



Strategic Plan

2005 - 2007

South Central_Workforce Council

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OVERVIEW

The South Central workforce development area (WDA) covering approximately 8,477 square miles is comprised of Yakima, Kittitas, Klickitat, and Skamania Counties located in the South Central region of Washington State. The dense forest and mountainous terrain of the Cascades form the western boundary, while the timbered covered mountains of Kittitas County make a natural boundary to the north. The eastern perimeter of the region is delineated by the Columbia River which flows along the sagebrush covered flanks of the four counties. The river then moves slowly through a series of dams on its way west to the Pacific Ocean where it marks the southern most edge of the region and the state.

The City of Yakima in Yakima County is the largest metropolitan area, with a population of 79,480 residents and the 7th largest city in the State. Scattered throughout the remainder of the geographic region are small to medium size cities and towns. The City of Ellensburg, with a population of 14,230, is the largest Kittitas County municipality and Goldendale, where 3,570 people live, is the largest community in Klickitat County. The largest town in Skamania County, Stevenson, has an estimated 1,260 people. The combined population of the four counties is 295,700, according to the latest reports from the Office of Financial Management in June, 2005.

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Native Americans were the first people to live and prosper in the region. Later, settlers came bringing cattle and fruit trees. The need for timber brought about the formation of the lumber and wood product's industry and the foundation of a resource based economy was then formed. The arrival of the Northern Pacific Railway in 1884, opened the doors to the exports of agricultural and timber products to the world beyond. By 1892 the first major irrigation system was developed which brought a considerable increase in productivity and diversity of agricultural products up until today. An ever-increasing demand for labor slowly brought migrant workers into the farm areas to help in the harvesting of crops and other activities.

The Cascade mountain range forms a barrier to the moisture-laden clouds from the coast causing rain and snow to be deposited in the mountains depriving the lowlands of most of its moisture. While the region tends to be dry and arid, water originating from 5 major dams located in Kittitas and Yakima Counties combined with the rich volcanic soil provide ideal conditions for farming..

Agriculture primarily fuels the region's economy. The development of the overseas market for agricultural products has been a major contributor to slow but steady growth through the 90s and into the new millennium. However, the largely seasonal nature of the work has been a major factor in the lower than average earnings from

wages and salaries. Overall economic growth remains lower than average throughout the region.

This area is equally rich in the diversity of the residents and their respective cultural heritages. Each County has experienced a significant increase in the Hispanic population. A small but significant population of Asians and Black Americans reside in communities across the service area. Within the borders of the local workforce development area lies the Yakama Indian Reservation providing the source for a significant population of Native Americans in both Yakima and Klickitat Counties.

Three major universities, two community colleges, a technical school and twenty-six school districts serve the region educationally. The high school dropout rate has historically been high and is higher than any region in the state. Today's challenges that are being faced in the educational system have a direct impact on the quality and strength of the future workforce development system.

The South Central community's rich diversity raises the contemporary issues of increasing economic diversity and the full incorporation of all citizens into educational and economic parity in an increasingly technical society. Progress has been made in all these areas, but much remains to be done. In the last decade, public and business leaders have become active in addressing quality of life issues for local residents.

In every discussion, the topic of creating more livable wage jobs has become a central point and is recognized as a cornerstone necessary for building a strong economy and a healthy community. Local elected officials, the Workforce Council and partners of Yakima, Kittitas, Klickitat and

Skamania Counties recognize the unique and important role of workforce programs in the development of economic and social health of its communities.



A strong and sustained effort must be maintained in the development of a local workforce system that responds to community concerns and addresses the needs of its customers -- workers and business. As we enter a new century, the South Central Workforce Council is committed to the development of a workforce system that provides opportunities for all residents to receive a quality education and avenues for pursuing training that will lead to productive, satisfying, and livable wage jobs for themselves and their families.

To achieve this end, the scope of the workforce delivery system must be expanded to include all public and private organizations that have the common vision of improving the quality of life for local residents. This means new partnerships must be forged, and existing relationships maintained with schools, post-secondary organizations, economic development agencies, business, labor, state

agencies and public organizations. As our system grows, it must connect these key players in a single network as a way to make efficient use of the public dollar, increase worker readiness for existing and new businesses and improve the quality of life for local residents. The South Central Workforce Council's Strategic Plan is the blueprint for this new system.

In the year 2000 the South Central Workforce Council aligned with the Washington State Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board's strategy utilizing skill panels to address critical skill gaps in local key industries. Skill Panels serve as a forum of business, labor, and education leaders who collaborate to support and address specific industry workforce issues. They assess current and future needs of the industry's workforce and implement strategies to keep pace with ever- changing technologies and market conditions.

The Council has identified four industries critical to the economic vitality of the four county region, i.e., Ag/Food Processing, Manufacturing, Healthcare, and Construction Trades. It has and will continue to support incumbent worker training efforts in these sectors through available WIA discretionary funds and other grant opportunities. On behalf of the full local council, a Business, Industry, and Education Committee (a sub-committee of the council) has been appointed to oversee equitable division of monies (as they become available), work and progress of the panels.

SECTION I.

PROFILE OF THE SOUTH CENTRAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AREA

A. Key Industries:

Key Industries can be approached in two ways.

1. Key Employment Industries: those which comprise more than 2 ½% of the region's total employment.

Those that fit this criteria for Yakima County include:

- * Agriculture / Crop Production
- * Agriculture support activities
- * Food Manufacturing
- * Education Services
- * Ambulatory Health Care Services
- * Hospitals
- * Nursing
- * Merchant wholesalers
- * Food services and drinking places

2. Key Growth Industries: those, which have recently outpaced the local area growth, have grown by more than 50 employees, and provide wages that are competitive with the local average wage. Included in this group are:

- * Petroleum and coal manufacturing
- * Animal Production
- * Ambulatory Health Care Services
- * Plastics and rubber manufacturing
- * Social assistance
- * Government
- * Justice, public order, and safety
- * Educational Services
- * Hospitals

In Yakima County, there are four industries that can be found on both key industry lists.

- * Ambulatory Health Care Services (clinics and doctors' offices)
- * Hospitals
- * Government
- * Education Services (in this area, mainly primary and secondary school employment)

Crop Production was the number one industry for 2002, and with agriculture support, food manufacturing, and others, agriculture based industries account for 48 percent of the county's key industries jobs.

Health care accounts for 19 percent of the county's key industry employment, and wages in the health care industry are more than 50% higher than the area's average wage.

While key industry studies have not been completed for the three smaller counties in the South Central region, a look at "location quotient" (ratio of a given industry's share of local employment to the same industry's share of statewide employment) can be helpful in determining which industries dominate the employment picture.

Kittitas County's key industries also include Agriculture and Government, as well as Retail Trade. All three are significantly more concentrated in the local employment than across the state, with location quotients of 1.19 for Retail, 1.85 for Government, and 2.03 for Agricultural Production. The high concentration of government jobs can be attributed to government education, with the presence of Central Washington University. Enrollment growth at the University is expected to continue.

Klickitat County also has agriculture as a key industry, with a concentration of employment at four times the statewide rate. Manufacturing and Government also have location quotients greater than 1.0.

Skamania County's largest three industries are Government (36%), Accommodation and Food Service (27%) and Manufacturing (11%). Accommodation / Food Service and Manufacturing have shown some slight increases in recent years, while Government employment is decreasing slightly. Unemployment is down about a point over the past year, similar to the state-wide trends.

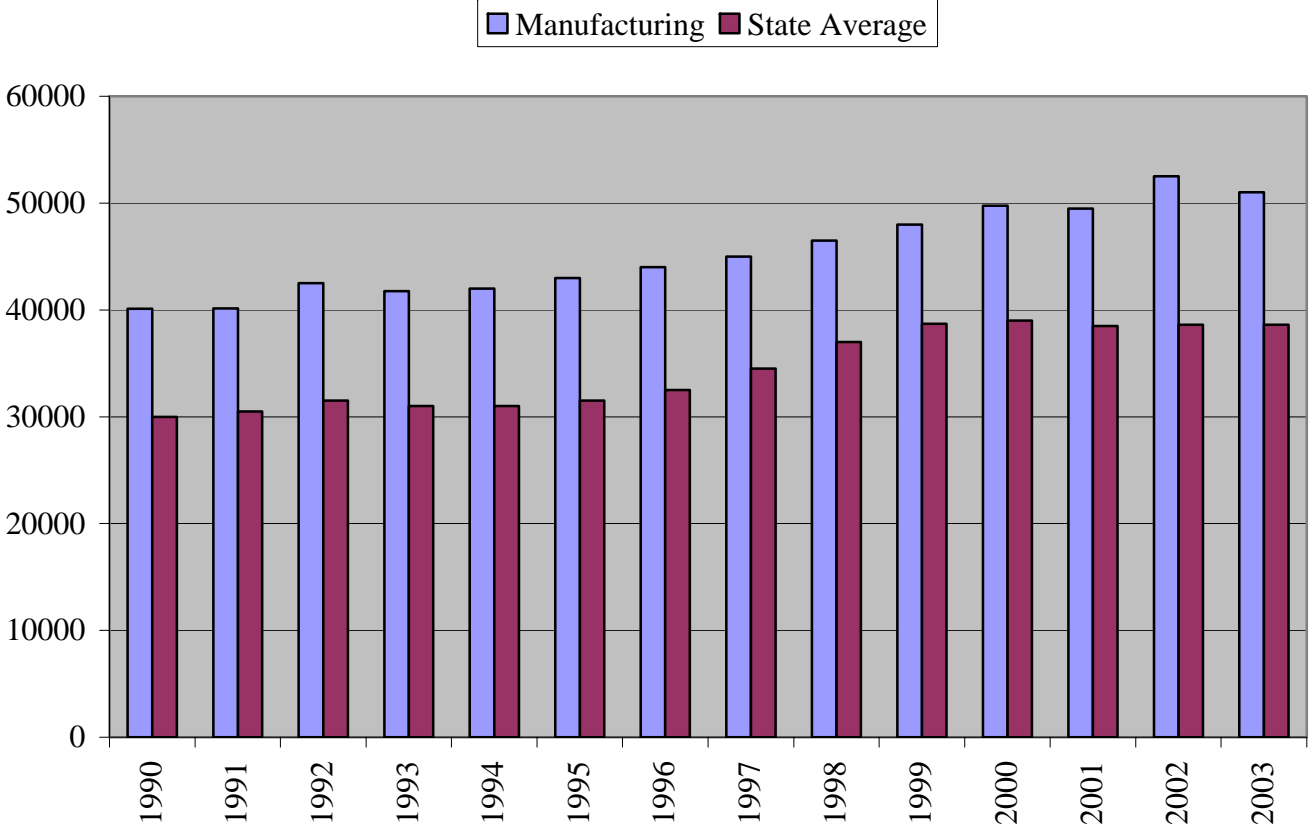
It makes sense to focus on Manufacturing. Many of the businesses in the area that are classified as manufacturers are, indeed, agricultural related industries, making packaging, equipment, and supplies specifically for the farming community. The health of the dominant agriculture industry is dependent, in part, on the health of these companies. These jobs have significant job-multipliers, too. The following table illustrates the profound positive job-multiplier-effect manufacturers have on the local employment market.

