



**NORTHWEST
WORKFORCE
COUNCIL**

2024 - 2028

REGIONAL WORKFORCE PLAN

Prepared by:

Northwest Workforce Council
Workforce Development Area #3

The Northwest Workforce Council serves Island,
San Juan, Skagit, and Whatcom Counties.



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Section 1. Regional Designation

Workforce Development Area Name and Number:

Northwest Workforce Development Area III

Fiscal Agent / Entity Responsible for disbursement of grant funds:

Northwest Workforce Council, Fiscal Agent

Counties Comprising Service Delivery Area:

Whatcom, Skagit, Island and San Juan Counties of Washington State

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Section 2. Regional Components

Regional Analysis of Economic Conditions

Overview

Island, San Juan, Skagit, and Whatcom Counties form the Northwest Workforce Development Area (WDA) of Washington State's workforce development system. The four counties are located in the northwest corner of Washington, with British Columbia, Canada to the north, Snohomish County to the south, Okanogan and Chelan Counties to the west, and the Salish Sea to the east. The total area is 5,562 square miles, with hundreds of miles of shoreline in all four counties. More than half of the land in Whatcom and Skagit Counties are federally managed lands and parks in the North Cascade Mountain range and all four counties have extensive city, county, and state parks and green spaces. This is in part due to a unique geological feature: Northwest Washington is one of the few places in the continental United States where the mountains meet the sea, creating myriad opportunities for tourism and recreation.

In 2024, the Northwest WDA had an estimated total population of 479,446. An estimated 372,006 people, or 77.5% of the total population, are located within Whatcom and Skagit counties in small to medium sized cities clustered around the I-5 corridor. The largest city in the four counties is the City of Bellingham, located in Whatcom County, with just under an estimated 96,000 people (WA ESD 2024; WA OFM 2024).

The I-5 corridor links Whatcom and Skagit to two major metropolitan areas: Lower British Columbia, Canada (Vancouver and Surrey) and Seattle, Washington. This impacts the region's economy greatly, encouraging international trade and commerce, creating additional tax revenue from Canadian visitors and consumers, and providing additional job opportunities for residents who choose to commute or participate in hybrid and remote work options.

Northwest Washington is home to Western Washington University, a nationally recognized four-year university, as well as two community colleges (Whatcom Community College and Skagit Valley College), a Tribal college (Northwest Indian College), and a technical college (Bellingham Technical College). There are also 21 K-12 school districts with a total enrollment of nearly 60,000 students in 2023-2024 (OSPI 2024).

From the time Washington was admitted into the Union in 1889 until the late 1970s, Northwest Washington's economy was focused around natural resource extraction, particularly logging and fishing. Fishing and marine trades continue to be vitally important to the region, both economically and culturally, however, the region's economy has significantly diversified over the past 40 years.

The region is currently home to Naval Air Station Whidbey Island (NASWI), four oil refineries, several hospitals, a large construction sector, multiple thriving creative economies with state-designated Creative Districts in Anacortes and Langley, as well as notable retail and hospitality sectors. Whatcom, Skagit, and Island Counties have strong agricultural bases with hundreds of active small to medium

sized farms. All four counties have growing value-added food manufacturing sectors that includes craft beer, spirits, cheese, baked goods, and fermented goods, which adds to the quality of life and has created more opportunities for food processing and agritourism. In addition to food and energy manufacturing, the manufacturing sector also includes aerospace providers, marine trades, and a large variety of other niche manufacturers. This has led to a relatively well-rounded economic base. Of the sectors in the Northwest, manufacturing contributed the largest portion of GDP in 2022 at \$7.15 billion. The next-largest contributions came from real estate and rental and leasing (\$2.96 billion), healthcare and social assistance (\$2.37 billion), and retail (\$1.92 billion) (JobsEQ 2024).

The remainder of this section proceeds as follows: the next section provides a summary of the WDA’s Workforce Demographics, then a workforce analysis providing a summary data-driven examination on current labor force employment, unemployment rates, labor market trends, and the educational and skill levels of the region’s workforce. Then, a section that highlights In-Demand Sectors and Occupations and current and future employment needs, as well as Skills and Knowledge needed. The final section analyzes existing workforce development activities in the region and identifies Strengths and Weakness of Services, which was informed by stakeholder surveys and two virtual Community Forums held in February 2024.

Workforce Demographics

Northwest Washington’s population is growing. The 2024 estimated population is 479,446 people, which means that the four counties combined have grown approximately 3.33% since 2020. According to **Figure 1**, the four counties will reach a population of over half a million residents by 2028, approximately half of whom will be located in Whatcom County.

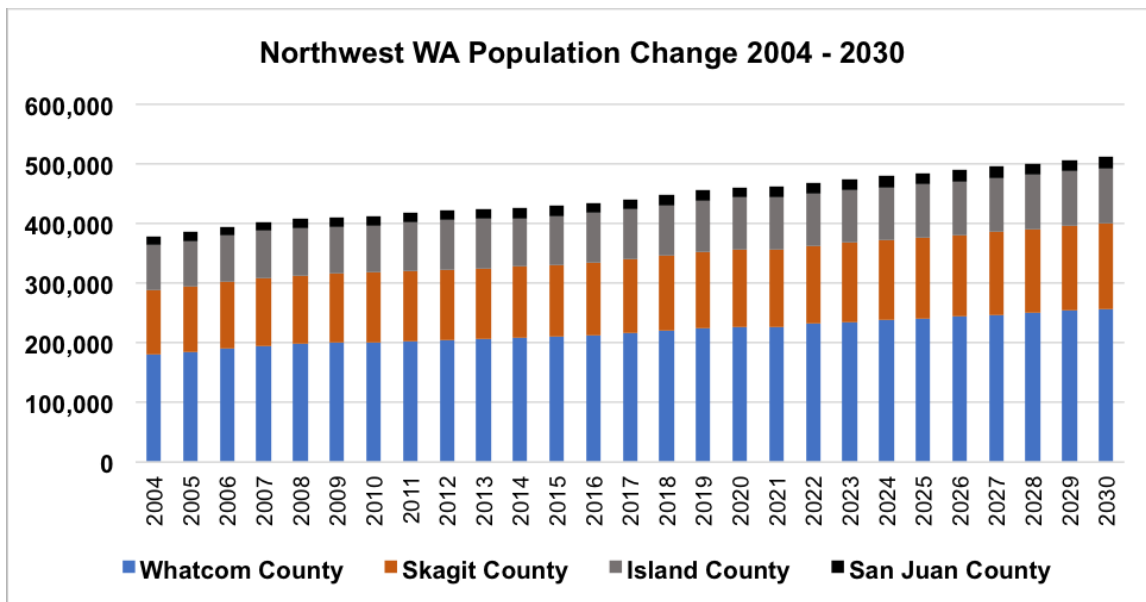


Figure 1: This figure shows population growth over time in Whatcom (blue), Skagit (light blue), Island (grey), and San Juan Counties (yellow). The data is the actual count from 2004-2020, projected from 2021-2022, and estimated for 2023-2030. Data source: WA OFM (2024).

Population growth in the Northwest WDA is driven primarily from in-migration. As **Figure 2** shows, the rate of natural increase (when births exceed deaths) has been flat since 1981, and around 2015, actually started declining. For the first time, in 2021, it is estimated that deaths exceeded births.

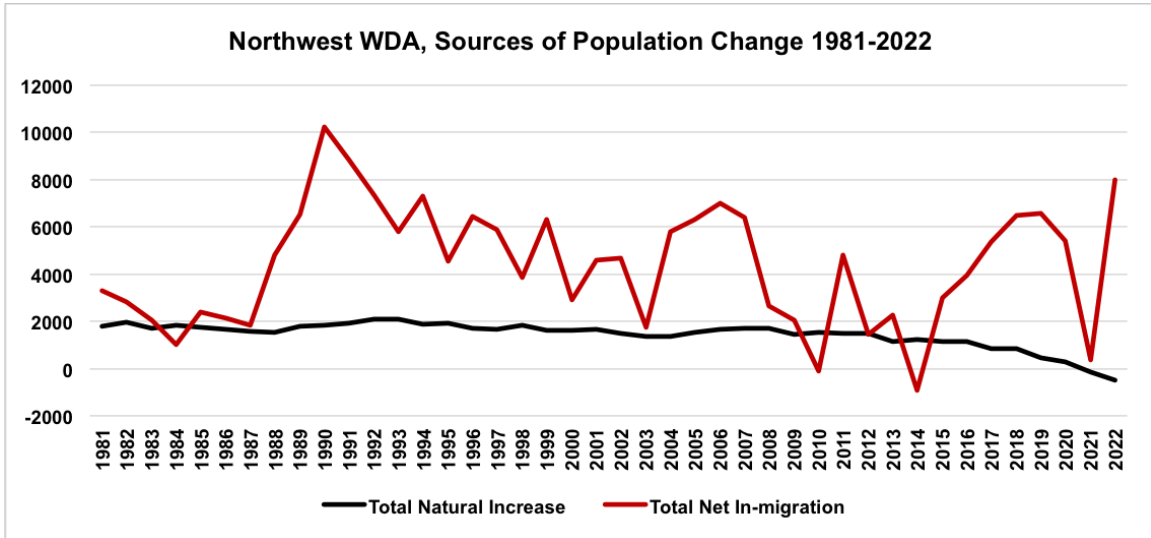


Figure 2: This figures shows the sources of Population Change in the Northwest Workforce Development Area between 1981-2022. Births and deaths are combined to create Total Natural Increase, which is the black line. The red line represents in-migration, which has exceeded the natural increase in population every year but three of the last 41. Data source: WA OFM (2024).

People migrate to Northwest Washington for many reasons: lifestyle, to be with family, to complete tours of duty at NASWI, for work and businesses, as a result of disasters, conflict and more. In the context of economic and workforce development, in-migration is harder to plan for their natural local population increases. As the red line shows, in-migration can be sporadic and hard to predict. What ages will incoming residents be? What kinds of skills and education will those populations have? Will they be available to participate in the local workforce? Will they have certifications that allow them to dive into the Washington State workforce? Will many choose to be remote workers? And maybe most importantly, where will they live?

In-migration is also increasing racial and ethnic diversity in Northwest Washington. **Figure 3** is a table that shows the breakdown of the populations by race and location as a percentage in 2010. In 2010 over 75% of all three counties identified as “white alone.” 90.4% of San County, 83.2% of Island County, 82.1% of Whatcom, and 76.9% of Skagit County identified as white alone in 2010.

	US	WA	Whatcom	Skagit	Island	San Juan
White alone	63.9%	72.7%	82.1%	76.9%	83.2%	90.4%
Black or African American alone	12.3%	3.4%	.9%	.6%	2.1%	.3%
American Indian or Alaska Native alone	.7%	1.3%	2.5%	1.7%	.7%	.5%
Asian alone	4.7%	7.1%	3.5%	1.7%	4.3%	1.2%

Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander alone	.2%	.6%	.2%	.2%	.5%	.1%
Two or more races	1.8%	3.6%	2.9%	2%	3.7%	2%
Hispanic or Latino	16.3%	11.2%	7.8%	16.9%	5.5%	5.4%

Figure 3: This table shows the distribution of population by race, comparing the US, Washington State, and the four Northwest WDA Counties in 2010. Data Sources: US Census Bureau (2024), OFM (2024).

According to the 2020 Census update, all four counties have become less white. As shown in **Figure 4** below, as of 2021 Skagit County 71.2% identified “white alone,” which is a decrease of 5.7% in ten years. Similarly, 75.1% of Whatcom (decreased 7%), 75.7% of Island (decreased 7.5%), and 84.6% of San Juan County (decreased 5.8%) identified as white alone. In Skagit County, 19% of the population identified as Hispanic or Latino, as does 10.6% of Whatcom County, 8.7% of Island County, and 7.7% of San Juan County.

The four counties only exceed the state percentage on three metrics. Skagit has a higher percentage of Hispanic or Latino population than Washington State (19% versus 14%). Whatcom County has a larger American Indian or Alaska Native population (2.4% versus 1.2%). Finally, Island County has a larger percentage of residents who identify as being two or more races (7.1% versus 6.6%).

	US	WA	Whatcom	Skagit	Island	San Juan
White alone	NA	63.7 %	75.1%	71.2%	75.7%	84.6%
Black or African American alone	NA	3.9%	1%	.6%	2.7%	.3%
American Indian or Alaska Native alone	NA	1.2%	2.4%	1.6%	.6%	.5%
Asian alone	NA	9.6%	4.5%	2.2%	4.7%	1.3%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander alone	NA	.8%	.3%	.3%	.5%	.1%
Two or more races	NA	6.6%	6.1%	5.1%	7.1%	5.4%
Hispanic or Latino	NA	14%	10.6%	19%	8.7%	7.7%

Figure 4: This table shows the distribution of population by race, comparing the US, Washington State, the four Northwest WDA Counties in 2021. Data Sources: US Census Bureau (2024), OFM (2024).

These demographic nuances are reflected in the Northwest WDA workforce system and its partner agencies. For example, the Lummi Nation has its own Workforce division. Skagit and Whatcom Counties also have myriad new services for Spanish speaking businesses, entrepreneurs, and workers via Economic Development Alliance Skagit County (EDASC), the Center for Inclusive Entrepreneurship (CIE), the Mount Vernon Chamber, and Western Washington University’s Small Business Development Center (WWU SBDC).

Age group	Northwest WDA population 2010	% of the population in 2010	Northwest WDA population 2025	% of the population in 2025
Pre-School (0 to 4)	24,015	5.8%	26,873	5.5%
School Age (5 to 19)	78,031	18.9%	86,250	17.7%
Young Adult (20 to 29)	59,476	14.4%	61,191	12.5%
Mid Adult (30 to 49)	99,429	24.1%	114,978	23.5%
Older Adult (50 to 59)	59,741	14.5%	51,810	10.6%
Older Adult (60 to 69)	49,120	11.9%	63,941	13.9%
Retirement Age Adult (70+)	42,504	10.3%	83,596	17.1%

Figure 5: This table shows the distribution of population by age group in the Northwest WDA in 2010 versus 2025. 2010 numbers are actual counts, whereas 2025 is an estimate. Data Sources: US Census Bureau (2024), OFM (2024).

The population of the Northwest WDA is aging. **Figure 5** shows the population counts and percentages by age groups in 2010 and 2025. Between 2010 and 2025, the percentage of pre-school age children (0-4), school age children (5 to 19), and young adults (20 to 29), mid adults (30 to 49), and older adults (50-59) all decreased, while the percentage of older adults (6-69) and retirement age adults (70+) increased significantly (Census Bureau 2024; OFM 2024).

This demographic shift creates challenges and opportunities for economic and workforce development over the next 20 years. Retirees have skills, knowledge, and expertise, making them ideal mentors and teachers. Some may also be interested and able to engage in part-time work or work share programs. The aging population will also create pressures and demand on the healthcare sector as more people require assisted living services, long-term care, physical and occupational therapy, and other forms of geriatric and eldercare.

The Northwest WDA workforce is highly educated. In all four counties over 90% of the population 25 and over graduated from high school (or the equivalent). Island and San Juan Counties are over 95%. Notably, 52.6% of San Juan County's population has a Bachelor's Degree or higher, which far exceeds the national rate of 38% (Census Bureau 2024). **Figure 6** below shows the breakdown by county.

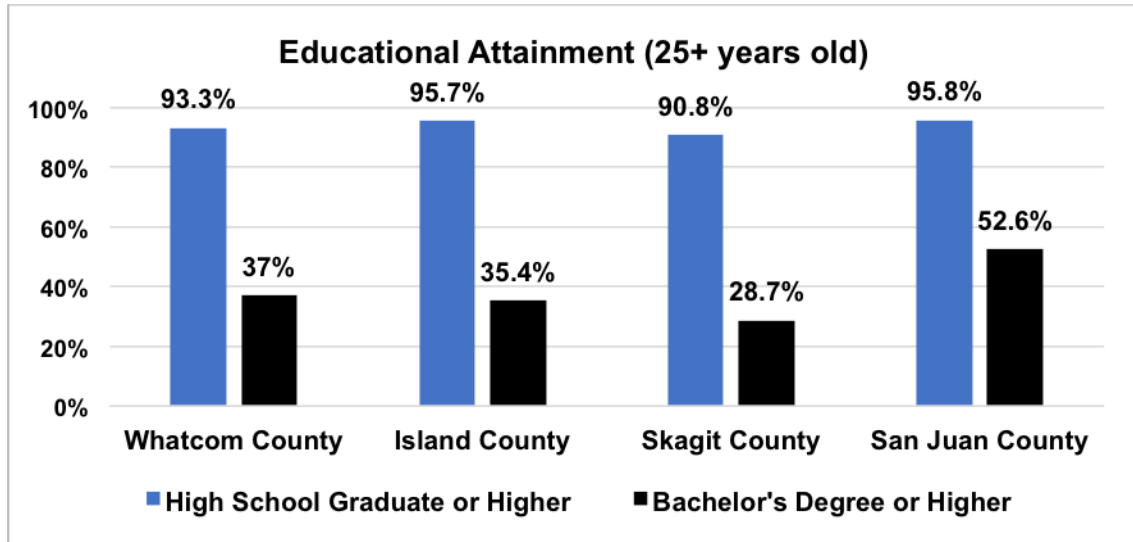


Figure 6: This figure shows the educational attainment rates for the four Northwest WDA counties. The dark blue bar indicates the percent of high school graduates (or equivalent). The light blue bar indicates the percent of the population with a Bachelor's degree or higher. Data source: US Census Bureau (2024).

In addition to being highly educated, the Northwest WDA also has an estimated 35,546 veterans. As a percentage of the population, Whatcom County has the lowest percentage of veterans at 5.6%. Skagit and San Juan County's stand at 7.9% and 7.1% veterans, which is higher than the national average of 6% ([Pew Research Center 2023](#)). Island County has nearly double the national average with a veteran population of 12.6%.

This is likely due to the presence of NASWI, which is the largest employer in Island County. NASWI currently employs approximately 10,800 workers, of which 8,700 are considered active duty military and 2,100 are either civilians or federal contractors (EDC for Island County 2023). NASWI is the only naval aviation support installation in the Pacific Northwest and provides facilities, services, and products to the naval aviation community and all organizations using the air station. The NASWI installation is located in North Whidbey and is approximately 8,030 acres. According to the [NASWI Economic Impact Assessment \(2018\)](#), which is the most recent economic assessment of the base, the installation's contribution to the regional economy in 2017 alone totaled \$1.04 billion.

Workforce Analysis

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began in March 2020, labor force participation rates in the United States are close to recovery, but not entirely. According to the St. Louis Federal Reserve Economic Data ([FRED](#)) (2024), in February 2020, the national labor participation rate for men was 69% and in April 2020 it dipped to a low of 66%. As of January 2024, the participation rate for men has returned to 67.9%. It is important to note that the labor participation rate for men has been falling nationally since approximately 1950, after reaching an all-time high of 87.4% in October 1949.

While men's labor participation rates have been on the decline, women's labor participation rates in the United States have been steadily increasing. In February 2020, 58% of eligible women were participating in the labor market. This dropped to 54.6% women in April 2020, which was the lowest

rate since October 1985. As of January 2024, the rate has nearly returned to pre-COVID levels at 57.5% ([FRED 2024](#)).

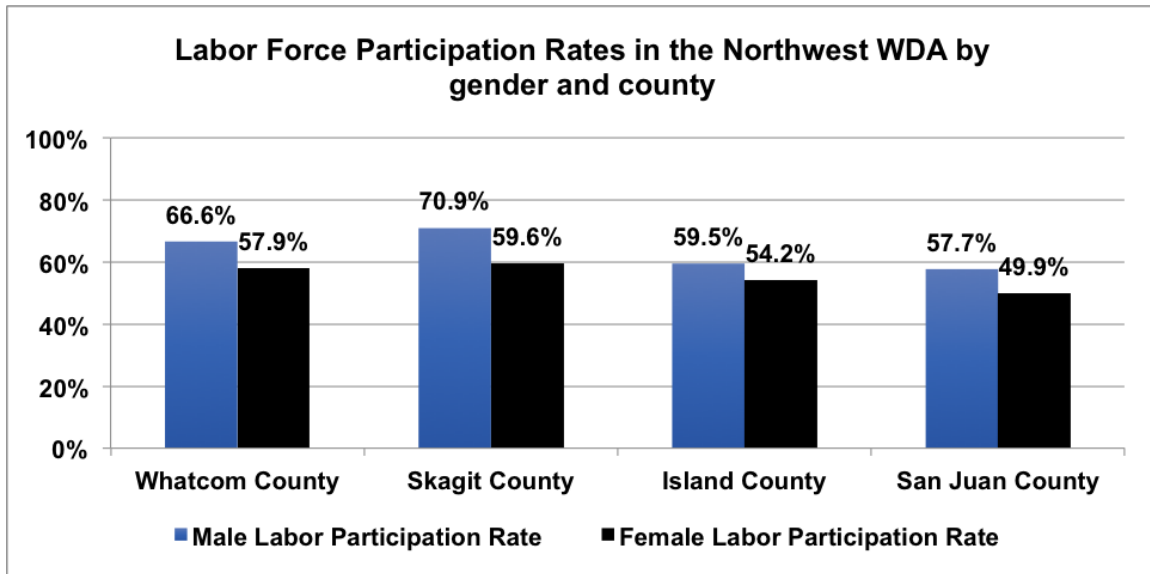


Figure 7: Labor Force Participation Rates in the Northwest WDA counties in 2019, which was the last time county-level data was available for this metric. Data Sources: WA ESD (2024); ACS (2019).

Unfortunately, county-level data on labor force participation rates have not been updated since COVID-19. ESD (2024) data tables for all four counties continue to reference Census and ACS data prior to 2019. As **Figure 7** shows, in 2019, Skagit County had the highest labor participation rates with 70.9% active in the labor force and 59.6% of women. San Juan County had the lowest rates, with 57.7% of men and 49.9% of women. Given that COVID-19 negatively impacted labor force participation rates for both genders, as well as continual reports of labor shortages by businesses operating within the Northwest WDA, it is possible that these rates, even if mostly recovered, have declined since 2019.

Unemployment was also deeply impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in closures for at least a period of time. Among the four Northwest counties, all four counties unemployment rates sat at below 5% in February 2020, with San Juan County at the lowest with 4.3% unemployment. By April 2020, unemployment temporarily skyrocketed in all four counties, from a low of 15.2% in Island County to a high of 19% in Skagit County. These dramatic numbers stabilized within a year and actually continued to decline to an all-time low point in summer 2023, with Whatcom, Skagit, and Island counties hovering between 3-3.3% unemployment and San Juan County at a dramatic low of 2.3% in June 2023 (ESD 2024).

As of December 2023, unemployment numbers are very close to pre-COVID-19 levels, with all four counties slightly increased to 4-5.6% unemployment (WA ESD 2024). **Figure 8** shows the data points for all four counties in February 2020, April 2020, December 2023, as well as the lowest rate over the past five years.

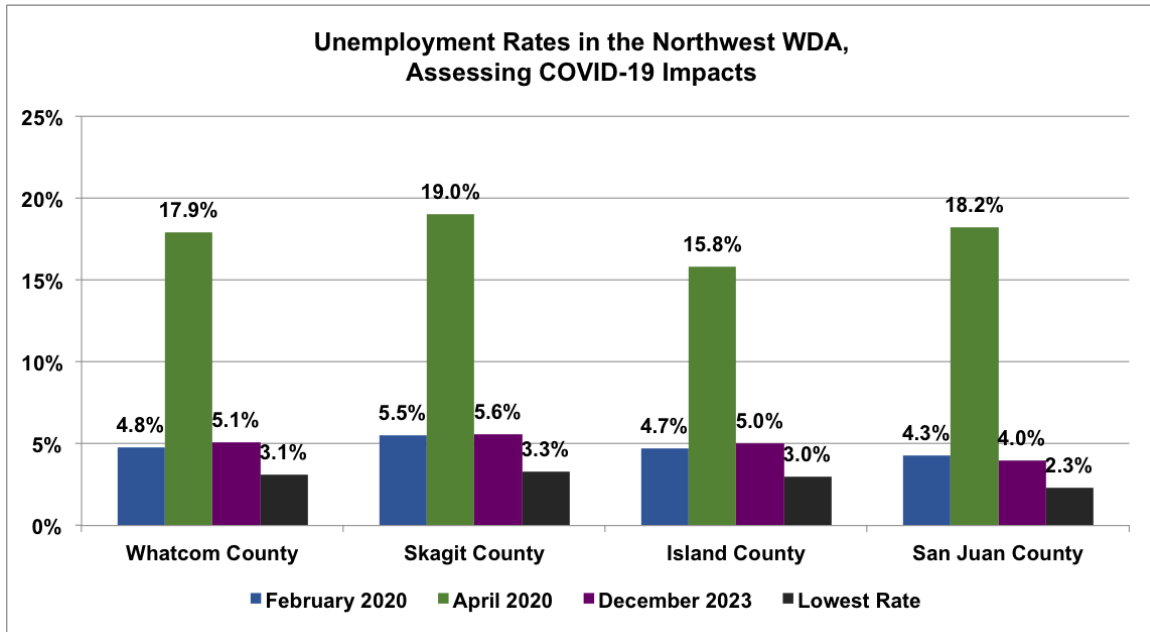


Figure 8: Unemployment rates in the Northwest WDA before, during, and since the COVID-19 closures. Data source: WA ESD (2024).

Figure 9 shows a breakdown of where employment is distributed in the Northwest WDA economy by sector (NAICS code) and gender. The healthcare and social assistance sector is the largest employment sector in Northwest Washington, with 23,353 jobs (ESD 2024; BLS 2024). The next largest employment sectors are retail (17,075 jobs), manufacturing (16,210 jobs), education services (15,069), accommodation and food services (14,117 jobs) and construction (13,203 jobs) in 2021 Q3. JobsEQ (2024) data, discussed in the following section covering In-Demand Sectors, confirms this trend has continued through 2023 Q1.

Employment by sector continues to be gendered in Northwest Washington. Women make up 57.6% of accommodation and food service workers, 77.6% of healthcare and social assistance workers, and 69.7% of education service workers. Manufacturing and construction sectors continue to predominately employ male workers. Manufacturing is comprised of 71% male workers and construction is 82% male workers. These facts will be reflected in regional service strategies detailed in the following section.

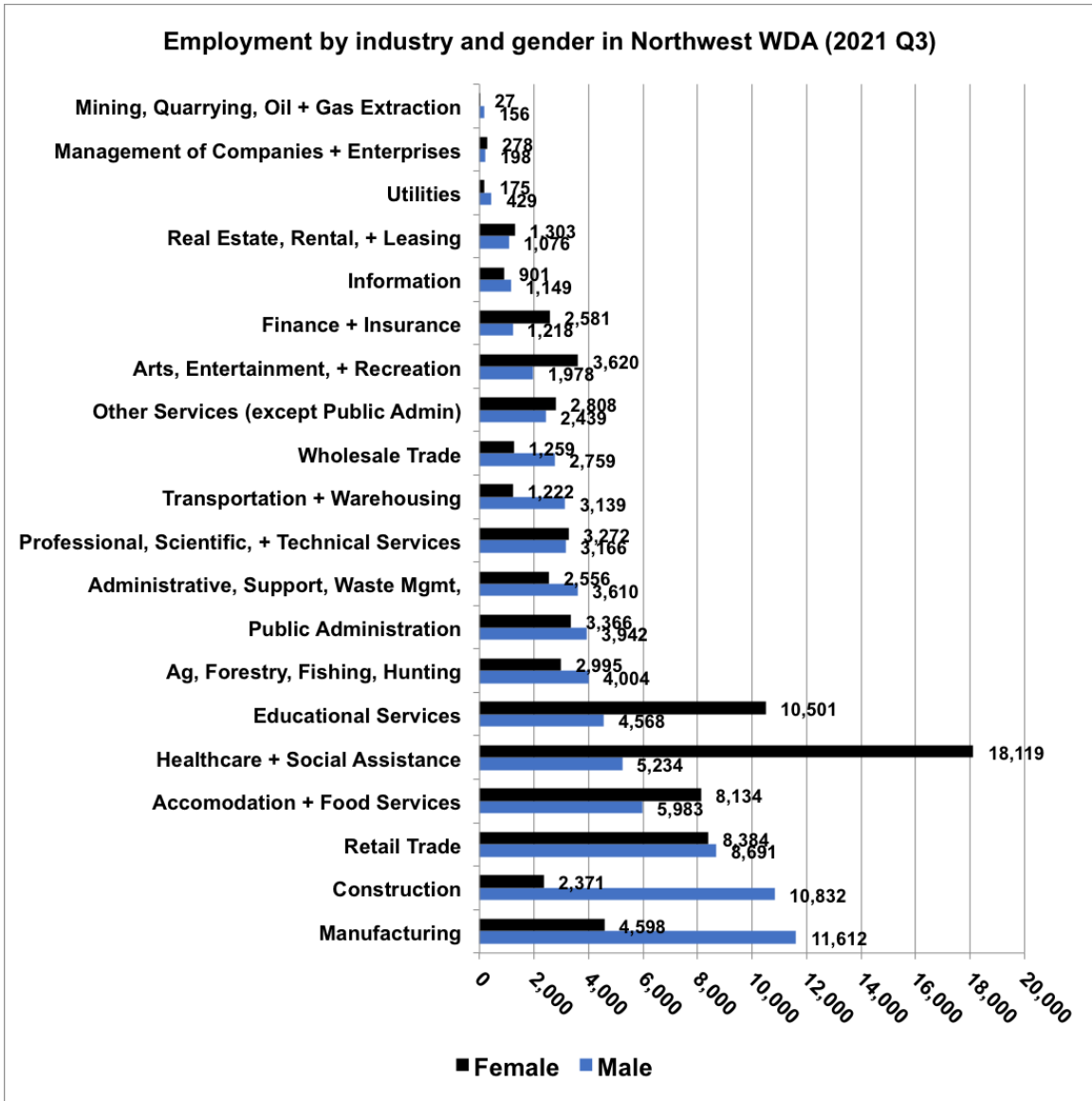


Figure 9: This bar graph shows the distribution of employment in the four Northwest counties by sector (NAICS code) and gender. Jobs held by people coded as male are shown in light blue. Jobs held by people coded as female are shown in black. The most recent data available is from ESD and the BLS is from Q3 2021 (ESD 2024; BLS 2024).

In-Demand Sectors and Occupations

This section provides a summary of existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations, and current and future employment needs. **Figure 10** below provides an updated employment count as of 2023 Q3 by sector. According to JobsEQ (2024), health and allied services, retail trade, accommodation and food services, manufacturing and construction are the top five employment sectors in the Northwest WDA.

Top Sectors by Employment Count: Northwest Workforce Development Area, 2023Q3

NAICS	Industry	Current			5-Year History		1-Year Forecast				
		Empl	Avg Ann Wages	LQ	Empl Change	Ann %	Total Demand	Exits	Transfers	Empl Growth	Ann % Growth
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	25,589	\$62,497	0.95	2,063	1.7%	2,878	1,210	1,302	366	1.4%
44	Retail Trade	21,882	\$41,780	1.19	-423	-0.4%	3,034	1,334	1,671	30	0.1%
72	Accommodation and Food Services	16,835	\$28,133	1.05	-142	-0.2%	3,086	1,342	1,636	108	0.6%
31	Manufacturing	16,282	\$74,958	1.10	-1,493	-1.7%	1,709	658	986	66	0.4%
23	Construction	16,198	\$74,994	1.47	1,213	1.6%	1,502	569	833	100	0.6%
61	Educational Services	15,926	\$61,423	1.09	-34	0.0%	1,642	737	765	139	0.9%
92	Public Administration	9,974	\$82,228	1.18	729	1.5%	976	406	514	57	0.6%
54	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	9,938	\$83,194	0.73	2,255	5.3%	933	329	483	120	1.2%
81	Other Services (except Public Administration)	9,101	\$40,049	1.16	312	0.7%	1,112	455	586	70	0.8%
11	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	8,358	\$43,915	3.57	-213	-0.5%	1,043	486	513	44	0.5%

Figure 10: This table shows the top sectors by employment count for the Northwest WDA. Data source: JobsEQ (2024).

While those five sectors have the highest employment counts, unfortunately many of the occupations in retail and accommodation services are not high paying jobs. **Figure 11** below shows the Top 20 occupations by average annual wage in the Northwest WDA.

