

SOUTH CENTRAL WORKFORCE **STRATEGIC PLAN**



2024-2028



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The South Central Workforce (SCW) plays a pivotal role in the economic vitality of Kittitas, Klickitat, Skamania, and Yakima counties. Our strategic initiatives are designed to address the evolving employment landscape, emphasizing adaptability, resilience, and integration. Our focus remains on preparing individuals for the changing job market, facilitating seamless transitions, and ensuring sustainable workforce development. By fostering collaboration between local businesses, educational institutions, and community partners, we strive to align training programs with emerging industry needs. Our commitment to innovation and responsive support aims to empower job seekers and businesses alike, promoting a robust and forward-looking economy across the south central region. The SCW stands as a catalyst for growth, equipping communities with the tools and resources needed for sustained success.

To meet the dynamic demands of businesses, the workforce system must be agile and innovative. Quick response to shifting business needs is critical, necessitating new approaches to training and re-skilling workers, particularly in roles increasingly reliant on technology and remote work. Collaborative efforts between the South Central Workforce and its partners aspire to elevate the current employment and training system, ensuring that all residents have access to quality education, training, and employment opportunities leading to quality jobs and family-sustaining wages.

Through the strategic design of services and activities, the SCW and its partners are poised to address challenges today and tomorrow, establishing an effective, efficient, and fully integrated service delivery system for workers and businesses. The 2024-2028 Strategic Plan serves as a blueprint for this transformative system.

Strategic Plan (2024 - 2028)



MISSION



Foster an integrated and skilled workforce by increasing opportunities to employment, benefiting both individuals and employers.

VISION



Thriving communities where everyone has access to economic vitality for a stronger tomorrow.

VALUES



INNOVATION

We are visionary leaders who seek creative approaches to serve the needs of our communities.

SUSTAINABILITY

We strive to maintain and support the long-term viability of workforce development in our communities.

ACCOUNTABILITY

We are answerable to our communities for all our actions, performance, and results.

INTEGRATION

We value and embrace the unique perspectives and experiences that each individual brings.

COLLABORATION

We pursue and value partnerships to achieve economic growth and prosperity for our communities.

PRIORITY

GOALS

STRATEGIES

MEASURES OF SUCCESS



QUALITY JOBS

Supporting employers and job seekers to meet marketplace needs and trends.

i.e. job descriptions, qualifications, pay, culture, company values, benefits (medical, childcare, etc.)

OBJECTIVE:

Connect talent and employers to ensure the vitality of a healthy and sustainable workforce by continuously engaging and sharing market trends.

Improve the quality of wages, benefits, and working conditions in the region

Enhance economic growth by increasing support for employers in identifying, recruiting, and retaining top talent

Advocate for and implement policies that promote self-sufficient wages, benefits, and a healthy work-life balance

Efficiently match the skills of the workforce with the needs of employers

Establish a baseline of businesses that adopt quality job elements such as childcare, transportation, or housing

Number of job placements from the region's pool of workers.

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

PRIORITY



TALENT PIPELINE

A trained workforce ready to meet the needs of employers.

OBJECTIVE:

Identify and coordinate training opportunities to meet the current and future needs of employers in our communities.

GOALS

Create and expand registered apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs

Increase work-based learning opportunities that aim to enhance job seekers' skills and readiness for successful employment.

Foster and support job seekers in transition by growing integrated career and training resources that result in self-sufficient wages and employment

STRATEGIES

Gather pre-apprenticeship/ apprenticeship organizations and intermediaries to provide training within the local area

Invest in work-based learning experiences through apprenticeships, on-the-job training, internships, and work experience

Develop programming for successful participation in the workforce that leads to retention and wage progression

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

Grow enrollments in existing pre-apprenticeship/apprenticeship programs

Establish a baseline of new apprenticeship/pre-apprenticeship programs created

Increase the number of work-based learning opportunities by 10%

Increase the percentage of participants that enter unsubsidized employment above self-sufficiency standards

Number of job seekers assisted with childcare, transportation, and/or housing

PRIORITY



YOUTH & YOUNG ADULTS

Providing career development and employment opportunities for young people aged 16 – 29.

OBJECTIVE:

Enhance young people's engagement with WorkSource resources to foster economic growth.

GOALS

Connect young people aged 16-29 to the WorkSource system to support their career development and employment goals

Identify the needs and challenges young people face regarding employment, education, and skill development

Establish partnerships with schools, colleges, and vocational training centers to tailor education and training programs that match the needs of employers

STRATEGIES

Collaborate with local organizations, schools, community centers, and youth programs to create partnerships that facilitate the referral of young people

Organize informational sessions and workshops to prepare young people for the job application process and the expectations of the workplace

Establish advisory boards consisting of community organizations that represent secondary education

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

Establish a baseline number of young people aged 16-29 who receive assistance in WorkSource offices

Number of young people attending informational sessions or workshops

Expand the number of young people who enter education or employment

Number of outreach connections and activities made with the k-12 system, College Success Foundation, and other student advisory groups

SECTION I

WORKFORCE REGION NAME:

South Central Workforce

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AREA NAME AND NUMBER:

South Central Workforce Area #9

COUNTIES COMPRISING SERVICE DELIVERY AREA:

Kittitas, Klickitat, Skamania, and Yakima counties

FISCAL AGENT/ENTITY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DISBURSAL OF GRANT FUNDS:

South Central Workforce Development Council

OVERVIEW

Covering around 10,196 square miles, the South Central Workforce (SCW) area includes Kittitas, Klickitat, Skamania, and Yakima counties in the south central region of Washington State. This region is marked by the thick forests and mountainous landscapes of the Cascades to the west, the timbered-covered mountains of Kittitas County to the north, the Columbia River and sagebrush-covered flanks to the east, and the Columbia River to the south, creating a diverse and uniquely geographical area. The region is connected with major interstates and transportation routes including I-90 and I-82.



Originally inhabited by Native Americans, the region saw the arrival of settlers who introduced cattle and fruit trees. The timber and wood products industry, driven by the demand for timber, laid the foundation for a resource-based economy. The advent of the Northern Pacific Railway in 1884 facilitated the export of agricultural and timber products globally. The establishment of the first major irrigation system in 1892 significantly boosted agricultural productivity and diversity, attracting migrant workers to engage in various agricultural activities.

The cascade mountain range acts as a barrier to coastal moisture, resulting in a dry climate in the lowlands. However, five major dams in Kittitas and Yakima counties, coupled with fertile volcanic soil, create favorable conditions for agriculture. Agriculture remains the primary driver of the region's economy, with a focus on expanding overseas markets for agricultural products.

The region is home to a diverse population, including a significant Native American community within the Yakama Indian Reservation, a growing Hispanic population, and the presence of Asians and Black Americans across the service area. Numerous educational institutions, both

private and state-funded, offer a varied range of post-secondary certificate and degree programs, contributing to the cultivation of a skilled workforce.

Economic objectives in the area focus on creating sustainable quality jobs, supporting both new and existing businesses, and nurturing a healthy community.

South Central Workforce is committed to creating a resilient workforce system by establishing partnerships with educational institutions, economic development agencies, businesses, labor, state agencies, the Yakama Nation, and public organizations. Through this collaboration, SCW strives to maximize the efficiency of public funds, elevate worker preparedness, and enhance the overall quality of life for residents as the region advances into the future.

Note: Data used within the Strategic Plan is from the 2018-2022 US Census 5-Year American Community Survey Data.

SECTION II

REGIONAL ANALYSIS OF ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

In-Demand Sectors and Occupations

Top Employment Industries (16 years and older)

2018 - 2022 Census Data

WA State	
Top Industries	
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	21.3%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	14.3%
Retail trade	11.7%
Manufacturing	9.2%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation, and food services	8.6%

Kittitas County	
Top Industries	
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	25.2%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation, and food services	15.3%
Retail trade	10.1%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	8.5%
Construction	7.6%

Klickitat County	
Top Industries	
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	22.9%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	11.4%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	10.6%
Retail trade	10.2%
Manufacturing	9.6%

Skamania County	
Top Industries	
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	20.1%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation, and food services	13.3%
Construction	12.4%
Manufacturing	11.7%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	8.2%

Yakima County	
Top Industries	
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	22.7%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	15.0%
Retail trade	10.3%
Manufacturing	9.6%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation, and food services	7.6%

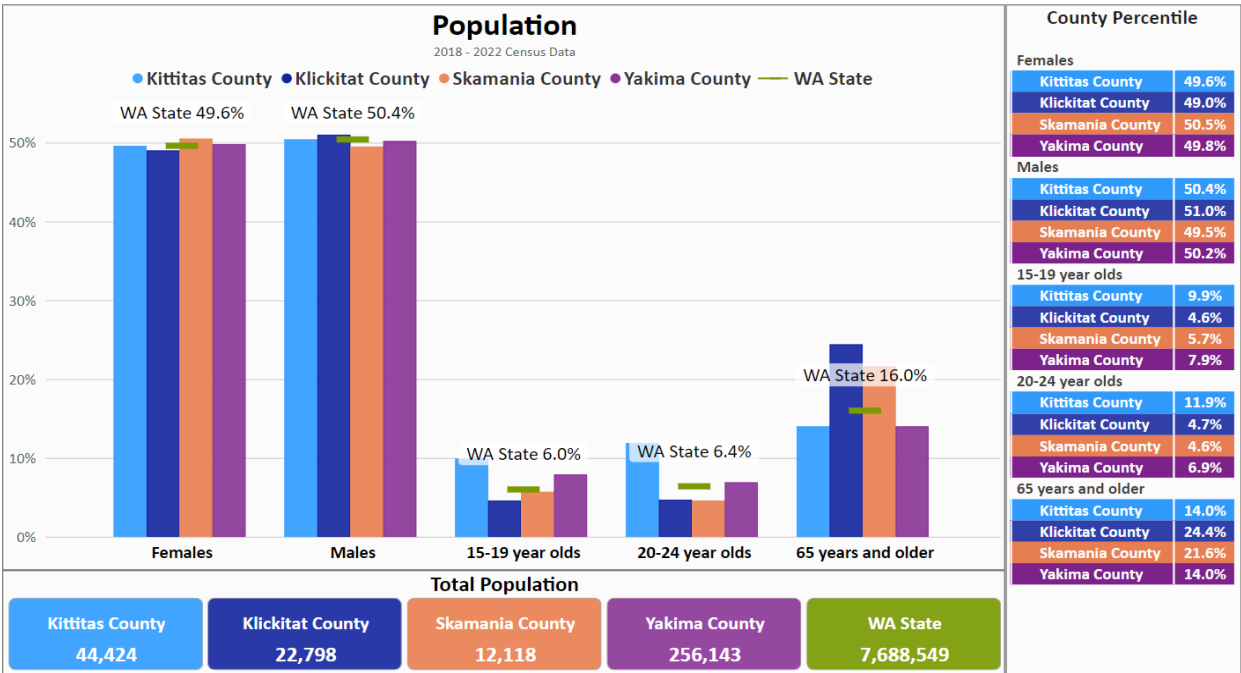
WORKFORCE DEMOGRAPHICS

Characteristics of those who live and work in the local area – According to the 2018-2022 US Census, the population in the SCW region population is evenly divided between men and women. While Yakima and Kittitas counties have a significant population of those aged 36 years and younger, Klickitat and Skamania possess a larger percentage of individuals over the age of 45.

Median Age					
Timeframe	Kittitas County	Klickitat County	Skamania County	Yakima County	WA State
2018-2022	36.4	47.0	46.6	33.0	38.0

The largest metropolitan area in the region is the City of Yakima in Yakima County, boasting a population of 97,278 residents making it the tenth largest city in the state. The rest of the geographic region is populated with small to medium-sized cities and towns. The City of Sunnyside, situated towards the southern border of Yakima County, holds the second-largest population at 16,296 residents. In Kittitas County, the City of Ellensburg is the most populous municipality with 18,703 residents, followed by the northern community of Cle Elum, reporting a population of 2,364.

In Klickitat County, the City of Goldendale takes the lead with 3,606 residents, while the communities of Bingen and White Salmon, situated along the Columbia River, collectively have a population of 3,570. Turning to Skamania County, the City of Stevenson stands as the largest population center, boasting a population of 1,966.



The south central region houses some of the highest proportions of minority populations in the State, primarily in Yakima County. With the largest percentage of Hispanics of any county in the State and the largest increase of Hispanics over the last ten years, this ethnic population continues to grow.

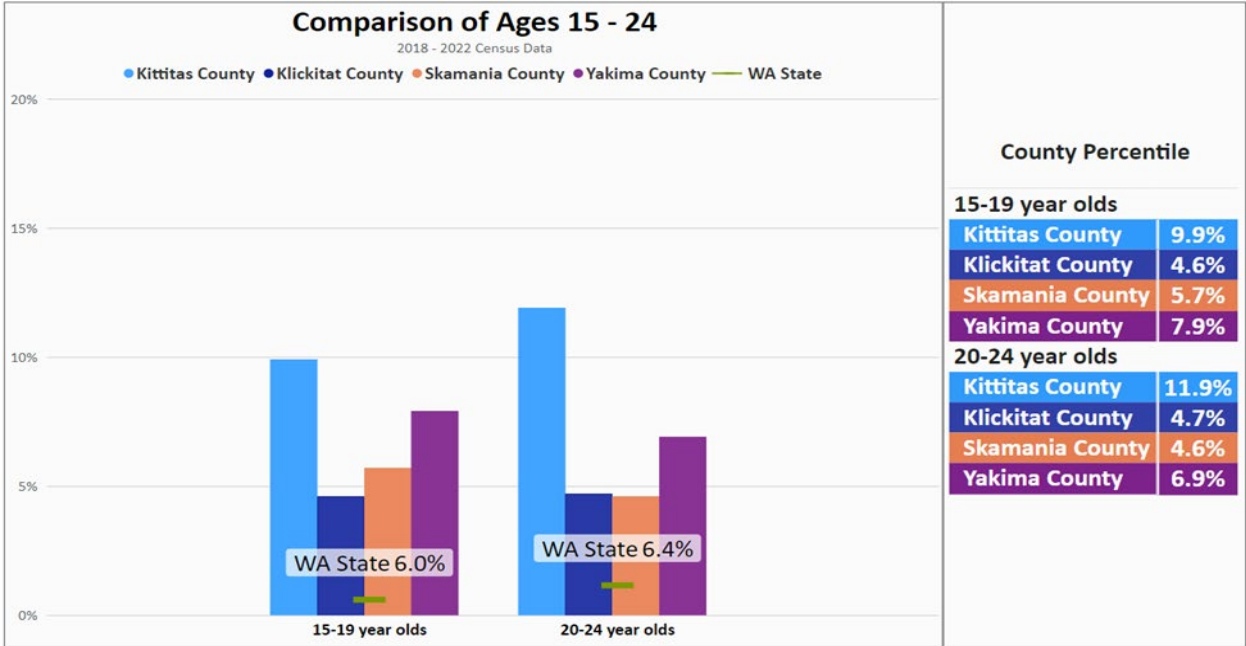
The region is racially diverse with Yakima County possessing the largest number of Hispanics. A larger than state average number of Native Americans reside in Yakima, Klickitat, and Skamania counties. Kittitas and Skamania counties are less diverse and have seen only small increases in minority populations.

Hispanic Origin and Race					
<small>2018 - 2022 Census Data</small>					
Race	Kittitas County	Klickitat County	Skamania County	Yakima County	WA State
White Alone, not hispanic	81.6%	80.2%	81.6%	40.8%	69.6%
Black or African American	1.0%	0.8%	0.1%	0.9%	3.9%
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.8%	1.5%	3.1%	3.3%	1.2%
Asian	1.5%	0.6%	2.4%	1.1%	9.2%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0.5%	0.5%	0.3%	0.4%	0.7%
Hispanic or Latino	9.6%	12.8%	8.6%	51.2%	13.5%
Some Other Race	5.0%	3.6%	3.9%	2.3%	5.2%
Two or More Races	8.5%	7.7%	6.3%	17.9%	9.9%

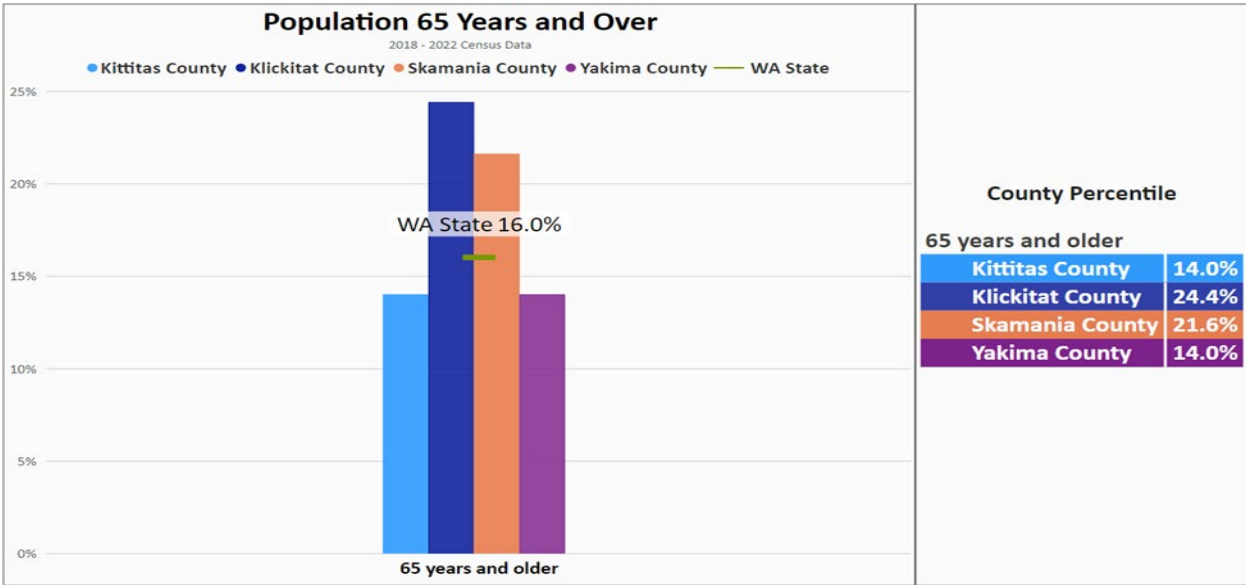
Those individuals with English speaking difficulties are most prominent in Yakima County at 16.2% while the remaining counties are at the state average of 3.4% or lower.

