



SUCCESS STORIES

APRIL 2026 - JUNE 2026

FUELING WORKFORCE GROWTH TO
DRIVE BUSINESS SUCCESS



NWC Creating Career Pathways for Motivated Individuals

• WHATCOM

Francesca was referred to Northwest Workforce Council (NWC) through a partner, Bellingham Technical College (BTC), as someone in need of tuition assistance. She was completing her final year in the Instrumentation and Controls program and quickly connected with a coordinator.

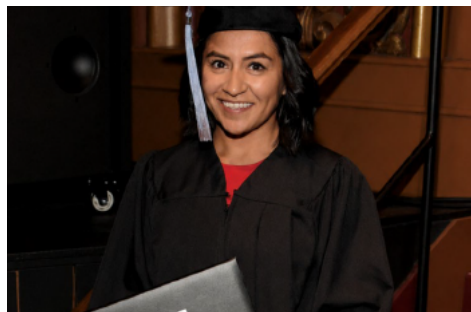
After a layoff in 2024, Francesca decided she needed to expand her knowledge and skillset within the manufacturing field to enter a more established career path. This occupation appeals directly to Francesca's voracious curiosity and eagerness to solve problems, and by expanding her credentials, she knew she would remain competitive in the local job market.

Francesca was enrolled in both WIOA I-B Adult and Dislocated Worker programs. She promptly completed a scholarship proposal and began receiving tuition assistance for her remaining quarters. In June of 2026, Francesca graduated from BTC's Instrumentation and Controls program with a cumulative GPA of 3.6. Furthermore, she was offered an internship position at PACCAR Inc. as an Instrumentation Technician.

Francesca reflected, "I'm excited about this career path because PACCAR really encourages continued education, so I'm considering the possibility of pursuing a Bachelor of Applied Science at BTC. Also, PACCAR is a global company, so the

possibilities are far-reaching down the road. Everyone at PACCAR is so nice and it's a great work culture. It's also a very clean and safe work environment."

Francesca is a wonderful example of someone who makes steady progress toward long-term goals by consistently executing her day-to-day tasks. NWC is thrilled to have played a small role in helping Francesca align herself with a career she is passionate about.



FRANCESCA'S GRADUATION PHOTO



FRANCESCA POSES ALONGSIDE ONE
OF PACCAR'S TRUCKS

"My experience working with NWC has been great! I was checked in on regularly and felt supported every step of the way." - Francesca

Adult
pgs. 1,4,6,

Dislocated
Worker
pgs. 1,2,3,6,8

Economic
Security for All
pg. 4,5

Matched
Investment
Savings Account
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Young Adult
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Community
Reinvestment
Program
pgs. 8,9

Disaster
Recovery
Dislocated
Worker Grant
pg. 9

NWC Makes Upskilling Possible and Strengthens Local Business

• SAN JUAN



BETH IN HER OFFICE

Professional development is never easy to fit into a small company's budget. Whether it's time, money, or team capacity, something is always in short supply.

Green Man Landscaping & Design, which serves the construction industry in San Juan Island, is one such company, balancing the demands of serving its customers every day while supporting the growth of its employees.

Office assistant Beth has been with Green Man for years, assisting with the company's bookkeeping. There was never sufficient funding for her to pursue an accountancy degree while continuing to work. So, when Beth learned about the Incumbent Worker Training program through Northwest Workforce Council (NWC), she jumped at the chance.

With help from NWC and the WIOA I-B Dislocated Worker program, Beth is now midway through her training, which will help cement her position within Green Man while providing inspiration for future career development and advancement opportunities.

"Funding from NWC made the difference between simply looking at programs and being able to enroll in one. Over the years, I have explored bookkeeping and accounting programs on and off, but I never felt I was in a financial position to move forward." - Beth

WIOA Support Paves the Way to a Healthcare Career

• SKAGIT

Still only in a very part-time survival job after nine months of trying everything—skills, education, work experience, WorkSource classes, mock interviews. Help!

Ruby had been laid off from a long-term position with a nonprofit organization that was exempt from paying unemployment insurance, leaving her ineligible for unemployment benefits. Living on a bare-bones income, she was understandably worried about her future.

The Northwest Workforce Council (NWC) became a safe place for Ruby to step back, evaluate her options, and explore both her short- and long-term career goals. She enrolled in the WIOA Title I-B Dislocated Worker program, completed career assessments, researched training opportunities, and evaluated her self-sufficiency needs. Through this process, she realized she wanted to pursue a career as a Radiologic Technologist.

