



**WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL OF SEATTLE-KING COUNTY**

A high-angle, slightly blurred photograph of a diverse group of people of various ages and ethnicities running on a track. The background is a light, textured surface with faint, repeating '© PNI Ltd' watermarks. A dark horizontal band is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing the title text.

# **STEPPING UP TO THE CHALLENGE**

**2003 REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY**



Mic Dinsmore

Kris Stadelman

# VISION

*Leadership toward an inclusive,  
dynamic regional economy*

Dear Friend,

**You've read the news.** You probably didn't even have to — most of us know at least one or two people who lost their jobs in the last year and are still struggling to find another. Since the beginning of the downturn in January 2001, the Seattle area's economy has gone from bad to worse — and with it the job market.

- Over the past year, King County lost 37,000 jobs — that's in addition to the 50,000 jobs lost in 2001.
- The Boeing Company alone has eliminated 46,000 jobs in King and Snohomish counties since 1998.
- Hospitals report that 2,000 jobs for nurses went unfilled in 2002.

**Where is the opportunity in this picture?**

**The opportunity is in collaboration** — creating connections and alliances that make things happen. The board and staff of the Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King have stepped up to the challenge posed by a difficult economy and seized this opportunity. We have brought new and old partners together and contributed our leadership and expertise, with clear results — for example, the partnership of hospitals, unions and colleges that is making an impact on critical staffing shortages in health care, or the group of high-tech industry partners convened to alleviate skills gaps.

The WDC has also created a clear blueprint for the next three years — a strategic plan with four major components. In this, our second report to the community, we describe our work in each of these four areas. We're proud of the way we have stepped up to the challenge. We hope you'll join us in the coming year to build on the opportunities that are here for all of us.

Sincerely,

**Mic Dinsmore**  
Board Chair

**Kris Stadelman**  
CEO

**The WDC's Action Plan**, developed in 2002, is a clear blueprint for meeting the challenges that face King County's workforce and employers. It is made up of four goals:



## CONVENE

Convene and inform King County's workforce development partners — to identify needs, coordinate efforts, design effective programs and leverage funding.

**THE WDC'S**

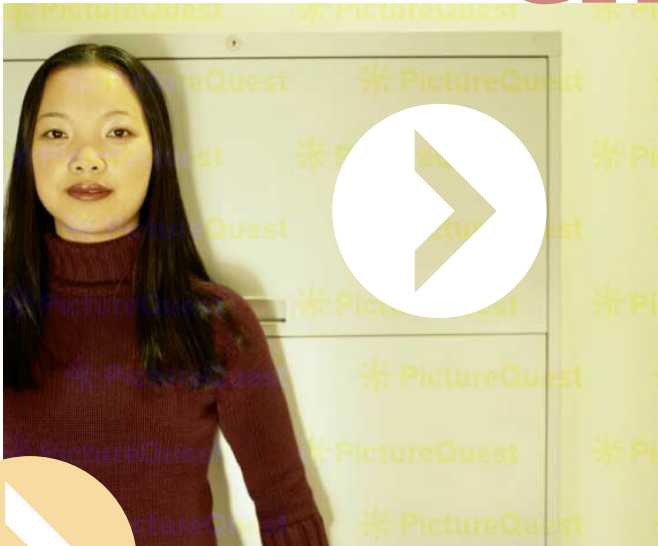
# MISSION

*To champion a workforce and learning system that allows our region to be a world leader in producing a vibrant economy and lifelong employment and training opportunities for every resident.*

During the last year the WDC has addressed the challenges in workforce issues on multiple levels: policy, industry worker shortages, worker

# CHALLENGE

dislocation, adult and youth disability issues, and the re-engagement of youth as future employees. While the projects, proposals, and strategies we have implemented are numerous, we wanted to share a sample of the exciting gains we have made on behalf of our community.



## ADVOCATE

Define and champion a regional policy agenda that will benefit our workforce and our employers by leveraging our experience and expertise in workforce development.

## INNOVATE

Develop and administer a high-quality and pioneering adult and youth employment and training system for all residents of King County.

## INVEST

Leverage traditional funding streams while diversifying and expanding the WDC's funding structure to address identified needs and gaps.