Language Other than English (5 years and older)					
<small>2018-2022 Census Data</small>					
Language	Kittitas County	Klickitat County	Skamania County	Yakima County	WA State
English Only	93.5%	87.4%	95.4%	57.4%	79.5%
Spanish	4.6%	10.7%	3.5%	40.7%	8.7%
Asian and Pacific Islander Languages	0.9%	0.3%	0.5%	0.9%	6.3%
Other Indo-European Languages	0.8%	1.2%	0.7%	0.5%	4.2%
Other Languages	0.2%	0.4%	0.0%	0.4%	1.4%
Speak English Less than Very Well	0.8%	4.7%	0.8%	16.2%	3.4%

Historically, the major proportion of new entrants into the labor force fall in the 15 to 24-year age bracket. In the early part of the decade, this population group was projected to decrease in all four counties; however, 2022 census data reveals contrary information with actual significant increases in Yakima and Kittitas counties.



When viewing the population segment aged 65 and over, Kittitas County is close to the state average. Skamania and Klickitat counties are substantially higher in this age group, and Yakima County follows the trend of a younger population.

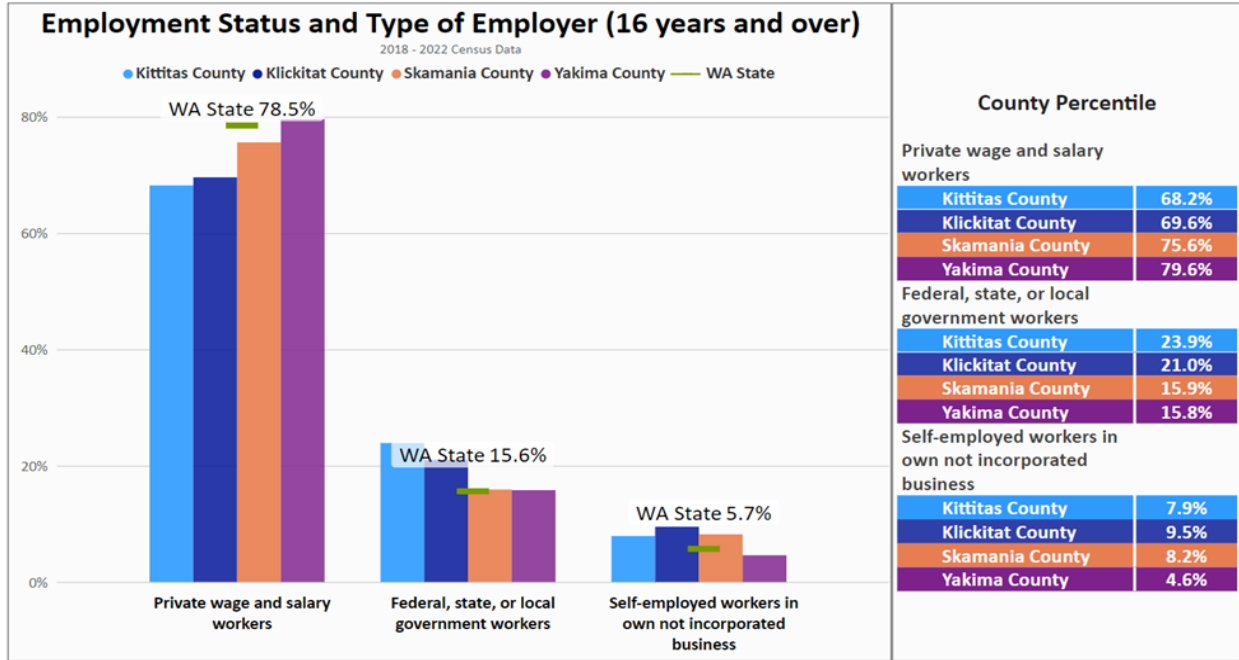


SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

Employment Status and Type of Employer (16 years and over)

When comparing the type of employment of the working population in the south central region, the majority of private wage, salary workers, and government workers align with the state

average. Contrarily, self-employed workers in Kittitas, Klickitat, and Skamania counties outpace the state by 2 to 4%.



Occupations (16 years and older)

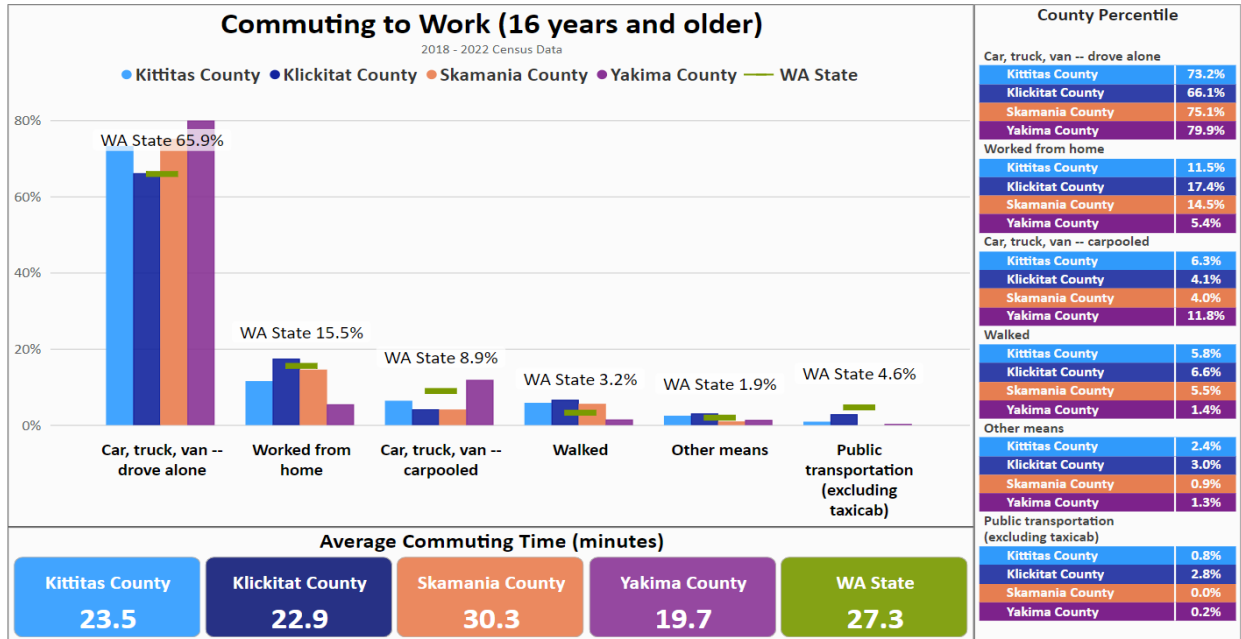
According to the 2018-2022 US Census, the following table shows the top five occupations people are employed in the SCW region compared to the same industries as those in Washington State.

Occupations (16 yrs and older)					
2018 - 2022 Census Data					
Occupation	Kittitas County	Klickitat County	Skamania County	Yakima County	WA State
Management, business, sciences, and arts occupations	37.6%	44.1%	40.3%	28.0%	44.4%
Service occupations	22.7%	14.4%	16.3%	18.8%	15.9%
Sales and office occupations	20.0%	14.6%	16.8%	17.4%	18.6%
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	9.7%	15.5%	11.8%	19.7%	9.4%
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	10.0%	11.5%	14.7%	17.2%	11.8%

Transportation and Commuting

In the South Central Workforce region, public transportation is extremely limited to non-existent depending on the county or community. This results in a larger number than the state average of commuters driving alone and an exceptionally low percentage of commuters using public transportation.

The majority of the area does have a commute time that is significantly less than the state average as traffic congestion is low.



Employment Status (16 years and over)

When looking at Employment Status for all workers aged 16 years and older, the region mirrors the state average in Skamania and Yakima counties, however, it is 10% lower in Kittitas and Skamania counties for private wage workers. Also of note, Kittitas and Klickitat counties have more federal, state, and local government workers.

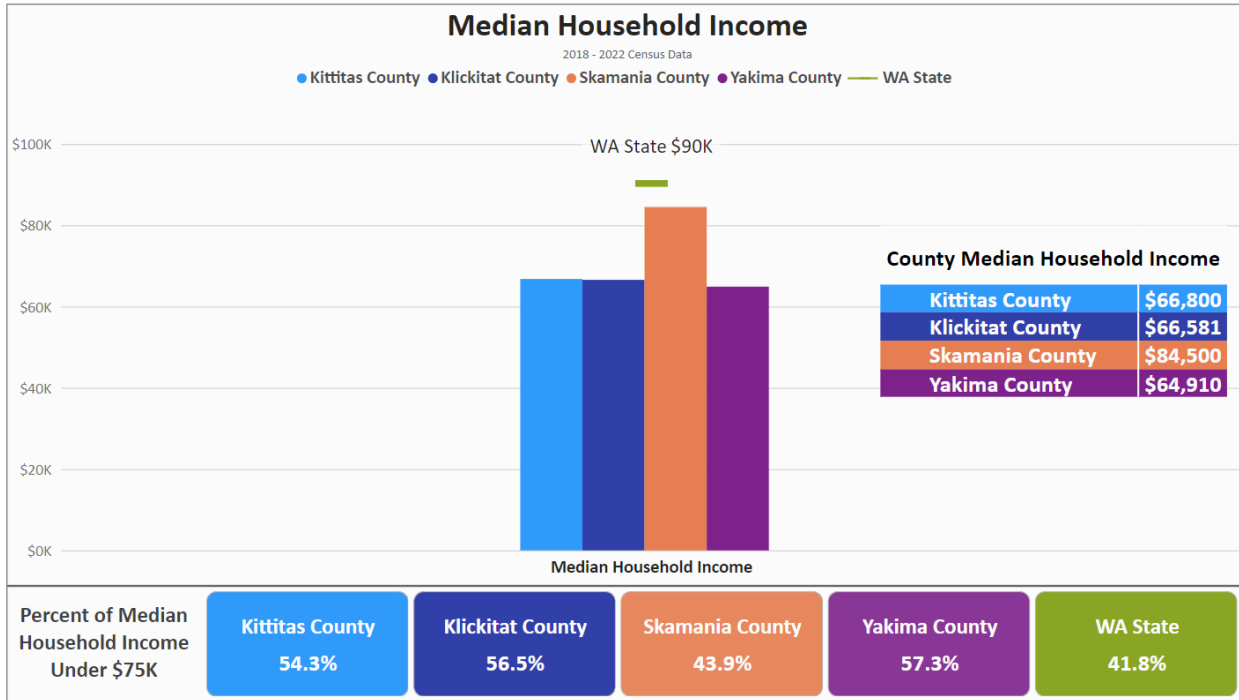
Another statistic to pay attention to is that the rural counties in the region have higher self-employed workers which are between 2-4% points higher than the state.

Employment Status and Type of Employer	Kittitas County	Klickitat County	Skamania County	Yakima County	WA State
Private wage and salary workers	68.2%	69.6%	75.6%	79.6%	78.5%
Federal, state, or local government workers	23.9%	21.0%	15.9%	15.8%	15.6%
Self-employed workers in own not incorporated business	7.9%	9.5%	8.2%	4.6%	5.7%

Median Household Income

The median household income in the state of Washington is \$90,325 per year. The median household income in the south central region falls well below this average. In fact, over half of the households in Kittitas, Klickitat, and Yakima Counties have median incomes under \$75,000

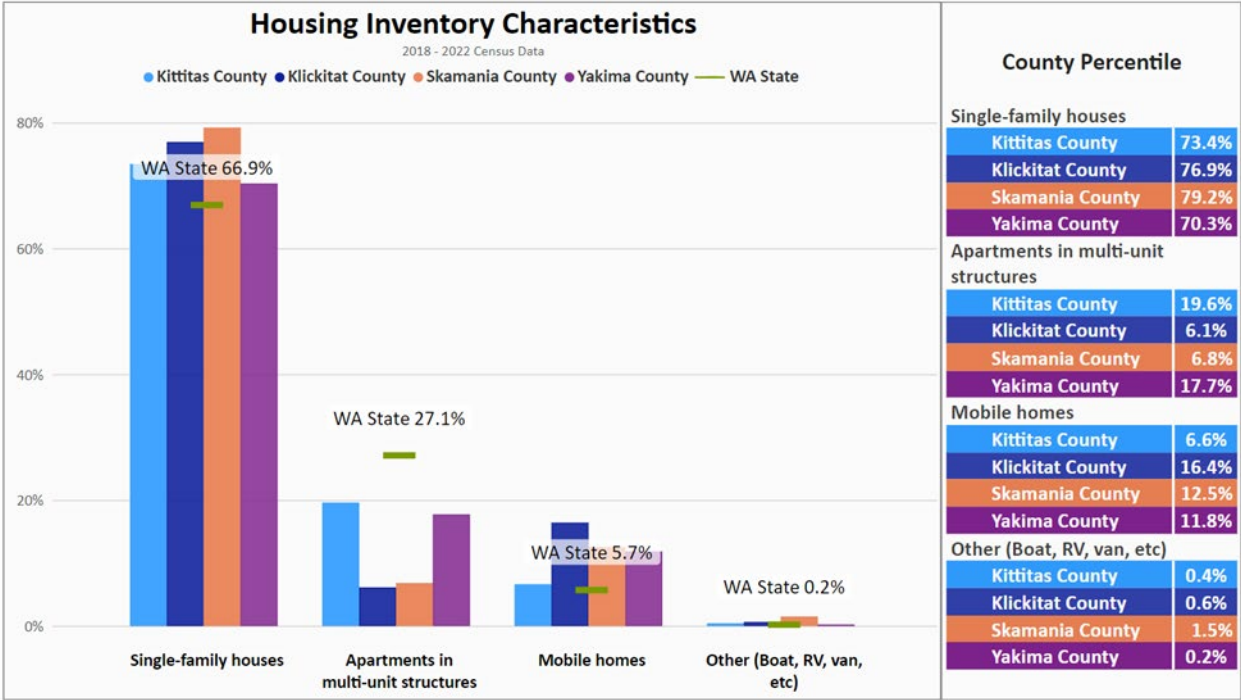
per year. While Skamania County is closer to the state average, 43.9% of households fall under the \$75,000 threshold.



Housing Inventory Characteristics

From 2018-2022, the median property value for owner-occupied houses in Kittitas County was \$417,600, in Klickitat County \$352,500, in Skamania County \$443,000, and in Yakima County the median property value was \$254,700.

For renter-occupied houses, the median gross rent for the south central area ranged from \$986 in Klickitat County, to \$1,010 in Yakima County, \$1,019 in Skamania County, and \$1,152 in Kittitas County. (Gross rent includes the monthly contract rent and any monthly payments made for electricity, gas, water, sewer, and any other fuels to heat the house.)



Education Attainment and Literacy

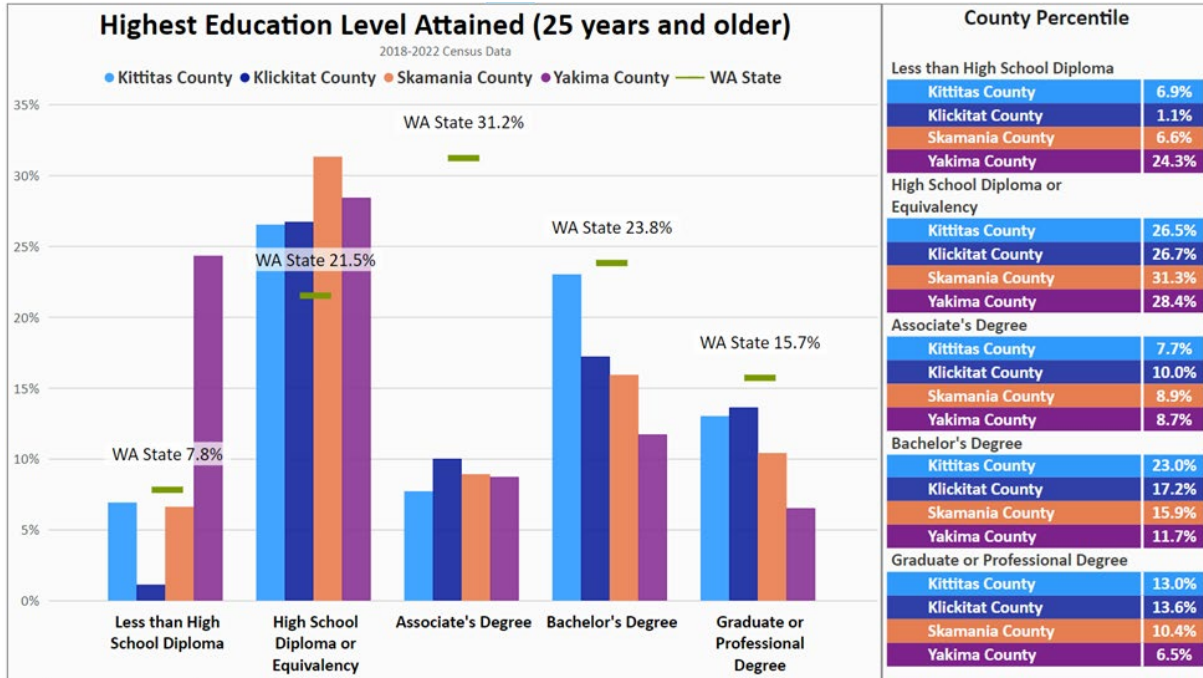
Fundamental skills in reading, writing, problem-solving, and communication are indispensable for successful employment. Imparting these essential skills to the youth is a pivotal aspect of workforce preparation. Moreover, adequately preparing young individuals for employment instills qualities beneficial to the community at large — appropriate behaviors, a robust work ethic, and a well-defined value system, among others. Addressing workforce and social issues effectively requires a concerted focus on improving graduation rates and ensuring the acquisition of solid foundational educational skills.

