

South Central Workforce Council Strategic Plan 2013 Executive Summary



The South Central Workforce Development Area (Workforce Development Area) covering approximately 10,119 square miles is comprised of Kittitas, Klickitat, Skamania, and Yakima Counties located in the South Central region of Washington State.

Creating livable wage jobs and strengthening the economic base by supporting new and existing businesses is recognized as a cornerstone necessary for building a strong economy and a healthy community. Local elected officials, the Workforce Council, and the partners of Kittitas, Klickitat, Skamania and Yakima Counties recognize the unique and important role of workforce programs in the development of economic and social health of its communities.

Like other communities working to rebound from the economic setbacks of the great recession a renewed emphasis and redirection of energy has been placed in restoring an economic structure that provides employment opportunities to all residents of the local community. The Council is committed to do its part in the development of a workforce system that provides opportunities for all residents to receive a quality education and opportunity to receive training that will lead to productive, satisfying, and family wage jobs.

To achieve this end, the South Central Workforce Council will continue to forge new partnerships and strengthen existing relationships with schools, post-secondary organizations, economic development agencies, business, labor, state agencies, and public organizations. As our system moves forward, it will continue to reach out and connect these key players in a single network as a way to make efficient use of public dollars to increase worker readiness for existing and new businesses, and to improve the quality of life for local residents. The South Central

Workforce Development Council (Council) Strategic Plan is the blueprint for this system.

The changing demographics and needs of the current and future workforce have clearly created new challenges for the education, training, and employment community. Business must have workers who possess good work habits, technical skills, and ability to change and adapt to new technologies and methods of doing work.

In response, local workforce programs have been structured to assist dislocated workers in connecting with job opportunities; to help low-skilled adults and older workers overcome barriers to employment; and to assist youth in finishing school and identifying career pathways that will lead to productive employment and rewarding careers. For TANF parents, the Council administers the WorkFirst Program that provides individuals real work experiences to develop the soft skills needed for employment. Lastly, the Council has proactively taken steps to build capacity to effectively serve individuals with disability so business can more easily access these largely untapped labor resources.


The Council along with local WorkSource partners have designed services and activities to provide an effective, efficient, and fully integrated service delivery system for workers and businesses. Given the current economy, demographics, and workforce, the Council continues to pursue the following priorities:

- Utilization of the area's greatest resource—*people*—to fill the gap of skilled workers in the South Central Area. There are significant social/economic advantages of increased utilization by developing the skills of new residents, TANF parents, dislocated workers, disadvantaged adults, individuals




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with disability, veterans, ex-offenders, and older workers.

- Early identification of those dislocated from declining industries and occupations to transition these people back into productive jobs. The Council will continue the practice of working closely with business and labor to ease the transition of workers to new jobs in the community. Goals for dislocated worker programs will prioritize recaptured earnings and benefits, and provide for career growth and future earning potential.
- Continued support and development of strategies that provide for career development and growth for incumbent workers at minimum wage or low paying jobs. The Council recognizes that when given the opportunity, these workers will make use of training that improves their skills and positions them for higher wage and higher skilled jobs. The success of training low-wage, entry-level incumbent workers to higher skilled jobs will also increase the availability of entry-level jobs for those who are entering the workforce for the first time.
- Improved strategies to maximize the potential of the youth population who have a higher than average minority population. These strategies will create pathways for movement to jobs that pay a livable wage.
- Implementation of proven, effective strategies, identified by the Health Skills Panel, to provide local residents the opportunity for entrance in to high demand, high wage health care occupations.
- Labor force participation rates will continue to rise for women. Therefore, the Council will provide an increased focus and promote educational opportunities to help women who enter the work-
force achieve higher earnings while prepar-

ing them for nontraditional jobs.

- Improve access and effective service to people with disabilities by enhancing accommodations, customized employment, marketing and job development in order to capitalize on this large and underemployed segment of the labor force.

- Explore and pilot new strategies that target retention of youth through improved informational services, assessment, career planning, and coordination of youth employment programs with schools. Further, projects such as dropout prevention will be continued, to promote school completion for youth through special programs and partnerships with education and business.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

Goal 1: *Improve the quality of education in area school districts through collaboration with business to prepare youth for entry into the workforce.*

Objective A—Support the connection between school and the workplace.

Strategies:

1. Establish and market workforce information materials to the South Central region to support education.
2. Develop a database of employers who will provide first hand work based learning experience to youth through internships, work experience, and job shadowing for the populations served.

Objective B—Develop programs that will help students advance educationally and succeed academically, focusing on dropouts and at risk students.

