

**VISION:**

All people in this region, regardless of race or ethnicity, share in its economic prosperity.

**MISSION:**

We catalyze system change in the Puget Sound region to increase the prosperity and economic growth of workers, employers, and communities and to ensure racial equity.

**As a workforce intermediary, we:**

- Advocate for system change of industry practices and to address barriers
- Broker a shared regional approach of strategies that are responsive to both community and industry needs
- Access and amplify resources by braiding funding sources
- Incubate & innovate strategies for racial equity impact and system change
- Analyze and use data to measure impact/drive system change

**WDC AS THE REGIONAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BACKBONE ORGANIZATION**

**Background**

In 2018, a new vision was conceived from community-led efforts to reimagine and transform workforce development in the Puget Sound with racial equity at the center, and with a central (backbone) organization to catalyze a collaborative, regional partnership between stakeholders—business, labor, philanthropy, education, and community—which leverages and aligns resources to increase equity and maximize outcomes.

COVID-19 accelerated the urgency of this work and the need for an equitable economic recovery plan to address stark income inequality and racial disparities in job loss, and the disproportionate representation of Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), and immigrant and refugee communities in low-wage jobs.

**REGIONAL STRATEGIC PLAN (APPROVED 12/2021)** [Recover Better: A Regional Plan for Equitable Economic Recovery](#); See also: [Advancing Workforce Equity in Seattle: A Blueprint for Action](#)

This Regional Workforce Plan (‘the Plan’) is intended as a strategic blueprint establishing a set of shared priorities for the WDC, its regional partners, County and City government, industry, labor, community colleges, and community-based providers over the next 3-5 years. The plan is intended to align regional and partner resources, and to strategically and collaboratively respond to the unprecedented job loss and massive disruption to the regional economy. The Plan intentionally and explicitly prioritizes support for low-wage workers and workers of color, who have historically experienced economic marginalization, and are now made more vulnerable without an intentional and concerted effort to center their needs and ensure their inclusion in regional economy’s recovery.

**GUIDING PRINCIPLES:**

- Center racial equity
- Elevate job quality
- Systems change
- Cross sector integration
- Strategic advocacy and innovation

To re-envision workforce development, we see skills development as necessary but insufficient. We need to address other barriers: financial, worker supports (e.g., childcare, transportation, health care), as well as racialized practices and policies that result in inequitable results. The overall goal needs to shift from only skills attainment and job placement to equitable employment outcomes.

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*Inclusive Economic Recovery: prioritizes the needs of BIPOC workers and other economically marginalized communities and the dismantling of structural and systemic racism across our institutions such that all workers, regardless of race or ethnicity have equitable access to high quality jobs and share in the region’s economic prosperity.*

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## OPPORTUNITY SECTORS

Seven sectors show promise in increasing access for workers of color, and/or opportunities to improve job quality:

- Construction
- Manufacturing
- Retail Trade
- Transportation and Warehousing
- Information Technology
- Healthcare
- Maritime

## STRATEGIES

### *Immediate Relief Strategies*

- Invest in subsidized transitional employment with pathways

### *Recovery Strategies*

- Advance sector partnerships and strategies
- Expand apprenticeship programs
- Invest in digital literacy
- Expand access to credentials with labor market value rapidly and at scale, especially for workers of color

### *Population-Based Strategies*

- Youth
  - Invest in and prioritize youth of color
  - Ensure work experience is high quality and linked to employers and pathways in in-demand fields
  - Embed youth voice in planning, process, and service delivery
  - Highlight navigation and support
- Immigrants/Refugees
  - Create bridges to vocational training programs
  - Offer apprenticeship programs in non-English languages
  - Create credential programs for foreign-educated professionals
  - Create a regional, coordinated language access plan
  - Fund translation of essential workforce documents and distribute effectively to multilingual job seekers

### *Advocacy*

- Leverage creative funding models
- Expand portable benefits and wrap-around supports
- Eliminate prohibitive policies to suspending and reinstating driver's licenses
- Remove criminal background as a barrier to employment
- Partner with employers and industry on equitable recovery commitments

### *Systems Change*

- Strengthen the connection between economic and workforce development
- Measure and track equitable economic recovery
- Invest in digital infrastructure
- Build meaningful and sustainable community influence and power

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***Job Quality:*** raises the expectation and commitment of all partners in the workforce system to support BIPOC workers in not simply gaining employment in any job but rather securing a quality job – one with livable wage jobs with benefits, opportunities for advancement and assurances of a safe and healthy workplace regardless of race or ethnicity have equitable access to high quality jobs and share in the region's economic prosperity.

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***Racial equity:*** Advancing race-conscious policies by applying an equity lens to every dimension of planning and implementation, not isolating it as a separate set of strategies, or adding it as an afterthought.

***Community:*** people impacted by the issues; people with lived experiences of trying to access services and often having no voice and visibility and decision-making power.

***Community engagement:*** two-way exchange of information, ideas, and resources. Community engagement should offer opportunities for communities to express their views and have a meaningful role in decision-making. It should also consider the diversity of our communities, including culture and ethnicity, and seek to create an inclusive and accessible process. Effective engagement removes barriers for communities that may have previously prevented residents from successfully working with County and City governments.