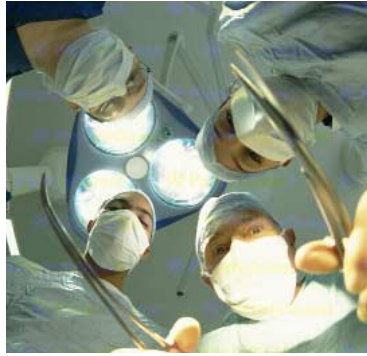
# CONVENE

## *Coming Together*

In the economy, everything is connected: the workforce, employers, colleges and other institutions that provide training, public schools, and youth who will fill tomorrow's jobs. The challenge for the WDC is in strengthening the natural partnerships between groups or organizations to build a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. In the last year, the WDC has devoted significant resources and expertise to bringing these elements together, helping them understand each other in relation to workforce development and facilitating their cooperation. In this section, we highlight our work in the health care industry to show how effective this facilitation can be.

## Industry

In early 2002, the WDC convened the Seattle-King County Health Care Staffing Crisis Panel to address critical skill shortages in health care. Co-sponsored with the Washington State Hospital Association, the panel brought together hospital executives, union representatives and community college administrators — many of whom had never before met around a single table to discuss workforce issues. The panel's work resulted in a report and action plan titled "In Critical Condition" that offers specific action to reduce the shortage in hospital personnel.



**CONVE**



## Education

"In Critical Condition" highlighted the vital link between industry efforts and the education system. Making the connection between industry requirements and educational access is critical to ensuring that workers are gaining the skills that employers need. The health care panel identified several key issues for training programs. Some of these were tangible — the need for a process to coordinate clinical placements — and some were endemic to the way in which college classes are funded by the state. The WDC targeted its resources in order to have the greatest effect — for example, using funding to create college classes specifically for hospital workers to advance in their professions.

Education means pre-college as well. The WDC's Project Start Out, a part of our Rewarding Youth Achievement program, builds a bridge to promising health care careers for minority teens. Connections between the University of Washington School of Nursing, Sea Mar Community Health Centers, South Seattle Community College and participating hospitals

and nursing homes resulted in 22 students becoming Certified Nurse Assistants, many while still in high school.



## WorkSource

WorkSource, the county-wide employment and training system overseen by the WDC, became the key to creating a real solution in health care for industry, education and labor. By merging different funding streams and drawing on the system's expertise, Career Pathways was born. This innovative partnership stations WorkSource career counselors at local participating hospitals. The career counselors help hospital employees to develop career plans and navigate the two- and four-year college systems so they can move into the high-skill, high-wage jobs that hospitals desperately need to fill. Meanwhile, men and women coming from jobs that offer limited advancement are moved into open positions on the first rung of the hospital career ladder.

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# ADVOCATE

## *Getting the Word Out*

Our ability to meet the challenge of fostering lifelong employment and training opportunities for every resident in King County is directly influenced by our ability to define and implement public policy. To fulfill the WDC's second goal, the WDC developed the 2003-04 Regional Workforce Policy and System Reform Agenda, a set of key policy statements about important regional and national issues that directly impact our success in fulfilling our vision and mission. The WDC has not only championed sound policies at the national, state and local levels, but succeeded in gaining the support of three major legislators from Washington State: Senator Maria Cantwell, Senator Patty Murray, and Representative Jennifer Dunn. Our leadership in reaching out to decision-makers has raised the profile of workforce development nationally, to benefit not just the workers of Seattle-King County, but the entire nation.





## Leadership

Leadership is more than offering technical assistance and convening potential partners. Leadership is articulating clear goals and striving to achieve them.

In April 2003, the WDC brought together a coalition of local workforce investment boards from three Northwest states hard-hit by unemployment to weigh in on the pending reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act in Congress. This unique coalition of Washington, Alaska and Oregon, which recently expanded to include California, New York, Kansas and other states, has been highly successful in setting forth a WIA reauthorization proposal that allows workforce boards to continue the important system-building work of the last three years.

Encouraging youth leadership has also been a strong focus of the past year. In Strengthening Programs through Youth Consultation and Evaluation (SPYCE), a youth-driven program evaluation project in summer of 2002, youth learned about evaluation, developed evaluation tools and methods, administered surveys and conducted focus groups, analyzed the data, and prepared presentations. SPYCE achieved two overarching goals: 1) to conduct a successful demonstration of a youth-driven evaluation, and 2) to learn more about what makes youth development programs effective. SPYCE represents a truly pioneering leadership effort to give youth who are served by youth programs a voice in them. The results of the evaluation are the product of the intense dedication of the SPYCE team, a diverse and talented group of Seattle-area youth who helped to design and implement all aspects of the evaluation.