Top 20 Occupations by Average Annual Wage: Northwest Workforce Development Area, 2023Q3

SOC	Occupation	Mean	Percentiles						
			Entry Level	Experienced	10%	25%	50% (Median)	75%	90%
29-1240	Surgeons	\$287,300	\$85,100	\$388,400	\$82,000	\$96,500	\$133,000	\$266,400	\$352,700
29-1210	Physicians	\$284,700	\$106,800	\$373,700	\$80,600	\$145,800	\$246,600	\$314,200	\$388,300
11-1010	Chief Executives	\$258,500	\$131,000	\$322,300	\$116,500	\$160,700	\$220,100	\$311,300	\$403,100
29-1020	Dentists	\$226,000	\$114,100	\$281,900	\$101,500	\$141,000	\$202,600	\$265,800	\$325,400
29-1150	Nurse Anesthetists	\$225,600	\$194,300	\$241,200	\$183,000	\$212,200	\$219,000	\$239,400	\$293,800
53-2010	Aircraft Pilots and Flight Engineers	\$209,900	\$84,800	\$272,400	\$70,700	\$108,400	\$175,700	\$264,700	\$358,200

Top 20 Occupations by Average Annual Wage: Northwest Workforce Development Area, 2023Q3

SOC	Occupation	Mean	Entry		Percentiles				
			Level	Experienced	10%	25%	50% (Median)	75%	90%
29-1080	Podiatrists	\$198,300	\$118,600	\$238,200	\$104,900	\$146,000	\$189,800	\$228,600	\$279,000
11-9040	Architectural and Engineering Managers	\$168,300	\$133,700	\$185,600	\$131,900	\$141,200	\$165,900	\$177,600	\$219,200
15-1220	Computer and Information Research Scientists	\$163,800	\$92,500	\$199,500	\$79,100	\$117,400	\$163,700	\$199,900	\$249,900
11-3020	Computer and Information Systems Managers	\$159,100	\$112,000	\$182,700	\$107,400	\$123,200	\$146,200	\$186,700	\$231,700
11-2020	Marketing and Sales Managers	\$152,100	\$83,800	\$186,300	\$74,600	\$102,000	\$141,600	\$189,300	\$236,100
11-3030	Financial Managers	\$151,500	\$97,600	\$178,400	\$91,600	\$112,200	\$142,800	\$175,600	\$214,800
17-2170	Petroleum Engineers	\$149,400	\$92,500	\$177,900	\$84,700	\$109,500	\$140,300	\$176,500	\$225,500
11-3110	Compensation and Benefits Managers	\$148,900	\$98,300	\$174,200	\$91,900	\$113,800	\$145,200	\$188,400	\$206,700
11-9120	Natural Sciences Managers	\$146,400	\$99,700	\$169,700	\$91,900	\$115,200	\$136,900	\$172,900	\$210,100
29-1070	Physician Assistants	\$146,300	\$120,900	\$159,000	\$116,100	\$129,900	\$140,700	\$168,300	\$175,800
11-3060	Purchasing Managers	\$144,400	\$109,400	\$161,800	\$102,400	\$121,700	\$132,600	\$158,500	\$197,700
29-1050	Pharmacists	\$143,800	\$119,800	\$155,700	\$107,900	\$138,300	\$144,600	\$163,900	\$168,200
11-3120	Human Resources Managers	\$143,300	\$97,500	\$166,200	\$92,000	\$110,000	\$133,500	\$160,300	\$191,700
29-1160	Nurse Midwives	\$137,500	\$115,800	\$148,300	\$111,500	\$124,500	\$136,600	\$163,800	\$169,000

Figure 11: This table shows the top 20 highest paying occupations in the Northwest WDA, then a breakdown of average annual wages by percentile. Data source: JobsEQ (2024).

Healthcare

With 25,299 jobs as of 2023 Q1, the healthcare and social assistance sector is, by far, the largest employment sector in the Northwest WDA, accounting for 13.8% of all employment in the region (JobsEQ 2024). Of those 25,299 jobs, 13,296 are in Whatcom County, 8,554 are in Skagit County, 3,029 are in Island County and 420 are in San Juan County.

Figure 12 below shows healthcare sector employment growth 2002 – 2023. Interestingly, unlike the manufacturing and construction sector, the healthcare sector experienced almost no employment impacts or downturns during national recessions.

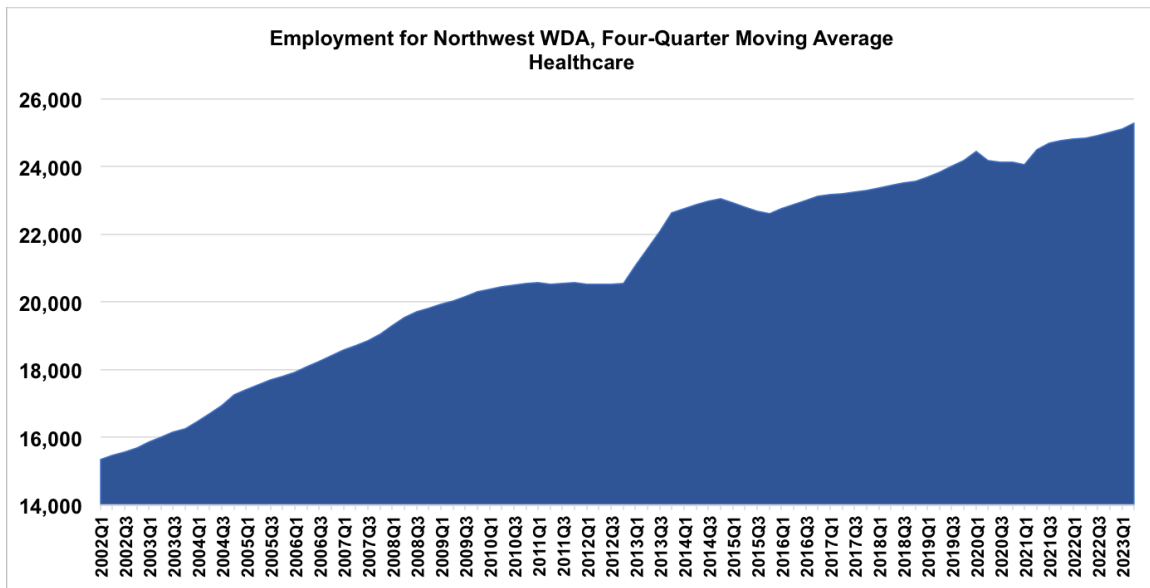


Figure 12: This figure shows employment growth from 2002 Q1 – 2023 Q1, using a four quarter moving average, for the healthcare sector in the Northwest WDA. Data Source: JobsEQ (2024).

In addition to a large aging population, as outlined in the Workforce Demographics section above, stakeholders throughout the Northwest WDA report the urgent need for expanded mental health and substance abuse recovery services. The population of people with disabilities in Washington State is also growing. According to the [CDC \(2021\)](#), 1.48 million or 1 in every 4 Washington State resident has a disability. This may generate additional demand for expanded healthcare services for some people with disabilities. Additionally, workers with disabilities seek employment and training services provided by the Council, WorkSource system programs, and, specifically, vocational rehabilitation. Employers and organizations that serve workers and job seekers also indicated in their survey responses that mental health and substance use recovery resources were critically needed supports for workforce generally. Combined, these trends indicate that there is good reason to believe that the healthcare and social assistance sector will continue to grow over the next five years.

The average annual wage in the healthcare sector has grown from \$27,366 in 2002 to \$61,111 in 2023 Q1 (JobsEQ 2024). **Figure 13** below shows healthcare sector annual average wage growth 2002 – 2023.

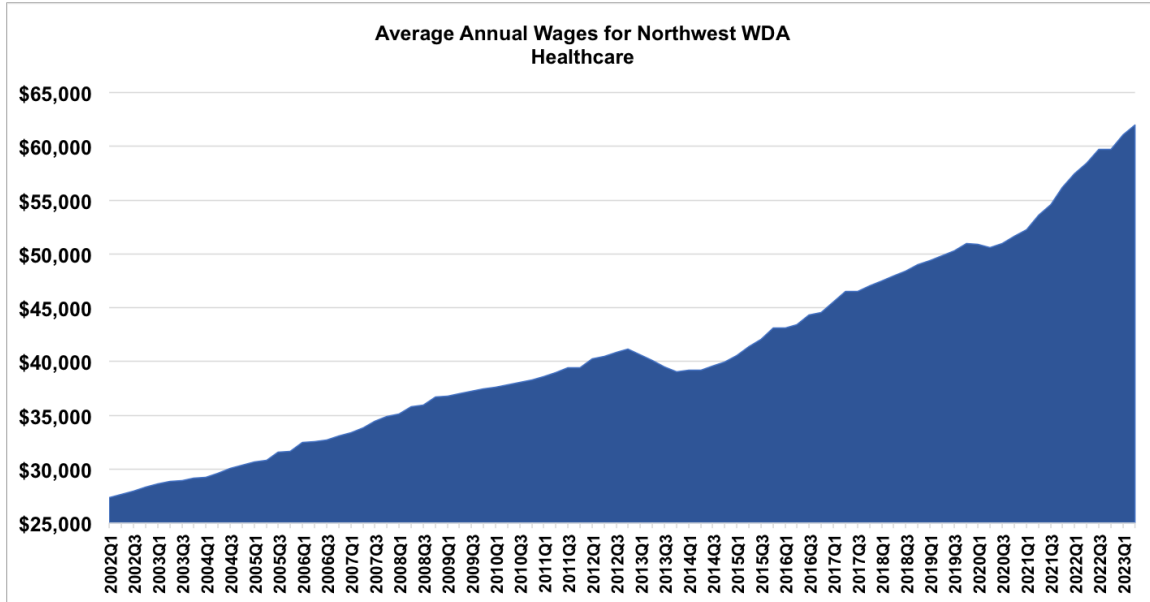


Figure 13: This graphic shows the average annual wages in the healthcare sector for the Northwest WDA between 2002 – 2023 Q1. Data Source: JobsEQ (2024).

While wage growth is consistent and there is a clear career path and wage ladder in healthcare, it should be noted that average annual wages within the sector continue to have a wide range. This means that there is a constant high demand for lower-paid positions such as personal care aides, home health aides, and certified nursing assistances. Additional breakdown by occupation is shown in **Figure 14**.

6-digit Occupation	Employed	Avg Annual Wages	Annual Demand
Personal Care Aides	2,842	\$38,000	509
Registered Nurses	2,781	\$99,700	189
Nursing Assistants	1,331	\$42,900	218
Home Health Aides	1,007	\$38,000	151
Medical Assistants	850	\$48,700	140
Receptionists and Information Clerks	661	\$41,900	101
Dental Assistants	571	\$50,200	92
Substance Abuse, Behavioral Disorder, and Mental Health Counselors	536	\$58,800	70
Medical Secretaries and Administrative Assistants	482	\$49,100	63
Office Clerks, General	393	\$46,700	51
Remaining Component Occupations	13,819	\$82,500	1,530
Total	25,273		

Figure 14: This table shows the distribution of jobs by occupation in the healthcare and social assistance sector. It is organized by the occupations with the largest number of people employed. Data Source: JobsEQ (2024).

The region's workforce system is well positioned to continue to support growth in the healthcare sector. **Figure 15** lists the multiple local post-secondary degree and certification programs linked to

healthcare in the Northwest region. While not identified by the JobsEQ (2024) data in the list below, BTC also offers programs and training for surgical and radiology technicians.

Program	Awards
Bellingham Technical College	
Emergency Care Attendant (EMT Ambulance)	30
Nursing Assistant/Aide and Patient Care Assistant/Aide	36
Registered Nursing/Registered Nurse	49
Skagit Valley College	
Emergency Care Attendant (EMT Ambulance)	65
Medical/Clinical Assistant	39
Nursing Assistant/Aide and Patient Care Assistant/Aide	59
Registered Nursing/Registered Nurse	73
Western Washington University	
Human Services, General	95
Whatcom Community College	
Medical/Clinical Assistant	38
Nursing Assistant/Aide and Patient Care Assistant/Aide	42

Figure 15: Post-secondary programs linked to healthcare and social assistance within the Northwest WDA. Data source: JobsEQ (2024).

Construction

Construction is also a high-demand, high-wage, industry with many career ladder options. In the last five years, the construction industry has grown by 1,424 jobs, making it second only to healthcare sector (1,860) and professional and technical services (2,125) (JobsEQ 2024).

Figure 16 below shows employment in the construction sector, using a four-quarter moving average, from 2002-2023. With an estimated 16,195 jobs, the construction sector accounts for 8.8% of total employment in the region and is one of the fastest growing employment sectors in the Northwest WDA. Of those 16,195 jobs, 8,963 are in Whatcom County, 4,630 are in Skagit County, 1,646 are in Island County and 956 are in San Juan County (JobsEQ 2024).

Unlike the healthcare sector, which shows continual linear growth over time, the construction industry in Northwest Washington was heavily impacted by the 2008 recession. Employment did not show signs of recovering until 2013 and since then, it demonstrates a stable upward growth, with small dips in employment in 2020-2021 as many city and county permit offices remained closed or were only processing a limited number of applications due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the end of those closures, as well as after the elimination of vaccination requirements, the sector continues to see employment growth.

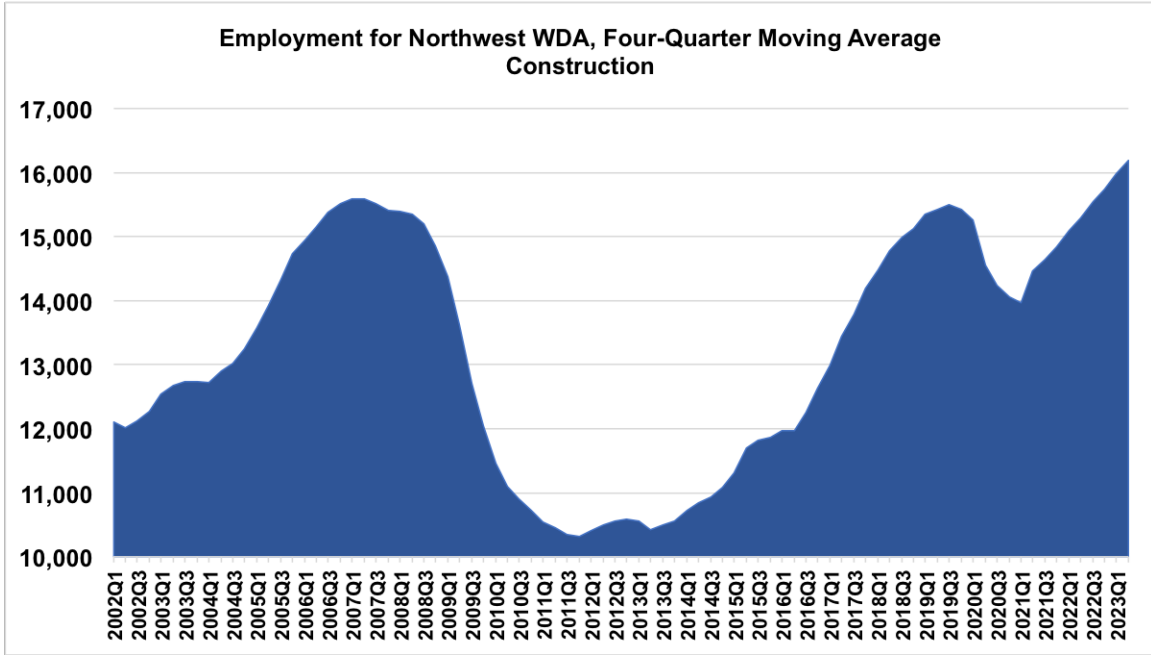


Figure 16: This figure shows employment growth from 2002 Q1 – 2023 Q1, using a four quarter moving average, for the construction sector in the Northwest WDA. Data Source: JobsEQ (2024).

The average annual wage in construction has grown from \$36,481 in 2002 to \$72,497 in 2023 Q1 (JobsEQ 2024). **Figure 17** below shows construction sector annual average wage growth 2002 – 2023.

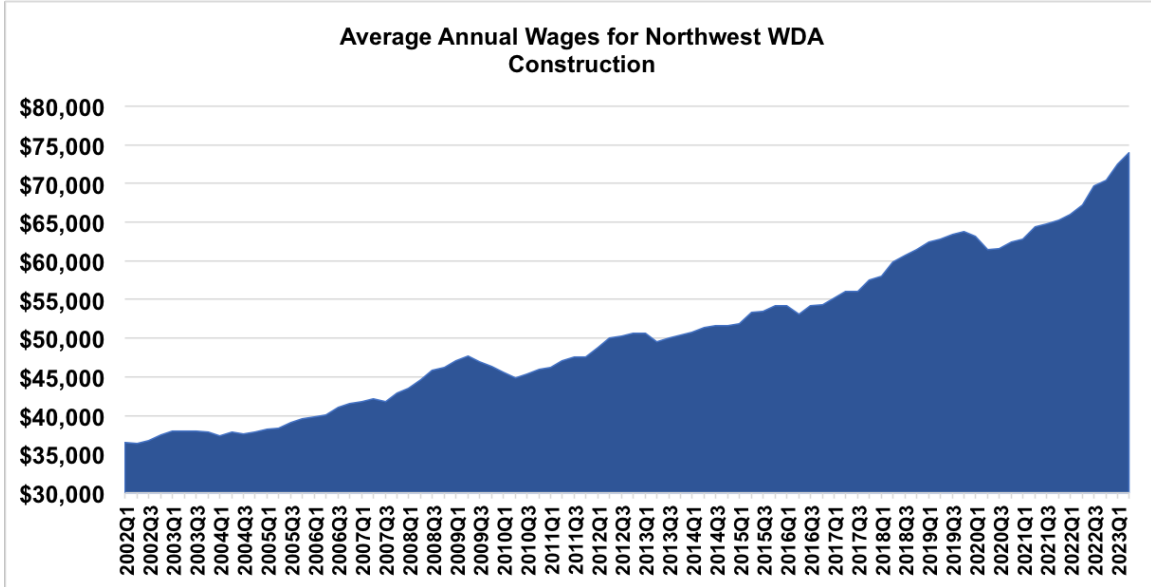


Figure 17: This graphic shows the average annual wages in the construction sector for the Northwest WDA between 2002 – 2023 Q1. Data Source: JobsEQ (2024).

While wage growth is consistent and there is a clear career path and wage ladder in construction, it should be noted that average annual wages within the sector continue to have a wide range. This means that there is a constant high demand for construction laborers, who are still only paid an annual

average salary of \$53,000, which is less than half of the estimated cost of living for the region. Additional occupational and wage breakdown is shown in **Figure 18** below.

6-digit Occupation	Employed	Avg Annual Wages	Annual Demand
Construction Laborers	2,123	\$58,300	237
Carpenters	1,756	\$70,000	177
First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers	1,218	\$104,700	125
Electricians	1,012	\$86,100	121
Construction Managers	776	\$119,400	68
Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	607	\$75,200	68
Painters, Construction and Maintenance	590	\$54,200	55
Office Clerks, General	446	\$52,000	54
Roofers	442	\$63,300	45
Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers	425	\$63,300	47
Remaining Component Occupations	6,773	\$73,400	707
Total	16,166		

Figure 18: This table shows the distribution of jobs by occupation in the construction sector. It is organized by the occupations with the largest number of people employed. Data Source: JobsEQ (2024).

In addition to historic employment and wage growth in the construction sector, there are several events in the 2024-2028 planning period that are likely to require additional workers in this industry.

First, the region will be home to the [Sumas Mega Construction Project](#), which will expand and modernize personal vehicle and commercial screening operations. Commercial inspection lanes will increase from two to four, and personal vehicle lanes will increase from five to six. The main building operations will be fully modernized and a dedicated pedestrian corridor will be constructed. This is estimated to be a \$135-155 million dollar project and is currently under environmental review. The design-build award is scheduled for November 2025, with construction to start by September 2026 with substantial completion by November 2028. Solicitation opportunities are expected in Fall 2024.

Second, there are also plans to modernize the US side of the Aldergrove-Lynden border crossing, known as [the Kenneth G. Ward Land Port of Entry](#). While not considered a Mega Project, it is currently estimated to be a \$90-100 million project that would turn the crossing into a 24-hour operation. The timeline to completion and solicitation is the same.

Finally, in addition to construction work driven by the refineries and major infrastructure projects, the construction industry will also continue to be high demand as Washington State's has passed [HB 1220](#) an amendment to the Growth Management Act (GMA). HB 1220 requires counties and cities to build a certain number of housing units across the income spectrum in order to meet current and future needs. According to the associated planning tools by 2044, the region will need to build over 61,000 housing units to meet demand. The breakdown by county ([WA Dept of Commerce 2023](#)):

- Island County: 8,475 units
- San Juan County: 3,097 units
- Skagit County: 16,914
- Whatcom County: 34,377 units

In addition to housing goals, the state has also implemented bills and strategies related to [expanding internet services](#), [energy resiliency](#), [climate resiliency](#) that will require significant investments in related specialized skills and occupations. To achieve these important goals a substantial workforce of general contractors, plumbers, electricians (including solar experts, water heater installers, fiber optics installers), and all related services will be required.

The region’s workforce system is well positioned to continue to support growth in the construction sector. **Figure 19** lists the multiple local post-secondary degree and certification programs linked to construction in the region.

Program	Awards
Bellingham Technical College	
Building/Home/Construction Inspection/Inspector	6
Electrician	62
Electromechanical/Electromechanical Engineering Technology/Technician	12
Heating, Air Conditioning, Ventilation and Refrigeration Maintenance Technology/Technician	10
Welding Technology/Welder	44
Skagit Valley College	
Welding Technology/Welder	11
Western Washington University	
Anthropology, General	63
Business Administration and Management, General	132
Sociology, General	117
Whatcom Community College	
Accounting Technology/Technician and Bookkeeping	89

Figure 19: Post-secondary programs linked to construction within the Northwest WDA. Data source: JobsEQ (2024).

In addition to those listed in **Figure 19**, the construction sector is also supported by the AGC apprenticeship as discussed and detailed below in Regional Sector Strategies.

Advanced Manufacturing

Manufacturing continues to be the primary driver of the Northwest WDA’s GDP and is a major employer with annual average wages that come close to the cost of living in the region.

Figure 20 below shows employment in the manufacturing sector, using a four-quarter moving average, from 2002-2023. With an estimated 16,499 jobs, the construction sector accounts for 9% of total

employment in the region. Of those 16,499 jobs, 9,266 are in Whatcom County, 6,160 are in Skagit County, 786 are in Island County and 287 are in San Juan County (JobsEQ 2024).

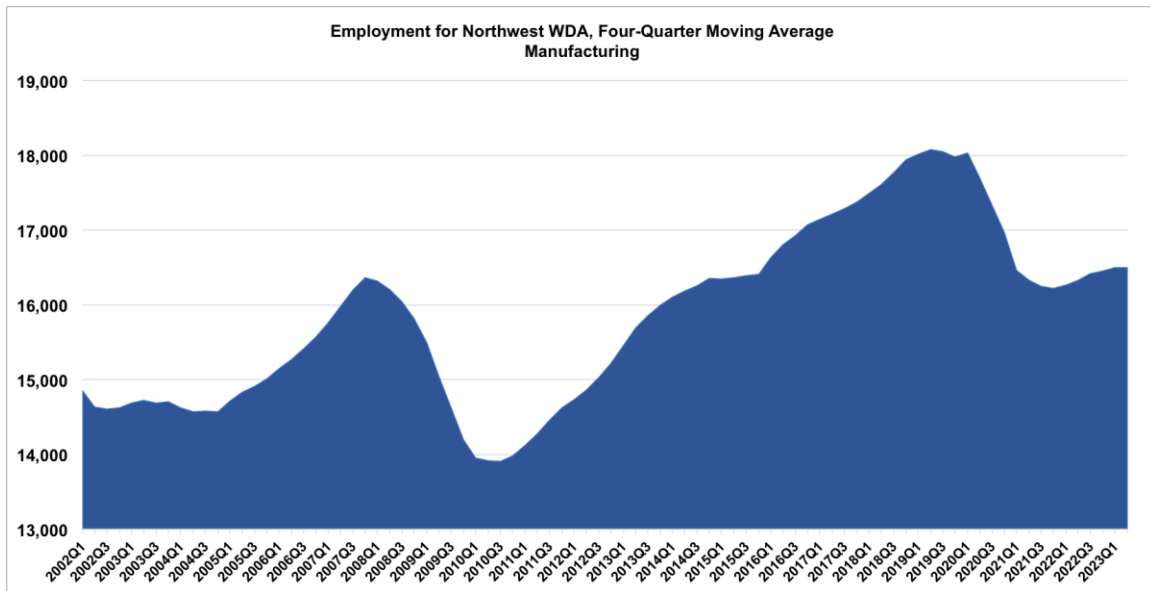


Figure 20: This figure shows employment growth from 2002 Q1 – 2023 Q1, using a four quarter moving average, for the manufacturing sector in the Northwest WDA. Data Source: JobsEQ (2024).

Manufacturing sector employment, like construction, is more vulnerable than the healthcare sector to economic shocks, such as the 2008 recession and 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. As **Figure 20** shows, the sector experienced major dips in employment during both events, though recovered more quickly than the construction sector from the 2008 recession.

The sector does seem to have some remaining impacts, but it is not entirely due to COVID-19. Manufacturing employment numbers started to decrease in the region in 2019 Q3 and continued to decline through 2021 Q4. Numbers have not yet returned to the 2019 Q2 high of 18,077 jobs (JobsEQ 2024). This is at least in part due to the fact that Alcoa, an aluminum smelter located in Whatcom County’s Cherry Point, was permanently closed in 2020, resulting in the loss of over 700 jobs. Altgas (formerly Petrogas) has since acquired the rights to develop and clean up the 1,600-acre facility.

The average annual wage in manufacturing has grown from \$37,993 in 2002 to \$75,714 in 2023 Q1 (JobsEQ 2024). **Figure 21** below shows healthcare sector annual average wage growth 2002 – 2023.

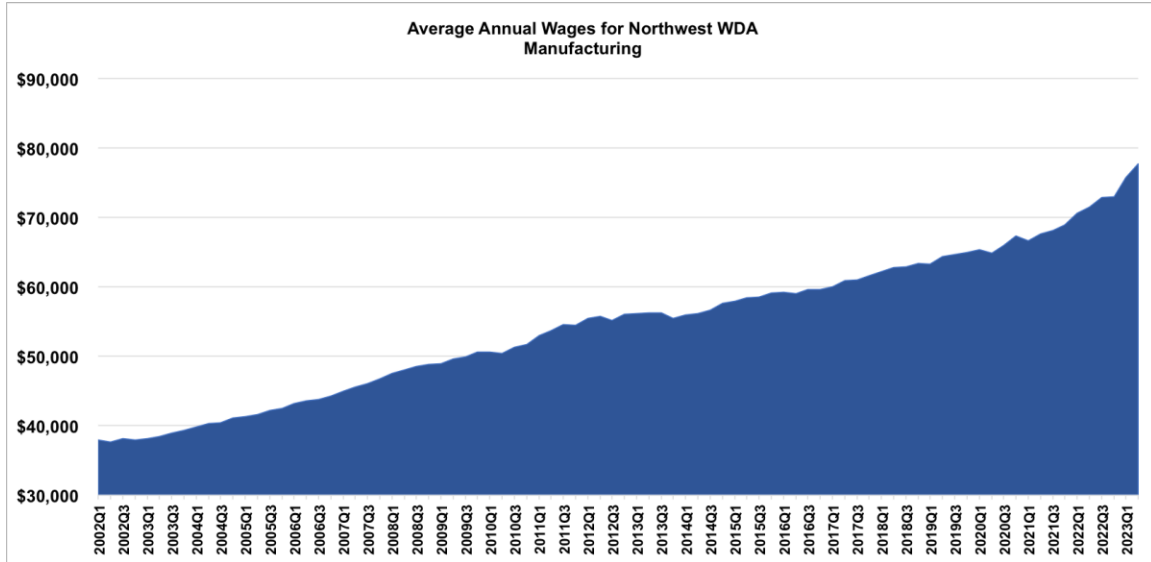


Figure 21: This graphic shows the average annual wages in the manufacturing sector for the Northwest WDA between 2002 – 2023 Q1. Data Source: JobsEQ (2024).

As with healthcare and construction, within the manufacturing sector, several of the high demand positions continue to fall far below the cost of living in Northwest Washington, including team assemblers, laborers and freight movers, meat and fish processors, packaging and filling machine operators, and food batch makers.

6-digit Occupation	Employed	Avg Annual Wages	Annual Demand
Team Assemblers	997	\$48,500	109
First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers	704	\$74,200	77
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	543	\$41,300	81
Packaging and Filling Machine Operators and Tenders	445	\$41,300	56
Meat, Poultry, and Fish Cutters and Trimmers	424	\$35,700	52
Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, and Weighers	383	\$53,900	47
Machinists	355	\$60,200	40
Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products	331	\$91,300	36
Industrial Machinery Mechanics	321	\$74,100	37
Food Batchmakers	304	\$40,600	47
Remaining Component Occupations	11,668	\$73,600	1,336
Total	16,475		

Figure 22: This table shows the distribution of jobs by occupation in the manufacturing sector. It is organized by the occupations with the largest number of people employed. Data Source: JobsEQ (2024).

The region's workforce system is well positioned to continue to support growth in the manufacturing sector. **Figure 23** lists the multiple local post-secondary degree and certification programs linked to manufacturing in the region. It is important to note two additional programs that support this sector, not identified in the JobsEQ (2024) data: WWU and BTC both offer BA's in Operations Management.

Program	Awards
Bellingham Technical College	
Chemical Technology/Technician	24
Engineering Technologies/Technicians, General	44
Machine Tool Technology/Machinist	27
Welding Technology/Welder	44
Skagit Valley College	
Manufacturing Engineering Technology/Technician	8
Welding Technology/Welder	11
Western Washington University	
Chemistry, General	53
Electrical and Computer Engineering	32
Operations Management and Supervision	40
Whatcom Community College	
Prepress/Desktop Publishing and Digital Imaging Design	14

Figure 23: Post-secondary programs linked to manufacturing within the Northwest WDA. Data source: JobsEQ (2024).

In addition to those listed in **Figure 23**, the manufacturing sector is also supported by the AJAC apprenticeship as discussed and detailed below in Regional Sector Strategies.

Skills and Knowledge

While many training and post-secondary programs are available, skills gaps still exist in the Northwest WDA. According to **Figure 24** below the top three in demand skills in the WDA are Microsoft Excel, Certification in Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR), and Hospitality.

Skill Gaps (Top 20 Skills in Demand): Northwest Workforce Development Area, 2023Q3

Skill	Candidates	Openings	Gap
	#	#	#
Microsoft Excel	1,055	1,477	-423
Certification in Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)	337	597	-260
Hospitality	250	494	-244
First Aid Certification	203	424	-222
Ability to Lift 51-100 lbs.	241	437	-196
Spanish	333	525	-192
Basic Life Support (BLS)	137	318	-181
Manufacturing	213	365	-152

Skill Gaps (Top 20 Skills in Demand): Northwest Workforce Development Area, 2023Q3

Skill	Candidates	Openings	Gap
	#	#	#
Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA)	215	349	-134
Microsoft Office	1,357	1,487	-131
Cash Registers	284	391	-107
Keyboarding/Typing	80	187	-107
Sales	438	544	-106
Teaching/Training, Job	259	364	-105
Marketing	155	242	-87
Serving	251	337	-86
Plumbing	199	284	-86
Mathematics	374	458	-84
Google	59	142	-82
Retail Sales	476	557	-81

Figure 24: This table shows the top 20 in demand skills in the Northwest WDA. Data source: JobsEQ (2024).

Figure 25 shows annual projected job growth by education level in the Northwest WDA as of 2023 Q2. The education levels that are currently projected to see the most growth are Master's Degrees followed by Doctoral or professional degrees and Bachelor's degrees.

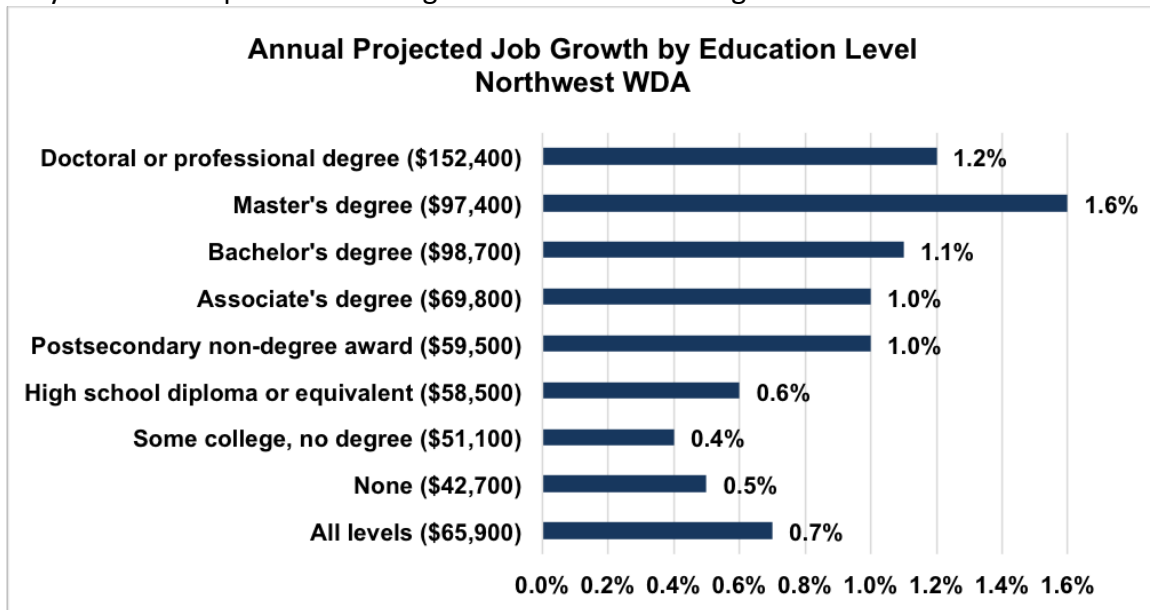


Figure 25: Annual projected job growth by education level in the Northwest WDA. Employment by occupation data is an estimate as of Q2 2023. Education levels of occupations are based on BLS assignments. Forecast employment growth uses national projections from the BLS adapted for regional growth patterns Data Source: JobsEQ (2024).

Education and training programs available for in-demand sectors and occupation were outlined in the previous section (see Figures 13, 17, and 21).

The NWC also surveyed employers and workforce system partners on job and related skills that will be needed over the next five years. The top skills selected by employers were those related to content creation (TikTok, YouTube, Meta), mental health, nursing and medical assistance, and geriatric and eldercare. The top skills selected by workforce system partners were those related to cyber security and data protection, mental health, nursing and medical assistance, and geriatric and eldercare.

