



workforce
SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON

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Contact: Julia Maglione, jmaglione@workforcesw.org, 360.567.3176

Workforce Southwest Washington secures \$1.6M for job training and assistance to help individuals move out of poverty and provide companies with skilled workers

Program will focus on South Kelso and Highlands neighborhoods

COWLITZ COUNTY (June 26, 2019) – Individuals in the South Kelso and Highlands neighborhoods will soon have additional resources and services to help them move out of poverty. And businesses could see an increase in the number of skilled workers available to fill their open jobs.

Workforce Southwest Washington (WSW), the local workforce development board for Cowlitz, Wahkiakum and Clark counties, secured \$1.6 million from the Governor’s federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Statewide Activities fund to help individuals in the neighborhoods become employed, retain employment and increase their earnings.

The program aims to address three concerns: (1) residents say finding and keeping work is challenging due to travel expenses and limited childcare availability, (2) nearby companies report difficulty recruiting and retaining a local workforce, and (3) as their wages increase, individuals may fall over the “benefits cliff” and lose access to services such as childcare or housing, further impeding their ability to keep a job and continuing the cycle of poverty.

By bringing together various nonprofit and community-based organizations and government agencies on this project, WSW is connecting a wide array of programs to provide the necessary services for individuals to obtain and retain a job, increase their earnings and work their way out of poverty.

“Securing, sustaining, and growing with meaningful work is critical to long-term upward economic mobility,” said Kevin Perkey, WSW CEO. “We’re proud to be a leader in this work, supporting our partners in Kelso and Longview who work tirelessly day-in and day-out to help members of the community move up the economic ladder.”

“With the Governor’s support, we’re confident our dedicated network of local businesses and community-based partners will move the needle forward for many families across our community,” said Perkey.

Several local manufacturing companies have committed to hiring and training individuals from the two neighborhoods. WSW is also interested in partnering with healthcare and construction companies.

WSW is joined by Lower Columbia Community Action Partnership (LCCAP), Dept. Social & Health Services (DSHS), Lower Columbia College, City of Kelso, Kelso City Council Member Mike Karnofski, Goodwill of the Olympics and Rainier, WorkSource, Kelso School District, Cowlitz Economic Development Council, Housing Opportunities of SW Washington, Love Overwhelming, Longview School District,

Serving businesses, job seekers and youth in Clark, Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties.

Cowlitz Habitat for Humanity, Cowlitz County, Cowlitz Indian Tribe, Ethnic Support Council, Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments (CWCOG), RiverCities Transit, the Community Foundation for Southwest Washington and others working together on this project.

WSW's proposal was one of four in the State to be accepted for the Governor's "Economic Security for All" (EcSA) poverty-reduction pilot project, which runs from July 1, 2019 to March 31, 2021.

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Workforce Southwest Washington (WSW), a nonprofit organization founded in 2002, contributes to regional economic growth by providing investments and resources to improve the skills and education of the workforce in Clark, Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties. WSW-funded programs operated by WorkSource and community-based organizations help businesses recruit, train and retain talent and provide individuals with the skills, education and training to find work or advance in their careers. Learn more at www.workforcesw.org.