## Inform

As a result of our efforts over the past year, our community leaders are increasingly turning to the WDC for the facts about local workforce efforts and how legislation such as WIA reauthorization will affect them. Decision-makers at all levels of government and business have sought our expertise to understand the impact of their decisions on workforce development. In addition to responding quickly to requests for information, WDC staff and board members are actively educating community leaders and the general public. We achieve this through letters to the editor, providing information to the media and hosting forums on workforce development. Educating the public and community leaders about our work will remain a central focus in the coming year.

# INNOVATE

## *Developing New Solutions*



At the WDC, we use the term “core business” to describe our employment and training services to customers in transition — including job search help, training, placement in jobs, retention and wage progression. In the last year, we have proven that “core business” does not mean “business as usual.” We ensure that our customers’ needs drive our resource investments and we create innovative strategies to better serve them.

### **Transitions**

Transitions, especially in an economy with dwindling job opportunities, are never easy. No one feels this more acutely than recently dislocated workers struggling to replace lost wages and make ends meet. The WDC-funded dislocated worker programs — which include projects that target some of the hardest-hit industries — form a safety net by training these individuals for high-demand jobs and connecting them with employers.

Dislocated workers are one of many customer groups the WDC has come to understand in a new way relative to the barriers they face in making economic transitions. We now understand that in order to fully engage in economic advancement, an individual needs to earn a wage that drives beyond a standard of “making it above the poverty line” to one of family self-sufficiency. This is a fundamental shift in how we view the needs of the constituents we support. The WDC has been a leader in partnership with the University of Washington and others in setting the goal of self-sufficiency as a standard of economic prosperity. Over the past year, the WDC helped develop a self-sufficiency calculator — a tool that helps customers measure their progress along the continuum toward self-sufficiency.



## Disabilities

A high percentage of people with disabilities face significant barriers to employment. Not only is this a missed opportunity in terms of human capital, it is also a challenge for the employment and training system. The WDC is committed to promoting programs that support adults and youth with disabilities in achieving workforce success. Two key areas in which we have excelled are our nationally replicated training on adult learning disabilities and our innovative local programs that support those who have physical, emotional or cognitive disabilities which affect their ability to work. In the past year, we partnered with local business leaders to create and expand career opportunities for adults with disabilities, and devoted Workforce Investment Act dollars to support employment and training for these adults. In addition, one of our newest grants for youth targets hidden disabilities, such as mental illness and substance abuse, and provides tools necessary for youth affected by them to achieve.



## Language

An increasing number of workers in King County are refugees and immigrants who face a significant barrier to workplace success: lack of English language proficiency. To address this issue, the WDC reached out to small community organizations that could help these individuals access our WorkSource system or provide them with basic employment-related services in their own communities. For limited-English speakers who are employed and thus have little time or money for English-language classes, the WDC launched Literacy Works, a project funded largely through private grants that provides a practical solution by offering workplace literacy classes on the job — classes that are tailored to the needs of each workplace and each employee. Workers gain job-specific English vocabulary and communication skills that increase their opportunities for promotion and wage gain, while employers gain a host of benefits, from better staff-management communication to lower error rates. This model of serving both workers and employers at the same time is key to our vision of an economy with opportunity for everyone.

