receive a one hour paid lunch period and will receive a 15-minute paid rest period for each four (4) hours worked. Employees cannot waive rest periods, combine the rest period with the lunch period, or use this time to shorten the workday.
- Overtime will be paid at the rate of one and one-half times the regular rate of pay and will be paid for hours worked in excess of 40 hours per week. Authorized leave taken in a pay period is not considered worked time for the purposes of calculating overtime.
- No overtime may be worked without prior authorization from an employee's supervisor.
- Requests for time off must be communicated to an employee's supervisor, consistent with the applicable leave policy (e.g., sick leave or vacation policies).

2.9 REPORTING COMPENSATION CONCERNS

The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), Washington's Minimum Wage Act, and other state laws pertain to compensation and deductions.

If an employee believes that an improper deduction has been made to their paycheck, or believes that their pay has been calculated improperly, the employee should immediately inform the Executive Director. No employee will be subject to retaliation for raising concerns or questions about improper deductions or pay calculations.

Reports of improper deductions or improper payment will be promptly investigated. If WCOG determines that an improper deduction has occurred, the employee will be reimbursed for any improper deduction made or any correction in pay needed. Similarly, improper payments to employees will also be subject to reimbursement by the employee.

2.10 TERMINATION PAY

Upon termination of employment, an employee is entitled to receive any wages due and cash out a maximum of 240 hours of accrued vacation time at their current pay rate. If an employee dies, termination pay shall be made to their estate or to any person legally entitled to such payment. There shall be no cash out for sick leave.

2.11 LONGEVITY COMPENSATION

Employees that have reached the top step in their salary range and who have completed 10 years of full-time employment or equivalent will receive an additional 1 percent longevity step per year beyond the salary range. If an employee receiving longevity compensation should move from one grade to another thereby becoming eligible for step increases, the longevity compensation stops until they again reach the end of their salary range.

3.0 EMPLOYMENT STATUS

3.1 EMPLOYEE CLASSIFICATIONS

Trial Service: The first six (6) months of employment for newly hired employees is referred to as the trial service period. An employee may be released at any time during the initial trial service period, with or without cause.

Full-time Regular: An employee who has completed their trial service period and is assigned a regular 40-hour workweek or equivalent, and who maintains continuous employment status.

Part-time Regular: An employee who has completed their trial service period and who is regularly scheduled to work fewer than 40 hours each workweek, and who maintains continuous part-time employment status.

Temporary: Individuals hired as an interim replacement, to temporarily supplement the work force, or to assist in the completion of a specific project. Such individuals are hired for a limited period of time. Temporary employees are not eligible for benefits, other than as may be required by law.

Contractor/Consultant: An individual whose services are retained on a contract basis for an agreed-upon scope of work.

Student Intern/Work Study: Temporary work assignment which allows a student to gain work experience in the field. Interns are not eligible to receive the fringe benefits discussed in subsequent sections of this manual.

Volunteer: Non-paid staff assigned to assist with specific programs/services. Volunteers are not eligible for benefits, except those required by law.

3.2 TRIAL SERVICE PERIOD

New Hires

An employee's first 6 months of employment with WCOG is the trial service period. This period is used to train and evaluate the employee's performance, conduct, observance of rules, and attendance. An employee may be released at any time during this introductory period, with or without cause. At the conclusion of the trial service period, the employee is still considered to have "at will" status.

3.3 CHANGE IN EMPLOYMENT STATUS

WCOG may change the employment classification of any employee at any time based on the nature of the employment assignment. The Executive Director will notify each employee in writing of any changes in their employment status.

3.4 TERMINATION OF EMPLOYMENT

The Executive Director may terminate positions when necessary. If multiple terminations are compelled by WCOG's financial circumstances, the order of employee terminations shall consider length of service and qualifications needed to fulfill WCOG needs.

3.5 HIRING & EMPLOYMENT

Individuals who want to be considered for employment with WCOG must complete application materials. WCOG relies upon the accuracy of information contained in the employment application as well as accuracy of other data provided throughout the hiring process and employment. Any misrepresentation, falsification, or material omission may result in exclusion of the individual from consideration for employment or, if hired, termination of employment.

Employees whose work requires a state or national license, registration, certification, or permit, will be required to present proof of such prior to employment and at each renewal period. It is the employee's responsibility to provide WCOG with proof of current required license, registration, certification or permit within 2 weeks of the issue date.

WCOG employees whose job responsibilities require them to use their personal vehicle, will be required to provide a copy of a valid driver's license at the time of hire and proof of current auto insurance. These employees are also responsible for advising WCOG of any change in driver's licensing or insurance status. Additionally, WCOG may request a copy of any employee's or applicant's driving abstract for review. Under no circumstances may an employee drive for WCOG business without a valid driver's license.

3.6 REHIRES

When former employees apply to be rehired, they will be evaluated on the same basis as all other applicants. Consideration will be given to past job performance and the circumstances surrounding termination of previous employment.

Employees rehired within 30 days after separation will have their service bridged. This means that the employee may retain the original date of hire and may continue to accrue

time-off benefits at the previous rate. Insurance benefits will continue as stipulated in the plan documents. Employees rehired after a break of service of more than 30 consecutive days will receive a new date of hire. They will be treated the same as new employees for all benefits.

3.7 EMPLOYMENT OF RELATIVES

The employment of or contracting with members of the same immediate family of any person currently employed by the WCOG shall be avoided except under extraordinary circumstances. If such employment is in the best interest of the WCOG, it shall be authorized by the Executive Director with Board concurrence.

3.8 OUTSIDE EMPLOYMENT

An employee shall not engage in outside employment if such employment interferes with his/her job performance or constitutes a conflict of interest as determined by the Executive Director.

3.9 EMPLOYEE PRIVACY AND PERSONNEL FILES

WCOG maintains employment-related files for its employees. These files are WCOG property. The main personnel file primarily contains the following types of information:

- Address, telephone number, and emergency contacts.
- Application and/or resume, reference letters or other materials submitted or created during the hiring process.
- Employment history information, including titles and dates of positions held, salaries, dates and amounts of raises, changes in status (e.g., full-time, part-time, temporary), resignation and hires, requests for work-schedule accommodations.
- Copies of licensure and vehicle insurance.
- Records of corrective or disciplinary action including any written complaints submitted by or pertaining to the employee, notes of resulting investigations, and conclusions of such processes.
- Personnel action items such as benefit enrollment records and personal information changes.
- Other documents pertaining to employment such as letters of commendation, training records, etc.

