Snohomish County, Washington
Workforce Development Strategic Action Plan (WDSAP)

October 2021
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Executive Summary

Snohomish County is home to more than 800,000 individuals and over 19,000 businesses with at least one employee. It is the third-most populous County in Washington, after nearby King and Pierce counties. As the commercial aerospace epicenter and hub of international trade, Snohomish County has seen continued economic growth, job creation, and success over the years. The economy is highly diversified with sectors of opportunity in Aerospace; Trade, and Business Development; Agriculture; Military and Defense; Recreation and Tourism; Energy and Sustainability; Arts, Culture, and Film; Education; Life Sciences and Global Health. Innovation continues to be central to growth as designated Innovation Partnership Zones and Opportunity Zones connect businesses, research institutions, and entrepreneurs to innovation projects. Pre-pandemic workforce totaled over 439,000 people, reflecting talent across all skill levels.

However, the ongoing implications of COVID-19 have significantly impacted Snohomish County's economy and workforce and are rapidly reshaping the framework for future economic and workforce development efforts. Research highlights from the Workforce Snohomish and Snohomish County Talent and Transferable Skills Analysis report identified approximately 38,000 jobs were lost during the initial stages of the pandemic (February and May 2020), with total jobs reducing from 299,000 to 261,000 jobs. While there are signs of recovery – Snohomish County recovered 15,000 jobs or 39% of jobs as of March 2021 – more recovery progress is required.

It is also important to acknowledge that the impacts of the pandemic have not been uniform. Industries that rely on the movement of people (e.g., tourism) have suffered, whereas those that depend on the movement of information (e.g., Information Communication Technology) have thrived. This disparity has further exacerbated the historical economic and health inequalities facing marginalized population groups within Snohomish County and the United States. For example, essential workers, a majority of whom represent racial and ethnic minority groups, faced higher unemployment rates and health-related risk during the pandemic and are expected to recover at a slower pace. The pandemic has caused significant changes from an economic perspective, including an accelerated shift of production of larger Boeing aircraft outside of the region with associated job losses.

Recognizing the necessity of a current, validated, and evidence-based action plan to respond to existing and emerging priorities and opportunities, Future Workforce Alliance (FWA) created a Workforce Development Strategic Action Plan (WDSAP). The Action Plan advanced the Snohomish County 2020-2024 Integrated Regional and Local Workforce Plan, which outlines the vision, mission, priorities, and objectives to establish Snohomish County as a "gold standard" for workforce development.

The overarching goal of the WDSAP is to address County challenges as they relate to workforce attraction, development, and retention. Grounded in the foundation of the "Gold-Standard" workforce development system, which is defined as being:

- Coordinated: It brings employers, training providers, economic development and workforce organizations, and community organizations together to determine the needs of businesses and workers and to coordinate programs to support economic opportunity.
- Data-driven: Data is used to drive decision-making, identify needs, develop strategies, and support continuous improvement and performance measurement.
- Centered on racial equity and inclusion: Equity and inclusion inform all aspects of the development and implementation of the workforce system to ensure historically underserved communities and individuals receive training, education, and support for sustainable wage career opportunities.

At its core, this Action Plan is action-orientated and provides a detailed roadmap to guide workforce development activities that support skills development and job creation over the coming 5-years. The Plan envisions Snohomish County as a globally recognized hub for talent that supports the regional economy and creates economic opportunity for all.

Three goals and associated objectives were identified as key priorities of focus for action. Together, they form a solid plan to advance a stable and sustainable workforce and economic competitiveness across Snohomish County. These goals are outlined in Figure 1. The action plan offers a timeframe for implementation and can be utilized as a shared roadmap through collaboration, communication, and commitment.

The project was delivered over five months running June through to October 2021. Engagement with approximately 70 local stakeholders spanning the Future Workforce Alliance Board and local Workforce Partner Organizations informed the primary research and supported action identification and prioritization. The project methodology was comprehensive and is reflected as follows:

The WDSAP acknowledges the tremendous focus on collaboration across and among stakeholders in the local workforce ecosystem, the importance of performance measures and accountability, and the priority of grounding all work in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. While Snohomish County is faced with significant economic and workforce challenges, the overall workforce development ecosystem is highly developed and is poised for long-term success. Continued collaboration with workforce partners, businesses, educators, and the Snohomish County Executive is essential to realize this positive future state.
Figure 1: WDSAP – At a Glance

Vision

The Future Workforce Alliance envisions Snohomish County as a globally recognized hub for talent that supports our regional economy and creates economic opportunity for all.

Goal #1
Facilitate and Build a Culture of Collaboration Among All Workforce System Stakeholders

Goal #2
Grow and Diversify Jobs in Snohomish County

Goal #3
Cultivate Talent through Increased Skill Development and Opportunities for Snohomish County

Gold Standard Workforce Development Ecosystem
Coordinated  Centered on racial equity and inclusion  Data Driven
1. **Preamble**

1.1 **About the Future Workforce Alliance**

The Snohomish County Future Workforce Alliance (FWA) was designated in February 2020 to serve Snohomish County as the Local Workforce Development Board. Created to formulate strategies to strengthen local businesses, support workers, and assist unemployed residents to transition and advance in the workplace successfully, the Alliance remains focused on providing leadership and fostering collaboration. The FWA strives to achieve a resilient and proactive approach to establish a gold standard workforce development ecosystem built through coordination and evidence-based data grounded in diversity, equity, and inclusion for all.

The FWA Board is committed to maintaining an inclusive, transparent, and diverse board that represents its population and nurtures a sense of belonging within and among the labor force. This creates an opportunity for active participation as board members, committees, and working groups advance strategic priorities and help implement actions and tactics to drive positive change within the workforce development system.

**Workforce Board Membership & Compliance**

Certified on May 15, 2020, the Future Workforce Alliance board comprises 21 board positions, representing 11 business and ten non-business members. Members have been recruited and appointed to the Alliance to strategically foster alignment and collaboration among business, labor, education, and human service and workforce service providers across the Executive's targeted industry sectors. Mandatory Workforce Readiness, Education, Economic Development, and Other (categorized) membership slots are occupied. All members of the Board (current and new) must meet the criteria of having both "optimal policymaking or hiring authority" within their institutions and "demonstrated experience and expertise" to help the Board achieve its strategic vision.

**Strategic Vision and Goals for Preparing Workforce**

To support the County Executive's vision and goals, the Future Workforce Alliance undertook a strategic plan to craft their vision, mission, priorities, and objectives to establish Snohomish County as a "gold standard" for workforce development. The strategy supports long-term economic growth and prosperity in Snohomish County, focusing on ensuring that job seekers and youth have the skills, knowledge, and support needed to participate in the family-sustaining occupations of today fully – and the future.

**Vision Statement**

The Future Workforce Alliance envisions Snohomish County as a globally recognized hub for talent that supports our regional economy and creates economic opportunity for all.

**Mission Statement**

The Future Workforce Alliance catalyzes equitable, inclusive, and responsible economic growth through public-private collaborative strategies that build upon a foundation of lifelong learning, the creation of quality jobs, innovation, and adaptability. The Future Workforce Alliance ensures that employers have consistent access to the skilled talent they need, and that youth and adults are supported in attaining rewarding careers.
1.2 Strategic Action Plan Context

The restructuring of the Snohomish County’s workforce development system established the Future Workforce Alliance as the Local Workforce Development Board and designated Workforce Snohomish as the local agency responsible for enacting the vision of the Alliance. The FWA turned its attention to building a strong and agile economic and workforce development system around four key strategies:

- Create better strategic alignment of workforce efforts across the county;
- Identify data-driven sector employment pathways in partnership with business, labor, education, and the non-profit sector;
- Implement measurable workforce development strategies; and
- Institutionalize and empower the diverse elements of our workforce system to develop robust partnerships that leverage cross-system resources and new investment.

The end goal is a strong and agile economic and workforce development system that establishes Snohomish County as the "gold standard" for workforce development, supports local businesses and workers throughout the county, and enables broad-based opportunity and economic growth.

