

***STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN  
JANUARY 2019 THROUGH JUNE 2022***

Developed by the Workforce Development Council (WDC)  
Strategic Planning Team



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## PLANNING TEAM MEMBERS

Bruce Dammeier	Pierce County Executive
Lakesha Egardo-Jones	Senior Director Innovation & Strategy, Workforce Central
April Betts Gibson	Executive Director, Puget Sound Orthopaedics
Steve Gear	VP, Energy Products & Technology Development, Bradken
Alecia Grady	Director of Personnel & Family Readiness, JBLM
Steve Grimstad	VP, Finance & Operations, Workforce Central
Deborah Howell	VP, Innovation & Strategy, Workforce Central
Bruce Kendall	President & CEO, Economic Development Board for Tacoma-Pierce County
Michelle Ledbetter,	Director, Pierce County Skills Center
Joyce Loveday	President, Clover Park Technical College
Conor McCarthy,	Council Member, City of Tacoma
Linda Nguyen	CEO, WorkForce Central
Tim Owens,	Manager, Marshalls and Chair, WDC
Dona Ponepinto,	President & CEO, United Way of Pierce County
Sally Perkins,	Business/Management Consultant, Practical Solutions
Patty Rose	Secretary/Treasurer, Pierce County Central Labor Council
Rick Talbert,	Council Member, Pierce County
Victoria Woodards,	Mayor, City of Tacoma

Lori Strumpf, Facilitator

***Strumpf Associates: Center for Strategic Change***

## INTRODUCTION

This document is the dynamic blueprint for the sustainability and growth of the region's talent pipeline. It is the product of intensive discussions by the Workforce Development Council's (WDC) Strategic Planning Committee members and feedback from staff, partners, and stakeholders. This plan lays the foundation for the organization's business plan, which will outline key actions and resources required to execute the objectives and strategies found in this plan.

The Planning Committee is to be commended for their imagination, dedication, and perseverance throughout this process. We have a vision of where we want to be, an assessment of where we are now and a set of criteria to measure our progress. We have defined the values that describe how we do business and developed strategies and priorities to move us from where we are to where we want to be.

The strategic direction, goals and strategies included in this plan are a response to our understanding of what our customers value most about the workforce system, and current opportunities and challenges for offering a high-quality system of talent development to the area's businesses.

Stanford's Center on Poverty and Inequality's 2017 annual "State of the Union" report found profound and persisting inequalities in the United States. The report details the "profound racial and ethnic inequalities that persist in many domains," notably in housing, employment and health. The report points out that since 1980, racial and ethnic disparities in poverty in the U.S. have remained largely unchanged, resulting in what the researchers characterize as "two Americas."

We acknowledge that these inequities and two America's exist in Pierce County. We are committed to addressing the racial and ethnic disparities that disadvantage people of color and create greater barriers to employment in our community. Our data shows that two important groups in our community—disconnected young adults and adults without a High School Diploma or a GED—include a disproportionate number of people of color. It is our goal to effectively address their barriers to employment in our community by addressing the underlying disparities and structural racism that they experience. We will provide the leadership required to reform the workforce development system to serve people of color in culturally response ways. We commit that when the race begins, everyone will be lined up at the same starting place.

During the four-year period of this strategic plan we will increase our leadership role in developing talent through data analytics, working to remove racial, ethnic and geographic disparities in the county, and by being proactive in creating partnerships that can catalyze opportunities. We will actively engage with our communities to create opportunities for our customers to gain skills and resources required to become self-sufficient.

With a fresh perspective on the mission, understanding what we do well, and the environment in which we operate, the WDC, on behalf of the workforce system, will pursue the following two bold goals:

- **By 2025** the workforce system will reduce the number of disconnected young adults<sup>1</sup>, 16 to 24, by half - from 15,300 to 7,650.
- **By 2025** the workforce system will reduce the number of residents between the ages of 25 to 64 without a High School Diploma or a GED, by half - from 38,475 to 19,237.

In Pierce County, as in the nation, there is an ongoing and growing scarcity of skilled workers to meet the demand. For the first time on record, the number of American job openings exceeds the number of job seekers.

March of 2018 marked the first month where the number of available jobs exceeded the total number of jobs seekers<sup>2</sup> (6.6M jobs vs. 6.4M unemployed). This is a clear trend – In the year prior, March 2017, there were 26% more jobs seekers than available jobs, whereas, in October 2018 we had 16% more jobs than those seeking employment.

In Pierce County, as of December, there were 8,597 active job postings in Pierce County.<sup>3</sup> Employers continue to report consistent difficulty in finding skilled workers to fill their job openings.