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Strategies:

1. Focus efforts to assist dropout students with school reentry to achieve a high school diploma, or access to alternative education opportunities for GED completion including effective after hour school and summer programs.
2. Develop and continue programs that focus on development of basic education skills for high mobility students, migrant students and students of farm families.
3. Develop and continue tutoring programs that will assist students in mastering reading, writing, and math skills.
4. Develop and continue employer mentoring/counseling programs to help dropout youth understand their employment potential.
5. Develop *second-chance* programs for youth who are out-of school with the *first-chance* system for youth who are in school.
6. Work with local schools and educational agencies to connect with workforce organizations serving as a broker to leverage and connect with employment and training services.

Goal 2: *Prepare adults in transition (TANF, disadvantaged adults, dislocated workers, and older workers) for successful participation in the workforce.*

Objective A—Prepare TANF participants and disadvantaged adults with the skills needed for entrance to the labor market, and the ability to find and retain employment to achieve self-sufficiency.

Strategies:

1. Provide the full range of services to TANF participants and disadvantaged adults through the WorkSource (One-Stop) system.
2. Increase capacity and access to services in rural WorkSource Centers through the use of technology.

3. For those seeking self-sufficiency, expand access to and provide the necessary intensive services as appropriate, to include childcare assistance, transportation, substance abuse counseling and other services that will remove barriers to employment.
4. Focus services on retention of jobs and wage progression.
5. Support the Kittitas, Klickitat, Skamania and Yakima WorkFirst Local Planning Area strategic plans with the local workforce development system.
6. Promote accelerated learning programs for low literacy workers and individuals with limited English speaking ability through special educational programs such as I-BEST.

Objective B—Prepare workers age 55 years and older with employment and training opportunities to find and retain employment to achieve self-sufficiency.

Strategies:

1. Provide the full range of services to workers age 55 years and older through the WorkSource (One-stop). System.
2. Provide information to businesses and employers on the advantages of employing mature workers.
3. Offer incentives to employers for hiring and training older workers to increase employment and training opportunities.
4. Provide training programs at times and locations that are accessible and provide mature workers opportunity to learn new skills and utilize existing programs and services.

Objective C—Provide services that will assist dislocated workers in finding and retaining employment at a comparable wage prior to dislocation.

Strategies:

1. provide the full range of services to dislocated workers through the WorkSource

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(One-Stop) system.

2. Continue exemplary best practices, such as rapid response, involving partners from public service employment, labor, and local community and technical colleges.
3. Prioritize return to work at comparable wages in as short a time as possible.

Goal 3: *Support the current economic base and promote future business growth through the development of a well-trained workforce.*

Objective A—Provide opportunities for incumbent workers to further their education in job-related skills or education beyond basic level.

Strategies:

1. Work with business leaders to create career, labor market information, and financial assistance information for incumbent workers to facilitate education, training, and career choices.
2. Develop incumbent worker training that builds skills for entry-level employees to move to higher skilled jobs within businesses.

Objective B—Create private-public partnerships to enable individuals to move up job and career ladders throughout their lives.

Strategies:

1. Support industry cluster skills panels to assess emerging and declining skill needs for development of training programs to meet those needs.
2. Develop secondary vocational/technical program standards linked to industry skill standards while working with the labor-business and education committees.

Objective C—Implement workforce services and programs that enhance business development, expansion, and retention.

Strategies:

1. Work in partnership with economic development organizations in attracting businesses to the area or assisting in new

business start-ups through services and incentives provided by the workforce system.

2. Support existing business retention, expansion, and new location by providing comprehensive, worker training support services to meet employer's training needs.

Goal 4: *Improve access to and quality of workforce training and employment programs to meet existing and future business needs.*

Objective A—Encourage and provide opportunity for all groups to work together, share a common vision, and to be part of policy and decision-making.

Strategies:

1. remove physical or artificial barriers and disincentives for people with disabilities and ensure access to other populations such as veterans and homeless.
2. Develop and implement public informational campaigns that educate the community on the importance of workforce preparation.

Objective B—Increase the capacity of high schools, community and technical colleges, universities and apprenticeship programs to provide high quality workforce education and training programs.

Strategies:

1. Partner with industry, education and labor/business to provide facilities, faculty, and equipment in high wage, high demand fields such as healthcare; construction trades and information technology & communications.
2. Support apprenticeship training to non-traditional fields and expand pre-apprenticeship programs.
3. Seek and replicate best practices in all institutions through career and technical education programs; and provide assistance, if necessary, to educational institutions in the South Central region.