In recognizing that building such a workforce system needs to be supported by an iterative and strategic process, the Alliance embarked on developing this county-wide Workforce Development Strategic Action Plan (WDSAP). This Strategic Action Plan aligns with and utilizes the Alliance's goals and objectives to determine priorities, industry, government, and community partners for system development and alignment, and metrics to support a "gold standard" workforce development system. It will help the county's economic and workforce recovery through skill development, retraining, and training to support high-demand occupations in growing industries. It will have a direct and constant focus on improving diversity within the labor market, equity for all, and inclusion for those that choose to participate. The strategic action plan will be implemented over the next five years in response to opportunities and challenges. It will encompass and recognize the County's response to the pandemic and correlating economic conditions and strive to strengthen labor market alignment between talent supply and demand.
2. Project Scope and Expected Outcomes

The process for the Snohomish County Workforce Development Strategic Action Plan (WDSAP) was initiated in the fall of 2020 by Snohomish County through a Request for Proposal (RFP-27-20BC). The RFP, through funding from an Economic Development Administration grant, solicited consulting services to develop a workforce development strategic action plan for Snohomish County to support the County’s economic recovery. Through a competitive proposal process, MDB Insight was retained in early 2021 to undertake and deliver on the scope of services as detailed in the RFP.

MDB Insight designed a comprehensive project plan in three distinct phases, as illustrated below in Figure 2. In undertaking this WDSAP, it was essential to build on existing efforts, gather input on the local workforce system and validate the strategic vision and goals of the Future Workforce Alliance for preparing the workforce.

Figure 2: Snohomish County Workforce Development Strategic Action Plan (WDSAP) Process Overview

Phase 1 Research and Analysis included a document review to understand coordination with the other plans and efforts underway, such as the Snohomish County 2020-2024 Integrated Regional and Local Workforce Plan and the 2021 Snohomish County Talent and Transferable Skills Research Study. This phase also presented an initial evaluation of the current labor force trends, financial, health, and physical barriers to labor force opportunity. Target industries with the greatest potential for job growth and a scan of local, State, and Federal workforce development support organizations in Snohomish County were examined.

Future Workforce Alliance Board (FWAB) members were interviewed to inform the process, the current workforce state, talent development, attraction and retention priorities, and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) considerations. The Board was also engaged through a workshop to confirm alignment, validate goals and objectives, and inform monitoring and key performance indicators.

The Stakeholder Engagement program also involved workforce partners across the County through a county-wide survey and a targeted workshop. The input was solicited on themes including barriers to opportunity, current capacity, workforce development collaboration, skills, talent supply, industry trends, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) considerations, and workforce development vision.
The Research and Analysis and Stakeholder Engagement phases offered a balanced and targeted approach that combined an objective evaluation of the current economic conditions with community assessment based on local insight and opinions. This pairing of technical research with feedback from stakeholders allowed decision-making to be based on a factual and intuitive, first-hand knowledge foundation. Utilizing both sources of perspective is essential to creating a plan tailored to meet the community's needs.

Figure 3: The WDSAP’s Approach

Phase 3 Strategy Development & Project Reporting culminated the results of research and consultation undertaken to provide Snohomish County with a WDSAP that supports developing a "gold standard" workforce system for Snohomish County and metrics to measure success and timelines. The WDSAP is to be coordinated by the Future Workforce Alliance and will be undertaken in partnership with industry, government, workforce providers, labor unions, Tribes, and educators.

2.1 Key Objectives of the WDSAP

The Snohomish County Workforce Development Strategic Action Plan (WDSAP) incorporates equity and inclusion lens with key outcomes to include:

- Aligning education institutions and workforce service providers to support businesses and industries long-term
- Implementing direct business service programs that foster job creation and retention
- Instilling the value of life-long-learning among employers, employees, students, and educators to support long-term talent development
- Proposing long-term funding streams to support a holistic workforce ecosystem and the primary entities needed to lead workforce development in the County
- Identifying partnerships among workforce organizations to strengthen strategies, support implementation, and leverage funding
- Supporting the most marginalized populations with training and job placement support
- Integrating economic and workforce development into an aligned and holistic strategy to provide equitable opportunity for Snohomish County workers and residents.

The implementation plan is sequenced, identifies lead and support entities, addresses funding sources, estimated cost, and evaluation metrics. Strategies foster greater coordination, collaboration, and
communication among industries, workforce providers, and educators. As part of the Plan, dashboards are established with metrics to track implementation progress, determine whether course corrections should be taken, and enhance accountability.

2.2 Strategic Framework for Workforce Development

In addition to focussing on the goals and objectives of the FWA and the actions stated in this Plan, the successful implementation of a comprehensive Workforce Development Strategic Action Plan (WDSAP) requires coordination with the other community plans and efforts already in motion or planned. In particular, the *Snohomish County 2020-2024 Integrated Regional and Local Workforce Plan*, Workforce Snohomish’s *Workforce Development Plan for 2016-2020*, 2021 Snohomish County *Talent and Transferable Skills Research Study* all influence and inform Snohomish County’s workforce development. The proposed actions in this Workforce Development Strategic Action Plan (WDSAP) reinforce or complement these other plans and initiatives.

Snohomish County's workforce system is coordinated under the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA)*. WIOA is designed to strengthen and improve the workforce system and help get Americans, including youth and those with significant barriers to employment, into high-quality jobs and careers and help employers hire and retain skilled workers. The Future Workforce Alliance administers core workforce programs under WIOA. As the local grant recipient and the fiscal agent, Workforce Snohomish is responsible for leveraging the WIOA to benefit local job seekers and employers. Recommendations under the *Integrated Regional and Local Workforce Plan* indicate opportunities for greater integration and leveraging of the WIOA at the local level and increased collaboration with regional workforce agencies.

The 2016-2020 *Workforce Development Plan* provides a clear definition of the local workforce development system\(^1\), ensuring that all ensuing plans, initiatives, and actions are coordinated and offer equitable opportunities for all Snohomish County workers and residents. Furthermore, the *Examples of Gold Standard Workforce Development Partnerships* and *A 360-Degree Review of Workforce Snohomish and Some Relevant Promising Practices* highlight opportunities to improve the workforce development system in Snohomish County through the effective use of data and performance measurements that inform strategies and ensure accountability, strategic leadership, and agreement on roles/structure between County, Alliance, and local grant recipient/fiscal agent.

Stronger coordination of workforce development efforts and increased accountability and performance measurements to track program delivery is a significant focus area in the State and County-wide efforts, including the *2020 Washington State Workforce Plan — Talent and Prosperity for All*. This report highlights four goals: strengthening business engagement, streamline customer service, broaden system accessibility, and building a next-generation performance accountability system. The *Integrated Regional and Local Workforce Plan* also calls for greater alignment of workforce development services between the Future Workforce Alliance, the Economic Alliance of Snohomish County (EASC), and Greater Seattle Partners to support expanded education, infrastructure, and job opportunities.

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\(^1\) Includes programs that use private and/or public (local, state, and federal) funds to prepare workers for employment, upgrade worker skills, retrain workers, or provide employment or retention services for workers or employers.
Support for workforce development is also evident in the COVID-19: Economic Resiliency Strategy for the Future, which calls for aligning workforce development and an innovation ecosystem with equitable and inclusive outcomes.

The Snohomish County Executive, Future Workforce Alliance, Workforce Snohomish, and WorkSource Snohomish County system partners utilize high-level economic health and prosperity indicators for businesses and job seekers/workers to inform strategies and priorities. These partners focus on negotiating WIOA performance accountability measures informed by past performance and labor market and population data at the system level.

The Snohomish County executive recently launched five initiatives to support workforce development efforts:

▪ Service Technology and Excellence Program (STEP) Initiative;
▪ Economic Development Initiative;
▪ Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Initiative;
▪ Multi-Agency Coordinating Committee; and
▪ Housing Affordability Regional Taskforce.

The initiatives are predicated on common guiding principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion and focus on innovative solutions and strategic collaborations to achieve common aims and enhancing the quality of life for all Snohomish County residents.
3. Snohomish County's Economy

3.1 Technical Research – What did we learn?

As highlighted in Section 2, market analysis was essential to understanding the economic and workforce environment of Snohomish County today and what opportunities may exist for tomorrow. This study involved understanding the barriers to opportunities in Snohomish County, industry trends, education and training, and integration with the Transferable Skills Analysis Report.

