2019
ANNUAL REPORT
A LETTER FROM OUR CEO

Pierce County’s prosperity depends on its residents ability to successfully access and participate in the labor market and also depends on its employers ability to access the qualified talent they need.

While one can say that our county has recovered from the great recession, this recovery has not been experienced by all. Pierce County’s unemployment rate remains higher than that of its neighboring counties, Washington state and the United States since the recovery began. As of November 2019, Pierce County’s unemployment rate was 5.1%. We have not sustained a rate below 5% for all prior months in 2019.

This means that there are 23,119 residents who are actively looking for work but are currently out of work. In addition, this figure does not include individuals who are discouraged from seeking employment and also does not include people who are under-employed as a result of their need to meet immediate basic needs. Further analysis supports what we already know — communities of color are disproportionately represented in the unemployment and under-employment figures. Given that our ultimate goal is prosperity for all, we need to acknowledge this disparity and commit to working toward more equitable access to workforce development services and employment opportunities.

Prosperity for all can be realized, but we need stakeholders from the public, private, non-profit and philanthropic sectors to form sustainable partnerships and align strategies and resources.

LINDA NGUYEN
CEO, WorkForce Central

The workforce development system and our business community must commit to analyzing our respective practices and remove barriers that prevent access to services and job opportunities. With technology driving change and with business cycles moving at accelerated speeds, employers will expect complex, creative and varied functions from their workforce to perform in a much more dynamic, fluid and digital environment. This will also require collective focus on strategies that will prepare our current and future workforce to seamlessly transition into and through the emerging economy.
ABOUT THE BOLD GOALS

The Pierce County Workforce Development Council’s Strategic Action Plan for January 2019 through June 2022 was created with our two Bold Goals in mind. Our data shows that these two important groups 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.

These goals are bold, but not unreachable. Hand-in-hand with our many community and MOU partners, we are working hard to address the needs of the whole person, expand access to workforce services across the county, target communities that have been previously underserved by the workforce system, and engage Pierce County communities in a way that is meaningful and empowering.

To do that strategically, we decided to first focus on the three areas of Pierce County that are home to the highest rate of adults without their high school diploma or GED and the highest rate of young adults who are not in school or working — referred to as “disconnected” young adults. Using data from the U.S. Census, we determined that those areas are, in order: Parkland/Spanaway, Lakewood/JBLM, and Central Tacoma (which includes parts of the East Side and South Tacoma).

The Bold Goals

By 2025, the workforce system will reduce the number of residents between the ages of 25 to 64 without a high school diploma or equivalent by half — from 38,475 to 19,237.

By 2025, the workforce system will reduce the number of disconnected young adults*, ages 16 to 24, by half — from 15,300 to 7,650.

*Or, youth under the age of 25 who are neither working nor in school
Profile of Pierce County

As of July 2018, Pierce County had an estimated 891,299 residents and, at the current rate of growth, we expect our region to exceed one million by 2026.

Unemployment is less than half of what it was 10 years ago, and the average annual wage is up 5% (adjusted for increased cost of living). The largest sector in Pierce County is Health Care and Social Assistance, employing 60,598 workers. The next-largest sectors in the region are Retail Trade (38,325 workers) and Educational Services (30,293).
Employments by Place of Work
2019 Year in Review

2019 was a big year for WorkForce Central and was the first year of our Bold Goals.

We launched Power Up Pierce (the outreach campaign for our Bold Goals) and held our first annual workforce forum on automation and artificial intelligence. We built new partnerships with community organizations that are doing vital work, and expanded our reach into more rural areas of the county. We also modernized our Monthly Employment Report, and opened a new WorkSource Center where we serve job seekers and businesses from across the region.

Each of these projects (which you’ll read more about in coming pages) were built and launched with our Bold Goals and some important ideas in mind: We want to make our community engagement deeper and more meaningful, and we want to make it easier to access our services across the region.
EMPLOYMENT REPORT LAUNCH

In January, we launched a reboot of our popular Monthly Employment Report – but this time, we made it interactive and added more features, including the ability to display historic quarterly employment trends by industry in Pierce County. We stripped away some of the old features that didn’t add valuable information to the report and added in real-time labor, occupation demand, wage and industry data from Chmura Economics and Analytics for a robust monthly look at Pierce County’s economy.

“LIVE. WORK. PIERCE.” LAUNCH

While it debuted in late 2018, the Live. Work. Pierce. Jobs portal hit its stride in early 2019 after we worked out some of the kinks in this first-of-its-kind job search tool. Located on the WorkForce Central home page, Live. Work. Pierce. allows users to search all job openings in Pierce County by employer, job title, job category, or certification type. Since its launch, it’s been used more than 14,000 times by job seekers from Eatonville to Seattle and everywhere in between.