Also shown in the table are the average covered wages for manufacturing jobs. They are notably higher than the average wages in the area. Despite the declining trend shown below, these factors make manufacturing a key industry.

Industry	Job Multiplier	Ave Wage
Manufacturing	2.738	\$50,975
Textiles and apparel	1.676	\$40,034
Wood products	4.028	\$36,276
Paper	4.759	\$56,424
Printing	2.220	\$37,009
Petroleum products	5.189	\$70,707
Chemicals	4.164	\$72,824
Nonmetallic minerals	2.714	\$40,358
Primary metals	3.438	\$48,629
Fabricated metals	2.182	\$37,319
Machinery	2.358	\$43,796
Computers and electronics	2.466	\$62,655
Electrical equipment	2.528	\$47,454
Plastics and rubber products	2.561	\$36,195
Other transportation equipment	2.393	\$68,389

Source: Office of Financial Management, July, 2004

Real Average Covered Wages, 1990-2003



Many small businesses exist and continue to emerge throughout the South Central service area, which is characteristic of Eastern Washington. The disadvantage to local workforce development is the lack of private business supported resources for training and the lack of career ladders for employee growth.

While dependence on a single large employer can provide some economic protection from downturns, which affect a single industry, declines in the aluminum, lumber and wood product firms over the last decade have demonstrated that negative changes can have a detrimental impact on local communities. The area's small business base is an asset, which may give the economy long-term resiliency and potential for growth.

The medium sized businesses located in the South Central area provide higher paying higher skilled jobs. These businesses, such as manufacturing, are linked and far more sensitive to the state and national economy. For example, the successes and downturns at Boeing ripple through this area causing expansion or contraction at those companies that sub-contract goods and materials to the airplane manufacturer.

B. Declining Industries

1. The Manufacturing sector in Yakima and Klickitat Counties has experienced some downturn in recent years. From 2000 to 2004, manufacturing jobs in Yakima County were reduced by 1,900, a loss of 16.8%. In Klickitat County, largely because of the closure of its large aluminum plant, manufacturing declined a whopping 68%, or 738 jobs.
2. Wholesale and Retail Trade saw a decline from 2000-2004 in Yakima County of 700 jobs, or 4.9%. It is expected that these numbers will rebound,

when the growth of the retail complex in Union Gap is completed, and as Wal-Mart and Ace Hardware distribution centers come fully online.

3. The closure in Klickitat County has had a cascading effect on other industries, such as Retail Trade, and Accommodations / Food Service, which are both down by a few dozen jobs.
4. Happily, Kittitas County has had a healthy growth period, and there are virtually no industries in decline in the county. Overall, non-farm employment is up 1,356 from 2000 to 2004, a gain of 10.9%.
5. The only industry showing noticeable declines in Skamania County is Government. And those declines are small, and more than made up by small increases in the Manufacturing and Accommodation / Food Service industries.

C. Industries Experiencing Growth:

1. After a period of decline in the Agriculture Industry during the 1990's, we have seen a rebound in

	1999	2002	2003
Kittitas County	1,100	1,100	1,170
Yakima County	22,200	21,100	22,950
Klickitat County	1,210	1,300	1,650
Skamania County	89	100	100

agriculture related jobs in the first few years of the new century. Growth has been most significant in Yakima and Klickitat Counties, with Kittitas County showing some modest growth in this industry.

Challenges of global competition, cyclical water shortages, increasing regulations and other factors make the forecasting of continued growth in Agriculture iffy at best. History shows us there is a fairly consistent cyclic pattern of ups and downs in this field. Since the South Central workforce area is so dominated by Agriculture, it must be considered in any planning.

2. As with the country as a whole, the Service Industry is advancing. Several segments of this industry are significant in our planning.
 - a. Health Care – In Yakima County, where this industry impacts the most, Health services have grown by 1,300 jobs from 1999 to 2004. Services are projected to continue growing at an annual rate of 1.4% through 2008.
 - b. Over the same period, expect to see growth rates of 1.7% in Kittitas County, and 1.9% in Klickitat County in the Service Industries, particularly Health Care Services.
3. Wholesale and Retail Trades can be expected to grow as well. Klickitat County will lead the way with 2.3% annual rate of job growth in the Trades through 2008. Kittitas County should see growth in this industry of about 1.7% per year, and Yakima County will grow also at about 1.2%.
4. Construction will be a significant growth industry in Klickitat and Kittitas Counties.
5. All counties in the region will see manufacturing improvements; though slight (under 0.5%).

D. Skill needs and the Local Workforce:

Statewide more than 94% of employers surveyed have reported that they are having difficulty in finding workers with job-specific skills, as well as problem-solving skills (89%), communications skills (85%), work habits (85%), computer skills (80%), and adaptability to change (80%).

Similarly, a recent workforce survey conducted by the Greater Yakima Chamber of Commerce area supported the above findings. Employers indicated those critical thinking skills, basic skills, interpersonal/team skills, and workplace ethics were the primary education and training needs of the workforce. The employer community has made it clear that these skills, though expected and essential can no longer be taken for granted. These same concerns have been expressed by the workforce development system as well.

Other surveys of businesses have indicated that they have experienced a shortage of skilled, professional, and technical workers. Skilled workers have been difficult for employers to find locally and often they recruit from outside the area.

E. Earnings from wages and salaries

Demand for employment and increased earnings have always been correlated with jobs that require post-secondary education and/or technical skills training. The majority of these jobs are full time as opposed to part time. In a resource-based economy, such as ours, the lower earnings are a reflection of the seasonal variations in demand for workers and lower rates of pay. High concentrations of workers throughout the South Central area have been characterized by this seasonal effect.

F. Income from all Sources:

The differential between the South Central area and the State’s earnings from work throughout the industries is a major factor in the statistics regarding median household income. In addition, per capita income is one of the most

important indices of the wealth for a region. If the growth of per capita income lags that of the State and Nation then the effect is an increasing level of poverty. See chart below:

Personal Income - Per Capita (Bureau of Economic Analysis)

	2001		2002		2003	
WA State	32,289		32,696		33,254	
	% of State		% of State		% of State	
Kittitas Co	23,480	72.7%	23,794	72.8%	24,048	72.3%
Yakima Co	23,062	71.4%	23,416	71.6%	23,916	71.9%
Klickitat Co	23,182	71.8%	23,728	72.6%	24,046	72.3%
Skamania Co	22,461	69.6%	22,446	68.7%	22,758	68.4%

The decline in personal income relative to the State poses serious problems into the future in our area as the cost of living continues to increase. Discretionary income, the money available for the purchase of goods and services, will be limited which ultimately restricts revenues for all businesses throughout the workforce area.

G. Implications of the local economy and of needed skills:

The assessment of the local economy outlines the critical need for development of strategies to prepare a quality workforce for current and future needs. To meet the labor demands, the South Central workforce system will:

Work in partnership with and support the academic benchmarks of Washington State's K-12 education system. Emphasis will be placed on strategies that increase student understanding of the importance of work, and how performance, effort, and decisions directly affect future career and educational opportunities (Essential Academic Learning Requirements Goal 4).

Coordinate education and training efforts at the local level that will create a seamless system of services. Program services will be made available to all residents of the local area, with priority levels set for special populations and those who are most in need of services and skill development.

Develop education, training and employment programs that focus on improved employer productivity and satisfaction. Industry skill panels have been identified,

developed and supported for growth occupations and industries.

Develop education and training programs linked to economic development efforts within the region to prepare workers for existing, expanding and new industries.

Be inclusive and recognize the diversity of the region and create opportunities for non-traditional employment, people of color, and those with disabilities.

Provide skill upgrade training opportunities for incumbent workers in the key economic sectors identified (Ag/Food Processing, Manufacturing, Healthcare, and Construction Industry) to maintain jobs, avert layoffs, increase earnings, achieve promotions, and help local industry stay healthy and competitive.

H. Analysis of the local area's economic development strategies

Economic development has become a high priority for Central Washington communities. County, municipal and tribal organizations have become active in formulating short and long-range plans for vitalization and growth of local communities. Reviewing the economic development plans across the region reveals six common goals.

1. Retain and build upon existing businesses.
2. Recruit new businesses.
3. Develop infrastructures to support businesses.
4. Provide technical assistance to businesses.

5. Provide workforce development assistance to existing and new businesses.

6. Provide customized incumbent worker skill upgrade training under a cost-sharing arrangement through local Skill Panels to assist our strategic industries in remaining competitive in the global economy.

7. Incumbent Worker Training.

Kittitas County has an economic development organization called the Economic Development Group of Kittitas County. The organization, located in Ellensburg, is privately and publicly funded. In addition to the above goals, their primary focus has been on labor issues with the philosophy that businesses' top concern is finding a skilled workforce. In response to merging opportunities, the organization has reached out to form strategic partnerships with local workforce organizations. Some of their current projects include the re-vitalization of Bowers Airport and studying the issue of a road connecting I-90 to the airport.

Klickitat County's economic development organization, Klickitat County Public Economic Development Authority, which is under county government, has established six economic development goals beginning in 1996. Priorities are established based upon their yearly funding. This is particularly true of their efforts to develop utility infrastructures. A major effort here is the return of hotel/motel tax revenues to support tourism through their visitor information centers. An objective is to make the visitor centers operational year-around. Other objectives include:

Through technical, financial, and organizational support, develop the water and sewer infrastructure serving the key residential, industrial, and commercial areas of the county.

Retain and expand Klickitat County's existing business and employment base.

Recruit small to medium sized business that diversify the economy and create quality employment opportunities.

Increase employment opportunities in agricultural production and processing in Klickitat County by recruiting new businesses and expanding existing businesses.

Maintain Klickitat County Public Economic Development Authority (the EDA) as an organization that fulfills its mission in a professional manner that is responsive to the needs of the residents and businesses of Klickitat County.

Increase tourist spending in Klickitat County.

Skamania County Economic Development Council (SCEDC) is located in Stevenson, WA. Its goals are designed to assist in the retention and expansion of existing businesses and industries, to encourage capital investment for new business development, and to promote public policies to facilitate orderly economic development in Skamania County. This is accomplished in several ways. The EDC

- Provides business counseling and business planning assistance to new and existing businesses
- Coordinates community strategic planning and preparation of contracts and grant applications for economic development activities and programs
- Sponsors workshops for local businesses
- Maintains a business information center
- Operates two micro-loan programs

- Promotes public policies that encourage economic development and represents the interest of local businesses

A countywide agency and municipal organizations, such as, the cities of Yakima, Zillah, and Sunnyside serve Yakima County. Yakima County Development Association, also known as New Vision, has the primary responsibility to promote economic development and to diversify the economy in all of Yakima County. To that end, New Vision has developed a five- year economic diversification program that will measurably improve the Yakima County economy. These efforts are being spearheaded by a private-public partnership that focuses on:

- Growing and retaining our local manufacturers

- Marketing Yakima County as a destination for new corporate facilities;

- Responding to companies interested in expanding or relocating to Yakima County; and

- Providing leadership on key issues that affect our local business climate

Also residing within Yakima County is the Yakama Nation. The Nation’s economic development efforts are well established after 20 years of operation. Each project is part of the Tribal strategic plan for long term economic growth based upon resources that the Tribe possesses. The Yakama’s currently have one of the highest unemployment rates in the area, estimated at 70%. This reality has placed an importance on increasing the skills of their workforce and at the same time developing Tribal employment opportunities for their people.