Strengths and Weakness of Services

The final section analyzes existing workforce development activities in the region, including education and training capacity, to meet the skills and employment needs of regional employers, including for individuals with barriers to employment.

While the Northwest EDA’s economy is diverse, well rounded, and growing, there are many economic and workforce challenges. Both the Whatcom County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) 2022-2026 and Island County CEDS 2024-2028 identifying aging, decaying, inadequate physical infrastructure and inadequate economic and social infrastructure (especially affordable, available housing and affordable, quality, accessible childcare) as major challenges that need to be addressed for many other economic development goals to be achieved.

The NWC’s Community Forum and Team Whatcom focus group similarly revealed that housing and childcare were major obstacles to many employers, both in terms of hiring and potential for growth. Likewise, the employer survey found that housing and rising labor costs due to cost of living increases were the greatest challenges.

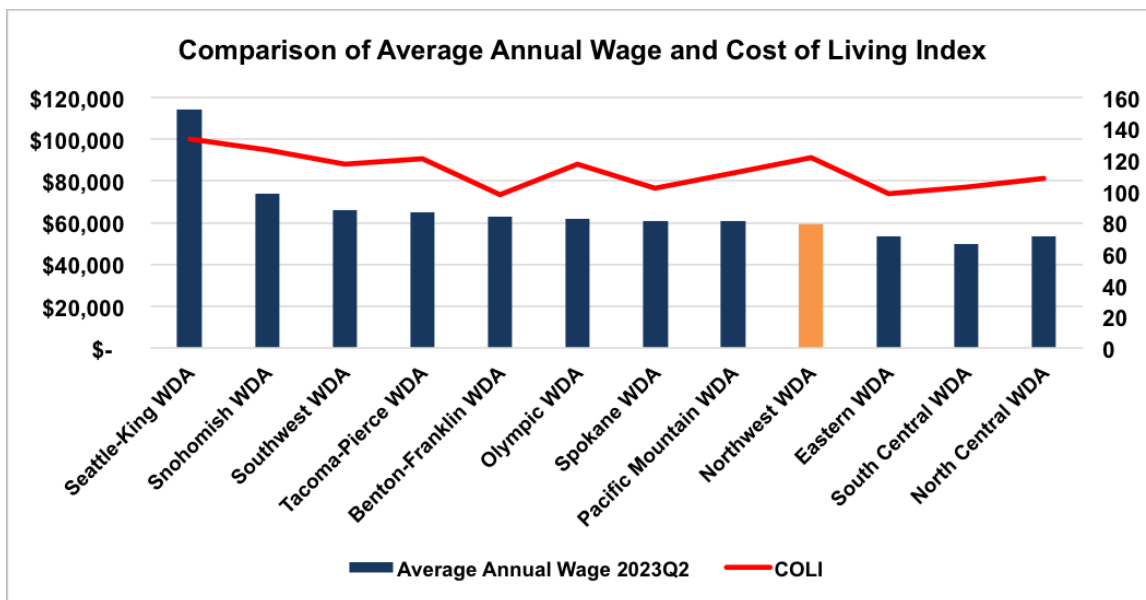


Figure 26: This graphic show the average annual wage as of Q2 2023 for every WDA in Washington State. The Northwest WDA is highlighted in yellow, the rest are light blue. The red line in the graph represents the estimated cost of living in each WDA. Data Source: JobsEQ (2024).

Figure 26 shows that the only WDA in the State of Washington whose average annual wage is at or above the cost of living is Seattle-King County. Every other WDA in Washington’s average annual salary

is estimated to be below the cost of living in that area. While the Northwest WDA is not unique in this sense, the situation in the Northwest WDA is arguably more acute. The cost of living is estimated to be \$121,500 in the Northwest WDA, which is 21.5% higher than the national cost of living average, and the average annual wage is only \$59,301. The Northwest WDA's average annual wage is also below the state average of \$84,569 and the national annual average salary at \$70,318 (2023 Q2)(JobsEQ 2024).

This puts incredible stress on employers and workers. According to stakeholder interviews and focus groups with economic development service providers, many small businesses, especially those with less than 100 employees, simply cannot afford to raise wages to the level that is currently required to cover the cost of living. For some lower wage sectors and occupations, it could mean doubling, tripling, quadrupling, or more current wage rates so that employees can afford rent and housing prices in the Northwest WDA. Many workers are therefore in precarious positions and a single income from a full time job simply cannot pay for even the basic essentials such as housing, utilities, childcare, food, and transportation.

The two focus groups revealed several additional challenges and opportunities. First, global (e.g. COVID-1 pandemic) and local events (e.g. employee turnover and retirement) in 2020-2024 have created the opportunity to re-engage and reestablish relationships with workforce system partners, employers, and job seekers. Additionally, Remote and hybrid work is creating challenges and opportunities. For workers, it is creating commute-free job options for higher paying jobs, which could help address some of the region's wage-cost of living gap. However, not all sectors or occupations are conducive to remote work and the employer survey also revealed many employers felt like changing worker expectations was a challenge. There is also a divergence between employer and worker preferences for remote and hybrid work.

Additionally, K-12 and early education partners continue to report ongoing impacts related to many outcome metrics including but not limited to low rates kindergarten readiness, low rates of students meeting math and science standards, and continued lower rates of attendance (attended 90% or more of school days). This is corroborated by the most recent data available from the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) (2024), found in **Figure 27**, below.

District	# of Students Enrolled 23-24	Graduated in 4 years (22-23)	Attended 90% or more of school days	Met Math Standards	Met Science Standards
Anacortes	2,646	92.2%	75.9%	57.3%	59.2%
Bellingham	11,511	85%	61.5%	41.3%	48.1%
Blaine	2,070	90.3%	63.8%	35%	42.8%
Burlington-Edison	3,334	54.9%	85.6%	26.9%	41.8%
Concrete	535	68%	64%	21.4%	43.5%
Coupeville	1,031	90%	65.4%	43.6%	52%
Ferndale	4,704	84.3%	61.8%	33.9%	43.9%

La Conner	520	93.8%	52.1%	25.2%	34.5%
Lopez	226	81.3%	60.3%	34%	43.4%
Lummi Tribal Agency	394	75%	28.8%	NA	NA
Lynden	3,596	84.7%	81.3%	35.9%	46%
Meridian	1,094	87.5%	68.3%	29.7%	41.4%
Mount Baker	1,607	73.5%	63.3%	24.5%	32.3%
Mount Vernon	6,472	83.2%	63.5%	26.2%	24.5%
Nooksack Valley	1,968	87.6%	70.4%	37.4%	42.2%
Oak Harbor	5,972	87%	73.7%	39.6%	49.3%
Orcas Island	782	91.7%	72.9%	35.1%	62.6%
San Juan Island	808	90%	58.3%	39.4%	45.3%
Sedro-Woolley	4,545	78.5%	69.7%	33.4%	41.5%
South Whidbey	1,191	94.5%	62.6%	40.9%	56.1%
Stanwood-Camano*	4,872	85.1%	70.4%	37.4%	49.5%
Totals / Averages	59,878	83.72%	65.58%	34.91%	45%

Figure 27: This table shows data for all of the 21 school districts that fall within the Northwest WDA, including Stanwood-Camano School District, which although in Snohomish County serves many students from Camano Island, which is part of Island County.

Finally, several sector specific challenges and opportunities were identified through surveys and focus groups:

- Healthcare training bottleneck stemming from the fact that it is difficult to pull nurses off the hospital floor to teach (less pay and requires more certifications)
- Healthcare practicum bottleneck due to not having enough departments and divisions to place additional students for required practicum rotations, in part due to the fact that the Northwest healthcare system is smaller and less complex than major metropolitan areas such as Seattle
- Misperceptions by youth, parents, teachers about careers in advanced manufacturing and construction, including marine trades
- Veterans leaving service lacking industry or employer recognized credentials while having competency in myriad of in demand skills

Regional Sector Strategies (20 CFR 679.510(a)(1)(iii))

The Council continues its efforts to align training and service delivery with high-demand occupations and skill clusters in healthcare, manufacturing, and construction.

Industry engagements often include broad participation from industry leadership, organized labor, educators, and workforce and economic development leadership around industry specific issues in multiple venues and formats. Industry roundtables bring partners together to examine workforce needs and create actionable plans to meet those needs. The Council executes these action plans

through its strong, collaborative partnerships and through its resource investment of training dollars and other funds. The Council has achieved success with numerous industry-led, sector-specific initiatives, and benefits from sector representation on the membership of the board.

WIOA training funds are targeted to the sectors identified below. The Council pursues additional funding sources to further its strategies in support of the region’s key industry sectors.

Identification and Prioritization

As outlined in Section 2’s Workforce Analysis and In-Demand Sectors and Occupations Analysis above, the top six employment sectors are health and allied services, retail, manufacturing, education services, accommodation and food services, and construction. Healthcare, manufacturing and construction are high demand – high wage sectors. They are also tradable sectors and comprise the largest percentage of GDP to the Northwest WDA’s economy. While retail, education services, and accommodation services are high demand sectors, many occupations within them are not high wage and offer no wage or skill mobility.

The Northwest Workforce Council’s three sectors of focus therefore remain advanced manufacturing, construction, and healthcare. Given the occupational breakdown within the sectors, this specifically includes:

1. Advanced Manufacturing
 - a. Beverage and tobacco product manufacturing
 - b. Food manufacturing
 - c. Wood product manufacturing
 - d. Machinery manufacturing
 - e. Petroleum and coal products manufacturing
 - f. Marine manufacturing
2. Construction
 - a. Building construction
 - b. Heavy and civil engineering construction
 - c. Specialty trades
 - d. Marine trades
3. Health and allied services
 - a. Ambulatory healthcare services
 - b. Hospitals
 - c. Social assistance

It is also important to note that while the IT and Telecommunications sectors do not make a large segment of employment in Northwest Washington (less than 1,500 job per sector), many of the skills, such as data analysis and cyber security, are in demand across sectors, including healthcare, construction, and manufacturing (JobsEQ 2024). Technology and data skills are no longer only required in the IT and related sectors.

Related occupations are also typically high wage jobs (annual average salaries over \$100,000). Therefore, the NWC will continue to evaluate technology and data related sectors and skills and will support job seekers and employers within advanced manufacturing, construction, and healthcare and who are in need of / or possession of these skills.

Collaborative Approaches - Advanced Manufacturing

Many local service providers exist to support the various sectors of advanced manufacturing in Northwest Washington. Marine manufacturing is a particularly strong industry, with strong working waterfronts located in Anacortes, Bellingham, and Freeland. There are also multiple Ports, which are important economic actors in Washington as they are authorized for economic development, logistics, and cleanup activities. The four counties are home to the Port of Bellingham (serves all of Whatcom), the Port of Anacortes, Port of Skagit, Port of Mabana, Port of Coupeville, Port of South Whidbey, the Port of Friday Harbor, the Port of Orcas and the Port of Lopez. In addition to the Port infrastructure, the four counties are home to multiple marinas as well as innovative boat building companies such All American Marine (Whatcom) and Nichol's Brothers (Island and Snohomish). Washington State Department of Commerce's Maritime Blue cluster programs and the Northwest Center of Excellence for Marine Manufacturing and Technology support these industries with networking events and funding opportunities.

The Working Waterfront Coalition for Whatcom County offers many services for marine trades employers, job seekers, and workers. The [Northwest Maritime Apprenticeship](#) earned approval to move forward to "Permanent Status" at the January 2024 quarterly meeting of the Washington State Apprenticeship and Training Council, a division of Washington State Labor and Industries.

In addition to the Maritime Apprenticeship, Bellingham Technical College also administers several Washington State apprenticeship programs, including Aerospace Joint Apprenticeship Committee's (AJAC) Advanced Manufacturing Apprenticeship. The Council will continue to support and promote these apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs.

Career Connect NW and Learning with Leaders partners have had a lot of recent success with the Washington Apprenticeship Vocational Education (WAVE) tours. In 2023 over 630 students participated in two tours that presented them with various Earn and Learn opportunities available in Northwest Washington ([Career Connect News 2023](#)). The Council will continue to promote, support, and participate in future WAVE tours.

In addition to participating in, supporting, and establishing relationships with the organizations and agencies described above, the Council will also continue to work with partners to encourage and educated individuals about the sector, especially those not traditionally in advanced manufacturing, such as women.

Collaborative Approaches - Construction

To create a pipeline of construction and related workers, the Council has supported apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship training as a vital work-based training modality and proven strategy of providing

training to job seekers leading to well-paying jobs. Bellingham Technical College administers the Associated General Contractor’s (AGC) apprenticeship program, which the Council continues to promote and support.

In addition, the Council plans to start to engage county level Building Industry Associations as well as the Building Industry Association of Washington (BIAW) as part of this work. The Council will also continue to work with partners to encourage and educated individuals about the sector, especially those not traditionally in construction, such as women.

Collaborative Approaches - Health and allied services

Health and Allied Services Northwest Alliance for Health Care Services (NWAHCS) was established in 2000 at the request of industry leadership to assist them in closing a workforce supply gap. Each industry segment is represented at NWAHCS and brings its unique and shared workforce challenges to the table for discussion and collaborative action. NWAHCS and its partner organizations have previously been highly successful in attracting competitive and industry-sourced dollars into the region to aid in addressing workforce issues. In the 2024-2028 plan period, the Council hopes to re-engage NWAHCS and if partners and resources are available, re-establish a solutions-oriented industry roundtable.

The Council’s partners have also recently had great success with the Exploring Careers and Healthcare Opportunities (ECHO) Tour, with hundreds of students participating, gaining hands-on exposure to healthcare tours. In addition to supporting and continuing to participate in future ECHO Tours in the region, the Council will also continue to work with partners to encourage and expose individuals not traditionally in healthcare and social assistance to the industry, including men.

For additional information please see **Attachment A**. As the Council serves four counties, all of these strategies and activities will be regional in nature.

Quality Jobs

A quality jobs framework provides actionable, detailed strategies and tools to improve the quality of jobs offered. The Council surveyed workers, job seekers, employers, workforce system partners, and organizations that serve workers and job seekers.

Stakeholder Type	Top Three Characteristics of Quality Jobs
Worker (N=12)	100% promotes a healthy work-life balance 91.7% pays a living wage 91.7% respectful workplace
Job seeker (N=45)	91.1% pays a living wage 86.7% safe workplace 84.4% promotes a healthy work-life balance + respectful workplace
Employer (N=22)	95.5% respectful workplace 86.4% pays a living wage 81.8% secure, stable workplace + safe workplace + promotes a healthy

	work-life balance + opportunities for professional development
Workforce partners (N=22)	100% promotes a healthy work-life balance + safe workplace + respectful workplace 95.5% pays a living wage + diverse workplace + offers health insurance + opportunities for professional development
Orgs that serve workers and job seekers (N=9)	100% opportunities for career growth + promotes a healthy work-life balance + safe workplace + pays a living wage 88.9% equitable workplace + inclusive workplace + offers health insurance

Figure 28: This table shows the results from five stakeholder surveys that asked, “What types of characteristics do you believe that quality jobs have?” The survey was not scientific.

Figure 28 provides the top three answers by stakeholder type to a question that asked respondents to identify characteristics of quality jobs. All stakeholders agree that promoting a healthy work-life balance, paying a living wage, and a respectful workplace are top characteristics of a quality job. Workforce system partners and organizations that serve workers and job seekers also noted the importance of offering opportunities for professional development and career growth as well as offering health insurance.

Stakeholders were also asked how to create a quality jobs framework in the region. **Figure 29** shows their top three responses. Overall, all stakeholders agreed that the Council should work with stakeholders to identify ways that they can contribute to the development of a framework and hold interactive sessions to get stakeholder input. Workers, employers, and organizations that serve workers and job seekers agreed that testing part of the framework and providing comments would also be useful. Job seekers preferred the use of surveys to collect data and workforce partners preferred reviewing a draft framework to provide comments on.

Stakeholder Type	Top Three Preferences for Contributing to the Development of a Quality Jobs Framework
Worker (N=12)	75% work with stakeholders to identify how they can contribute 58.3% hold interactive sessions to get stakeholder input 50% test part of the framework and provide comments
Job seeker (N=45)	71.4% work with stakeholders to identify how they can contribute 71.4% hold interactive sessions to get stakeholder input 50% use surveys to collect data
Employer (N=22)	54.5% work with stakeholders to identify how they can contribute 50% hold interactive sessions to get stakeholder input 45.5% test part of the framework and provide comments
Workforce partners (N=22)	59% work with stakeholders to identify how they can contribute 50% hold interactive sessions to get stakeholder input 40.9% review draft framework and provide comments
Orgs that serve workers and job seekers (N=9)	77.8% work with stakeholders to identify how they can contribute 66.7% hold interactive sessions to get stakeholder input 66.7% test part of the framework and provide comments

Figure 29: This table shows the results from five stakeholder surveys that asked, “How do you think employers and partners can help develop a quality job framework that is inclusive, equitable and promotes economic prosperity?” The survey was not scientific.

Regional Service Strategies (20 CFR 679.510(a)(1)(ii))

Strategic Details and Interventions

Given the trends and changes in workforce demographics and the economy identified in Section 2, Northwest Workforce Council and its partners face challenges in assisting all residents to prepare, find, and keep employment in local high-wage, high-demand industry clusters. Careful planning targeting these challenges will help the system respond to the needs of industry and workers.

The following strategic service actions and initiatives for the Northwest WDA support the goals of the Council.

Goal A. Lead the Region's One-Stop Career Center System that

A-1 Aligns education, employment and training services

- a. Leverages time and investment resources with partner agencies to support training and education
- b. Supports short-term training options to maximize funding and minimize training time
- c. Aligns WorkSource service delivery system with state and regional economic priorities
- d. Increases collaborations between education institutions, community partners and industry
- e. Analyzes and improve access to WorkSource system services for youth and people who experience barriers
 - i. Ensure outreach is effective for each of WIOA's 14 identified target populations
 - ii. Services are tailored and customized to individual needs
 - iii. Services, products, and facilities employ the principles of Customer Centered Design

A-2 Reinforces retraining and retention of the current workforce

- a. Provide high quality labor market information that enables workers to respond to changes in technology or skill demands of business and informs workers of opportunities to improve skills
- b. Advocate for continued availability and expansion of training programs accessible to employees through flexible times and locations, and through hybrid and on-line delivery
- c. Bring education and industry together to identify skills that enhance worker retention and promotion
- d. Encourage business investment in worker training and retraining by promoting facility use for training, flexible work scheduling, and matching funds
- e. Provide and market services to business to provide upgrade and transition training to current workers

A-3 Provides valued services and dependable results

- a. Strengthen the agility of WorkSource system partners response to emerging or changing employer needs
- b. Champion and implement opportunities for job seeker skill growth aligned with labor market demand
- c. Make WorkSource services more widely known and available

- i. Deploy WorkSource marketing products
- ii. Advocate for improved first point of contact introductions (web-based, place bound)
- iii. Grow employer satisfaction with WorkSource services

A-4 Embeds the principles of continuous quality improvement

- a. Maintain a rigorous one-stop operator and site certification process based upon the quality principles of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award
- b. Foster a culture and daily practice of continuous quality improvement within the region's WorkSource Career Centers
- c. Continue to refine and increase use of the region's knowledge management system, Dynamically Aligned Workforce Network (DAWN)
- d. Focus attention on system outcome performance through a quarterly report to the board's oversight body

Goal B. Strengthen the Regional Workforce Development System that

B-1 Expands ways in which business is engaged

- a. Conduct and/or participate in regional conferences on key industry sectors to foster the exchange of ideas and innovations
- b. Convene and/or participate in local industry forums and tables to identify industry's emerging or unmet talent/workforce needs
- c. Expand the number of businesses participating in work-integrated learning (i.e. internships, pre-apprenticeship, on the job training, mentorship, incumbent worker training)
- d. Grow partnerships with industries to market their career opportunities to youth, parents, and other advisors and influencers

B-2 Tailors its services and products responsive to business

- a. Provide high quality labor market information that enables programs to respond to changes in the labor market and informs students and customers about current career opportunities
- b. Increase employers' knowledge and use of valued workforce system services
- c. Engage employers in identifying skill standards and promote training programs that provide skills to industry standards
- d. Grow opportunities for students and job-seekers to build workplace competencies in the classroom and through experiential learning
- e. Advocate for continued availability and expansion of training programs accessible to current workers through flexible times and locations, and through hybrid and on-line delivery

B-3 Leverages resources and aligns strategies of key partners

- a. Enhance coordination between workforce and economic development in key economic clusters
- b. Promote strategies for networking across geographic, professional, business and interest based communities
- c. Maintain active partnership with other workforce councils and educational and economic development organizations to develop new funding resources
- d. Maintain collaboration with community and technical college partners for coordination of student support resources to maximize student access and success in training

- e. Align resources to support secondary vocational education programs for high school students that establish educational and employment pipelines in targeted industries
- f. Leverage resources for work-based experience and internships for high school students aligned with their career pathways that maximize outcomes including program retention, graduation, entry into post-secondary training and employment
- g. Work with secondary and post-secondary vocation education programs to enhance all partners' performance on state core and federal common measures

B-4 Partners strategically to strengthen regional competitiveness and job creation

- a. Enhance partnerships with economic development organizations and employers to support regional efforts for business attraction, expansion and job retention
- b. Coordinate business engagement activities to identify talent needs and convene stakeholders to align activities to meet those needs
- c. Collaborate with economic development and education partners to leverage resources, increase efficiency and provide quality business services

B-5 Elevates support of workforce development issues, policies and initiatives

- a. Network at the federal level with the key workforce staff of US Senators and representative
- b. Increase outreach to stakeholders and potential financial partners
- c. Develop talking points and communication tools to communicate systemic barriers and regulatory and statutory impediments to business success and innovation
- d. Continue to strengthen the workforce and the Council's profile with the media, key stakeholders and funders

Goal C. Champion A Systemic Approach to Lifelong Learning that

C-1 Is responsive to business and industry needs

- a. Identify training and educational opportunities to support targeted industries' workforce skill needs
- b. Identify and support training in high demand occupations
- c. Expedite worker training to meet industry and market demands
- d. Collaborate with industry partners to innovate just-in-time trainings tailored to business needs
- e. Build training capacity for employer-based recruitment and retention strategies for a multigenerational, multi-cultural workforce

C-2 Enables workers to identify multiple pathways for career success

- a. Introduce K-12 and other young adults, their advisors, and parents to career paths, career opportunities and connecting activities
- b. Expose young adults to activities to broaden knowledge of career path options in high demand industries
- c. Increase work-based learning opportunities that promote career pathways and soft skill development
- d. Support efforts to promote professional technical/vocational and apprenticeship programs
- e. Provide joint outreach and recruiting efforts with local colleges to engage students in postsecondary education, including pathways

C-3 Offers workers opportunities to upgrade their skills in response to changing workforce needs and challenges

- a. Expand career and education pathways to enter and advance in the workforce
- b. Support continuous learning in all phases of employment: preparation, retention and advancement
- c. Provide learning opportunities for workers to keep pace with evolving technology
- d. Cultivate soft skills through mentorship opportunities with local businesses
- e. Integrate basic skills remediation with long-term training opportunities
- f. Increase participation in adult basic education and high school completion

C-4 Promotes competency-based education and training

- a. Bring education and industry together to identify skill standards that enhance hiring, retention, and promotion
- b. Partner with education to enable industry recognized credentialing of skill attainment
- c. Promote attainment of industry recognized certificates and credentials in target industries
- d. Provide high quality labor market information that enables participants to make decisions on career progression and “stacking” of industry recognized credentials
- e. Promote workplace skills attainment and credentialing
- f. Increase the use of credit for prior learning which lead to certificates and credentials

Goal D. Strategically Partner with Regional Economic Development Partners to

- a. Identify opportunities to align education, workforce, and economic development
- b. Leverage resources to achieve common goals

Cooperative Agreements

Please see the complete the Regional Service Strategies Framework - **Attachment B**.

Coordination with Regional Economic Development Organizations

Economic development entities represent the lead organizations in working with business recruitment, retention, and expansion in each of the Northwest counties. This includes the four associate development organizations (ADOs), which are considered the local arm of the Washington State Department of Commerce:

- Economic Development Council for Island County (EDC for Island County)
- Economic Development Alliance of Skagit County (EDASC)
- Economic Development Council for San Juan County (EDC for San Juan County)
- Port of Bellingham (serves all of Whatcom County)

In addition, a myriad of other economic development and technical service providers exist in Northwest Washington, including the WWU SBDC. NWC maintains active working relationships with each, which take the form of participation on select committees and teams; two-way consultative relationships for business attraction, retention and growth; Rapid Response activities, including lay-off

aversion; workforce analytics and labor market information; collaboration on strategic planning and key sector initiatives; community and service branding; and informal early warning systems to make each other aware of opportunities and threats.

The directors of Island County Economic Development Council (EDC) and Economic Development Alliance of Skagit County (EDASC) are seated on the NWC board. A representative of the Port of Bellingham, Whatcom County's designated Associate Development Organization, is an invitee and regularly attends NWC board meetings.

Examples of current and future planned activities include:

- Rebuilding and establishing relationships with all four ADOs, especially those currently experiencing leadership transitions (Whatcom, Island).
- Whatcom County has a standing monthly meeting of practitioners involved in economic development activities, including the implementation of the Whatcom County CEDS 2022-2026, known as Team Whatcom.
- NWC actively participates and is part of Choose Whatcom, a marketing project aimed at growing and attracting business to Whatcom County. NWC is highlighted as a resource for business on the project's Choose Whatcom website's Business Resources.
- Partnering with the WWU SBDC for business to business outreach promoting WorkSource Services, including On-the-Job and Incumbent Worker training.
- NWC is an active partner of the EDASC and supports EDASC's job fairs. EDASC also performs business-to-business outreach promoting WorkSource Services, including On-the-Job and Incumbent Worker training.
- The Economic Development Council of San Juan County is a grant and donation-driven nonprofit organization with a mission of improving economic conditions in our region. We work closely with organizations such as the Northwest Workforce Council, Skagit Valley College, high schools, and other training partners, to deliver free and very low-cost training to local workers, including elementary and high school students, young adults, and career-changers.

Coordination of Transportation and Other Support Services

NWC takes an energetic and proactive role in the coordination of workforce investment activities throughout the four counties, including regarding the provision of or referral for supportive services, such as transportation and other support needed by those participating in WIOA services under all Titles.

Information on availability of supportive services is provided to clients and customers of all WIOA programs. Services may include but are not limited to transportation assistance including bus passes and short-term provision of prepaid gas cards. Carpooling among those engaged in-group training activities is encouraged. Other Title I funded support services available include childcare services; clothing assistance for interviews and internships; emergency housing assistance; safety and job specific clothing and equipment upon placement in unsubsidized employment.

Partners remain updated on supportive services through a variety of mechanisms, including use of DAWN, the knowledge management system utilized by the WorkSource partnership in the Northwest. DAWN includes information on eligibility for the various forms of supportive services, the referral process, and related information needed to assure clients can access the services identified, and supports (and funding resources) are blended from among available partners, without duplication of services. These are coordinated with additional community resources identified by partnership staff and through use of the Washington State 2-1-1 website: <https://wa211.org/>.

In addition, Council staff attends scheduled Community Resource Network (CRN) meetings. These meetings include representation from a broad network of community service providers, faith-based organizations, healthcare providers, transit providers and others. A feature of each meeting is sharing information on available community resources, such as energy assistance availability or transportation vouchers offered by faith-based organizations. As new support service resources are identified, they are reported at WorkSource all staff meetings and included on DAWN for access by partner staff.

The WorkSource Whatcom and Skagit Centers participate with their local transit providers ([Whatcom Transit Authority](#) (WTA) and [Skagit Transit](#)) in free bus pass programs. Free bus passes and other transportation resources are available to any job seeker in either county with a demonstrable need to facilitate their job search. They do not have to be enrolled in a program to be eligible, they simply need to be looking for work and eligible for supportive services and there are no other community supports available. WIOA IB Staff work with the person to review and exhaust other funds available such as TANF, BFET, or CBOs. There are faith-based organizations that have some resources to provide short term public transit supports. San Juan residents can get day passes to use Skagit Public Transportation.

[Island Transit](#) now provides service 7-days a week fare-free on both Whidbey and Camano Islands. Finally, [San Juan Transit](#) is privately owned and offers transit services, tours, and charts on San Juan Island only. Lopez and Orcas Islands are currently only served by taxi and shuttle services.

Given the island geography in the Northwest WDA, support with ferry fees are available only to individuals who are enrolled in a program and need to use the ferry system for to access training or conduct job search activities.

Regional Cost Arrangements – not applicable.

Regional performance negotiation and evaluation

NWC's senior leadership participates on the statewide WIOA IB performance workgroup. The workgroup meets on a regular basis to consider both historic and current data as it considers targets for each of the WIOA measures for the coming year. The Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board first negotiates with the Department of Labor for the State's performance metrics. This process is done through a state and local collaboration with representation from all 12 workforce development areas. Once this has been established, NWC leadership then works with the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board to establish local targets that align with the state target. Local targets are based on historic data with consideration to any changes in the local economies. NWC

leadership consults with the service providers during this process and reports to the Board on the progress of the negotiations.

Section 3. Local Components

Strategic Vision

To create a robust, sustainable, regional economy.

Mission

The preparation of a skilled, successful workforce aligned to the needs of business and industry.

Strategic Goals

A. Lead the Region's One-Step Career Center System that

- Aligns education, employment and training services
- Reinforces retraining and retention of the current workforce
- Provides valued services and dependable results for business and the workforce
- Embeds the principles of continuous quality improvement

B. Strengthen the Regional Workforce Development System that

- Expands ways in which business is engaged
- Tailors its services and products responsive to business
- Leverages resources and aligns strategies of key partners
- Partners strategically to strengthen regional competitiveness and job creation
- Elevates support of workforce development issues, policies, and initiatives

C. Champion a Systemic Approach to Lifelong Learning that

- Is responsive to business and industry needs
- Enables workers to identify opportunities and pathways for career success
- Offers workers opportunities to upgrade their skills in response to changing workforce needs and challenges
- Promotes competency-based education and training programs

D. Strategically Partner with Regional Economic Development in order to:

- Identify opportunities to align education, workforce and economic development
- Leverage resources to achieve common goals

Regional Alignment and Strategy

Sustaining a high performing local workforce development board

NWC seeks to actively engage its members in matters of strategic importance to its mission. New and prospective board members are invited to attend council and committee meetings in advance of their appointments to orient themselves to the work, and engage in the strategic discussions underway. The board chair, elected officials, and executive director work collaboratively to orient incoming board members to the local workforce development system. The board's committees meet weeks in advance of full board meetings. Minutes of committee meetings are distributed to board members in advance of full board meetings, thereby allowing members time to review and prepare for presentations and discussion during the meeting.

Board membership is reflective of the board's strategic focus on key industry sectors, with industry leaders representing advanced manufacturing, health and allied services, and construction in addition to labor, education, and other government seats as required by WIOA. Infusing board conversations with insight from these leaders helps the board retain its focus on developing trends and needs within its targeted sectors and aids it in making strategic resource investments. Additionally, the board seeks input from subject matter experts to inform its work on matters of strategic relevance.

The Board maintains its strategic focus through:

- Review of labor market data and its analysis
- Convening and participating in sector tables
- Maintaining partnership tables to obtain continuous stakeholder input
- Board Committee work that focuses on populations that experience barriers to employment

Northwest Workforce Council uses an active committee structure that provides systematic processes to set policies, fashion strategies, foster interagency coordination, and oversee the implementation of comprehensive strategic and operational plans for economic and human resource development.

Committees meet quarterly. In addition to a seat on the Board of Directors, each Council member may also serve on standing or ad-hoc committees. All items go through the appropriate committee before passing to the full Council. If a Council member has an interest in a specific issue or wishes to address it, effort should be made to do so while the issue is still at the committee level.

Agenda packets are emailed prior to the published committee meeting date which contains information to be discussed and voted on at the meeting. Agendas indicate those items intended for a vote, background items to an emerging issue, or for information purposes. Committee members may discuss each issue prior to bringing a recommendation to the full board of directors.

All committee meetings are open. The general public is afforded opportunity to be heard at each meeting, at a time designated by the chairperson.

Board strategy for program and resource alignment

Northwest Workforce System Partnership

The Northwest Workforce Development Area has had a functional partnership in place since 1992 in Whatcom County and since 1994 in Skagit, San Juan, and Island Counties. The objective of the partnership effort is the attainment of shared principles, beliefs, and priorities, across programs and across providers as expressed in the Council's Framework for Doing Business.

The value of partnership is achieved when each organization finds it can achieve enhanced performance and customer satisfaction through collaborative efforts, shared processes, and systems which allow partners to:

- Share information so that the information becomes system knowledge and is used by all for the benefit of the customer
- Provide an environment of collegiality which supports a culture of doing whatever it takes to deliver quality services to the customer
- Promote individual agency goals as goals of the collective so as to create strategies which support each partner, which in turn enhances the performance of each partner
- Coordinate planning across multiple programs
- Assist in meeting state and federal mandates to coordinate and collaborate
- Provide a learning environment and culture for staff to build and practice new skills

Several types of teams inform the workforce delivery system.

Process Improvement Teams

A team designated as a process improvement team is responsible and accountable for continuous improvements to a specific process. These teams may have created a product, service, or process or they may be chartered to continue process improvement of a product, service or process created by a work team. This type of team is ongoing.

Work Teams

Either the Partner Management Team or a NWC committee of the Board charters and supports work teams who may create a needed product, service, and/or process. A work team is disbanded when the product, service, and/or process they are responsible for designing is completed.