Analyzing the 2018-2022 Census data reveals that 24.3% of Yakima County adults aged 25 did not complete high school — a figure three times higher than the state average.

Notably, Kittitas and Skamania counties fall below the state average, with rates of 6.9% and 6.6%, respectively.

In contrast, Klickitat County stands well below the state average at 1.1%, indicating a notably low percentage of individuals without a high school diploma or equivalent.

When comparing post-secondary education certificate attainments, over 70% of Washington State residents have an associate degree or higher, while the SCW region averages 36.2% of the population have an associate degree or higher.



Highest Education Level Attained	Kittitas County	Klickitat County	Skamania County	Yakima County	WA State
Less than High School Diploma	6.9%	1.1%	6.6%	24.3%	7.8%
High School Diploma or Equivalency	26.5%	26.7%	31.3%	28.4%	21.5%
Associate's Degree	7.7%	10.0%	8.9%	8.7%	31.2%
Bachelor's Degree	23.0%	17.2%	15.9%	11.7%	23.8%
Graduate or Professional Degree	13.0%	13.6%	10.4%	6.5%	15.7%

Proficiency in reading, writing, and basic math is foundational for various skills and many entry-level roles. In the ongoing era of information technology, employers increasingly value candidates who have completed high school and acquired some post-secondary education and/or training.

Despite what seems like a sufficient labor pool, the employer community currently grapples with recruitment difficulties due to a shortage of individuals possessing strong basic educational skills. To genuinely bridge the existing skill gap, addressing deficiencies in basic education must be given top priority.

Adults in Transition

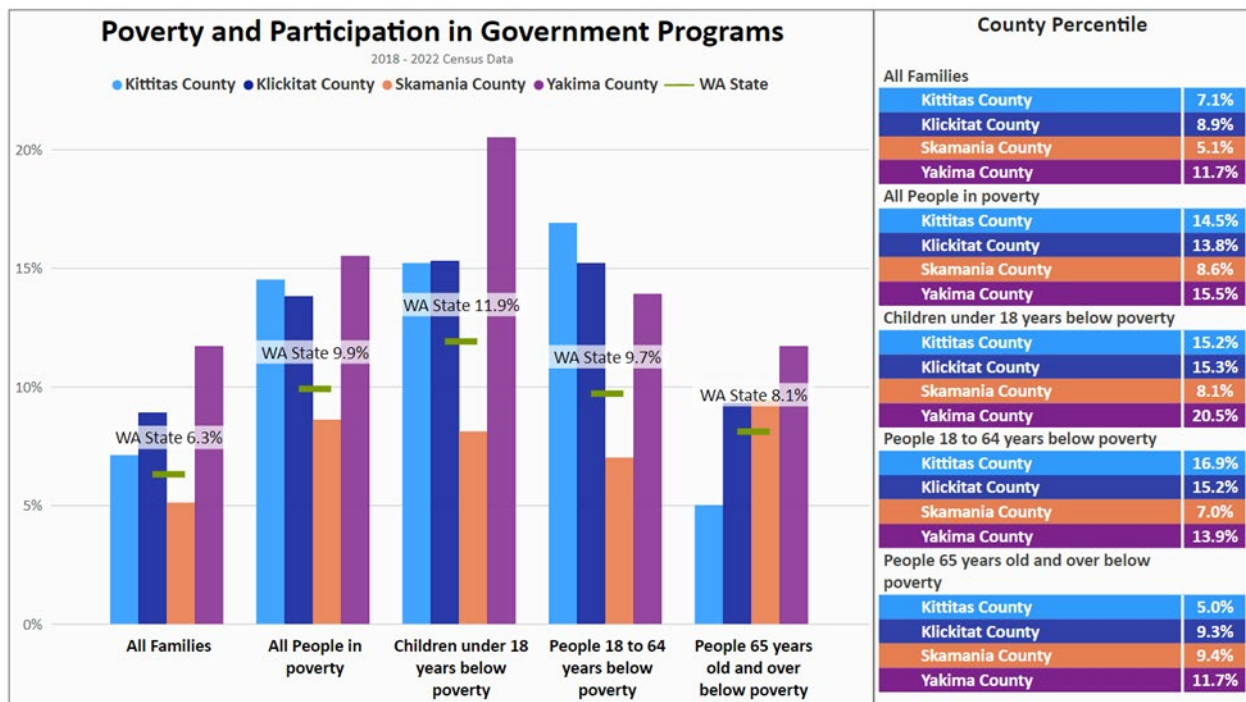
The SCW area continues to struggle with elevated poverty rates. A significant portion of individuals below the poverty threshold often go without any form of assistance and typically hold unstable employment. Some work full-time but earn wages insufficient to support their families. Many individuals in poverty, particularly those seeking employment or facing

employment barriers, find themselves overlooked. Additionally, a considerable number of those securing entry-level positions encounter challenges in earning wages conducive to sustaining a family or achieving self-sufficiency.

Poverty and Public Assistance

The following table from the 2018-2022 US Census reveals that all counties in the local area exceed the Washington State average indicators for poverty. Yakima County is notably high — almost double the state average at 11.7%.

As we look at individual poverty rates in the categories of Children under 18 years old and People 18 to 64 years old, Yakima, Kittitas, and Klickitat counties exceed the state average by 2 - 8.6% points. Additionally, Skamania County has seniors aged 65 years and older in poverty.



Basic Food Households

From 2018 to 2022, approximately 21.7% of households in Yakima County were recipients of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or basic food assistance.

- **Households with Children:** Within the group of households receiving SNAP assistance, an estimated 59.5% included children under the age of 18.
- **Elderly Households:** About 31.5% of households with SNAP assistance consisted of one or more individuals ages 60 and over.
- **Female Householder:** Approximately 34.3% of all households benefiting from SNAP were led by a female householder without a spouse present.

- Employment Status:** Furthermore, an estimated 39.5% of households receiving SNAP had two or more individuals who were employed in the past 12 months.

Those receiving SNAP in Kittitas and Skamania counties mirror the state average at 11 and 11.3% respectively, while Klickitat County is above the state average at 13.3%.

Various Income Sources					
2018 - 2022 Census Data					
Income Source	Kittitas County	Klickitat County	Skamania County	Yakima County	WA State
Earnings	79.6%	68.7%	70.0%	77.9%	78.9%
Social Security	28.7%	41.4%	43.4%	31.0%	29.2%
Retirement income	22.5%	29.0%	32.7%	19.9%	23.3%
Supplemental Security Income (SSI)	6.5%	5.7%	4.4%	6.7%	4.5%
Cash Public Assistance Income	2.0%	3.4%	5.0%	3.9%	3.3%
Food Benefits/SNAP past 12 months	11.0%	13.3%	11.3%	21.7%	11.1%

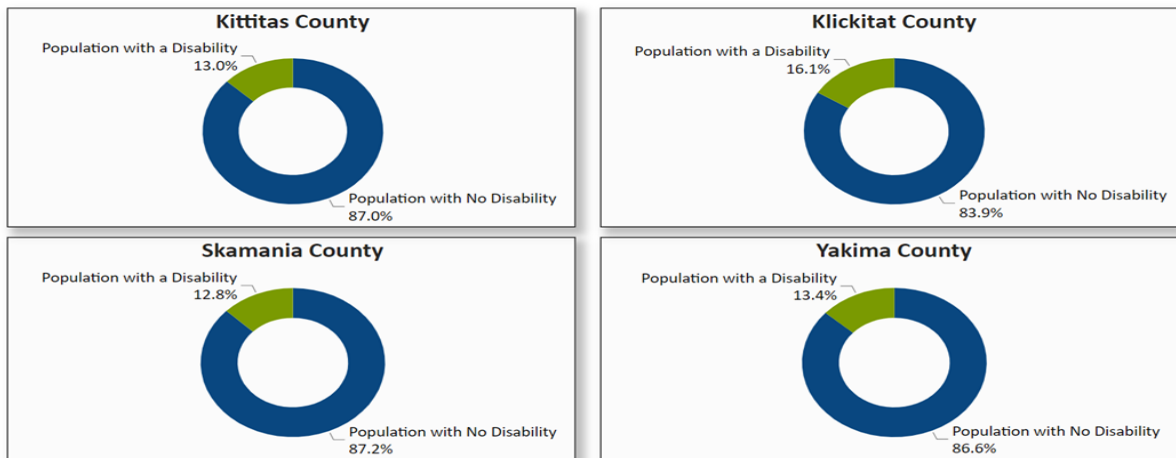
These income sources are not mutually exclusive; that is, some households received income from more than one source.

Individuals with Disabilities

The SCW area’s non-institutionalized population of individuals with disabilities is 13.8%. Klickitat County has the highest percentage of individuals with disabilities in the region at 16.1%, which is 3.4 percentage points higher than the state of 12.7%. Skamania County is also higher than the state average at 12.8%, while Kittitas and Yakima counties, 13.4% and 13.0%, are similar to Washington’s 12.7%.

Disability by South Central Region

2018-2022 Census Data

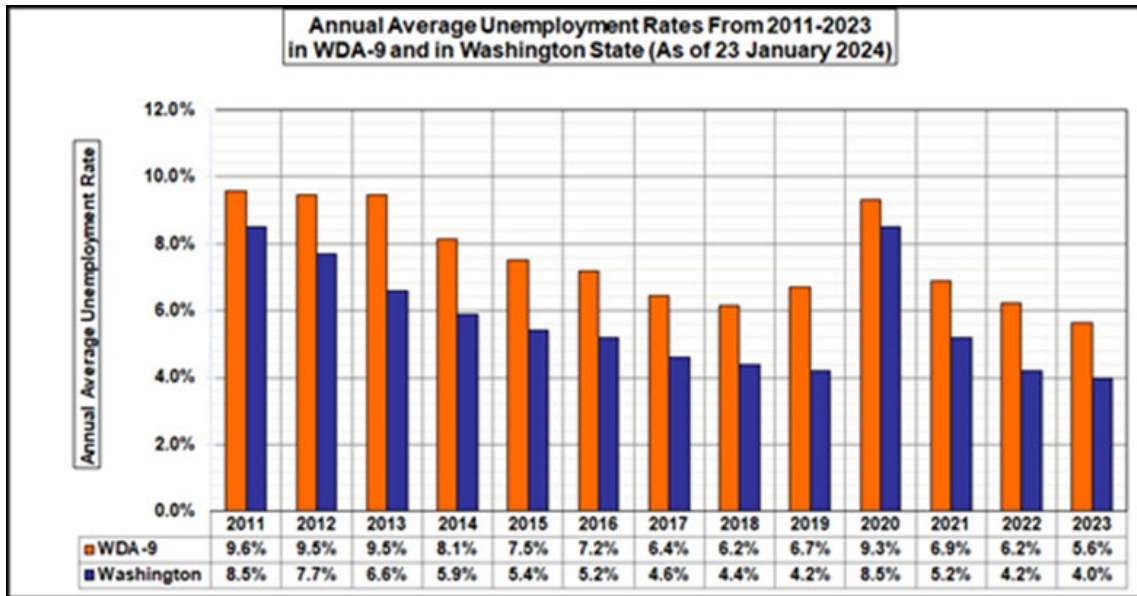


WORKFORCE METRICS

Unemployment Trends

Annual average unemployment rates spiked to highs not seen since the Great Recession in all four counties in the south central region in 2020 due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Washington

reported the first case of the Coronavirus on January 20, 2020. Cases grew exponentially, and in an attempt to slow the virus spread, the state virtually shut down on March 23. This “Stay at Home” order was to last just two weeks; it was extended to May 31, 2020.

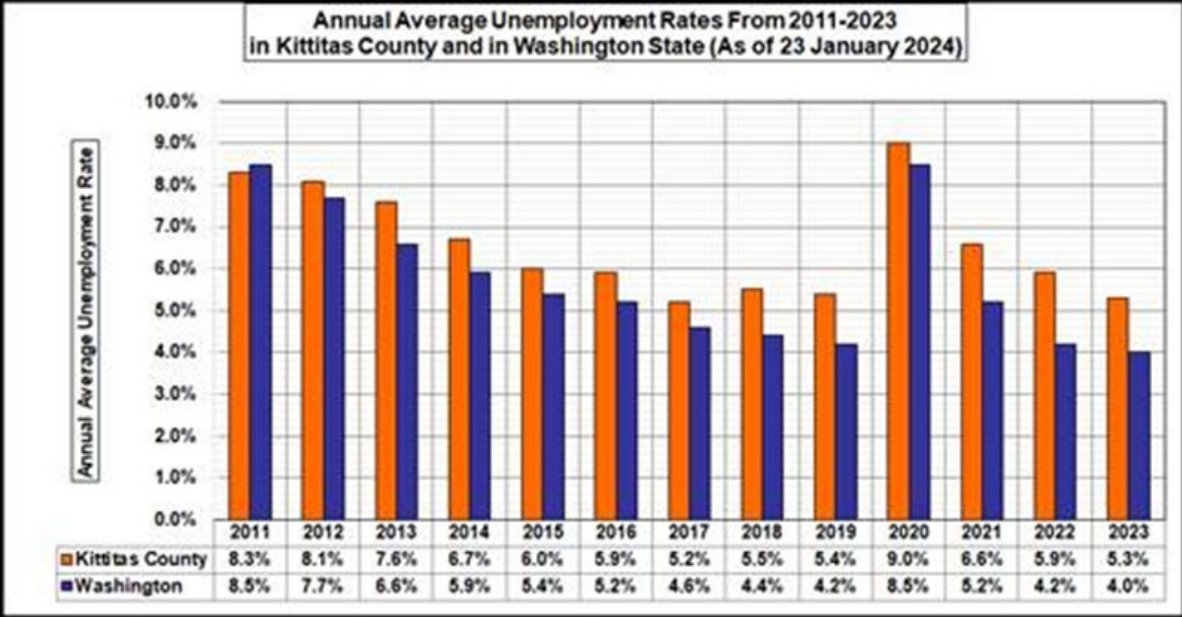


Source: Washington State Employment Security Department: Labor Market Economic Analysis

Kittitas County

The highest average unemployment rate in Kittitas County in the last five years was 9.0% percent in 2020, higher than rates seen during the Great Recession. The unemployment rate has since returned to pre-pandemic levels. In 2023, the average unemployment rate in Kittitas County was 5.3% compared to the state rate of 4.0%.

Central Washington University (CWU) is the largest employer in Kittitas County supporting much of the economy. Construction and agriculture are also strong. In fact, the construction sector in Kittitas County continues to expand with growth rates surpassing those across the state. Timothy hay, a variety of hay, is the single-largest agricultural product produced in the area with roughly 90% of the crop exported overseas.

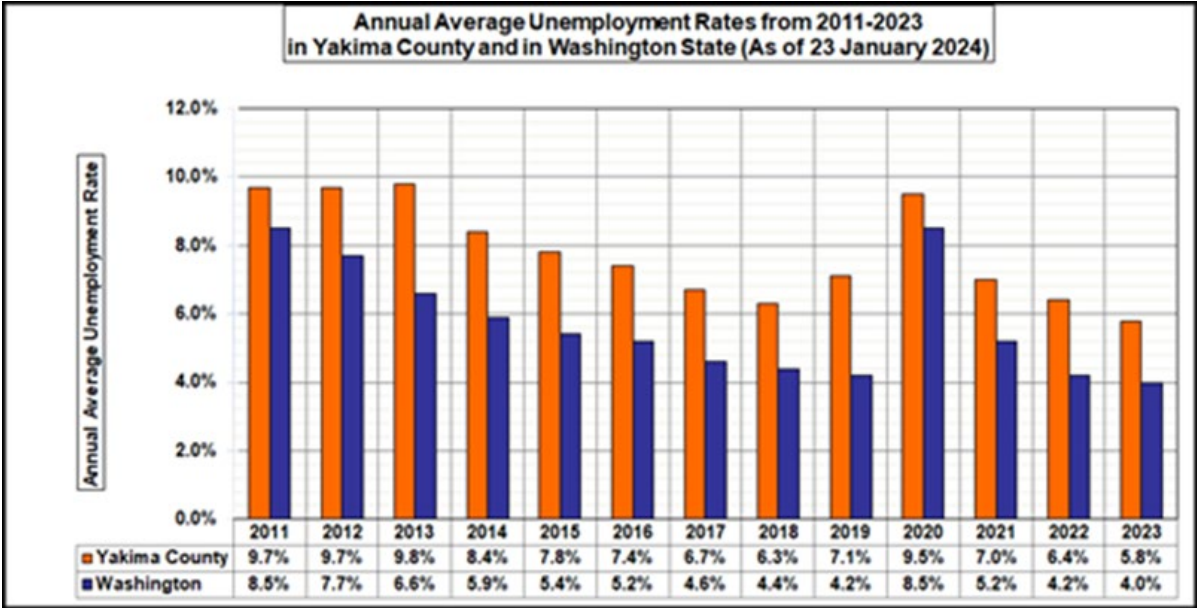


Source: Washington State Employment Security Department: Labor Market Economic Analysis

Yakima County

Unemployment has rebounded in Yakima County from its peak of 9.5% in 2020. In 2023, the average unemployment rate in Yakima County was 5.8% compared to the state rate of 4.0%.