Her coordinator helped her understand that this was a long-term goal and that she would need stable employment while working toward it. Together, they identified her strengths and focused on how to communicate them effectively to employers. Ruby applied for a position at Island Hospital, where she was able to present herself as a strong candidate by highlighting the qualities that make her successful in the workplace. She got the job.

Today, Ruby has stable income, meaningful employment, and a clear pathway toward a career in radiologic technology. What once felt like an uncertain future has become a realistic, achievable plan, supported by steady employment and a renewed sense of purpose.

"I am working at Island Hospital in Patient Registration at the main and ER entrances. I'm so grateful. Work is great! I also love that I'm able to use one of my favorite skills every day: compassion. It keeps my soul right to be in an environment that promotes genuine kindness and care. I appreciate you being a support along the way. One thing that's incredible is that I work directly with the Diagnostic Imaging department. Once I've been here a little while longer, I'm going to ask them more about their field and what their X-ray career paths have been." - Ruby

Top To Bottom Inc. Builds Skills and Strengthens Business Through NWC's Incumbent Worker Training

• WHATCOM



*PATRICK AND MICAIAH REPAIRING
A BOAT*

Top to Bottom Inc. is a family-owned boat repair business serving Bellingham, Washington, and the surrounding ports since 1986. For nearly 40 years, the company has built a strong reputation for quality boat repair, reliable service, and commitment to the local maritime community.

As boats become more advanced with complex electrical, electronic, and battery systems, Top to Bottom recognized the need to improve employee skills and knowledge. The company identified gaps in marine electrical, corrosion prevention, and service management.

To help address these needs, they partnered with Northwest Workforce Council (NWC) through the Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) program to provide funding for advanced trainings through the American Boat & Yacht Council (ABYC).

With NWC's support, two employees were able to attend ABYC certification training courses. Patrick, the Operations Manager, completed ABYC Service Management and Marine Corrosion classes. Micaiah, a Marine Technician, completed ABYC Advanced Marine Electrical and Marine Corrosion classes. With his prior ABYC Basic Marine Electrical certification and two additional ABYC certifications, Micaiah earned ABYC Master Technician recognition. His increased skills and contributions were recognized with a salary increase.

These certifications have helped their business improve customer communication, increase service capabilities, and provide customers with greater confidence in the work being performed. The team is now better prepared to estimate projects accurately, create reasonable timelines, and confidently bid on larger and more complex jobs.

"NWC's training programs has given us the opportunity to train my staff. Taking the Open Water Diver and ABYC courses gave us confidence to take on more technical jobs! It also gives our clients the peace of mind knowing we perform our work to the highest industry standards." - Patrick Schjelderup, Operations Manager of Top to Bottom Inc.

NWC and Top To Bottom Help Young Adult Dive into a Better Future

• WHATCOM

Kaiden was referred to Northwest Workforce Council (NWC) by Top to Bottom Inc. As a young adult, he had limited work experience and needed support to become more competitive in the job market.

Kaiden's goals were to find a stable job, become self-sufficient, and move into his own apartment. To help him achieve his goals, Kaiden worked with his NWC Coordinator, who enrolled him in the WIOA I-B Out-of-School Youth program to support his employment goals. Through this program, Kaiden was able to obtain employment with Top to Bottom through NWC's On-the-Job Training.

During his training, Kaiden made steady progress and showed a strong commitment to learning new skills. To help address skill gaps, Top to Bottom encouraged him to take an Open Water Diver course. NWC supported Kaiden in earning his certification, which gave him the skills to perform hull cleaning, propeller inspections, underwater repairs, and marine debris removal.

With support from NWC and Top to Bottom, Kaiden has gained valuable work experience and industry skills. He is now on his way to achieving his goals of long-term employment, financial independence, and a successful future.



*KAIDEN POSING WITH HIS NEWLY ACQUIRED
OPEN WATER DIVER CERTIFICATION*

Two Journeys Toward Self-Sufficiency Through EcSA and WIOA

• SKAGIT



ESTHER AND NICHOLE AT WORK

Every journey to self-sufficiency is unique, but access to the right resources and support can make all the difference. Esther and Nichole are two examples of how the partnership between Northwest Workforce Council (NWC) and Community Action of Skagit County (CASC) helped them overcome barriers, gain employment, and build more stable futures.