The Northwest Workforce Partner Management Team

The Northwest Workforce Partner Management Team is charged with achieving consistent quality and consistent customer outcomes in the workforce development system's operational performance. It serves as an ongoing process improvement team. It is responsible for accomplishing the 'systems level'

work to achieve the goals in the regional workforce strategic plan and ensuring the system operating components defined in the Partnership Memorandum of Understanding and WorkSource Certification are developed and widely deployed. The Partner Management Team's broad operational focus transcends the tactical operational focus of other teams. The Partner Management Team, in coordination with the One Stop System Operator, has the authority to direct and task the work of these teams to achieve system outcomes. The team is empowered to take action within the scope of its charter and reports its recommendations for items outside of that scope of work to leadership. The team reports to the system's strategic leadership, both in taking direction and elevating issues of strategic import and/or resource deployment.

Activities of the Partner Management Team include:

- Identify and remove process barriers which impede system alignment
- Identify and improve core processes to attain maximum effectiveness and customer outcomes
- Align internal core processes and procedures across the workforce development system to ensure they are systematic and saturated
- Champion process improvements made to core processes and ensure implantation of the systems, processes, and tools required to implement
- Promote system performance and its customers' satisfaction
- Ensure procedures facilitate a culture of continuous improvement
- Align procedures to Northwest Workforce Council's core values for the workforce development system, WorkSource system operational policies, and WorkSource certification requirements
- Assist in the development and coordination of biannual system strategies to affect anticipated future workforce needs
- Provide the necessary project management to achieve its own work plan and to ensure effective, system-wide implementations
- Identify and foster new relationships with community stakeholders and service providers

Management Team membership is comprised of management staff from each full partner organization (NWC MOU signatories), and One Stop System Operator. The Partner Management Team calls upon subject matter experts as indicated. Partner organizations' leadership shall nominate managers appropriate to serve on the team. The team is self-facilitating and self-managed.

Northwest Regional Partnership Teams

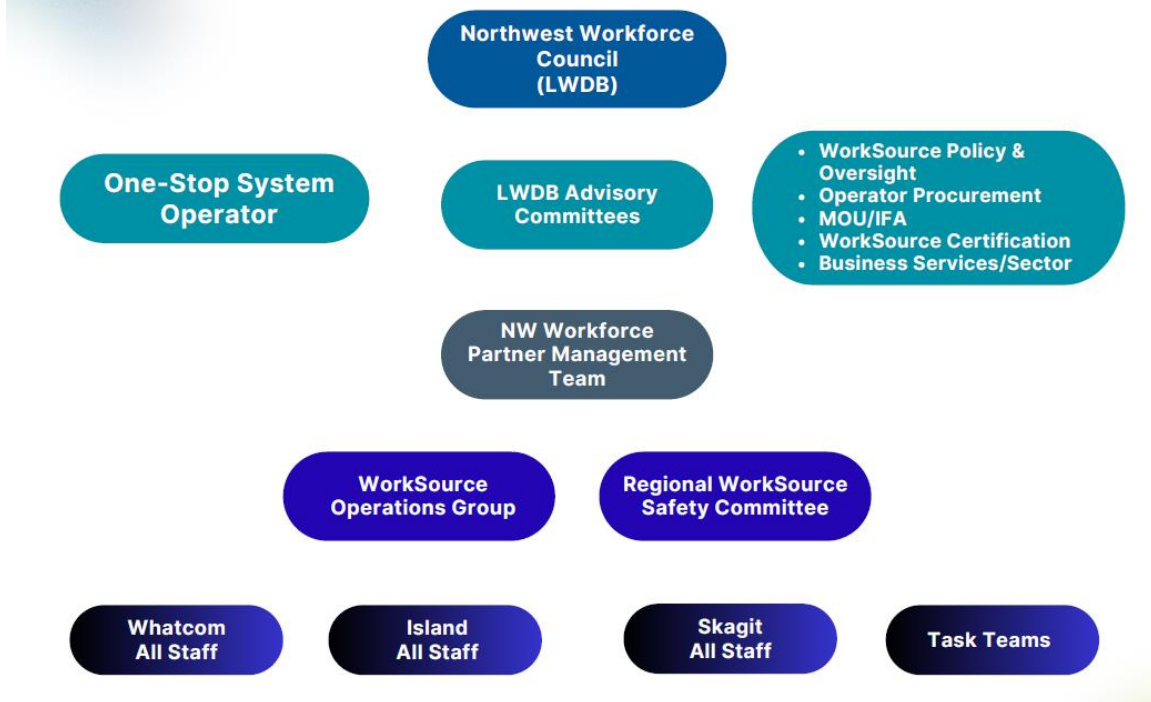


Figure 30: This image shows an organization chart of the Northwest Regional Partnership Teams.

As work evolves and the scope of design activities affect additional community stakeholders, the partnership increases outreach and engagement of other important stakeholders. The partnership actively engages with the following organizations and entities, among others:

- Economic Development Alliance of Skagit County (Skagit County ADO)
- Port of Bellingham (Whatcom County ADO)
- Economic Development Council for Island County (Island County ADO)
- San Juan County Economic Development Council (San Juan County ADO)
- Western Washington University Small Business Development Center (WWU SBDC)
- Council of Governments
- Labor and apprenticeship organizations
- K-12 educational agencies including:
 - The region's school districts; and
 - Northwest Educational Services District No. 189
- Cascades Job Corps Center
- The Opportunity Council
- Community Action of Skagit County
- Lummi, Nooksack, Samish, Upper Skagit & Swinomish Tribes
- Lummi Nation Workforce Development & Vocational Rehabilitation
- Division of Child Support (DSHS)
- Bellingham Regional Chamber of Commerce

- Mount Vernon Chamber of Commerce
- Oak Harbor Chamber of Commerce
- WWU Center for Economic and Business Research (WWU CEBR)
- Center for Inclusive Entrepreneurship (CIE)
- Center of Excellence in Marine Manufacturing & Technology
- Technology Alliance Group for Northwest Washington (TAGNW)
- Northwest Innovation Resource Center (NWIRC)
- Working Waterfront Coalition of Whatcom County

Description of partner training programs

The following is a brief overview of the types of programs and services offered by the Northwest workforce development system. These programs and activities reflect resources available to train, upgrade, and assist the jobseeker in obtaining employment while providing the employing community a qualified workforce to retain and grow viable business and industry.

Training Institutions

One of the strengths of the Northwest area is the number of two- and four-year degrees, certificate programs and continuing education opportunities offered through Bellingham Technical, Whatcom Community, Skagit Valley, and Northwest Indian Colleges. Western Washington University has a variety of baccalaureate and market-driven post-baccalaureate programs.

Bellingham Technical College

Bellingham Technical College (BTC) offers a wide variety of professional technical degrees, certificates and bachelor of applied science programs, training students in high-demand fields that include Nursing & Allied Health, Engineering Technology, Advanced Manufacturing, Business, IT, Automotive, Industrial Technology, Culinary Arts, and Fisheries & Aquaculture Sciences.

Bellingham Technical College's workforce collaboration level and graduate job placement success rates are outstanding, and critical to our success. Over 300 community members and industry and labor representatives serve as advisors to BTC's programs, participate in career and internship fairs, support programs and students, and work with the College to offer internship and industry experience opportunities to students. Long-standing, critical workforce organization partners such as Northwest Workforce Council and Northwest Economic Development Council, K12 educational partners, and other community organizations help inform College training efforts.

BTC serves a wide variety of students, many of them first-time, low-income college students from underrepresented populations. The College is committed to focusing resources and program development on support programs and instructional models that can help all students reach their educational goals.

Whatcom Community College

Ranked among the top community colleges in the nation, Whatcom Community College (WCC) contributes to the vitality of the local community by providing quality education in academic transfer, professional-technical, lifelong learning, and continuing education, preparing students for active citizenship in a global society and meeting the workforce needs of regional employers. Programs are augmented by robust student advising, financial aid, job search, cooperative learning, and externship placements and support to ensure that all students receive the education, knowledge, life skills and training they need to be successful in both academic and industry settings.

Whatcom offers two-year transfer and applied degrees, 34 shorter certificates in business, health, legal and education fields, a new Bachelor of Applied Science degree in IT Networking and non-credit opportunities for professional development, including continuing education for professionals to maintain industry credentials and certifications, and customized training for particular industries and businesses.

WCC is also recognized as a regional and national leader in cyber security education. WCC's programs are informed by community employers and continuously reviewed and improved for currency. Faculty prepares students for success in small classroom settings as well as labs that simulate the real-world work environment. Whatcom graduates have the skills and education to succeed and grow in our community and job market.

WCC provides contextualized learning across a variety of programs, including English as a second language and a High School 21+ program that support those students with additional educational needs in order to be college ready.

Skagit Valley College

Skagit Valley College's (SVC) Strategic Plan Core Themes of Equity in Access, Achievement, and Community are at the heart of the College's work. SVC's educational programs are aligned with regional and state workforce and economic development strategies because SVC closely collaborates with Northwest Workforce Council, two economic development councils in the district, ports, municipalities, K-12 school districts, and industry and labor representatives to develop a program mix representative of identified skills gaps and industry needs. Additionally, each program consults an advisory committee made up of local industry representatives. Partnerships and the pursuit of grant funding has allowed SVC to continue to expand Management, Nursing and Allied Health, Manufacturing, Data Management and Analytics, and Dental Therapy programs.

SVC offers 38 two-year degrees and 56 certificates with an emphasis in Business, Education, Health Science, Industrial Technology and Transportation, and Public Services. SVC also offers five baccalaureate programs: a Bachelor of Applied Science (BAS) in Environmental Conservation, BAS in Management, BAS in Healthcare Management, BAS in Advanced Manufacturing and Design, and a Bachelor of Science in Computer Science. Through its partnership with local tribes, the College has developed a Dental Therapy program to increase access to quality, culturally responsive dental therapy

providers in the region. Reflective of local industry, SVC also hosts the Northwest Center of Excellence for Marine manufacturing and Technology.

By using the I-Best model in an array of Professional/Technical and transfer programs, SVC gives students an accelerated experience to prepare them to take college courses. Additionally, by offering programs such as High School 21+ Adult High School Diploma, Open Doors High School Completion, INVEST (a comprehensive post-secondary transition program for individuals with intellectual disabilities), and English Language Acquisition, the College continues to invest in making education possible for all students.

Western Washington University

The area's workforce benefits from the presence of a nationally recognized institution of higher education. Professional and continuing education programs and lifelong learning programs at Western Washington University (WWU) are particularly beneficial to incumbent workers and those seeking to upgrade skills. A variety of post-baccalaureate programs are offered. WWU also offers technical and professional degrees well suited to the northwest area's needs including engineering, recreation management, computer science, business management, and the physical sciences. WWU offers Bachelor of Science degrees in Electrical Engineering, Manufacturing Engineering, Polymer Materials Engineering, Industrial Design, Energy Science and Technology and has 2+2 articulation agreements with Bellingham Technical College and Whatcom Community College. The university's RN to BSN Nursing program is in direct response to the region's healthcare industry leadership stated need for advanced trained nursing staffs.

Additionally, WWU offers programs during the year for youth that serve as preparatory coursework for a wide variety of future job requirements and interests. These programs cover academic enrichment, leadership training, and understanding private enterprise. The university is a leader in advancing STEM education.

Northwest Indian College

Northwest Indian College (NWIC) is an important resource in the Northwest WDA. NWIC provides post-secondary educational opportunities for Native peoples and other area residents. The only accredited 2-year and 4-year tribal college in Washington, Oregon and Idaho, NWIC is located on the Lummi Reservation in Whatcom County, with six full-service extension sites at the Swinomish Reservation in Skagit County, Port Gamble S'Klallam in Kitsap County, Tulalip in Snohomish County, Muckleshoot in King County, Nisqually in Thurston County, and Nez Perce in Idaho.

It houses the National Indian Center for Marine Environmental Research and Education. The college offers a Bachelor of Science in Native Environmental Science, Bachelor of Arts Degree in Native Studies Leadership, Bachelor of Arts in Tribal Governance & Business Management, Bachelor of Arts in Community Advocates and Responsive Education (CARE) in Human Service, and two year and transfer degree programs in; Associate of Arts and Science in Native Environmental Science, Business and Entrepreneurship, Public and Tribal Administration, General Direct Transfer Degree, Life Sciences, Information Technology, Early Childhood Education, Chemical Dependency Studies, and other

Individualized Programs. NWIC also offers the following Certificate Programs: Computer Repair Technician, Construction Trades, Individualized Studies, and in addition offers the following Completion Awards: Entrepreneurship, initial Early Childhood Education Certificate, Short Early Childhood Education Certificate of Specialization, Tribal Casino Management, and Tribal Museum Studies.

The Workforce Education Department provides certificated professional development and vocational training courses in a variety of areas in health professions, construction trades and industrial certifications. Academic, vocational, continuing, and adult basic education is provided in an environment that recognizes and nurtures students' cultural identity. The college also provides business assistance.

Apprenticeship Training

Training for apprentices is offered at Bellingham Technical College and Skagit Valley College. Examples of courses offered include: Industrial Trade Math; Basic Mechanics for Electricians; Welding; Blueprint Reading; Basic Electricity for Mechanics, Millwrights and Non-Electricians; Apprentice Painter; and Apprentice Carpentry. The Electricians, Plumbers, and Pipefitters, and Carpenters Apprenticeship programs all have Technical Training Centers located in Skagit County and will soon be joined by the Western Washington Masonry Trades apprenticeship program. These and four other apprenticeship programs jointly participate in the annual Washington Apprenticeship Vocational Education (WAVE) Tour for high school students from the four northwest counties and Snohomish County. They also participate in recruiting for special programs available to involve adults and young adults in apprenticeship preparation and vocational exploration.

Bellingham Technical College offers Related Supplemental Instruction or RSI for two apprenticeship programs. One through the Inland Northwest Chapter of the Associated General Contractors of America or INWAGC, which include: Carpenters, Heavy Equipment Operators and Laborers apprenticeships. The second apprenticeship program offered is through AJAC Advanced Manufacturing Apprenticeships, currently serving cohorts within the Industrial Maintenance and Machining fields.

Skagit Valley College offers a Multi-Occupational Trades associate in applied science degree for students who have completed a registered apprenticeship program and select general education credits required for the degree.

WWU Center for Economic and Business Research

Strategic planning requires accurate and timely information about the workforce and the local economy. The local workforce system benefits from a strong working relationship with WWU's Center for Economic and Business Research (CEBR), part of the College of Business and Economics. The CEBR director sits on the board of the Council. The Center assists by providing a focus for economic and business research activities for the university and for the region's workforce and economic development partners through the provision of:

- Econometric model building and dissemination of regional forecasts.
- Economic database management for local, state, regional, and national economic activity.

- Continued study of business cycles and fiscal issues in Washington State and British Columbia.

In addition, staff at the CEBR conduct regular cost of living and other surveys, work with a variety of business organizations, and communicate regularly with elected officials, non-governmental organizations, and business leaders in the region.

Secondary Vocational Programs

Each of the twenty school districts in the Northwest region (21 K-12 districts, including Stanwood Camano and Lummi Tribal Agency schools) provides vocational education programs that prepare young adults for entry into post-secondary education, training and the workforce. All have articulation agreements with the area's two-year colleges; Skagit Valley, Whatcom and Bellingham Technical, that offer dual credit programs designed to integrate high school and college vocational programs. The programs of study allow students the opportunity to earn college credits, certificate or a two-year college degree based on competencies attained while in high school. These vocational technical programs develop skills needed to work in a technologically oriented society by emphasizing math, science and communication and provide training to achieve entry into a specific profession or career cluster.

The Council works with school districts to implement, expand and saturate work-based learning opportunities that complement the vocational-technical training and articulated programs of study, which exist with the local colleges. Work based learning provides student the opportunity to explore occupations or industries to guide course selection, reinforce classroom learning, and create relevance for required courses.

The Northwest Career and Technical Academy

The Northwest Career and Technical Academy is one of seventeen skills centers in Washington State. Washington State Skills Centers are an integral part of the education K-12 system, operating as an extension of the high schools within a local region. The primary purpose of Skills Centers is to give students the academic and work skills to successfully enter the job market or advanced education and training. Skills Centers provide cost-effective, quality job training in programs that would be too expensive to offer at every high school. NCTA serves juniors and seniors referred from the region's high schools primarily in Skagit and Whatcom Counties with a few students from Snohomish County accessing NCTA. Like all skills centers, NCTA serves as an extension campus for area high schools and offers programs at four campuses, Mount Vernon, Anacortes, Sedro-Woolley and Whatcom. NCTA offers a variety of courses, licenses, and certifications in programs such as:

- Aerospace Manufacturing
- Animation & Graphic Design
- Applied Medical Science
- Automotive Services
- Baking & Pastry
- Construction
- Criminal Justice
- Culinary Arts
- Dental Assisting
- Drone & ROV
- Early Childhood Education
- Fire Science & EMS
- Maritime
- Medical Assisting
- Money & Business
- Peer Counselor/Behavior Technician

- Pharmacy Technician
- Teaching Academy
- Veterinary Assisting
- Video Game Development
- Welding Manufacturing

These programs provide the skills, knowledge, and professional leadership training necessary for the workplace or continuing education through an apprenticeship, community college, or university. Students will also be offered a jump-start through participation in internships, job shadows, field studies, clinical and other real-world experiences as well as college articulated credits, industry certifications and licenses. Program certifications and licenses received by students represent valuable employment skills because they meet industry standards and increase potential earning power and post-secondary training/educational placement.

There is currently an effort underway to bring another skills centers to the region. The Whatcom County Skills Center was approved in September of 2023 to be established which will located off of the Guide Meridian Road and will support students from both Whatcom and Skagit County.

Private Career Training Programs

The region has a number of proprietary training schools and programs. The Council provides direction to the proper resources for those wishing to be listed on the state’s eligible training provider list. Those that are on the eligible provider list are included as options for participants seeking vocational training through WIOA funding. Commercial driving schools, for example, provide an important resource for an in-demand occupation as local community and technical colleges no longer provide this training. Specialized industry-focused training is also offered by Impact Washington as well as a plethora of smaller organizations and providers.

Employer Sponsored Training

The workforce system often partners with employers to leverage funding or other resources for worker training. The highly successful training program of Hexcel Burlington is one example of a collaborative effort of the employer and workforce system partners to expand this business, its workforce, and sustainable competency building systems. In response to skill shortages in the construction sector, both Barron Heating & Air Conditioning and Andgar have initiated internal training schools.

One-Stop Career Centers (WorkSource)

The Council has long held the belief that an integrated system of programs and services is the most cost efficient and customer valued approach to achieving high performance standards for partners and the respect and satisfaction of both business and job seeking customers. One strategy for achieving integration of services is the availability of Career Centers, which serve as the community focal point for access to the local employment and training system. These career centers are known as WorkSource Centers, a proud partner of the American Job Center Network, in Washington State.

The Council and the region’s program partners have established three (3) Career Centers within the Northwest Workforce Development Area. These centers are located in Bellingham (serving Whatcom County), Oak Harbor (serving Island County), and Mount Vernon (serving Skagit County). San Juan County is served by a Career Center dedicated to providing employment and training services to the

community and staffed by the NWC, this center, however, is not identified as a WorkSource Center. Each WorkSource Center offers universal access to basic career services, houses the required programs and service providers, and provides access to those services and programs customers may need. All Career Centers, as well as Affiliated and Connection sites, are required to be certified by the local Council before using the WorkSource brand identity.

Career Centers add value to workforce system building by providing a focal point for the change process. The development of a co-located center focuses attention on many of the larger systemic pieces, which need to be integrated if the system itself is to be viewed by consumers as truly seamless. Additionally, experience in established centers shows all different types of job seeking customers are more satisfied with the information and services they receive in one place. Research also shows career centers, once operational for a period of time, assist programs in meeting and exceeding their individual program goals.

Programs Funded Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, Title IB

These programs include services for adults, eligible young adults (youth) who experience a barrier as defined in WIOA, and dislocated workers. They are delivered through the WorkSource system with staff located within the Northwest's one-stop career centers and the San Juan Career Center. NWC has established a priority of services for all populations that recognizes Veterans preference and the needs of low-income and basic skill deficient populations. Title IB participants access multiple programs offering basic career services, individualized career services, follow up, and/or training services.

Outreach

Active outreach, recruitment, and enrollment of young adults, adults, and dislocated workers and veterans are also conducted at appropriate sites in the community and through appropriate communication channels for the targeted population. With plant closures and substantial layoffs, rapid response services delivered on site at the business include intake activities and workshops for dislocated workers. See Targeted Outreach for detail.

Individualized Career Services and Career Pathway Plans

WIOA shapes both the scope of services and the service environments for job seekers. Staff is charged with providing intentional planning that extends beyond the job seekers' participation in program services by assisting in the development of career pathways. Within the plan, individualized career services include comprehensive assessment, career guidance and case management, customized job search, basic education, work-readiness skills (e.g. work experience) pre-employment classes and services, workforce preparation, financial literacy, and supportive services. As assessed, program services address basic skills remediation and completion of a high school diploma or GED for adults, dislocated workers, and young adults.

Comprehensive Assessment

Comprehensive assessment is effective with all populations. Staff are involved in facilitating an ongoing discovery process involving active engagement by the participant as skills, interest, capabilities, labor

market information (e.g. demand occupations, wages, outlook) are identified. Challenges are identified and then addressed in plans. For young adults, objective assessment includes an assessment of need for any of the fourteen program elements, identification of the young adult's strengths and personal assets as well as the assessment of the following areas: basic skill levels, occupational skill levels and training needs, prior work experience, interests and aptitudes, support service needs, youth development and leadership, and support service needs. The appropriate method to receive the program element is included in their individual service strategy. Staff use formal assessments such as CASAS, World of Work Inventory (WOWI), O*Net Skill Assessment, and Career Bridge.

Training Services and Credentials

A new emphasis is placed on obtaining credentials within a career pathway, specifically stackable credentials where the resulting investment of public funds equates to progressively higher wages as the person moves along a career pathway.

A substantial amount of training services occurs in the natural environment of business and industry, where participants learn skills and can demonstrate competencies. Work-based training, as one would expect, engages employer input thus strengthening programming. Work-based training services include job shadows, internships, on the job training, pre-apprenticeship/apprenticeships, customized and incumbent worker training, entrepreneurial, and job readiness training.

The Council recognizes attainment of postsecondary credentials for all residents is paramount to strengthening the connection between industry and education, to improve economic outcomes for students and the competitive stature of businesses in Washington. As such, the Council endorses the recommendation of the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board's Credential Transparency Advisory Committee to establish credential transparency framework that is: learner-centered, and can meet a learner's need throughout working life; accommodates, and views as assets, all cultures, lived experiences, and learning styles of credential-seekers; deconstructs student learning by commonly defined knowledge, skills and abilities; provided momentum, mobility, and permeability along educational and career pathways; and can be reliably evaluated.

Skagit Valley College has an exemplary high school completion program: HS+ Adult High School Diploma is a competency-based high school completion program for adults 21 years of age or older who do not have a high school diploma or GED. High school competency requirements may be met through high school and college coursework and/or prior learning gained from work, life, and/or military experience. NWC supports this type of credentialing with local training providers.

Training may be provided only after a participant has conducted career planning activities, has had a complete analysis of assessment information, and has a demonstrated need for training. There must be a reasonable expectation that the result will lead to a job within a career pathway that leads to self-sufficiency.

Individual Training Accounts (ITA) are reserved for job driven occupations in the Northwest Areas' industry sectors, and occupations supporting the industry sector. An example of a training program that supports the industry sector is commercial driver license training (CDL).

Prior to establishing an ITA, the participant and Coordinator have navigated and leveraged all other available resources and a determination is made that the individual is unable to obtain grant assistance from other sources to pay the costs of training such as Pell, TAA, or State funds including the Washington College Grant and the Opportunity Grant, or that the individual requires assistance beyond that which is available from other sources to pay training costs. Individual Training Accounts must be established with eligible training providers after a participant completes an extensive scholarship application process. The scholarship application process begins the individual's developmental portfolio. It requires that the individual plan for success in school and the career pathway as demonstrated by completing an extensive assessment process, researching both the training program and labor market, outlining their choice of an eligible training provider, and addressing barriers that may prevent program completion, and providing job readiness documentation such as a current resume and letters of recommendation.

Incumbent Worker Training

The Council recognizes that there is increasing need to train and retrain current workers to keep pace with the accelerating pace of technological advances, process refinements, and other changes driven by the pressures of globalization. Giving workers the contemporary skills required to meet the needs of a particular employer or set of employers, incumbent worker training enables those businesses to become or remain competitive. This type of training is often delivered at the worksite and uses a variety of formats including continuing education and customized employer-based training that leverages local college and other expertise. The Council actively pursues incumbent worker training as well as Title IB funding targeted for the region's key industry sectors and focuses on providing the training workers need to increase their skills and earnings as they become qualified to fill current workforce gaps in health and allied services as well as construction and aerospace, marine, and other advanced manufacturing.

The injection of funding through Economic Security for All and Community Reinvestment Funds that targets both job seekers and business owners who are Indigenous, Black or Latino will assist in creating awareness of this valued training strategy while increasing the competitiveness of small businesses.

Programs Funded Under the Wagner-Peyser Act

Employment Security partners with the Council to connect employers and job seekers. The Employment Security Department (ESD) operates the public labor exchange within the Northwest WorkSource career centers by providing no-fee, employment resources and staff-assisted services to employers and job seekers authorized under the WIOA Title III Wagner-Peyser Act. The mission of ESD is, "We contribute to healthy communities by providing people equitable access to resources that improve economic security."

Key components include working with job seekers to improve their job search skills, tools, and

methods. In addition, use labor market information and employer input to encourage in-demand/skills gap training for job seekers in need of up- skilling. Activities include the provision of services, such as: assisting job seekers in finding employment, assisting employers in filling jobs; and facilitating the match between qualified jobseekers and employers. Wagner-Peyser supported labor exchange services serve as a cornerstone of the WorkSource system.

Veterans, unemployment insurance claimants, individuals with disabilities, migrant and seasonal farm workers, dislocated workers and others facing barriers to employment may receive intensive, staff-assisted services to gain suitable employment, e.g.: through various ESD-managed WorkSource programs, or through WorkSource partner programs, if eligible. In addition, businesses and job seekers are encouraged to explore job listings and employment and training information resources on WorkSourceWA.com.

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) provides a full range of vocational services to enable individuals with disabilities to obtain and keep employment. Included in its services are vocational assessments for interest and abilities, labor market information, job search assistance, assistance with physical and mental restoration services, vocational training, and substantial counseling and guidance. DVR staff provide a leadership role and technical assistance in designing and implementing systems, practices, and training which allow all partners to better serve persons with disabilities.

Department of Services for the Blind

The Washington State Department of Services for the Blind (DSB) provides training, counseling, and support to help Washington residents of all ages, who are low vision, blind, or deaf-blind, pursue employment, education, and independent living. Individuals can access these services via an interactive LiveChat application available through all computers available for public use in the three WorkSource centers located in the Northwest, or through calling their phone line at [800-552-7103](tel:800-552-7103).

WorkFirst Programs

There are a variety of programs in the area for low-income individuals on Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). These programs work to increase WorkFirst parents' access to job search, training programs - including basic skills, job retention, and wage progression assistance for those receiving public assistance. WorkSource provides employment services to WorkFirst participants as part of ESD's local WorkFirst contract requirements.

Low-income Families with Dependent Children—Economic Security for All

With the passage of permanent funding in the most recent Washington state legislative session, this program provides the full range of employment and training services to low income families and is coupled with a robust, multi-generational, year long financial literacy program to assist families out of poverty and into self- sufficiency.

Basic Food Employment and Training

The Basic Food Employment and Training (BFET) program is an important part of Washington State's comprehensive workforce development system serving the needs of low-income individuals, displaced workers, and employers. The BFET program assists Basic Food recipients in obtaining livable wage employment and achieving self-sufficiency. The program offers job-search training, education, and workfare activities to improve BFET participant's employment prospects and wage-earning potential.

BFET provides intensive case management with the goal for its participants to obtain employment. BFET can also provide supportive services for transportation, childcare, car repairs, clothing, and rent and utility costs. In addition, BFET has limited funds for tuition, tools, licenses/certifications, and textbooks. Washington State's BFET program is voluntary; there are no mandatory participation requirements. BFET resources available through the community and technical colleges in this region are coordinated with WIOA IB programs to maximize resources and eliminate duplication in serving the community. WorkSource Center's also offer BFET for job search activities provided by Employment Security.

Mature Worker Services

The full range of services to older workers (55+ years old) is delivered through WorkSource Northwest career centers with staff located within the centers. Active outreach, recruitment, and enrollment of mature workers is conducted through WorkSource's Career Course. There, mature workers access multiple programs offering basic career services, intensive career services, follow-up services, and training services.

Center staff also refer mature workers to the Senior Community Service Employment Program provided through the AARP Foundation in this four-county region, with funding provided through the Older Americans Act.

Digital Literacy

The COVID 19 pandemic highlighted the disparate digital skill levels of many of the populations we serve. Job seekers who assess as needing increased digital literacy skills now have increased options as a result of increased on line instruction options (e.g. LinkedIn Learning, GCFGlobal) formal classroom instruction, WorkSource Center tutoring programs provided by AmeriCorps volunteers, and community based services (e.g. Goodwill Learning Centers).

AmeriCorps, funded by Employment Security Department, provides digital literacy training in the region's WorkSource Centers to aid in the acquisition of computer skills. Utilization of the North Star Learning system allows for training and testing competency of individuals who need basic introduction in the use of technology and navigation of the internet. Expected to continue through August 2024.

Key Industry Sector Tables

The Council and regional partners continue efforts to align training and service delivery with high-demand occupations and skill clusters in health and allied services, and in marine and other advanced manufacturing. Industry engagements often include broad participation from industry leadership, organized labor, educators, and workforce and economic development leadership. In support of this sector focus WIOA training funds are targeted to identified sectors and occupations. The Council pursues additional funding sources and leverages with other agencies to further its strategies in support of the region's key industry sectors. Industry tables examine workforce needs and create actionable plans to meet those needs. The Council has achieved success with numerous industry-led, sector-specific initiatives, and benefits from its strategically pursued key sector representation on its board.

Worker Retraining

The Worker Retraining program assists dislocated workers in researching new career opportunities that will lead to sustainable employment. Individuals receiving unemployment receive assistance with career advising, local labor market research, Training Benefits and Commissioner Approved Training applications, tuition and book support, wrap around services and job search upon completion of training. To ensure students receive all necessary supports, a cross referral system between WorkSource partners and college Worker Retraining coordinators is utilized to strengthen student success. As an example, students preparing for job search upon graduation often utilize many of the services within the WorkSource centers and can benefit from cooperative case management between the colleges and WIOA programs. While in training, students may receive multi-layered services for accessibility and resources to assist individuals with a disability. As an example, students are often connected with college Accessibility Resource Coordinators as well as additional supports from the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation.

The Worker Retraining program further serves incumbent workers, supporting upskilling of individuals who require training to remain employed. This program has the built-in flexibility to work either with individuals on a personal level or with businesses that require a cohort of workers to be trained with specialized skills in order to remain employed. The colleges remain experts in curriculum development aligned to the local workforce needs, including incumbent worker training and worker retraining.

One of the area's training providers for commercial truck driving, Taylor Made Truck Driving School, also has a Worker Retraining Program and works collaboratively with the WIOA IB co-enrolled program participants to cover training costs in combination with that which is allowable in an ITA. This affords maximum coverage for low-income individuals, allowing them to enter quickly into training that results in rapid employment in a high wage high demand occupation that meets the needs of our key sectors.

Training Benefits Program

The Training Benefits program offers additional weeks of unemployment benefits so eligible claimants can train for careers in a high-demand field. Claimants are oriented to this program during orientations offered at WorkSource and in Rapid Response. Information on training benefits is also available online

and is described in Unemployment Claim Kits available online to those opening an initial claim. WorkSource partners at Whatcom Community, Bellingham Technical, and Skagit Valley Colleges offer approved programs that meet Training Benefit standards.

The State Job Skills Program

Washington's Job Skills Program (JSP), administered by the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, is training customized to meet employers' specific needs. While funding is not available for program year 2024, college representatives are instructed to check back for program year 2025 grant opportunities for training. A central focus of JSP is to provide training and employment for those at risk of losing their jobs due to technological or economic changes. Training is delivered to new or current employees at the worksite or in a classroom. During the last report period covering 2021 through 2023 nineteen businesses in the Northwest WDA participated in training opportunities to upskill staff and expand their businesses and workforce.

JSP training is a tool for enhancing the growth of Washington's economy and increasing employment opportunities. JSP provides funding for training in regions with high unemployment rates and high levels of poverty. It also supports areas with new and growing industries, locations where the local population does not have the skills needed to stay employed, and those regions impacted by economic changes that cause large-scale job loss.

The Northwest's community and technical colleges have implemented successful JSP training and are practiced at developing successful programs to meet local employers' need for new or current employee skill development.

OIC of Washington

Opportunities Industrialization Center of Washington (OIC) is part of the National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP). OIC provides career development services for migrant and seasonal farmworkers and their dependents. OIC helps participants acquire skills needed to obtain, retain, and advance in agricultural jobs or start new careers. Career Services include skills assessment, provision of labor market information, job search assistance, career planning developed through a customer-centered design, career counseling, internships and work experiences, and financial literacy.

Training Services include occupational skills and job training, including on-the-job training and skills upgrading opportunities, that prepare participants to work in in-demand industries, meet the hiring needs of local employers, and provide participants with an industry-recognized credential.

Youth Services include tutoring, solutions to increase graduation rates, occupational skills training, services to help further education, leadership development opportunities, mentoring, comprehensive guidance and counseling, financial literacy training, and entrepreneurial skills training.