Distinct economic and demographic differences between the upper and lower Yakima Valley have given rise to specific efforts by Sunnyside, Inc, the official organization representing the City of Sunnyside, Port District, and the Chamber of Commerce. This economic development partnership focuses its efforts on the following areas:

- The creation of year-round family wage jobs;

- The diversification of the local economy;

- The retention and expansion of existing business;

- The recruitment of new business;

- Support of programs and projects for the sustainability of agriculture; and,

- Support of programs and projects which enhance the quality of life and environment in Sunnyside.

The City of Zillah first established an Economic Development Organization in 1991. In September 1999, the Zillah City Council, in a public meeting, established a wide array of goals. Four goals are of immediate importance for workforce development.

- To develop and maintain an infrastructure that will support a diversified economy and high quality of life and promote sustainable growth.

- To promote a diversified economy that will enhance the greater community of Zillah.

- To strengthen partnerships with the school district.

- To continue and expand the educational and recreational activities.

- To promote economic development.

As seen above, employment maintains a high priority in economic development goals for the workforce area. A consensus exists that a prepared workforce is a critical element to an area's economic future, and it is critical that the workforce development systems prepare workers to meet those demands. A timely and rapid response capability for worker training must exist in order to meet the needs of expanding or new businesses.

A mutual reciprocity must exist between the workforce development system and the economic development community:

A well-prepared workforce is required for businesses to be productive, competitive in developing superior products and services, competitive in pricing, to be profitable and endure.

Economic development is required to provide the economic opportunities to meet people's needs and to retain the area's population, especially the youth.

In the South Central workforce development area, a shared vision exists for the rich diversity that each person brings to the community. Each person has a responsibility to contribute to the community for it to function as a whole. It is important to recognize that most of the economic development organizations have very thoughtfully and analytically crafted comprehensive and detailed plans and programs to achieve their economic development goals.

It is apparent that economic development and workforce development go hand in hand. Employment opportunities and livable wage jobs require businesses that prosper; yet the ability for businesses to grow is highly dependent on the availability of a prepared and skilled workforce. To strengthen and continue to build this partnership the Workforce Council incorporates the following principles:

Workforce development organizations will rely on the professional expertise of economic development agencies in their efforts to retain existing businesses, assist them in expanding their operations, recruit new firms, develop the necessary infrastructure, and assist with regulations to promote economic development.

A consensus exists that employers need a well-prepared workforce for maintaining and expanding their current business, as well as attracting new businesses to the area.

Timely and rapid response capability for worker training must exist in order to meet the needs of expanding or new businesses. This is a companion principle to the rapid response capability expected for those firms and their employees who are facing large layoffs or business closures.

- ❑ A consensus exists that economic development is enhanced through incumbent worker training.
- ❑ Workforce development is now a powerful tool to attract and retain business; a prominent deal-making element with incumbent worker skill upgrade training at the core of this initiative.
- ❑ To prepare for long-term economic recovery, it is imperative that we invest in human capital by developing a skilled workforce to compete in our global economy.

A commitment to incumbent worker training is an investment in growing the local economy and the practice positions industry for growth.

SECTION II.

SOUTH CENTRAL'S CURRENT AND FUTURE WORKFORCE

A. Employment

During 2003, Yakima County employed 18,866 agricultural workers or 20.2 % of the total workforce. Klickitat County followed with 1,203 farm workers or 20.6% and Kittitas had 647, and a percentage rate of 5.2% of total employment. Due to the seasonal nature of the agricultural economy, the unemployment rate for the South Central workforce area remains perennially high, directly influencing the classification of the area as a “Surplus Labor Area” by the U.S. Department of Labor.

The cyclical nature of an agricultural based economy produces sharp fluctuations in employment throughout the year. As local farms and ranches begin preparation for the growing season, unemployment figures begin to decline. As farm production enters its heights in the summer months, the workforce area will typically see its lowest jobless rate figures. By fall, harvest has reached full production and unemployment rates steadily begin to increase, and sharply move to highest joblessness rates for the year by early winter months.

Unemployment rates

	Yakima County	Klickitat County	Kittitas County	Skamania County
1998	10.5%	10.8%	7.6%	8.7%
2004	10.9%	14.3%	7.3%	8.7%

While jobless figures typically follow the trends reported by the state, they stay significantly higher than the state average. Over the last six years we have seen a small increase in the unemployment rate in Yakima County and a small decrease in Kittitas County. Klickitat County, meanwhile, has increased significantly from 10.8% to 14.3%.

In the foreseeable future there will be a slow down in the national rate of growth in the labor force, principally due to the aging of the population. The South Central area will show variability in its rate of growth, but rates will begin to diminish as the baby boom population reaches retirement age. The annual average rate of growth for the Yakima County labor force from 1990 to 1998 was 1.5%. From 2000 to 2008, the growth rate will back off slightly to 1.4% annually, for a net increase in the workforce of about 8,600 workers.

B. Education and literacy

Perhaps no place in the state can the skills gap be more clearly seen than in the South Central workforce area. Despite what appears to be a more than adequate supply of labor, many employers find it difficult to find and hire qualified people. Local businesses are reporting more and more that hundreds of jobs are being left unfilled as job seekers lack sound basic educational and technical job skills to perform the work.

The ability to read, write and perform math forms the basic requirement for any skilled job. Since a high school diploma is viewed as the indicator of acquisition of basic educational requirements, the profile of educational attainment in the South Central workforce area is revealing. The following statistics from the Census Predictors

(Based on 1990 and 2000 U. S. Census Data) indicates that nearly 59% of Yakima County’s population has a high school education or less, a drop of nearly 5% from 1990’s figure of 62%, Kittitas County was up slightly, from 43% to 43.8%, while Klickitat County improved significantly, dropping to 52.6% from 67%.

Educational Attainment	Yakima County %		Kittitas County %		Klickitat County %	
	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000
Education less than 9th grade	17	17.1	5	3.9	10	6.7
Education between 9th and 12th grades:	18	14.3	11	8.9	22	11.6
High school Diploma or equivalent	27	27.4	26	31	35	34.3
Received some college – no degree	20	20.8	33	24.3	19	24.8
Received Associates Degree	6	5.2	8	5.7	5	6.2
Received Bachelors Degree	9	9.8	12	16.9	8	11.1
Attended Graduate School	4	5.5	5	9.3	2	5.3

Literacy among the adult population remains a continuing quest for improvement. Factors relating to English proficiency, low educational attainment, and poverty are, without question, barriers to successful employment.

The basic literacy levels in the workforce area are comparatively lower than the State. While 17% of the state’s adult population lacks high school credentials, 40% of Yakima County adults and 25% of Klickitat County

adults lack those credentials. In Yakima County, 19% of the adults do not speak English.

52% of the adult population in Yakima read below the 6th grade level, and 23% read below the 2nd grade level. In Kittitas County 14% read below the 2nd grade level and 36% read below the 6th grade level, in Klickitat 21% have literacy skills below the 2nd grade and 49% below the 6th grade.

C. Demographic Changes

From 1990 through 1999 the population in Klickitat and Yakima Counties grew more slowly than the State's. That continues to be the case. Kittitas County, on the other hand, outpaced the state's growth rate in the '90's and continues to grow rapidly. In 2004 Kittitas County was the 4th fastest growing county in the state.. Projections for population growth show rates continuing at near the 2004 rate for the next five years.

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	00-04 change
Kittitas	33,362	34,000	34,800	35,200	35,800	7.30%
Klickitat	19,161	19,300	19,300	19,300	19,300	0.70%
Yakima	222,581	224,500	225,000	226,000	227,500	2.20%
Skamania	9,872	9,900	9,900	9,900	10,100	2.30%
Washington	5,894,143	5,974,910	6,041,710	6,098,300	6,167,800	4.60%

D. Characteristics of those who live and work in the workforce area

The total population is a large pool from which the labor force is derived. Those 16 and older are considered candidates for the workforce while children from birth through 15 are the potential future job seekers. People are categorized as either employed, unemployed or looking for work, or they are not participants in the labor force. As the demographics of the population shift, the labor pool is affected. The most salient challenge in the future is the changes that are taking place now.

The major proportions of new entrants into the labor force are in the 16 through 24-age bracket. This group will generally decrease at a slow rate until the year 2020. It is anticipated

that from 1998 through 2005, Yakima County will show a slight decline in the 15-19 and the 20-24 age groups. At the same time Kittitas and Klickitat will experience a slight decline in the proportion of 15-19 year olds while the 20-24 age bracket will show slight increases.

At the other end of the spectrum, the proportion of those 55-64 years of age will increase from 1998 to 2005 as the baby boom population begins to move through retirement age and this increase is projected to continue to the year 2020. This

will bring about a shift in the age structure of workers further slowing the growth of the local labor force.

The need for a quality workforce to meet the demands of current business needs has had a direct effect on this segment of the worker population. Older workers are now being encouraged to remain in the workforce longer as their training and knowledge can provide continuity in productivity for businesses. Many employers have indicated that they cannot find new job seekers with the necessary skills.

The minority population represents some of the highest proportions in the State, primarily in Yakima County. With the largest percentage of Hispanics of any County in the State, and the largest percent of increase of Hispanics, Yakima County's growth is expected to be primarily in the Hispanic community over the next five years. Statewide, Hispanic population is expected to increase by nearly 1/3 (almost 200,000 people) from 2000 to 2010. Most of that increase will take place in Yakima County.

The minority youth population showed significantly higher proportions in all three counties as compared to the overall population. Generally, the minority youth will not migrate out of the area, as they tend to stay and help support their families. The potential for helping to increase minority youth participation in the labor force will pay dividends in the future.

E. Youth

The ethnic make-up of our K-12 population mirrors that of the workforce in the South Central area. During the 1998-1999 school year, over one half, 53.4%, (26,688 of 49,954) of the students enrolled in Yakima County schools were minority students. In Kittitas County, 9.8% (533 of 5,441) were minority and in Klickitat 18.1% (701 of 3,867) were minority.

According to the 2001-2002 School Year School Dropout Report for grades 9 through 12, the workforce area experienced a significantly higher “dropout rate” and “status unknown” than any other workforce area in Washington State.

WDA	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI	XII	State
% Of Dropout	6.0	8.1	7.7	7.8	8.7	7.0	7.7	8.3	11.1	5.5	5.8	5.3	7.7
% Of Status Unknown	1.7	3.9	1.9	3.4	4.0	2.4	3.8	3.6	5.2	2.2	1.6	1.7	3.2

South Central WDA is represented as WDA IX

The region’s dropout rate stands at 11.1% and Status Unknown rate is 5.2% of the total students enrolled. These percentages are much higher than any other area in the

State. The county breakdowns for 2001-2002 dropout rates are: Kittitas County – 4.4%; Klickitat County – 7.0%; Yakima County – 12.3%. High School dropouts are a top concern for communities within the South Central area. Youth who do not have a high school education will experience higher rates of unemployment, be more likely to participate in public assistance programs, be involved in the criminal justice system, and will earn less money as compared to those youth with a high school education.