Snohomish County is home to more than 800,000 individuals and 19,222 businesses (with at least one employee) and is the third-most populous county in Washington, after nearby King and Pierce counties. As the commercial aerospace epicenter and hub of international trade, the county has seen continued economic growth, job creation, and success over the years. Innovation continues to be a central tenet of growth as designated Innovation Partnership Zones and Opportunity Zones bring together businesses, research institutions, and entrepreneurs to spur innovation and invention.

In addition to the ongoing impact of COVID-19, the County is also witnessing a significant economic shift as The Boeing Company plans to consolidate production of the 787 wide-body commercial jet to Charleston, South Carolina. These overlapping economic shocks have affected several sectors, including aerospace manufacturing and related supply chain, retail, accommodations and food services, and healthcare and social assistance. The unemployment rate was at its highest in April 2020 at 19.3%, and roughly 38,000 jobs were lost during the initial stages of the pandemic, with Snohomish County recovering at a slower pace than its neighbors in Peirce and King County. The Snohomish County 2020-2024 Integrated Regional and Local Workforce Plan identifies that most occupations impacted by the pandemic in Snohomish County have a higher percentage of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) workers compared to the BIPOC share of the County’s population (23%).

The following pages provide a high-level visual snapshot and key findings that emerged from the Technical Research. These findings are critical, as they, along with stakeholder insights, enabled the development of targeted actions and initiatives that support establishing Snohomish County as a "gold standard" for workforce development. Detailed analysis is provided in the Research & Analysis – Interim Report (Appendix A).

### Barriers to Opportunity

- **6th most expensive** when it comes to monthly housing costs
- **5th most expensive** when it comes to monthly childcare costs
- **3rd most expensive** when it comes to monthly transportation costs
- **5th least prepared** when it comes to emergency savings
- **Rural limitations, demand for and access to reliable, high-speed broadband**
- **Industries disrupted by COVID-19; local aerospace ecosystems was hit hard**
Local Demographic Trends


Snohomish County accounts for 21% of the Puget Sound Region’s population and 11% of Washington State’s population. Compared to the previous year, the population in Snohomish Country grew by 2% or 16,931 new residents.

Snohomish Population (2021)

847,431

Historic Growth

Snohomish County’s population grew at an average rate of 1.6% a year (higher compared to 1.2% at the State level and 0.7% nationwide).

Projected Growth 2021-2030

Snohomish County

- 5-year change: +46K or 6%
- 10-year change: +103,308 or 12%

Washington State

- 5-year change: +368K or 5%
- 10-year change: +794K or 10%

U.S.A

- 5-year change: +368K or 5%
- 10-year change: +794K or 10%

72% of Snohomish County’s population growth is through immigration.

Gender Distribution (2019)

Female 49.8%
Male 50.2%
Even gender split distribution in Snohomish County.

Racial Diversity (2018)

Snohomish County’s population is predominantly white, representing 70% of the total population. Minority groups in the County include Hispanic/Latino (11%), Asian Alone (11%), Two or More Races (4%), Black/African American (3%), American Indian and Alaska Native (1%), and Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander (1%). The County shows less ethnic and racial diversity compared to Washington State and the Nation.
Local Demographic Trends


Educational Attainment (2019)

Snohomish County resident educational attainment levels exceed the national average in both Bachelor and Associate degrees. 21.7% of Snohomish County residents hold a Bachelor’s Degree (2.9% above the national average), and 10.3% hold an Associate’s Degree (2.2% above the national average).

High school graduation is highest among White at 95% and is lowest among Other Race (65%) and Hispanic (73%) populations. Black/African American graduation rate is 89%. Asians account for the highest rate of bachelors degrees at 51% while Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander are lowest at 13%. Black/African American bachelors rate stand at 24%.

*US Census 2019 ACS 5-Year Survey (Table S1501)*

Household Income (2019)

In 2019, Snohomish County recorded a larger median household income (inflation-adjusted), compared to the State and the Nation. The County also had a larger share of household with incomes over $100,000. In 2019, full-time male employees in Washington made 1.36 times more than female employees.

- **Average Female Salary in Washington**: $58,599
- **Average Male Salary in Washington**: $79,606

Asians had the largest median household income in Snohomish County at $85,800, followed by Non-Hispanic White. On the other hand, Hispanics had the lowest median household income at $55,400 behind American Indian ($59,300) and Back/African American ($60,200).

https://statisticalatlas.com/county/Washington/Snohomish-County/Household-Income

Population by Age Group (2019)

71% of Snohomish County’s population is under the age of 55. Projections show a similar distribution of age groups in Snohomish County by 2024.

Poverty (2019)

7.5% of the population live below the poverty line, lower than the national average of 12%. The largest demographic living in poverty are females between 25 - 34 years, followed by Females 35 - 44. The most common racial or ethnic group living below the poverty line is White, followed by Hispanic and Asian.

The Self-Sufficiency Standard found that a single adult living in Snohomish County (West) requires an estimated annual income of $29,689 (or $14.06 hourly) to meet basic needs (including housing, food, healthcare, and transportation).

*2019 Low Income Community Needs Assessment, Snohomish County*
Local Workforce Trends

Impact of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic shocked the local economy, specially in sectors such as manufacturing, tourism, and small businesses. Although the local economy has improved significantly (unemployment rate in July 2021 was 5.9%, compared to 19.2% in April 2020), it masks the high unemployment that remains in the sectors most impacted by the pandemic: retail, accommodations and food services, healthcare and social assistance, and aerospace manufacturing.

Labor Force (2019)

From 2005 to 2019, Snohomish County’s labor force grew by 27%, experiencing an average annual growth of approximately 6,661 people or 2%.

The pandemic has disproportionality impacted people of color. Unemployment claims in Snohomish County among Pacific Islander population represented 114%, American Indian 53% and African American 56% of claims per total workers.


Gender and race impacts on labor force participation rate and unemployment rate.

Labor Force Status by Race

**Participation Rate - Under Poverty Line**: 45.8%
**Unemployment Rate**: 27%

**Participation Rate - With any Disabilities**: 47.8%
**Unemployment Rate**: 10%

**Participation Rate - Less than High School**: 64.2%
**Unemployment Rate**: 10%
Local Employment Dynamics

Source: Washington Employment Security Department, 2019 | Otherwise Noted

**Employment (2019)**
Most of the employment in Snohomish County was concentrated in industries such as manufacturing (20%), retail trade (12%), and health care and social assistance (12%). Manufacturing also recorded a high concentration of jobs relative to the State.

**Employment Change 2015-2019**
Between 2015 to 2019, employment in Snohomish County experienced a **6% growth**, representing **15,363 new jobs**.

**High and Low Performance Sectors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>+4,517 jobs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prof. Scientific &amp; Technical Services</td>
<td>+2,776 jobs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Services</td>
<td>+2,146 jobs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>-1,483 jobs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>-816 jobs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Care &amp; Social Assistance</td>
<td>-238 jobs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Occupational Makeup (2019)**
The occupational makeup in Snohomish County is mainly comprised by office and administrative support occupations (11%), sales and related (10%), and production (9%).

**Occupational Long-Term Projections**

- **Occupational Projections 2017-2027**: +91,984 jobs
- **Average Annual Openings 2022-2027**: +3,818 jobs
- **Food Preparation and Serving will add**: +11,768 jobs

Women hold the majority of the jobs within the educational services and health care and social assistance sectors.
Key Industry Sectors

Source: Snohomish County 2020-2024 Integrated Regional and Local Workforce Plan | Otherwise Noted

Manufacturing is the largest sector employer in the county (about 1/5 of nonfarm jobs). Over 2020, manufacturing employment dropped by 7,900 (13%). Snohomish County lost roughly one-fifth of aircraft assemblers in 2020. Aerospace product and parts manufacturing jobs declined by 14% (5,800 jobs).