All medically related information will be maintained by the Executive Director in a separate, confidential employee medical file. Information in the medical file may be disclosed only to the employee, to a supervisor on a need-to-know basis, individuals given access by the employee's written consent, or as otherwise required or allowed by state and federal law. Employee medical files include the following types of information:

- Medical questionnaires
- Benefit claims
- Doctor's notes
- Accommodation requests
- Medical leave records
- Workers' compensation claims

An employee who wishes to review their personnel records can ask the Director to do so. These records may be reviewed only in the presence of a designated WCOG official during normal business hours. If an employee disputes information contained in their personnel file, the employee may submit a written request to the Executive Director that the information be changed or removed. If this request is denied, the employee may request that a statement containing their correction or rebuttal be placed in the file.

It is each employee's responsibility to notify the Executive Director or designee of changes in personal information that would affect compensation, benefits, potential conflict-of-interest issues, emergency contact, etc. such as address and change in number of dependents (children, partners, other family).

3.10 INTERNSHIPS

WCOG may choose to participate in school-related internship programs. All internships shall be approved by the Executive Director. Work will be performed under the supervision of an assigned supervisor who will be responsible for completing any school-related progress reports.

While internships are generally unpaid positions, interns will be required to comply with many of the processes, policies, and procedures required of regular employees and must sign the internship letter of understanding. Internship programs are considered stand-alone programs and in no way entitle the student to a position at the conclusion of the internship period.

3.11 VOLUNTEERS

WCOG may use volunteers to assist within the organization. All volunteer assignments shall be approved by the Executive Director. Volunteers may receive reimbursement for specific incurred costs such as mileage reimbursements. A current employee may not volunteer in any capacity related to their paid position. While volunteer positions are unpaid, volunteers will be required to comply with many of the processes, policies and procedures required of regular employees and must sign the volunteer letter of understanding.

4.0 GENERAL POLICIES

4.1 GENERAL EMPLOYEE CONDUCT (Code of Ethics)

The following are guidelines for employee conduct:

- Ensure that our interactions and communications with each other, community partners and the general public are professional and caring.
- Demonstrate mutual respect toward co-workers, colleagues, community partners, clients, and the public.
- Recognize that each work assignment is important and worthy of our best efforts.
- Accomplish work in a timely, accurate, and professional manner.
- Exercise good judgment by limiting personal calls, texting, conversations, and visiting to non-working hours.
- Adhere to policies, procedures, safety rules and safe working practices.
- Comply with directions from supervisors.
- Preserve and protect WCOG's equipment, grounds, facilities, and resources.
- Follow WCOG's ethics and conflict of interest standards.

4.2 ATTENDANCE

General Standard

Employees are expected to be at work on time during their scheduled workdays and times. Additionally, employees are expected to remain at work through the duration of their shift (except for breaks and lunches) unless released by their supervisor.

Absence Notification

Employees unable to work or unable to work during their agreed-upon schedule shall notify their supervisor as soon as possible. Notification should be made before the employee's workday begins or, at a minimum, within one hour of the employee's usual starting time. If, at any time, an employee is incapacitated to the point they are unable to call in personally, they are responsible for having someone call in for them.

Employees are expected to give a reason for their delay or absence and to update their supervisor daily until they can resume work. If the employee is on an approved leave of absence for a period, daily notification is not required. In these situations, a medical doctor's statement of an expected resumption of work should be provided. If there is a change in the expected date of return, an employee's supervisor should be notified as soon as possible.

Employees who experience an injury (whether on-the-job or away from work) may be required to provide a medical doctor's assessment of their ability to return to work. WCOG may also require employees who are absent more than three (3) consecutive days due to an illness to provide a doctor's diagnosis and assessment of their ability to return to work.

Any planned absences such as paid or unpaid days off, medical appointments, etc. must be arranged in advance with an employee's supervisor.

Minimizing Staff Exposure to Illness

In the interest of the health of both the public and staff, employees may not report for work in the office if they are experiencing any of, but not limited to, the following symptoms:

- Fever
- Persistent cough (unless attributable to noncontagious conditions such as allergies)
- Chills
- Body aches not attributable to strenuous exercise
- Abnormal fatigue.

Discipline

Employees may receive attendance-related discipline for the following policy violations (absent approval or extenuating circumstances):

- Failing to be present at work on time.
- Failing to properly report absences as described above.
- Failing to show up for work and provide notification (no show/no call).
- Failing to provide proper documentation of illness when required.
- Excessive and/or patterned absenteeism.
- Reporting to work in the office showing symptoms of a communicable illness.
- Any employee who is absent three consecutive days, without proper notification, will be considered to have voluntarily terminated his/her employment.

4.3 TOBACCO-FREE WORKPLACE

Smoking, vaping, and any other use of tobacco products is prohibited in all areas of WCOG's office building and facilities. This policy covers the smoking of any tobacco products, or the use of smokeless or "spit" tobacco, e-cigarettes or similar devices, and applies to both employees and non-employee visitors of WCOG.

4.4 SELLING AND SOLICITATION

Non-employees are not allowed at any time to come upon WCOG premises to sell products, distribute literature, etc. This policy is to restrain third parties or strangers from soliciting or handing out materials for political, union, charitable, or similar activities.

Reasonable employee solicitation, for non-controversial charitable causes and/or community events, that does not interfere with work, is permitted. Employees may not solicit for any purpose during their own or another employee's work time. Work time is defined as the time an employee spends performing his/her duties and does not include break periods or meal periods. WCOG reserves the right to disallow specific employee solicitations it believes to be inappropriate.

4.5 PROPERTY USE & THEFT

WCOG property may not be removed from company premises except in the ordinary course of performing duties. Taking WCOG property without permission is considered theft. Any employee who is aware of another employee stealing is expected to immediately report such behavior to a supervisor.