F. Adults in transition and incumbent workers

Adults who are in transition include those moving from welfare to work, disadvantaged adults, dislocated workers, injured workers, and other adults seeking employment.

Dislocated Workers: Many workers may be dislocated from their work either because of a business failure or downsizing. During the period of 1995 to 1999 there were 7,429 (34.0%) people receiving unemployment benefits who were dislocated, The majority 6,067 or (88.9%) resided in Yakima County. Kittitas County had 801 (10.8%) of the region’s total while Klickitat County had 561 (7.6%) of the region’s total.

TANF Participants: This group represents the segment of the population who is receiving public assistance because of impoverished conditions. The workforce area has a population of 275,104, which represents 4.7% of the total State population. In January 2005, the TANF population of the four counties represented 3,196 or 8.9% of the State’s total of 36,011 cases.

Disadvantaged Adults: High levels of poverty continue to plague the region. Many of those who live below poverty levels do not receive any form of assistance and are usually

marginally employed, while others may work in jobs but not earn a livable wage to support their families. During 1999 Yakima County had the highest number of disadvantaged living in poverty, 43, 848 (19.7% of total population) of any County in the State. Children below age 18 who were living in poverty represented 15.9% of its total population. Klickitat County had a poverty rate of 17.0% while Kittitas County had a 19.6% rate. The State rate was 10.6%.

People with Disability: According to the United States Census Bureau, in 2000, Yakima County had a population of 44,663 people with disability. Kittitas and Klickitat had 5,760 and 3,814 individuals with disability, respectively, for a total population of 54,237 individuals with disability residing in the South Central area. The July 2002 DSHS Blue Book reported that the South Central area had 606 individuals who were receiving Supplemental Security Income benefits. Yakima County had 533 disabled citizens and Klickitat and Kittitas counties reported 44 and 29, respectively.

G. Implications of the demographic profile of South Central Workforce Area

The changing demographics and needs of the current and future workforce have clearly created new challenges for the education, training and employment community. Business must have workers who possess good work habits, technical skills, and the ability to change and adapt to new technologies and methods of doing work.

Workforce training programs must be restructured and redirected to assist dislocated workers in connecting with job opportunities; help adults, older workers and TANF

recipients overcome barriers and develop the skills necessary to obtain and retain employment; build capacity to effectively serve individuals with disability so business can more easily access this largely untapped labor resource; and assist youth in making the connection between school and work and in identifying career pathways that will lead to productive employment and rewarding careers.

To meet these challenges, the South Central Workforce Council will strive to develop a comprehensive workforce system that will provide effective, efficient, and fully integrated service delivery for workers and employers.

Given the current economy, demographics and workforce, the South Central Workforce Council will focus on the following priorities.

1. Utilization of the area's greatest resource – people – to fill the gap of skilled workers in the South Central area. The social/economic advantages of increased utilization by developing the skills of new residents, TANF participants, dislocated workers, disadvantaged adults, individuals with disability, and older workers will be a large step in providing workers to meet local business needs.
2. Early identification of those dislocated from declining industries and occupations will help transition these people back into productive jobs. South Central workforce area must continue practices of working closely with business and labor to ease the transition of workers to new jobs in the community. Goals for dislocated worker programs must prioritize recaptured earnings and benefits, and provide for career growth and future earning potential.
3. New strategies must be implemented that provide for career development and growth for incumbent workers at

minimum wage or low paying jobs. The South Central Workforce Council recognizes that these workers can provide a pool of candidates who can receive training to move to higher wage and higher skilled jobs. The success of training low wage, entry level incumbent workers to higher skills jobs will also increase the availability of entry level jobs for those who are entering the workforce for the first time.

4. Since the minority populations have a higher than average distribution of youth, improved strategies should be developed to maximize the potential of this worker pool.

5. The aging of the population, with its increasing needs for healthcare, will provide higher paying professional jobs in this service industry. New training strategies must be developed that prepare local residents for entrance into these occupations.

6. Labor force participation rates will continue to rise for women. Increased opportunities for education and skill development will help add more women to the workforce. Workforce programs must be proactive in the recruitment of women to non-traditional training programs.

7. Workforce programs need to insure access and effective service to people with disability in order to capitalize on this large and underemployed segment of the labor force. Strategies need to be implemented around program policy and practice, accommodation, customized employment, marketing, and job development regarding individuals with disability.

8. Retention of the resident youth population through education, vocational, and job development strategies.

9. Development of strategies that will promote school completion for youth through special programs, and partnerships with education and business.

H. Local Data

The Council heavily relies on state data for the purposes of planning, setting service levels for significant groups and development of local programs that address current and future needs. However, time lags, reporting limits and levels of data are not always sufficient for local planning and responses to changes. To address these shortages in data, the Council may supplement state data with local information. Such information may include surveys conducted by local economic development agencies and chambers of commerce, information available through the Consortium's Management Information System for WIA I-B and WorkSource, and other reliable and relevant data produced by the local Conference of Governments, community-based organizations and government agencies.

SECTION III

SOUTH CENTRAL WORKFORCE SYSTEM

A. Local Structure

The South Central Consortium is comprised of Yakima, Kittitas, Klickitat and Skamania Counties. A board of four elected County Commissioners represents each county. One County Commissioner from each area serves as a member of the four person executive committee that oversees matters related to workforce development.

The local South Central Workforce Council is comprised of 27 members with a business majority. Individuals appointed to the Council represent appropriate organizations and institutions specified in the WIA and as prescribed by the Washington State Workforce Investment Board. A Board of Directors comprised of 9 Council members meet monthly to conduct the regular business of the Board. The Board of Directors is also responsible for making recommendations to the full Council, Legislative issues, and Board recruitment.

The Council structure includes a Youth Council that is charged with overseeing matters related to youth activities and will facilitate the sharing of information among workforce development programs serving youth. The Youth Council includes eleven members representing business, education, law enforcement, public housing, Job Corps, parents and youth. The following subcommittees of the Workforce Council have been developed to ensure that all stakeholders and partners of the local workforce system are afforded the greatest opportunity for participation.

1. A WorkSource Oversight Committee comprised of all participating partners of the WorkSource system will advise the Council on matters relating to system and policy planning and development regarding the local WorkSource system.

2. A Planning Committee who is responsible for overseeing the procurement of service providers, policy development, marketing, special events and activities.

3. An Education, Business, and Industry Committee who is responsible to oversee business services, industry skill panels, and incumbent worker training.

B. Local WorkSource (One-Stop) Strategy

The distinct economic, demographic, and employment needs of the workforce development area have created a need for new and innovative approaches to meeting local workforce needs. Labor exchange programs must respond to the employment demands of business in a timely and efficient manner. Workforce training programs must be structured to maximize local resources and deliver cost-effective training that provides the necessary skills in the least time possible. This will require significant changes and realigning of local programs into a comprehensive workforce system meeting the needs of business and job seekers.

To meet these challenges, the South Central Workforce Council has developed a service delivery system consistent with the goals and objectives of Washington State's WorkSource system. The local WorkSource system focuses on leveraging resources, identifying new resources to sustain the system and synergizing organizations to improve the delivery of education, training and

employment services in Yakima, Kittitas, Klickitat and Skamania Counties.

Members of the local One-Stop Partnership have already begun this process for change and have embraced the challenge of working in concert to improve workforce development in Central Washington. Through a Washington State Employment Security implementation grant, local partners developed a working blueprint for a One-Stop system in the South Central area. This plan contains the Integration and Accountability sections of the One-Stop Business Plan.

A Focus on Business

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 called for changes to the way businesses would be served in the new one-stop centers. WorkSource Central Washington under the leadership of the South Central Workforce Council now seeks to clearly define how business services will be packaged, marketed and provided in a professional and consistent way by all WorkSource partners in our region..

The purpose of this Business Services plan is to direct a focus toward the improvement and effectiveness of the services offered to businesses in our region. A key component of this improvement will be the coordination of the many programs and partners found in WorkSource. A coordinated approach for WorkSource services will enable employers to get assistance from us, not only to find workers, but for a variety of other services.

The following are specific goals for Business Services in our region:

1. Goal: Services to businesses will be offered as a system. Perception will be that all partners contacting businesses represent WorkSource, rather than their own agency.

”There is a need to knock down categorical thinking. Workforce development programs must be considered a system and act as a system. Workforce partners must face up to hard decisions regarding shared resources and shared accountability for results.” *High Skills, High Wages -2004, Workforce Board.*

Objective: All partners’ contacts with area businesses will be coordinated, so as not to overlap. All business service representatives will present themselves and WorkSource business services using the same WorkSource identity, the same materials, and selling WorkSource services rather than individual agency services.

As a system, we will develop firm agreements for participation from partner organizations. The agreements will detail the responsibilities and commitments for participation. The agreements will require that all partner organizations provide services, share information and conduct themselves in manner agreed upon by all participating partners.

2. Goal: The available services will be clearly defined. The business customer will be presented with a clear picture of the services available to him/her, and how to obtain them.

Objective: Define clearly what our services are, who provides them, and how they are provided. Staff from all partners will be trained to understand this “menu of services”, and be able to describe and facilitate them for the business customer.

Objective: Establish levels / tiers of service, including at least basic core services – available to all businesses -, and premium services – offered only to certain business customers. Define how it will be determined

which businesses will be eligible to receive premium services.

3. Goal: Key performance measures will be developed / adopted to demonstrate the success of our business service program.

While the state provides performance information based on satisfaction surveys, there remains a need for realistic and meaningful ways to measure our success in offering business services. Possible measurements may include: a) Percentage of total employers in an area using WorkSource; b) Number of job listings posted with WorkSource; c) Number of businesses participating in job fairs, workplace learning activities, industry seminars, PFE, etc.

Objective: Develop measurements and the tools we may use to record them. This may include working with the state toward the improvement of SKIES for this purpose, or developing ways to use WorkSource Membership System, or other tracking methods – either through technology or other means.

4. Goal: Improve and coordinate our marketing to business. Businesses shall receive a clear message about our “menu of services”. Marketing materials vary from office to office, and from partner to partner. The state has recently developed a package of attractive and consistent materials. These may or may not clearly represent what we have available in each local office. The materials need to be developed in clear language understandable by employers and must clearly speak to the benefits and value of using the system.

Objective: Develop a marketing plan and evaluate existing materials. Do they speak with “one voice”? Do they describe our local services adequately? Is there a consistent message across all partners?

5. Goal: Staff the new, coordinated WorkSource Business Services Program.

Resources are at a premium. Across three counties and six offices, fewer than three FTEs are allocated to providing services to business. A proactive and effective delivery of services to business in our region will require more staff dedicated to the task.

Objective: Review staff allocations across all partners. Coordinate efforts to streamline existing work and reduce duplication. Consider reallocation of resources to meet the business services challenges.

Objective: Seek additional funding. Research / develop fee-for-service activities to augment and partially support business services.