Retail Trade employs an estimate of 32,800. Retail sales person is the most common occupation in Snohomish County, with approx. 10,000 workers.

Leisure and Hospitality one of the hardest hit sector by the pandemic was down 3,900 (14.5%) over 2020. This sector accounted for 23,000 Snohomish jobs.

Construction the county’s fastest growing sector. Construction employed 24,100 in 2017, with a projected growth to 27,500 in 2022 and 28,400 by 2027.

Healthcare and Social Assistance, projections indicate that this sector is projected to grow from an estimated 33,000 jobs in 2017 to 40,700 in 2027.

The Snohomish Economic Development Initiative has also identified trade and business development, aerospace, agriculture, fisheries and forest products, technology, military and defense, recreation and tourism, energy and sustainability, arts, culture and film, and education, life sciences and global health as sector of opportunity.

Gender, Race, People with Disabilities and Poverty Considerations

Gender

The labor force participation rate of the male residents far exceeds those of the female residents. The difference is even more pronounced when the female is a caregiver of a child or multiple children. COVID-19 worsened this trend by sending mothers in the labor force back to caretaking responsibilities.

Center for American Progress, 2020

Race/Ethnicity

Several minority populations show low labor force participation rates coupled with high unemployment rates. The pandemic has disproportionality impacted people of color. Unemployment claims in the county among Pacific Islanders represented 114%, American Indian 53% and African American 56% of claims per total workers.

People with Disabilities

Individuals with a disability have had a much higher unemployment rate, and substantially lower labor force participation rate than people with no disability. The same trend can be seen in Snohomish County. There should be a concerted effort to ensure individuals with disabilities have the same opportunities as those living without a disability.

Poverty

In addition to the persistent unemployment rate, nearly one of every ten residents lives in poverty, with people of color and women being disproportionately impacted. More than a quarter of the county is not served by fixed-route transportation services, and the cost of housing is rapidly outpacing incomes.
3.2 Stakeholder Engagement – What Did We Learn?

This section summarizes the key themes that emerged from consultation efforts. Representatives from education, economic development, local workforce service providers, and the Future Workforce Alliance Board engaged in in-depth conversations to understand their perspective on workforce trends, needs, challenges, and successes. These representatives were able to speak to existing workforce development efforts, and they provided an on-the-ground qualitative perspective.

Consultation input is invaluable to strategic priority development and action identification as it gathers the insight of those working in the workforce ecosystem. The remarks shared reflect those extracted from these conversations.

Future Workforce Alliance Insights

The Future Workforce Alliance offered valuable insight to inform and guide the Strategic Action Plan development. One-on-one interviews with the Future Workforce Alliance Board (FWAB) members enabled a more robust understanding of current workforce issues, barriers to labor force participation, and the existing workforce ecosystem. The key highlights are presented below and offer direction to guide the action plan creation. A complete engagement summary is provided in the Summary Engagement Report (Appendix B) of this report.

- Snohomish County's current labor force is constrained. While some industries and sectors enjoy a strong labor supply, other sectors that require technology-based, STEM, digital and technical skills and trades and constructions face hiring and retention gaps.

- Labor force readiness is lacking. Employers face difficulties hiring local talent with the skills necessary for select occupations; concerns include high employee turnover, hard and soft skills, training, retraining, and retaining gaps.

- A mismatch exists in the minds of employers and employees as it relates to job offerings and work culture. Job seekers and employees seek and pursue work-life balance, benefits, and favorable work culture in keeping with ongoing trends.

- Issues with access and equity are also perpetuating as unemployment remains high among marginalized populations. The onus is placed on those farthest from the opportunity to address their financial, health, and physical barriers impeding labor force transition.

- The county faces challenges attracting, retaining, and supporting marginalized populations fueled by gaps in systems and services. The population diversity is not well represented in the available talent, the education system, leadership roles, and BIPOC owned businesses.

- There is consensus and desire among the Future Workforce Alliance members to be more customer/client-centric whereby personalized packages are developed for each participant in the labor force, and access for job seekers, employees, and employers can be facilitated based on their needs.

- Deliberate and intentional actions need to be taken to reach marginalized groups. This could include marketing of opportunities and type of available work, engaging businesses to provide more opportunities for training/apprentice recruiting for minorities, working with school and parent groups of the marginalized populations, or ensuring easy access (clear pathways) for marginalized groups to gain education, skills, and jobs.
▪ The County and workforce partners need to focus and address the historical and systemic issues that affect black indigenous. Other people of color emphasizing learning and listening, fostering a dialogue of discovery with marginalized populations.

▪ Enabling an inclusive, equitable, and belonging ecosystem demands targeted approaches and responses. This includes understanding and addressing historic, long-standing, and current issues that hinder marginalized communities from participating in labor. Emphasis needs to be on the role of the FWA in enabling and empowering the workforce system's diverse elements.

▪ Staffing and resources need to be enhanced within the County, Workforce Snohomish, and Economic Alliance Snohomish County, focusing on supporting marginalized populations. Currently, the lack of a liaison for the County's diverse population affects the service delivery quality.

▪ Engaging with businesses to understand their needs is a key workforce development priority for the FWA. Members identified that supporting businesses and building the business infrastructure will address retention and attraction priorities and gaps and strengthen labor supply and demand alignment.

▪ A counterpart to this is improving access to training and education resources. While the County enjoys a robust education ecosystem, including local colleges, technical institutes, universities, and schools, there are gaps in talent engagement, enhancement, and attraction. Efforts need to start at the elementary level to engage students and promote the benefits of STEM and trade-related opportunities.

▪ Opportunities exist to build and promote apprenticeship programs, stronger partnerships with businesses to provide skills training, retraining, networking, internships/co-ops/apprenticeships, bridge and onboarding programs, on-the-job training. A clear articulation of career pathways to attract talent, strengthen the supply, and develop training programs in response to current and future needs, including retirement waves, is critical to successful workforce development outcomes.

▪ Access to real-time Labor Market Information (LMI) is identified as key to address current and emerging workforce issues and challenges. In addition, there is a call to strengthen and position the workforce ecosystem to support socio-economic and workforce opportunities for marginalized populations. Efforts are underway whereby technical colleges have revised their mission to support BIPOC and underrepresented students.

▪ Fostering a favorable work culture beyond minimum pay and benefits to focus on an inclusive environment promoting a sense of belonging for all is identified as a critical priority for the County and the FWA. The County could continue advocating and connecting with labor organizations and unions to understand employees' needs and preferences. Programs that support businesses to be worker-centric could also be promoted among the local business community.

▪ Top strengths within the Future Workforce Alliance, community, and Workforce Snohomish that make workforce Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) more feasible include the different perspectives amongst board members, broad access to diverse networks, a pipeline of talent, and a well-funded non-profit community focused on DEI.

▪ Top barriers within the Future Workforce Alliance, community, and Workforce Snohomish that make workforce Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) work challenges include lack of common language/different perspectives on the concept of DEI and lack of outreach historically excluded communities.
The workforce ecosystem should be flexible and pivot and respond based on industry needs and changing trends. Opportunities exist to facilitate and build a culture of collaboration among all workforce system stakeholders in Snohomish County. With a holistic view, workforce supports should extend across the region to both rural and urban areas.

**Workforce Partner Organizations Insights**

Workforce partner organizations across the County were engaged through an online and telephone survey between August and September 2021 to inform and guide creating a "gold standard" workforce development system. Approximately 31 workforce partners organizations provided input to the survey. In addition to the survey, workforce partners also participated in a virtual round table in September 2021. Both these efforts offered valuable insights into the current workforce ecosystem, available workforce development programming and services and potential for program scaling, barriers to workforce opportunity, skills, and talent readiness, and a "gold standard" workforce system. The resulting highlights are presented below. A complete engagement summary is provided in the Summary Engagement Report (Appendix B) of this report.