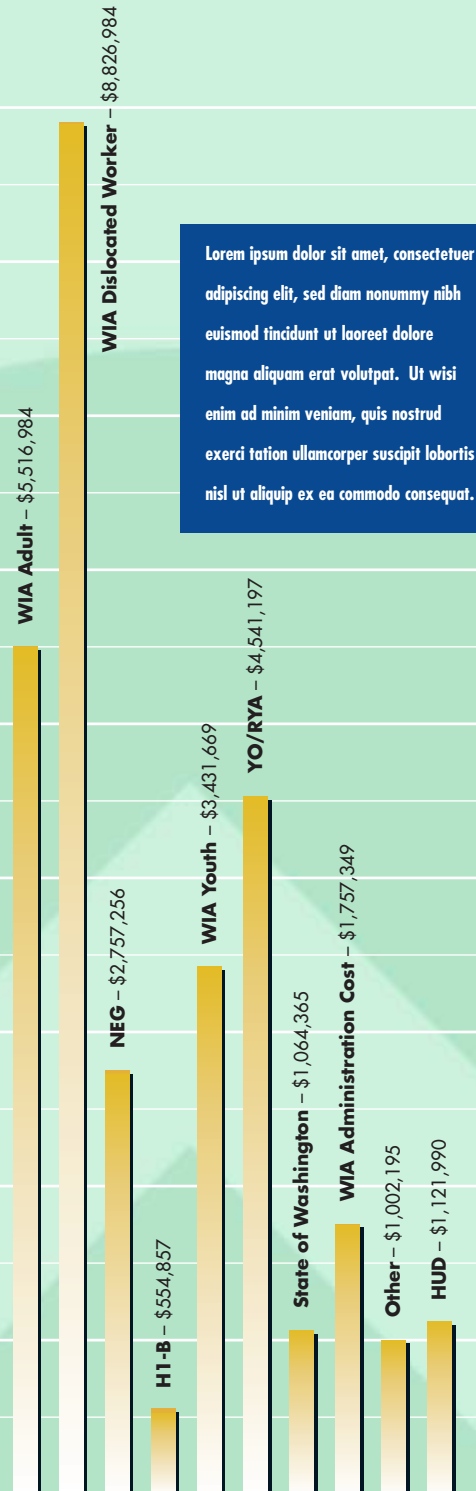
# INVEST

## Funding Initiaves

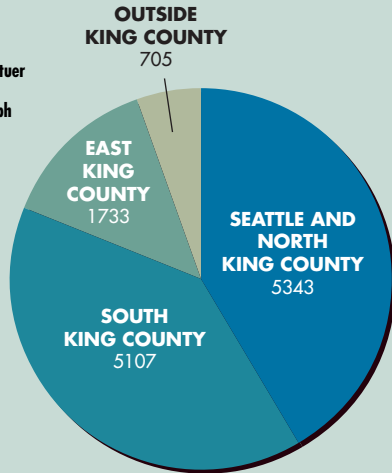
### Foundation

Our investment strategy is similar in spirit to a venture capitalist: we fund initiatives that are innovative and targeted and that have proven results. In the current program year, the WDC has made an important investment in workers who obtain employment and employers who produce jobs. The dollars amount to \$22 million — the return amounts to workers who obtain language skills and jobs, single parents who obtain skills and improve their economic condition, and youth who will become the workforce of tomorrow.

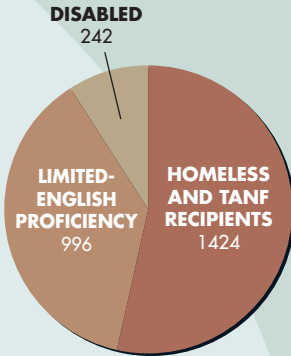
In addition to these fundamental investments, the WDC focused in 2002 on diversifying our funding structure and brought in several grants from private foundations. Private funds support our public revenue and allow us the flexibility to follow our own priorities.



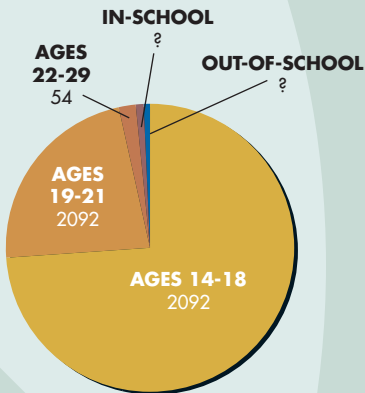
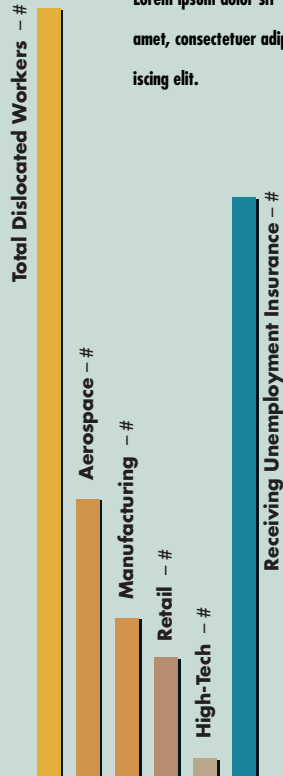
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