Agriculture remains a substantial component of the local economy followed by healthcare and social assistance. Construction also remains solid.

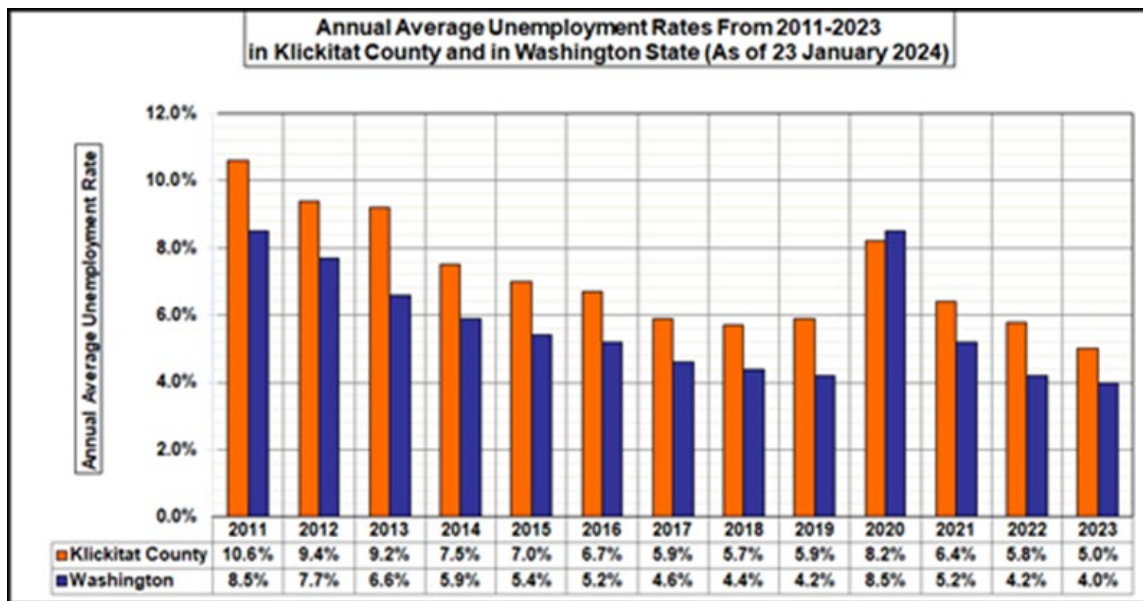


Source: Washington State Employment Security Department: Labor Market Economic Analysis

Klickitat County

Klickitat County saw the highest average unemployment rate in the last five years in 2020. The rate was 8.2% compared to the state rate of 8.5% at that time. The average unemployment rate is now significantly lower than pre-pandemic levels. In 2023, it was 5.0% compared to the 4.0% statewide.

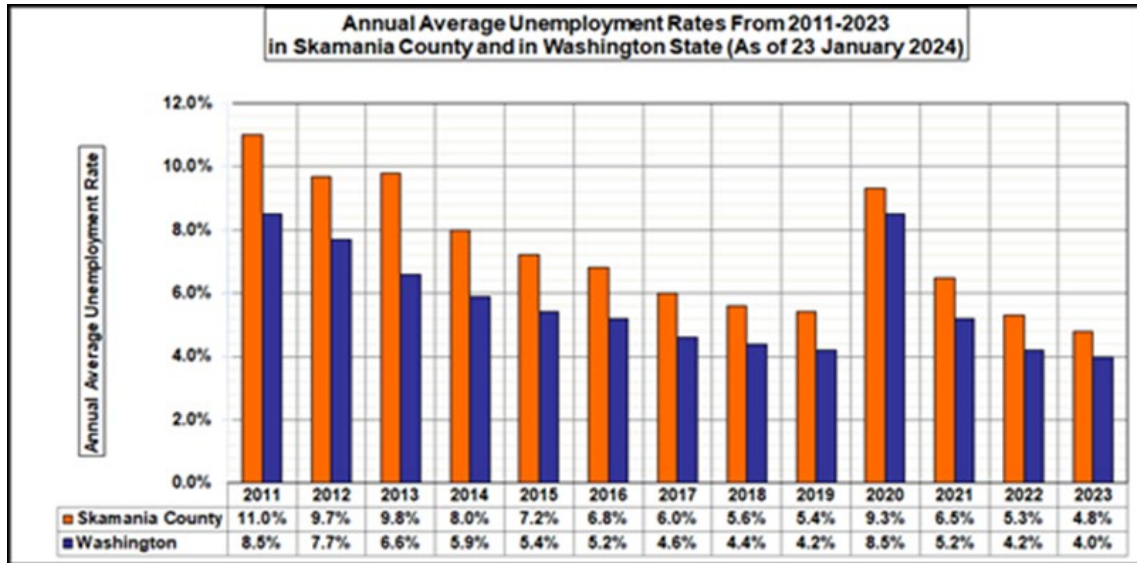
Klickitat County can be divided into three economic regions. The western third of the county relies on unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV a.k.a. drones) production, wood products and orchards, and fruit packing. The eastern third is dominated by vegetable farming, as well as the Roosevelt regional landfill. The central third boasts the county seat, the Maryhill Museum, windsurfing, and kite-boarding beaches. Vineyards and wineries have been expanding across the county.



Source: Washington State Employment Security Department: Labor Market Economic Analysis

Skamania County

The downturn in tourism severely impacted Skamania's economy. In 2020, the unemployment rate soared to 9.3%. However, by 2023, it had decreased significantly to a record low of 4.8%.



Source: Washington State Employment Security Department: Labor Market Economic Analysis

Strengths and Weaknesses of Service

Enhancing services and results for diverse populations in the SCW region necessitates an initial focus on meeting individuals where they are. Establishing personal connections is crucial in workforce development, particularly for those facing significant barriers. SCW is dedicated to investing in system enhancements that enable adaptable, community-based service delivery models tailored to the specific needs of individuals and communities.

By expanding investments to encompass underemployed individuals and eliminating obstacles to serving youth and adults, SCW will continue to broaden the scope and reach of the region's workforce development network, engaging partners, and stakeholders through more integrated efforts.

Providing diverse populations with various skill levels with multiple entry and exit points to career pathways, alongside a suite of strategies to overcome barriers, not only facilitates initial entry into an industry but also supports advancement to higher positions or levels within the field, thereby enhancing earning potential. To further achieve equitable outcomes for diverse populations, SCW will continue to invest in sector strategies and advocate for expanding training beyond occupational skills to encompass workplace readiness and digital literacy education.

REGIONAL SECTOR STRATEGIES

Identification, Prioritization, and Collaboration

South Central Workforce was one of the first areas in the state and nation to focus on industry sectors as a workforce strategy. We will continue to utilize this approach as a means to address local workforce issues.

Industry Sector Partnerships are regional alliances within one industry that bring employers, education, training, economic development, labor, government, and community organizations together to design, create, and implement workforce solutions. Convened by the South Central Workforce Employer Engagement Team, partners meet as necessary to discuss industry needs and labor market information. Together the partners will determine potential workforce initiatives and investments; assist with the identification of key skill gaps and skill standards for the targeted skill panels; customize training programs for new workers and solve incumbent worker training needs to create customized workforce solutions.

As in the past, sectors will be evaluated periodically. Additional sectors may be supported as new or existing industries emerge/grow, while others may be de-emphasized. SCW will also support sector efforts conducted by economic development organizations and other partners.

The sectors adopted for the south central region are based on industries that are important to the local economy and provide current and future growth for quality jobs and careers. Said sectors were validated by the South Central Labor Economist from the Washington State Employment Security Department (ESD) Labor Market and Economic Analysis Division and comply with the methodology prescribed in the criteria for identifying and prioritizing target sectors in Washington’s Strategic Workforce Development Plan, “Talent, and Prosperity for All.”

Strategic Industry Sectors adopted include:

- Health Services (NAICS 62)
- Agriculture (NAICS 11)
- Construction (NAICS 23)
- Manufacturing (NAICS 31-33)
- Transportation and Warehousing (NAICS 48-49)

Strategic Industry Sectors in the South Central Workforce Development Area (WDA-9) as of November 2023		
Industry		NAICS Codes
1	Health Services	62
	Social Assistance	624
2	Agriculture	11
3	Construction	23
	Specialty Trades	238
4	Manufacturing	31-33
	Food Manufacturing (Processing)	311
	Beverage and Tobacco Products	312
	Fabricated Metals	332
5	Transportation and Warehousing	48-49
	Truck Transportation	484

Source: *Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages. Bureau of Labor Statistics*

Note: The North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) is the standard used by Federal statistical agencies in classifying business establishments to collect, analyze, and publish statistical data related to the U.S. business economy

Health Services Industry Sector

The Health Care Industry Sector was already suffering challenges before the COVID-19 virus ravaged the nation. The pandemic and fallout from it only exacerbated the issue. The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects overall employment in healthcare occupations to grow faster than the average for all occupations. About 1.8 million openings are projected each year to 2032, due to employment growth and the need to replace workers who leave the occupations permanently.

In Yakima County, private health services providers (NAICS 62) added more jobs than any other sector countywide, providing over one-third (36.9%) of the covered jobs gained from 2012-2022. This sector is comprised of four subsectors: ambulatory health care services (NAICS 621), hospitals (NAICS 622), nursing and residential care facilities (NAICS 623), and social assistance (NAICS 624). In Klickitat and Skamania counties, healthcare support occupations (NAICS 31) and community and social services occupations (NAICS 21) have grown at 2.55% and 2.26% respectively over the last five years.

A summary of the in-demand occupations that currently exist or are anticipated to exist in Health Care and Social Assistance include home health and personal care aides, nurses and nursing assistants, dental hygienists, pharmacy technicians, medical and dental assistants, and social workers.

Agriculture Industry Sector

Agriculture remains a substantial component of the local economy; however, agricultural employment has tapered off since its peak in 2018. Anecdotal evidence suggests this decline is related to automation and the increased use of H-2A labor.



Still, industries related to agriculture such as food processing remain strong in SCW. Food processing includes fruit juice and ingredients, vegetable packers/processors, dairy products, breweries, and wineries. Due to automation, these food processing jobs often require a workforce with computer literacy and a knowledge of food safety. Wineries and micro-breweries also require brewing/winemaking, and production control.

A summary of the in-demand occupations that currently exist and/or are anticipated in the near future include packing and filling machine operators, computer-controlled machine tool operators, maintenance and repair workers, first-line leads/supervisors, agricultural equipment mechanics, as well as bottling, labeling, and canning line techs.

Construction Industry Sector

Construction has been growing in SCW, especially in Yakima and Kittitas counties. Barring rising interest rates or unforeseen economic events, it should remain a strong sector over the next few years. In Kittitas County, construction (NAICS 23) added more jobs than any other sector countywide. This is due to new home sites in Suncadia and transportation projects along I-90. In Yakima County, the construction upturn in the past 10 years was in specialty trades (NAICS 238).

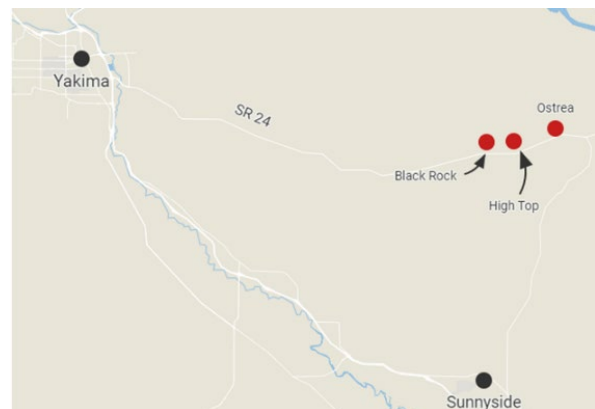
The Association of General Contractors (AGC) organized a series of Construction Industry Sector roundtables in 2023. At both events, multiple employers expressed frustration at the lack of workers with a valid Washington state driver's license. The availability of public transportation is limited throughout the region, making this a critical workforce issue. This was reiterated at an Industry Sector roundtable organized by South Central Workforce.

Several of the in-demand occupations expressed at the local level include construction laborers, framing contractors, siding contractors, electricians, painters, HVAC techs, plumbers, cement masons and concrete finishers, welders, and steel fabricators.

Construction Clean Energy

Two solar-based projects are under development in Yakima County. The High Top and Ostrea projects, each boasting an impressive 80-megawatt capacity will be situated off State Route 24, approximately 20 miles east of Moxee. Together, they will generate power for approximately 15,000 homes. The construction phase of these projects is anticipated to create around 450 jobs.

Spanning approximately 1,600 acres each, the High Top and Ostrea projects will allocate 926 and 811 acres, respectively, for solar panels and associated equipment. These sites are located north of State Route 24 and south of the Yakima Training Center, situated on privately owned land.



Two daily trains arrive in Roosevelt, located in Klickitat County within the Columbia River Gorge, each carrying over 12 million pounds of waste. This waste is then transferred to a convoy of trucks that navigate a cliff-side road with numerous turns to reach the top of a dry plateau.

This expansive landfill serves as the origin of pipeline-grade natural gas, capable of meeting the energy needs of approximately 19,000 households daily, powering furnaces, stoves, and water heaters.

Owned by the Klickitat Public Utility District, the landfill gas prompted an investment of around \$40 million for the construction of a processing facility designed to eliminate gas impurities.

The methane extracted from the Klickitat County landfill is poised to represent a significant milestone in Washington's gas industry's shift towards renewable natural gas and receives waste shipments from five states and British Columbia.

Manufacturing Industry Sector

Manufacturing still represents an important industry sector in the south central region. Employment in the fabricated metal product manufacturing subsector (NAICS 332) has been edging upwards in Yakima County during the past ten years.

The challenge that exists in many manufacturing settings is to find experienced and skilled workers. For instance, although some workers have welding skills, they may not be experienced with sanitary welding standards necessary for food-grade applications and/or may not have worked with stainless steel since the material is often cost-prohibitive for training programs.

A summary of the in-demand occupations that currently exist and/or are anticipated to exist soon include welders, CNC operators, electrical and electronic engineering techs, industrial machinery mechanics, engineers, machinists, computer-controlled machine tool operators, assembly technicians, and first-line leads/supervisors.

Our economic development partners report that another 200 manufacturing jobs will be open in Yakima County thanks to the addition of another food processor opening within the next two years.

Transportation and Warehousing Sector

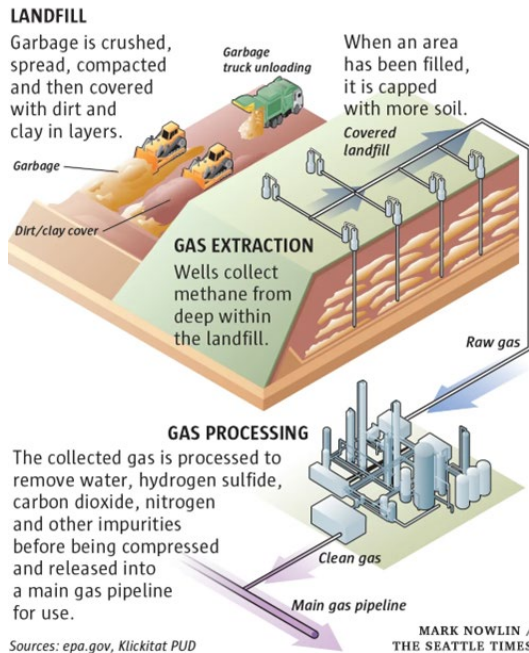
Transportation and warehousing retain a place on the SCW Area List of Strategic Industry Sectors because of the need to transport and store agricultural products and processed foods to a worldwide market. Another contributing factor is the presence of several regional warehouse operations including Wal-Mart and Ace Hardware in Yakima County. A large WinCo distribution center will soon break ground in Kittitas County. In addition, two new distribution centers are slated to open in Yakima County bringing another 100 jobs per facility.

A summary of the in-demand occupations that currently exist and/or are anticipated in the near future include heavy tractor-trailer truck drivers, order fillers, hand packers, stockers, maintenance, and repair workers.

See Section III Planning Implications for Strategic Details and Interventions

How landfills produce high-quality gas

Decaying waste at landfills produces methane gas. If it escapes into the atmosphere — without combustion — it is a potent greenhouse gas. At two Washington landfills, in Klickitat and King counties, it is captured and refined into pipeline-quality gas.