- Of the 31 partners organizations surveyed, 67% rated the availability of local, skilled talent across all groups, including the historically marginalized populations of Snohomish County, as 'good,' with 19% stated it as poor.
- Approximately 74% provide female and LGBTQIA+ communities, and 71% offer services for BIPOC and low-income communities. Less than 50% of surveyed organizations offer renters (45% offer these services) and persons experiencing homelessness (39% offer these services).
- Identified demographic, social, and financial barriers significantly impact a residents' ability to participate in the labor force spanned the inability to find permanent housing and affordable childcare, inadequate and affordability of public transportation, drug or alcohol abuse or addiction, English language barriers, homelessness, and an existing criminal record.
- Research shows that in addition to the experience of homelessness itself, the broader homeless population faces additional obstacles to labor force participation, including physical or mental health barriers and challenges related to re-entry from incarceration or hospitalization.
- Workforce partners were asked to rate several workforce development programming and services currently provided across the County through the survey. Key insights include:
  - 26% rate adult primary education as 'excellent' while 23% rate it as 'good.'
  - Programs/services that rate as 'good' include job search support (52%), job training availability (45%), jobseeker assistance (45%), and job placement (45%).
  - Supportive services, including childcare, transportation assistance, mental well-being, were rated as either 'fair' (45%) or 'poor' (35%). Similarly, approximately 23% of respondents identified access to labor market information as 'poor.'
  - Programs/services that rate as 'fair' include post-employment services (61%) and soft skills training (58%).
- Among actions that need to be undertaken to ensure that Snohomish County is well-positioned for a strong talent pipeline, both now and into the future, most survey respondents chose skills
training/retraining programs (61%), internships/apprenticeships/co-ops (52%) and adequately paying jobs (48%).

- Collaboration and partnerships with employers is a crucial focus identified by respondents, with 81% stating that employers serve on their Board as directors or as advisors, 74% identify that they host joint events with employers, and 71% identify that employers actively inform the design of program and services.

- Similarly, most workforce partner organizations provide the following programs in partnership with educational institutions. These include hosting joint events (61%), providing training programs (58%) as a joint effort, serving on the Board as directors or advisors (58%), and actively informing the design of the workforce partners programs and services (55%).
4. Prioritizing Workforce Development

In addition to validating the goals and objectives drawn from the Future Workforce Alliance Strategic Plan, the Board and workforce partners engaged through targeted workshops in a Local Priority Setting exercise that resulted in objectives being allocated as either short (1 year), medium (2-3 years) and long-term (+4 years) timeline for initiation. The result of this exercise is detailed below. Each column reflects the input gathered through the two workshops. This input was considered, along with all research findings, to support and inform the action plan timelines for delivery, as presented in Section 7 of this report.

4.1 Ranking Workforce Development Objectives

Figure 4 illustrates the results of the priority setting exercise for the FWA’s GOAL #1: Facilitate and Build a Culture of Collaboration Among All Workforce System Stakeholders. The FWA board members and partner organizations identified that most of the six objectives under this goal need to be undertaken within a 2 to 3-year time frame.

Figure 4: Local Priority Setting, FWA & Workforce Partners, Goal #1 results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>FWAB Workshop</th>
<th>Partner Workshop</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bring together all entities with interest in workforce development.</td>
<td>Two years</td>
<td>Two years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build strategic partnerships to enhance local systems (Ex. workforce,</td>
<td>Two years</td>
<td>Three years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>community, and economic development).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commit to increasing representation on the Future Workforce Alliance</td>
<td>Two years</td>
<td>Two years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board and Standing Committees to reflect different perspectives.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop structure and leadership for collaborative workforce efforts with</td>
<td>Three years</td>
<td>Two years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a focus on racial equity and inclusion.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase employer engagement in workforce dev. by providing a unified</td>
<td>Three years</td>
<td>Two years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>way to work with education and workforce systems.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure historically marginalized groups will inform and provide</td>
<td>Three years</td>
<td>Two years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recommendations on how the goals and objectives are implemented.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5 illustrates the results of the priority setting exercise for the FWA’s GOAL #2: Grow and diversify Jobs in Snohomish County. Similar to Goal #1 objectives, the FWA board members and partner organizations identified that most of the seven objectives under this goal need to be undertaken within a 2 to 3-year time frame.
**Figure 5: Local Priority Setting, FWA & Workforce Partners, Goal #2 results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>FWAB Workshop</th>
<th>Partner Workshop</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Build partnership with Economic Alliance of Snohomish County and Workforce Snohomish.</td>
<td>Two years</td>
<td>Three years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand the talent needs of employers with high-quality jobs.</td>
<td>Two years</td>
<td>Two years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actively recruit and attract new employers</td>
<td>Two years</td>
<td>Three years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support employers to incorporate best practices for inclusive hiring to meet talent needs</td>
<td>Two years</td>
<td>Two years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retain those jobs by meeting the needs of existing employers.</td>
<td>Three years</td>
<td>Three years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assist local employers with business expansion to create jobs.</td>
<td>Three years</td>
<td>Two years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve digital access to support education, workforce, and employer needs with a focus on helping underserved areas/communities</td>
<td>Three years</td>
<td>Two years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6 illustrates the results of the priority setting exercise for the FWA’s **GOAL #3: Develop Talent in Snohomish County**. The FWA board members and partner organizations identified that most of the five objectives under this goal need to be undertaken within a two-year time frame.

**Figure 6: Local Priority Setting, FWA & Workforce Partners, Goal #3 results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>FWAB Workshop</th>
<th>Partner Workshop</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify talent gaps among the existing workforce and those seeking work.</td>
<td>Two years</td>
<td>Two years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase alignment of education and training with employer needs.</td>
<td>Two years</td>
<td>Two years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide accurate information, guidance, and support to jobseekers, focusing on historically excluded or marginalized populations.</td>
<td>Two years</td>
<td>Two years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhance skills of current residents, notably historically excluded or marginalized populations, and attract new talent.</td>
<td>Three years</td>
<td>Two years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prioritize the use of data and analysis, focusing on gathering racial and ethnic data to identify and address needs to build a skilled workforce.</td>
<td>Three years</td>
<td>Two years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 7 illustrates the results of the priority setting exercise for the FWA’s **GOAL #4: Create Skill Development Opportunities for Snohomish County Residents**. The FWA board members and partner organizations identified that most of the three objectives under this goal need to be undertaken within a 2-year time frame.

**Figure 7: Local Priority Setting, FWA & Workforce Partners, Goal #4 results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>FWAB Workshop</th>
<th>Partner Workshop</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify and address the unmet needs of those facing barriers in the workforce, emphasizing racial equity and inclusion.</td>
<td>Two years</td>
<td>Two years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offer every high-quality resident education, mentorship, and career development</td>
<td>Three years</td>
<td>Two years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase diversity and equity in key industries such as high tech, advanced manufacturing, and others.</td>
<td>Three years</td>
<td>Two years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4.2 Realigning FWA Strategic Plan Workforce Development Goals and Objectives

Figure 8 offers a snapshot of the FWA's Strategic Plan goals and objectives and how they are reflected in the Workforce Development Strategic Action Plan. While the four Strategic Plan goals were validated through the recent research, it was recognized that there was an opportunity to condense Goal 3 and Goal 4, as their intent was very similar. This resulted in a total of 3 goals being brought forward into the Workforce Development Strategic Action Plan, as seen in Section 7. The 27 objectives originally presented (see Column 2) have been realigned in the WDSAP into 11 objectives (see Column 3).

