



workforce  
SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON



# Impact Report

*July 2022 - June 2023*



Through investments in local businesses, community-based organizations, economic development councils and higher education, Workforce Southwest Washington (WSW) builds strong partnerships to serve Southwest Washington.

The programs and services we fund and the partnerships we create help to develop the economy, support business growth, recovery and job quality, provide opportunities for economic mobility, and challenge systems that hinder individuals from gaining self-sufficiency.

Workforce development is a team effort, and we are grateful to our regional partners that collaborated with us to help employers find and train qualified workers and empower individuals to find jobs or advance in their careers.

Thank you for your partnership and support as we strive to create a region where economic prosperity and growth exist for every person.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Miriam Halliday".

Miriam Halliday, CEO



## BUSINESS GROWTH

As the workforce development board for Clark, Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties, WSW is equipped to propose solutions to meet business challenges. The WSW Business Services Team refers, connects and convenes system partners, including economic development and education, to get companies to the right resources.

WSW invested **\$584,742** in training for existing and new employees to support business growth and sustainability.

**349** businesses received employee recruitment, training and placement assistance, layoff aversion and other services through WSW and our partners at WorkSource.





In the 2022-2023 program year, WSW launched incumbent worker training funds to partner with and support companies who invest in technical skills training and advancement for employees with diverse backgrounds, including racial, ethnic and gender diversity, people with disabilities, veterans, people with criminal backgrounds and LGBTQ+ individuals. WSW partnered with two employers, bringing training to 21 employees.

Our Business Services Team aids companies in the growth, recruitment, retention and upskilling of their employees. Working closely with businesses is integral to a workforce system well-matched to business needs and an economy where business and employees thrive.

### ***Business services offered through the workforce development system***

- Access to labor market information and data
- Assistance writing job descriptions
- Dislocated worker assistance and Rapid Response
- Employer outreach
- Hiring and special events
- Hiring services in response to COVID-19
- Incumbent worker training
- Information on business start-up, retention and expansion
- Internships
- Job seeker referrals
- Layoff aversion services, including Shared Work
- On-the-job training
- Referral to economic development, chamber of commerce, workforce development board and other business resources
- Workshops



## QUALITY JOBS INITIATIVE

Quality Jobs benefit businesses, workers and job seekers by improving recruitment and retention and strengthening our region's economy.

In July 2022, WSW released six Quality Job Guides, each covering a Quality Job Standard. The guides provide practical guidance on implementing strategies, a fillable worksheet to help guide businesses and additional resources to help businesses improve job quality to recruit and retain talent.

As part of the Quality Jobs Initiative, WSW developed a Quality Jobs Workplan, using strategies from the Quality Jobs Framework to outline actions and timelines to improve internal job quality. WSW has established an ongoing plan to meet action items, with progress made under each standard.

### ***How WSW Improved Wages, Training and Advancement Opportunities for its Employees***

WSW adopted the Nonprofit Salary Survey, which shows the competitive pay for nonprofits by region, to conduct an internal salary audit. With the cost of living increasing significantly during COVID, WSW wanted to ensure staff were paid self-sufficient wages. In 2022, WSW leadership adjusted employee salaries to align with the pay of other nonprofits in Southwest Washington. WSW conducts a salary survey every two years. Salaries are reviewed and adjusted based on regional cost of living.

Offering competitive wages and providing wage transparency acts as a two-pronged retention strategy. Employees are offered compensation that provides self-sufficiency and are empowered to understand the opportunities for growth in their role and in the company.

In 2022, WSW revised the process for professional development to promote clarity and increase learning opportunities for employees. Employees can request funding to participate in professional development opportunities, such as conferences or classes. These funds are available through a transparent request process and awarded on a first come first served basis. After taking part in a professional development opportunity, employees are expected to present to the team at a Lunch and Learn.

WSW invests in company-wide training for all staff. Building a Community of Equity (BaCE) through Washington State University Vancouver is offered to every employee. During 2023, WSW staff participated in a group conflict resolution training. The training courses are aligned with the needs of employees and are based on the results of the biannual employee survey.





WSW staff participate in monthly Lunch and Learns. Topics have included employee presentations on their area of expertise, external partners sharing information on their organizations and new processes to implement in the workplace.