Employees wishing to use WCOG equipment for personal use must specifically seek supervisory approval in advance. Violation of this policy is a serious offense and will result in the appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

In addition, when an employee leaves employment with WCOG, the employee must return all WCOG-related information, property and equipment that the employee has in his/her possession. Violation of this policy may result in appropriate legal action.

4.6 PERSONAL APPEARANCE AND CONDUCT

Employees are expected to use good judgment and dress according to the assignment of the day (i.e., more casual dress for labor intensive duties and business attire for meeting settings). Employees are expected to observe good habits of grooming and hygiene at all times, and to avoid personal practices that may negatively impact coworkers' ability to do their jobs (e.g., excessive use of scented products).

If there are questions as to what constitutes proper attire, employees should consult their supervisor or the Executive Director.

4.7 EMAIL

WCOG employees have email accounts for conducting official business communications. Employees should understand that WCOG email is not private or confidential. Email that has been deleted is retrievable. All messages written to or from WCOG email addresses are records of WCOG and property of WCOG. WCOG reserves the right to read, use and disclose e-mail messages. For these reasons, employees should not have an expectation of privacy in anything created, stored, sent or received via WCOG's email accounts.

Additionally, when using the email system, keep correspondence to a professional, business tone. Special care should be shown not to make comments or forward jokes that may be in violation of policies on discrimination or harassment. Employees are prohibited from using the email system to forward chain emails, jokes, cartoons or any similar material.

4.8 COMPUTER & INTERNET USE

Employees are required to comply with all software licenses, copyrights, and other state and federal laws governing intellectual property. Fraudulent, harassing, embarrassing, indecent, profane, obscene, intimidating, or other inappropriate material may not be displayed, sent, or stored on WCOG computers. Employees encountering or receiving such material should report the incident to their supervisor.

The internet is filled with a wide variety of information. WCOG believes that some of the material found on the internet is inappropriate for the workplace and therefore, during work hours the internet will be used primarily for business purposes. Employees may use their computers to access the internet for personal reasons during break and lunch periods. At any time, the internet should not be used to access websites and inappropriate information as described above. WCOG computer systems are monitored so employees should not have an expectation of privacy in anything created, stored, accessed, sent, or received on the company computer system. Use of WCOG equipment for inappropriate internet use, as outlined in this policy, will be subject to discipline, up to and including termination.

4.9 PERSONAL CELL PHONES

To show respect to co-workers, employees are asked to turn personal cell phones on a low ring tone during work hours. Please choose a private location for cell phone conversations to prevent disrupting co-workers.

4.10 ELECTRONIC MEDIA

WCOG respects an employee's right to utilize electronic social media platforms during their personal time. Employees are prohibited from using work time to access or participate in such activities for personal reasons. Access and use of the above social media platforms may be authorized for official WCOG marketing.

Employees must follow these guidelines when communicating through the internet and/or using social media:

- WCOG information will not be broadcast without express authorization from management.
- News of WCOG activities, information about coworkers, and WCOG event pictures will not be shared without express authorization.
- Names and information obtained through WCOG business are confidential and will not be broadcast.
- Since we represent WCOG agency in the community, employees are expected to be respectful and avoid posting derogatory, defamatory or other negative comments about the company or its employees.
- If you have any questions or concerns regarding the use of electronic media, please consult your supervisor.

4.11 BUILDING SECURITY

WCOG prohibits its employees from allowing unauthorized third parties access to the building for non-business purposes. Employees are not allowed to lend or duplicate their keys for any reason.

4.12 CONTACT WITH NEWS MEDIA AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

The Executive Director will be responsible for all official contacts with news media regarding WCOG business matters. The Executive Director may designate specific employees to give out procedural, factual or historical information on particular subjects. Any employee receiving calls or requests from the media must refer such calls to the Executive Director or the designated media representative.

Employees who are contacted by local, state or federal agencies and asked to provide information on behalf of WCOG should consult with their supervisor prior to releasing information outside the normal scope of their duties. Additionally, employees contacted by attorneys, paralegals or other similar individuals/organizations should note the

information being requested and inform the caller that they or another WCOG representative will get back to them. Such inquiries should be documented and reviewed with supervisory personnel prior to releasing WCOG information.

4.13 BREASTFEEDING/LACTATION

This policy aligns with the Fair Labor Standards Act and Washington law as related to breaks for nursing mothers.

For up to two years after the child's birth, any employee who is breastfeeding their child may take breaks to express breast milk. WCOG has designated a private room for this purpose.

4.14 POLITICAL ACTIVITY

Employees, as private citizens, have the right to express political views, be involved in the political system, and vote as they please, provided that all of the above occurs during non-working time. No WCOG employee shall expend public funds, or supplies, or work towards the campaign of any candidate or issue while on WCOG time. Staff members are prohibited from holding an elected, public office in a member jurisdiction and are prohibited from holding an elected, partisan office such as a Washington State Legislator or a United States Congressperson, or any other State or national elected, partisan office.

Since politics can be very divisive in the office, employees are asked to be respectful of all political views when discussing politics in the workplace.

4.15 GIFTS, GRATUITIES & PAYMENTS

No employee of the WCOG shall accept any favors, gifts or gratuities from persons, concerns or businesses that have or seek to have contracts with the WCOG. Additionally, WCOG employees will not receive any outside payments for services provided as a WCOG employee.

5.0 AUTHORIZED LEAVE

Leave is any authorized absence during regularly scheduled work hours. Leave may be authorized by the Executive Director with or without pay. (Absence without permission is considered unauthorized absence and shall be subject to disciplinary action which may include dismissal.)

5.1 VACATION

Employees shall obtain approval from their supervisor of when they take vacation days in order to ensure WCOG's responsibilities are not compromised due to untimely absence or a staffing shortage resulting from multiple, simultaneous staff vacations. It is WCOG's hope and intention to accommodate employee vacation-schedule requests as much as possible. Vacation leave with pay for regular, full-time or part-time employees will be earned in accordance with the following provisions:

Executive Director Vacation Schedule

The Executive Director is entitled to three (3) weeks' vacation per year beginning with the first year of employment, four (4) weeks of vacation after the fifth (5th) year of employment, and five (5) weeks of vacation after the tenth (10th) year of employment.