The realignment of objectives also considered the Gold Standard definition as per the FWA’s Strategic Plan. The Plan identified that Snohomish County's workforce system becomes a gold standard system to benefit businesses and residents alike. **A Gold-Standard workforce development system is:**

- **Coordinated:** It brings employers, training providers, economic development and workforce organizations, and community organizations together to determine the needs of businesses and workers and coordinate programs to support economic opportunity.
- **Data-driven:** Data is used to drive decision-making, identify needs, develop strategies, and support continuous improvement and performance measurement.
- **Centered on racial equity and inclusion.** Equity and inclusion inform all aspects of the development and implementation of the workforce system to ensure historically underserved communities receive training, education, and support for sustainable wage career opportunities.
### Figure 8: Realigning Workforce Development Objectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FWA’s Goals</th>
<th>FWA’s Objectives</th>
<th>WDSAP’s Objectives Aligned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>GOAL #1: Facilitate and Build a Culture of Collaboration Among All Workforce System Stakeholders</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bring together all entities with interest in workforce development.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Objective A: Develop structure and leadership for collaborative efforts to meet the needs of a diverse workforce, with a focus on racial equity and inclusion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build strategic partnerships to enhance local systems (Ex. workforce, community, and economic development).</td>
<td></td>
<td>Objective B: Build strategic partnerships to enhance the education, workforce development, economic development, human development, and community development systems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commit to increasing representation on the Future Workforce Alliance Board and Standing Committees to reflect different perspectives.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop structure and leadership for collaborative workforce efforts with a focus on racial equity and inclusion.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase employer engagement in workforce dev. by providing a unified way to work with education and workforce systems.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure historically marginalized groups will inform and provide recommendations on how the goals and objectives are implemented.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GOAL #2: Grow and diversify Jobs in Snohomish County</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build partnership with Economic Alliance of Snohomish County and Workforce Snohomish</td>
<td></td>
<td>Objective A: Understand and actively support the talent needs of employers with high-quality jobs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand the talent needs of employers with high-quality jobs.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Objective B: Actively retain, recruit and attract new employers to increase diversity and equity in key industries within the Snohomish economy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actively recruit and attract new employers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support employers to incorporate best practices for inclusive hiring to meet talent needs</td>
<td></td>
<td>Objective C: Increase alignment of education and training with employer needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retain those jobs by meeting the needs of existing employers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assist local employers with business expansion to create jobs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve digital access to support education, workforce, and employer needs with a focus on helping underserved areas/communities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FWA's Goals</td>
<td>FWA's Objectives</td>
<td>WDSAP’s Objectives Aligned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOAL #3: Develop Talent in Snohomish County</td>
<td>Identify talent gaps among the existing workforce and those seeking work.</td>
<td>Objective A: Improve digital access to support education, workforce, and employer needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increase alignment of education and training with employer needs</td>
<td>Objective B: Ensure key organizations are supported and able to meet the needs of target populations and attract talent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enhance skills of current residents, particularly those who have been historically excluded or marginalized, and attract new talent to the county.</td>
<td>Objective C: Enable a County-wide value proposition to attract and retain talent in the County.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provide accurate information, guidance, and support to jobseekers, particularly those who have been historically excluded or marginalized.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prioritize the use of data and analysis, focusing on gathering racial and ethnic data to identify and address needs to build a skilled workforce.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOAL #4: Create Skill Development Opportunities for Snohomish County Residents</td>
<td>Offer every resident high-quality education, mentorship, and career development. (Pre-K through post-secondary education/training, lifelong learning).</td>
<td>Objective A: Identify talent gaps among the existing labor force (employees and job seekers).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identify and address the unmet needs of those facing barriers in the workforce, emphasizing racial equity and inclusion.</td>
<td>Objective B: Offer every resident high-quality education, mentorship, and career development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increase diversity and equity in key industries such as high tech, advanced manufacturing, and others.</td>
<td>Objective C: Enhance Skills of current residents, notably historically excluded or marginalized populations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. **Collaborating for Success**

A central part of the WDSAP's development was the identification of key federal, state, and county workforce partners and their role within the Snohomish County workforce ecosystem. Figure 9 provides a high-level illustration of Snohomish County's current workforce ecosystem. Mapping the workforce ecosystem was also an essential exercise by the FWA board members and the workforce partners to understand the players and recognize opportunities for collaboration. The ecosystem builds on the definition of the "Local Workforce Development System" as detailed in the 2016-2020 Workforce Development Plan and identifies four key partner groups who influence this ecosystem:

- **Educators** – A robust educational ecosystem supports the region with 14 post-secondary institutions and over 45,000 high school students spread across 92 secondary schools.

- **Major Industry Sectors** – A strong economy is supported by eight industry sectors that drive economic growth and regional investment activity. Core pillars such as aerospace and technology have historically driven economic growth and local employment. Because of their importance, these sectors have also attracted workforce and education program support services.

- **Snohomish County Executive** – Snohomish County, alongside the Future Workforce Alliance and Workforce Snohomish, plays a vital convenor role within this ecosystem. The County focuses on legislative and policy changes; the FWA is responsible for developing and updating the local workforce vision, mission, and strategic goals and objectives. Workforce Snohomish is mandated to be customer-facing and directly implement workforce programs and services. These organizations also provide a continuous stream of Labor Market Information (LMI) to inform priority setting.

- **Workforce Support Networks** – Numerous workforce partners strengthen the ecosystem, private or not-for-profit organizations that support agencies. These include partners such as Snohomish STEM, local Chambers of Commerce, and Centers of Excellence, which provide an array of skill and job training programs to job seekers and LMI.

Please refer to the Research & Analysis Report (Appendix A) for more detailed information on ecosystem partners, mandates, and local workforce programs.

Overall, the local workforce ecosystem is highly structured, with several job support programs and agencies. Themes from a partner workshop conducted as part of this strategy identified an opportunity for enhanced collaboration. Stakeholders highlighted that many workforce programs are often siloed, with duplicated efforts and limited program integration. However, there is a willingness amongst partners to collaborate. A potential opportunity identified was to create a workforce partner communication plan.

COVID-19 has also been a significant challenge. The pandemic resulted in many support programs being paused or significantly reduced, which negatively impacted job seekers. Moving forward, stakeholders feel there should be a focus on restarting in-person workforce programs as quickly as possible while ensuring health and safety protocols are met.

Stakeholders also highlighted that the ecosystem had increased its focus on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives over recent years, and this must continue as a priority. At the Executive level, Snohomish County has taken steps to increase DEI initiatives. For example, in 2018, an 11-person Equity and Inclusion Taskforce was commissioned with the mandate to improve inclusion efforts across the
The task force later published the Snohomish County Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Assessment 2019, which included four goals and 13 action items related to opportunities for continuing diversity, equity, and inclusion-focused practices across Snohomish County.

Likewise, themes from interviews with FWA board members indicated that to become a "gold standard" workforce system requires inclusive collaboration among all partners. This includes a focus on developing a charter and establishing a coalition of willing employers and workforce support agencies that commit to addressing all community members equally. Board members stressed that this action has the potential to solidify Snohomish County as a place where everyone has access to the resources needed to build a more robust workforce. The creation of the FWA serves as an essential step in advancing local collaboration efforts by connecting workforce agencies, businesses, educators, and levels of government. However, due to many workforce players within the ecosystem and the complexity of programming and support services, maximizing collaboration efforts will take commitment to a common goal and collective effort.

5.1 Collective Impact

Collective Impact is a specific form of collaboration, which serves to bridge the science/practitioner gap. It is defined as follows: "The commitment of a group of important actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem." Research shows that focusing on Collective Impact will result in continuous and ongoing impact for the community. Collaboration among partners may not consistently achieve results if the goals are not aligned across the organizations. Collective impact success, on the other hand, stems from its fundamental characteristics. Research has identified five attributes of Collective Impact initiatives that lead to successful outcomes. These include:

1. **A common agenda** - allows partners to align their interests and resources in a meaningful and sustainable way. A shared agenda is not only a common goal – it is a shared understanding of how to reach that goal and what the problem is.

2. **Shared measurement systems** – provides information about whether the initiative is successful. It is difficult for collaborators to agree on what needs to be measured to define the venture's success without a common agenda. This step is complex because no two organizations use the same measurements. However, to report results and come to reliable conclusions, agreement on when and how the outcomes will be measured is essential.

3. **Mutually reinforcing activities** – leverage the unique strength of each partner so that it can own a specific part of the project. However, each organization needs to act in tandem with the rest and align with the common agenda.

4. **Continuous communication** – to create trusting relationships between Collective Impact participants. Without the investment of a lot of time and conversation, the first two steps would be challenging to achieve.