Employees complete an annual staff evaluation, which outlines their professional and personal goals for growth. Staff evaluations help employees evaluate the skills they wish to build and the trajectory of their career with WSW.

Evaluating processes for training and advancement has helped WSW to create equitable access to professional development opportunities and encourage employees to reach their full potential.

WSW has taken additional steps to improve recruitment, ensure hiring and onboarding are equitable and accessible, engage workers and improve benefits. Find updates on [our blog](#) as we continue to document our journey to improve job quality.



## ECONOMIC MOBILITY

Across the region, individuals from underprioritized communities and families with low- and middle-income lack the economic opportunities pivotal to success. Access to training and quality jobs creates a talented workforce and further opportunities to grow businesses and create a strong economy.

Our investments serve businesses and individuals to align a skilled workforce with quality jobs, creating opportunity and economic prosperity.

Through our investments in 2022-2023:

**1,234** youth and adult job seekers received **4,417** services through the workforce system to help them bolster their skills, gain education, find jobs or advance in their careers

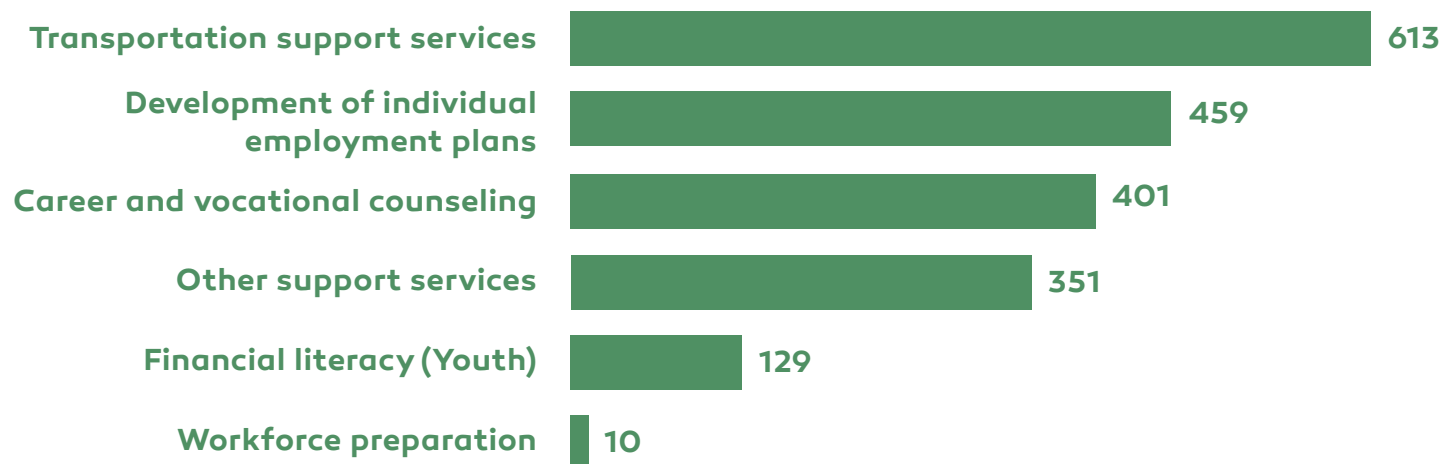
**2,903** individuals enrolled in programs

**266** individuals were placed into jobs

**\$5 million** invested in training and career services for youth and adults

**73%** of individuals were placed into jobs that meet or exceed the MIT Living Wage Standard of **\$20.94** in Clark County and **\$15.92** in Cowlitz County

Many individuals accessing the workforce system are overcoming multiple barriers and require a variety of services to help them achieve their goals. With nearly 30 services available, individuals have multiple areas of support as they take steps toward employment and self-sufficiency.





## RECOVERY GRANT

Supporting our community members in recovery and those affected by the opioid crisis is vital to the economic success of our region.

The goal of the recovery grant was to provide individualized career coaching, planning, training and employment opportunities to individuals facing barriers to economic stability and prosperity, specifically to those whose lives have been impacted by opioid addiction. Programs funded through the grant provided support services and wrap-around assistance to increase successful employment outcomes both in the near and long term.

WSW partnered with recovery, reentry and health organizations across Southwest Washington to provide informed and holistic services to those impacted by the opioid epidemic.