Business Services included employee recruitment, safety training and customized on the job training for eligible workers.

Additionally, OIC partners with the Monitor Advocate System to ensure farmworkers have equitable access to career services, skill development, and workforce protections offered by American Job Centers.

Cascades Job Corps Center

Cascades Job Corps operates as a residential career technical training and education initiative, generously funded by the US Department of Labor. Designed to support eligible individuals aged 16 through 24, the program facilitates the completion of high school education, fosters skill development for meaningful careers, and establishes connections with employment, apprenticeship, military, or higher education opportunities.

At Job Corps centers, participants benefit from on-campus housing, nutritious meal options, basic medical care, uniforms, class supplies, and engaging recreation facilities and activities. Eligibility criteria require applicants to be between 16 and 24 years old, with low income, homelessness, or foster child status.

Currently, Cascades Job Corps offers training in diverse trades including Information Technology, Healthcare, Security and Protective Services, Office Administration, and Culinary Arts. Through these programs, students pursue industry-recognized certifications and licenses, acquiring valuable employment skills. Furthermore, emphasis is placed on soft skills, leadership development, and essential life skills.

Participants have a two-year window to complete the program, with the option to apply for a third year to delve into advanced training within their chosen trade or at a local college. Collaboration with Sedro-Woolley School allows students without a high school diploma to dual enroll, concurrently pursuing high school education while focusing on their trade. Additionally, some students may opt to pursue their GED, which can be obtained onsite at no cost.

Upon program completion, students receive Career Transition Services, aiding in career placement, along with a Transition Allowance to support their next steps.

Literacy Programs

A variety of non-profit and community-based organizations provide literacy services throughout the region. Adult Basic Education (ABE) and Family Literacy Services in the region are provided by Bellingham Technical, Whatcom Community, and Skagit Valley Colleges, Community Action Skagit County, and Northwest Indian College under Title II of WIOA. Goodwill Industries also offers ABE and GED services. Also, some WIOA programs, such as financial literacy, are offered through classes at WorkSource career centers.

Youth Re-engagement Programs

Youth re-engagement programs, such as Bellingham Technical College's IMPACT! program, provide low-income and first-generation students an opportunity to complete HS diplomas or the GED, while

exploring high wage and high demand career options, as well as developing educational, life and financial plans. Whatcom Community College and Skagit Valley College also offer re-engagement programs such as High School 21+ to support out-of-school youth and adults 21 and older in completing basic skills towards earning a high school diploma, with options for also earning college credit. Additional programming at Skagit Valley College includes Open Doors (a competency-based high school completion program for eligible students 17-20 years), INVEST (a post-secondary transition program for individuals enrolled in high schools until age 21 with intellectual disabilities), and English Language Acquisition (instruction in speaking, listening, reading, and writing in English to prepare for college and employment).

Community Based Providers that Support Workforce Development

Workforce Development Area 3 has numerous agencies providing support to high-barrier individuals listed in Section III of this plan. The region includes Opportunity Council, and Goodwill Training & Education within its operating framework to maximize efficiencies while delivering high quality support. By including non- required partners, the Council is better able to leverage resources and align services to those most in need. The most underserved and vulnerable in the workforce benefit from the practical assistance of subsidized childcare and the case management of these organizations. Childcare availability and cost are primary barriers to customer success, particularly those who are low income. By including providers as active stakeholders, the wraparound services are enriched and informed around current trends and resources for the most marginalized customers. As part of the employer support, these non-required partners can guide and advise strategic use of the available workforce including hiring practices, staff and supervisor training models, and information sharing around childcare subsidies.

Expanding Access

Targeted Outreach

Washington’s workforce development system is an integrated network of services, programs and investments with a shared goal of improving the skills of the state workforce. The sum of all targeted outreach from partners within the system translates to a powerful and substantial resource base that, when coordinated effectively, the resulting effort is scalable regardless of individual program resource. As each stakeholder in this system provides services to the array of people who experience barriers, access is no longer a term reserved for individuals with disabilities. To that end, Committees to the Workforce Development Council board, work to:

- Create a forum for sharing best practices and improving accessibility throughout the system for populations with a wide variety of barriers, including: economic, physical, mental, and behavioral health
- Be an integral part of the region’s partnership team structure
- Develop barrier solutions to accessibility of the system
- Include membership of interested stakeholders and subject matter experts

Success for outreach is, in part, how well the system does shifting direction from individual programs outreach to targeted outreach where individuals with barriers are engaged in the system (not just siloed program services), where all partner programs achieve or exceed targeted outcomes, and under the overarching principle that business and industry are gaining access to the entire talent pool in our communities.

The depth and breadth of service provider knowledge of the system, its services, and programs will be essential to meet targeted outreach goals.

A systemic approach to customer outreach with emphasis of increasing access to remote areas is incorporated in the WorkSource process improvement plan that resulted from the Center Certification process. The Northwest Workforce system has a 'no wrong door' philosophy for serving business and job seeking customers. When conducting outreach, the goal is that all staff, regardless of their agency or program affiliation will present an array of available services from the system and staff will assist in service connections.

Resources and emphasis are placed on marketing and outreach that has extended reach and resonates with the WIOA targeted populations. Examples of this include:

- Radio advertisements and radio programming;
- Marketing on the transit buses, their travel extending to all areas within the geographic region;
- Advertising WorkSource system services in Craigslist and other news media;
- Attending community forums, meetings, and job fairs where staff represents the services and programs of the entire system;
- Outreach flyers for the system's services and programs are posted at laundromats, food banks, and low-income housing;
- Mobile services and connection points in rural areas;
- Presentations to specific groups such as: Northwest Youth Services' Ground Floor for homeless young adults; American Legion Auxiliary for unemployed Veterans; Community Resource Network in Whatcom and Skagit for multiple target populations and more
- Integrating system services within established community programming; for example, conducting young adult workshops in the diversion program for justice-involved youth with Community Links.

Outreach Efforts by Population Served

Displaced Homemakers

- Worker retraining coordinators at the community and technical colleges provide outreach, referrals, and services to this population.
- WIOA staff developed targeted marketing materials designed for those individuals who are displaced due to their military spouse's assignment. They engage and obtain referrals from staff at Fleet and Family Services at the Whidbey Naval Air Station.

- All displaced spouses are invited to attend Rapid Response events throughout the region and to participate in services that are available.

Low-Income Individuals

- Each of the resource room computers has a Washington Connection link icon saved on the desktop. Job seekers who may qualify for SNAP and, by extension, BFET, are referred to this vital community resource.
- Low-income adults who receive federally funded Basic Food (SNAP) and are at least 16 years old can receive Basic Food Employment & Training (BFET) services. ESD is a BFET provider in Island, Skagit, and Whatcom counties. Through a partnership with the local Community Services Offices, potential participants for BFET are identified and receive an invitation to an Orientation to BFET services.
- In addition to ESD, other BFET providers include: Bellingham Technical College; Community Action of Skagit County; Northwest Indian College; Opportunity Council; Skagit Valley College; Whatcom Community College.
- NWC has a strong and long relationship with the local community action agencies (Opportunity Council and Community Action of Skagit County) that provide referrals. The Opportunity Council provides information about services to all of the staff providing early learning services to low-income families.
- WorkSource staff participate in local coalition meetings of social service agencies and present information about the system's programs and services.
- WorkSource staff regularly updates DSHS Public Benefit Specialists about program opportunities. These Public Benefit Specialists refer individuals who are working and applying for SNAP to engagement/orientation sessions.
- Colleges serve low-income adults through multiple programs including federal financial aid, Basic Food Employment & Training, Opportunity Grant, and WorkFirst.

Individuals with Disabilities

- Referrals and co-enrollments are a constant activity to ensure that job seekers receive the help they need to succeed. Colleges market their training services on the transit busses, extending their reach to all populations, including people with disabilities.
- DVR demonstrates collaboration and service delivery integration to assure that job seekers with disabilities receive quality customer service within the WorkSource system and works jointly with employers to maximize the employment outcomes for job seekers with disabilities.
- DVR provides targeted outreach to the disability community through local community partnerships and liaisons with medical providers, mental health agencies, other government agencies, high school special education programs, and post-secondary institutions. Referrals and co-enrollments are a constant activity to ensure that job seekers receive the necessary supports to succeed.
- ESD currently funds veteran employment specialists whose sole focus is to help military veterans with disabilities and other severe employment barriers. Disabled Veteran Outreach Program (DVOP) staff assist veterans in assessing their skills and interests, identifying potentially appropriate

training programs, and work with the veteran to create an employment plan that meets their individual needs.

Older Individuals

AARP Foundation provides the Senior Community Services Employment Program (SCSEP) in the Northwest and recruits through WorkSource. The program serves job-seekers over the age of 55 who are low income to obtain a paid work experience with in-depth job searching.

- The local technical and community colleges are open enrollment institutions and serve a diverse population including older workers seeking retraining into high wage/high demand occupations.
- WorkSource marketing materials include images of mature workers, drawing the job-seeker's attention to the environment that is inclusive and attentive to unique needs.

Formerly Incarcerated Individuals

- Staff participate in and collaborate with re-entry programs such as the Re-entry Coalition. Staff coordinate with juvenile probation officers regarding services and supports.
- WorkSource staff present workshops to attendees of Community Links (a diversion program) to young adults and their guardians in lieu of jail time or getting a charge on their records. They collaborate with Community Links to provide additional services.
- WorkSource staff perform active recruitment and outreach to Whatcom County Sheriff's Office Jail Work Center, Skagit Justice Center and Island County Jail, as well as with local work release programs and Community Corrections Officers.
- WorkSource staff present an overview of WorkSource Services to the Juvenile Detention School to reach those still incarcerated.
- WorkSource staff present the Fresh Start workshop at the three WorkSource centers and at Northwest Indian College.
- Marketing materials for the Fresh Start Workshop are promoted throughout the community and on radio programs. Referrals and co-enrollments occur as appropriate.

Individuals Experiencing Homelessness

- Additional homeless and housing provider outreach includes the Anacortes Family Service Center, the Mount Vernon Friendship house.
- Outreach to Homeless Support Program Coordinators in secondary schools.

Foster Care

- Young Adult program staff routinely provide outreach to K-12 and with the Department of Children Youth and Families staff. Community and technical college programs (such as Passport to College) target foster youth.
- Direct outreach to YouthNet, Treehouse, and BlueSkies for children.

At-Risk Youth

- The colleges serve at-risk youth through a number of youth re-engagement and training programs to help identify career pathways and attain stackable certificates leading to employment. Three such examples are the Project IMPACT! Program, Open Doors, and HS21+. Additionally, the colleges provide pre-apprenticeship programs that build foundational and technical skills needed to successfully enter the trades.
- Active recruitment and outreach include: Northwest Youth Services, WA State Department of Children, Juvenile Probation and Court, Secret Harbor, GRADS-Teen Parent Program, Oasis Teen Shelter, Teen Clinics in Mount Vernon, DVSAS, Youth Dynamics, National Association for Education of Homeless Children & Youth, Catholic Community Charities, and more.
- WorkSource will continue to grow the partnership with DSHS to serve SNAP recipients who are young adults.

Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers

- MSFW Outreach staff provides year-round services which intensify during the peak agricultural periods. This group regularly communicates with MSFW customers, local agricultural employers, and other local organizations that have similar mission to provide direct and support services to this population. For those workers looking to upgrade skills within the industry, programs such as Wagner-Peyser, WIOA Section 167, and WIOA I-B Adult and Dislocated Worker will coordinate and leverage resources.
- One MSFW outreach staff person provides outreach efforts to MSFW's in Skagit and Whatcom counties. The methods used to accomplish this include:
 - Promote and encourage MSFWs to take advantage of local WorkSource services via weekly broadcasts on KSVR 91.7 FM radio station; attend community forums with local partners/MSFWs to discuss/network topics such as housing, jobs, healthcare, education, and food drives, etc.;
 - On a weekly basis, continue outreach efforts in laundromats, church groups, farms, taco trucks, and other areas in which MSFWs visit, socialize, and congregate to promote WorkSource services;
 - Attend SeaMar Migrant Health/Resource Fairs in Whatcom and Skagit during the harvest season; Initiate Job-Ag/Resource Fairs for local farmworkers;
 - Network with agricultural employers in Skagit and Whatcom counties;
 - Visit with MSFW at their job sites and provide information;
 - Attend resource fairs initiated by local community agencies who offer services to MSFWs;
 - Visit farm worker apartment complexes and conduct door-to-door distribution of flyers advertising WorkSource services.

Individuals within Two Years of or Exhausted TANF

- WorkSource communicates regularly with TANF program staff for both at-risk youth and those who will soon exhaust benefits.

- Presentations about the array of services and programs occur at Community Service All staff meetings and at the Local Planning Area meetings. When appropriate, individuals are referred to other system programs.

Unemployed, Long-Term Unemployed, and Discouraged Workers

- Hundreds of unemployment insurance claimants are invited to WorkSource every month. The goal is to engage them early in the UI benefit process and assist them in accessing WorkSource services. UI claimants are introduced to a wide menu of services available through the WorkSource system.
- Regular email notifications are sent to inform job seekers of upcoming job fairs and/or hiring events and job leads.
- UI claimants receive follow up appointment at post RESEA Orientation and, in some cases, an additional call at eight weeks post RESEA Orientation.

Veteran Special Initiatives

- The following organization perform ongoing outreach to veterans: Lighthouse Mission; Opportunity Council (Whatcom/Skagit/Island Counties); Local Colleges and Universities (through their Veterans' Service Offices); Lummi Nation; Sunrise Services (Island/Whatcom); Unity Care Northwest.
- The colleges help veteran students engage with multiple on-site and community resources to guide and strengthen success in securing local employment. As an example, when veterans meet with college VA navigators, they are directed to additional resources as appropriate, including Worker Retraining funding and support, Unemployment processes, DVOP counselor services at the WorkSource center and community supports such as housing and disability.

Dislocated Workers

- The colleges have developed several outreach strategies to engage dislocated workers. Examples include the Life Transitions program at Skagit Valley and all colleges participation on the region's Rapid Response team.
- Radio and media campaigns occur quarterly to entice dislocated workers to the center and program services.

Education and workforce investment coordination

The Council utilizes multiple mechanisms and strategies in continuing its successful history of coordination of education and workforce investment activities with secondary and postsecondary partners throughout the region. Through its board structure and partnership tables, including the Northwest Workforce Partner Management Team, Advisory Committees to the Board, industry partner tables, and other venues, the Council will continue to promote and support coordinated and co-funded activities that enhance services, which may include co-enrollment in core programs when appropriate, with each partner providing services that add value and avoid duplication.

Career pathways

NWC invests in the development of career pathways through a combination of high-quality education, training, hands-on learning, and other services that provide the skills that local industries need, including the preparation of enrolled individuals to be successful in secondary or post-secondary education options, including pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships, as well as career guidance to support individuals in achieving education and career goals. As appropriate, education is offered concurrently with workforce preparation activities and training. Individualized service strategies organize education, training, work readiness, and other services to meet the particular needs of an individual in a manner that accelerates their educational and career advancement, and helps them enter or advance within a specific occupation or occupational cluster.

The Northwest partnership will continue to facilitate career pathway development through regular review by industry and career programs, with input from industry partners, to identify needs and potential building blocks of career pathways. As part of this process, local area high schools and colleges will collaborate on ways to identify and introduce educational components for program development, alignment, and dual enrollment (e.g. Career and Technical Education with dual credit, College in the High School, Career & Technical Academies, Running Start, cybersecurity camps for high schoolers) to facilitate streamlined progression by students that maximizes their time, credits, and tuition dollars.

Prior learning assessment is employed by the colleges for veterans, returning adult workers, or those with previous training or education to help them avoid paying for and repeating content they have already adequately mastered.

The partnership tables will continue to develop improved customer access to career pathways that include, wherever possible, the full continuum of customer needs, including English language learning, adult basic education, high school credentials, certificate and degree options, work-based learning opportunities and articulation from high school to postsecondary education and beyond. Over half a million Washington adults without a high school credential are a largely untapped sector of the labor market. This demographic combined with 16-18 year old young adults who have separated from the K-12 system require additional resources and supports to fulfill their potential as working contributors to the local labor market. The region's colleges provide a variety of high quality, accelerated Adult Basic Education options.

Bellingham Technical College and Skagit Valley College offer I-BEST programming, an accelerated model for college preparation. Bellingham Technical College, through Project Impact, and Skagit Valley College, through Open Doors, offer high school completion for eligible students 17-20 years of age. Skagit Valley College provides On-Ramp and College and Workforce Prep Academy programs to help transition English Language Learners and Adult Basic Education students more seamlessly into professional technical programs, and INVEST (a post-secondary transition program for individuals enrolled in high school until age 21 with intellectual disabilities.)

NWC facilitates the development of career pathways primarily through its Title IB program design in collaboration with multiple partners and stakeholders throughout the system. This is accomplished through the following:

- Preparatory activities that allow job seekers to be successful in post-secondary education and which includes assessment, career exploration, and planning. Job seekers receive prompt, differentiated support based on their individual needs. Plans will be based on assessment and will identify a career pathway.
- Career guidance and support to direct the customer towards the next step on the pathway and attainment of a micro-certificate or recognized post-secondary credential.
- Remediation of basic education and skills gaps.
- Career exploration through work experiences; job shadows; work site tours; and informational interviews.
- Hands-on training models such as a series of pre-apprenticeship opportunities offered in Skagit and Whatcom counties through coordinated efforts of NWC, registered apprenticeships, and the community and technical colleges. This training provides a combination of basic skill and occupational instruction that prepares workers for competitive entry within the advanced manufacturing and construction industries. Upon completion of training, job seekers obtain a selection of the following credentials: manufacturing basics; OSHA; flagging; forklift; blueprint reading; trades math; and LEAN principles. These exemplify 'stackable credentials' upon which the individual can add additional credentials gained on the job, or through return for additional training to advance on their career path.

The Council and partners will supplement this coordinated planning with use of multiple data sources to identify and support existing training and continue development of effective new programs that lead to career pathways and industry recognized postsecondary credentials and employment opportunities in key sectors. Data sources include local and regional labor market analysis, feedback from key advisory board members and community partners, as well as graduation, employment placement and wage rate trends that are tracked by the colleges when possible.

Business engagement and business-responsive initiatives

The Council's business and employer services strategy for the Northwest's workforce system is articulated in its Regional Business Services Plan, which summarizes roles and responsibilities of system partners.

This foundation sets the framework to quickly and effectively adapt operations to provide a highly qualified workforce which meets the needs of our dynamic marketplace and fuels the economic growth of our region. This approach maximizes efficiencies and aids in establishing a comprehensive approach to business customers under the WorkSource brand; that provides a coordinated and responsive system of services to employers; that staff are knowledgeable of services and able to make appropriate referrals or connections if needed, and the WorkSource MIS system is used to record employer contacts and document services provided to businesses.

The Council's Vision for Business Services:

- To provide services on a universal basis in a customer-focused, market-driven approach
- To enhance the workforce development system's capacity for responsiveness to a rapidly changing marketplace
- To promote a healthy business climate to attract and retain businesses and jobs

The main objectives of the Council's framework plan are to:

- Align separately funded workforce development programs to provide comprehensive solutions to business customers
- Focus, align, and improve the effectiveness of the region's business services delivery
- Increase the value of services available and business customers' satisfaction with those services
- Build collaborative partnerships and opportunities to achieve goals
- Create an effective, efficient single point-of-contact process
- Enhance business' use of WorkSource services to address their workforce needs

Guiding Principles

- Recognition of the business as a primary customer, stakeholder and investor
- Alignment of service delivery strategies to respond to business customer demand
- Prioritizing the delivery of select services to business most able to fuel regional economic and community growth, targeting in-demand sectors with high wage, high skill occupations
- Deployment of a highly competent professional staff able to deliver quality products and services.
- Promote a robust labor exchange system which provides job seekers access to job opportunities and businesses access to an available, skilled workforce.

Responsive Services

Regardless of the condition of the economy, the job market is determined by business demand. Business services are established to serve the demand side of the workforce talent equation by strengthening the relationship and the quality of interactions with employers, generating access to more and better jobs. The economy is an engine that is fueled by healthy businesses and a robust, vital workforce. Services provided develop businesses and contribute to the development of the workforce, while services provided to develop the workforce contribute to the development of businesses.

A regional labor economist is available to analyze and disseminate timely and relevant labor market information through face-to-face meetings, written monthly updates, presentations to staff, and employer groups, by request. This translates to knowledge and strategy around the Northwest region's in-demand industry sectors. The regional labor economist is also available to provide information both in-house and to the public regarding the regional inventory of occupations and important related indicators such as prevailing wage statistics. By utilizing this data and analysis in the strategic process and with communication with staff, all members of the team are on the same page.

Economic development entities represent the lead organizations in working with business recruitment and retention in each of the Northwest counties. NWC maintains active working relationships with each, which take the form of participation on select committees and teams; two-way consultative relationships for business attraction, retention and growth; Rapid Response activities, including lay-off aversion; workforce analytics and labor market information; collaboration on strategic planning and key sector initiatives; community and service branding; and informal early warning systems to make each other aware of opportunities and threats.

The directors of Island County Economic Development Council (EDC) and Economic Development Alliance of Skagit County (EDASC) are seated on the NWC board. A representative of the Port of Bellingham, Whatcom County's designated Associate Development Organization, is an invitee and regularly attends NWC board meetings.

Examples of current activities include:

- Whatcom County has a standing meeting of practitioners involved in economic development activities, known as "Team Whatcom." NWC actively participates and is part of the "Choose Whatcom" project to grow and attract business to Whatcom County. NWC is highlighted as a resource for business on the project's Choose Whatcom website: Recruiting Resources.
- Maintaining an active partnership with WWU SBDC's for business-to-business outreach promoting WorkSource Services, including On-the-Job and Incumbent Worker training.
- NWC is an active partner of the EDASC and supports EDASC's initiative to promote the Skagit County Maritime Cluster, one of NWC's key industry sectors, marine manufacturing. EDASC also performs business to business outreach promoting WorkSource Services, including On-the-Job and Incumbent Worker training.
- In San Juan County, NWC's Career Center in Friday Harbor adjoins the EDC offices and staff of each agency work closely together on business and workforce projects and presentations. Currently each organization participates on a county committee called "Island Friendly," whose goal is to improve overall customer service and build a San Juan Island brand.

Key Industry Initiatives

The Council's core business is to improve the ability of the workforce to meet the demands of business and industry. The local workforce development system provides an array of business services, with resource investment in targeted industry sectors. The Council strategically aligns WIOA training investments and service delivery with high demand occupations and skill clusters in growth industries, while lending support to other regional business initiatives and service delivery infrastructure.

Industry Tables

Industry tables can take many forms but are often characterized as public-private partnerships of leadership from business, labor, workforce development, economic development and education. Industry tables work together to help clarify industry's needs, including workforce issues, and respond as a system to adapt or customize local approaches to provide workers with the skills required within industries vital to our regional economy. Through industry tables and other venues, the Council

convenes leadership across jurisdictional boundaries to address workforce-related issues, while also participating in industry tables convened by other entities (ports, EDCs, colleges, etc.).

Closing Skill Gaps

As business and industry continue to evolve their workplaces, the skills of workers need also to continually evolve to ensure profit and productivity. Strategies to address skill gaps begin in the K-12 system with pipeline activities to attract young people to careers and industries with promising futures. The preparation of young people with the necessary academic and experiential backgrounds to succeed in these occupations can begin in K-12 or other appropriate non-school venues. Skill gap continues with engagement of key industry leadership to identify existing, emerging, and anticipated worker skill gaps. Influences on skill gaps can include anything from changes in technology, contracts, work methods, or even an aging workforce.

Business Services within the WorkSource One-Stop Career Centers

The Council oversees the operation of one-stop career centers (WorkSource), which serve as convenient access points to the workforce development system. The Council is responsible for developing and implementing policies and procedures that align partners' activities and resources into an integrated delivery system for high quality, customer-driven services.

Labor Exchange

Labor exchange is defined as: assisting employers in filling jobs; assisting job seekers in finding employment; and facilitating the match between the employer and job seeker. Coordination begins with customer (business/employer/job seeker) introduction to an automated labor exchange system, including such items as a centralized job listing system, WorkSource branded products, and a shared client history system.

Industry-Focused On-the-Job and Customized Training

Delivering skill-based, industry-valued training has become a focal point in workforce development. With knowledge and skill requirements changing at high speed, employers, employees, educators and students all struggle to stay abreast of escalating skill demands in the workplace. Through resource leveraging with public and private investments, the Council targets its WIOA and grant training resources to increase the number of workers in high demand occupations within targeted sectors.

- **Identification of specific industry trends and skill requirements:** Workplace trends and skill requirements are identified, and training organized to address emergent needs.
- **Setting high standards for education and training providers:** Only those training providers who produce results and meet high standards are approved by the Council as preferred providers.
- **Use of workforce and occupational skill standards:** The integration of Workforce Skill Standards and Foundation Skills into curricula and training throughout the Northwest system provides a common understanding of the skills, attributes, and characteristics generally required by employers. Occupational skill standards, professional competencies, and industry-

recognized certifications provide the system an opportunity to benchmark worker training against industry standards.

The WorkSource system solicits requests from business in targeted industries for training activities that can be offered to upskill current workers and on-the-job training to bridge the gap created by a lack of available skilled workers.

Talent Pipeline Strategies

Increasing the size and quality of the available labor pool is critical to meeting the current and future workforce needs of business. This is accomplished through a myriad of strategies which include: career fairs, industry familiarization tours, job shadowing, career camps, youth employment, coordination with career connect programs, participation with industry on collegiate advisory committees, monitoring emerging legislation and regional or national initiatives, and other such strategies as may be funded and contemporary.

Job Retention

Workforce development and economic development have a mutual interest in saving and retaining jobs. Retention of existing jobs is as important as is the creation of new jobs to the local economy. An informal early warning system brings the Northwest economic and workforce development communities together to reduce the number of jobs potentially being shed. As approximately 69% of the region's jobs are attributable to small business, providing support to this vital segment is essential to job retention.

Employment Security Department's Shared Work program is an excellent indicator of businesses whose jobs may be at risk. Companies in the program are approached and offered technical assistance from either the EDASC or WWU SBDC. The free, confidential counseling offers a variety of services including financial analysis, access to capital, and competitive analysis.

The Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges' Job Skills Program (JSP) is a tool in economic development efforts to recruit, retrain and expand good jobs throughout the region. JSP enables partnerships between employers and educators to develop and customize short-term training solutions that benefit employers and their workers, strengthening key economic sectors. During the 2021-2023 biennium, grants awards of nearly \$1.3 million were made to 15 business partners within Northwest communities to help over 1400 trainees develop skills, benefiting companies and their employees.

The WIOA I-B programs provide follow-up services and job retention services including job counseling, assistance, resolving barriers, and referral to appropriate resources to former participants and to participants who were co-enrolled in other partner programs including Trade Act. Further supplemental skill training services can be provided to current employees through the IB Incumbent Worker Training program.

Hiring Events

Job fairs and hiring events provide excellent exposure to businesses with job openings and cast a wide net in attracting potential applicants. Hiring events and job fairs may include but are not limited to:

- Single employer on site
- General public hiring events and job fairs
- Target demographic events
- Target skill events
- Target industry sectors events

Specialized job fairs may be scheduled on an as-needed basis to meet individual business needs (e.g. large recruitments, layoffs, etc.)

One-Stop System

Continuous Improvement

Northwest Workforce Council's performance accountability system is consistent with the accountability provisions of WIOA the State and the Department of Labor's regulations and guidelines. The Council uses the information collected and reported through the statewide management information system and the data and post-program outcomes collected and reported by the State Workforce Board and the State's Employment Security Department on federal Common Measures and on State Core Performance Measures. The Council also applies the results of its continuous quality improvement methods, which include performance data, customer flow data, customer surveys, comment cards, and focus groups.

The purposes of the performance review and accountability system are to improve performance; provide quality and effective services to customers; and assist the Council in overseeing the one-stop (WorkSource) system programs, including WIOA Title I-B programs. The Council carries out its performance accountability responsibilities on a regular and timely basis through a LWDB Committee. The Committee receives and reviews local WIOA levels of performance on federal Common Measures and on state Core Performance measures. The committee is responsible for reviewing the performance information provided by the State Board, Employment Security Department, and that collected by the Council either through the statewide management information system or its continuous quality improvement processes, then incorporating the findings and conclusions of these efforts in its strategic planning.

Northwest Workforce Council reviewed the performance of WIOA Title I programs and the other workforce development programs throughout its strategic planning process to assist in determining strategic goals and strategies for the workforce development system. To improve performance, meet customer needs and develop a world-class workforce, it has set goals and strategies that include skills standards, competency attainment, system integration, lifelong learning and a commitment to continuous quality improvement.

The Council believes its strategies will strengthen the services, increase outcome performance, and develop the necessary skill level needed by the worker and the employer in today's work environment. The Council will continue to evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies in relation to local labor market needs, demographics of the current and emerging workforce, the outcomes achieved by the participants, and customer feedback. The Council will, if necessary, revise its strategies if the labor market needs; performance or customer feedback determines change is necessary.

The Council recognizes the value and benefit of management indicators to track and predict performance. Working closely with its partners to track and report common measures across multiple federal workforce development programs: Employment Security Department, Job Corps, Adult Basic Education, and the Department of Social and Health Services Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. The Council's Committee has continually refined its Northwest Workforce System Quarterly Performance Report to improve its usefulness as a performance oversight tool. The report includes measures of importance to the Council and the one-stop system which include: DOL federal common measure performance of programs operated by Northwest partner organizations, WIOA training investments, WIOA Title I fiscal summary, competitive workforce grants and awards by key sector, one-stop customer flow, business and job seeker satisfaction, unemployment, and other significant workforce system issues or accomplishments of the quarter. The report provides timely insight into performance attainment and aids the Council in its oversight role to ensure the region's workforce system is responsive to the Council's strategic goals and that its programs meet performance goals.

The Council has developed a comprehensive tracking system for WIOA Title I performance for Young Adult, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs. The Young Adult, Adult, and Dislocated Worker programs are designed to meet the Common Performance Measures with entry into - and sustainability in - employment, earnings, credential attainment and skill gain.

The Council, in its strategic planning capacity, reviews the performance of the other workforce development programs in the area which include Adult Basic Education, Post-Secondary Vocational Technical Education, Apprenticeships, Private Schools, and Secondary Vocational Education. Outcomes on state workforce core measures for these programs are reviewed annually. The Board Committees review state workforce programs' local outcomes, and state/local level targets and outcomes to inform the development of the Council's strategic goals and objectives and specific investment strategies.

The Council is not directly responsible for the performance of local workforce development programs, which are governed and administered by other agencies or organizations. The purposes of the performance review of these programs are to assure system alignment and integration goals are advancing, they include but are not limited to: improving outcomes for its customers, expanding existing coordination efforts, increasing services and resources to customers, and providing quality and current information to employers and job seekers.

Northwest workforce system staff work actively with post-secondary vocational education programs to enhance all partners' performance on State core and common measures. WorkSource staff actively engage with the local colleges' Worker Retraining staff to coordinate resources and services to

dislocated workers, increasing retention in training and employment outcomes after training completion.

The State Workforce Board establishes criteria and performance levels and maintains the system for training services provider eligibility and performance. This information provides useful baseline data for reviewing the performance of other workforce development programs.

Continuous Quality Improvement in WorkSource Operations

Northwest Workforce Council, with agreement of the chief local elected official and in accordance with its Opportunity Act (WIOA) mandate, designates and certifies one-stop Career Center operators and those sites wishing to become, or remain, a part of the Northwest's WorkSource one-stop system. The Council is authorized to approve, approve provisionally with a required plan of action to address deficient areas, or deny an application. A technical assistance guide is sent that identifies both strengths and opportunities for improvement. Subsequent applications are reviewed to ensure the Council's recommendations have been addressed and the expected quality system continues to mature in sophistication and deployment. Certification is for a three-year term.

The WorkSource certification process is managed by the LWDB Committee's Certification Team, whose membership consists of representatives from organized labor and private industry. The full Council membership acts upon the Committee's recommendations.

Wireless plan for WorkSource centers

Wireless internet is available for customer use at all three WorkSource Centers in the Northwest. An upgrade of current hardware was conducted during the summer of 2020.

Remote access to services

Customers who need remote access to services can use WorkSourceWA.com to obtain basic career services, labor market information, information about college programs and processes, and links to other job seeker sites.

One of the positive effects of the COVID pandemic is that all partner agency staff are now fully able to provide virtual services using platforms such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams, in addition to their availability to serve customers onsite from WorkSource Centers and affiliated partner sites. Many WIOA providers now have on-line applications. These technologies have expanded the manner of doing business and extended the reach of services across the Workforce Development Area. Workforce development partner agencies work in collaboration with local transit authorities to provide access to mass transit for customers with no other sources of transportation. This includes free bus passes and assistance with route planning. Due to the rural nature of much of the Northwest region, public transportation can be distant from residences and rural route schedules generally preclude public transportation as an option for employees. Where public transportation is available, WorkSource Centers are located within easy access. Career pathways aligned with regional high school programs will explore access to high school bus transportation.

ADA compliance

The Council will continue to improve its current system and procedures and to promote access and provide services to individuals with disabilities thus ensuring compliance with Section 188 of WIOA and the American with Disabilities Act of 1990 and ADA Amendments Act of 2008

Physical and Programmatic Accessibility of Facilities, Programs, and Services

Accessibility is ensured through a variety of formal, regularly scheduled activities. A work team consisting of partnership staff will continue to provide universal access reviews of all WorkSource Centers to ensure that the facilities and program services comply with all accessibility requirements and recommendations. These reviews occur with a predictable cycle that aligns with Center certification. Additionally, the Equal Opportunity Officer conducts an EO review of each center every year. This review includes, among other features, monitoring for compliance with all nine elements of the Washington State Nondiscrimination Plan, including accessibility, and the provision of reasonable accommodation and modifications. Additionally, the EO Officer evaluates NWC's policies and procedures to ensure programmatic access.