5. **Backbone support organizations** – the role of facilitator, project manager, and data manager

Snohomish County's workforce ecosystem already demonstrates several of these characteristics. For example, the Integrated Local and Regional Area Plan clearly describe the "common agenda" via the vision, mission, goals, and objectives; as part of this strategy, "shared measurement systems" are being developed that align with WIOA accountability standards. Future opportunities exist in expanding mutually reinforcing activities and improving continuous communication among workforce partners. The
Snohomish County Executive, FWA, and Workforce Snohomish may continue to act as the backbone support organizations to ensure Strategic Action Plan success and the collective benefits for the community, employers, students, and job seekers.
Figure 9: Snohomish County Workforce Ecosystem

Overview
- There are 5 public universities & colleges across Snohomish County
- 15 School Districts
- 92 High Schools
- 45,972 student enrollments.
- 94.6 student-teacher ratio

EDUCATORS

WORKFORCE SUPPORT NETWORKS

Other Support Networks
- Snohomish STEM
- Centers of Excellence
- 13 Chambers of Commerce in Snohomish County
- E.g., City of Bothell, Everett, King County, Puget Sound Regional Council
- 10+ Centers of Excellence across the County
- E.g., Edmonds College Center for Learning Connections, Apprenti

Community & Technical Colleges
- There are 6 community & technical colleges across Snohomish County.

Private Universities & Colleges
- There are 3 private universities & colleges across Snohomish County.

Public Universities & Colleges
- There are 5 public universities & colleges across Snohomish County

Secondary Schools

Elementary & Middle Schools

Workforce Snohomish
- 2x Worksource Centers
- Employment & Business Supports

Services
- Advocate for local businesses
- Develop Economic Vitality
- Connect businesses to services

Economic Alliance of Snohomish County

SNOHOMISH COUNTY EXECUTIVE

SNOHOMISH COUNTY WORKFORCE ECOSYSTEM

MAJOR INDUSTRY SECTORS

- Aerospace
- Agriculture, Fisheries & Forest Products Industry
- Technology
- Military and Defense
- Recreation and Tourism
- Energy and Sustainability
- Arts, Culture & Film
- Education, Life Sciences & Global Health

Technology & Innovation Supports
- E.g., SC Open Innovation Labs, NW Innovation Resource Center, Sno Is a Tech Skills Center

Social Supports
- E.g., Communities of Color Coalition, YMCA Snohomish County, LETI - Latino Educational Training Institute
6. Strategic Action and Implementation Plan

The Snohomish County Workforce Development Strategic Action Plan (WDSAP) is underpinned by three goals, aligned with the Future Workforce Alliance. The goals are interrelated and, if implemented effectively, will ensure a solid and sustainable workforce and economic competitiveness across the county.

The goals and the objectives of the Strategic Action Plan are detailed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GOAL</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| GOAL #1: Facilitate and Build a Culture of Collaboration Among All Workforce System Stakeholders | Objective A: Develop structure and leadership for collaborative efforts to meet the needs of a diverse workforce, with a focus on racial equity and inclusion.  
Objective B: Build strategic partnerships to enhance the education, workforce development, economic development, human development, and community development systems. |
| GOAL #2: Grow and Diversify Jobs in Snohomish County                  | Objective A: Understand and actively support the talent needs of employers with high-quality jobs.  
Objective B: Actively retain, recruit and attract new employers to increase diversity and equity in key industries within the Snohomish economy.  
Objective C: Increase alignment of education and training with employer needs. |
| GOAL #3: Cultivate Talent through Increased Skill Development and Opportunities for Snohomish County | Objective A: Identify talent gaps among the existing labor force (employees and job seekers).  
Objective B: Improve digital access to support education, workforce, and employer needs.  
Objective C: Ensure key organizations are supported and able to meet the needs of target populations and attract talent.  
Objective D: Enhance skills of current residents, with a focus on historically marginalized populations, and enable a county-wide value proposition to attract and retain talent in the County. |

6.1.1 Action and Implementation Plan

The Action Plan details specific tactics and proposed initiation timeframe to support the workforce development objectives. These actions offer clear direction for the Future Workforce Alliance, Snohomish County, its partners, and its stakeholders to undertake to address the validated issues and opportunities that should be addressed over the life of the WDSAP. The timeframe for initiating and/or implementing the recommended actions are noted as Short (1 year), Medium (2-3 years), and Long-term (+4 years).

The Action Plan is expected to be revisited regularly to assess its applicability in a changing environment.
There may be a need to add new actions in response to changing market conditions and policy considerations.

**GOAL #1: Facilitate and Build a Culture of Collaboration Among All Workforce System Stakeholders**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTION PLAN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Objective A: Develop structure, leadership, and opportunity for collaborative efforts to meet the needs of a diverse workforce, with a focus on racial equity and inclusion.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Timing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| A1 | Engage with historically marginalized groups to garner input, insight, and recommendations on preferred methods and approaches to maximize participation in the workplace and career readiness.  
   - Building on the concerted efforts of WorkSource Snohomish County, this may involve direct interaction opportunities through local community-based organizations, service groups, faith-based organizations, and community centers. Actions must reflect inclusion, transparency, and respect. | Short |
| A2 | Commit to increasing representation on the Future Workforce Alliance Board and Standing Committees to reflect different perspectives.  
   - Within COVID-19 protocols, establish in-person Board meetings so that roles and responsibilities are clearly articulated. The Board could select the frequency of these meetings.  
   - Investigate opportunities for increased racial diversity, youth engagement, and minority leadership roles on the Board.  
   - Convene a regular meeting of the Local Workforce Board Chairs within the region (Snohomish, King, and Pierce counties) to establish a collaboration platform. This platform may be used to identify and address common regional workforce issues, identify best practices, and coordinate funding opportunities to strengthen the workforce system throughout the region.  
   - Develop a marketing and Board Recruitment Plan to increase awareness and opportunities for participation. | Short |
| A3 | Develop a workforce partner communications plan to promote the Workforce Strategy and Action Plan, its benefits to all internal and external stakeholders and the broader region. | Short |
| A4 | Implement the recommendations of the *Snohomish County Diversity, Equity, And Inclusion Assessment.* | Medium |
| A5 | Establish a coalition of willing employers and workforce support agencies actively committed to addressing all community members equally | Medium |
### ACTION PLAN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective A: Performance Metrics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ Diverse representation on local and regional Boards, Committees is reflected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Increased participation of historically marginalized groups in local planning and strategy implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ # Actions implemented and # of outcomes from the Snohomish County Diversity, Equity, And Inclusion Assessment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ # Board marketing and recruitment campaigns</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Objective B: Build strategic partnerships to enhance the education, workforce development, economic development, human development, and community development systems. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Timing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B1</td>
<td>Bring together all entities with interest in workforce development.</td>
<td>Short</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Integrate organizations that support historically marginalized and underserved areas of the county into all workforce system practices such as workforce system service development and implementation, Future Workforce Alliance working groups, and the Innovation Center for Future Workforce to ensure that the workforce system meets and supports the opportunity for all in Snohomish County.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Host a Knowledge Exchange Forum annually to support key workforce stakeholders and economic developers to come together and share information, insight, priorities, and initiatives. This ½ day gathering will support collaboration across and among stakeholders and increase opportunities for collective impact.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Establish the Innovation Center for Future Workforce,² comprised of workforce development specialists and community leaders.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2</td>
<td>Increase employer engagement in workforce development by providing a coherent, unified way to work with education and workforce systems.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Identify champion employers in key economic sectors that can promote successful interactions and outcomes with the education sector, resulting in greater alignment between employer talent needs and graduate readiness to enter the workplace. This can be captured in a communique style communication and shared broadly across the region through the website and social media.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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² The Center will work collaboratively to identify best practices, develop recommendations, and support implementation of projects to address systemic barriers to workforce development and economic opportunity, and foster collaboration and idea generation to develop an inclusive and innovative workforce system. The Center will also provide quarterly updates to the Future Workforce Alliance to support the Board’s goals and objectives, provide information about the implementation of workforce service delivery system, and identify challenges, opportunities, and recommendations for improvement.
## ACTION PLAN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTION</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ Work with Snohomish STEM, employers, education, and social support organizations to host job fairs that showcase employment opportunities in high-demand, high-paying jobs, STEM and Trade-related jobs for local graduates and labor force participants.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Connect existing fairs and trade days centered in the urban areas to the rural communities to increase participation and the number of students or job seekers connected to employers. These events may be online or hybrid models influenced by COVID-19 protocols.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective B: Performance Metrics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ New partnerships and collaborations fostered through the Innovation Center for Future Workforce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ # Knowledge Exchange Forums, job fairs hosted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ # Events in rural communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ # Partnerships with school districts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ # of program outcomes through the Employment Support Network and the Leadership Employment Support Network</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### B3

**Promote Front Line Staff Engagement and Interaction.**

- Employment Support Network made up of Front-Line staff who work directly with clients on a day-to-day basis. This network will support information dissemination and promote a collective dialogue to strengthen awareness of local programming to address client employment support needs. Such interaction strengthens local knowledge of what programs and services are available in the region and encourages client supports through a client-centric approach. This Network would meet each month for two (2) hours.