### *Grant Partners*

Chai Rivers Recovery Café • CORE Health • Kelso Comprehensive Treatment Center • Lifeline Connections • Open House Ministries • PeaceHealth • Recovery Café Clark County • SWACH • Vancouver Housing Authority • Wahkiakum County Health and Human Services • WorkSource • Xchange Recovery

Through these partnerships, 272 individuals were served with career, education and support services. As a result, 127 participants have returned to work in occupations such as commercial driver's license (CDL) driving, heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC), registered nurse, customer service, phlebotomy, business administration, chemical dependency counselor, construction, medical lab technician and more. The average annual wage upon exiting to employment was \$47,611. Six participants received training in professional fields that can have an impact on the opioid crisis.

**272**

individuals served

**127**

participants returned to work with an average wage of

**\$47,611**

### *Melissa's Story*

Melissa was working in a financial role but lost her job due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Her company was shut down and she was laid off. Melissa was in a



panic and did not know where to go. Her unemployment advisor recommended she attend the WorkSource employment and training orientation. At WorkSource, she met with a talent development specialist and took an online assessment.

Melissa had family members who struggled with addiction and wanted to do something to help others. Since she had been affected by the opioid crisis, she was eligible for services through the recovery grant. Melissa decided to return to school and earn her bachelor's degree in human services with an emphasis on chemical dependency.

She started school a few years prior but had to drop out due to her financial situation and take a full-time job. As a single mom working an internship and going to school full-time, Melissa had run out of financial aid and needed assistance to complete her last two quarters. Working with a talent development specialist at WorkSource, Melissa applied for scholarship funds to finish her last two terms. She was awarded a scholarship and earned her degree. While enrolled in the program, WorkSource provided Melissa with gas and clothing vouchers.

Melissa had an internship with Lifeline Connections during her education and afterwards was hired full-time to work in case management with jail transition services. After working with the company for a year, she transitioned to a new role working with the court. In her role, she recommends that her clients utilize services through WorkSource to gain education, training and career services. She started graduate school and is working to become a licensed mental health and substance abuse social worker.

WSW received additional grant funds that were invested in businesses and organizations that support our community in recovery. With the funds, WSW provided equipment to recovery organizations and hosted two events focused on recruitment and retention of those in recovery and reentering the workforce.

Our team provided \$15,000 in technology equipment to three recovery organizations, Chai Rivers Recovery Café in Cowlitz County, Recovery Café Clark County and Lifeline Connections in Vancouver, WA. The equipment is used to participate in training and job preparation and search activities.

Our two recovery-focused events saw a total of 178 attendees across Clark and Cowlitz counties. Ty Reed of Recovery Career Services presented on the benefits of hiring people in recovery and how to support and retain employees with substance use disorder and who are reentering the workforce.





## IN-DEMAND JOB TRAINING AND PLACEMENTS

Healthcare, construction, manufacturing and technology are industries in our region with high wages, projected growth and demand for skilled workers. Our investments in these sectors provide quality job opportunities and career pathways while meeting the need for qualified talent.

### TRAININGS

Between July 2022 and June 2023, we invested in training for job seekers and workers, including on-the-job training, work experiences, incumbent worker training and internships.

Trainings in our target sectors:



21

Construction



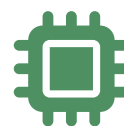
249

Healthcare



6

Manufacturing



31

Technology

The largest group of participants were trained in healthcare support occupations, in part attributable to an ongoing Koelsch Communities initiative to train and retain long term care workers. The partnership began in 2017 as a response to employee turnover and staff burnout.

WSW invested in Humanity training, a paradigm-shifting training program from Europe. The training aimed to improve the quality of work for employees and quality of life for residents. After the first cohort, there was a 90% reduction in aggressive behavior and refusal of care by residents with dementia. Koelsch and WSW have continued to partner to bring the training to cohorts in 2019, 2022 and 2023. [Read more about the WSW and Koelsch partnership.](#)

Thirty-three people participated in training in transportation and material moving occupations. These are popular due to a high demand for truck drivers, stockers, order fillers, packers and cleaners of vehicles and equipment. Within the last year, there have been more than 800 online job postings for occupations in heavy tractor and trailer truck driving, according to JobsEQ, with a median annual wage of \$60,320, well above the MIT self-sufficiency standard for Southwest Washington.

