

***STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN  
JULY 2018 THROUGH JUNE 2021***

***FINAL REVIEW DRAFT  
For REVIEW  
by Stakeholders and Community Members  
September 25, 2018***

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



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## **INTRODUCTION**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In Pierce County, as in the nation, there is an ongoing and growing scarcity of skilled workers to meet the demand. For the first time on record, the number of American job openings exceeds the number of job seekers. On June 5, 2018, the Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey (JOLTS) issued by the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) showed a record 6.7 million available jobs in the United States during the month of April. Previously released BLS data showed 6.3 million job seekers in April and 6.1 million job seekers during the month of May.

In Pierce County, the number of job openings in August 2018 was 10,446. Employers continue to report consistent difficulty in filling their job openings.

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

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

## **DATA SNAPSHOT'S**

*Sources:* U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts and the Employment Security Department

### **General Population**

- As of July 2017, the population estimate for the county was 876,764. This is a 10.3% change/increase from April 1, 2010 (estimates base) to July 1, 2017, with a growth rate of 5.27% in the past year.
- The largest city in Pierce County is Tacoma with 211,277 residents, nearly 13,000 more residents than 2010.
- In the county, 91% of people 25 years or older are high school graduates or higher.
- Of those individuals age 25 years or higher, 25.4% have a bachelor's degree or higher.
- The percent of individuals 5 years old and older that have a language other than English spoken at home is 14.5%.
- Pierce County had proportionately more young people (below the age of 18) and fewer older residents (65 and older) than the state in 2016.
- Pierce County had 6.8 percent of its population under the age of 5 years compared to the state's share of 6.2 percent.

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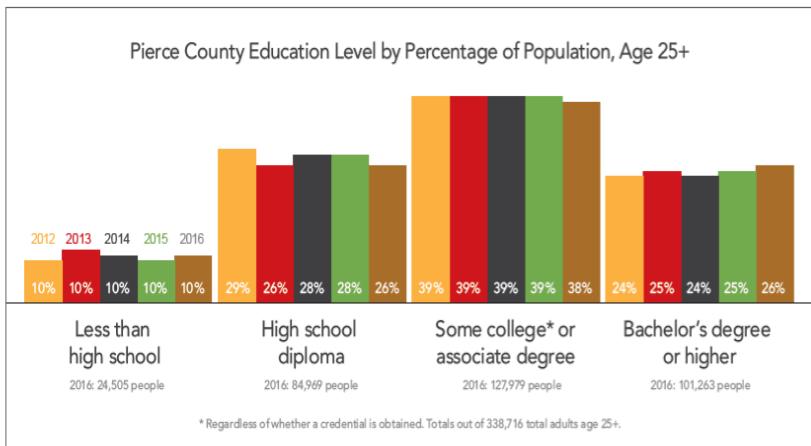
<sup>1</sup> Disconnected youth and young adults are defined as those who are neither working nor in school. Nationwide there are 4.9 million, or one in every eight, American young people in this age group who are not connected to either of these anchor institutions

- Those under the age of 18 made up 23.7 percent of Pierce County's population compared to 22.4 percent of the state's population.
- The oldest age group, those 65 and older, made up 13.4 percent of Pierce County's population compared to 14.8 percent of the state's population.
- Females made up 50.3 percent of the population in Pierce County compared with 50.0 percent of the population in Washington state.
- Pierce County has been becoming more diverse along racial and ethnic lines. Black residents made up 7.5 percent of Pierce County's total population compared to 4.1 percent of the state's population.

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

- The average annual wage in 2016 was \$47,850, below the state's average annual wage of \$59,073.
- The median hourly wage in 2016 was \$21.97, which surpasses the state's median hourly wage of \$20.68 when King County is excluded but falls below the state's median hourly wage of \$23.91 when King County is included.
- The median household income (in 2016 dollars), was \$61,468.
- The median earnings were \$35,286 in 2016.
- The median earnings for those with less than high school was \$26,203 in 2016.
- The median earnings high school graduates were \$33,047 in 2016.
- The median earnings of those with a bachelor's degree was \$52,120 in 2016.
- The median earnings for those with some college or associates degree was \$39,190 in 2016.
- The percent of people in poverty was 12.1%, or over 100,000 people based on the population.
- In 2016, there were 295,350 jobs in Pierce County covered by unemployment insurance, with a total payroll of more than \$14.1 billion.
- The percent of individuals 16 years and older in the civilian labor force is 62.0%.
- The mean travel time to work for workers age 16 years and older is 30.5 minutes.
- The county pre-recession nonfarm employment high was 285,400 jobs in 2007. Through August 2017, preliminary data is averaging 313,500. The unemployment rate, which averaged 10.1 percent through August 2011, is averaging nearly half of that at 5.4 percent in 2017.
- The size of the Pierce County labor force in 2016 was 405,717, up over 13,000 from 2015. In 2017, through August that number is up around 8,500 from 2016.
- Trade, transportation and utilities, government and educational health services are the peak industries in the county.

# Studying Skilled Jobs



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

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

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

## **ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW**

### **VISION, MISSION AND VALUES**

**VISION:** Economic prosperity for our customers and the region.

**MISSION:** The Workforce Development System's mission is to provide easy access to and enhance delivery of workforce development services for individuals and businesses.

#### **VALUE**

**PROPOSITION:** We provide individualized and customized navigation to a comprehensive set of job and career development services.

**TAG LINE:** Partnering in pursuit of greater economic vitality for all

**CUSTOMERS:** Our primary *external customers* are individuals and businesses.

Our primary *internal customer* is our **staff**.

**ROLE:** The WDB will play several roles in furtherance of our vision and mission:

- We **lead and oversee** the workforce development system.
- We seek to **catalyze change** in the community to build effective partnerships.
- We will **strategically invest** in program innovation.
- We **act as a convener** of business and industry.

## **ORGANIZATIONAL CORE VALUES**

Our Common Values:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## ***STRATEGIC PRIORITIES, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES***

### ***Strategic Priority***

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

### ***Goals***

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

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

#### ***Outcomes by 2021:***

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

#### ***Key Strategies***

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

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

#### ***Outcome by 2021***

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

#### ***Key Strategies***

- 2.1 Improve and enhance the use of common technology for communication among the system’s partners and to increase user friendly access for customers.

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

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

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

***Outcomes by 2021***

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

***Key Strategies***

- 3.1 Strengthen workforce development strategies for adults that link education and career pathways<sup>3</sup> to an increase in targeted sector employment opportunities to ensure that workers have the skills needed to fill current and emerging high wage/high demand jobs.
- 3.2 Strengthen workforce development strategies for young adults that ensure access to education and training opportunities, particularly young adults facing barriers to employment.
- 3.3 Establish strong linkages with post-secondary institutions and local labor unions to align programming with career pathways and labor market demand.
- 3.4 Promote registered apprenticeship programs.
- 3.5 Build a highly efficient job placement infrastructure through alignment of local public and private services.
- 3.6 Customize the service delivery processes to meet the needs of disconnected young adults and adults without a high school diploma or GED.

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

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

***Outcomes by 2021***

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

***OPERATING PRINCIPLES***

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

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

**MEASURING RESULTS:**

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

- By 2021** the workforce system will reduce the number of disconnected young adults, 16 to 24, by XXXX.
- By 2021** the workforce system will reduce the number of residents between the ages of 25 to 64 without a High School Diploma or a GED, by XXXX.