Cooperative Agreements

WIOA requires the local workforce boards, with the agreement of the chief elected officials, to develop and enter a [Memorandum of Understanding](#) (MOU) between the WorkSource partners. The South Central MOU can be found in the link above and on our website at scworkforce.org

COORDINATION WITH REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS

The Yakima County Development Association (YCDA) and the Kittitas County Chamber of Commerce (KCCC) worked closely with the SCW while developing their Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) to ensure that key workforce training and education goals were incorporated into our plan. YCDA and KCCC also worked with Education Service District (ESD) 105 to ensure their STEM education plan for Central Washington is incorporated into the CEDS plan.

As a result of this collaboration, YCDA, and KCCC’s CEDS contain a specific goal to develop a world-class workforce. Actions and strategies within this broader goal reflect the priorities of SCW.

The Skamania County Economic Development Council (SCEDC) coordinates services with the South Central Workforce to develop local skills through workforce training and education. The SCEDC’s Community Action Plan aims to better utilize existing programs offered to advance both job skills and business management. The plan calls to maintain and promote quality education for



Rendering of new WinCo Distribution Center in Ellensburg

children, retraining for adults, and developing and supporting projects that benefit the public and allow people to gain skills through the ESD, the SCW, and others. The SCEDC will expand efforts for workforce and start-up business training with the goal of “upskilling” residents for jobs providing family wages.

See page 36 for Transportation and Support Services

REGIONAL PERFORMANCE NEGOTIATIONS

SWC staff and the designees for the State Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (WTECB) develop a meeting schedule to discuss and negotiate performance measure targets. Staff reviews an analysis of targets for each area based on past targets, past performance,

trends, and other factors provided by the Workforce Board as a starting point for the WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs.

Data provided is reviewed and where appropriate information on local economic conditions, demographic information, and other significant factors is collected for further discussion with WTECB staff. Multiple conversations regarding data accuracy, preliminary measures, and processes are conducted through state meetings with the Washington Workforce Association and directly with local staff. Before performance measures are final, the local area reviews all proposed measures to ensure the goals adequately reflect the current labor market, economic conditions, demographics, and other related factors.

In an instance where the measures recommended by the WTECB for negotiations appear inconsistent or inflated, local staff will review the data with the state board staff to arrive at a mutually acceptable baseline. The result will then be compiled into a (comprehensive) target summary for Washington State that is presented to the Department of Labor for approval or further negotiations. It should also be noted that the SCW reserves the right as provided by the WTECB to later revisit and review the original targets for adjustment where they prove to be incorrectly set.

SECTION III LOCAL WORKFORCE SYSTEM

PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

The evolving demographics and requirements of the current and future workforce have presented new challenges for the education, training, and employment sectors. Businesses now demand employees with strong work ethics, technical proficiency, and the ability to adapt to new technologies and work methodologies.

In response, local workforce programs have been structured to assist dislocated workers in connecting with job opportunities and aiding low-skilled adults and older workers in overcoming barriers to employment. Additionally, these programs aim to assist youth in completing their education and identifying career pathways leading to productive employment and fulfilling careers. The SCW administers the WorkFirst Program for TANF parents, providing real work experiences to develop the soft skills crucial for employment. Furthermore, proactive steps have been taken by the SCW to enhance capacity for effectively serving individuals with disabilities, unlocking an often-untapped labor resource for businesses.

Alongside local WorkSource partners, SCW has designed services and activities to create an effective, efficient, and fully integrated service delivery system for both workers and businesses.

STRATEGIC VISION AND GOALS

See page 2 for the South Central Workforce Mission, Vision, Values, and Priorities.

Given the current economic landscape, demographics, and workforce needs, the SCW is committed to the following priorities for 2024-2028:

- **Quality Jobs:** Supporting employers and job seekers to meet marketplace needs and trends (i.e., job descriptions, qualifications, pay, culture, company values, benefits (medical, childcare, etc.)).
 - Connect talent and employers to ensure the vitality of a healthy and sustainable workforce by continuously engaging and sharing market trends.
- **Talent Pipeline:** A trained workforce ready to meet the needs of employers.
- **Youth and Young Adults:** Providing career development and employment opportunities for young people ages 16-29.
 - Improved strategies to maximize the potential of the youth and young adults, particularly focusing on creating pathways to jobs that offer livable wages.

Talent and Prosperity for All Alignment

The SCW Strategic Plan is in alignment with the State of Washington's “Talent and Prosperity for All” (TAP) plan in three of the five goals.

TAP Plan Priorities	SCW Strategic Plan Priorities
Job Quality	Quality Jobs
Credentialing	Talent Pipeline
Youth	Youth and Young Adults

REMAINING A HIGH-PERFORMING BOARD

Throughout its history, the South Central Workforce (SCW) has consistently achieved or surpassed all performance targets agreed upon with the Washington Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board. SCW's success is deeply ingrained in a management framework that prioritizes high program performance each year. This commitment commences during the negotiation phase of performance measures, where staff meticulously review all state data and local conditions to ascertain that the established goals are both achievable and realistic.

Once targets are set, performance measures and local targets are negotiated and embedded in every WIOA I-B Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth provider agreement. The goals are charted and monitored monthly by staff and reviewed quarterly by the full board. Should significant deficiencies occur in contract performance, staff immediately intervene to identify issues and develop solutions for correction. Intervention by SCW staff can include a range of activities that include providing technical assistance to corrective action.

In upholding high performance as a primary focus for its contractors, the SCW places substantial importance on past performance as a weighted factor in contract awards. This assessment encompasses factors such as organizational capacity, including proficiency in collecting and

managing data; staffing levels, experience, and qualifications; familiarity with the local area; and the organization's track record of integrity, business ethics, fiscal accountability, performance, and technological capabilities. Upon the award of contracts, successful bidders are required to commit to negotiated performance levels and display a successful track record during contract management.

REGIONAL ALIGNMENT AND STRATEGIES

WIOA Youth Program

Within the four counties of Yakima, Kittitas, Klickitat, and Skamania, 32 school districts are distributed across 10,196 square miles. Demographics including ethnic composition, income, and dropout rates vary greatly throughout each of the counties. Yakima County has over twice the TANF child recipient rate compared to the State of Washington. Klickitat ranks second in this area but is also considerably higher than the state average. The unemployment rate among 16-21 year olds is higher than federal and state rates, with Skamania being almost twice as high.

WIOA Youth program is designed to assist both in-school and out-of-school populations facing significant barriers. Barriers may include being basic skills deficient, low-income, low-skilled, involved with the juvenile justice system, homeless, in foster care, school dropouts, experiencing personal crises, or being pregnant or parenting. The program is fully integrated and accessible to youth with disabilities, defined as individuals with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, those with a record of such an impairment, or those regarded as having an impairment.



WIOA Youth program graduating from Perry Tech in Yakima

To ensure accessibility, our providers take measures to offer reasonable accommodations and modifications. These adjustments aim to enable youth with disabilities to participate in the WIOA Youth program actively and fully.

SCW's youth program service model incorporates an objective assessment for each youth participant. This assessment encompasses a comprehensive review of academic and occupational skill levels, as well as an evaluation of specific service needs. The primary goal is to identify suitable services and career pathways tailored to the individual participant.

In cases where the objective assessment indicates that co-enrollment with the WIOA adult program would be advantageous, the youth may be enrolled in both programs. Each program assumes distinct responsibilities to prevent any duplication of services, guaranteeing a more effective and customized approach to meet the diverse needs of the participants.

Following a comprehensive objective assessment, the youth (and parents if the individual is under 18) collaboratively develop the next steps outlined in an Individual Service Strategy. This plan is subject to periodic updates as necessary, aligning services directly with one or more indicators of performance. Moreover, the Individual Service Strategy outlines suitable career pathways, incorporating both education and employment goals, and considerations for career planning.

WIOA case management staff play a crucial role in facilitating intensive vocational exploration, drawing upon vocational programs and other community youth service providers. Each youth participant receives assistance in comprehending the nature and requirements of work through various means, including informational interviews with local employers, job shadows, and worksite training opportunities, all of which are listed among the available services.

Individualized career guidance stands as a fundamental activity to assist both in-school and out-of-school youth to navigate the diverse services available to attain their occupational objectives. Every young individual undergoes an assessment to identify individual needs and is provided support while developing a plan. This plan outlines the necessary steps to establish an educational foundation, articulate career goals, and identify the resources required to achieve each stage of the plan from initiation to completion.

The career planning process incorporates information about multiple pathways, which may encompass post-secondary education programs offered by colleges and universities, as well as apprenticeship, entrepreneurial, or vocational programs provided by private technical schools. The aim is to equip youth with the knowledge and resources necessary to make informed decisions and pursue their chosen career paths successfully.

For youth facing educational deficiencies, case managers place significant emphasis on the critical importance of high school graduation or obtaining a GED. Every participant in the WIOA Youth program receives comprehensive information about school re-entry or basic education programs. They are actively supported in selecting the most suitable options that not only align with their educational needs but also provide the necessary resources and support crucial for successfully graduating high school or attaining a GED.

In addition to vocational and technical skills, young individuals must possess essential soft skills to actively engage in training programs and secure or retain employment successfully. Within the SCW's youth programs, pre-employment skills training is offered to assist young participants in acquiring, understanding, and developing interactive and fundamental behaviors such as attendance and punctuality, crucial for success and progression in the workplace. These workshops also incorporate life skills training, equipping young individuals with the tools to manage personal affairs, including budgeting, handling bank accounts, and maintaining health. This comprehensive approach ensures that young people are not only well-prepared to secure employment but also become productive and positive contributors to the local community.

Education and employment are often intertwined by linking classroom learning to its real-world applications, leveraging the assistance of private and public employers along with labor

organizations. Whenever feasible, programs will engage these partners to furnish insights into various jobs and careers, fostering the development of both paid and unpaid work-based learning opportunities. These initiatives aim to strengthen the connection between the educational environment and the workplace. SCW actively engages in multiple secondary advisory groups that bring together essential partners to ensure the successful participation of youth in these integrated programs.

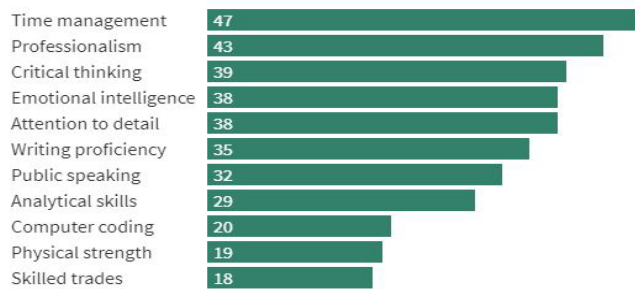
The case management team leverages all available community resources to help youth formulate their career plans. This encompasses utilizing resources provided by WorkSource and the WorkSource website, as well as organizing workshops like career exploration. These workshops offer valuable information about potential career paths, the essential skills for success, and insights into the trends and technologies shaping the American workplace.

For youth placed in work-based learning activities, staff will connect with employers and gain feedback to ensure adequate progress and implementation of foundational skills such as but not limited to:

- Attendance
- Punctuality
- Grooming/Hygiene
- Positive Attitude and Behavior
- Completing Tasks Effectively
- Effective Interpersonal Relations

THE SOFT SKILLS GAP

% of employers who select _____ as one of the most lacking skills among the candidates who apply for their roles



Source: Survey of 2000+ U.S. employers conducted by ZipRecruiter, Inc., July 12–August 1 2023. Respondents were verified hiring managers or talent acquisition professionals with responsibility for hiring.



Youth Work Experience, Internships, and Job Shadows

Work experiences, internships, and job shadowing activities play a pivotal role in providing real-world exposure to job environments and the requirements of the working world. These opportunities contribute to the development of personal attributes and enhance employability skills, offer practical knowledge, facilitate career exploration, expose participants to various industries, and equip them with the skills necessary to secure and advance in employment.

Negotiations for work experiences and internship opportunities involve collaboration with both public and private sector agencies. Youth placements are strategically determined based on comprehensive assessments, identified deficiencies, and individual career goals. The development and monitoring of training sites incorporate work ethic and occupational skill competencies, including punctuality, attendance, positive work attitudes, personal appearance, effective task completion, and the cultivation of relationships with co-workers and supervisors.

Case managers play a vital role in regularly monitoring work sites, engaging with employers and trainees, and conducting progress evaluations. The summer component is particularly critical, providing youth with opportunities for accelerated academic engagement and expanded

occupational skills training. This combination of skills acquisition, aligned with academics, helps participants understand the tangible connection between academic success and future job opportunities.

During the summer, youth are presented with diverse opportunities, including full and part-time employment, including summer jobs. The academic component involves evaluating each youth's basic skills and academic needs to develop an effective plan. Job shadowing opportunities enable youth to observe various professions, helping them assess their interest in potential future career opportunities. While placement follows a similar process as other work activities, the summer element allows for the pursuit of multiple career goals and interests, focusing more on career exploration.

Youth are provided with a comprehensive array of tailored occupational and vocational skills training opportunities designed to lead to fulfilling careers with long-term retention. Occupational skill training takes place in diverse settings, including work experiences, internships, and vocational environments. Case managers play a crucial role in enrolling youth into occupational training fields that not only develop in-demand employability skills but also align with their career potential. This strategic approach ensures that the training received is not only relevant but also enhances the participants' readiness for sustainable and rewarding employment opportunities.

Service providers in the south central region offer a program structure that integrates both education and training components. The educational services provided by diverse agencies cover adult basic education and literacy activities, encompassing basic skills training, critical thinking, and English as a second language. In conjunction with these educational opportunities, youth participants will engage in various workforce preparation activities, including but not limited to self-management, grooming for employment, and following directions. The coordination of these blended services occurs through comprehensive training sessions such as hands-on occupational skills training, job readiness training, and on-the-job training, all delivered concurrently.

Throughout their WIOA program, youth are paired with a case manager, serving as a mentor and guide. This mentorship is crucial in helping youth navigate challenging decisions during this pivotal time in their lives. Matching youth with supportive staff who offer care and foster stable relationships is a priority. Opportunities for mentoring arise through various channels, including worksites, educational activities, schools, and online resources. Many employers also engage in mentoring relationships with youth during their training services. Efforts are made, whenever possible, to collaborate with schools and designate a staff member, such as a counselor, whom youth can approach to address any issues.

Each registrant receives comprehensive guidance and counseling, starting with an assessment of their assets and needs during the enrollment process. Case managers provide ongoing counseling not only for the youth but also for their family members. Joint planning and counseling sessions with participants are conducted to develop strategies, benchmarks, and timelines for achieving educational, employment, and training goals. Given our focus on serving the "most in need" youth, many participants require additional support systems. WIOA staff establish positive support by collaborating with schools, employers, other agency providers, medical institutions,

community service agencies, and other community support services. Experts may also recommend additional resources to address specific issues related to drug/alcohol, mental and physical health, domestic violence, and gang involvement. Our comprehensive approach aims to eliminate barriers that pose significant obstacles for the entire family to achieve self-sufficiency.

Youth Follow-up Services

The extent of follow-up is based on individual needs. Case managers work closely with youth during and after completion of the program to determine the scope of follow-up services offered. The services may include, but are not limited to, leadership development, addressing educational and/or employment situations, guidance with education, career development, adult mentoring, and peer support activities. Follow-up services have helped our program maintain a good relationship with past participants and attain the performance levels required by the WIOA program.

Job Seekers in Transition

Individuals seeking employment encounter obstacles that can make securing or retaining a job more challenging. Despite the added difficulty, it is important to note that these barriers are not insurmountable. Certain challenges, like a temporary lack of transportation, are relatively easier to address than others.

Population segments that have job seekers in transition:

- Displaced homemakers
- Youth in, or formerly in, Foster Care
- Low-income individuals
- English language learners
- Native Americans, Alaska Natives, and Hawaiians
- Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers (MSFW)
- Individuals with disabilities
- Older individuals
- Single parents/pregnant women
- Justice involved adults and youth
- Long-term unemployed
- Homeless individuals
- Veterans
- Other groups designated by the Governor

Effective employment programs exhibit particular attention when assisting individuals confronting these barriers, often implementing a range of population-specific strategies to deliver personalized services. Addressing population-specific needs takes various forms. For certain groups, establishing connections with specialized support services like childcare or mental health care proves crucial. Leadership development or assistance in building confidence may be essential for others. Some may find value in transforming prior experiences into skills or assets, such as military service or training while incarcerated.

WIOA Adult

The WIOA Adult program will serve economically disadvantaged individuals, ages 18 – 72, who are most in need of WIOA I-B employment and training services to help them attain self-sufficiency. Given the current state of our local economy, the need for WIOA services has never been greater. Priority of services will be given to TANF recipients, veterans, and other low-income individuals who have been unsuccessful in obtaining employment due to low education levels, minimal work history, and circumstantial barriers compounded by a life of poverty.