By scraping daily results from every major online jobs board, then Narrowing by geographical area, Live. Work. Pierce. becomes the first board of its kind to display jobs specific to Pierce County. With roughly 12,000 job openings here in Pierce County, part of our goal with this one-stop shop for job postings is to help local employers find local talent to fill their needs and to stop the brain drain from our county to points north and south.

In turn, those Pierce County workers can find a job that’s close enough to home to make it back in time for Little League in the evenings.

POWER UP PIERCE LAUNCH

In February, we launched Power Up Pierce with a new website, Facebook and Instagram accounts, and print materials. The goal: to appeal to both Bold Goal populations by creating a bright, engaging outreach campaign that would resonate with adults and young adults in need of a leg up and encourage them to reach out for help with their career and education goals.

With the launch of Power Up Pierce, outreach specialists started hitting the streets to engage young adults and those without a high school diploma. Power Up Pierce banners, tablecloths, stickers and print collateral started making the rounds at community events several times per week. The outreach team also created engaging new ways to interact with potential Bold Goal customers, including planning game nights and Power Up Pierce graduation ceremonies for customers who graduated from training programs, and engaging school districts to create new career and resource fairs for families in the Parkland/Spanaway area.
WORKSOURCE CENTER

In April, nearly 250 people came to check out our new WorkSource Center and to get a tour of the 20,000 square foot space, home to more than 80 staff from seven different workforce partner agencies. The new WorkSource Center merged two former locations into a single building to provide better and more efficient service for our customers.

While we had our grand opening in April, the center officially opened its doors to customers in December 2018. Each month, the center gets an average of almost 2,200 visits, and it’s meeting the needs of businesses as well as job seekers: At a MultiCare hiring event at the center in February, 400 job seekers attended and 120 were offered jobs on the spot.

The new office is located right off Pierce Transit Route 57 and is less than two miles from the previous locations at 3650 S. Cedar St. and 1305 Tacoma Ave. S.

JOBFEST

JobFest is the largest young adult job fair in the state of Washington and is geared toward those aged 16 to 24. It’s a great opportunity for young people to explore future career paths or find that first job, and is held each year in the Tacoma Dome. In April 2019, 719 job seekers stormed the Dome to check out the employment offerings of over a hundred exhibitors. At the event, 234 people were interviewed for jobs, and a total of 67 were hired, 44 of which were hired that same day.

CENTRAL PIERCE CAREER EXPO

In collaboration with Franklin Pierce School District, WorkForce Central along with WorkSource partners created a new Power Up Pierce event: the Central Pierce Career Expo. Over 50 presenters attended, including businesses as well as many community resources such as education and training institutions, labor unions, vocational rehabilitation, young adult programs, and more.

The event was designed for not only students of the Franklin Pierce School District, but also families and the greater community. As this area experiences a disproportionately high number of disconnected youth, as well as adults who do not have their high school diploma or GED, WorkForce Central sought out to bring partners together to increase access to the workforce for this under-served population. Overall, 100 attendees from the local community participated in the event.

“As a single mother who had no choice but to leave my job due to medical complications ... I can’t begin to describe how grateful I am to have this program available to me and my family, to help us transition back on our feet.”

- Sophavy
WIOA Adult Services Program Customer

Q2
Quarter Two
FUTURE OF WORK REPORT RELEASE

The rise of artificial intelligence and automation is a topic that keeps those of us in workforce development up at night. Futurists and authors like Martin Ford have warned us for years about the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the “threat of a jobless future” — that by 2030, 400 million workers worldwide could be displaced by automation. We know certain occupations will be (and have already been) made obsolete by machines, artificial intelligence and the internet.

We know we need to start preparing our workforce and the next generation for what’s coming — especially in Pierce County, where our analysis found that several of our most in-demand jobs are highly susceptible to automation. Based on our current distribution of jobs, we’re at risk of losing a huge chunk of work to automation and computerization. That’s because we have a disproportionate share of retail sales, hospitality and food service jobs and not as many coveted computer, tech, and white collar jobs as our neighbors to the north and south (King and Thurston counties, respectively).

FUTURE OF WORK FORUM

The Future of Work report was a great precursor to a community conversation about how we can start to plan for the Fourth Industrial Revolution. On Sept. 26, we hosted WorkForce Central’s first annual forum: The Future of Work: Automation, AI, Oh My! The evening event featured a keynote address from Ford, the New York Times bestselling author and futurist, as well as a panel discussion with local employers and experts in automation, technology, STEM education and health care about what we need to do to prepare our economy for coming changes to the way we work.

“Before joining WorkSource, I was unsure of how much I still remembered how to do on the computer for a good job. I was able to get many computer links and positive feedback that gave me confidence and the courage to continue looking for work.

- Bernadine
WIOA Adult Services Program Customer
POWER UP 98404: ECSA KICKOFF

This year, WorkForce Central and community partners won $1.75M to help lift 250 families out of poverty in 98404. In November, we kicked off our work on the Economic Security for All grant at the Family Investment Center in Salishan and got to work serving families on the East Side by connecting them to jobs, training, financial literacy coaching, education and resources to help them build a better life.