As a single mother, Esther was determined to build a brighter future for herself and her family. Referred by CASC to participate in the Financial Learning and Resiliency through Empowerment (FLARE) program, she enrolled in WIOA I-B Adult and Economic Security for All (EcSA) programs to strengthen her skills and prepare for meaningful employment.

Throughout the year-long FLARE program, Esther remained committed to every step of her journey, successfully maximizing the program's incentives through her hard work and perseverance.

She also participated in NWC's Work Experience Training program (WEX) at the Humane Society Thrift Shop in Mount Vernon, where she gained valuable experience as a cashier and sales clerk while building confidence in her abilities.

When her WEX concluded, Esther took the next step by applying for a Resource Specialist position with CASC. Her dedication paid off and she was hired.

Esther continues investing in her future by participating in the Matched Investment Savings Account (MISA) program, working toward the goal of paying off her automobile loan and achieving greater financial stability.

Like Esther, Nichole also faced significant barriers as a single mother. Despite the obstacles, she remained focused on creating a better life for herself and her family. Referred by CASC, she enrolled in WIOA I-B Adult and EcSA programs while participating in the FLARE program. Nichole successfully completed the year-long FLARE program, consistently demonstrating commitment and determination. Through her efforts, she maximized the available incentives and developed the skills and confidence needed to pursue a new career.

Looking for full-time employment, Nichole applied for a Resource Specialist position with CASC and was hired. In her current role, she connects individuals and families with valuable community resources. She also remains actively engaged by participating in the monthly Community Resource Network meetings, helping strengthen partnerships that benefit families throughout Skagit County. After completing her first full month of employment, Nichole received a \$500 employment incentive from NWC.

Esther and Nichole's stories demonstrate the powerful impact that collaboration, education, and workforce development can have on individuals and families. Through the partnership between NWC and CASC, both women overcame barriers, gained valuable work experience, secured meaningful employment, and continue building financially stable, self-sufficient futures.

Their journeys remind us that when people are given the opportunity, support, and encouragement to succeed, they don't just change their own lives, they strengthen their families, workplaces, and communities.

MISA Provides Financial Relief by Paying Off a Car Loan

• SKAGIT

Yamileth is a Spanish speaker who was sent to WorkSource to get help finding a job. She came to the United States with limited work experience. She applied for different entry-level positions but did not hear back. Only her husband was working and providing for their family of four.

She enrolled in the WIOA I-B Out-of-School Youth and Economic Security for All (EcSA) programs. Yamileth's goal is to earn her GED and obtain a full-time job. She continued applying and received an opportunity to work.

As an EcSA participant, Yamileth was able to enroll in and complete a Financial Literacy course through Financial Beginnings. She was also able to participate in the Matched Investment Savings Account (MISA) program with the intention of paying off her car loan.

When Yamileth reached her savings goal, she was able to pay off her car loan. This provided financial relief for her and her growing family. Eliminating a monthly car payment contributed to improving their financial situation.

Stay-at-Home Mom Realize Her Career Dreams Through EcSA & MISA

- ISLAND



ADRIANA AND HER FAMILY AT A WHIDBEY ISLAND EVENT

Adriana is a married mother of four young children. Her family was not self-sufficient and she was long-term unemployed – out of the workforce to raise her children. She struggled to find a way to re-enter the workforce and find assistance to build finances for starting her own business. Adriana needed help with career guidance, setting achievable goals and obtaining funds to purchase equipment and products for her business.

Adriana was eligible for Economic Security for All (EcSA) and Matched Investment Savings Account (MISA) programs. Northwest Workforce Council (NWC) helped Adriana set career goals and achieve critical milestones in her savings plan. NWC also helped Adriana get connected to other family community resources, complete financial literacy classes and research how to launch her online merchant business.

Adriana successfully completed her WIOA program participation by obtaining self-employment and continues to launch and grow her business. She established Sweet Moon Homestead, a small business in Whidbey Island specializing in handcrafted, homestead-inspired bath and body products. With the help of NWC, Adriana was able to define her business goals, accomplish tasks associated with business plans, reach her savings goal, and achieve her dream of self-employment, all while managing her family responsibilities.