Trainings span across diverse occupation groups, informed by regional demand and the skills and inclinations of participants. We fund training to help job seekers upskill to find work and encourage the retention and promotion of existing employees. [Explore additional training data.](#)



### Top 3 Trainings by Occupation



38

Healthcare Support



33

Transportation and  
Material Moving



10

Healthcare Practitioners  
and Technical  
Occupations

## PLACEMENTS

During the program year, 266 participants exited into unsubsidized employment. The top occupations for placements into employment were office support and administration, transportation and material moving, and healthcare occupations.

Placements in our target sectors:

- 17** In construction with a median salary of **\$40,560**
- 12** In healthcare practitioner occupations with a median salary of **\$70,720**
- 27** In healthcare support occupations with a median salary of **\$37,731**
- 19** In production occupations with a median salary of **\$37,107**
- 3** In technology occupations with a median salary of **\$49,545**

Of the participants, 56 were placed into office support and administration, including jobs as customer service, office and administrative support, clerks, secretaries, tellers, dispatchers and bill and account collectors. Transportation and material moving occupations saw 35 placed in jobs including truck drivers, bus drivers, aircraft attendants, hand packers, packagers and material movers. Healthcare support occupations had 27 participants exit to employment in jobs such as dental assistants, nursing assistants, personal care aides, home health aides and medical assistants.

The top occupation fields for employment placements are in high demand across the region with well-established training pipelines and pathways to employment. [Explore additional participant data.](#)



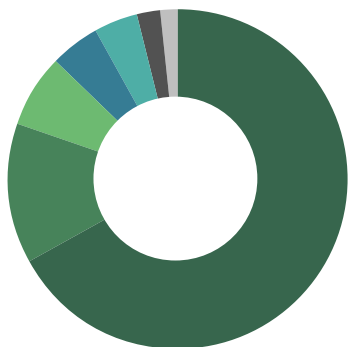


## PARTICIPANTS

20%

of participants served self-identified as Black, Indigenous or Person of Color

### Participants by Race



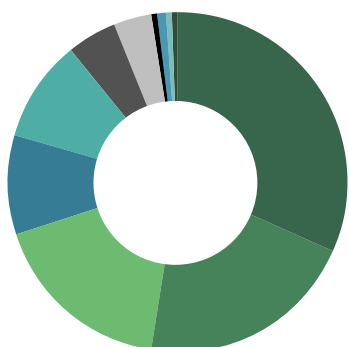
66.9%	White
13.3%	Declined to identify
7.2%	Asian
4.5%	Black or African American
4.2%	2 or more races
2.3%	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
1.5%	Native American or Alaska Native

### Participants by Gender



56.5%	Female
40.9%	Male
2.6%	Declined to identify

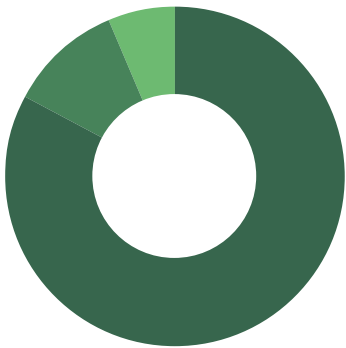
### Participants by Education Level



31.7%	General Education Development, high school equivalent or high school diploma
21.0%	Some college
17.3%	Bachelor's degree
9.6%	Associate degree
9.6%	Less than high school
4.8%	Master's degree
3.5%	Other post-secondary degree or certificate
0.8%	Did not identify
0.7%	Doctorate
0.6%	No school grades completed
0.4%	Attained Certificate of Attendance/Completion after successfully completing an Individual Education Plan in high school

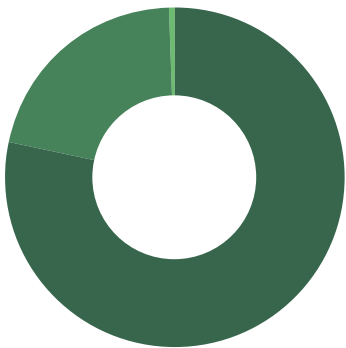


Participants who Identified with Having a Disability



83.0%	Does not have a disability
10.7%	Does have a disability
6.3%	Declined to identify

Participants by County



1961	Clark County
530	Cowlitz County
9	Wahkiakum County



# TAKING A BITE OUT OF FOOD INSECURITY: PARTNERSHIP INCREASES FOOD DISTRIBUTION CAPACITY

In the wake of the pandemic, families across Southwest Washington still struggle to make ends meet. Often that means having to decide between paying bills and buying food. At the same time, the small nonprofit organizations that provide crucial support, services and resources to the community are stretched thin by spiking demand.