Regular Full-time Vacation Accrual

Accrual of vacation days shall begin with the first day of hire according to the following schedule:

Year	Days Per Year	Hours Per Month
1	10	6.667
2	11	7.333
3	12	8.000
4	13	8.667
5	14	9.333
6	15	10.000
7	16	10.667
8	17	11.333
9	18	12.000
10	19	12.666
11	20	13.333
12	21	14.000
13	22	14.667
14	23	15.333
15	24	16.000
16+	25	16.667

The Executive Director may start a new employee at a vacation accrual year greater than Year 1 when the employee's work history or market conditions warrant such an adjustment. In no case shall such an adjustment exceed the maximum monthly accrual rate approved by the Council Board.

Regular Part Time Vacation Accrual

Part-time employees working 20 or more hours per week will accrue vacation pro-rated based upon the percentage of full-time hours worked.

Leave Charged

Leave is charged on an hourly basis as taken. A full day may involve use of more than eight (8) hours depending on employees approved schedule.

Accumulation

A maximum of 30 days (240 hours) of vacation leave may be carried over at the end of each calendar year. Greater accumulation of vacation leave must be specifically approved by the Executive Director and may be granted in unusual circumstances arising out of program or personal needs.

Separation

Upon separation, an employee shall be paid for the unused portion of their accumulated vacation leave accrued to the last day worked, up to a maximum of 240 hours.

Any employee separating from service who has not taken their earned vacation shall receive the hourly equivalent of his/her salary for the earned vacation based on the employee's current pay rate calculated by dividing the current annual salary by 2,080. Payment for such leave may be made as separation pay rather than as an extension of separation date.

5.2 SICK LEAVE

Use of Sick Leave

WCOG will administer its paid sick leave policy in accordance with applicable law.

Consistent with Washington's paid sick leave law, employees may use accrued sick leave for the following reasons:

- An employee's own illness, injury, or health condition; to accommodate the need for medical diagnosis, care, or treatment of a health condition; or preventative medical care.
- An employee's need to care for a family member with illness, injury, or health condition; care for family member who needs medical diagnosis, care, or

treatment; care for family member who needs preventive medical care. Family members include an employee's child (whether biological, adoptive, foster, step-child, or child for whom employee stands in loco parentis, is a legal guardian for, or is a de facto parent) and regardless of age or dependency status; parent, whether biological, adoptive, de facto, step-parent, legal guardian or person who stood in loco parentis to employee when employee was a child; spouse or registered domestic partner; grandparent; grandchild; or sibling.

- Closure of the employee's child's school/place of daycare, or of the employee's workplace, by order of a public official for health reasons; or
- For reasons related to domestic violence, sexual assault or stalking that affect the employee or the employee's family member ("safe leave"; see also policy on domestic violence leave below).

As discussed above, employees should request sick leave in advance when the need for leave is foreseeable; for unforeseeable leave, notice should be given to the employee's supervisor as soon as practicable. WCOG may require documentation regarding the use of sick/safe leave where an employee uses more than three consecutive days of paid sick/safe leave; provided that if the request for documentation would result in an unreasonable burden or expense, WCOG will confer with the employee to address this concern. With respect to such documentation, WCOG will not require disclosure of the nature of the illness or other private medical or personal information unless necessary to also evaluate a request for reasonable accommodation of a disability or for other lawful reason. WCOG will not tolerate retaliation against any employee based on the appropriate use of paid sick leave.

Under the Washington Family Care Act, an employee may also use sick leave or other paid time off to care for themselves or to attend to the needs of an employee's immediate family member as follows:

- 1) To care for a child of the employee with a health condition that requires treatment or supervision.
 - **Child of the employee:** Biological, adopted, or foster child, a stepchild, legal ward, or child of a person standing in loco parentis who is under 18 years of age; or 18 years or older and incapable of self-care because of a mental or physical disability.
- 2) To care for the following family members who have a serious health condition or an emergency condition:
 - **Spouse of the employee:** Husband or wife of the employee.
 - State-registered Domestic Partner of the employee.
 - **Parent of the employee:** Biological parent of an employee or an individual who stood in loco parentis to an employee when the employee was a child.

- **Parent-in-law of the employee:** Parent of the spouse or state-registered domestic partner of an employee.
- **Grandparent of the employee:** Parent of a parent of an employee.
- **Grandparent-in-law of the employee:** Parent of a parent of an employee's spouse or domestic partner.

Under WCOG policy, employees may also utilize sick leave to care for their ill siblings and grandchildren. Employees on an approved Medical Leave of Absence will be required to use all paid sick leave (and other forms of paid leave) prior to taking leave without pay.

Rate Earned

Sick leave shall be earned at the rate of 8 hours per calendar month for all regular, full-time employees. Part-time regular employees working 20 or more hours per week will accrue sick leave pro-rated based upon the percentage of full-time hours worked. Temporary employees accrue one hour of paid sick leave per 40 hours worked. Regular employees may carry over a maximum of 700 hours of sick leave at the end of each calendar year. Temporary employees may carry over a maximum of 40 hours sick leave at the end of the calendar year.

Recording

Sick leave will be taken and recorded in increments of not less than one tenth hour.

In Lieu of Vacation

If in the event an employee becomes sick or injured while on vacation, they may use sick days instead of vacation for the days they are thus prevented from enjoying their vacation.

5.3 HOLIDAYS

Full-time employees have fourteen (14) paid holidays per year as shown below. Full-time employees will receive eight (8) hours pay for each holiday. The Executive Director, at the beginning of each year, will establish a schedule of holidays and dates and distribute the schedule to employees. Holidays may change slightly from those listed below.

- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King's Birthday
- President's Day
- Memorial Day
- Juneteenth
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Veteran's Day

Thanksgiving Day
Day after Thanksgiving
Christmas Day
Day next to Christmas
Two (2) floating Personal Holidays (see below)

Employees may select two (2) personal holidays each year. On January 1st each year, 16 hours of personal holiday are added to an employee's record. Personal holidays are prorated for employees who work less than 12 months of the year or a part-time schedule. Personal holidays are prorated according to the employee's full-time equivalency (FTE). Personal holiday hours are not carried over from one year to the next. At the end of the calendar year, unused personal holiday hours are forfeited.

Part-Time Employees

Part-time employees working 20 hours or more per week will receive a pro-rated portion of holiday pay based on hours worked.

5.4 BEREAVEMENT AND FUNERAL LEAVE

A full-time employee absent from duty due to the death of a family member as defined in Section 5.2 Sick Leave, may be authorized up to three (3) days of paid leave by his/her Executive Director. If additional time is necessary for reasons of travel distance, an additional two (2) days may be authorized. Part-time employees working 20 hours or more per week will receive a pro-rated portion.

5.5 PARENTAL LEAVE

To enable time off for the birth, adoption, or placement of foster care of a new child, WCOG grants family leave to employees for these purposes. Employees must submit requests for family leave to the Executive Director as far in advance as possible for approval. Reasonable lengths of family leave will be approved based upon schedule needs and workloads.

Employees are eligible to use their paid time off (vacation and eligible sick leave) during this time and may also be eligible for partial wage replacement through the State of Washington (see Paid Family Medical Leave (or "PFML") policy below). When all eligible leave is exhausted, employees will be placed on a Leave of Absence without Pay. While an employee is on an unpaid leave of absence, benefits will be handled according to the Leave of Absence without Pay policy.

5.6 MATERNITY DISABILITY LEAVE

A female employee is eligible to take an unpaid leave of absence for the period of time that she is sick or temporarily disabled due to pregnancy or childbirth. Employees must submit requests for maternity disability leave in writing to the Executive Director with medical verification of the employee's need for and duration of leave. Such employees are eligible to use their accrued paid leave (such as vacation and sick leave) during this period and may also be eligible for partial wage replacement through the State of Washington (see Paid Family Medical Leave policy below). If an employee has exhausted their paid leave and/or any State benefits, they will be placed on a leave of absence without pay for the remainder of the disability leave. While an employee is on an unpaid leave of absence, benefits will be handled according to the Leave of Absence without Pay policy.

5.7 MILITARY LEAVE

WCOG provides military leave of absence for employees while performing military service in accordance with federal and state law. For public employers, this leave includes paid leave for up to 21 working days per year for military service based on Washington State law. Military service includes active military duty and Reserve or National Guard training. Employees are required to provide their supervisor with copies of their military orders as soon as possible after they are received. Reinstatement upon return from military service will also be determined in accordance with applicable federal and state law.

5.8 MILITARY SPOUSAL LEAVE

Any employee who works more than 20 hours per week and whose spouse or state-registered domestic partner is deployed or about to be deployed or is on leave from deployment in a military conflict declared by Congress or the President is entitled to up to fifteen (15) days of leave of absence per deployment. The leave is unpaid except that the employee can use his/her vacation. An employee wishing to take this leave must notify the Executive Director within five business days of receiving official notice that the spouse is being deployed or will be on leave from deployment. Upon conclusion of the leave, the employee will return to his/her position or an equivalent one unless the employee would otherwise have been terminated had he/she not taken the leave.

5.9 JURY & WITNESS LEAVE

A regular employee shall be granted leave of absence with full pay for the following reasons:

- 1) Jury duty

2) Appearance legally required as a witness for WCOG-related business.

The employee shall submit a copy of the summons to the Executive Director for placement in the personnel file. The employee shall receive regular compensation for any performance of such service, provided that the fees, except mileage or subsistence allowances, which the employee receives as a juror or witness, are remitted to the WCOG. In addition, an employee performing such services shall not lose any benefits he/she is duly entitled to during this period of service.

An employee is required to notify his/her supervisor promptly when summoned for jury duty and subsequently upon selection as a juror and provide appropriate documentation. When an employee is excused from jury duty, the employee is required to report back to work or immediately notify their supervisor that they are able to return to work for the balance of their scheduled workday.

5.10 UNPAID LEAVE

Upon written request of an employee, the Executive Director may grant an employee a leave of absence without pay. Unless an employee is receiving Paid Family Medical Leave benefits from the State of Washington, all appropriate paid leave must be exhausted. The leave request must be dated, signed by the employee, and state the reasons, circumstance, duration, and location of the employee during the leave. Leaves of absence for medical reasons will require a physician's verification of the medical reason for and duration of the needed leave. Before returning from medical leaves of absence, employees may be required to submit a release to return to work from their physician.

WCOG will make reasonable efforts to accommodate requests for unpaid leave if they do not disrupt the business operations of WCOG. Approval of such leave shall be in writing and signed by the Executive Director. No vacation, sick leave, or holiday benefits will accrue or be paid while an employee is on unpaid leave. Upon expiration of approved unpaid leave, the employee shall be reinstated in the position held at the time leave was granted or to another equivalent position. An employee who fails to report promptly for work at the expiration of a leave, or who accepts other employment during the leave, or who applies for unemployment insurance while on leave, will be considered to have voluntarily resigned.

5.11 DOMESTIC VIOLENCE/SEXUAL ASSAULT LEAVE

Employees may take reasonable leave from work, work a reduced schedule or take intermittent leave from work to take care of legal or law enforcement needs or obtain

medical treatment, mental health counseling or social services assistance when employees or their family members are victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking. Employees taking this leave may use any eligible paid time off while on this leave. For the purposes of this policy, "family member" includes child, spouse, state-registered domestic partner, parent, parent-in-law, grandparent, or person with whom the employee has a dating relationship.

Employees are required to provide advance notice in writing of the employee's need for leave. Such requests will be provided in writing accompanied with verification to support the need for leave (i.e., police report, court document, or a written statement from the employee). When advance notice cannot be given because of an emergency or unforeseen circumstance due to domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking, the employee or their designee will notify the WCOG of the need for leave no later than the end of the first day that leave is taken.