“The support I received through NWC made a huge difference in helping me pursue my goal of starting my business, Sweet Moon Homestead. As a busy mom of four, NWC provided me career guidance that helped me determine the best path forward. Their programs provided valuable services, financial stipends, and savings matches that helped ease the financial burden of purchasing supplies and investing in my future. Because of their support and encouragement, I was able to take important steps toward turning my passion into a growing business. After my very first market-filled with compliments, support, and kind words from customers and vendors, I knew I was on the right path. I am incredibly grateful for the opportunities and resources they provided along the way.” -Adriana, Owner of Sweet Moon

Returning to NWC for a New Career Path: A Veteran's Successful Career Transition

• SKAGIT

Steven Cruse is proof that investing in new skills can pay off more than once. A Veteran, Steven first came to Northwest Workforce Council (NWC) in 2007, when the WIOA Title I-B program helped him train for a welding career. He spent the next 15 years working in the trade until his employer, Petrzelka Brothers, began scaling back operations, leaving him unexpectedly out of work at a point in his career when he was thinking about retirement.

Although Steven had a strong support system, he wanted to continue working while transitioning into a role that was less physically demanding than welding. Remembering the success of his previous experience with NWC, he returned for guidance in finding a new career path.

During his intake appointment, Steven shared that he had driven trucks while serving in the military. He had also met with the Worker Retraining Coordinator at Skagit Valley College and identified heavy and tractor-trailer driving as a promising next step. His background in welding had strengthened his mechanical aptitude, blueprint-reading skills, and problem-solving abilities, while his reliability, punctuality, and willingness to listen had consistently contributed to his success on the job.

As a Veteran, Steven received priority of service and was enrolled in the WIOA Title I-B Adult program. With support from NWC, Steven attended Taylor Made Truck Driving School, where he earned his Commercial Driver License (CDL).

While searching for a permanent driving position, Steven remained active in the workforce. As a member in good standing with the LiUNA union, he accepted flagging assignments and project work to gain additional driving experience. He worked for InfraSource, a subsidiary of Potelco, alternating between flagging duties and welding gas pipe along Pulver Road in Skagit County. After that project ended, he joined Finkbonner Flagging, driving a Truck Mounted Impact (TMA) vehicle to protect crews working on the I-5 fish passage project.

Steven's persistence and adaptability ultimately led to the right opportunity. Armor Marine, an aluminum boat manufacturer in Anacortes, recognized the unique value of his combined welding and commercial driving experience. The company hired him to both weld aluminum boats and transport finished products, allowing him to put his diverse skill set to work in one role.

Today, Steven is employed full time at Armor Marine, earning \$40 per hour plus benefits. By building on his previous experience and gaining new credentials through NWC, he successfully transitioned into a career that will allow him to remain a productive member of the workforce while extending his working years in a less physically demanding role.

Scholarship Support Opens the Door to a Meaningful Career

• WHATCOM



DAWN AT WORK

After becoming unemployed from her position as a Home Care Aide, Dawn relocated from Spokane to Whatcom County determined to build a new career. Motivated by a desire to serve others and achieve financial self-sufficiency, she pursued education to become a Substance Use Disorder Professional (SUDP). As a low-income individual, she relied on available resources to help make her educational goals a reality.

Dawn was referred to Northwest Workforce Council (NWC) and enrolled in the WIOA Title I-B Adult program, where she was assigned a Coordinator. She completed a scholarship proposal and was awarded a scholarship to begin the SUDP program at Whatcom Community College. When transportation became a barrier, NWC also assisted with critical vehicle repairs, ensuring she could continue attending classes and complete her practicum.

Dawn earned her SUDP degree in December 2025 and obtained her SUDP-T license in January 2026. She then accepted employment at her practicum site, Contact Counseling Recovery Services, where her dedication and strong performance led to a promotion to Manager of the Women's Recovery Program. She is now preparing to take the National Certified Addiction Counselor (NCAC) exam as she continues advancing her career in behavioral health.

Dawn's journey demonstrates how targeted workforce and supportive services can remove barriers, create career opportunities, and strengthen the local behavioral health workforce.

Investing in Young Adults, Building the Future Workforce

• ISLAND

Northwest Workforce Council (NWC) delivered its second YouthWorx program in Island County. Five young adults completed the six-week course, which provided essential skills and tools for workplace success. The curriculum covered employability skills, including job applications, resume development, interviewing, time management, and customer service.

Participants shared that they valued the opportunity to connect course lessons to personal growth and workplace behaviors, helping them build the skills and confidence needed to succeed in the workplace.

By completing the program, the cohort gained the knowledge, and confidence to take the next step toward employment success. Participants were prepared to pursue internships through NWC's Work Experience Training program, subsidized employment opportunities, or unsubsidized employment, creating pathways toward meaningful careers and long-term workforce success.