WIOA Adult Priority of Service:

1. *First Priority:* Shall be given to veterans and eligible spouses (covered persons) who are recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, or individuals who are basic skills deficient.
2. *Second Priority:* Shall be given to non-covered persons (individuals who are not veterans or eligible spouses) who are recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, or individuals who are basic skills deficient.
3. *Third Priority:* Shall be given to veterans and eligible spouses (covered persons) who are not low-income and are not basic skills deficient.
4. *Fourth Priority:* Shall be given to those individuals who are not considered to be earning a wage that is self-sufficient and who possess one or more of the following barriers to employment:
 - Basic Skills Deficient
 - School Dropout
 - Justice Involved
 - Individual with a Disability, including a formal record of drug and/or alcohol abuse
 - Homeless
 - Single Parent
 - Limited Work History
 - Unemployed or underemployed and pursuing training in local high-demand occupational clusters as approved by the SCW
 - Lacks Occupational Skills, and
 - Their family is not yet self-sufficient.

WIOA Adult service delivery builds upon the *basic career services* job seekers receive through WorkSource. WIOA adult services are offered as part of the menu of services for job seekers who are identified as potentially eligible and in need of skill training to achieve self-sufficiency.

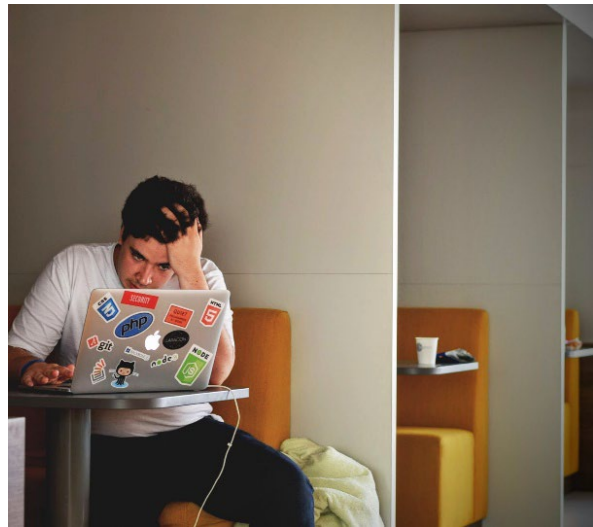
Case managers guide applicants through a *comprehensive assessment* that includes interviews, interest testing using WorkSourceWA.com, and basic skills testing to identify barriers, determine interests, and set appropriate achievement objectives. The case manager and participant use this information to collectively develop an Individualized Employment Plan which clearly outlines the combination of services including barrier resolution activities, GED and remediation, and the training needed and appropriate for participants to achieve their goals.

WIOA Dislocated Worker

The South Central Workforce will pursue and develop multiple pathways to help dislocated workers find employment (especially through retraining) and to help employers find skilled workers. This will consist of:

- Coordinating outreach to the unemployed with emphasis on those who have exhausted unemployment insurance (UI).
- Increasing on-the-job training, work experiences, employer roundtables, local training providers, and apprenticeship training in the region.
- Leveraging resources through co-enrollment with partner programs like Economic Security for All (EcSA), Wagner-Peyser, older worker programs, and others that offer dislocated workers more service options.
- Coordinating employer outreach to address shifting employer expectations.
- Targeting employment and training resources to the region's strategic industry clusters.

WIOA formula funds allocated to the SCW for Dislocated Worker programs will be used to provide services through the WorkSource delivery system. The SCW's program operators may use grant funds to provide services to individuals who meet the local and federal WIOA Dislocated Worker eligibility definitions. The goal is to provide workforce investment activities that increase the employment, retention, earning, and occupational skill attainment of job-seeking customers.



Training Services

Training services are available to participants of the adult, dislocated worker, and youth programs who are eligible and unable to obtain or retain employment at self-sufficiency levels without the development and skills for employment. These services will be provided after evaluation/assessment and case management have been determined that the need exists and that the participant can participate, benefit from the training; and is unable to obtain grant assistance from other sources to pay the costs of their training or require assistance beyond that available under grant assistance from other sources. Program providers must determine if Pell Grants, the Washington College Grant, and other sources of grants to pay for training costs are available and if necessary, utilize WIOA funds to supplement or leverage other funding.

A priority is placed on guiding participants into classroom training and occupational training that build job skills in high-skill/high-demand occupations as well as other occupations that meet local labor market demands so the participant can increase opportunities for employment, job retention, and self-sufficiency. Participants are matched carefully to the training selection according to their interests and their abilities.

Training services provided to adults and dislocated workers are determined on a case-by-case basis and may include:

- Occupational skills training, including training for non-traditional employment
- On-the-job training
- Programs that combine workplace training with related instruction
- Training programs operated by the private sector
- Skill upgrading and retraining
- Entrepreneurial training
- Pre-apprenticeship and Apprenticeship
- Adult education and literacy activities provided in combination with services
- Customized training conducted with a commitment by an employer or group of employers to employ an individual upon successful completion of the training
- Institutional skills training

Individual Training Account (ITA)

An Individual Training Account (ITA) is the process used to obligate funds for participants. Case managers use ITAs to outline expected training expenses and list the financial resources including WIOA funds secured to meet those expenses. Whenever possible, cost sharing and co-enrollment with other programs are coordinated to maximize WIOA participant resources. Combined with Pell and other forms of financial aid, case managers ensure that the funds are available, and the plan is achievable before the participant enters training.

On-the-Job Training (OJT)

On-the-job training (OJT) benefits those who can best gain skills in a work setting. For many job seekers, access to training programs, or the interests and academic ability to complete classroom training is beyond their ability to participate. OJT provides the employer with a training reimbursement while they train these valuable employees on the job. The job seeker receives immediate employment while building the job skills they need to be productive employees for local businesses. OJT workers can be extremely effective in Klickitat and Skamania counties where access to classroom training is limited and where employers may have limited availability to recruit skilled job seekers. Effective working relationships with WorkSource partners and local community resources help achieve the goals of our programs by reducing duplication of services, enhancing cost-efficiency, and promoting a one-stop service delivery system.

Customized Training (CT)

Customized Training (CT) is training designed to meet the special requirements of an employer or a group of employers. CT is conducted with a commitment by the employer(s) to employ the participant upon successful completion of the training. CT must be paid for, in part by employers, for which the employer pays not less than 50% of the cost of the training. Individuals considered for CT must meet the eligibility requirements for the WIOA Adult or Dislocated

Worker program. Employed individuals may be considered for CT under special conditions that are defined by the WIOA administrative bulletins for Adult and Dislocated Worker programs.

Work Experience (WEX)

Work Experience (WEX) will be provided for those who have a limited work history and lack work maturity as evidenced by their past experiences in the workforce. This intensive service is designed to allow job seekers the opportunity to build soft skills in an actual job setting and gather positive work references.

Apprenticeship

The SCW area has a severe shortage of qualified applicants for available apprenticeship openings. While there is an adequate supply of workers who are interested in accessing apprenticeship opportunities, the vast majority are not able to meet the minimum requirements for entry due to low basic skills levels. Through employer outreach, employers report shortages of available qualified applicants, and the only immediate remedy is to raise the skill level of the current labor pool through education and training.

Apprenticeship is paid, on-the-job learning with related classroom-based instruction. The US Department of Labor defines registered apprenticeship through four essential criteria: (1) paid, on-the-job learning under the supervision of skilled employees; (2) related classroom-based instruction; (3) ongoing assessment against skills standards; and (4) culmination in a portable, industry-recognized credential.

To address our business customers' needs, SCW embarked upon a variety of employer engagement activities in partnership with the Advanced Manufacturing Apprenticeship Committee (AJAC). These have confirmed that local employers want better access to high



Youth apprentice in Yakima.

school students, young adults, and adults in transition with a particular interest in building mechanical, machining, production, and/or robotics skills such as machining basics, machine setup and operations, inspection, preventative maintenance and repair, and production machine operations. These skills directly translate to high-demand occupations and career pathways such as machinist, industrial maintenance, and mechanical engineering.

By partnering with AJAC to deliver these trainings, we are actively meeting the needs expressed by our employer partners. SCW and its apprenticeship partners have responded to these industry needs by building strong partnerships with local school districts, community

colleges, and youth and adult serving organizations across the South Central Workforce Development Areas so that young people can gain access to these jobs and careers.

Through our closely cultivated partnerships, the apprenticeship capacity grew to offer two new youth apprenticeship programs to employers (Production Technician and Automation Technician), one adult apprenticeship program (Industrial Maintenance Technician), and just recently another adult apprenticeship program (Food Manufacturing Technician) for processing and agricultural companies that span across all of Central Washington.

Customer Choice

To enable the participant to make a responsible and informed choice about where best to receive training, WIOA uses three mechanisms:

- ITAs
- A statewide list of eligible training providers
- Consumer information regarding training providers

Rather than being dependent upon case managers to prescribe a training regimen, individuals are expected to take an active role in managing their employment future through the use of ITAs. Adults and dislocated workers receiving training under this approach will receive the information they need (skills assessment, labor market conditions, and trends, training vendor performance) to make an informed choice about their employment future and the training to support their decision.

Follow-Up Services

Retention Services (Follow-Up Services) are post-employment job retention services, including supportive services, counseling and training are allowable under WIOA follow-up services could include, but are not limited to:

- Additional career planning and counseling
- Contact with the participant's employer, including assistance with work-related problems that may arise

Peer support groups; information about additional educational opportunities, and referral to supportive services available in the community.

Transportation and Support Services

Supportive services are available to all WIOA I-B participants and are intended to enable an individual to participate in program activities and to secure and retain employment. Supportive services are made available to customers when the need for, or lack of, assistance could impact their ability to continue participation. Support Services commonly include transportation assistance, car repair, childcare, tuition, appropriate work clothing, and tools required by the employer. Networking with other organizations allows for appropriate referral and coordination

of supportive service assistance so that WIOA funds are used only in the absence of other resources.

To the extent allowable and as resources permit, support services will be provided to eligible and enrolled I-B Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth participants. Pursuant to local policy, supportive services will only be provided when it has been determined through an assessment that such services are necessary for the participant to successfully complete the goals and objective outlined in their Service Plan; or circumstances exist that threaten successful training or participation in employment; and when the cost of the service is beyond the ability of the participant to pay. Supportive Services are not entitlements and shall be provided to participants based on a documented financial assessment, individual circumstances, the absence of other resources, and funding limits.

Given the large rural area of the South Central Workforce region, transportation is limited. While a public transportation system exists within the City of Yakima and adjacent communities, other services throughout the region are limited to specialized transportation programs or nonexistent. Recognizing that transportation is critical to the success of participants to actively engage in employment and training programs, SCW will utilize several options to remove transportation as a barrier. Consistent with local policy transportation assistance will only be provided when it is assessed as needed for successful participation and adequately documented.

The SCW partners with public and private transportation companies such as HopeSource, People For People, and Mt Adams Transportation to strategize, expand, and cover rural areas of the four-county region.

REGIONAL ALIGNMENT AND STRATEGY AND EXPANDING ACCESS

Targeted Outreach

The SCW highly values ensuring access to all communities across the region. Despite the vast geographical area, a full Career Development Center, affiliates, specialized, or connection sites have been strategically positioned in the major population centers of each county. These strategic locations ensure reasonable travel distances, even to remote and rural areas within each county served. While the full Career Development Center in Union Gap offers the most comprehensive access to one-stop services, affiliate, specialized, and connection sites directly provide entry to WIOA Title I-B programs. They also facilitate connections to other partner programs in person or through electronic access or itinerant services.

To inform residents about its services, SCW conducts proactive recruitment efforts through its contracted entities and various social media platforms. This involves outreach to local school districts and Open Door programs for both in-school and out-of-school youth. Additionally, recruitment extends to community centers, presentations to local fraternal organizations like Rotary and Kiwanis, along with necessary advertising through both digital and print media.

The SCW conducts an evaluation and certification of each site location every three years to ensure both accessibility and the provision of WIOA programs and services. The SCW assesses

whether additional access points are required to adequately serve a community. Access points refer to public agencies (e.g., libraries) or partner organizations that have the capacity and willingness to establish linkages and provide resource materials accessing the WorkSource system electronically. These determinations take into account factors such as population size, cost considerations, and input from community members.

In addition to partnering with public agencies and organizations to generate awareness of WorkSource offerings, a focus on community engagement and outreach has been brought to the forefront with the understanding of each county having its favored types of activities and adjusting to meet the needs of the community. For example, within Yakima County, it has been a norm for community members to attend large events and open houses within local venues to gain access to resource information; however, in the Columbia Gorge, there is a lack of large venues so nontraditional venues like post offices or coffee shops have been utilized for WorkSource pop-ups. A pop-up event occurs when there is not a specific event or gathering scheduled, and WorkSource creates its own outreach activity. This has been pivotal in our efforts to continue building relationships with our community partners.

In May 2023, a WorkSource kiosk was built in the Valley Mall in Union Gap, the largest shopping center in Yakima County. This kiosk has served as a main point of access for information about WorkSource and the partners who make up the one-stop system. The kiosk is staffed by various



WorkSource partners daily and open during high traffic times as noted by Google analytics and customer trends documented by shopping center management.

Integrated Service Delivery

Integrated Service Delivery (ISD) is the delivery of workforce service in a manner that aligns/braids the resources of participating partners to seamlessly address the training and employment needs of both job seekers and businesses. The goal of ISD is to encourage job seekers to take advantage of all available resources to obtain employment, maintain employment, and earn better wages. ISD is built on a belief that job seekers who utilize more of the services will have better success achieving their respective employment goals.

The certified WorkSource centers in the South Central Workforce region utilize an ISD model. The model creates a warm welcome and a quick connection to a robust set of high-value system resources relevant to the local region including screening, initial assessment, skill development, work readiness, and eligibility determination. Title I – Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth contractors, as well as Title III – Wagner-Peyser, provide the primary staffing for the model, having the largest presence in the centers. Other smaller WorkSource partners contribute when present in the centers.

Other services offered in the WorkSource centers to job seekers include but are not limited to job search and job placement assistance; career counseling; needs and interest assessments; proficiency testing; workshops; development of an individual employment plan; and case management. Services to employers include assistance in developing and posting job orders, referral of qualified job seekers to job openings, and organizing hiring events. Both job seekers and employers are also provided with robust labor market information to help inform their activities.

The core programs – Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Adult Basic Education, Wagner-Peyser, and Vocational Rehabilitation – work in concert to effectively serve job seekers and employers across the area. Strategies will be informed by labor market information gathered, analyzed, and provided by Labor Market and Economic Analysis and other sources. While each program has clearly defined activities to carry out, as defined by law, through leveraging services and resources optimum outcomes can be achieved.



Attendees at job fair.

SCW's alignment of core programs includes establishing effective career pathways that combine guidance, education, training, and support services that prepare individuals for careers. The pathway system will include navigators that help guide individuals to appropriate programs and services given their needs and career goals. The SCW will promote co-enrollment to align services and will encourage shared roles for guidance and support services within each career pathway program to prevent duplication of services among the core programs.

People with Disabilities

Every effort is made to accommodate all individuals within WorkSource centers, regardless of disability or need. Placement Specialists are available at the primary access points to the WorkSource system and are equipped to provide assistive technology.

Systems include:

- Washington Relay Service 711 to assist customers who have hearing impairments
- Online meeting platforms such as Zoom to assist customers with visual impairments

- Adjustable and/or stand-up workstations for customers with physical impairments
- Equipment that addresses mobility such as a larger keyboard, a trackball or joystick mouse, and other assistive equipment
- Language identification tools (i.e., I SPEAK cards) and Universal Translation Service – for English Language Learners (ELL)

Based on individual needs and where capacities within the center exist, special populations will receive intensive services such as one-on-one employment counseling, job development, referral, training assistance, and partner or community-offered services. Where applicable the WorkSource system will help this population access specialized services through the State of Washington Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Services to the Blind, County Developmental Disability Programs, Labor and Industry Disability Programs, Goodwill, and other local organizations serving the disabled population. Disabled participants will be encouraged to pursue assistive programs where available.

Accessibility of Facilities

The South Central Workforce is committed to giving access to all eligible applicants to the workforce system and will take every reasonable measure to ensure that no applicant or customer of the local system is discriminated against. Further, the SCW shall actively ensure that no individual shall be excluded from participation, denied benefits, or subject to discrimination with any program or activity. The SCW will make every reasonable effort to ensure that participants are not employed under WIOA to carry out the construction, operation, or maintenance of any part of any facility that is used or to be used for sectarian instruction or as a place for religious worship, except where those activities are allowed by federal statute or law. The SCW shall prohibit any individual from being discriminated against because of status as a participant; and assures participation in programs or activities is available to citizens, nationals of the United States, lawfully admitted permanent resident aliens, refugees, asylees, parolees, and other immigrants authorized by the Attorney General to work in the United States.



In carrying out these functions, through the administrative staff, SCW shall assign an Equal Opportunity Officer, who shall be authorized to monitor the local workforce system and partners where such partners fall under the authority of the local SCW for equal opportunity compliance. Duties of the South Central Workforce Equal Opportunity (EO) Officer shall include regular monitoring of Physical WorkSource and system facilities that fall under the authority of the SCW to ensure compliance with the American Disabilities Act Section 188. And shall work directly with the state EO Officer to carry out the provision of the State of Washington Methods of Administration to ensure:

- Notice and Communication – customers and staff understand their EO rights through posters and notices, and taglines in all system communications and marketing materials.
- Assurances – all contracts, grants, cooperative agreements, and other similar documents must include specific assurance language for nondiscrimination and equal opportunity.