5.12 ADMINISTRATIVE LEAVE

On a case-by-case basis, WCOG may place an employee on administrative leave with or without pay for a specified period of time, as determined by the Executive Director. This leave may be used to provide WCOG with time and opportunity to investigate matters, make decisions, or execute other administrative proceedings as needed.

5.13 WASHINGTON PAID FAMILY & MEDICAL LEAVE (PFML)

The Washington State Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML) law established a program administered by the Washington Employment Security Department (ESD) to provide paid leave to eligible employees who need leave for certain family and medical reasons. This policy provides an overview of the PFML program, but greater detail is available at www.paidleave.wa.gov.

Eligibility

Under PFML, employees may be eligible for monetary benefits and/or job protection when taking leave for covered reasons. As a small employer, WCOG is not required by this law to grant leave. However, if leave is approved by WCOG or an employee is entitled to leave under a different law (e.g., maternity disability leave), an employee may be entitled to monetary benefits through ESD. To be eligible for monetary benefits, an employee must have worked 820 hours in Washington (for any employer or combination of employers) during the year preceding the claim.

Duration

Eligible employees may be entitled to receive PFML benefits for up to 12 weeks per claim year when taking medical or family leave, or for a combined total of 16 weeks of family and medical leave per claim year; an additional two weeks of PFML benefits may be available in the event the employee's leave involves incapacity due to her own pregnancy.

Covered Reasons for Leave

PMFL benefits may be available in connection with leave taken for the following reasons:

Medical Leave - Medical leave may be taken due to the employee's own serious health condition, which is an illness, injury, impairment, or physical or mental condition that involves inpatient care or continuing treatment by a health care provider, as those terms are defined under RCW 50A.05.010. However, an employee is not eligible for PFML benefits if the employee is receiving time loss benefits under the workers compensation system.

Family Leave - Family leave may be taken to care for a covered family member with a serious health condition; for bonding during the first 12 months following the birth of the employee's child or placement of a child under age 18 with the employee (through adoption or foster care); for qualifying military exigencies as defined under the federal law; or during the seven calendar days following the death of an employee's child. For purposes of family leave, covered family members include the employee's child, grandchild, parent (including in-laws), grandparent (including in-laws), sibling, or spouse, and also includes any individual with whom an employee has a relationship that creates an expectation that the employee will care for the individual.

Family/medical leave is available in blocks of time (e.g., three weeks off for surgery and related recovery or 12 weeks off to bond with a new baby).

PFML Application Process

An employee must submit an application to ESD in order to seek PFML benefits. For guidance on the application process, please refer to the ESD website (www.paidleave.wa.gov). Eligibility determinations will be made by ESD. If approved, the employee will need to file weekly benefit claims with ESD to continue receiving benefits. ESD determines the amount of the monetary benefit; a benefits calculator is available on ESD's website to aid employees in estimating their benefit. For some leaves, there is a seven-day waiting period.

Notification Requirements

An employee must provide written notice to WCOG of the intent to take PFML leave. ESD may temporarily deny PFML benefits if employer notice is not provided. As noted above, as a small employer WCOG is not required by the PFML statute to approve a PFML leave request but will consider leave requests on a case-by-case basis.

Coordination with WCOG Paid Leave

Paid leave accruals (vacation, sick leave, floating holidays, or any other accrued leave) may be used to supplement PFML benefits. An employee may elect to use such accrued leave during a PFML covered absence, although the receipt of accrued leave must be reported to ESD as part of the PFML claims process and will result in a pro-rated weekly PFML benefit.

6.0 ADDITIONAL BENEFITS

The below-listed programs are current at the time of adoption of this manual. The extent of coverage is determined annually through the budget process.

This portion of the manual contains general descriptions of the benefits. It is not intended to, and does not, provide you with all the details of these benefits. Therefore, this manual does not change or otherwise interpret the terms of the official plan documents. WCOG refers its employees to the official plan documents for a complete description of the available benefits, as well as any prerequisites, limitations or conditions on the receipt of those benefits.

WCOG reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to amend, modify or terminate, in whole or in part, all or any component of its benefit program.

Regular employees working 20 hours or more and their dependents (spouse, Washington State registered domestic partner, and children) are provided the following coverage: medical, dental, vision. Regular employees working 20 hours or more are provided with the following additional coverage: long-term disability and life insurance.

6.1 MEDICAL

Regular employees working 20 hours or more per week and their eligible dependents are provided medical coverage. The percentage of the premium paid by the employee is determined annually through the budget process and will be identified in the plan information documents.

6.2 DENTAL

Regular employees working 20 hours or more per week and their eligible dependents are provided prepaid dental coverage.

6.3 VISION BENEFITS

Regular employees working 20 hours or more per week and their dependents are provided prepaid vision coverage.

6.4 LONG-TERM DISABILITY INSURANCE

Regular employees working 20 hours or more per week are provided prepaid long-term disability insurance.

6.5 LIFE INSURANCE

Regular employees working 20 hours or more per week are provided group life insurance.

6.6 RETIREMENT

All eligible regular WCOG staff are required to participate in the Washington State Public Employees Retirement System (PERS). The employer and employee's contributions are determined by the Legislature of the State of Washington. Employee contributions are tax deferred.

6.7 SOCIAL SECURITY

The WCOG does not contribute to the Federal Old Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance (Social Security) program for employees that are in a PERS eligible position. Instead, WCOG makes contributions on behalf of these employees to one of the WCOG Deferred Compensation Plans in an amount equal to that which it would be required to contribute to Social Security. WCOG does contribute to Social Security and not to the WCOG Deferred Compensation Plans for all other employees.

6.8 WORKER'S COMPENSATION

All employees and volunteers are covered by the State of Washington's Worker's Compensation Program. This insurance covers employees in the case of an on-the-job injury or job-related illness and is funded by an employee and employer-paid premium. For qualifying cases, the State Industrial Insurance will pay the employee for medical costs and lost compensation when certain criteria are met.

An employee who is receiving time-loss payments under the Worker's Compensation Program may supplement such payments with sick leave to make up his/her full salary. At no time may an employee receive time loss payments combined with sick leave that exceed their regular salary.