ISLAND COUNTY YOUTHWORX GRADUATES

Taking Aim: Empowering Young Adults Through Work Experience

• ISLAND

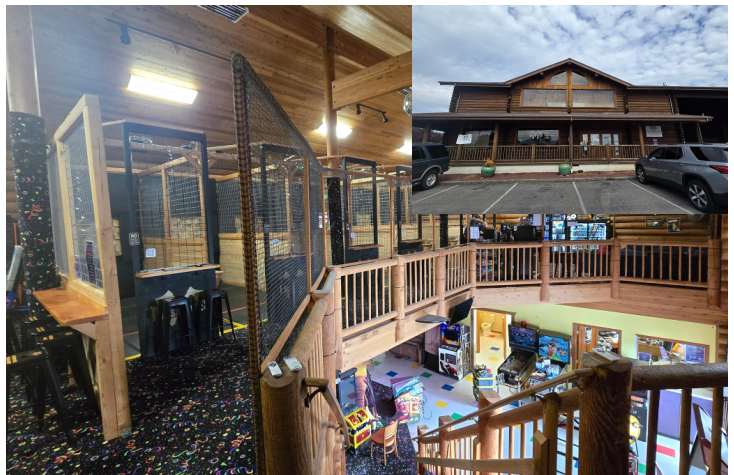
Tossin' Axes partnered with the Northwest Workforce Council's (NWC) Work Experience Training program (WEX) to provide WIOA Title I-B Youth participants with the opportunity to gain valuable, hands-on work experience in a supportive, real-world business environment.

Throughout the internship, participants developed the technical skills needed to perform daily job responsibilities while receiving individualized coaching and support. Although some interns required additional training initially, they consistently improved their job performance and ultimately learned required tasks to a high standard.

Beyond technical skill development, the interns demonstrated significant growth in essential workplace competencies. Staff observed improvements in communication, customer interaction, professionalism, and overall confidence - skills that are critical for long-term employment success.

WEX also benefited Tossin' Axes by helping develop a pipeline of job-ready workers while allowing the business to mentor individuals entering the workforce. Investing time in training participants contributed to a stronger workplace and reinforced the value of providing meaningful learning opportunities.

Partnerships like this demonstrate how NWC Work Experience Training program create lasting value for both participants and employers, helping young people gain the skills and confidence they need to succeed while connecting local businesses with motivated, emerging talent.



TOSSIN' AXES IN OAK HARBOR OFFER FUN ACTIVITIES FOR EVERYONE

"Overall, they were great interns, and I look forward to helping train more interns as they become available." -Daniel Cladwell, Managing Partner and resident "Axe-pert"

DL Deep Cleaning & Landscaping Invest in New Equipment through Business Accelerator Grant

- **WHATCOM**



DIEGO AND LEYDY WITH THEIR NEW TRAILER

Diego and Leydy are the owners of DL Deep Cleaning & Landscaping. After immigrating from Colombia with their children, they faced many challenges as they adapted to life in the United States, particularly the language barrier. Despite these obstacles, they successfully launched their own business and built a loyal and growing customer base.

Founded in 2023, DL Deep Cleaning & Landscaping specializes in creating and maintaining clean, tidy, and vibrant spaces through a combination of professional cleaning and creative landscaping services.

They use their personal vehicle to operate the business and have gradually acquired the tools needed to complete their projects. However, for larger jobs, they often had to rent a trailer to transport their equipment and a commercial riding lawn mower to complete the work efficiently.

Through the Business Accelerator Grant, they were able to purchase a trailer to secure storage for their equipment. They also purchased a commercial riding lawn mower, which is essential for completing larger landscaping projects.

Owning the trailer and the lawn mower has eliminated the need for frequent rentals, reducing operating expenses. The trailer has also improved the efficiency of transporting tools and equipment between job sites, allowing projects to be completed more effectively. As a result, the business is able to retain more of its revenue, improving overall profitability.

Asian-owned Store Receives Needed Appliance Upgrade through CRP

- **SKAGIT**



JENILYN AND PERCIVAL'S HAPPY FACES AS THEY RECEIVE THEIR BUSINESS ACCELERATOR GRANT

Casipi Filipino Store is an Asian-owned Filipino grocery store in Mount Vernon, Washington, offering Filipino food products, including traditional ingredients, snacks, frozen goods, beverages, and specialty items. The store serves customers looking for Filipino products and ingredients for preparing meals at home.