Objective: Consider employing a Business Services Coordinator to bring this plan to fruition.

6. Goal: Employers shall have a convenient and comfortable place to avail themselves of tangible business resources. Each WorkSource will have a business resource area. This may or may not be physically located in the WorkSource Center.

Objective: A resource area would be a distinct location, within or apart from a WorkSource Center, which provides access to LMEA, tax information, information on hiring and job descriptions, etc. Additionally, the centers should offer space for interviewing and for industry specific training.

C. Workforce System Partners

Historically in the South Central workforce development area, it has been imperative that state and local agencies work together to provide services to both the employer and the job seeker. The Workforce Investment Act has provided an opportunity for local agencies to work in partnership and develop new strategies to meet the demands of the new emerging workforce and the employer community.

The South Central workforce development system includes, but is not limited to:

Employment Security, whose mission it is to help people succeed throughout their working lives. The Department carries this out by supporting workers during times of unemployment, by connecting job seekers with employers who have jobs to fill and by providing business and individuals with information they need to adapt to a changing economy.

Individuals to be served: General Public, Youth, Adults, Dislocated Workers, and Veterans

Services to be provided:

WorkSource Operator in Yakima, Klickitat and Skamania Counties

Wagner-Peyser activities under WIA Title III

Timber Retraining Programs

Trade Adjustment Assistance

Veterans Services

Services for Agricultural workers

WorkFirst

WIA I-B Youth, Adult, and Dislocated Worker services in Klickitat and Skamania County

Department of Social & Health Services, whose mission is to improve the quality of life for individuals and families in need, and help in achieving safe, self sufficient, healthy, and secure lives.

Individuals to be served: Adults, Youth, and Children in need.

Services to be provided:

WorkFirst services include core, intensive, and training services for adults who are on public assistance.

Cash Assistance provides temporary cash assistance to families in need.

Food Stamps provide food assistance to families in need.

Medicaid provides medical coverage to eligible families and individuals.

Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) provides subsidized child care program for individuals who are 200% of poverty people and are working and/or participating in a WorkFirst.

K-12 Educational System who are preparing students to be successful through mastering the skills outlined in Washington State's Educational Reform Initiative and preparing students to transition into full-time employment, the military, post-secondary training, and/or baccalaureate education while becoming responsible citizens.

Individuals to be served: Youth and Families

Services to be provided:

General Education

Activities funded by Carl D. Perkins Vocational-Technical Education Act of 1998 for secondary vocational education activity.

Yakima Valley Community College and Clark Community College As learning-centered institutions, they serve a diverse community, assisting students in acquiring the knowledge in basic literacy, academic, professional, and technical programs and skills for life-long learning.

Individuals to be served: In-School Youth, "At-Risk" Youth, Dislocated Workers, Adults in Yakima, Kittitas, and Klickitat Counties.

Services to be provided:

Intensive and Training Services to WIA IB Youth, Adults, and Dislocated Workers

Employer Sponsored Training

WorkFirst Services

Programs funded under Carl D. Perkins Vocational-Technical Education Act of 1998.

Work related adult basic education and literacy programs funded under the federal Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (WIA Title II)

Perry Technical Institute provides industry with well-trained people who are motivated to work as team members in our rapidly evolving technological world.

Individuals to be served: Youth and Adults who have a High School Diploma or GED.

Services to be provided: Established technical training and provide contractual training for employers in Yakima, Kittitas and Klickitat counties.

Washington State University, Central Washington State University, and Heritage College. These four-year institutions provide opportunities for individuals to gain the credentials or degrees beyond those offered by the K-12 system, Community College, and/or Technical Schools.

Individuals to be served: Youth, Adults, and Dislocated Workers

Services to be provided: Post-Secondary Baccalaureate education.

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation's mission is to enable individuals with disabilities to obtain and keep employment. Participants must have a disability that makes it difficult to get or keep a job and requires the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation services in order to work.

Individuals to be served: Individuals with disabilities

Services to be provided: Core and Intensive Services and other supportive services.

Department of Services for the Blind promotes the economic and social well-being of people who are blind and all other individuals with significant visual disabilities by encouraging and assisting them to become economically and socially independent and to stimulate their integration into society.

Individual to be served: Individuals who are blind

Services to be provided:

Core and Intensive Services to WIA I-B Youth (transitional students, as well as out-of school) and Adults in Yakima, Kittitas and Klickitat Counties

Fort Simcoe Job Corps, funded by the Workforce Investment Act, is designed to increase the employability of severely disadvantaged, out-of-school young people ages 16-24. Fort Simcoe offers a wide array of vocational skills and addresses other needs that bear on a student's employability.

Individuals to be served: Disadvantaged, Out-of-School, Drop-out Youth between the ages of 16-24.

Services to be provided: Core, Intensive, and Training Services for economically disadvantaged youth meeting program eligibility requirements.

People for People whose mission is to strengthen the community by providing quality human services.

Individuals to be served: Adults, Older Workers, TANF recipient, and Dislocated Workers

Services to be provided:

WorkSource Operator in Kittitas County

Core, Intensive and Training to WIA I-B Adults in Yakima and Kittitas Counties

Core, Intensive, and Training Services to WIA I-B Dislocated Workers in Kittitas County.

Transportation Service for special needs populations.

Opportunities Industrialization Center of Washington's (OIC) mission is to help in the elimination of unemployment, poverty and illiteracy so that people of all colors and creeds can lead their lives with greater human dignity.

Individuals to be served: Youth who are In-School and "at-risk", Out-of-School, and School Drop Outs, and Adults.

Services to be provided:

Core, Intensive, and Training Services under WIA I-B for Youth in Yakima and Kittitas Counties

WIA Programs to serve migrant and seasonal farm workers in Yakima, Kittitas, and Klickitat Counties

Americorp programs including Youthbuild, Circle of Success and Washington Reading Corps.

Ex-Offender Work Orientation Program for felony ex-offenders released to Yakima County.

Community Development Block Grant and Community Services Block Grant services

Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinic / Northwest Community Action Center (NCAC), mission is to create measurable change that will empower at-risk and economically disadvantaged individuals and families to achieve a greater level of self-sufficiency by engaging the

local communities and business through advocacy and coordination of financial, material, and human resources.

Individuals to be served: Economically Disadvantaged Families, In-School “at-risk” Youth, and Adults on Public Assistance in Yakima County

Services to be provided:

Core, Intensive, and Training Services for youth under WIA-I-B

“Readiness to Learn” Grant providing case-management services in K-12 system

GEAR Up Grant –Partnership with University of Washington Elementary Schools, Parents and Students

Connects Program providing youth with an exposure and connection to the various health care fields.

Seasonal Childcare Referral Services for Seasonal and Migrant Farmworkers.

WorkFirst Programs in Yakima County

Community Development Block Grant and Community Services Block Grant services

Medical and Dental Clinics for Farmworkers and other low-income individuals.

Hope Source mission is to build a community where all people can live a life of hope, dignity, and self-reliance.

Individuals to be served: Low income - Youth, Adults, and Families in Kittitas County

Services to be provided:

Community Development Block Grant and Community Services Block Grant services

Weatherization

Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault Victim Service

Transportation Assistance

Other support services

Klickitat – Skamania Development Council’s mission is to prevent and alleviate poverty through programs which will build stronger individuals, families, organizations and community.

Individuals to be served: Low income - Youth, Adults, and Families in Klickitat and Skamania Counties

Services to be provided:

Community Development Block Grant and Community Services Block Grant services

WorkFirst Programs

Timber Workers Assistance Programs

Other support services

Labor Organizations such as Laborers’ International Union Local #614, United Brotherhood of Carpenters, Painters & Allied Trades, Sheet Metal Workers who provide apprenticeship opportunities in their respective trades and are members of the South Central’s Construction Industry Skill Panel.

Business Organizations such as the Chambers of Commerce will be providing Business Services as described in WIA through the WorkSource Centers. They will serve as a forum for the development of goals and strategies benefiting the business community and to articulate these goals and strategies to the public and promote support for them.

Economic Development Organizations will be providing Business Services as described in WIA through the WorkSource Centers. Their mission is to retain and expand existing businesses in the community and recruit new businesses into the community to provide employment opportunities to diversify the economic base.

The following are other One-Stop System Partners who are part of the South Central workforce development system:

- AARP/Senior Employment
- Provident Industries
- Catholic Family Services/Child Care Resource and Referral
- Central Washington Comprehensive Mental Health
- Goodwill Industries
- Providence Health Systems
- Rural Enterprise Community
- Women and Minorities Enterprise Program
- Yakima County Aging and Long Term Care
- Yakima County Coalition for the Homeless
- Washington State Migrant Council
- Yakama Nation

Division of Child Support

Elmview

And other organizations

D. Changes in the Local System

Businesses are increasingly concerned about educational reforms and the quality of the labor force. Economic growth in the South Central workforce area will be increasingly constrained by the lack of a skilled workforce. It is imperative that emphasis is placed on the development of our human capital.

Strong partnerships must be forged with business groups that include local economic development agencies, labor organizations, chambers of commerce and other business organizations. The spectrum of linkages will take different forms to include:

1. Using business as a primary source for identifying workforce needs and designing training services that will provide workers with the skills and abilities for jobs in the local community.
2. Using skills training as an incentive for economic development initiatives that will attract new businesses to the area and assist existing businesses to remain in the community, including training programs for incumbent workers to facilitate career growth and economic earnings.
3. Development of innovative programs that will train youth and adult workers for skills that match emerging job opportunities that provide livable wages and opportunity for career growth.

4. Development of industry specific training that responds to urgent and specific needs of business.

Programs for adults in transition will emphasize training in high skill, high wage occupations that provide the skills needed to achieve self-sufficiency and opportunity for career and economic growth. The South Central Workforce Council will link WorkFirst, WIA I-B adult and dislocated worker services, programs for people with disabilities, financial aide programs and other services to provide a pool of resources that will support skill development of adults in the South Central workforce area.

Given the rural and agricultural nature of the service area, the Council recognizes the need for service to migrant and seasonal farm workers in the South Central workforce area. In order to assure access, participation and employment for this segment of the population, the Council will provide basic education, English as a second language, and skill training that allows migrant and seasonal farm workers to acquire the basic and technical skills required of local business.

Youth services will be connected to Goal 4 of Washington State's Essential Academic Learning Requirements, whereby school-based learning will be connected with work-based learning to develop the cognitive connection between what is learned in the classroom with the workplace. Emphasis will be placed on the development of portfolios and selections of career majors with an awareness of nontraditional occupations. Services will be constructed around activities that will lead into entrance or further training for high-skilled and high wage jobs. Consistent with education reform, the Council will assist

local districts with Washington Academic Student Learning assessment efforts.

As a primary initiative, the South Central Workforce Council will strive toward a single regional partnership that will link the range of employment, training and post secondary programs for youth. Through the South Central Youth Council, services such as Running Start, two + two academic programs degrees, and Career and Technical Education will be connected through common goals, objectives and strategies.

SECTION IV.

PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY

A. South Central's Performance System

The South Central Workforce Council and WorkSource partners are dedicated to the delivery of quality services in the Yakima, Kittitas, Klickitat and Skamania Counties. To achieve high levels of performance the Council recognizes the need for clearly defined measures that identify the system's progress and areas needing improvement. The South Central Workforce Council has received the baseline core indicators from the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board. In development of local accountability measures, care was taken to consider the unique characteristics of the local area that directly influence performance outcomes. Discussion and proposed indicators are found at the end of this section.

The South Central workforce system understands the importance of focusing on customers of the system, both workers and the employer community. In the development of the local One-Stop system and in preparation of the transition to WIA, the local system has already adopted the "Simply Better" model for continuous quality improvement (CQI). In oversight of the local WorkSource system the Council will use the CQI model to obtain customer feedback for improving core, intensive and training services, identifying service gaps and developing strategies to eliminate or resolve issues. The workforce system will incorporate the information provided by the Mystery Shopper to improve services as well as reward a job well done.

B. Data Collection and Reporting

To track local performance indicators the Council will employ automated tracking systems and will report information that is consistent with federal and state requirements. The Workforce Council WIA programs and other WorkSource partners have implemented a statewide case management information system called SKIES.

The Services, Knowledge & Information Exchange System (SKIES) is hosted on Washington State servers. SKIES is a comprehensive database system that interfaces with many other state agency data sources to provide as timely and accurate information as possible about the services and needs of our customers. SKIES is accessed by local case managers, program managers, and MIS staff via a secure Internet browser interface. It is designed to support the delivery of services across multiple programs by providing universal access to employment and training services in a One-Stop environment.

The primary functions in SKIES are Management Information, Performance Information, Labor Exchange activities and Case Management (plan and track customer services and needs).

WorkSource Centers provide customers with a "one-stop shopping experience" to find employment and training services and resources. Many WorkSource partners offer intensive and training services, but the overwhelming majority of residents who visit the WorkSource centers take advantage of the many "self-service" activities made available in our resource rooms and lobbies. While SKIES tracks performance and provides case management tools for customers receiving intensive and training services, our WorkSource system lacked a means to track the activities of these self service customers.

In early 2001, the Tri-County Workforce Council saw this need, and developed the WorkSource Membership System (WMS, originally called WorkSource Tracking System). This Internet-based system provides us information about the self-service activities of our WorkSource customers, as they sign in using their magnetically encoded membership card, and voluntarily reporting their activities. Other workforce areas in the state have since adopted the WMS system.

The South Central Workforce Council firmly believes that good performance is a primary cornerstone to a credible system. To ensure the local workforce system is achieving acceptable levels the Council, at a minimum, will require of its contractors and operators of the One-Stop system performance reports on a quarterly basis. Reports will cover both those core indicators required and as made available by the state as well as specific goals and performance outcomes tracked locally by the Council and WIA I-B contractors. As the Council deems necessary, local or state evaluative data such as employer or participant surveys will be used as a supplement to evaluate the local workforce system.

C. Provider Eligibility

The South Central Workforce Council contracts the majority of WIA I-B services. The selection of service providers is based on a procurement procedure that complies with federal, state and local procurement processes. The criteria for selection include:

- Quality of training

- Characteristics of participants

- Cost

- Performance goals

- Staff capability

- Organizational experience

- Financial viability

- Audit and performance reports

- Past performance

The South Central geographical area is large with many small communities located throughout the region and distanced from major population centers. For residents of the rural communities, technical schools, trade schools, four-year colleges and community college programs are not readily available and accessible. In a time when the workplace is frequently changing and jobs require new skills, employers often require specialized training programs that are not available through local training institutions.

When a provider of training develops programs to address these needs and seeks WIA funding or the use of WIA Individualized Training Accounts, the training provider is required to make application to the Council for review and approval. Once approved, the Council will provide the state Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board in Olympia with the application. That application process must be completed for each program a training provider is petitioning to have approved for the Washington State Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL). The State notifies the training provider and the local workforce council, as well as lists all newly approved programs on the state website for access. The state's eligible training provider list

is reviewed by the WTECB annually. The criteria for approval will include:

Review of course content for appropriateness of skills needed in the local labor market.

Review of instructional staff to ensure instructors are qualified to deliver the training.

Review of tuition and fees to ensure that costs are reasonable.

Review of the organization's past performance.

Other criteria required by the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board.

D. Performance and Interventions

In the delivery of services through subcontracts, the Council will review performance to monitor progress against federal and state core measures as well as those individual measures proposed and negotiated with the bidder. For each contract, the Council will set monthly benchmarks and a range for benchmark performance.

In the event a contractor falls below the tolerances set by the Council, administrative staff will review the performance deficiencies to determine the appropriate action needed for correction. If the findings are non-significant in nature, staff will inform the organization of the problem in writing and request a written response that details the actions that will be taken and timelines for correcting deficiencies. Should problems continue to exist or where the issues identified are substantial and significant the Council, at its discretion, shall institute any one or a combination of the following actions.

Sanctions

Contract suspension

De-obligation of funds

Contract termination

The Council has historically recognized good performance of service providers in the system and will continue this practice. Incentives are made available to sub-recipients when the Council has reached performance benchmarks set by the state that result in incentives to the local area, and when the sub recipient performance has at the end of their contract period met or exceeded the goals of their contract. Payments to contractors are pro-rated to contractors of the system based on the proportionate share of services provided through their subcontract.

The South Central Workforce Council is part of the larger state workforce development investment system. All performance-based interventions shall be consistent and comply with the Washington State Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board Plan and subsequent policy.

E. Continuous Quality Improvement

The South Central Workforce Council is committed to the improvement of programs and services. To achieve this goal, the Council will develop an annual assessment of the local system that will focus on the following Malcolm Baldrige Criteria:

Leadership

Strategic planning

Customer focus and satisfaction

Information and analysis (self-assessment and benchmarking)

Human resource and management development

Process management and improvement results

The “Simply Better” model has been selected by the local One-Stop partnership and implementation has already begun in the local WorkSource (One-Stop) system. In addition, the Council will continue to pursue quality throughout the local workforce system and may use additional practices that:

Objectively measure services that are relevant to workforce outcomes and performance objectives.

Provide clear information necessary for changes to expand or improve delivery of core services, referral, contract and access options, and/or points of service.

Identify service gaps.

Provide information that will lead to the improvement of the “feel” of service sites and “satisfaction” of services received by customers.

Utilize existing CQI models and tools that have already or will be developed by the Department of Labor and the Washington State Employment Security Department.

F. Federal and State Performance Measures

Federal Participant and Employer Satisfaction Measure for Youth, Adult, and Dislocated Worker Programs.

WIA I-B participants who have exited either from the Youth, Adult, Dislocated Worker programs are eligible to be chosen for inclusion in a random sample. Participants

are asked three questions regarding their overall satisfaction with the services that they have received.

Employers who have received a substantial service are eligible to be chosen for inclusion in the random sample. Employers are asked three questions regarding overall satisfaction with the services that they have received.

Federal Satisfaction Targets for Youth, Adult, and Dislocated Worker Programs

	Employer Satisfaction*	Participant Satisfaction*
Year 6	69.0%	75.0%
Year 7	69.5%	75.5%

*The weighted average ratings on each of the 3 questions regarding overall satisfaction reported on a 0-100 scale

Youth Federal Targets

	Older Youth Entered Employment	Older Youth Retention	Older Youth Earnings	Older Youth Credential	Younger Youth Skill Gains	Younger Youth Diploma	Younger Youth Retention
Year 6:	77.8%	83.4%	\$2,704	63.2%	86.0%	60.8%	71.2%
Year 7:	78.8%	83.7%	\$2,737	64.2%	87.0%	61.8%	72.2%

Youth Federal Definitions:

Older Youth Entered Employment: Of those who are not employed at registration (excluding those who are not employed in the first quarter after exit, but are enrolled in post-secondary education or advanced training in the first quarter after exit): Number of older youth who have entered employment by the end of the first quarter after exit divided by the number of older youth who exit during the quarter.

Older Youth Employment Retention: Of those who are employed in the first quarter after exit (excluding those who are not employed in the third quarter after exit, but are enrolled in post-secondary education or advanced training in the third quarter after exit): Number of older youth who are employed in the third quarter after exit divided by the number of older youth who exit during the quarter.

Older Youth Average Earnings Change: Of those who are employed in the first quarter after exit (excluding those who are not employed in the third quarter after exit, but who are enrolled in post-secondary education or advanced training in the third quarter after exit): Total post-program earnings (quarter 2 plus quarter 3 after exit) minus pre-program earnings (quarter 2 plus quarter 3 prior to registration) divided by the number of older youth who exit during the quarter.

Older Youth Credential: Number of older youth who are in employment, post-secondary education, or advanced training in the first quarter after exit and received a credential by the end of the third quarter after exit divided by the number of older youth who exit during the quarter.

Younger Youth Skill Gains: Of all in-school youth and any out-of-school youth assessed to be in need of basic skills, work readiness skills, and/or occupational skills: Total of number attained basic skills goals + number attained work readiness skills goals + number attained occupational skills goals divided by total number of basic skills goals + number of work readiness skills goals + number of occupational skills goals.

Younger Youth Diploma or Equivalent Attainment: Of those who register without a diploma or equivalent: The number of younger youth who attained secondary school diploma or equivalent by the end of the first quarter after exit divided by the number of younger youth who exit during the quarter (except those still in secondary school at exit).

Younger Youth Retention: The number of younger youth found in one of the following in the 3rd quarter after exit (post-secondary education, advanced training, employment, military service, qualified apprenticeships) divided by the number of younger youth who exit during the quarter (exclude those still in secondary school at exit).

Youth State Targets

		Participant Satisfaction	Educational Attainment	Employment or Further Education	Median Earnings
Year 6:		95.0%	72.8%	76.1%	\$10,853
Year 7:		95.0%	73.3%	76.6%	\$11,145

Youth State Definitions:

Participant Satisfaction: Of those youth who exited and responded to the survey in the 3rd quarter after exit divided by the number of respondents very satisfied or somewhat satisfied divided by number of respondents.

Education Attainment: All youth age 17 or older (at exit) who exit the program and received a credential within three quarters after exit divided by all youth age 17 or older (at exit) who exit the program.

Employment or Further Education: All youth who are employed in quarter 3 after exit, in post secondary education in the 3rd quarter after exit, or in secondary school at exit divided by all youth who exit the program.

Median Earnings: Determine the median quarterly wage of all exiters with earnings in the 3rd quarter after exit. Annualize the quarterly median wage by multiplying times 4. Include all youth who exit the program and have earnings in the 3rd quarter after exit (except those in post secondary school with earnings).

Adult Federal Targets

	Adult Entered Employment	Adult Retention	Adult Earnings	Adult Credential
Year 6	79.2%	80.4%	\$3,841	68.8%
Year 7	79.7%	80.9%	\$3,941	69.8%

Adult Federal Definitions:

Entered Employment: Of those who are not employed at the date of participation: The number of participants who are employed in the first quarter after exit divided by the number of participants who exit during the quarter

Retention: Of those who are employed in the first quarter after exit: The number of participants who are employed in both the second and the third quarter after exit divided by the number of participants who exit during the quarter. Customers not employed in the first quarter after exit are excluded.