6.9 COBRA

Upon termination (for reasons other than the employee's gross misconduct) of employment or reduction of hours of employment, the employee along with their spouse and dependents, are entitled to continuation coverage for a period of eighteen (18) months. If the employee dies, is divorced, becomes eligible for Medicare, or a dependent child ceases to be a dependent child under the plan, the spouse and dependent children are entitled to continuation coverage for thirty-six (36) months. Continuation coverage is at the expense of the employee (or dependent, as applicable).

If an employee is a participant in a plan but waived dependent coverage, the waived spouse and/or children are not entitled to continuation of coverage.

It is the responsibility of the employee to notify the Director of their intent to have continuation of coverage through COBRA. This request must be in writing (printed letter or email) within sixty (60) days of the date of the qualifying event (termination, etc.). Notice, other than written notice, will not be binding until confirmed in writing.

6.10 UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION

Employees may qualify for Washington State Unemployment Compensation after separation from WCOG employment depending on the reason for separation and if certain qualifications are met. For more information on these benefits, contact your local Employment Security office and/or website.

6.11 DEFERRED COMPENSATION

All WCOG employees are eligible to participate in the IRC Section 457(b) deferred compensation program(s).

6.12 BENEFIT BUY-OUT OPTION

Employees have the option of receiving monthly incentive payments for waiving certain benefits for themselves and/or their eligible dependent(s). Typically, only employees and dependents that are covered under another group medical or dental plan may waive their WCOG provided coverage. WCOG’s medical insurance provider makes the determination of eligibility to waive coverage.

The monthly incentive payments are as follows:

Coverage	Monthly Medical	Monthly Dental
Employee	\$200	\$15
Spouse	\$200	\$15
All Children (not each)	\$200	\$15

Employees may cancel the buy-out option and re-enroll on the WCOG group plan(s) during the annual Open Enrollment Period. To rejoin the group plan(s) at any other time, the employee must experience a Qualifying Event and provide proof of loss of coverage within 31 days of that loss. A Qualifying Event is a change in family or employment status.

Examples of family status changes are:

- Marriage/Washington State Domestic Partner Registration; or
- Death; or
- Divorce; or
- A change in a spouse's insurance coverage.

Examples of employment status changes are:

- Termination of employment; or
- A change in a spouse’s employment status that results in a change in insurance coverage.

6.13 HEALTH SAVINGS ACCOUNT OPTION

Employees have the option of receiving monthly incentive contributions to their Health Savings Account (HSA) for selecting a high deductible health plan for themselves and their dependent(s).

The monthly incentive payments are as follows:

Coverage	Monthly Incentive
Employee only coverage	\$150
Family coverage	\$300

Employees may change their health plan choice during the annual Open Enrollment Period.

7.0 EMPLOYEE TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

It is WCOG's policy to: 1) provide employees with the opportunity and environment for professional development; 2) charge the Executive Director with the responsibility for encouraging and assisting employee training and development; and 3) encourage all employees to be responsible for excellent performance in their assignments.

Where budget permits, the Executive Director will seek training opportunities which will improve staff skills and abilities and prepare staff members for career advancement when opportunities arise.

7.1 TYPES OF TRAINING

Training can be obtained through several means including participation in conferences, workshops, institutes, seminars and direct enrollment in courses and classes offered by bona fide educational institutions and training agencies. Staff members are encouraged to engage in training activities during non-working hours, but release time for approved training courses and programs must be authorized by the Executive Director.

7.2 TRAINING CRITERIA

Selection for participation in training sessions and courses will be based upon the following criteria:

- a. Enhancement of the staff member's performance of presently assigned responsibilities or increasing the potential for assignment of greater responsibilities.
- b. Assisting the staff member in removing any educational credential or basic skill deficiencies which impede employment opportunity.
- c. Ability to fund the training within the current program budget.

7.3 ALLOWABLE COSTS

Reimbursement or prepayment by WCOG of costs associated with enrollment in courses and classes at educational and training institutions, workshops, institutes, and conferences may be approved by the Executive Director. The costs of books, manuals and equipment shall be reimbursable if they become the property of the WCOG. Costs may be authorized by the Executive Director only so far as they do not exceed budget limitations.

7.4 COURSE REFUNDS

Any staff member enrolled in a course or class at an educational institution or training agency who does not achieve a passing grade or satisfactorily complete the course will not be reimbursed (or employee must repay if prepaid by WCOG) for tuition, incidental fees or other eligible costs. If a staff member is subject to conditions that are beyond their control, such as illness, accident or other problem which affects the staff member's ability to pass the course, reimbursement for related costs may be authorized by the Executive Director.

8.0 TRAVEL AND PERSONAL EXPENSES

WCOG board members, employees, and others such as members of various WCOG based committees as may be approved by the Executive Director, may be reimbursed, use WCOG employee travel credit cards, advance travel funds, or per diem for necessary expenses incurred in the performance of official business. All board members, employees, or others shall receive approval from the Executive Director before conducting any official business that will incur travel or personal expenses.

8.1 TRAVEL

WCOG board members, employees, and other designees are considered to be in travel status when WCOG business requires attendance at any function away from the WCOG office .

Authorization

The Executive Director must authorize, in advance, any travel and/or attendance at any meetings, conventions or conferences where expenses may be incurred by board members, employees, or other individual(s) designated by the Executive Director.

Means

Board members, employees and other designees traveling at the expense of WCOG shall proceed by the most direct and economical means consistent with the performance of the business of WCOG.

Use of Vehicle

Use of a personal vehicle for business is preferred. Rental cars may be used if approved in advance by the Executive Director or an employee's immediate supervisor.

Vehicle Insurance Compliance

Any board member, staff member, or designee using their personal vehicle in the performance of WCOG business must comply with Washington State laws regarding mandatory automobile insurance.

Reimbursement

The board member, employee, or designee shall be reimbursed for the use of their automobile at the current Washington State approved standard mileage rate.

8.2 MEALS

Meals will be paid for under the following conditions: that they are incurred in carrying out official WCOG business, and that they are authorized in advance by the Executive Director. These two principles are to be used in all cases of meal expense involving board members, employees, designated others, and/or WCOG business guests (speakers, presenters, etc.).