This Strategic Plan brings together priorities covering all workforce programs within the WDC’s purview. Its priorities and objectives encompass all the WDC’s activities. However, a plan is of little value by itself. This document is the framework to continue our growth and ensure the sustainability of our high-performance, customer-focused workforce development system that continues to benefit all stakeholders – our customers, our employees, and the community.

The demand is great, as is our commitment to build a workforce strategy for our time that can meet the needs of today’s changing business environment.

### ***DATA SNAPSHOTS***

*Sources:* U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts, American Community Surveys, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, JobsEQ, and the Employment Security Department

#### ***General Population***

- As of July 2017, the population estimate for the county was 876,764. This is a 10.3% increase from 2010, with a growth rate of 5.27% in the past year.
- The largest city in Pierce County is Tacoma with 213,418 residents, 15,000 more residents than 2010.
- In the county, 91% of people 25 years or older are high school graduates or higher.
- Of those individuals age 25 years or higher, 26% have a bachelor’s degree or higher.

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<sup>1</sup> Disconnected youth and young adults are defined as those who are neither working nor in school. Nationwide there are 4.9 million, or one in every eight, American young people in this age group who are not connected to either of these anchor institutions

<sup>2</sup> Estimates derived from the Bureau of Labor Statistics’ Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey (JOLTS) for total nonfarm seasonally adjusted job openings, and Local Area & Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) report of seasonally adjusted unemployment.

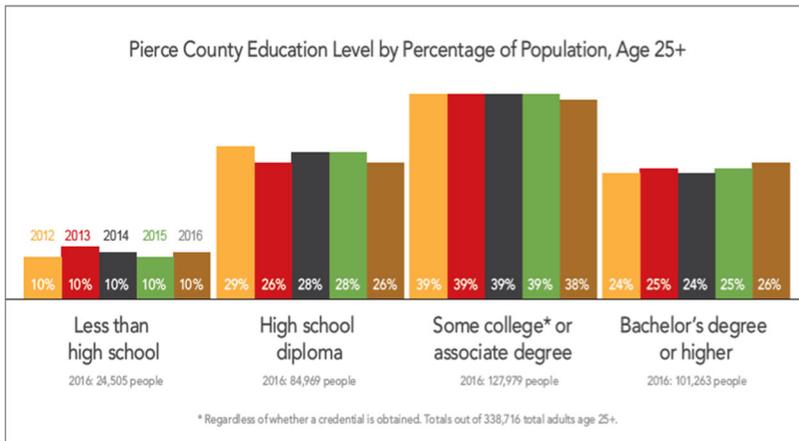
<sup>3</sup> Active job estimates are pulled from Chmura’s JobsEQ, Real-Time Intelligence Report.

- The percent of individuals 5 years and older that have a language other than English spoken at home is 14.2%.
- The cost of living in Pierce County is 12% above the national average (111.9, base US), but much lower than the state (127.2, base US).
- Median rent in Pierce County is \$1,116 per month, 14% higher than the national average.
- One in ten residents under 65 have a disability (10.1%).
- Pierce County has proportionally more young residents (under 18) than the state and national share and proportionally fewer older residents (65 and older).
  - Nearly one in four (24%) Pierce County residents are under the age of 18 while just 13% are 65 or older.
- In 2016, the Department of Defense employed 55,125 personnel – 40,065 of which are not counted in our employment statistics because they are active duty military.
- The military spent \$2.4B for Pierce County personnel in 2016.
- Pierce County is becoming more diverse along racial and ethnic lines. Black residents made up 7.5 percent of Pierce County’s total population compared to 4.2 percent of the state’s population. Over the last decade the proportion of residents estimated to be White alone, has declined from 78% to 73%, with the greatest increase coming from Multi-racial residents and those with a Hispanic or Latino origin (up 2.8% and 3.6% respectively).