Earnings Gain: Of those who are employed in the first quarter after exit: Total post-program earnings (earnings in the second and third quarter after exit) minus pre-program earnings (earnings in second quarter and third quarter prior to participation) divided by the number of participants who exit during the quarter. Customers not employed in the first quarter after exit are excluded.

Credential: Of the adults who received training services: Number of participants who were employed in the first quarter after exit and received a credential by the end of the third quarter after exit divided by the number of participants who exited during the quarter.

Adult State Targets

	Participant Satisfaction	Adult Employment	Adult Earnings	Adult Credential
Year 6	90.0%	75.8%	\$15,583	62.9%
Year 7	90.0%	75.8%	\$16,118	63.4%

Adult State Definitions:

Participant Satisfaction: Satisfaction rate is based on State Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board phone survey using a sample drawn from all adults who exit the program. The following two questions are asked, 1) “To what extent did you meet your educational objectives as a result of your enrollment?” And 2) “Overall, would you say you were “very satisfied”, “somewhat satisfied”, “somewhat dissatisfied”, or “very dissatisfied” with the training program?”

Employment: All adults who exit the program regardless of their employment status at participation, and are not enrolled in school in the third quarter after exit divided by all adults who exit the program

Earnings: Rank earnings for those people who exit the program who have earnings in the third quarter after exit, rank earnings from highest to lowest and determine median quarterly earnings. Annualize the quarterly median wage by multiplying times four.

Credential: All adults who exit the program divided by the number who attained a credential within three quarters after exit.

Dislocated Worker Federal Targets

	DW Entered Employment	DW Job Retention	DW Earnings Replacement	DW Employment & Credential Attainment
Year 6	81.8%	88.4%	-\$750.00%	71.9%
Year 7	82.3%	88.9%	-\$650.00%	72.4%

Dislocated Worker Federal Definitions:

Entered Employment: All dislocated workers are counted in this measure regardless of their employment status at registration. Number of dislocated workers who have entered employment by the end of the first quarter after exit divided by the number of dislocated workers who exit during the quarter.

Job Retention: Of those who are employed in the first quarter after exit: Number of dislocated workers who are employed in both the second and the third quarter after exit divided by the number of dislocated workers who exit during the quarter.

Earnings Replacement: Of those who are employed in the first quarter after exit. Total post-program earnings (earnings in quarter 2 + quarter 3 after exit) divided by the pre-dislocation earnings (earnings in quarter 2 + quarter 3 prior to dislocation).

Credential: Of the dislocated workers who received training services: Number of dislocated workers who were employed in the first quarter after exit and received a credential by the end of the third quarter after exit divided by the number of dislocated worker who exited during the quarter.

Dislocated Worker State Targets

	DW Participant Satisfaction	DW Employment	DW Earnings	DW Credential
Year 6	89.5%	80.5%	\$25,063	67.5%
Year 7	89.5%	81.0%	\$25,882	68.5%

Dislocated Worker State Definitions:

Participant Satisfaction: Satisfaction rate is based on State Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board phone survey using a sample drawn from all adults who exit the program. The following two questions are asked, 1) “To what extent did you meet your educational objectives as a result of your enrollment?” And 2) “Overall, would you say you were “very satisfied”, “somewhat satisfied”, “somewhat dissatisfied”, or “very dissatisfied” with the training program?”.

Employment: Percent of adults employed third quarter after exit: All adults who exit the program regardless of their employment status at registration, and are not enrolled in school in the third quarter after exit divided by all adults who exit the program.

Earnings: Rank earnings for those people who exit the program who have earnings in the third quarter after exit, rank earnings from highest to lowest and determine median quarterly earnings. Annualize the quarterly median wage by multiplying times 4.

Credential: Credential: All adults who exit the program divided by the number who attained a credential within three quarters after exit. Credentials are identified by administrative records and cross-matches with Community & Technical College records, High School and Private Career Schools data, and approved Apprenticeship programs.

Common Performance Measures

The Department of Labor implemented a single comprehensive system to collect, record, and report program performance for federal workforce programs. The Department of Labor will continue to collect all the data on program activities, participants, and outcomes that are necessary for program management and to convey full and accurate information on the performance of workforce programs to policymakers and stakeholders.

Three common measures apply to programs serving youth, adults, and dislocated workers.

Youth Measures	Adult and Dislocated Worker Measures
➤ Placement in Employment or Education	➤ Entered Employment
➤ Attainment of a Degree or Certificate	➤ Employment Retention
➤ Literacy and Numeracy Gains	➤ Earnings Increase

Youth Common Measures

Placement in Employment or Education: *Of those who are not in post-secondary education, employment, or the military at the date of participation:* The number of participants who are in employment or the military or enrolled in post-secondary education and/or advanced training/occupational skills training in the first quarter after exit divided by the number of participants who exit during the quarter.

Attainment of a Degree or Certificate: *Of those enrolled in education (at the date of participation or at any point during the program):* The number of participants who attain a diploma, GED, or certificate by the end of the third quarter after exit divided by the number of participants who exit during the quarter.

Literacy and Numeracy Gains: *Of those out-of-school youth who are basic skills deficient:* The number of participants who increase one or more educational functioning levels divided by

the number of participants who have completed a year in the program (i.e., one year from the date of program participation)

plus the number of participants who exit before completing a year in the program.

Adult Common Measures

Entered Employment: *Of those who are not employed at the date of participation:* The number of participants who are employed in the first quarter after exit divided by the number of participants who exit during the quarter.

Employment Retention: *Of those who are employed in the first quarter after exit:* The number of participants who are employed in both the second and third quarters after the exit quarter divided by the number of participants who exit during the quarter. Adults and Dislocated Workers who were not employed in the first quarter after exit are excluded.

Earnings Increase: *Of those who are employed in the first quarter after exit:* Total post program earnings (in the second and third quarters after exit) minus the pre-program earnings (in second and third quarters prior to the participation quarter) divided by the number of participants who exit during the quarter. Customers not employed in the first quarter after exit are excluded from this measure

SECTION V.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES

MISSION STATEMENT

Establish, maintain, and improve a customer driven workforce system to increase skills, employment, job retention and earnings resulting in a quality workforce and enhanced productivity and profitability of South Central workforce area businesses.

A. Planning Process

The South Central Workforce Council's Strategic and Operations plans were developed under the supervision of the Workforce Council. Extra effort was made to ensure the community, workforce partners and other stakeholders were provided opportunity to review, provide input and comment on the plan. The subsequent table details the activities and timelines for updating the strategic plan.

In 2002 the Tri-County Workforce Council was awarded a Community Audit Grant from the Department of Labor to:

- Define Self-Sufficiency
- Define our Workforce Population
- Forecast expected changes in the workforce economy
- Define the support services available to our workforce (e.g. childcare, transportation, training)

The Community Audit, called "State of the Workforce Report", was presented in each county soliciting comment

and input from community members. The information gathered from these community meetings provided anecdotal information and helped to reshape the focus, not only of that report, but also the strategic and operational plans.

In April of 2002, the Council, in partnership with several community groups, sponsored Workforce Week. Job Fairs, Youth Career Fair, open houses and public seminars and workshops highlighted this week of workforce-related events. Nationally known speaker Ed Barlow led many of these events, and elicited input from business, education and community members which provided direction to the Council for strategies for the next few years.

B. Workforce Priorities

The workforce priorities for the South Central workforce area were identified by leaders from business, K-12 and post-secondary education, labor, the Yakama Nation, economic development agencies, community based organizations, and local government.

The community meetings, such as Workforce Week and the Community Audit, expanded these priorities. The priorities are as follows:

Workforce programs need to develop and implement services that improve worker productivity and employer satisfaction.

Programs should target development of challenging jobs that provide workers with opportunity for career and economic growth.

The Workforce System needs to connect and work in partnership with the K-12 education system. Emphasis should be placed on supporting Washington State's four

essential learning goals and the development of skills that are applicable to the workplace.

The workforce system must be inclusive, recognizing the diversity of the region and creating non-traditional employment opportunities for people of color, under-represented genders and people with disabilities.

- ❑ The workforce system must be proactive in efforts to retain businesses including designing a program around the common needs identified by South Central's Skill Panels (Manufacturing, Healthcare, Ag/Food Processing, Construction Trades) for both short-term benefits and long-term positioning that improve efficiency through incumbent worker skill upgrades.
- ❑ The workforce system must continue implementing the strategy of training incumbent workers since that practice upgrades worker skills, averts layoffs, increases earnings, achieves promotions, and allows for cross-industry recognized credentials-- all aspects helping industry to stay healthy.

The Council also recognized that while many community comments have been valuable and relevant to the positive development of the workforce system, some community recommendations fell outside the purview of the policy body, others were more characteristic of the philosophies that need to be maintained to create an equitable system and one that supports other systems connecting to workforce development. All comments and recommendations have been considered important and have been incorporated as operating standards and principles for the system.

1. The local workforce system must value, support and work cooperatively with the K-12 education system. The Council and the partners of the workforce system must work cooperatively with, encourage and support schools in the development or modification of curricula that teaches workplace skills and the development of individual career plans for all youth. Further, the Council will support state education reform through the four essential learning goals and development of a certificate of mastery.

2. The Council must value the pursuit of vocational and/or technical training in high schools. The Council also supports students seeking immediate entrance to the labor market to pursue vocational or technical studies, and training through technical schools and apprenticeship training programs.

3. The Council must maintain a strong priority and commitment to post secondary training and communicate to local schools the need for challenging and demanding courses that will prepare them for entrance into post secondary programs.

4. The Council supports efficiencies in the use of public dollars and time investments of students. The Council will support programs, such as Running Start, two + two academic degrees, and other community college courses for the "double efficiency" they offer in completing high school graduation credits and college credits concurrently. This also includes efficiencies in education for all students by encouraging workforce organizations and education to coordinate among schools, adult basic education, and English as a second language programs.

5. Services to young people need to be holistic. Assessments should consider the needs of students and families. When providing services, system staff need to

recognize the changing family life styles such as job relocation and the demands placed on seasonal work and farm worker families and support communities in their efforts to address child care needs and parenting skills.

6. The Council must be proactive in making positive change at a local and on a state level. This will take the form of direct communication with the state legislature to encourage support of local funding for economic development, education and other programs.

7. The Council will operate in a manner that seeks and promotes full participation from all of community's groups, including the disenfranchised, community-based organizations, the faith-based community, labor, employees, and employers through on-going and as-needed focus groups. Council members on a regular basis will meet with respective constituencies and report on workforce activities.

8. The Council will develop a close alliance with economic development agencies to promote a diverse economic base that provides vertical (value-added) and horizontal integration.

9. The Council will continue to encourage and provide support in the development and promotion of customer service training to the local workforce system including training in serving target populations.

10. The Council celebrates the diversity of our communities and encourages the Workforce Council and the WorkSource system to reflect the diversity of the community.