Payment

WCOG employee credit cards may not be used to pay for meals. Board members, employees, or designees will obtain a travel advance or use personal funds to pay for meals based on established per diem rates. The use of per diem is determined on a per meal basis dependent on the departure and arrival time from Bellingham. Departure prior to 7:00 AM qualifies for breakfast per diem, prior to 12:00 PM qualifies for lunch per diem, and return after 7:00 PM qualifies for dinner per diem.

Food provided by the carrier during travel by airlines or rail, and snacks or continental breakfasts provided by hotels or conference sponsors is not considered a meal under this section. Breakfasts, lunches, and dinners provided as part of a conference, seminar, or meeting, however preclude per diem reimbursement or use of advance travel funds for those meals. In some instances, meal costs are included as fixed costs in the price of admission to events, seminars, or other presentations. Under these circumstances, the entire cost of the event will be submitted for reimbursement, but not under the per diem plan.

Per Diem

Per diem meal rates are the lesser of the lowest Washington State or Federal GSA meal rate tiers in effect at the time of travel. These rates are inclusive of tax and gratuity. Receipts are not required when using per diem except as described in section “a” under “Exceptions”.

Exceptions:

- a) If a meal is included as part of a meeting’s agenda and has a fixed price the “working meal” may exceed the above limits. As an exception, this situation shall require a receipt, and an explanation attached to the expense reimbursement form.

- b) Food service provided (e.g. Non-alcoholic beverages, snacks, lunch, dinner, etc.) for speakers and staff attending WCOG events (Annual dinner, WCOG sponsored

workshops, etc.) will be paid for by WCOG to a maximum of \$30.00 per person per event.

8.3 OTHER

Charges for entertainment, alcohol, optional valet service, newspaper and/or magazines are not reimbursable expenses. Parking expenses are reimbursable and only requires documentation if it exceeds \$5.00. Parking tickets, traffic citations or any other fines associated with infractions of the law are not reimbursable.

8.4 REIMBURSEMENT

Personal expense forms must be used for all claims for reimbursement of expenses incurred. Items shall be entered in order of payment with date and nature of expense indicated.

Separate Requests

Under no circumstances may one employee claim expenses incurred by another employee. Each employee must submit separate reimbursement requests on the WCOG expense reimbursement form.

Receipts

Receipts are required for lodging, transportation (other than public transportation), meals that meet the exception (listed under section 8.2), and for meeting fees. Receipts shall be secured for miscellaneous expenses exceeding \$5.00. Miscellaneous expenditures, such as small office supplies, document copies, etc. may be made while traveling and are eligible for reimbursement. Receipts shall be attached and submitted with the expense reimbursement form or WCOG credit card statement. Receipts must list details of purchase. If receipts are lost an employee must complete and submit an unavailable receipt form with the personal claim or credit card statement.

Authorization Signature

The signature of the Executive Director or a WCOG Board Officer on a submitted personal expense form acknowledges the official nature of the expense and constitutes specific authorization for the incurred expense(s).

8.5 LODGING

Reimbursement for lodging on authorized trips outside of Whatcom County shall be made only for the amount of actual expenses incurred during the performance of official duty as a WCOG board member, employee, or designee for the WCOG's benefit.

Lodging Reimbursement

Lodging reimbursement rates are based on the current GSA Domestic Per Diem Rate Tables for domestic travel or the U.S. Department of State Foreign Per Diem Rate Tables for international travel.

Charges more than established rates must be pre-approved by the Executive Director. A receipt is required for all lodging reimbursement requests. WCOG credit cards may be used for lodging. Receipts will be reconciled to the WCOG travel credit card statement.

Exceptions:

- a) Lodging for board members or employees may be authorized within Whatcom County with approval of the Executive Director.
- b) Lodging for speakers from outside the Whatcom County area at WCOG events may be authorized with the prior approval of the Executive Director.

9.0 CONCERN RESOLUTION AND DISCIPLINE PROCEDURES

9.1 CONCERN RESOLUTION PROCEDURES

WCOG encourages employees to share their work-related concerns, suggestions, or problems directly with their supervisor or the Executive Director (verbally or in writing) before they escalate to a more serious situation.

Employees who feel that their situation has not been sufficiently addressed by their supervisor are encouraged to discuss and/or submit their concerns or suggestions in writing to the Executive Director.

9.2 DISCIPLINE GUIDELINES

WCOG adheres to the at-will doctrine of employment, meaning that either WCOG or the employee may end the parties' employment relationship at any time, with or without cause or notice. Subject to that limitation, WCOG may elect to use the following methods to address performance and disciplinary issues depending on its assessments of the relevant circumstances.

1. **Verbal Warning.** A verbal warning is a counseling session about an employee's conduct, performance, or their failure to observe a guideline, policy, regulation, or instruction. During this session, the supervisor will discuss WCOG expectations and the changes required by the employee. Following the counseling session, the manager/supervisor will document the discussion and share it with the employee.
2. **Written Warning.** A written warning is a formal written disciplinary action for inadequate performance, misconduct, or violations of WCOG policy. Written reprimands will typically be documented on a Corrective Action Form and discussed with the employee. Corrective Action Forms become part of the employee's personnel file.
3. **Suspension/Last Warning.** A suspension is a temporary, unpaid absence from work, which may be imposed as a penalty for inadequate performance, misconduct, or violations of WCOG policy. A last warning disciplinary action may be given when the employee is being disciplined at this level but WCOG is not requiring unpaid leave. Suspension/Last Warning reprimands will typically be documented on a Corrective Action Form and discussed with the employee. Suspensions / Last Warning actions become part of the employee's personnel file.

4. **Termination.** This is the most severe form of disciplinary action which ends the employment relationship. A termination is typically documented on a “Corrective Action Form” form and discussed with the employee.

Again, the level of disciplinary action will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. WCOG recognizes the benefit, in some cases, of using progressive discipline, but is not required or obligated to use progressive discipline before imposing a particular type of disciplinary action, including termination. Nothing in this policy alters the at-will employment relationship or constitutes a promise of specific treatment in specific circumstances.