Technology

All WorkSource staff receive an orientation to the accessibility features incorporated in the Microsoft products available for job seekers. Centers maintain assistive technologies to aid persons with a disability in accessing the resources of the one-stop system. Staff familiarization with the technology is maintained through short, intermittent, hands-on demonstrations conducted by DVR partner staff in the centers.

Materials for Individuals with Disabilities

A commitment to universal design is expressed through a standard review process to ensure that any new print or media material is accessible. The Council has developed guidelines that meet Web Content Access Guidelines 2.0 as an instructional aid to support staff in developing materials that work for everyone. Each Center has copies of Your Accessible Career Resource Center brochure, in both English and Spanish, prominently displayed which describes how to request reasonable accommodations. The region also has a robust policy, in place since 2004, on reasonable accommodation: Provision of Reasonable Accommodation, Reasonable Modification, and Auxiliary Aids and Services to Persons with Disabilities.

Staff Training and Support

New staff is oriented to policy and an array of desk guides, tools, links, and on-line training hosted on the partnership's knowledge management system, DAWN. This includes a self-paced, online curriculum: ADA Building Blocks. Other disability-related resources and important processes include guidance for requesting an accommodation, FAQ's for service animals, and available assistive technologies. DAWN also houses information on creating accessible documents, holding accessible meeting and training among other desk guides designed to improve services to people with disabilities.

The region's Competencies for Workforce Development Professionals includes a competency on diversity and another for Disability Specialist.

A comprehensive inventory of resources and desk aids that assist staff in service/advising all customer groups concerning issues of access. Specific information guides for all focus populations called out in WIOA are housed on DAWN and updated annually. Staff are also trained in referral processes to college Accessibility Resource Specialists, Disabled Veteran Outreach Counselors, and Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors.

Title I Activities

Adult and dislocated worker programs

Northwest Workforce Council provides comprehensive and timely strategies to strengthen the workforce in response to the region's diverse needs. By employing an integrated approach with community and agency partners, the Council leverages and aligns resources in response to labor market demand. As businesses evolve, a diversified and highly adaptable workforce is necessary to compete in the labor market. The Council continues to innovate lifelong learning opportunities and to refine transferrable and occupational skills required in the modern work environment. The dislocated worker and adult programs, funded by the Opportunity Act, support the Council's mission by providing multiple pathways to employment for individuals at all stages in their careers; those who have experienced a layoff, are entering the workforce for the first time, are transitioning to different careers, need assistance to upgrade their skills to retain employment or have barriers to achieving economic self-sufficiency. Individuals served by these programs receive customized services to assist with career guidance, job search preparation, barriers identification with strategies to reduce or eliminate barriers to employment, remediation of occupational skills gaps and the attainment of work readiness, digital literacy, and basic skills to meet employer needs. Additionally, participant plans address appropriate financial literacy skill attainment allowing job seekers to understand and effectively use various financial skills, including personal financial management, budgeting, and the benefits of investing.

Northwest Workforce Council provides WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs. In doing so, the Council focuses on an integrated approach to service delivery to ensure comprehensive outreach and collaborative assistance to participants in the dislocated worker and adult programs. The integrated service design responds to business needs by using an industry/occupational sector as a guide to upskilling and employment activities.

The approach encompasses the following operating principles:

- Keep it simple and easy to follow
- Focus on high-wage, high demand occupations
- Reduce labor/staff intensity in the customer flow
- Reduce duplication of upfront services/activities across funding streams
- Direct customer flow and service development by vocational/sector choice

Partners in the WorkSource system are cross trained on eligibility requirements and opportunities available from agencies providing services within the one-stop career center environment. Staff knowledge is built through:

- Regular presentations in all resident center staff meetings. This training supports an integrated and seamless approach to the customer referral process.
- The region's knowledge management system provides key process flow, designated referral experts, and standardized referral information templates for each of the area's workforce development programs. Referral pages include current recruitment status, key contacts, and next step instruction.
- Our key system integrator training through which staff together grow their knowledge of different system and staff functions and become aware of eligibility requirements of partner programs.

The workforce system has a no wrong door philosophy. Job seekers may enter the system through the career and technical colleges, DSHS, or other community-based organizations who will inform individuals about the array of systems available in the system. For example, an individual counseled by a Worker Retraining Coordinator may be referred to the IB Dislocated Worker Program. Co-enrollment and wrap around services are encouraged to assist Dislocated workers achieve their goals quicker.

In order to improve programmatic access and system integration, the WorkSource system has established a designated "itinerant program desk" at Northwest Centers in the resource rooms. As stated earlier, itinerant partner staff are returning to service delivery at the Center after the long break caused by the COVID pandemic. Customers also benefit from an integrated service design, which provides Wagner-Peyser funded job search preparation assistance to the general public through the job readiness workshop series instructed in both English and Spanish and other basic career services delivered within the WorkSource Centers.

Customers who appear to meet eligibility requirements for WIOA IB and who are in need of customized job search assistance, career preparation, or training assistance are referred to WIOA services through an on line portal at [NWC Connect](#) to fill out an interest form, the information filled out transfers to a WIOA application thus eliminating any need for a job seeker to replicate information already provided. Staff contact the applicant as soon as possible and within three business days of receiving the referral.

During the initial discussion with program staff, job seekers receive a general overview of WIOA IB and the additional programs and services available at the WorkSource center.

WIOA IB Adult and Dislocated Worker Program Eligibility

Customers enrolled in WIOA IB Adult and Dislocated Worker programs must meet eligibility criteria and demonstrate a need and readiness to participate in services to obtain or retain employment. The policies used to determine eligibility for the adult and the dislocated worker programs are Eligibility Verification and Priority Selection for Title IB Adults #01-21 and for Title IB Dislocated Worker # 01-20 respectively. Services are then customized based on the evaluation of a customer's occupational skill

set, work readiness, and viability to obtain employment in high demand occupations within key sectors. Once determined eligible for services, the customer develops an employment plan with a WIOA representative to determine timelines for goals and to begin researching labor market information for high-wage, high-demand employment.

Assessment

Representatives for the WIOA programs utilize a variety of assessment tools including structured interviews, electronic and paper assessments, and competency-based evaluations of basic skills to identify skills, interests and aptitude. Results from assessment tests and progress reports from community and technical colleges and partner agencies engaged with customers additionally guide career planning and help determine appropriate services to moderate skills gaps. IB staff recognize assessments previously completed for all services and incorporate this in planning for any training needs and ITAs.

Career Decision Making

NWC advocates the use of CareerBridge as one important source of information on occupations, training, and employment. The area refers to the ESD Occupations in Demand list for long and short-term occupational forecasts. The Occupations in Demand list aids in a consistent and appropriate navigation of employment and training opportunities. Career guidance and counseling is provided to adults and dislocated workers to make useful meaning of the information gathered to help inform good choices and wise investments in the career planning process aligned to their interest and skills. IB staff also utilizes the WOWI and CASAS to determine skill levels, interests, and aptitudes.

WIOA Title I representatives actively participate in program advisory committees at the community and technical colleges to keep pace with labor and skill trends in the advanced manufacturing, health and construction sectors. These venues also provide opportunities to network with local businesses to customize training plans for WIOA and co-enrolled Trade Adjustment Act (TAA) participants in alignment with real time hiring needs.

Basic Skills

Basic skills competencies are crucial to remain competitive in the labor market. Adults and dislocated workers are counseled to participate in educational opportunities to remedy basic skills deficiencies. High school non-completers are directed toward high school equivalency (GED) preparation activities and the state's High School 21+ programs and High School diploma programs for adult learners. Financial support is available for testing fees and GED certification and HS21+ programs offer access to tuition waivers.

Non-English and limited English-speaking participants are also directed toward the local Adult Basic Education providers, and English Language Learner (ELL) programs at community and technical colleges, and community agencies to prepare workers to be sufficiently workplace functional in English.

WIOA provides pathways for immediate remediation of basic skills deficiencies and supports opportunities for advancement to longer term programs through colleges' Integrated Basic Education Skills Training (I-BEST) programs when available. I-BEST provides opportunity for individuals to earn a degree in high demand sectors while remediating basic skills. This strategy proves particularly beneficial to migrant seasonal farmworkers who speak English as a second language and individuals with low basic skill levels.

There are multiple options to develop computer literacy. WIOA refers appropriate individuals to Goodwill computer classes, free online resources, and continuing education classes in the region. At the WorkSource Center, AmeriCorps volunteers assist job seekers upgrading their digital literacy skills. The goal in all options is to teach customers how to use software, navigate and use the Internet and problem solve basic issues. This prepares the job seeker for more advanced computing classes at the community and technical colleges.

Lifelong Learning

The Council is committed to lifelong learning opportunities to assist businesses and the workforce in remaining competitive. Technologic fluency is a minimum requirement for a preponderance of jobs. For many, Digital Literacy skills are a necessary bridge to enter employment, academic classes, formal computer classes or vocational training. For those already employed, computer literacy is a key to keeping and advancing their employment.

The greatest need and benefit potential of these programs is in serving low skilled and low-income individuals; limited English-speaking individuals; mature workers (55+); and current workers whose IT skills no longer meet minimum requirements in the workplace.

Training Opportunities

There are multiple pathways for workers in need of occupation specific skills to obtain career goals. Training pathways are supported by an integrated service delivery model with multiple partner agencies to best leverage time and resources.

Classroom Training

Labor market indicators highlight the need for a workforce trained in occupational specific skills. The Council partners with local colleges to ensure programs meet industry standards and provide competencies aligned with contemporary labor market demands. WIOA program participants are counseled on multiple pathways leading to careers in fields in need of workers and which provide livable wages. Participants are assisted in pursuing training opportunities to develop skills and certifications necessary for successful employment, career advancement and wage progression.

Individuals with minimal work experience and the long-term unemployed separated from occupations no longer in demand benefit from certifications and degrees earned through programs at local educational institutions. Unemployment insurance recipients who seek training to enter high-demand occupations access WIOA Title I tuition scholarships and may apply for a reprieve from UI job search

requirements (Commissioner Approved Training) and additional unemployment benefits (Training Benefits) in support of training completion. WIOA ITAs and scholarships support students in long-term training programs as well as short-term industry specific certifications to support the minimum qualifications of businesses.

The Council continues to work closely with community partners in identifying strategies to provide blended funding to low income and unemployed or underemployed adults in need of classroom training. WIOA coordinates with other funding sources such as federal financial aid including Pell, Worker Retraining, Basic Food Employment & Training, Washington College Grant, WA Opportunity Scholarship, and Foundations Grant to maximize financial resources available to students in need of classroom training. Staff from the community and technical colleges present information about enrollment, funding, and program availability to prospective participants. Staff meet once quarterly with representatives from the various funding sources as a measure of continuous quality improvement in combined outreach and service delivery efforts.

Work-based Training

WIOA underscores the benefits of work-based training opportunities for both business and employees. WIOA programs emphasize this through multiple strategies including internships, on-the-job training, pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs, and incumbent worker training.

Internship

Long-term unemployed and individuals with minimal work history benefit from internships to demonstrate work readiness skills, learn occupational skills, and earn an employment reference. Businesses, non-profit and public agencies partner with NWC to design training plans and provide skills training. Often employment plans include additional services such as classroom training from community and technical colleges or job search assistance through the job readiness workshops.

On-the-Job Training (OJT)

On-the-job training is a successful strategy for employers to invest in and retain employees trained to their specific needs. WIOA representatives assist employers with creating training plans for adult and dislocated worker new hires while mentoring and tracking the success of the employee during the training process. Employers receive partial wage reimbursement for the new hire to offset the time and expense of providing needed training.

On-the-Job Training affords employers the flexibility to train workers to the specifications of the company and may include additional support from other agencies. The Council continues to focus on opportunities presented by expanded hiring needs in the advanced manufacturing sector. Manufacturers now benefit from the combination of contracted classroom training instruction alongside hands-on group activities, as well as recruitment and retention support.

WorkSource team members respond to a local manufacturing/construction employer's staffing needs by implementing a screening and referral process, which identifies job applicants in need of OJT for

successful employment and aligns them with available positions. The referral process continues to be an effective strategy to connect the long-term unemployed with immediate employment opportunities with businesses willing to provide training.

NWC and ESD integrate service delivery in support of co-enrolled participants' employment and training goals. For example, WorkFirst participants engaged in job search activities, and veterans receiving assistance through the Veterans Services Representative, could both benefit from OJT as a means to immediate employment as they are further supported by a network of WorkSource services.

Pre-Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship Services

Pre-Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship services are options an individual can explore when the customer comes into a WorkSource Career Center. The Plumbers and Pipefitters, Electrical and Carpenters Technical Training Centers for joint apprenticeship programs are located in Skagit County, offering opportunities for collaboration (see WAVE Tour description).

Support Services

Adults and dislocated workers engaged in Title I employment and training programs have access to support services to help offset expenses which may impede their ability to complete the activities necessary in order to return to employment. Financial assistance is available to help offset unexpected expenses that create a barrier to participation. These services may relate to transportation, utility or rent costs while engaged in program services when no other community resources are available to meet the need.

WIOA IB staff participate in local community resource networks to understand and leverage supportive services available from community and faith-based organizations. Information obtained is shared at all staff Center meetings and referral information is available via the region's knowledge management system.

Young Adult Programs

The Northwest Workforce Council's WIOA Title I-B Young Adult program provides complementary services to improve employability through education, work-based learning, and training opportunities. Young Adult services develop workplace attributes and interpersonal skills valued by local industry. Programs serve eligible young adults, 16-21 years with in-school services, and 16-24 years with out of school services.

The WIOA Young Adult program applies a competency-based approach to assessment and services using Workforce Skills Standards to prepare young adults for full-time employment of post-secondary and occupational learning with strong relationships to the job market and employers.

The Council provides leadership in growing collaborations between businesses, secondary, and post-secondary educational institutions and community service providers to ensure effective and meaningful workforce preparation experiences for young adults. Outstanding results are consistently

achieved by engaging education, business, labor, and community service providers to develop a coordinated system which provides basic academic, life, work, and technical skills preparation for workers as defined by industry. The Council strives to incorporate these areas of skill development in all community approaches to young adult employment preparation. The Council engages business to identify their needs and expectations. This information is then used to assist young adults in acquiring the skills, attributes and knowledge demanded by business.

The Council remains active in focusing resources to collectively address systemic issues of workforce development. NWC and partners leverage resources beyond those available through WIOA Title I-B to create pipelines of new workers to meet emerging skills gaps. This begins with career planning and preparation services that promote post-secondary education programs, apprenticeships, and STEM occupations that prepare students for high-wage, high-demand jobs. Through community partnerships, NWC influences the development of the workforce in significantly greater proportion than WIOA funding alone would be able to achieve.

The WIOA Young Adult program engages in joint outreach, marketing, and recruiting efforts with secondary schools, community and technical colleges, business organizations, community-based young adult service providers, and other partner staff for referral of youth to workforce preparation services within the community. Emphasis is placed on outreach to target WIOA populations with an emphasis on service to out of school young adults, including increased focus on re-engagement services for those who have dropped out of high school.

Eligible youth are guided through an assessment to determine their education and workplace competencies and deficiencies, in turn helping determine which services are best suited to prepare them for employment. Assessment areas include: strengths, basic and academic skill level, occupational skills attainment, prior work experience, employability, interests, aptitude, developmental needs, and need for supportive services to permit participation in program services. Results of assessments are used to develop an Individual Service Strategy (employment plan) which identifies service needs and applicable program elements, employment/career goals, non-traditional occupations (if applicable), achievement objectives, and appropriate support services.

Young Adult Service Delivery System Components

The Council champions a mix of approaches to provide access to career information, education, work experience and training to prepare young adults for post-secondary education, training and employment. Opportunities are customized based on individually assessed needs and available resources to support long-term employment goals. The following is a summary of services available; including those addressing the WIOA required 14 Young Adult Program elements, provided by NWC and its regional partners.

Tutoring, Study Skills Training, and Instruction

These include services available through local school districts; non-profit agencies; community organizations; and business and volunteer involvement for the purpose of dropout prevention, school retention, skill development, drop out reengagement and as preparation for specific occupations.

Specific examples of such services for at-risk in school young adults enrolled in WIOA Title IB include referrals and tuition assistance for basic skills remediation and credit catch-up. For young adults in post-secondary programs, school volunteers and paid tutors are provided when students need additional educational support.

Basic Skills

Competencies in basic skills are crucial to the success of young adults in the labor market. Those lacking basic educational skills are counseled to participate in remedial education. A variety of approaches are used to assess academic skills including the review of school transcripts and standardized test results released by school districts, administration of the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS), or referral for more in depth testing. High school non-completers are counseled toward high school completion, participation in drop out reengagement services, or other GED or high school completion services available through NWC partnerships. NWC coordinates with local community colleges to provide services and career supports for young adults already enrolled in high school completion programs, basic skill remediation, and vocational training.

Many out-of-school young adults require assistance along a guided pathway to employment. Working with the colleges and other community partners, NWC IB staff provide a comprehensive plan to employment with interventions and services critical to moving young adults far enough on the skill ladder to promote lasting success in the job market.

Alternative Secondary School Services

These include services provided by school districts; community and technical colleges; Job Corps; or any entity whose education program meets local and state education requirements for a high school diploma or GED.

NWC staff are connected at all the area alternative schools and refer and support students needing to complete secondary school as part of the service package. NWC also partners with local school districts and Community and Technical Colleges in innovative drop out re-engagement programs, providing work-based learning opportunities in tandem with high school completion and GED services.

Paid and Unpaid Work Experiences

Work experiences are planned, structured, learning experiences provided at a business. NWC has a network of public and private sector employers who host paid and unpaid work experience opportunities supported by NWC staff and resources. These experiences help youth acquire an understanding of personal attributes, knowledge, and skills needed to obtain and advance in employment and provide an opportunity for career exploration and skill development.

Work experiences may include the following elements:

- Application of academic skills within a work context
- Instruction in employability skills or workplace skills such as the employer defined Workforce Skills Standards

- Exposure to various aspects of an industry or occupation
- Adult mentorship
- Integration of basic academic skills into work activities

Labor Market and Career Decision-Making

A fundamental feature of service delivery design for young adults, both in-school and out of school, is exposing them to the tools necessary to research career interests, how those interests and aptitudes line up with occupations available in the local labor market, and how to create a career pathway to access those occupations. Training is intended to assist young adults become lifelong learners and know where and how to access timely, relevant labor market data to assist in their employment and career development. Instruction is provided on how to use the resources available in the WorkSource Centers and online such as ONetonline.org, WorkSourceWA.com, Career Bridge, Washington State Occupations In Demand list, as well as training on the use of informational interviewing with employers for labor market and employment information. The identified key industry sectors are a particular focus to guide young adults to understand the in-demand occupations in the local labor market. For young adults, all instruction and guidance on effectively conducting job search activities occurs through this program element.

Occupational Skills Training

Occupational skills training occurs in a variety of ways. Young adults have options to develop or increase occupational skills training through vocational/technical training as well as work-based training modalities. Work-based training can include work experience, internships, on the job training, pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs. NWC supports young adults in achieving certificates and credentials in in-demand occupations, with a focus on the key sectors of manufacturing, health care, and construction. Priority is given to occupational skills training through Community and Technical College Partnerships in the region's key sectors in high demand industries.

Leadership Development Opportunities

NWC sponsors young adults in a variety of ways to foster leadership development. Examples include attendance at Leadership Institutes and Washington Business Week programs in the area related to their career interests. NWC also supports AmeriCorps Volunteers who assist young adults in enrolling in programs that develop capacity for leadership and peer mentoring. This includes units on teamwork, problem solving, decision-making, and conflict resolution.

Leadership skills are also developed through the instruction of Workforce Skills Standards and delivering workshops, through online instruction, and during one-on-one skill development sessions with WIOA IB staff. Participants gain a better understanding of the employer's perspective, practical skills, and the interpersonal skills needed in the workforce such as how to communicate clearly on the job, how to succeed in teams and changing environments, how to work efficiently, and how to identify and cultivate a positive company image.

Supportive Services

Supportive services are provided to an enrolled young adult in accordance with existing Council Policy WIOA 01-11 and when necessary to enable successful participation in their services plan. These are coordinated with other community resources identified by staff and through use of the Washington State 2-1-1 website. Services are directly provided with WIOA funds only when other community resources are not available and may include, but are not limited to: transportation assistance including bus passes; child care services; clothing assistance for interviews and internships; safety and job specific clothing and equipment upon placement in unsubsidized employment; and emergency temporary housing. When access to nutrition is not otherwise available, supportive services may include food.

Adult mentoring for a total of not less than 12 months

NWC staff are represented in local Young Adult Management Networks and referrals are made to organizations such as Big Brothers/ Big Sisters, high school-based mentoring programs, and similar programs within the region. Internship and worksite supervisors are coached in their roles as both supervisors and mentors and encouraged to continue a mentoring relationship with the young adults after their work placement ends. DOL has indicated that this is the least used service strategy across the nation. While we expect that this is due to the time commitment of one year (most young adults have a briefer time horizon), NWC is exploring options to make this service more readily available to program participants.

Comprehensive guidance and counseling, as appropriate

All young adults who request assistance or demonstrate need, or are otherwise assessed as appropriate are referred for drug, alcohol, and personal counseling. NWC collaborates closely with community-based agencies and makes informed referrals to assure comprehensive guidance and counseling is available as needed. Program staff receive training on how to identify, support and refer young adults for these services.

Job search training

During the planning process and throughout their participation, all eligible young adults are provided labor market information about key sectors including demand, wages, and long-term outlook. NWC staff provide instruction on job search components such as how to obtain labor market information, assess their skills, complete a resume and application, and conduct themselves in informational or employment interviews. Staff provide training to community partners in job search components to reach non-WIOA eligible young adults, and market WorkSource job search services within the community.

Financial Literacy Education

Financial literacy activities are provided in a variety of ways to assist young adults to understand basic financial concepts to make informed financial decisions. This includes providing access to tools and resources needed to manage a budget through training and to succeed in work and life. Young adults

have access to instruction in related workshops offered at WorkSource and with community providers offering financial literacy services in the four-county area, including the Asset Coalition, community action agencies, and local banks and credit unions offering training in maintaining checking accounts, credit management and related issues.

Entrepreneurial Skills Training

NWC staff have a variety of resources available to assist young adults interested in learning how to prepare for self-employment and building a business. Along with the financial literacy services, which are fundamental in business, young adults access resources available at WorkSource Centers and through training providers and free workshops in the region including SCORE; Small Business Administration (SBA) programs, and Economic Development Associations in each county. NWC is exploring options to make this service more readily available to program participants.

Follow-up services for WIOA

NWC staff maintains contact a minimum of once per quarter with all young adults served for a full 12 months after completion of participation. The frequency and intensity of follow up increases based on individual need. Services provided may include the same support services available during active participation, as well as other services that may be needed for job retention, or completion of a credential program, including: mentoring; labor market information; financial literacy; post-secondary preparation/transition; and assistance addressing work-related problems.

Preparation/Transition to Post-secondary Education and Training

NWC and partners provide a range of services/activities which help both in-school and out of school young adults prepare for transition to post-secondary education and training. NWC staff provide workshops focusing on labor market and development of career pathways at area high schools, at WorkSource Centers, and as requested in the community. Staff assist young adults to connect with local community and technical colleges to explore postsecondary options; assist them in understanding costs and to connect with financial assistance opportunities to fund postsecondary training including federal financial aid, scholarships, and grants; assist with the college admission process; and educate them on how to manage a budget to prepare for time in training. Other activities include annually hosting a Washington Apprenticeship Vocational Education (WAVE) Tour which invites high school juniors and seniors in the region to participate in hands on demonstrations presented by multiple registered Apprenticeship programs, linked to the key sectors of manufacturing and construction.

The Opportunity Grant and the Experience Work Project

The gap between the skills possessed by young workers and the expectations of employers continues to widen. Young adults disengagement from the Labor Market was further impacted during by the effects of the COVID pandemic. The Project, funded through the Opportunity Grant, matches students in high school and college vocational training programs with businesses offering on-site opportunities for career exploration, job shadow or internship. Mentorship relationships are created which assist young adults moving into the workplace. Students participate in robust learning experiences

throughout the year. Mentors rate students' professional behaviors as either meeting or exceeding their expectations. Business interest and participation in this program has increased markedly in recent years.

Washington Apprentice Vocational Education (WAVE) Tour

The annual WAVE tour involves young adults in apprenticeship vocational exploration activities at the Pipefitters, Electrical, and Carpenters Technical Training Centers. Additional trades representatives such as heavy equipment operators, sheet metal workers, laborers, plumbers, and sprinkler installers are also present, offering students exposure to trades offered beyond those available locally. The purpose is to interest young people in the potential for jobs in the trades and linking the academic skills necessary for success. NWC participates in coordinating this event and recruiting young adults from area high schools from Island, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish, and Whatcom counties. As part of the Tour, students receive hands on training in various trades. Pipe bending, screw gun races, and using math to solve real electrical problems are popular activities. They hear workers speak firsthand on apprenticeship occupations, preparation, and the benefits of trade careers. Students see, touch and experience the various trades.

Pre-Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship Training Initiatives

These initiatives are work-based training models offered in the region through coordinated efforts of NWC, registered apprenticeships, and the community and technical colleges. The trainings provide a combination of basic skill and occupational instruction that prepares workers for competitive entry within the advanced manufacturing and construction industries. Upon completion of the training, job seekers obtain a variation of the following credentials: manufacturing basics; OSHA; flagging; forklift; blueprint reading; trades math; and LEAN principles. These exemplify stackable credentials, upon which the individual can add additional credentials gained on the job or through return for additional training to advance on their career path. Pre-apprenticeship opportunities are currently offered in partnership with the Carpenters, Ironworkers, and ANEW for other construction trades., NWC plans to sustain and increase pre-apprenticeship offerings, as feasible, across the region.

Drop Out Reengagement Programs

NWC, Community and Technical Colleges, and school districts in the region possess innovative programming to focus on re-engaging young adults 16-21 who have dropped out of high school. The three technical and community colleges all offer drop-out re-engagement and/or 1418 high school completion programs. For young adults enrolled in the re-engagement program, the college provides classroom instruction for High School Completion, including High School 21+, GED, and basic skills improvement. NWC provides hands on, work based training services, including paid internships and mentorship experiences, and provides the structure and support needed to help the student achieve both academic and career success.

Rapid response to layoffs and closures

The Council coordinates and oversees a highly engaged and coordinated rapid response system. Execution of an integrated plan for all dislocated worker programs, Worker Retraining and WIOA Title

IB programs provides focus on businesses' workforce needs and provides for a consistent, timely, high quality, and innovative approach to the delivery of services to all dislocated adults. Through Council leadership, rapid response practitioners exhibit an array of competencies across many disciplines that help create seamless solutions for all customers. Rapid Response is simultaneously strategic and operational. Solutions are customized to needs and yet consistent in their quality.

The Council oversees a vision of Rapid Response as a comprehensive economic transition model, which requires the engagement of leadership and practitioners. A wide area network of practitioners and stakeholders comprise an informal "early warning system" which alert partners to potential job loss, allowing a system response to avoid or minimize job loss. Tools such as the Shared Work Program, , targeted workforce-related advocacy, and local economic development programs can help to avert the loss of jobs from the Northwest economy.

The Council's coordination of services, activities, resources and benefits facilitate the goal of returning affected individuals to work, in demand occupations, as quickly as possible. Critical attributes of the Northwest's Rapid Response system include:

- A systematic orientation towards layoff prevention, strategic planning, and reemployment
- Mastery of applicable rules and regulations
- Establishment and maintenance of broad partnerships
- Clear and consistent procedures and policies
- Leadership seeks comprehensive solutions over menu-based services
- Properly trained staff

During a layoff of significance, onsite Rapid Response orientations are coordinated within a broad partnership and with the State Dislocated Worker Unit. Orientations include onsite information on the applications and requirements of Unemployment Insurance. Workers receive orientation to all applicable dislocated worker programs (WIOA, Worker Retraining,) and then followed up with staff assisted sessions where the dislocated worker is assisted with the application and intake for multiple programs.

Rapid Response presentations are now available in a variety of formats, in person, online, and a hybrid of online/in person.

For those who have marketable job skills and who will benefit from intensive job search assistance, services are coordinated to ensure a quick re-entry into the workforce at a competitive wage. For those needing upskilling or reskilling, laid off workers are informed of the full set of employment and training services available in the dislocated worker program.

Coordination of Transportation and Other Support Services

NWC takes an energetic and proactive role in the coordination of the workforce investment activities throughout the four-county region. This philosophy extends to the provision of or referral for supportive services, including transportation and other support needed by those participating in WIOA services under all Titles. Activities that build capacity and effectiveness are fostered, duplicate or inefficient practices are discouraged.

Supportive services are provided when necessary to enable successful participation. Information on availability of supportive services is provided to clients and customers of all WIOA programs. Services may include, but are not limited to: transportation assistance including bus passes, or short-term provision of prepaid gas cards. Carpooling among those engaged in group training activities is encouraged. Other Title I funded support services available include childcare services; clothing assistance for interviews and internships; emergency housing assistance; safety and job specific clothing and equipment upon placement in unsubsidized employment.

Partners remain aware and updated on supportive services through a variety of mechanisms, including use of DAWN, the knowledge management system utilized by the WorkSource partnership in the Northwest. DAWN includes information on eligibility for the various forms of supportive services, and the referral process and related information needed to assure clients can access the services identified. These are coordinated with other community resources identified by partnership staff and through use of the Washington State 2-1-1 website: <https://wa211.org/>.

In addition, Northwest Workforce Council and partner staff regularly attend scheduled Community Resource Network meetings. These meetings include representation from a broad network of community service providers, faith-based organizations, healthcare providers, transit providers and others. A feature of each meeting is sharing information on available community resources. For example, energy assistance availability or transportation vouchers offered by faith-based organizations. Partner staff attending assures that as new support service resources are identified they are reported at WorkSource all staff meetings and included on DAWN for access by partner staff.

Wagner-Peyser Service Coordination

As described elsewhere in this plan, NWC convenes multiple partnership tables to ensure the workforce system operates as a well-aligned and integrated system. NWC articulates its expectation for the system to function in this manner through policy, guidance, and quality standards and monitors progress through its Board Committees.

ESD is co-located in each of the region's WorkSource Centers, provides Basic Career Services as outlined under WIOA. These services are available in person, through on-line video platforms, as well as through chat messaging in the WorkSourceWA platform. ESD has representation on the region's Northwest Workforce Partner Management Team which includes representation of all system partners, WorkSource Operations Group, and other ad hoc task teams as projects or product needs are identified. Staff use the regional knowledge management system - DAWN, and attend regular Center-based All Staff meetings to improve coordination of activities.

Title II Coordination

The Council, through its board structure, partnership tables and ongoing service delivery design activities regularly engages adult education and literacy providers throughout the four-county region to coordinate Title I services with those available under Title II. Title II providers include Bellingham

Technical College, Whatcom Community College, Skagit Valley College, and Community Action of Skagit County.

Those enrolled in Title I services who have not yet achieved a high school diploma or equivalency (GED), or do not have the basic skills necessary to succeed in further vocational training or to otherwise meet the needs of local employers are regularly referred to Title II partners for adult basic education or literacy services as part of their service plan. Likewise, the adult education and literacy services partners refer students participating in their educational activities to NWC for the range of workforce preparation activities available through WIOA title.

For example, young adults who lack either a high school credential or GED, as well as work experience or work references, receive complementary services such as a paid Internship through NWC and Title I funds, while engaged in basic skills training at a partner adult education provider. Whatcom Community, Skagit Valley and Bellingham Technical Colleges offer programs such as High School 21+, to support out-of-school young adults and adults 21 and older in completing basic skills toward earning a high school diploma, with options for also earning college credit. Title I services are available to support such students with additional vocational training when basic skills levels permit.

The NWC and Title II partners have worked collaboratively since 2016 to complete discussion and review of each partner's Title II Plans when those plans are renewed. Partners submit the plans to NWC staff who review the plans for alignment with WIOA Plans and One-Stop MOUs. Partners have agreed to follow that process as Title II plans are prepared for submission going forward.

Serving People with Disabilities

The Northwest Workforce Development area has held a partnership table regarding improved access and services to people with disabilities that convened and met regularly throughout the duration of the Workforce Investment Act. The products and outcome of that team included:

- Provision of Reasonable Accommodation, Reasonable Modification, and Auxiliary Aids and Services to Persons with Disabilities Policy
- Procedural desk guides
- Regular accessibility reviews (architectural and programmatic) of the WorkSource Centers
- Identification and provision of direct service staff training
- Technical Assistance
- Marketing materials for job seekers with disabilities
- Competencies for Disability Specialists

In order remain contemporary and meet the requirements of WIOA, the team expanded its scope and membership through a LWDB Advisory Committee Staff from Division of Services for the Blind has joined this partnership team. Ongoing members include: NWC Board Member and DVR supervisor, DVR counselors, the NWC's Equal Opportunity Officer, the WorkSource Regional Manager, Disabled Veteran Outreach Program Staff, Accessibility Resource Specialists from the Community and Technical Colleges, and Employment Security Staff. Meeting notices are posted on the Northwest Workforce Council Board web site and other community meetings.