Universal Access: Outreach will be conducted to all populations of eligible participants utilizing census data and information, and every reasonable effort will be made to reach all special populations. SCW will provide equivalent levels of information about WorkSource services and activities to all populations through advertising and where appropriate notices to schools and community service groups. SCW will consult with community organizations about ways to improve outreach and access to customers who are English Language Learners (ELL) ensuring meaningful access to program services. Likewise, SCW will utilize bilingual staff, interpreters, language services, documents, and brochures reflecting languages represented in the area and technology such as the Washington Relay Service (711).

Outreach to Veterans and Eligible Spouses

The South Central Workforce is committed to upholding a top-tier level of service to assist returning military personnel in securing meaningful employment with sustainable wages. The Adult and Dislocated Worker programs will adhere to the amended Jobs for Veterans Act, ensuring that covered veterans and their eligible spouses receive priority services for I-B adult and dislocated worker services as appropriate. In instances where spending limits are in effect, veterans will be prioritized over non-veterans. It is emphasized that the Veterans Policy is not meant to replace the fundamental function of the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs.

Priority of Services is a feature extended to all WIOA-funded programs within the south central area. WorkSource front desk staff and the WIOA registration process actively communicate the Priority of Services policy to veterans and eligible spouses. Additionally, comprehensive information about this policy is accessible on the website, WorkSourceWA.com.

Veteran outreach efforts are strengthened through the following initiatives:

- Reaching out to veterans with military unemployment claims
- Participating in veteran job fairs and stand-downs
- Delivering presentations during regular unemployment orientations
- Incorporating veterans' preferences into all communications
- Offering targeted on-the-job training (OJT) services tailored for veterans

- Collaborating with ESD veteran representatives to cross-reference and maximize resources
- Enrolling veterans in programs through a coordinated approach to provide a comprehensive range of services
- Establishing close partnerships with veteran liaisons at local colleges and universities
- Advocating and promoting the YesVets to employers within the South Central Workforce Development Area.



In addition to working with Veteran Representatives, staff discuss veteran’s priority at orientations when they provide information about WIOA programs.

Front-end services ensure that all customers entering the WorkSource offices are asked about their veteran or eligible spouse status and are then informed of their right to priority for employment and training services.

Staff will conduct outreach activities to employers, veterans, and eligible persons not currently accessing the system. Case management services will be provided to all referrals, as necessary. The needs of multiple-barrier veterans and recently separated veterans with military occupational specialties that do not readily transfer to the civilian workforce are managed on a case-by-case basis. Specific preferences are provided to these customer groups in the areas of applicant registration, selection and referral to job openings, and other core services.

Services may include a combination of self-service, facilitated self-service, group services, and/or referral to supportive services. The Local Veteran’s Employment Representative (LVER) is the employer liaison who seeks job opportunities, organizes hiring events, and participates in job fairs for veterans. The Disabled Veteran’s Outreach Program (DVOP) staff case manages veterans with severe barriers to employment who may also need intensive one-on-one services. Both are done regardless of the agency or program affiliation. In addition, the LVER and DVOP act as liaisons to ensure that other WorkSource staff are aware of the particular needs and priorities of veterans.

Older Workers

The SCW area sets priority of services for low-income individuals which also include older workers and disabled participants in the WIOA Adult program. The SCW partners with the local Area Agency on Aging and Retired and Senior Volunteer Programs to reach older workers who may be eligible for WIOA adult services.

Linkages Between the One-Stop System and Unemployment Insurance (UI)

The customers benefit from an Integrated Service Delivery front-end model which provides an access point for customers to UI information and technology to apply and file their weekly claim. Customers who receive UI benefits can participate in re-employment services including job search preparation workshops, one-on-one planning, referrals for education and training services, and other basic career services delivered within the WorkSource centers. In the workshops, UI claimants are provided with a comprehensive overview of the services available in the South Central WorkSource system.

Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers in the One-Stop

The Migrant Seasonal Farm Worker (MSFW) program includes the WIOA National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) and ESD's MSFW program. These programs work in concert to provide resources and job opportunities for migrant and seasonal farm worker customers. ESD's MSFW program works to match employer needs for labor by posting jobs and referring farmworkers to said opportunities. The MSFW attaches labor to jobs and conducts outreach to seasonal workers to ensure they have information regarding worker rights and responsibilities, safety information, and resources available in the community. MSFW staff also partner with Washington State Labor and Industries to coordinate presentations about worker safety. The NFJP focuses on assessing the needs and goals of the MSFW and then up-skilling workers through training to promote a career pathway to a job that is no longer seasonal and low-skilled and offer support services that will promote their stability for housing, transportation, medical benefits, and other support services. Both MSFW programs conduct specific outreach to improve job opportunities and community connections through the one-stop centers and access points.

Cross-Regional Coordination

The North Central/SkillSource and south central regions are adjacent areas with similar industries, populations, and service delivery methods. To enhance efficiency and optimize local resources, leadership and staff will convene regularly to explore ways to enhance service strategies.

Collaborative efforts between the regions will focus on:

- Standardizing administrative and managerial functions across both regions to reduce costs and increase efficiency. This includes sharing staff expertise for technical support, troubleshooting, and developing common financial management software. Additionally, shared development of procedures for equal opportunity and compliance monitoring, as well as identifying other areas for joint policy development, will be pursued to streamline operations.
- Organizing combined professional development opportunities like the 2023 Central Regions Joint Business Services Summit. These collaborative convenings will facilitate the exchange of innovative practices and the exploration of new service delivery methods.
- Coordinating Rapid Response events in cases where closures affect both regions, ensuring a synchronized approach to ensure a seamless delivery of services for both the employer and affected workers.

EDUCATION COORDINATION

As the federal and state-designated workforce policy body, the SCW is actively engaged in identifying workforce needs and issues throughout the local area. This occurs through the evaluation of labor market information provided by ESD and contracted Labor Market services; consultation with local Economic Development Organizations; and information obtained from locally identified sectors through surveys and forums.

Where workforce training issues are identified that require skill development through a structured setting, the SCW will work directly with secondary and postsecondary institutions to coordinate strategies and services to address industry needs. This includes assessing current post-secondary offerings to avoid creating new programs that duplicate those already in existence. The SCW enjoys a cooperative and ongoing relationship with post-secondary institutions in the local area with a significant presence. This includes Clark College, Yakima Valley College (YVC), Central Washington University (CWU), and Heritage University. Where a void of training exists, the SCW will work directly with these entities to customize existing training programs or develop new programs that will effectively and efficiently address the workforce needs.

The SCW has and will continue to be active in working with secondary Career and Technical Education programs to aid in the alignment of educational programs that will develop the foundational skills needed for entry-level jobs or for further training through postsecondary programs. Examples of this effort include the current Pre-Employment Training Services program, WA STEM, K-12 General Advisory Committee, Open Doors, Yakima Valley Technical Skills Center, Educational Service Districts 105 and 112, Career Connect South West, and area school districts. The partnership targets poverty youth and at-risk youth, building a network of educational and workforce services to move them to a career pathway. Our programs work directly with youth engaged in basic educational activities and help them understand the relevance of what is learned in the classroom to the workplace. Priorities for Youth are entrance into employment, apprenticeship training, or postsecondary programs.



CAREER PATHWAYS AND CREDENTIALS – TITLE II COORDINATION

The South Central Workforce has an active role in coordinating workforce investment between WIOA Title I programs and Title II. The SCW works with YVC's College and Career Readiness Division (CCR) to provide adult education and literacy activities in the local area, including YVC's two campuses in Yakima and Grandview and learning centers in Ellensburg and Toppenish. Programs and program changes for YVC's CCR are developed in response to local social and economic trends indicating a growing uneducated workforce and expanded demand for skilled employees who can increasingly use computer technology. Despite what appears to be a more than adequate labor supply, the employer community continues to express frustration in finding qualified people to hire due to a lack of workers with sound basic educational skills. To make real gains in closing the current skill gap, reducing deficiencies in basic education and computer literacy must be priorities.

YVC's CCR offers Integrated Basic Education Skills Training (I-BEST), a nationally recognized developmental education model that contextualizes adult basic education and English Language Acquisition (ELA) coursework by integrating it into a vocational training certificate program. I-BEST programs are contextualized with career pathway content to accelerate learning, transition students to college career pathways, and prepare students for entry-level employment.

Credentialing Reform and Equitable Access

The SCW endorses credentialing reforms that not only ensure fair access but also promote workforce mobility and contribute to sustained economic prosperity, under the state's strategic objectives.

EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

SCW proactively engages a diverse range of employers in the four-county region which includes representation from small businesses and those in high-demand industry sectors and occupations. This involves implementing customized outreach initiatives, sector-specific forums or conferences, and targeted communication strategies to guarantee that all employers have a chance to provide feedback, and their needs are met. Special emphasis is placed on direct outreach to support small businesses in high-demand sectors and occupations, as well as minority-owned businesses, which often lack the resources of larger companies. Our outreach strategy is guided by cultural competency and awareness to ensure the utmost respect and acknowledgment of the rich heritage and perspectives of Hispanic and other minority communities, contributing to the unique culture in the south central region.

Local Business Needs

Engaging businesses and employers is a crucial part of the workforce development system. The new 21st-century workforce system embraces employers as valued partners in a joint effort to help identify, create, and implement effective workforce solutions. SCW accepts the responsibility for leading this employer engagement effort to build stronger partnerships with businesses and encourage a collaborative approach to employer engagement.

The SCW is committed to leading this effort with a diverse range of employers, core partners, and interested stakeholders to cooperatively establish a seamless workforce system highlighted by active employer/business participation, integrated service delivery, the use of technology to increase access to services, and system accountability and sustainability.

Service providers are supplied with labor market and employment information in key industry sectors in the South Central Workforce system. This quantitative information stems from the Bureau of Labor Statistics and ESD regarding in-demand industry sectors. Providers can then make this information available to all participants. The SCW and its Employer Engagement Team will supplement this with qualitative information about in-demand occupations and career opportunities supplied through interviewing local employers to offer participants a more in-depth understanding of available careers in key industry sectors.

Moreover, participants will be encouraged to attend job fairs, seek career counseling at WorkSource, and seek career counseling and exploration services at local secondary and postsecondary educational institutions.

Cohesive System

The SCW continuously updates the “Employer Engagement Services Plan” with a shared vision incorporating the consensus of all stakeholder thoughts into a highly functional, sustainable plan. As the plan, guided by the principles of collaboration, integration, and participation, evolves more partners, stakeholders, and employers shall be identified and invited to share their ideas and participate in the process.

The South Central Workforce Employer Engagement Services Plan has been developed cooperatively by the SCW’s core partners with assistance from interested stakeholders, including economic development agencies, and local business interests. The Plan coordinates a combination of employer engagement strategies and resources to produce an appropriately educated and well-trained workforce directly responsive to the skills needs of business. The Plan design establishes a seamless workforce system of fully aligned partners working in collaboration with a diverse range of employers to support and sustain economic growth in the region and help more people find and keep jobs that lead to economic self-sufficiency.

Entrepreneurial and Microenterprise Services

To foster entrepreneurship and bolster microenterprises, SCW intends to invest in regional entities that deliver training in entrepreneurial skills and microenterprise services. This involves facilitating and endorsing workshops, as well as facilitating access to resources for small businesses. Essential to the success of these initiatives will be partnerships with local business incubators, colleges, and community organizations. The objective is to cultivate an entrepreneurial culture that plays a key role in economic diversification and the generation of employment opportunities.

Incumbent Worker Training

The SCW has a long history of utilizing WIOA funding to deliver wide-ranging technical skills training to employees (incumbent workers) of local companies from construction, manufacturing, ag/food processing, healthcare, wind farm, and unmanned aerospace vehicle (UAV) industries. Incumbent worker training is a key service to industry/business by increasing the competitiveness of the employee and the employer.

Each program year, the SCW’s Planning Committee determines an amount of adult/dislocated worker formula funds to be reserved/expended for incumbent worker training subject to performance results (annual report) and budget considerations.

Incumbent worker training will be prioritized for businesses and employees from Key Industry Sectors identified in the SCW’s WIOA Strategic Plan. The SCW will also consider other opportunities with industries/companies to avert layoffs, address skill shortages, or assist emerging industries.

The SCW’s incumbent worker training dollars are best leveraged when working with industry partnerships, associations, consortiums, roundtables, or panels and where training projects benefit more than one company.

WIOA requires a minimum company match from participating employers of 10%-50% depending on the size of the company. In most cases, company matches can be satisfied with the cost of wages/benefits paid to the employee/trainee while in training, which is tracked and documented by the SCW. To ensure the quality of training, training outcomes will be required and documented. The Planning Committee reviews and determines funding for incumbent worker training proposals in accordance with SCW’s Incumbent Worker Training Policy.

Industry or Sector Strategies

Through employer engagement, the South Central Workforce shall forge effective partnerships with a diverse combination of stakeholders throughout its workforce development area. This partnership will include but not necessarily be limited to chambers of commerce, economic development organizations, community-based organizations, non-profits, tribal governments, port districts, municipalities, educational institutions, trade associations, and labor groups. This expanded group of fully aligned partners will better ensure that workforce development activities meet the dual needs of employers seeking skilled workers and job seekers who require the appropriate education and training to fill these in-demand jobs. This expanded partnership of new stakeholders will create Strategic Industry Sector Partnerships to design and plan real-time workforce solutions.



Flyer promoting IWT to businesses

The SCW will implement a range of initiatives to meet the diverse needs of employers in the region. These initiatives include incumbent worker training, on-the-job training, customized training programs, industry and sector strategies, career pathways development, and the utilization of effective business intermediaries. These strategies are designed to improve workforce skills, meet the specific needs of different industry sectors, and facilitate career advancement for workers. The implementation of these initiatives will be guided by regular feedback from employers and continuous evaluation of labor market trends.

A critical component impacting economic development is the quality and availability of the region's workforce. Investments in human capital drive business growth and are more important today than ever before. Similarly, a region's economic success is now heavily dependent on how well it educates its population and how well it responds to key industries/ sectors' labor and specific occupational demands.

ONE-STOP SYSTEM

Continuous Improvement of Service Providers

The South Central Workforce monitors all contracted providers of services to ensure they meet the minimum threshold of performance. Further, the SCW will only utilize those services that meet local employer needs as determined by demand occupations identified by the state or those occupations determined in demand at the local level directly through employers (e.g., surveys) or local business organizations (business chambers, ADOs, EDCs, trade organizations, etc.).

Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) may consider the establishment of higher performance levels where it is determined that those established by the state are substantially lower than what the SCW determines can be achieved at the local level. The SCW shall monitor these rates as they are published by the state.

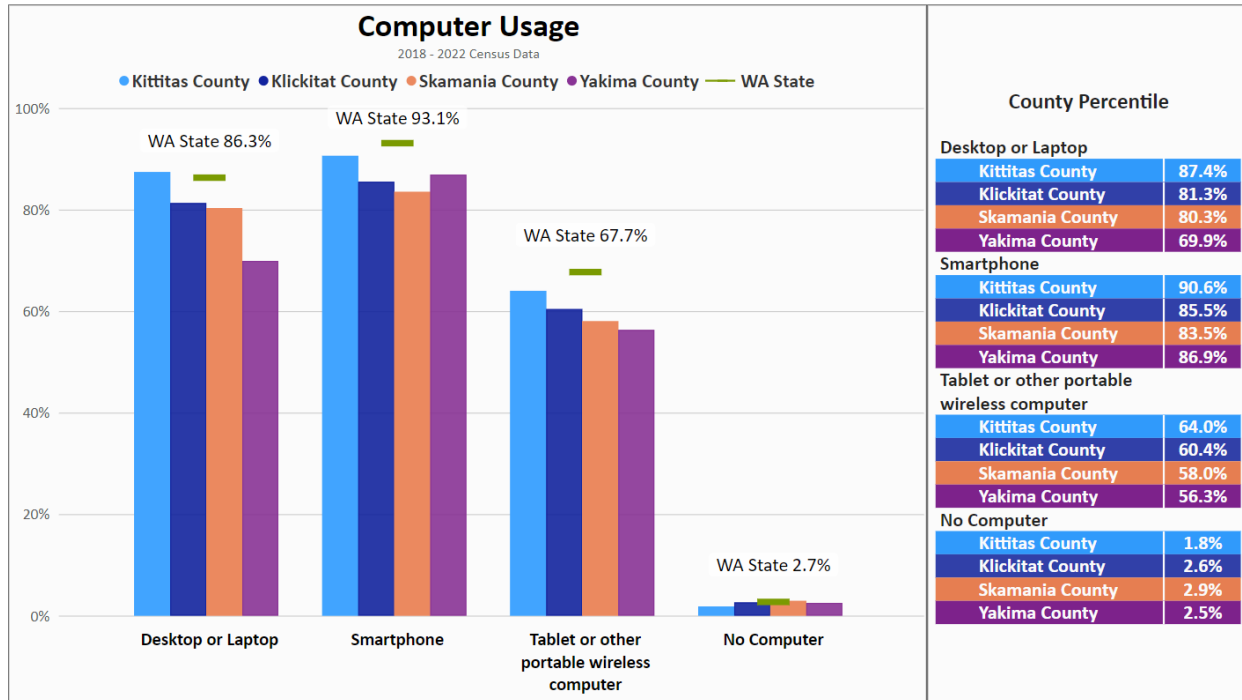
Further, where it is determined that a new training program is offered that does not appear on the state-eligible training provider list, the SCW shall work with the local provider to determine that the training being offered will achieve the established baseline rates based on LMEA data, or other local information offered by employers in the local community. Additionally, the SCW reserves the right to suspend ITAs of any training provider where it has been monitored and determined that the outcomes of the training are falling significantly below those rates set by the state; or where after consultation with local employers it has been determined that the training offered is not relevant nor adequate to prepare the workers for training related industry jobs.