C. Commitment to Special Populations

The South Central Workforce Council is committed to the concept of equal opportunity and access to equitable services for all segments of the local population. After considering all available and current demographic data, appropriate and specific target groups will be set by the Council in order to insure that no segment of the population is disregarded. Specific groups targeted for service include females, people with disability, TANF recipients, school drop-outs, people 55 years and older, Hispanics, Blacks, Native Americans and Asians. Emphasis will be placed on marketing and outreach to target populations with the priority being fair and equal access to and benefit from services.

D. Economic Issues

While the development of new infrastructure for adequate roads, utilities, and ready-to-build sites maintain the highest priority, work force development is recognized as an integral and vital element of local economic development plans. A strategy common to all economic development agencies across the region is focus on the expansion of present business, creation of new local businesses, and marketing of the region to attract new companies. Industries targeted for growth, expansion, and attraction include:

- High tech industries

- Agriculture and related industries

- Manufacturing (including assisting Puget Sound firms with production bottlenecks)

- Recreation

Healthcare

Construction Industry

As seen in previous discussions, education and job skill levels are low compared to other parts of the state. To increase skill levels and prepare the local workforce, it was agreed that industries with an \$8 to \$12 hourly pay range provide the greatest opportunity to employ the current pool of unemployed workers. To achieve wage and job progression, future emphasis would be placed on existing or new businesses offering hourly wages in the \$12 to \$15 category, followed by higher end technology industries providing significant employment opportunities in the \$15 and higher category.

Over the past few years, economic development agencies and workforce organizations have recognized the vital link between a quality workforce and business success. As a result, training institutions have become closer aligned with economic development agencies to implement workforce training programs that address employment needs. Such practices include development of community college curricula to address specific need requirements of new and expanding businesses. As companies consider the South Central area for expansion or new business start-ups, workforce organizations work closely with economic development staff to package and market training programs and employer incentives.

Business Retention and Expansion:

One fine example of an effective partnership between economic development and workforce development is occurring in the South Central region. The Economic Development Association/New Vision (EDA) assists manufacturing businesses via the Business Retention and Expansion program. These businesses include agriculture and food processing, viticulture, metal fabrication, wood products, plastics, printing, fabrication of food processing equipment, and telecommunication products. Strong relationships between the EDA, the Workforce Council, and Washington Manufacturing Services paved the way to capitalize on numerous customized training grants. Private industry provided match dollars double the grant awards and over 275 workers from 45 manufacturing companies in the area have received customized training. This “lean” training has helped the South Central region weather the recession much better than most areas in the state.

E. Economy and Skills Needs

Like other parts of Washington State, businesses in the South Central area are finding it harder to fill job openings. Although worker supply is high in the South Central area, businesses see too many job openings left unfilled due to the lack of applicant education and job skills. Too many employers report that the available workforce lacks the basic education, work maturity, and job specific skills currently needed in their business.

While the economy in the local area has historically been sluggish, community leaders remain optimistic and confident that the local economy can be vitalized through careful implementation of a comprehensive plan. A cornerstone of this plan includes a restructuring of the

workforce system to create new training programs, strategies and practices that build on the strength of current workforce to address business needs. To achieve this end the workforce system must:

1. Be responsive to current and future employment needs of business. Workforce programs must gain a greater understanding of the skill requirements; create an efficient system for referral to openings and design training programs that provide sound basic education, work maturity, and job specific skills.
2. Address skill needs of current workforce. Training programs should focus on developing skills for current jobs in the labor market, provide increased opportunity for improving basic educational skills, and increased opportunities for language training for those with limited English speaking ability.
3. Maximize resources and integrate services. The cost of training and retraining is high. To maximize resources, training organizations must wisely use funds from all sources to provide the greatest opportunity to those needing training. Services must be integrated in a fashion that reduces unnecessary duplication and simplifies the process for customers seeking training or employment.
4. Design programs that are flexible and innovative. Business expansion or start-ups can occur quickly with little advanced warning. Workforce organizations must be positioned to assist businesses in screening, recruiting, and hiring to fill a few or many positions. Training institutions and programs must be ready to develop new curricula or adapt existing programs to develop worker skills in the shortest time possible.

5. Work cooperatively with education to solidify the connection between the classroom and workplace. Consistent with Washington State educational reform, workforce organizations can play an important role to K-12 education in their efforts to achieve Goal 4 of the Essential Academic Learning Requirements. Workforce organizations are uniquely positioned to serve as the bridge between schools and business.

6. Maintain a priority for service to disadvantaged adult and youth. Given the high rates of school dropouts, TANF participation, and poverty levels of the South Central workforce area, services must target the less fortunate by providing all residents the opportunity to improve their quality of life through higher paying jobs that provide future growth.

F. Goals of the South Central Workforce Development Area

In late January of 2000, the Workforce Council convened in a two-day work session to examine the worker and business needs of the local area and to establish the direction of the local workforce system into the new century. The Council carefully considered the many comments received through the community planning process as well as the priorities set forth in the Governor's Executive Order and those articulated by the State Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board. In most cases, they found all shared a common theme. That is, workforce programs needed to:

Build a strong partnerships with education K-12, post-secondary, technical colleges and other workforce organizations

Strengthen worker readiness through education, work maturity, and job skills.

Include full participation of all residents of the area.

Focus on significant worker populations (youth, adults in transition, dislocated, public assistance recipients and incumbent workers).

Connect workforce training with economic development to retain and promote economic growth.

To achieve the aforementioned the South Central Workforce Council has set forth the following goals and objectives.

Goal 1. Improve the quality of education in all local area school districts through collaboration with business to prepare youth for entry into the workforce.

Objective A. Strengthen the connection between school and the workplace.

Strategies:

1. Establish a clearinghouse of workforce learning materials available to the South Central region to support education.
2. Recruit and maintain a pool of employers (business people) who can serve as resource speakers and instructors for job readiness classes.
3. Develop labor-business advisory committees to serve as a resource to local educators in the development of curricula, classes and programs that utilize contextual, applied and work-based learning opportunities.
4. Develop a database of employers who will provide first hand work based learning experience to youth

through internships, work experience, and job shadowing.

5. Establish teacher internships to keep educators abreast of the skills needed in the workplace.

Objective B. Develop programs that will help all students, including dropouts and students at risk, succeed.

Strategies:

1. Develop programs and organize efforts to assist the dropout students with school reentry to achieve a high school diploma or access alternative education opportunities for GED completion including effective after school hours and summer programs.
2. Develop programs that focus on development of basic education skills for high mobility students, migratory students and students of farm families.
3. Develop tutoring programs that will assist students in mastering reading, writing, and math skills.
4. Develop employer mentoring/counseling programs to help dropout youth understand their employment potential.
5. Link “second-chance” programs for youth who are out-of school with the “first-chance” system for youth who are in school.

Goal 2: Prepare adults in transition (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, disadvantaged adults, dislocated workers and older workers) for successful participation in the workforce.

Objective A: Prepare TANF participants (including non-custodial parents) with the skills needed for entrance to the labor market, and the ability to find and retain employment to achieve self-sufficiency.

Strategies:

1. Provide the full range of services to TANF participants through the WorkSource (One-Stop) system with WorkFirst employment services joining the WorkSource system as a full partner described in local Resource Sharing Agreements and MOUs.
2. Increase capacity and access to services in rural WorkSource Centers through the use of technology.
3. For those seeking self-sufficiency, expand access to and provide the necessary intensive services, as appropriate, to include childcare assistance, transportation, substance abuse counseling and other services that will remove barriers to employment.
4. Focus services on retention of jobs and wage progression.
5. Integrate the Yakima/Kittitas and Klickitat WorkFirst Local Planning Area strategic plans with the local workforce development system.

Objective B: Prepare disadvantaged adults with the skills needed to find and retain employment to achieve self-sufficiency.

Strategies:

1. Provide the full range of services to disadvantaged adult workers through WorkSource (One-Stop) system.
2. For those seeking self-sufficiency, expand access to and provide the necessary intensive services, as appropriate, to include childcare assistance, transportation, substance abuse counseling, and other services that will remove barriers to employment.
3. Focus services on retention of jobs and wage progression.
4. Increase access and opportunities in basic skills and English as a second language instruction.
5. Offer incentives to employers for hiring and training low-income workers.

Objective C: Prepare workers age 55 years and older with employment and training opportunities to find and retain employment to achieve self-sufficiency.

Strategies:

1. Provide the full range of services to workers age 55 years and older through WorkSource (One-Stop) system.
2. Provide information to businesses and employers on the advantages of employing mature workers.

3. Offer incentives to employers for hiring and training older workers to increase employment and training opportunities.
4. Provide training programs at times and locations that are accessible and provide mature workers opportunity to learn new skills.

Objective D: Provide services that will assist dislocated workers in finding and retaining employment at a comparable wage prior to dislocation.

Strategies:

1. Provide the full range of services to dislocated workers through WorkSource (One-Stop) system.
2. Continue exemplary best practices such as rapid response involving partners from public service employment, the community college and labor.
3. Prioritize return to work at comparable wages in as short a time as possible.

Goal 3: Expand and retain the present economic base and promote future business growth through the development of a well-trained workforce.

Objective A: Provide opportunities for incumbent workers to further their education in job-related skills or education beyond basic levels.

Strategies:

1. Work with business leaders to create career, labor market information, and financial assistance information for incumbent workers to facilitate education, training and career choices.
2. Work with employers to identify and to provide in-house training that is cost-effective to the employer.

3. Develop incumbent worker training that builds skills for entry-level employees to move to higher skilled jobs within businesses.

Objective B: Create private-public partnerships to enable individuals to move up job and career ladders throughout their lives.

Strategies:

1. Develop and support industry skill cluster panels to assess emerging and declining skill needs for development of training programs to meet those needs.
2. Develop secondary vocational-technical program standards linked to industry skill standards while working with the labor-business and education committees.

Objective C: Implement workforce services and programs that enhance business development, expansion and retention.

Strategies:

1. Work in partnership with economic development organizations in attracting businesses to the area or assisting in new business start-ups through services and incentives provided by the workforce system.
2. Assist at-risk businesses with employment, training and education programs that develop the skills of their workers.
3. Support business retention, expansion, and new location by providing comprehensive, worker training support services to meet employer's training needs.

Goal 4: Improve access to and quality of workforce training and employment programs to meet existing and future business needs.

Objective A: Encourage and provide opportunity for all groups to work together, share a common vision, and to be part of policy and decision-making.

Strategies:

1. Conduct extensive recruitment through outreach to organizations representing groups with significant memberships having limited English proficiency, by advertising outreach programs into targeted communities, via newspapers, radio and TV, and Spanish radio for limited English-speaking listeners.
2. Remove physical or artificial barriers and disincentives for people with disability, and other populations with unique obstacles to employment.
3. Develop and implement public informational campaigns that educate the community on the importance of workforce preparation.

Objective B: Increase the capacity of high schools, community and technical colleges, universities and apprenticeship programs to provide high quality workforce education and training programs.

Strategies:

1. Partner with industries to provide facilities, faculty, and equipment in high wage, high demand fields such as healthcare, construction trades, information technology, and communications, working with education and labor-business committees.

2. Expand apprenticeship training to non-traditional fields and expand pre-apprenticeship programs.
3. Seek and replicate best practices in all institutions through vocational and technical education. Provide assistance, if necessary, to educational institutions in the South Central region.