### ***Income, Poverty and the Economy***

- The median wage as of 2018Q3 was \$42,100, below the state’s median wage of \$47,600.
- The median hourly wage in 2017 was \$22.91, which surpasses the state’s median hourly wage of \$22.00 when King County is excluded but falls below the state’s median of \$24.89 when King County is included.
- The median household income (in 2017 dollars), was \$63,881
- The median earnings in 2017 was \$37,083
- The median earnings for those with less than high school was \$26,912.
- The median earnings high school graduates was \$35,868.
- The median earnings of those with a bachelor’s degree was \$55,301.
- The percent of people in poverty was 10.0% (86,035) for those whom poverty status is determined.
- In 2017, there were 302,174 jobs in Pierce County covered by unemployment insurance, with a total payroll of more than \$14.9 billion.
- The percent of individuals 16 years and older in the civilian labor force is 61.9%.
- The mean travel time to work for workers age 16 years and older is 31.2 minutes.
- The county pre-recession employment hit a high of 378,371 in December 2007. As of November 2018, the preliminary estimate had rebounded to 414,063 with an unemployment rate of just 4.9% (less than half the 2010 annual average of 10.4%).
- The size of the Pierce County labor force is up to 435,478, up nearly 35K from three years prior.
- As of 2018Q3, Health Care & Social Assistance along with Retail Trade comprise 30% of industries in the county, followed by Educational Services (9.1%), Accommodation and Food Services (8.6%), and Construction (7.7%).

# Studying Skilled Jobs



**Did you know** that 38 percent of all jobs in Pierce County can be classified as Skilled Jobs – those which require postsecondary education or training beyond high school, but less than a four-year degree?

WorkForce Central recently commissioned a comprehensive study of Skilled Jobs in Pierce County. Head to our website to read the summary, findings and full report.

*The proportion of Pierce County residents aged 25 and older with some college or associate degrees has remained virtually unchanged since 2011. The percentage is unlikely to budge without targeted strategies to address it.*

## ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

- VISION:** Economic prosperity for our customers and the region.
- MISSION:** The Workforce Development System’s mission is to provide easy access to and enhance delivery of workforce development services for individuals and businesses.
- VALUE PROPOSITION:** We provide individualized and customized navigation to a comprehensive set of job and career development services.
- TAG LINE:** Partnering in pursuit of greater economic vitality for all
- CUSTOMERS:** Our primary *external customers* are individuals and businesses.  
Our primary *internal customer* is our **staff**.
- ROLE:** The WDB will play several roles in furtherance of our vision and mission:
- We **lead and oversee** the workforce development system.
  - We seek to **catalyze change** in the community to build effective partnerships.
  - We will **strategically invest** in program innovation.
  - We **act as a convener** of business and industry.

## ORGANIZATIONAL CORE VALUES

Our Common Values:

We believe in the following shared principles, beliefs and priorities....

***EMPOWERMENT.*** We support our customers in gaining the skills and confidence to make choices right for them and their families.

***INNOVATION.*** We embrace on-going innovation, creativity, and change for achieving continuous improvement and growth.

***RESULTS.*** We deliver our very best in all we do, holding ourselves accountable for results.

***RESPECT.*** We treat our team members, customers, and partners with mutual respect and sensitivity, recognizing the importance of diversity. We respect all individuals and value their contributions.

***STEWARDSHIP.*** We are stewards of the public trust and take seriously our responsibility for fiscal management.

***SOCIAL JUSTICE.*** We will purposefully identify, discuss and challenge issues of race and color and the impact(s) they have on our organization, each partner organization, its respective systems, and the people we serve. We will also challenge ourselves to understand and correct the inequities we discover within the workforce development system and gain a better understanding of ourselves during this intentional process.

## STRATEGIC PRIORITIES, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

### *Strategic Priority*

- Build and sustain the talent pipeline and close the skills gap<sup>2</sup>.

### *Goals*

- **By 2025** the workforce system will reduce the number of disconnected young adults, 16 to 24, by half - from 15,300 to 7,650.
- **By 2025** the workforce system will reduce the number of residents between the ages of 25 to 64 without a High School Diploma or a GED, by half - from 38,475 to 19,237.

### **Objective 1: Increase business engagement with the workforce system.**

#### *Outcomes by June 2022:*

- Increase the number of businesses providing workbased learning opportunities by X%.
- Increase the number of businesses using the system for recruitment by X%.
- Increase the number of businesses participating on advisory boards, curriculum development committees, etc. by X% system-wide.

#### *Key Strategies*

- 1.1 Develop methods that help businesses navigate the workforce system and services.
- 1.2 Inventory best and promising practice approaches already implemented in the area for working with and engaging businesses and scale up.
- 1.3 Implement best practices throughout Pierce County.
- 1.4 Deploy an awareness campaign on the goals targeted to businesses.

### **Objective 2: Create an integrated system that is aligned to the goals.**

#### *Outcome by June 2022*

- Customer satisfaction, for individuals and businesses, increases by X%.
- Established indicators of integration have been achieved, by establishing 7 key system wide integrators: Common data collection system, including customer satisfaction, Information Sharing, Cross Agency Training/Professional Development, Common Referral System, Workforce Skill Standards (common set of ‘work readiness’ competencies), Common Technology including an Integrated Platform (for data entry, portal, eligibility applications, etc.), Single point of contact, one system approach, for businesses to access services.