Recently, two of Casipi's essential appliances, a cooler and a freezer, stopped working almost at the same time, creating an immediate need for replacement equipment to safely store products and continue serving customers. The owners began saving and setting aside funds for the replacement, but the cost of the equipment made it difficult to move forward without additional financial support or financing options.

The timing was ideal when a staff member from Northwest Workforce Council (NWC) reached out to Casipi about the Business Accelerator Grant opportunity through the Community Reinvestment Program (CRP). The grant supports BIPOC-owned small businesses by providing funding for essential equipment and improvements that strengthen operations and sustainability.

With this support, Casipi was able to purchase a new cooler and freezer, allowing the business to safely store more products, reduce food waste and spoilage, improve inventory management, and keep essential items available for customers. The new equipment has helped Casipi operate more efficiently and continue serving the needs of the community.

Business Accelerator Grant Enhances Store Outreach Capabilities

• ISLAND



JULIET WITH HER NEW CAMERA

The Whidbey African Store is a Black-owned store in Oak Harbor, Washington, owned by Juliet Dei. Northwest Workforce Council (NWC) first connected with Juliet when she opened her doors as a training site for WIOA I-B participants through the Work Experience Training program.

Juliet's goal is to empower women in Africa. She intentionally sources ethical, eco-friendly products from women-owned small businesses across countries such as Ghana, Kenya, Ethiopia, and Togo. She opened a training center in a rural community that provides young people with training to create products such as baskets, leather purses, slippers, and other handmade goods. These products are sold and marketed to support these families and help create sustainable income opportunities.

As the only African shop in Island County, the Whidbey African Store serves as a cultural resource center for many institutions by sharing African culture, traditions, and products with those interested in learning about Africa. Juliet also participates in cultural fairs with organizations such as Coupeville Elementary School and the Oak Harbor Chamber of Commerce.

Juliet has plans to expand her educational programs and online outreach. For years, she relied on outdated camera and audio equipment to produce content for webinars and marketing materials.

Through the Business Accelerator Grant, Juliet was able to purchase a professional-grade camera with high-end lenses, as well as upgrade her microphone and recording system. The new camera will allow her to capture more compelling photos for her website, increasing traffic and, ultimately, improving her profit margins. These new tools will enhance her educational content, strengthen her brand, increase customer engagement, and help her reach a larger audience.

"Working with NWC has been a true blessing. Your support has helped me bring my vision of giving back to society to fruition, and it is always a joy to hear the positive reports from the trainees who have helped in my shop. I am incredibly grateful to the staff who are always looking for ways to help my business thrive."

The Business Accelerator Grant has been the icing on the cake, and the grant came at the perfect time. Struggling with poor sound and picture quality has been embarrassing, and this funding will make a significant difference. I cannot thank you enough, and I look forward to sharing all the benefits this opportunity has given me." - Juliet Dei, Owner Whidbey African Store

NWC Partnership Helps Small Businesses Recover and Rebuild

• WHATCOM

Mazdak International is an engineering firm specializing in consulting for the mining industry and smaller foundry operations in North America. Mazdak has been a long-term business partner of Northwest Workforce Council (NWC) in hosting work-based training for participants.

Following the major flood in December 2025, Mazdak's shop was flooded with approximately two feet of water, causing extensive damage to the facility and equipment. The company was required to rebuild its operations but did not have sufficient funds to replace critically damaged equipment. Through the Business Accelerator Grant, Mazdak was able to purchase an induction heater, an essential piece of equipment needed to resume operations.

As part of the recovery efforts, Ahmed, a Disaster Recovery Dislocated Worker Grant (DRDWG) participant was hired to support Mazdak's rebuilding following the flood, while gaining valuable work experience.

"We want to let you know that Ahmed is working diligently and is very polite toward the entire team. Thank you for helping us rebuild our facility." -Baha Abulnaga, owner of Mazdak International



101 PROSPECT STREET, BELLINGHAM - 2005 E. COLLEGE WAY, MOUNT VERNON
265 NE KETTLE STREET, OAK HARBOR - 540 GUARD STREET, FRIDAY HARBOR

WorkSource is an equal opportunity employer/program. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. Washington Relay Service: 711

The local WIOA Dislocated Worker, Adult and Youth programs receive support and funding from U.S. Department of Labor WIOA Title I-B grants. Read more about USDOL grant funding at nwboard.org/about/federal-resources.

The local WIOA Discretionary Grant, Economic Security for All (ECSA) is supported by the USDOL Employment and Training Administration PY25 Allocation of WIOA Federal funds to NWC LWDB.