### B4

**Encourage Leadership Collaboration among Employment Support organizations.**

- Leadership Employment Support Network – this would involve senior-level executives gathering once a year for a more strategic dialogue about current and planned programming, gaps in services that need to be addressed, and to share organizational successes achieved throughout the year. It promotes collaboration and collective engagement while strengthening relationships and awareness between and among organizations that deliver direct client services.
## GOAL #2: Grow and Diversify Jobs in Snohomish County

### Action Plan

**Objective A: Understand and actively support the talent needs of employers with high-quality jobs.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>Support employers to incorporate best practices for inclusive hiring to meet talent needs.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Carry out a best practice review to support developing an &quot;information resource&quot; that employers can utilize to inform hiring practices that reflect inclusion, diversity, and a welcoming workplace. Share via the website and social media.</td>
<td>Short</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>Implement the recommendations of the 2021 Snohomish County Talent and Transferable Skills Research Study.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3</td>
<td>Retain local jobs by meeting the needs of existing employers.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Carry out a comprehensive analysis of local job postings, sector, occupation, employer, and skill level to increase understanding of employer talent needs. This insight must be shared with job seekers to promote local employment opportunities and with educators and training providers to inform programming and training opportunities.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A4</td>
<td>▪ Create a centralized online information source to inform employers of existing business support programs, services, and grants in Snohomish County.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Objective A: Performance Metrics**

- # Recommendations from the Talent and Transferable Skills Research Study implemented
- # of employers educated on DEI best practices
- # of jobs retained
- # of visits or downloads on the online business support information page.
- # Increase in STEM workers and employee retention when compared to non-STEM

### Objective B: Actively retain, recruit, and attract new employers to increase diversity and equity in key industries within the Snohomish economy.

<table>
<thead>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B1</td>
<td>Assist local employers with business expansion to create jobs.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Conduct direct employer outreach through an annual (or semi-annual) survey to local businesses to capture their input on projected labor demand over 12, 24, and 36 months. This survey should be coordinated among those organizations seeking employer input to minimize survey outreach initiatives and strengthen employer participation.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2</td>
<td>Monitor job quality and participation.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Action Plan

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B3</td>
<td>Investigate and introduce a standardized performance metric system to monitor the progression of job quality and labor force participation across historically marginalized and racial populations.</td>
<td>Long</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B4</td>
<td>Design and implement a regional employer recognition program to encourage, support, and recognize those employers who demonstrate participation in workforce development efforts, such as co-op placement, apprenticeship, on-the-job training, etc.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B5</td>
<td>Develop a workforce marketing profile/program highlighting the region’s assets, affordability, and cultural and recreational experiences.</td>
<td>Short</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Objective B: Performance Metrics**

- Employer Satisfaction – Year over year comparison of business satisfaction
- # BRE projects in target industry sectors
- # Employer partnerships committed to a top-quality workforce
- # Job-quality training seminars or programs

**Objective C: Increase alignment of education and training with employer needs.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C1</td>
<td>Establish a &quot;speakers bureau&quot; that links local employers with students and job seekers (through a school setting or local employment support organizations) to share success stories, describe workplace experiences, and promote career exploration.</td>
<td>Short</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2</td>
<td>Encourage education institutions to carry out regular assessments of program enrollment, graduation, and curriculum alignment to the competencies, skills, and knowledge demanded by employers.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Objective C: Performance Metrics**

- # Number of speakers contacted & students engaged
- # Number of education partnerships fostered
GOAL #3: Develop Talent through Increased Skill Development and Opportunities for Snohomish County

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Plan</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objective A: Identify talent gaps among the existing labor force (employees and job seekers).</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#</td>
<td>Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>Through training that growth sectors have endorsed, create a career laddering platform that supports lower-skilled workers to make an immediate contribution and explore opportunities for workplace advancement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>Encourage more online, part-time and modular programming to increase access and enable increased participation of people with disabilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3</td>
<td>Encourage businesses to use mentorship as both a recruitment and retention practice.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Objective A: Performance Metrics**

- Number of job seekers supported
- Number of workers from marginalized population groups supported into employment
- Number of businesses engaged regarding mentorship on recruitment and retention practices

**Objective B: Improve digital access to support education, workforce, and employer needs.**

| # | Action | Timing |
| B1 | Provide accurate information, guidance, and support to job seekers, focusing on historically excluded or marginalized populations. - Ensure information is presented in an easy-to-use, relevant and useful manner to maximize usability among job seekers, students, and employment support organizations. | Short |
| B2 | Prioritize the use of data and analysis, focusing on gathering racial and ethnic data to identify and address needs to build a skilled workforce. | Short |
| B3 | Effectively use and disseminate LMI information among the regional business community to inform decision-making. | Medium |
| B4 | Develop a broadband strategy with recommendations for providing a fiber-optic network throughout the county's rural and urban areas. | Long |

**Objective B: Performance Metrics**

- Number of businesses accessing LMI information
- Households and businesses with access to fiber optic network

**Objective C: Ensure key organizations are supported and able to meet the needs of target populations, and attract talent.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
</table>
### Action Plan

| C1 | Investigate the applicability of increasing staff/liaisons at Workforce Snohomish to reflect minority and marginalized populations. | Short |
| C2 | Continue to foster partnerships with the Economic Alliance of Snohomish County and Workforce Snohomish.  
▪ Clearly articulate the role, initiatives, and projects of the Snohomish County Executive, Workforce Snohomish, and Economic Alliance of Snohomish County among internal and external partners and the Board members to ensure alignment and streamlined program delivery.  
▪ Establish working-groups sessions and information-sharing agreements with senior and front-line staff in these organizations to understand the current state of activities and where opportunities may exist to collaborate and share information resources and outcomes. For example: sharing LMI, employer/employee connections, and training resources. | Short |
| C3 | Continue to support the one-stop operator to coordinate service delivery of one-stop partners and service providers. | Medium |
| C4 | Work with partners to promote equitable programming, support services, and learning opportunities among marginalized target groups. | Medium |

### Objective C: Performance Metrics

- Increase in staff representation of minority and marginalized populations
- Coordinated service delivery outcomes through the one-stop operator
- # Education partnerships committed to developing a top-quality workforce and aligned workforce ecosystem

### Objective D: Enhance skills of current residents, with a focus on historically marginalized populations, and enable a county-wide value proposition to attract and retain talent in the County.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D1</td>
<td>Launch a short-term destination marketing campaign that promotes the County’s assets and positions it as a hub for remote working.</td>
<td>Short</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D2</td>
<td>Position and promote broadband hubs within the County’s rural and urban areas and Innovation Partnership Zones and Opportunity Zones designations.</td>
<td>Short</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D3</td>
<td>As part of the youth working group, engage local students/influencers to highlight the county’s advantages through their Instagram stories.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D4</td>
<td>Continue to foster partnerships with Refugee and Immigrant Services Northwest (RISNW) to understand and respond to the needs of the international community within Snohomish County.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D5</td>
<td>Establish a workforce pilot program based on the proven Project Quest model that provides comprehensive support to help low-income earning adults gain post-secondary credentials and skills to access well-paying jobs.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Objective D: Performance Metrics

- # Number of views of marketing activities related to remote worker attraction
- # Number of new projects initiated that support refugee and immigrant populations
- Workforce pilot project launched