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<sup>2</sup> The skills gap: A disconnect between what businesses want new employees to know before they show up for work and what the applicant pool actually knows.

### ***Key Strategies***

- 2.1 Improve and enhance the use of common technology for communication among the system's partners and to increase user friendly access for customers.
- 2.2 Collect and use data to understand who the customers are, to avoid blind spots and assumptions about the customers, and to understand what will influence the customer's experience and behavior.
- 2.3 Analyze racial and ethnic data by County Council District and zip code.
- 2.4 Develop methods to regularly listen to customers to test new processes before implementing them permanently.
- 2.5 Create a user-friendly and welcoming system for internal and external users.
- 2.6 Create and promote policies at the federal, state and local levels that promotes greater integration of the workforce system.

### **Objective 3: Expand and improve the talent pipeline of disconnected young adults and adults to quality jobs.**

#### ***Outcomes by June 2022***

- Businesses report that the number of qualified applicants has increased by X%.
- The number of adults without GED/HSD that access post-educational opportunities has increased by X%.
- The number of adults that obtain a GED increases by X%
- The number of disconnected young adults that become connected to education and/or work increases by X%
- The number of adults who complete post-secondary education with a certificate or certification increases by X%
- The number of young adults and adults who obtain and sustain employment increases by X%

### ***Key Strategies***

- 3.1 Strengthen workforce development strategies for adults that link education and career pathways<sup>3</sup> to an increase in targeted sector employment opportunities to ensure that workers have the skills needed to fill current and emerging high wage/high demand jobs.

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<sup>3</sup> Career pathways are defined in WIOA as a combination of rigorous and high-quality education, training, and other services that aligns with the skill needs of industries in the economy of the State or regional economy involved (as well as other criteria). As part of the business plan that will be developed, the WDC will further define what the career pathways are locally.

- 3.2 Strengthen workforce development strategies for young adults that ensure access to education and training opportunities, particularly young adults facing barriers to employment.
- 3.3 Establish strong linkages with post-secondary institutions and local labor unions to align programming with career pathways and labor market demand.
- 3.4 Promote registered apprenticeship programs.
- 3.5 Build a highly efficient job placement infrastructure through alignment of local public and private services.
- 3.6 Customize the service delivery processes to meet the needs of disconnected young adults and adults without a high school diploma or GED.

**Objective 4: Support individuals to gain employment through a system of wrap around services that is responsive to their diverse experience and needs.**

***Outcomes by June 2022***

- The common referral system established by the Workforce Partnership has been used to identify service gaps and partnerships have been established to fill gaps where required.
- The number of individuals who are ‘co-enrolled’ between multiple partners that provide supportive services that enable access to housing, transportation, counseling, etc. has increased by X%.

***Key Strategies***

- 4.1 Survey, qualitatively and quantitatively, potential customers in the target groups to understand what deters them from using services.
- 4.2 Become more culturally responsive in how services are designed and delivered.
- 4.3 Identify and leverage culturally responsive and anti-racism work already being done in the county.
- 4.4 Expand connections to the priority populations through the library system, faith-based organizations, Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Halls, and other places where individuals not normally served by the workforce system feel welcome.
- 4.5 Conduct a gap analysis through engagement with priority customers and key stakeholders to assess what services may be missing and/or what changes are needed in how services are delivered to ensure participation

## OPERATING PRINCIPLES

**The following principles define the way the organization operates with regard to the goals and strategies identified. The core processes employed by the organization to accomplish the goals will operate in the following fashion.**

- We seek to identify and eliminate bias in all we do through organizational analysis and self-reflection, dialogue and analysis of our behaviors and actions.
- We operate as a learning organization that is innovative, flexible, and timely in our service delivery.
- We are anticipatory of external developments that may have an impact on the organization.
- We challenge each other to achieve excellence.
- We hold ourselves accountable to each other and our customers.
- We collaborate with our partners and build strategic alliances around our goals, strategies and tasks in which we are engaged.
- We implement, measure, evaluate and continuously improve all our programs, services and operations based on data analytics and our values.
- We continuously strengthen organizational effectiveness and build capacity.

## MEASURING RESULTS:

**Overall Measure by 2021 as a result of the strategies put in place:**

- **By 2022** the workforce system will reduce the number of disconnected young adults, 16 to 24, by XXXX.
- **By 2022** the workforce system will reduce the number of residents between the ages of 25 to 64 without a High School Diploma or a GED, by XXXX.