Work completed through includes:

- Created a comprehensive access review tool to review WorkSource Centers against both compliance requirements and a set of customer service standards
- Developed Partnership Standards for creating accessible documents (meets WAG 2.0).
- Completed a comprehensive inventory of the resources and created resources where none existed that assist staff in serving/advising any customer around issues of access for all customer groups, including those with disabilities.

This work resulted in a well-organized, easily accessible catalog of materials available on the Dynamically Aligned Workforce Network (DAWN), the partnership intranet site for knowledge management. Included are: WorkSource access tools, resources, and desk guides that are conveniently organized and enable all staff to readily access necessary information.

In addition to this partnership team, the Northwest Workforce Council and the local DVR offices in Bellingham, Mt. Vernon, and Oak Harbor fully support the statewide agreement, Shared Vision, Values, & Principles of Collaboration between DSHS Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DSHS/DVR) and Washington Workforce Association (WWA). This cooperative agreement outlines shared vision and values in providing services to job seekers with disabilities and principles of collaboration which outlines the roles and responsibilities of each partner. NWC will use this agreement as a model for additional state and local entities that wish to enter a cooperative agreement to improve the employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

Title I Procurement Process

The Council will secure providers in compliance with Washington State and Federal procurement policies, as well as the Council procurement policy WIOA 01-23.

The Council will utilize a One Stop Operator secured through an open competitive procurement process as described in those policies. For Program Years 2024-2025, and as permitted by 20 CFR 679.410(b) and 20 CFR 681.400(a), Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker Career Services, as well as Youth Services, will be provided directly by the Northwest Local Workforce Development Board (NW LwDB) Staff as approved by the local board and CLEO. The Council has a successful history of providing Youth services and Adult and Dislocated Worker Career Services directly. The Council will follow State, Federal and local policy directives in securing providers for those services through the period of this Plan.

Should State and Federal policies require competitive procurement for Youth and/or Adult and Dislocated Worker providers, the Council may seek to participate as an applicant, and if so, would follow the Council's WIOA 01-23 process to avoid any potential or perceived conflict of interest.

Provision of adult and dislocated worker training services

Adult and Dislocated Worker classroom training services are provided through Individual Training Accounts (ITA). Agreements with educational institutions are established, unless one of several exceptions specified in WIOA Section 680.320 apply.

Individual Training Accounts (ITA) will be issued pursuant to NWC Policy 01-10 which describes all requirements including that training supports in-demand occupations and is provided by institutions on the Eligible Training Provider List. NWC's standard ITA procedures ensure that the trainee explores training provider options and states on their application why they have chosen the specific training provider.

On-the-Job and customized training may be provided by employers through a contract with the Adult and Dislocated Worker service provider according to the NWC Policy 01-26 OJT. NWC and regional training partners have a successful history of providing incumbent worker training. Incumbent worker training will be explored under the WIOA local options and a policy will be developed if the option is chosen.

WorkSource integrated technology systems

WIOA IB, Wagner Peyser, Trade Act, and Labor and Industry staff that work out of a WorkSource Center have all implemented the state Management Information System (MIS) system to record basic and individualized support and training services. In the Northwest, no local partners have entered into data sharing agreements and opted in to use the state MIS system.

The WorkSource Centers implemented the new statewide WorkSourceWA.com job match and case management system. WIOA IB and Wagner-Peyser funded services use the system for eligibility determination, register participants, document services and outcomes, and document case notes. WIOA IB programs continue to maintain business practices for program forms. As system improvements have occurred, staff are entering business services as appropriate.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

The LWDB values Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) and takes action to remove or reduce barriers. The focus here is on the system integration so that all job seekers have access to information, services and programs. This section outlines the values expressed by the LWDB, leadership and staff, how they are articulated in policy and procedure and how they are operationalized within our system. Concrete examples illustrate how values are made actionable and then saturated within the system. The Northwest's Quality Plan includes supporting staff to develop as professionals so that they meet the needs of diverse populations. This section concludes with NWC's planning for accountability and continuous quality improvement in serving diversity. The Northwest has a LWDB Committee that attends to DEI.

Expressed Commitment Senior leadership in the Northwest Partnership values and recognizes:

- Diversity both strengthens the partnership's cultural vitality while increasing innovations and effectiveness. Many local businesses express value in a diverse workforce, are open to learning

more about the talent pool of qualified job seekers, and understand diversity helps drive positive business results.

- Eliminating barriers that prevent full participation results in equity: fair treatment, access, and opportunity.
- Inclusion involves creating environments where an individual or group can be and feel welcomed, respected, and supported.

These values are embedded in the Northwest Workforce Council’s Framework for Doing Business and in the Quality Standards embedded in the Council’s WorkSource Center Certification process (notably, the application). They are addressed by leaders across the partnership as evidenced by the time and attention given to hire, train, and support a diverse workforce that provides services to a diverse public. Front line staff are included in developing strategies to meet goals, provide effective, targeted outreach, and develop service improvements.

Policy and Procedures

Management staff review, with intention, the WIOA IB and WorkSource policies to ensure that policies and procedures are culturally responsive, create no adverse impacts, and support the merits of DEI as outlined above.

System policies and procedures include:

- Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the Implementation of WIOA. The MOU agreement provides shared definitions, values, and services expectations across the partnership and with each partner entity regarding access and equal, effective, and meaningful participation by all individuals, including those with barriers.
- The MOU specifically addresses access as follows: “Access to the services provided through the WorkSource Centers and at all partner organization locations is essential to meeting the requirements of WIOA. Job candidates, workers, and businesses must be able to access all information and participate in services relevant to them via visits to physical locations as well as in virtual spaces. Council has established a regional committee to assist and ensure the workforce development system is providing unrestricted customer access, including to WIOA’s prioritized individuals with barriers to employment.”
- Integrated Front-End Service Policy. This policy articulates a front-end assessment for all job seekers in a WorkSource center so that they may access appropriate services, information, and programs.
- Customer Concern and Complaint Resolution Policy. This policy informs staff of the processes when a customer has a concern or complaint so that issues may be promptly addressed, and staff understand and inform customers of their rights to file a complaint.
- Equal Opportunity and Non Discrimination Policy 1036
- Reasonable Accommodations. This policy outlines processes to ensure that customers with disabilities are afforded the same opportunities as other job seekers.
- Priority of Service for Veterans and Eligible Spouses. This policy outlines staff and agency responsibilities for implementing priority of service for qualified programs.
- WorkSource Staff Protocols. This comprehensive document was updated in 2019. It articulates values, protocols, and procedures in each certified WorkSource Center. A section is dedicated

to reasonable accommodation, which outlines the philosophy of policy and practice: “To create an inviting and inclusive environment where all persons have equal access to Center services.”

- The Regional Safety Plan attends to the needs of individuals with disabilities.
- 508 Compliance Style Guide. This document outlines standards and provides guidelines for creating accessible documents, presentations, and websites.
- Standards for Creating Accessible Documents was adopted by in 2019.

Governance Structure

LWDB Committees

WIOA encourages local boards to include in their governance structure advisory committees that provide information or propose strategies to assist the Board in achieving goals. The Committees attending to access and DEI is chaired by a Council member and consists of representatives of partner programs, community organizations, and the general public.

Of key import to Board committees is to highlight and sustain a focus not only on physical accessibility, but equal attention be given to programmatic accessibility. In delving into issues of programmatic accessibility, the LWDB has redesigned the internal, comprehensive, Center Access Review Guide. This guide clearly highlights programmatic access criteria. This is described below under center certification process.

The Committee also completed a comprehensive inventory of the resources that assist staff in serving/advising any customer around issues of access for all customer groups. This work resulted in a well-organized, easily accessible catalog of materials available on, DAWN. Included are: WorkSource access tools, resources, and desk guides that are conveniently organized and enable all staff to readily access necessary information. Staff within the WorkSource system is also trained regarding the resources available within the system to promote access for individuals with disabilities. This includes referrals to college Accessibility Resources Specialists, Disabled Veteran Outreach Counselors, and Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors. This catalog of resources is reviewed annually for updates by the partnership’s WorkSource Operations Group.

Center Certification Process

A section of the certification application requires the system’s centers to identify and illustrate how access is ensured. It requires a deliberative response on actions taken to improve customer access to basic and individualized services.

Within the three-year certification cycle, each Center must have had a comprehensive access review utilizing the Access Review Guide. The review is conducted by a team representing multiple partners in the system. The review includes compliance requirements (e.g. WIOA Section 188, Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, Equal Opportunity requirements outlined in the states non-discrimination plan). Areas under review contain standards and assessment probes for:

- Timeliness and responsiveness in service provision

- Service connections
- Customer communications
- Outreach standards
- Cultural and physical environment

The results of the comprehensive access review are provided to the LWDB Committee and the Partnership Management Team to resolve any issues that may arise. The reports for each center are included in the Centers' certification application.

The Certification Team, when determining a Center certified and meeting the standards to operate under the WorkSource brand, provides a technical assistance report to include in WorkSource Quality Improvement Plan. Many items on the plan have been addressed or are in process. Items in process include:

- Bolster techniques for current staff development and new staff orientation to Center systems and partner involvement. An orientation to the workforce development system has been generated and suggests items which should be shared with staff on an annual and ongoing basis.
- Customer focus group sessions are expected as an ongoing method of feedback from job seekers, local businesses, and partners. Focus groups are scheduled to occur at least once per certification cycle.
- Utilizing a data dashboard, contributed to and accessible by all partners is necessary to system oversight. System partners currently submit available performance, demographic, and customer feedback data to NWC staff, who in-turn compile and report the information to the Board. NWC staff are currently working on a system dashboard, so that data can be accessed in real time.

Expanding ADA Compliance

The LWDB will improve its current system and procedures and continue to promote access and provide services to individuals with disabilities thus ensuring compliance with Section 188 and the following:

American with Disabilities Act of 1990 and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008

Accessibility of facilities, programs and services occurs through a variety of formal, regularly scheduled activities. As mentioned earlier, these reviews occur with a predictable cycle that aligns with Center certification. Additionally, the Equal Opportunity Officer conducts an EO review of each center every year. Elements of this review include monitoring for compliance of all nine elements of the Nondiscrimination Plan, accessibility, and the provision of reasonable accommodation and modifications. The EO Officer evaluates the LWDB's Policies and procedures to ensure programmatic access.

Technology

WorkSource Northwest Career Centers maintain assistive technologies to aid persons with a disability in accessing the resources of the one-stop system. Staff familiarization with the technology is

maintained through short, intermittent, hands-on demonstrations conducted by DVR partner staff in the centers' All Staff meetings and via web-based instruction on staffs' knowledge management system, DAWN. Working with the State Equal Opportunity Team and other WDAs, plans are in place to secure JAWS (Software application Job Access with Speech which is used by people who are blind) and create more accessibility features in the accessible work stations.

Materials for Individual with Disabilities

A commitment to universal design is expressed through a standard review process for any new print or media material are accessible. The Northwest Workforce Council developed document accessibility guidelines as an instructional aid for staff so that staff develop materials that work for everyone. Each Center has copies of Your Accessible Career Resource Center brochure, in English and Spanish, prominently displayed which outlines how to request reasonable accommodations.

Staff Training and Support

New staff is oriented to policy and an array of desk guides, tools, links, and on-line training hosted on the partnership's knowledge management system, DAWN. The region has a robust policy, in place since 2004: Provision of Reasonable Accommodation, Reasonable Modification, and Auxiliary Aids and Services to Persons with Disabilities. The Equal Opportunity (EO) training is scheduled twice per year. New staff and those who have not participated in EO training within the prior two years attend these training sessions. New staff who have a wait time are instructed to access the training materials and Equal Opportunity video housed on DAWN.

DAWN, the region's knowledge management system for workforce partners, includes a self-paced, online curriculum, ADA Building Blocks. Other disability-related resources and important processes include guidance for requesting an accommodation, FAQ's for service animals, and available assistive technologies. The region's Competencies for Workforce Development Professionals includes a competency on diversity and another for Disability Specialist.

Services, System Improvements, Projects

This section provides illustrations where the LWDB turns dialogue and intention into action. The LWDB focuses on key work processes and innovations with the aim of creating value for the customer and achieving our goals.

Inclusive Environments

Specific attention is consistently given to creating an inclusive environment, including the most recent remodels of two centers. The result was inviting spaces for customers; staff workstations were reorganized to be more available to assist customers. Training rooms were designed to be highly mobile allowing numerous formats that accommodate both learning designs and the needs of individuals.

Upon completion of the remodels, Whatcom and Whidbey both hosted Open House events to partners and the public to familiarize agency staff and the general public about WorkSource services and programs.

Expanded Workshop Offerings

The LWDB will continue to assess need and demand for service options. Spanish instructed workshop offerings have expanded to four: Resume Writing, Skills Discovery, Preparing for Interviews, and Search Smart.

WorkSource cocreated the Fresh Start workshop materials in collaboration with three community and technical colleges, the Northwest Indian College, Goodwill, and Community Action of Skagit County for delivery in any/each of those locations, mitigating the frequency with which services to job seekers with conviction history are eliminated due to staffing or budget reductions.

Itinerant Desk

In order to increase access to system partner services, the itinerant desk was piloted in Whatcom in 2018 and expanded to Whidbey and Skagit the following year. The itinerant desk is a specific space in or near the resource center where customers can access, on a predictable schedule, any of the WIOA mandated employment and training programs as well as some voluntary programs. The partner program representative is responsible for accurately maintaining its calendar on DAWN. This ensures that staff can accurately refer customers to a staff while onsite. Staffing of partner services is marketed to jobseekers through the WorkSourceWA calendar of events. While the COVID pandemic ceased the staffing of the itinerant desk, plans are in place and partners are scheduling time back in the Centers.

Professional Development

Workforce Professionals represent the diversity we serve. Nearly all the 14 targeted populations outlined in WIOA are employed as professionals providing services to job seekers and business. We capitalize on staff insights, and knowledge is shared during the Center Use meetings that occur twice per month at each center. This meeting time and space provides opportunity to incorporate unique views into providing services that our customers value. It also provides opportunity to have shared learning experiences, thus blurring the lines between partner organizations and promoting service integration.

In order to effectively serve any customer group, training includes foundational aspects for the profession. Staff are introduced to the 12 Competencies for Workforce Professionals (located on DAWN). Training highlights include:

- The Career Development Process
- Creating Accessible Documents
- Customer Service Principles
- Motivational Interviewing
- Effective communications
- Introduction to Assistive Technology (with hands on demonstration)
-
- Human Centered Design
- ADA building blocks (self-paced, web-based instruction)
- Disability Etiquette
- Gender Identity
- Equal Opportunity
- De-escalation techniques

Accountability

The ability to collect data, analyze to assess performance and effectiveness, and to share that information system wide are essential to improving system performance. The current MIS system restricts our ability to perform this type of analysis. While staff collect and input data, the ability to mine the data or generate meaningful reports currently does not exist. This will be a focus area when the ability to mine reliable data for reporting from the state MIS system becomes available.

The LWDB deploys other strategies for collecting data to analyze the system and services.

- English and Spanish job seeker and business comment card are made available online, embedded as a link in emails, and provided in a hard copy version. Results are compiled and analyzed quarterly and are posted in the centers and provided to staff. This data contains a specific question regarding ease of access.
- Exit surveys are conducted annually at each Center where 100% of individuals visiting the center are asked to complete a customer satisfaction survey.
- During the Equal Opportunity Center reviews, job seekers are interviewed with specific probes regarding feeling welcomed, the person's view of accessibility, and the quality of services.

Board Composition and Compliance

Please see **Attachment E** to provide a list of current workforce board members and indicate how the membership of the board complies with WIOA requirements.

Section 4. Performance Accountability

The Northwest Area's performance accountability system is consistent with the accountability provisions of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) as defined by the State and the Department of Labor's regulations and guidelines. The Council relies on the information collected and reported through the two primary sources:

- Statewide management information systems
- The data and post-program outcomes collected and reported by the state Workforce Board and the Employment Security Department to satisfy the federal WIOA Common Indicators requirement.

The Council also analyzes and applies the results of its continuous quality improvement methods, which include performance data, customer flow data, customer surveys, comment cards, and focus groups.

The purposes of the performance review and accountability system are to improve performance; provide quality and effective services to customers; and assist the Council in overseeing the one-stop (WorkSource) system programs, including WIOA Title IB programs. The Council carries out its performance accountability responsibilities on a regular and timely basis through a LWDB Committee, which receives and reviews local WIOA levels of performance on federal Common Indicators. This committee is responsible for reviewing the performance information provided by the state Workforce Board, Employment Security Department, WIOA Core Program partners, as well as data collected by the Council either through MIS or its continuous quality improvement processes. The Council then

incorporates the findings and conclusions of these efforts in its strategic planning, initiating timely and effective performance-based consequences that may include incentives, improvement plans, or sanctions.

Northwest Workforce Council was able to review the performance of WIOA Title IB and Title III programs throughout its strategic planning process to assist in determining strategic goals and strategies for the workforce development system. WIOA Title II and Title IV programs have not been able to report performance data at the regional level to date; only annual state level data are available. To improve performance, meet customer needs and develop a world-class workforce, it has set goals and strategies that include skills standards, competency attainment, system integration, lifelong learning, and a commitment to continuous quality improvement.

The Council believes its strategies will strengthen the services, improve outcome performance and develop the necessary skill level needed by workers and the employers in today's work environment. The Council will continue to evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies in relation to local labor market needs, demographics of the current and emerging workforce, the outcomes achieved by the participants, and customer feedback. The Council will, if necessary, revise its strategies if the labor market needs, performance or customer feedback determines an expansion or change is necessary.

The Council recognizes the value and benefit of management indicators to track and predict performance and works closely with its partners to track and report common measures across the four core WIOA workforce development programs. The Council's LWDB Committee has continually refined its Northwest Workforce System Quarterly Performance Report to improve its usefulness as a performance oversight tool. The report includes measures of importance to the Council and the one stop system which include:

- DOL federal common measure performance of programs operated by WorkSource Northwest partner organizations
- WIOA training investment
- WIOA fiscal summary
- Competitive workforce grants and awards by key sector
- One stop customer flow
- Business and job seeker satisfaction
- Unemployment rates, and other significant workforce system issues or accomplishments of the quarter.

The report provides timely insight into performance attainment and aids the Council in its oversight role to ensure the region's programs meet performance goals.

The Council has developed a comprehensive tracking system for WIOA Title 1B performance for Youth, Adult, and Dislocated Worker programs. The Youth, Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs are designed to meet the Common Performance Measures with entry into employment 2nd and 4th quarter, earnings, skill gains, and credentials. Employer measures are under development.

WorkSource Northwest staff work actively with secondary and post-secondary vocation education programs to enhance all partners' performance on State core and common measures. At the post-secondary level, the WorkSource staff actively engage with the local colleges' Worker Retraining staff to coordinate resources and services to dislocated workers, increasing retention in training and employment outcomes after training completion. NWC coordinates with the State Opportunity Grant program that supports low-income adults to train for high-wage, high-demand careers. Staff meet and identify individual students that need additional assistance and provide resources and services that help the student complete their training program past the point of Opportunity Grant support.

The State's Workforce Board establishes criteria and performance levels and maintains the system that reports training services provider eligibility and performance. This information provides useful baseline data for reviewing the performance of other workforce development programs.

Continuous Quality Improvement in WorkSource Operations

Northwest Workforce Council, with agreement of the chief local elected official and in accordance with its WIOA mandate, designates and certifies one-stop Career Center operators and those sites wishing to become, or remain, a part of the WorkSource-Northwest one-stop system. The Council is authorized to; 1) approve; 2) approve provisionally with a required plan of action to address deficient areas; 3) or deny an application. A technical assistance guide is sent that identifies both strengths and opportunities for improvement. Subsequent applications are reviewed to assure the Council's recommendations have been addressed and the expected quality system continues to mature in sophistication and deployment. Certification is for a three-year term.

The certification process is managed by the NWC Board's Certification Team Committee, whose membership consists of representatives from organized labor and private industry. The full Council membership acts upon the Committee's recommendations. In 2017, the Certification Team members conducted a review and completed an improvement cycle of the Council's certification materials and process. The updated process and improved application materials were approved by the Council in December 2017.

Operators and the sites they operate must represent the highest standards of quality in the delivery of employment and training services. Any entity wishing certification must demonstrate processes, practices, and performance outcomes that meet or exceed a set of quality standards based upon the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award criteria:

Leadership

A commitment to excellence in the WorkSource system is modeled and shaped by strong public and private leadership. The Council provides the workforce development system with effective private-sector led oversight of the regional system, while agency leaders work collaboratively to provide active and supportive management to achieve system goals. Senior leadership is directly involved in creating and sustaining common values, organizational directions, performance expectations, and customer focus. Leaders remove barriers, which deter innovation and quality improvement.

Strategic Planning

WorkSource is managed in accordance with the Council's regional workforce and operations plans, WorkSource system policies, and regional protocols. The Council's plan focuses on ensuring quality and results. WorkSource Northwest one-stop operator(s) develop and use a Quality Plan that demonstrates to the Council strategies for achieving its Framework for Doing Business. The Quality Plan sets strategies and objectives for the next one to three years, while containing clear and measurable implementation steps in support of the Council's Regional Workforce Plan.

Customer Focus

The WorkSource system is based upon an unwavering focus on the needs of its business and job seeker customers. Services are shaped and assessed by attention to customer needs and associated adjustments to strategies, processes, and products. Customer satisfaction calls for the use of relevant data and information as an integral piece of the organization's performance. The Council requires the solicitation and applied use of customer feedback to inform continuous quality improvements.

Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge Management

In order to ensure that the WorkSource system is managed effectively, responds to customer needs, and produces results, consistent use of meaningful data is fundamental. Performance must be reviewed and analyzed, and that knowledge then used to lead performance improvement.

Workforce Focus

WorkSource sites are well-integrated, high-performance work organizations. Collaborating agencies reduce duplication of effort, empower staff to make decisions, and invest in staff development. Leadership ensures staff have the tools and skills they need to provide excellent service. Every staff member has the ability and authority to meet customer needs, either directly or, when appropriate, by helping the customer make the right connections to the expertise he or she seeks.

Operations Focus

WorkSource is a high quality, customer service enterprise. To ensure ongoing success, emphasis is placed on continuous improvement of key processes to reduce variability and rework and to improve performance. Agility is required to respond quickly, flexibly and effectively to changing requirements. Work systems and work processes are designed, managed, and improved to deliver customer value and achieve organizational success.

Results

In its oversight role of the workforce development system, Northwest Workforce Council reviews outcomes of the one-stop career centers and affiliated sites of WorkSource. Each partner organization and program within this system contributes to the system's overall performance, while each is responsible to its funding source for program results and compliance. Program and organizational performance are one aspect of performance results. The Council is also interested in ensuring the

collective system of one stop career centers and affiliated sites, known as WorkSource, contributes to the achievement of its strategic goals for the workforce development system.

Performance Based Accountability

Northwest Workforce Council is accountable for the results of WIOA Title I-B through a system of performance-based interventions, and shares in accountability for Title II Vocational Rehabilitation, Title III Wagner-Peyser and Title IV Adult and Family Literacy program results.

A workforce area is considered to not meet local performance measures when its performance, for individual indicators (measures) falls below 50% of the target for any one of the federal common performance indicators in a program year. Additionally, a workforce area is considered to not meet local performance measures when its performance falls below 90% of the target for the average score across each of the WIOA core programs or when its performance falls below 90% of the target for the average score of each WIOA core performance indicators across the WIOA core programs.

An area is at risk of failing a target if actual performance for any quarter (1st, 2nd, or 3rd) is less than the established programs' targets or if there is a significant decline in performance. In such a circumstance, the state will notify the Council's executive director and will schedule technical assistance with the appropriate local area staff.

Attachment A

Sector Partnership (See Section II)

Sector to be served: Advanced Manufacturing

Check one: X Regional

Phase	Timeline for each phase	Activities anticipated for each phase to be implemented. Please indicate how each LWDB will participate for sectors served in a multi-area region.	Anticipated outcome(s) for each phase	Measure(s) of progress for each phase
<p>Phase I: Prepare Team Goal: build buy-in & support</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Continue to coordinate, collaborate, and re-establish relationships with workforce system partners, especially K-12 school districts, post-secondary training and education programs.</p> <p>Continue to coordinate, collaborate, and re-establish relationships with the umbrella economic development agencies in the region who can help identify employer needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic Development Council for Island County (EDC for Island County) (ADO) • Economic Development Alliance of Skagit County (EDASC) (ADO) • Economic Development Council for San Juan County (EDC for San Juan County) (ADO) • Port of Bellingham (serves all of Whatcom County) (ADO) • Western Washington University’s Small Business Development Center (WWU SBDC) • Team Whatcom (economic development service provider consortium) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rebuild and reengage key stakeholder relationships. • Identify opportunities through relationship building. 	

<p>Phase II: Investigate <i>Goal: determine target industries</i></p>	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use data and input from partners listed in Phase I to determine industries within manufacturing that require or could benefit from workforce development services. • Re-establish regular partner meetings for information sharing purposes. • Continue to send staff to Team Whatcom monthly meetings. • Continue to work with WWU CEBR to have the most up to date econometric data. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather the most up to date information from those working directly with businesses. • Re-engage and re-establish relationships with partners. • To be working with up to date data. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to date qualitative and quantitative data on the advanced manufacturing. • Number of Team Whatcom meetings attended.
<p>Phase III: Inventory & Analyze <i>Goal: build baseline knowledge of industry</i></p>	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rely on ADOs, WWU SBDC to provide additional business intelligence and context based upon their business retention and expansion work as well as technical assistance. • Share knowledge with other partners such as PMT. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be up to date on the ever changing landscape of advanced manufacturing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regularly updated data on the manufacturing sector.
<p>Phase IV: Convene <i>Goal: build industry partnership, prioritize activities</i></p>	June 30, 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene an advanced manufacturing industry roundtable to identify problems and solutions with stakeholders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve alignment between employer needs and workforce programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of industry roundtables per 5-year planning period.
<p>Phase V: Act <i>Goal: implement ideas</i></p>	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build relationships with specific partners working within manufacturing to promote their manufacturing related apprenticeship and training programs including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working Waterfront Coalition of Whatcom County (Northwest Maritime Apprenticeship) • Bellingham Technical College (AJAC's Advanced Manufacturing Apprenticeship) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve coordination between partners. • Maximize usage of the apprenticeship slots. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of apprentices enrolled annually. • Number of apprenticeships completed

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with economic and workforce development partners to support and promote regional job fairs. • Support and participate in WAVE tours. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use tools available to support workforce development in the region. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • annually. • Number of students attending WAVE tours.
<p>Phase VI: Sustain & Evolve Goal: <i>grow the partnership</i></p>	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work to identify additional partners and opportunities within advanced manufacturing sub-sectors, especially those that are underserved or unserved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To expand the NWC’s impact in the region. • To be inclusive of all workers, job seekers, employers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of new partnerships , grants, and opportunities identified annually.

Sector to be served: Construction

Check one: X Regional

Phase	Timeline for each phase	Activities anticipated for each phase to be implemented. Please indicate how each LWDB will participate for sectors served in a multi-area region.	Anticipated outcome(s) for each phase	Measure(s) of progress for each phase
Phase I: Prepare Team Goal: build buy-in & support	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The same group of partners will be important to Construction as Attachment A – Advanced Manufacturing, Phase I. In addition, the NWC plans to engage builders Associations, such as the Building Industry Association of Washington (BIAW) as well as local county-level associations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rebuild and reengage key stakeholder relationships. Identify opportunities through relationship building. 	
Phase II: Investigate Goal: determine target industries	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use data and input from partners listed in Phase I to determine industries within manufacturing that require or could benefit from workforce development services. Re-establish regular partner meetings for information sharing purposes. Continue to send staff to Team Whatcom monthly meetings. Continue to work with WWU CEBR to have the most up to date econometric data. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gather the most up to date information from those working directly with businesses. Re-engage and re-establish relationships with partners. To be working with up to date data. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to date qualitative and quantitative data on construction Number of Team Whatcom meetings attended.
Phase III: Inventory & Analyze Goal: build baseline knowledge of industry	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rely on ADOs, WWU SBDC to provide additional business intelligence and context based upon their business retention and expansion work as well as technical assistance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be up to date on construction knowledge. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regularly updated data on the construction

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share knowledge with other partners such as PMT. 		sector.
Phase IV: Convene Goal: build industry partnership, prioritize activities	June 30, 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Convene a construction industry roundtable to identify problems and solutions with stakeholders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve alignment between employer needs and workforce programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of industry roundtables per 5-year planning period.
Phase V: Act Goal: implement ideas	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build relationships with specific partners working within manufacturing to promote their construction related apprenticeship and training programs including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bellingham Technical College (AGC's Apprenticeship) Work with economic and workforce development partners to support and promote regional job fairs related to the trades. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve coordination between partners. Maximize usage of the apprenticeship slots. Use tools available to support workforce development in the region. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of apprentices enrolled annually. Number of apprenticeships completed annually.
Phase VI: Sustain & Evolve Goal: grow the partnership	Ongoing	Work to identify additional partners and opportunities within construction sub-sectors, especially those that are underserved or unserved.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To expand the NWC's impact in the region. To be inclusive of all workers, job seekers, employers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of new partnerships, grants, and opportunities identified annually.

Sector to be served: Healthcare and social assistance

Check one: X Regional

Phase	Timeline for each phase	Activities anticipated for each phase to be implemented. Please indicate how each LWDB will participate for sectors served in a multi-area region.	Anticipated outcome(s) for each phase	Measure(s) of progress for each phase
Phase I: Prepare Team Goal: build buy-in & support	Ongoing, June 30, 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The same group of partners will be important to Construction as Attachment A – Advanced Manufacturing + Construction, Phase I. • In addition, the NWC plans to try to re-engage and establish relationships with regional industry-specific actors including PeaceHealth St Joe’s, Skagit Regional Hospital, and WhidbeyHealth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rebuild and reengage key stakeholder relationships. • Identify opportunities through relationship building. 	
Phase II: Investigate Goal: determine target industries	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use data and input from partners listed in Phase I to determine industries within healthcare and social assistance that require or could benefit from workforce development services. • Re-establish regular partner meetings for information sharing purposes. • Continue to send staff to Team Whatcom monthly meetings. • Continue to work with WWU CEBR to have the most up to date econometric data. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather the most up to date information from those working directly with businesses. • Re-engage and re-establish relationships with partners. • To be working with up to date data. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to date qualitative and quantitative data on healthcare. • Number of Team Whatcom meetings attended.
Phase III: Inventory & Analyze Goal: build baseline knowledge of industry	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rely on ADOs, WWU SBDC to provide additional business intelligence and context based upon their business retention and expansion work as well as technical assistance. • Rely on hospitals, healthcare providers, and training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be up to date on healthcare industry knowledge. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regularly updated data on the healthcare sector.

		<p>programs to provide up to date information regarding local employment and training situations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share knowledge with other partners such as PMT. 		
<p>Phase IV: Convene Goal: build industry partnership, prioritize activities</p>	June 30, 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene a healthcare and social assistance industry roundtable to identify problems and solutions with stakeholders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve alignment between employer needs and workforce programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of industry roundtables per 5-year planning period.
<p>Phase V: Act Goal: implement ideas</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build relationships with specific partners working within healthcare to promote their training and certification programs related to high-demand occupations in the industry: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whatcom Community College • WWU • Work with economic and workforce development partners to support and promote regional job fairs for the healthcare industry. • Support and participate in ECHO tours. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve coordination between partners. • Use tools available to support workforce development in the region. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of apprentices enrolled annually. • Number of apprenticeships completed annually.
<p>Phase VI: Sustain & Evolve Goal: grow the partnership</p>	Ongoing	<p>Work to identify additional partners and opportunities within healthcare and social assistance, especially those that are underserved or unserved or that work with unserved and underserved populations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To expand the NWC's impact in the region. • To be inclusive of all workers, job seekers, employers. 	<p>Number of new partnerships, grants, and opportunities identified annually.</p>

Attachment B

Regional Service Coordination Framework

Phase	Timeline for each phase	Activities anticipated for each phase to be implemented. Please indicate how each LWDB will participate for sectors served in a multi-area region.	Anticipated outcome(s) for each phase	Measure(s) of progress for each phase
Phase I: Prepare Team Goal: build buy-in & support	June 30, 2026	<p>The Partnership Management Team (PMT) comprised of local MOU organizations is now embedded as a major function of the local area structure and serves as the intermediary between the Council and the local WorkSource Partnership. Its key function is to carry out the local areas planes goals and objectives across the region by providing guidance to the local WorkSource System. The impact of COVID 19 has disrupted the stability of the PMT with a constant flux in partner representatives and inconsistent attendance.</p> <p>To reenergize the PMT the council will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review with partners and their representative responsibilities detailed the local Memorandum of Understanding. • Review the PMT core process and objectives to ensure they are relevant, current and meet the needs of each partner as well as the greater workforce system. • Refocus customer service efforts through surveys and focus groups to ensure service is meeting the needs of workers and customers in a constantly changing workforce environment. • Develop and implement a customer recognition system across the partnership for staff; and employers who actively engage in the system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every partner is fully informed of responsibilities and fully participates in ongoing meetings, • The work of the PMT is aligned to work toward plan goals and implement council strategies. • Customer service process and procedures are evaluated regularly and modifications made to improve access and quality of service. • A region wide fully developed annual customer recognition in place. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The PMT and Council review progress regularly through quarterly and annual reports.