Community Outreach and Use of Technology

Technology provides a range of tools and solutions to enhance access to WorkSource services in underserved communities. Harnessing these technologies is crucial to ensuring that all individuals in our region can access the necessary services for preparing for and securing unsubsidized employment. Despite the improved accessibility brought about by technology and expanded access sites for WorkSource services, job seekers will only utilize these resources if they are aware of them and trust that they will contribute to achieving their employment goals.

This emphasizes the necessity of combining accessible resources with robust marketing efforts and increased brand awareness.

All WorkSource Comprehensive and Affiliate Centers have computer labs that are open to the public. The centers also have mobile laptop cases that can be utilized throughout the region to help customers with access to digital literacy.



Wireless Internet

The state has made significant investments in technology to improve service delivery and allow for the collection of information necessary to support WIOA performance outcomes. All certified WorkSource Centers currently have stand-alone wireless networks that allow customers to access services using their personal technology devices. In the South Central Workforce area desktop or laptop computer usage, smartphone usage, and tablet usage are all well below the state averages with Yakima County being significantly lower than the state average for desktop or laptop usage.

Types of Internet Subscriptions
2018 - 2022 Census Data

Types of Internet Subscriptions	Kittitas County	Klickitat County	Skamania County	Yakima County	WA State
Cellular data plan	80.7%	74.2%	71.6%	80.5%	87.4%
Broadband such as cable, fiber optic, or DSL	71.6%	58.4%	64.9%	66.1%	80.8%
Satellite	7.5%	16.4%	9.6%	9.3%	6.0%
Dial-up alone	0.3%	0.5%	0.5%	0.3%	0.1%

Unemployment Claimants

The UI program is a required partner in the workforce system and provides unemployment benefits to individuals who have lost their employment through no fault of their own and who otherwise meet initial and continuing UI eligibility requirements. The Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program has four purposes:

1. Reduce UI duration through improved employment outcomes
2. Strengthen UI program integrity
3. Promote alignment with the vision of the WIOA, and
4. Establish RESEA as an entry point to other workforce system partners.

All UI claimants attend a mandatory Re-employment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) appointment at WorkSource. The foundation of the RESEA is an in-person meeting between the UI claimant and a WorkSource center staff.

The appointment consists of the following:

- Eligibility Assessment
 - Every RESEA session is required to include a one-on-one assessment of the claimants' continuing UI eligibility. This assessment typically includes confirming employment status and a review of the claimant's work search activities.
- Reemployment Services to include:
 - Support in the development of an individual reemployment plan
 - Customized career and labor market information
 - Enrollment into the Wagner-Peyser Employment Services, and
 - Information and access to other WorkSource services and resources that support the claimant's return to work.

During these assessments, UI claimants are provided a comprehensive overview of the services available in the South Central WorkSource system. These initial and upfront program components are detailed with intensive training program services for individuals who meet eligibility requirements and require individualized plans to overcome barriers to employment.

Trade Adjustment Assistance

Historically, the SCW has and will continue to make every effort to coordinate services with the Trade Adjustment Assistance services provided through the ESD. The range and depth of coordination includes, but is not limited to:

- Referrals to WIOA programs are required from the certified TAA-affected workers.
- Co-enrollment of participants to maximize and make the best use of local resources when applicable.
- Jointly between DW and TAA case manager/counselors consult and share information related to the participant's plans and activities for returning to work.

- Cost share and leverage support services where needed and appropriate.
- Where appropriate integration of TAA staff in rapid response efforts.

*See page 38 for the Americans with Disabilities Act.
See pages 27, 32, and 33 for Title I-B Activities.*

RAPID RESPONSE

Rapid Response is a required activity of the South Central Workforce for coordinating the provision of rapid response services at the local level. SCW will utilize a rapid response strategy for WARN/Non-WARN events and Trade Act/Non-Trade Act events to the extent feasible. To ensure the effective delivery of rapid response services, the SCW is responsible for the following rapid response activities:

- Consulting with the state's dislocated worker unit, state and local economic development organizations, and other entities to avert potential layoffs.
- Determining proposed layoff schedules and how the employer plans to assist the dislocated workers, including the status of any collective bargaining negotiations affecting layoff benefits.
- Ascertaining and providing the State Dislocated Worker Unit (DWU) with information related to severance, separation pay, retirement incentives, and voluntary layoffs so that the UI Division can review and determine UI eligibility.

The SCW is responsible for coordinating and offering all local rapid response activities. Required topics for rapid response layoff orientations are described below:

- UI information
- Training Benefits and Commissioner Approved Training information
- WorkSource services
- WIOA Dislocated Worker services
- Community and technical college resources
- Local WorkSource partner contact names and phone numbers
- Rapid Response Survey

A survey is an important tool used in determining an affected worker's skills and education and identifying probable assistance needs to effectively connect them with community resources. Additionally, the U.S. Department of Labor requires survey results for National Emergency Grant (NEG) applications. The survey may include:

- Maintaining an inventory of available workforce resources for on-site meetings to address the short and long-term assistance needs of impacted workers.

- Determining the need for and promoting a voluntary labor-management committee or a workforce transition committee comprised of representatives of the employer, affected workers or their representatives, and other community entities, as necessary. The committee would assist in planning and overseeing an event-specific strategy that supports the reemployment of affected workers.
- Determining the need for peer worker outreach to connect dislocated workers with services in conjunction with the labor-management committee or its equivalent.
- Consulting and coordinating with appropriate labor representatives when planning rapid response activities for those impacted workers covered by a collective bargaining agreement.
- Ensuring procedures are in place for timely access and referral to WorkSource programs, services, and information offered by WIOA, UI, TAA, Wagner-Peyser, and other programs.

When the local workforce board, local rapid response team, or local partner becomes aware of a substantial layoff or closure event, they will notify the State DWU. The local Rapid Response contact person will inform the State DWU of the event and strategies for carrying out rapid response activities in the local area.

See page 36 for Transportation and Support Services.

WAGNER-PEYSER COORDINATION

The Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth formula programs, in coordination with the Wagner-Peyser Employment Service, are pivotal pieces of the one-stop delivery system, which is the foundation of the Workforce Development System. The Title I programs require partners in the one-stop delivery system which provides universal access to career services to meet the diverse needs of adults dislocated workers, and youth. WIOA offers an integrated and comprehensive range of services consisting of workforce development activities benefiting job seekers, employers, and communities. WIOA provides a workforce system that is universally accessible, customer-centered, and training that is job-driven.



Integrated Service Delivery (ISD) is the delivery of workforce service in a manner that aligns/braids the resources of participating partners to seamlessly address the training and employment needs of system customers – job seekers and businesses. The goal of Integrated



Service Delivery is to encourage more job seekers to take advantage of as many services as necessary to help them engage in the labor market to achieve their goals for employment. ISD is built on a belief that job seekers who utilize more of the services available to them in the workforce system will have better success achieving their employment-related goals.

Partners in the South Central Workforce one-stop system utilize an Integrated Basic and Individualized Career Services Delivery model. This model creates a warm welcome and a quick connection to a robust set of high-value system resources relevant to the local economy including screening, initial assessment, skill development, work readiness, and eligibility determination. Staff working in an Integrated Basic and Career Services Delivery environment are organized into functional teams to meet the needs of customers, rather than working in programmatic silos. WIOA Title I – Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth service providers as well as Title III – Wagner-Peyser provide primary staffing for these functional teams. Other WorkSource partners will also be providing basic and individualized services but on a limited basis due to staffing levels.

Other services offered to job seekers visiting WorkSource offices include but are not limited to job search and job placement assistance; career counseling; needs and interest assessments; proficiency testing; job hunter workshops; development of an individual employment plan; and case management. Services to employers include assistance in developing and posting job orders, referral of qualified job seekers to job openings, assistance with job descriptions and posting on social media as well as hiring events and job fairs. Both job seekers and employers are also provided with robust labor market information to help inform their activities.

The core programs — Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Adult Basic Education, Wagner-Peyser, and Vocational Rehabilitation — work in concert to effectively serve job seekers and employers across the area using labor market information gathered, analyzed, and provided by Labor Market and Economic Analysis and other sources. While each program has clearly defined activities to carry out, as defined by law, leveraging services and resources optimizes outcomes.

The SCW’s alignment of core programs includes establishing effective career pathways that combine guidance, education, training, and support services that prepare individuals for careers. The pathway system includes navigators that help guide individuals to appropriate programs and services based on their needs and career goals. The SCW will promote co-enrollment to align services and will encourage shared roles for guidance and support services within each career pathway program to prevent duplication of services among the core programs.

See page 43 for Title II Coordination.

COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS

WIOA requires the local workforce boards, with the agreement of the chief elected officials, to develop and enter a [Memorandum of Understanding](#) (MOU) between the WorkSource partners. The South Central MOU can be found in the link above and on our website at scworkforce.org.

PROCUREMENT

If required by the contracting agency or the grantor, the SCW will conduct competitive procurements to secure program services from eligible providers for Title I of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and for other programs administered by the SCW. Contract awards may be renewed by the SCW where it is determined it is in the best interest of the program and upon successful negotiations. Entities awarded contracts will serve as the service provider for the local area for the modification of contracts for additional funds; or for other discretionary programs where such services align, provide cost savings, and benefit the participants.

Selection of service providers will comply with Washington State policy and other applicable federal regulations. When required, the South Central Workforce will use a “Request for Proposal” (RFP) system applying the Formal Procurement Method. This process will include the posting of public notice as an open invitation to the public, including the faith-based community, to participate in the bid process for SCW funded services. SCW will maintain a list of organizations that have previously expressed an interest in bidding for the delivery of services that are renewed regularly. Those organizations will be notified when the procurement process occurs.

SCW will then make the final selection of service providers to be funded based on those proposals that are most responsive to the request, most advantageous to the workforce area, and most efficient in terms of quality and cost. All awards are contingent on concurrence by the Consortium of County Commissioners for the local area.

When conducting procurements, the SCW will apply selection criteria that will include the following, with an assigned point system weighted by level of importance: program design; agency qualification, including program management financial viability; audit and performance reports; performance goals; cost analysis; and additional relevant categories.

See page 33 for Training Services.

MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS

In collaboration with the Employment Security Department and the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board, SCW continues its partnership to streamline workforce development services through the implementation of essential information technology solutions for customer information management. SCW actively supports statewide strategies for information technology solutions, and the following features and practices are prevalent in the SCW region:

- **Online Portals:** Customers can remotely access information, submit applications, and manage their data through online portals. These portals incorporate features such as document uploads, application status checks, and notifications.
- **Integrated Databases:** Multiple databases are employed to foster collaboration among one-stop partners. These databases facilitate the sharing of information across various

programs and agencies, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of a participant's situation.

- **Data Analytics:** Implementation of data analytics tools enables the extraction of meaningful insights from the extensive information collected. This aids in decision-making, program evaluation, and the identification of trends to enhance service delivery.
- **Training and Support:** Adequate staff training is a priority, covering system usage, data security, and privacy protocols. Ongoing support ensures that staff can proficiently utilize the technology.
- **Security and Privacy Measures:** Recognizing the sensitive nature of information in workforce development programs, robust security and privacy measures are in place to safeguard participant data.



Innovation

We are visionary leaders who seek creative approaches to serve the needs of our communities.

Sustainability

We strive to maintain and support the long-term viability of workforce development in our communities.

Accountability

We are answerable to our communities for all our actions, performance, and results.

Integration

We value and embrace the unique perspectives and experiences that each individual brings.

Collaboration

We pursue and value partnerships to achieve economic growth and prosperity for our communities.

ACCESSABILITY

The local plan actively promotes integration and embraces individuals from diverse backgrounds to cultivate a varied workforce, acknowledging their pivotal role in driving innovation, creativity, and a broad range of perspectives. It strives to attract, retain, and offer support to individuals from underrepresented groups. Additionally, the plan aims to implement equitable processes and strategies to ensure that our outcomes reflect the diverse communities we serve, as evidenced by the [data reported](#) on our website.

Understanding the dynamic nature of economic challenges, the plan integrates strategies to bolster the resilience of both the workforce and the local economy. This includes fostering adaptable skills, promoting industries with growth potential, and establishing support systems to mitigate economic downturns.

Acknowledging the reciprocal relationship between the workforce and businesses, the plan strives to meet the needs of both entities, fostering sustainable economic growth. It recognizes the mutual benefit of a thriving workforce and successful businesses, striving for a balanced and robust economic ecosystem.

Through targeted interventions and strategic initiatives, the local plan addresses specific challenges and barriers to access. This may involve tailored programs for marginalized communities, mentorship initiatives, or specialized training to bridge skill gaps.

The South Central Workforce tested our values as an organization and a community when developing the 2024-2028 Strategic Plan. As evidenced by our top priorities and core values align with the state's “Talent and Prosperity for All” plan.

Recruitment of Board Members Across the Local Area

The South Central Workforce membership has representatives from all counties in the workforce area. It also has a cross-section of members that represent key business sectors in the region. Whenever a seat on the board becomes available, both of those elements are considered during the recruitment process. The SCW works with chambers of commerce, economic development organizations, its members, and local elected officials to recruit new members who will be active and who can ably represent their industry's perspective on the board.

For Labor positions, the South Central Workforce recruits directly through the Central Washington Labor Council. For public sector membership, the SCW recruits directly with state and local entities for nominations for the board. All nominations go through a subcommittee of the board to review the qualifications of the person, reviewed by local elected officials and then submitted to the full board for recommendation to the local elected officials for formal appointment.

See Attachment B for Board Composition.

SECTION IV PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY

Performance Informs Local Strategic Planning

The South Central Workforce (SCW) and WorkSource partners are dedicated to the delivery of quality services in Kittitas, Klickitat, Skamania, and Yakima counties. To achieve high levels of performance the SCW recognizes the need for clearly defined measures that identify the system's progress and areas needing improvement. In the development of local accountability measures, care was taken to consider the unique characteristics of the local area that directly influence performance outcomes.

The South Central Workforce system understands the importance of focusing on the customers, both job seekers and the business community. In partnership with the One-Stop Operator, WorkSource site operators use continuous quality improvement models and obtain customer feedback for improving basic, individualized, and training services, identifying service gaps, and developing strategies to eliminate or resolve issues.

To track local performance indicators the SCW employs automated tracking systems and reports information that is consistent with federal and state requirements. The statewide database supports the delivery of services across multiple programs by providing universal access to employment and training data across WorkSource locations and partners. It also serves as the backbone of program management information, performance information, and case management (plan and track customer services and needs).

SCW produces quarterly reports that are detailed on our website scworkforce.org. Staff evaluate the reports and assess progress toward quarterly and annual goals. Where performance is

lagging, SCW staff will meet with service providers to develop strategies for improvement and correct deficiencies.

Oversee and Measure Performance

Performance measures will be compiled in conjunction with quarterly reports and distributed to Workforce partnerships in support of program management and analysis. The South Central Workforce (SCW) will lead a meaningful collection of data that can feasibly be obtained and used for continuous performance improvement.

SCW plays an instrumental role in assessing all one-stop partner programs. Beyond traditional program-specific performance metrics, the One-Stop Operator will consider how well all one-stop partner programs coordinate and integrate service delivery, promote the seamless transition of customers from one partner to another, and meet the needs of customers.

The performance results along with customer surveys will be utilized to enhance the development of service strategies. Currently, we have a WorkSource One-Stop Committee designed to provide guidance and support for the one-stop system. This committee addresses corrective actions necessary to improve service.

WIOA Performance Information

As the entity responsible for oversight and certification of the local WorkSource System, the SCW will utilize the following framework for continuous quality improvement:

Review performance information for core programs provided by the state for progress toward negotiated state and federal target levels. This will include:

- WIOA I-B Adult
- WIOA I-B Dislocated Worker
- WIOA I-B Youth
- Adult Basic Education
- Vocational Rehabilitation
- Other state programs as applicable



Where programs are underperforming, consult with local responsible entities to identify issues, and provide technical assistance where appropriate.

Develop and implement a customer improvement survey for employers and workers. On an ongoing basis, review customer concerns and develop solutions with WorkSource Partners. Provide regular and ongoing technical training to WorkSource partner staff in the following areas:

- Local WorkSource policy
- Customer service for workers and business
- EEO and accessibility training for special populations (e.g., persons with disabilities, limited English Speakers, etc.)
- Incorporate reviews of WorkSource performance at regular WorkSource partner meetings

Performance Based Interventions

Historically the South Central Workforce has managed local I-B programs through a performance-based intervention process. This occurs through monthly tracking of individual provider contracts that evaluates progress toward contract expenditures, enrollments, and service to specific target groups such as older workers, TANF participants, people with disabilities, drop-outs, females; and those ethnic groups present in the local region that includes Native American, Hispanic, Black, and Asian Americans. Further, tracking every month includes progress toward contracted performance based on the local area's annual negotiated targets with the state. Performance management includes desktop reviews monthly by local area staff, quarterly reviews of the full board at regular meetings, and local compliance and technical assistance monitoring with each I-B contractor. SCW produces quarterly performance reports that are detailed on our website scworkforce.org.

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

South Central Workforce is supported by the U.S. Department of Labor and funded by federal and state grants. To learn about funding, go to: <https://scworkforce.org/about/stevens-amendment/>