RIBBON CUTTING OF THE NEW PARKLAND CAREER CENTER

In November we cut the ribbon on the new Parkland Career Center at 402 Garfield St. South, which will be home to the Pierce County Construction Pre-Apprenticeship Program, young adult programming, and a resource room with computers available to all Pierce County residents at no cost. We chose Parkland as the location for our new center because this area is home to a disproportionate number of adults without their high school diploma or GED and young adults who are not in school or working, and frequently sees less than its fair share of resources. Look for the Parkland Career Center to open its doors in early 2020!

PIERCE COUNTY CAREER DAY

Each year, students came from schools as far away as Oregon to be part of the “best career day around” at the Washington State Fairgrounds. More than 90 businesses provided interactive exhibits for students to make and build things, to try their hand at welding, or even operate a piece of heavy equipment. A total of 1,740 students donned safety vests, hats, and glasses for the hands-on experience and learned about skilled trades, apprenticeship opportunities, education, and earning a livable wage all while getting a chance to see, and feel first-hand what working in the trades is all about.

“Both WorkSource and YADI have helped me with my team-building, organizational skills, and housing. I can now pursue my goals of furthering my education this Spring quarter at Tacoma Community College, in hopes that I can give back to the community in my future job.

- David
Young Adult Development Internship Customer
Workforce System Achievements

EMAP Services
This year, WorkForce Central began providing access to the Enrolled Member Assistance Program (EMAP) services to provide additional support to our customers. EMAP helps them access resources to assist with work/life balance, including assistance or referrals to services such as: childcare and elder care consultations, debt management and budgeting advice, counseling, home ownership, and more.

Providing access to reliable data
This year WorkForce Central partnered with over two dozen businesses, workforce development partners, and community members to deliver the data and insights needed to make critical decisions. Together, these partnerships amounted to over 50 projects with support for research and analytics.

The Pierce County Community Engagement Task Force
The Task Force is made up of 51 different organizations who are working together to support residents becoming healthy and economically stable. Its members have defined a new approach to collectively address gaps in services across Pierce County, the importance of which is demonstrated by the dedication of staff time and resources from so many agencies.

Addition of 18 Certified WorkSource Satellite Sites
In July, we certified the Pierce County Library System’s 18 locations as WorkSource Connection Satellite sites. That means they will provide computers where jobseekers can access online workforce development services, as well as offering free Microsoft technology certifications, WorkSource workshops and programs and more.

Partnering with the Pierce County Library is helping to bring workforce development services to rural reaches of the county where they may not currently exist, which is one of the chief goals of the Workforce Development Council’s strategic plan.

Adult Basic Education Navigator
When our partners who provide adult basic education saw the need for a system navigator, WorkForce Central stepped up to fund this role for the first time in 2019. Working with the five local adult basic education partners, this new position was hired to ensure adults without a high school diploma or equivalent are given information and referred to a network of local community colleges, community-based organizations, as well as other resources. This summer, our WorkSource Pierce Center offered GED prep classes for the first time ever, thanks to our partnership with Clover Park Technical College. Due to its success, they anticipate continuing to offer this class.

Common Referral System Powered by 211
Prior to the implementation of the Common Referral System, there was no standard process to track customer referrals across agencies. With this system now in place, 17 agencies across Pierce County can unitedly serve residents and reduce redundancies in information collection for the customer. As of December 31, 2019, 2,446 clients have been referred by way of the Common Referral System.
Pictured: Mother and daughter duo Angela and Ameiah Daniels attended Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) training together in 2019 with help from WorkSource Pierce.
Jobseekers Served

In 2019, the Pierce County WorkSource Center received 24,000 visits, uniquely serving over 16,000 residents. The center serves a very diverse population of the Pierce County community with a wide range of work experience and years in the labor force.

Similarly, our job seekers come from a variety of education backgrounds: 19% lack a high school diploma, 38% have earned a high school diploma or equivalent, and 28% possess a post-secondary certificate or award.
Businesses Served

WorkForce Central is dedicated to supporting Pierce County businesses by providing access to resources that support local hiring needs at no cost to them. These include recruitment and screening of job candidates, conducting hiring events and job fairs, and facilitating work-based learning opportunities.

These statistics have been taken from the 2019 calendar year performance of Workforce Central’s sub-contractor, ResCare Workforce Services. They are not inclusive of the efforts of WorkSource Pierce and its partners.

327
Businesses Served
Number of employers receiving workforce assistance.

2,262
Employer Services
Number of unique services provided to employers.

1,685
Job Openings
Number of positions open to fill.

685
Job Postings
Number of positions directly supported with recruitment assistance.

476
Job Placements
Number of individuals placed into employment.

105
Work Experience Sites
Number of work experience, on-the-job training, and apprenticeship opportunities facilitated.