<p>Phase II: Investigate Goal: determine target industries</p>	<p>June 30, 2026</p>	<p>Re-examine current coordinated partner coordinating process and procedures to customers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate worker customer flow to ensure system barriers are minimized and customers receive services needed. • Ensure services and access is made available to all worker customers of the local system including special groups. • Review referral processes with WorkSource Centers and to non-co-located partners of the system. • Ensure businesses receive the highest level of service available through annual job fairs, hiring events and specialized recruitment to new and expanding businesses; and ensure that both workers and business are appropriately informed of services and support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local WorkSource systems and processes are regularly reviewed and where necessary adjusted to ensure customers receive the highest level of service. • Demographic data collected by all partners and reviewed to ensure target groups and special populations are adequately served. • Customer referral processes reviewed and practices are in place to warm handoff to partner programs. • Increased participation of business as measured by number and ratings by workers and business. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The PMT and Council review progress regularly through quarterly and annual reports. • Number of business events is reported quarterly and annually; and each event assessed through customer survey and feedback for effectiveness and quality.
<p>Phase III: Inventory & Analyze Goal: build baseline</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a local system reporting system that measures effectiveness of each partner organization based on federal and state measures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner actual performance meets or exceeds federal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly, quarterly and annual performance reports

<p>knowledge of industry</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue the current customer feedback process that measures satisfaction of front-end services at each center through hard copy and electronic surveys. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> and state targets. Customer satisfaction is maintained at a satisfactory or above level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> submitted by partners and reviewed by the Council to evaluate actual performance against annual federal and state targets. Customer surveys to ensure customer satisfaction is at or above satisfactory (75%) levels.
<p>Phase IV: Convene Goal: build industry partnership, prioritize activities</p>	<p>June 30, 2026</p>	<p>See Phase I.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See Phase I. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See Phase I.
<p>Phase V: Act Goal: implement ideas</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local system strategies, goals and objectives originate from the Council and disseminated to staff and the PMT. The PMT creates a 2-year action plan, reviewed annually. The PMT meets bi-monthly and provides direction and guidance to local centers and partnership for implementation. The PMT is aided by a commissioned Operations Committee and Center staff to ensure initiatives are implemented. All work is reviewed annually by the council and are included in the Council's Certification process and reviewed by the Council's Certification Review Team. The PMT creates a two-year action plan to execute strategies and is guided by PMT charter. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Goals and initiatives are institutionalized in the NWC Structure. Monitoring, evolution of progress, intervention as needed are operationalized at stage to ensure progress toward targets and to maintain accountability at each level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress is reviewed and assessed monthly as appropriate at NWC board meetings and bi-monthly at PMT meetings. Outcome of initiatives are reviewed by WDC's Certification Committee to ensure compliance as part of the center certification cycle.

<p>Phase VI: Sustain & Evolve Goal: <i>grow the partnership</i></p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop succession-planning approach with PMT members and organizations. • Maintain a knowledge management system through DAWN and the Buddy system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To have less time with vacant positions on PMT. • To not lose institutional knowledge with partner and staff turnover. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Succession plan for PMT members and organizations.
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Attachment C

Regional Economic Development Coordination Plan

Phase	Timeline for each phase	Activities anticipated for each phase to be implemented. Please indicate how each LWDB will participate for a multi-area region	Anticipated outcome(s) for each phase	Measure(s) of progress for each phase
Phase I: Prepare Team Goal: build buy-in & support	--	Continue to coordinate, collaborate, and re-establish relationships with the umbrella economic development agencies in the region: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic Development Council for Island County (EDC for Island County) (ADO) • Economic Development Alliance of Skagit County (EDASC) (ADO) • Economic Development Council for San Juan County (EDC for San Juan County) (ADO) • Port of Bellingham (serves all of Whatcom County) (ADO) • Western Washington University’s Small Business Development Center (WWU SBDC) • Team Whatcom (economic development service provider consortium) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to identify new opportunities for collaboration. 	--
Phase II: Investigate Goal: determine options for coordinated service delivery	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with economic development entities to promote WorkSource services and resources, including OJT and incumbent worker programs. • Include ADOs and economic development service providers in industry roundtable discussions. • Gain information from ADOs based on their BR+E outreach work to business 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More employers and workers served. • Increase the number of businesses aware of WorkSource services and resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of partners promoting WorkSource services. • Number served due to partner referral.

<p>Phase III: Inventory & Analyze <i>Goal: build baseline knowledge</i></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the ADOs, WWU SBDC, and WWU’s Center for Business and Economic Research (CEBR) to regularly collect, analyze, and share economic, market, and workforce data. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Work with partners to identify a data lead. ○ Work to standardize and simplify data profiles across counties. ○ Work with the ADOs to promote Northwest WDA regional data in addition to county level data, as economic and workforce development are regional in nature. • Coordinate between organizations and agencies where possible so as to not duplicate data analysis and trends forecasting efforts. • Work to make data analysis and trends approachable to non-experts, limiting industry-specific jargon where possible. • Explore options for a shared regional Economic and Workforce Data Dashboard, with county breakdown options. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased public knowledge about the Northwest’s economic system and its needs. • Reduced efforts and time to collect and share the same data points. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free, easily accessible, and simple economic and labor force data, reports, and studies for employers, workers, and other stakeholders. • Data-driven annual report to the board (and shared with partners) of the region’s economic development activities most closely associated with workforce issues.
<p>Phase IV: Convene <i>Goal: build partnership, prioritize activities</i></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene or support partners in convening industry roundtables that include economic development service providers and other workforce system partners. • Maintain NWC Board cross-pollination with regional ADO Directors. • Work with ADOs to identify overlap between their Strategic Goals (CEDs) and the NW Regional Strategy. • Work with the Center for Inclusive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Re)build relationships with ADO Directors. • Increased alignment between regional strategies. • Gain clarity in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of annual meetings with ADO Directors and staff. • Number of ADO Directors on NWC Board.

		<p>Entrepreneurship (CIE) and the Mt Vernon Chamber to aid in implementing diversity, equity, and inclusion goals related to servicing Spanish-speaking employers, workers, and job seekers.</p>	<p>the region on shared goals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased visibility of NWC to BIPOC businesses and workers. 	
<p>Phase V: Act Goal: <i>implement initiatives</i></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore options to create sub-committees or workgroups focused specific strategic goals. Explore options to collaborate with the ADOs to create county-level workforce Action Plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase alignment between NWC and ADOs. Increase active participation of board and partners in implementation . 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of workgroups or sub-committees related to implementing goals. Annual progress report to the board regarding goal implementation.
<p>Phase VI: Sustain & Evolve Goal: <i>grow the partnership</i></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue identify new opportunities for stakeholder involvement in projects and participation at formal tables. Continue to identify new partners who can serve growing employer and worker needs in a trauma informed, culturally appropriate way, with particular attention to unserved and underserved populations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify partners who can meet new needs. Identify ways for partners and stakeholders to be meaningfully involved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of new partners engaged. Number of stakeholder engagements.

Attachment D**1. Local One-Stop System**

Site	Type of Site (Comprehensive, Affiliate, or Connection)	Site Operator(s)
WorkSource Whatcom	Comprehensive	Baldoz Professional Services
WorkSource Skagit	Comprehensive	Baldoz Professional Services
WorkSource Whidbey	Comprehensive	Baldoz Professional Services
San Juan Career Center	Career Center	Northwest Workforce Council

2. WIOA Title I Service Providers

Dislocated Worker Program List all current and potential service providers in the area	Indicate service(s) provided by each			WIOA funded?
	Basic	Individualized	Training	
Northwest Workforce Council	X	X		X
NW Ironworkers			X	X
NW Carpenters Institute			X	X
Apprenticeship & Non-traditional Employment for Women (ANEW)			X	X
Western Washington Masonry Trades			X	X
Vocational Education Provider & Employers			X	X
Bellingham Technical College (Worker Retraining)			X	
Whatcom Community College (Worker Retraining)			X	
Skagit Valley College (Worker Retraining)			X	
Goodwill			X	
Community Action Skagit County (Adult Literacy)			X	X

Comments regarding the adequacy and quality of Dislocated Worker Services available:

For the past four years, the results of Dislocated Worker Basic and Individualized Services provided by Northwest Workforce Council have met or exceeded the core WIOA performance indicator targets. NWC contracts for projects and for individualized training with Community and Technical Colleges, private proprietary training organizations and with a number of Joint Apprenticeship Training Committees for pre-apprenticeship training, expanding access for dislocated workers to apprenticeship training. NWC also utilizes employers for On-the-Job (OJT) and Incumbent Worker Training. All have met or exceeded the core

WIOA performance indicator targets.

Adult Program List all current and potential service providers in the area	Indicate service(s) provided by each			WIOA funded?
	Basic	Individualized	Training	
Northwest Workforce Council	X	X		X
NW Ironworkers			X	X
NW Carpenters Institute			X	X
Apprenticeship & Non-traditional Employment for Women (ANEW)			X	X
Western Washington Masonry Trades			X	X
Vocational Education Provider & Employers			X	
Bellingham Technical College (Worker Retraining)			X	
Whatcom Community College (Worker Retraining)			X	
Skagit Valley College (Worker Retraining)	X	X		
Goodwill	X	X		
Community Action Skagit County (Adult Literacy)	X			
AARP	X	X		
DVR	X	X		

Comments regarding the adequacy and quality of Adult Services available:

For the past four years, the results of Adult Basic and Individualized Services provided by Northwest Workforce Council have met or exceeded the core WIOA performance indicator targets. NWC contracts for projects and for individualized training with Community and Technical Colleges, private proprietary training organizations and with a number of Joint Apprenticeship Training Committees for pre-apprenticeship training, expanding access for adults to apprenticeship training. NWC also utilizes employers for On-the-Job (OJT) and Incumbent Worker Training. All have met or exceeded the core WIOA performance indicator targets.

Youth Program List all current and potential service providers in the area	Indicate service(s) provided by each			WIOA funded?	Services for youth with disabilities?
	Basic	Individualized	Training		
Northwest Workforce Council	X	X	X	X	X
NW Ironworkers			X	X	X
NW Carpenters Institute			X	X	X
Apprenticeship & Non-traditional Employment for Women (ANEW)	X	X	X		X
Western Washington Masonry Trades	X	X	X	X	X

Vocational Education Provider & Employers	X	X			X
Lummi Indian Business Council	X	X	X	X	X
Northwest Youth Services		X			
Goodwill	X	X	X	X	X
DVR					
Community Action Skagit County		x			x
Cascade Job Corps Center	x	x	x		x

Comments regarding the adequacy and quality of Youth Services available:

For the past four years, the results of comprehensive Youth Services provided by Northwest Workforce Council have met or exceeded the core WIOA performance indicator targets. NWC contracts for projects and for individualized training with Community and Technical Colleges, private proprietary training organizations, and with a number of Joint Apprenticeship Training Committees for pre-apprenticeship training, expanding access for youth to apprenticeship training. NWC also utilizes employers for On-the-Job Training (OJT). All have met or exceeded the core WIOA performance indicator targets. Broad outreach within Northwest Region communities and agencies has expanded access to services to a diverse young adult population.

Attachment E

Official Name of Local Board: Northwest Workforce Council
Fiscal Agent: Northwest Workforce Council
Contact Name and Title: Marissa Cahill, CEO

Complete this table to demonstrate Board membership in compliance with WIOA:

Required categories	Name/Title/Organization*	Nominated by
Business majority (greater than 50% of all members)		
1. Business	Del McAlpine, All American Marine	Whatcom Chamber of Commerce
2. Business	Hart Hodges, Waycross Investments	Whatcom Chamber of Commerce
3. Business	Robin Plume, Plum Inc.	Whatcom Chamber of Commerce
4. Business	Terry Corrigan, Haskell	Whatcom Chamber of Commerce
5. Business	Tonja Myers, Lynden Christian Healthcare	Whatcom Chamber of Commerce
6. Business	Brian Ivie, Skagit Regional Health	Economic Development Alliance of Skagit County (EDASC)
7. Business	Mark Vorobik, EDCO Inc	EDASC
8. Business	John Sternlicht, EDASC	EDASC
9. Business	Kevin Corrigan, Nichols Brothers Boat Builders	Economic Development Council of Island County (EDCIC)
10. Business	Marcia Fakkema, Heritage Bank	EDCIC
Workforce (20% of members. Majority must be nominated by organized labor)		
1. Labor	Tammie O'Dell	Northwest Washington Central Labor Council (NWCLC)
2. Labor	Lori Province	NWCLC
3. Comm. Based Org	Greg Winter, Opportunity Council	Whatcom Opportunity Council
4. K-12	Alerd Johnson, Island Co School District	Oak Harbor School District
Education & Training		
1. Title II Adult Ed	Kathi Hiyane-Brown, Whatcom Community College	Whatcom Community College Board of Trustees
2. Higher Education	Dave Paul, Skagit Valley College	Skagit County Commissioners
Government		
1. Wagner-Peyser	Jessica Barr, Employment Security Dept.	ESD
2. Voc Rehab	Megan Grundbrecher, DSHS/DVR	DSHS/DVR
3. Economic Development	Sharon Sappington, EDC of Island County	Island County Commissioners

Attachment G

This section of the Local Integrated Workforce Plan serves as the LWDB’s certification that it complies with all required components of Title I of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and Wagner-Peyser Act and must be signed by authorized officials. Please customize this signature page to accommodate your CLEO structure (i.e., local areas that require more than one local chief elected official signature).

The Local Workforce Development Board for Northwest WDA (#3) certifies that it complies with all required components of Title I of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and Wagner-Peyser Act and plan development guidelines adopted by the State Workforce Development Board. The LWDB also assures that funds will be spent in accordance with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, Wagner-Peyser Act, and their regulations, written U.S. Department of Labor guidance implementing these laws, Office of Management and Budget circulars, and all other applicable federal and state laws and regulations.

DocuSigned by:
Satpal Sidhu
1192C7C18B664E3...

Local Chief Elected Official(s)

DocuSigned by:
Mark Vorobik
947855984F1B42A...

Local Workforce Development Board Chair

Attachment H

Public Comment

(See WIOA Sec. 108(b)(20))

Describe the Local Board’s public review and comment process, and how an opportunity is provided for various populations and groups such as representatives for business and labor organizations to participate. The description should specify the public comment duration and the various methods used to seek input into the plan prior to submission (e.g., web-posts, newspapers, e-mail, web-posting, events, forums, and plan development workgroups).

1. Northwest Workforce Council Board regularly updated

As outlined in the Board description found in Attachment E, the Council’s Board includes representatives from business, labor, local government, and economic and workforce development service providers. During the update process, the Executive Committee, Planning Committee, Regional Access Advisory Committee, and the Full Council Board were regularly updated and solicited for feedback and input during their normally scheduled meetings January – April 2024.

2. Northwest Workforce Council Board, Strategy Update Sub-Committee

A Regional Strategy Update Sub-Committee was formed to provide input and feedback in every part of the update process. The Regional Strategy Update Sub-Committee members included:

- Jessica Barr, North Sound Regional Director, Employment Security Department
- Peter Browning, County Commissioner, Skagit County
- Hart Hodges, Ph.D., President, Waycross Investment Management Company
- Lori Province, WIOA Labor Liaison, Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO

The Regional Strategy Update Sub-Committee convened to discuss various aspects of the strategy update three times. The Committee was survey for their availability and preferences for method of feedback. The group unanimously preferred Zoom meetings and opportunities to review and provide feedback via email. An agenda, meeting notes, and follow up feedback opportunities were provided for every meeting. The Sub-Committee was also provided and reviewed the initial timeline to completion for the document as well as a revised timelines on an as needed basis.

The main topics covered by meeting:

- Meeting #1: Introductions, discussed committee member interests and priorities, reviewed the first draft of key stakeholder survey questions.
 - The committee was also offered the opportunity to provide additional comment and feedback on the survey via email.
- Meeting #2: Discussed goals for the sub-committee, how the Council can be more innovative and prepare the future workforce and create opportunities for local people to stay in the region. A summary update on the data and trends analysis was provided, as well as additional discussion on the surveys. It was decided at this meeting to translate the worker, job seeker, and employer surveys into Spanish. The Sub-Committee also discussed what types of questions and feedback they were interested in getting from the Community Forum.
 - The committee was also offered the opportunity to provide additional comment and feedback via email.

- Meeting #3: Reviewed the survey responses to date and stakeholder outreach and communications work to promote the survey. Provided updated data on the key sectors of focus (advanced manufacturing, construction, healthcare). Also provided information on IT and Telecommunications in order to discuss emerging needs and trends. Discussed and reviewed Regional Sector Strategies, Regional Service Strategies, including the goals.
 - The committee was also offered the opportunity to provide additional comment and feedback on the Service Strategy goals via a survey.

The Review Sub-Committee was also offered the opportunity to provide feedback and comments on the Regional Strategy draft both before and during public comment, which began on Friday, April 5, 2024.

The Review Sub-Committee was provided an update regarding feedback from the State Workforce Board and ESD and comments received during the public comment period.

3. Community Forums and Focus Groups

a. Virtual Community Forum on February 22, 2024, 10-12am via Zoom, no registration required.

This two-hour community forum was broadly advertised via the NWC Board website (announcement posted Feb 1st), emails to partners (Feb 1st, 9th, 14th) and partners sharing in their newsletters and social media. The event was posted on EDASC's event calendar (Skagit), and Sustainable Connections event calendar (Northwest Washington). Three out of the four ADOs posted information regarding the Community Forum on their social media at least once, most reposted the opportunity in several locations. Nine individuals attended the session, representing employers, workers, and local government staff. The Forum was asked to provide feedback on Regional Sector Strategies, Regional Service Strategies, Council goals, and had a roundtable discussion.

The roundtable discussion was set with the following questions: What is the future of work? How are AI and other tech issues changing workforce needs? How has COVID-19 changed your service delivery, skills needs, and other work? What is the role of remote / hybrid work over the next four years? How can Northwest Workforce Council be more innovative, creative, and agile? How can we be innovative around training and partnership? How can we leverage funds? How would you like to be more involved in NWC's work in 2024-2028?

b. Team Whatcom on March 8, 2024, 11-12:30 via Zoom, a consortium of economic development service providers

This standing monthly meeting of economic development service providers in Whatcom County meets monthly to discuss issues, review priorities, and examine progress as it relates to the Whatcom County CEDS 2022-2026. The Whatcom County CEDS 2022-2026 has six overarching economic development goals, of which Goal #3 is workforce related. Workforce development had previously been identified as a priority topic for review and discussion in 2024 via a member survey in December 2023. 17 Team Whatcom members attended this session, which is almost the full membership. The Forum was asked to provide feedback on Regional Sector Strategies, Regional Service Strategies, Council goals, and had a roundtable discussion.

The roundtable discussion was set with the same questions as the Community Forum.

4. Stakeholder Surveys

A series of five surveys in English were developed in order to seek input and feedback from key stakeholder groups: job seekers, workers, employers, workforce system partners, and organizations that serve workers and job seekers. After consultation with the Review Sub-Committee, three of these

surveys were translated into Spanish: job seekers, workers, and employers. Extensive outreach to partners was conducted via email, with social media and newsletter templates provided in both English and Spanish. The survey assets were sent out to the NWC Board and partners, including the four ADOs, all of who participated in the survey as workforce system partners, and helped distribute the survey through their business networks.

The survey was live and available for response from February 1, 2024 – March 31, 2024. The surveys were anonymous and asked no identifying questions of the respondents (e.g. name, gender, race, birthdate, business or employer name, etc.) in order to encourage more responses. Job-seeker and worker survey questions were adjusted to account for an 8th grade reading level.

Stakeholder surveys were developed to have overlapping subsets of questions. Employers were surveyed on strategic planning (investment priorities), skills needed, great challenges, youth employment, and quality jobs. Workers were surveyed on barriers and challenges to finding quality jobs, youth employment, and quality jobs. Job-seekers were surveyed on the same topics as workers. Workforce system partners were surveyed on strategic planning, skills needed, greatest employer challenges, credentialing, capacity building, youth employment, quality jobs, and future legislation impacting workforce development. Finally, organizations that serve job seekers and workers were surveyed on credentialing, youth employment, and quality jobs.

Stakeholder Survey Type - Language	Number of responses
Employer - English	22
Worker - English	12
Job Seeker - English	45
Orgs that serve workers + job seekers - English	9
Workforce system partners - English	22
Employer - Spanish	1
Worker - Spanish	0
Job-Seeker – Spanish	0

Figure 31: This table shows the surveys by type, language, and the number of responses for each.

Due to the low response rates for the Spanish surveys, additional outreach was extended to EDASC, WWU SBDC, the Mount Vernon Chamber, and the Center for Inclusive Entrepreneurship (CIE). Washington State Department of Commerce’s Community Liaison likewise recommended CIE and the Mount Vernon Chamber for additional outreach to this population.

One of the lessons learned from this is that while translations are a necessary first step in reaching unserved and underserved population, it is not sufficient on its own and requires trauma-informed, culturally appropriate, trust-based outreach. In discussion with staff experts at the WWU SBDC and CIE, this population of business owners and workers are unlikely to respond to emails or social media. CIE also noted that in their other survey work, they first have to establish trust-based relationships with each individual business owner or worker in order to make them feel comfortable with responding to a survey. This population is very unlikely to respond to surveys or emails from organizations or individuals they do not have personal experience with.

Additionally, it is important to note that a large segment of Northwest Washington’s population from Central and South America are actually not Spanish speakers at all. Many are Indigenous and either do not speak Spanish at all or Spanish may be their second language. During the Nooksack and Skagit River

floods in 2021, impacting two of the four counties in the Northwest WDA, FEMA translated emergency materials into Spanish, Russian, and Punjabi, Quechua, Mam, K'iche, Mixteco-Bajo, Mixteco Alto, and Triqui. FEMA worked on the Indigenous language translations through the Guatemalan and Mexican Consulates. Many workforce and economic development organizations in the region do not have the resources (staff or funding) to negotiate or translate materials into every language that is truly needed. Additionally for some Indigenous languages there are only one to two translators available in the entire United States.

5. Public Comment Period

A 30-day public comment was held from Friday, April 5, 2024 to Monday, May 6, 2024. The document was posted on the Northwest Workforce Council's Board website on Friday, April 5, 2024 with a link to the PDF and instructions to email comments.

In addition to posting on the website, an email was sent out to all Board members and NWC partners, including ADOs, announcing the opportunity for public comment and asking partners to please share the opportunity with their members, employees, or constituents. The NWC included two social media and email templates for partner convenience, one being an announcement and the other being a follow up reminder. Partners posted or emailed the announcement out to their networks at their convenience. The NWC received confirmation of sharing and/or comments from all four ADOs (Port of Bellingham, EDASC, the EDC for Island County, and the EDC of San Juan County). The Port of Bellingham also shared the opportunity to comment with Team Whatcom.

The NWC issued a press release to local newspapers announcing the public comment period. These news outlets included:

- Bellingham Herald
- Cascadia Daily News
- Skagit Publishing (Goskagit.com)
- San Juan Islander
- Whidbey News-Times

The press release was also posted on the website and the public comment period was also announced at the April 2024 Partnership Management Team meeting, the April 2024 Whatcom County Business and Commerce meeting, and the April 2024 Team Whatcom meeting.

Comments received were carefully evaluated by NWC consultant and staff, with every comment categorized, necessity and content of edit discussed, required edits were then assigned to staff and reviewed by all.

Attachment F

2024-2028 Local Integrated Workforce Plan Assurances

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Planning Process and Public Comment	References
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1. The local board has processes and timelines, consistent with WIOA Section 108(d), to seek input for the local plan's development. This includes providing representatives of businesses, labor organizations, education, other pivotal stakeholders, and the general public an opportunity to comment for a period not exceeding 30 days.	WIOA Sec. 108(d); 20 CFR 679.550(b)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2. The final local plan, and modification, is available and accessible to the public on a regular basis through electronic means and open meetings.	WIOA Sec. 107(e); 20 CFR 679.550(b)(5)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3. The local board has established procedures ensuring public access, including people with disabilities, to board meetings and information regarding board activities, such as board membership, meeting minutes, the appointment of one-stop operators, awarding of grants or contracts to service providers, and the local board's by-laws.	WIOA Sec. 107(e); 20 CFR 679.390 and 679.310
Required Policies and Procedures		References
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4. A written policy is established by the LWDB outlining potential conflicts of interest and resolutions. Entities with multiple roles under the LWDB have documented agreements with the LWDB and chief elected official (CEO), ensuring compliance with WIOA, pertinent OMB guidelines, and the State's conflict of interest policies.	WIOA Sec. 107(h); 20 CFR 679.430; WIOA Title I Policy 5405; WorkSource System Policies 1012 and 1025
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5. The LWDB affirms that required one-stop partners actively provide access to their programs through the one-stop delivery system, contribute to its maintenance, and participate consistently with local memoranda of understanding (MOU).	WIOA Sec. 121(b); 20 CFR 678.400
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6. The LWDB confirms the execution of MOUs with each one-stop partner detailing service provisions, costs and funding arrangements, referral methods, accessibility measures, especially for those with barriers, and periodic reviews at a minimum of every 3 years; and has provided the State with the latest version(s) of its MOU.	WIOA Sec. 121(c); 20 CFR 678.500; WorkSource System Policy 1013
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7. The LWDB, aligned with the CEO, affirms its selection of one-stop operators through a competitive process, ensuring their eligibility, transparency, and adherence to all WIOA regulations, including conflict of interest, service coordination, and stakeholder engagement, with full operational functionality achieved by July 1, 2017.	WIOA Sec. 121(d); 20 CFR 678.600; WorkSource System Policy 5404
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	8. The LWDB has or will negotiate and reach agreement on local performance measures with the local chief elected official(s) and Governor before the start of the program year, using the required objective statistical model.	WIOA Sec. 107(d)(9) and 116(c); 20 CFR 679.370(j) and 677.210
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	9. The LWDB has procurement policies and procedures for selecting one-stop operators and awarding contracts for youth, training, and career services under WIOA Title I, ensuring coordination with local educational entities, budgeting, accessibility compliance, and consumer choice in line with state, local, and WIOA mandates.	WIOA Sec. 107(d)(10); 121(d) and 123; 20 CFR 679.720(l-m); 679.410; 678.600-625 and 681.400; WIOA Title I 5404
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	10. The LWDB has policies and procedures for identifying and determining the eligibility of training providers and their programs to receive WIOA Title I individual training accounts and to train dislocated workers receiving additional unemployment insurance benefits via the state's Training Benefits Program.	WIOA Sections 107(d)(10), 122(b)(3), and 123; 20 CFR 679.720(l-m) and 679.380; WIOA Title I Policy 5611

	Required Policies and Procedures	References
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	11. The LWDB has written procedures for resolving grievances and complaints alleging violations of WIOA Title I regulations, grants, or other agreements under WIOA and written policies or procedures for assisting customers who express interest in filing complaints at any point of service, including, at a minimum, a requirement that all partners can identify appropriate staff contacts and refer customers to those contacts. All parties will be informed of these procedures, ensuring clarity and accessibility, especially for limited-English speaking individuals.	WIOA Sec. 181(c); 20 CFR 683.600; WorkSource System Policy 1012, Rev. 2 and 1025.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	12. The LWDB has assurances from its one-stop operator that all one-stop centers and, as applicable, affiliate sites have front-end services consistent with the state's integrated front-end service policy and their local plan.	WorkSource System Policy 1010 Revision 1
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	13. The local area has established at least one physical, comprehensive, full-service one-stop center ensuring access to specified career, training, employment services, and programs, including those from mandated one-stop partners with at least one title I staff member present, access during regular business days, accommodations for alternative hours where needed, and facilitates direct technological linkages where program staff isn't physically present.	WIOA Sec. 121(e)(2)(A); 20 CFR 678.305; WorkSource System Policy 1016
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	14. The LWDB ensures all one-stop centers, and Title I programs or activities are accessible both physically and programmatically to individuals with disabilities in accordance with 29 CFR part 38 and WIOA sec. 188 to include accessibility of facilities, services, technology and materials.	WIOA Section 188; 29 CFR Part 38; 20 CFR 652.8(j)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	15. The one-stop centers undergo certification at least once every three years, based on objective criteria set by the State board in consultation with chief elected officials and local boards. This certification process assesses the centers' effectiveness, physical and programmatic accessibility, and commitment to continuous improvement, in alignment with WIOA Section 121(g) and the requisite standards related to service coordination.	WIOA Sec.121(g); 20 CFR 678.800; WorkSource System Policy 1016
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	16. The local board certifies that in all determinations, including facility locations, related to WIOA Title I-financially assisted programs or activities, it neither employs standards nor procedures that lead to discrimination on prohibited grounds, nor does it take actions, directly or through other arrangements, that impair the objectives of the WIOA nondiscrimination and equal opportunity provisions. The board ensures all individuals have equitable access and benefits from one-stop services, without any form of discrimination.	WIOA Section 188; 29 CFR Part 38
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	17. The LWDB provides to employers the business services outlined in WorkSource System Policy 1014.	WorkSource System Policy 1014
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	18. The local board complies with the nondiscrimination provisions of Section 188, and assures that Methods of Administration were developed and implemented.	WIOA Section 188; 29 CFR 38; WIOA Policy 5402, Rev. 3; WorkSource System Policy 1012, Rev. 2
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	19. The local board collects and maintains data necessary to show compliance with nondiscrimination provisions of Section 188.	WIOA Section 185; 29 CFR 38; WIOA Policy 5402, Rev. 3; WorkSource System Policy 1012, Rev. 2

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	20. The LWDB complies with restrictions governing the use of federal funds for political activities, the use of the one-stop environment for political activities, and the local board complies with the applicable certification and disclosure requirements	WorkSource System Policy 1018; 2 CFR Part 225 Appendix B; 2 CFR Part 230 Appendix B; 48 CFR 31.205-22; RCW 42.52.180; TEGL 2-12; 29 CFR Part 93.100
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	21. The LWDB ensures that one-stop MSFW and business services staff, along with the Migrant and Seasonal Farm Worker program partner agency, will continue to provide services to agricultural employers and MSFWs that are demand-driven and consistent with ESD's mission.	WIOA Sec. 167; MSFW Services Handbook
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	22. The LWDB follows confidentiality requirements for wage and education records as required by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), as amended, WIOA, and applicable Departmental regulations.	WIOA Sec. 116(i)(3) and 185(a)(4); 20 USC 1232g; 20 CFR 677.175 and 20 CFR part 603
Administration of Funds		References
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	23. The LWDB has a written policy and procedures to competitively award grants and contracts for WIOA Title I activities (or an applicable federal waiver), including a process to be used to procure training services made as exceptions to the Individual Training Account process.	WIOA Sec. 108(b)(16); 20 CFR 679.560(a)(15); WIOA Title I Policy 5601; WIOA Sec. 134(c)(3)(G); 20 CFR 680.300-310
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	24. The LWDB has accounting systems that follow current Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) and written fiscal-controls and fund-accounting procedures and ensures such procedures are followed to insure proper disbursement and accounting of WIOA adult, dislocated worker, and youth program and the Wagner-Peyser Act funds.	WIOA Sec. 108(b)(15), WIOA Title I Policy 5230; WIOA Title I Policy 5250
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	25. The LWDB ensures compliance with the uniform administrative requirements under WIOA through annual, on-site monitoring of each local sub-recipient.	WIOA Sec. 184(a)(3); 20 CFR 683.200, 683.300, and 683.400- 410; WIOA Policy 5230
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	26. The LWDB has a local allowable cost and prior approval policy that includes a process for the approval of expenditures of \$5,000 or more for equipment requested by subcontractors.	2 CR Part 200; 20 CFR 683.200; WIOA Title I Policy 5260, Rev. 4
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	27. The LWDB has a written debt collection policy and procedures that conforms with state and federal requirements and a process for maintaining a permanent record of all debt collection cases that supports the decisions made and documents the actions taken with respect to debt collection, restoration, or other debt resolution activities.	WIOA Section 184(c); 20 CFR Part 652; 20 CFR 683.410(a), 683.420(a), 683.750; WIOA Title I Policy 5265
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	28. The LWDB has a written policy and procedures for ensuring management and inventory of all properties obtained using WIOA funds, including property purchased with JTPA or WIA funds and transferred to WIOA, and that comply with WIOA, Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM) and, in the cases of local government, Local Government Property Acquisition policies.	WIOA Sec.184(a)(2)(A); 20 CFR 683.200 and 683.220; OMB Uniform Admin. Guidance; (GAAP); WIOA Title I Policy 5407

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	29. The LWDB will not use funds received under WIOA to assist, promote, or deter union organizing.	WIOA Sec. 181(b)(7); 20 CFR 680.830-840.
	Eligibility	References
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	30. The LWDB has a written policy and procedures that ensure adequate and correct determinations of eligibility for WIOA-funded basic career services and qualifications for enrollment of adults, dislocated workers, and youth in WIOA-funded individualized career and training services, consistent with state policy on eligibility and priority of service.	20 CFR Part 680 Subparts A and B; proposed 20 CFR Part 681 Subpart A; WorkSource System Policy 1019, Rev. 8
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	31. The LWDB has a written policy and procedures for awarding Individual Training Accounts to eligible adults, dislocated workers, and youth receiving WIOA Title I training services, including dollar and/or duration limit(s), limits on the number of times an individual may modify an ITA, and how ITAs will be obligated and authorized.	WIOA Sec. 134(c)(3)(G); 20 CFR 680.300-330; WIOA Title I Policy 5601, Rev. 2
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	32. The LWDB has a written policy and procedures that establish internal controls, documentation requirements, and leveraging and coordination of other community resources when providing supportive services and, as applicable, needs-related payments to eligible adult, dislocated workers, and youth enrolled in WIOA Title I programs.	WIOA Sec. 129(c)(2)(G) and 134(d)(2); 20 CFR 680.900-970; 20 CFR 681.570; WorkSource System Policy 1019, Rev. 8