The COVID-19 pandemic put a strain on already limited social services, including the distribution of food to our region's most vulnerable households. Southwest Washington residents struggle to make ends meet, facing skyrocketing inflation. Rising food, gas and housing costs put additional strain on individuals and families. Compounding the issue, volunteers that help keep food banks running are in short supply.

In response, WSW and the Washington State Department of Commerce began a partnership to increase the capacity of food distribution centers across the region. The program run through WorkSource places interns with local food distribution centers, helping individuals gain skills and work experience and at the same time building much-needed capacity at food banks and pantries to feed our community.

Since the start of the program, 47 people have participated at food distribution sites, increasing capacity in a time of critical need. After completing their internship and gaining valuable transferrable job skills, all program participants were subsequently hired by companies including PeaceHealth, SEH America, Lower Columbia College, the United States Postal Services and others across Southwest Washington.



## YOUTH INVESTMENTS

As our incoming workforce, preparing and training young adults for employment is fundamental to creating a workforce with the skills needed to fill the in-demand occupations of the region. We invest in our region's youth through our career and



employment center, [Next](#). Our investments in youth include internships, work experiences, educational services, career services and trainings, workshops and support services.

Through our investments in 2022-2023:

**\$1.3** million invested in youth services

**133** youth enrolled

**24** internships and work experiences

**167** services provided to youth

The top three services were:

**129** Financial literacy

**72** Labor market information services

**62** Support services - Fees, supplies, test, transportation and more

"I didn't know how to write a proper resume, how to fill out applications, what finances meant (they have other wonderful programs that go along with a work experience, like getting your Financial Literacy Certificate), and how important it was to professionally represent yourself when needed," said Next participant Lauren Haakinson, who completed a work experience with Storyboard Delights and has since secured full-time employment with a business in Cowlitz County. "I was also getting my GED at the time, and they even discussed with me what I wanted my future to look like. Do I want to go to college? What are my interests? Where do I want to go?"



Our largest youth investment is in our region's youth career and employment center, Next. In 2023, Next released a new strategic plan to guide the organization over the next three years. Next strives to reach and engage youth to connect them with accessible, individualized services to empower them with the skills and competencies to succeed in their education and career pathways. The plan also outlines goals to engage with business

to make youth exiting Next a first choice for hiring and invest in Next staff to ensure retention and quality services.

### ***2023 – 2026 Next Strategic Plan Goals***

- Next reaches young adults to offer holistic services to deliver an accessible, individualized and impactful participant experience.
- Make Next employers' first choice for hiring into a quality job.
- Next's youth have the skills, competencies and support they need to be successful in securing access into post-secondary and quality job pathways.
- Next leaders thoughtfully invest in staff and aim to keep employee retention at 75% minimum.

## **SYSTEM LOCATIONS**

WSW invests in career centers, education partners and community-based organizations to reach and serve job seekers from all walks of life. Having services available in a variety of locations improves accessibility to no-cost workforce services for youth, adults, students and rural communities. Services available include career coaching and guidance, training and educational opportunities and support services.

During 2022 – 2023 career and employment services funded by WSW were offered through:

- Bridgeview Resource Center
- Clark College
- Fourth Plain Forward
- Goodwill Longview Work Opportunity Center
- Love Overwhelming
- Lower Columbia College
- Next
- Wahkiakum County Health and Human Services
- Washington State University Vancouver
- WorkSource Kelso

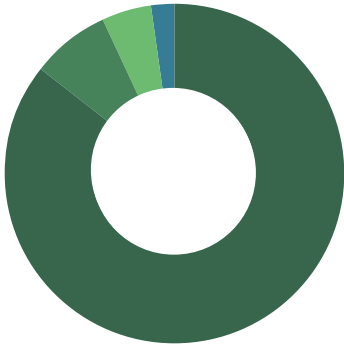




## FUNDING

WSW's budget for PY22 was **\$7.4 million**, of which **92%** went into the community through contracted services and support.

### Funding Spent by Type



85.6%	Federal
7.6%	State
4.8%	Local government
2.0%	Private

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