

RECOVER BETTER

A REGIONAL PLAN FOR EQUITABLE ECONOMIC RECOVERY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I. INTRODUCTION

The Regional Strategic Plan (‘the Plan’) is intended as a blueprint for establishing a set of shared priorities for the Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County (WDC) and its regional partners: county and city government, industry, labor, community colleges, educational & training partners, community-based organizations, and the community over the next 3-5 years. The Plan is intended to align regional and partner resources, and to strategically and collaboratively respond to the unprecedented job loss and massive economic disruption resulting from the COVID-19 global pandemic. The Plan intentionally and explicitly prioritizes equitable economic recovery, improving job quality and the placement of dislocated workers into quality jobs, as its ultimate north stars. The strategies here are explicit in their intent to support Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) and immigrant and refugee communities, who have historically experienced economic marginalization, and now made more vulnerable without an intentional and concerted effort to center their needs and ensure their equitable participation in the region’s recovery.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

A set of guiding principles informed the planning and development of the Plan as well as its priorities and strategies:

- Centering racial equity at the core of the Plan by focusing on Black, Indigenous, People of Color workers, immigrant and refugee communities, and those disproportionately impacted in the current economic recession.
- A dogged insistence on moving dislocated workers into quality jobs offering living wages and benefits, the opportunity for advancement, and safe workplaces to minimize personal risk & prioritize health.
- Improving the quality of jobs historically occupied by low-income workers.
- Attention to equitable access to economic opportunity and the removal of barriers that have historically precluded BIPOC workers, immigrants, and refugees from accessing quality jobs.
- A cross-sector and expansive solutions orientation inclusive of human services, advocacy and policy solutions.
- Strategy selection informed by research, evidence, and data, as well as the perspectives of industry, labor, the community, and other partners.
- Leading with innovation and best practices in workforce development, resisting an impulse to default to the status quo and other real or perceived constraints.

APPROACH

We sought the perspectives of industry, labor, government and the community whenever possible to understand enablers and barriers to employment, as well as complementary data analyses, research, and evidence. The Plan relied on existing sources of community feedback to minimize burdening community members with additional requests for engagement and input, while they manage the adverse impacts of the pandemic. As the Plan moves from formulation to implementation, the integration of community engagement will continue to play a critical role.

In addition, we examined economic projections at the national and regional levels to make reasonable assumptions about the region’s recovery. We established a short-list of ‘opportunity

sectors’ – those sectors we believe should be a focus of regional recovery - based on short-term indicators of recovery, criteria associated with job quality, accessibility to those jobs by BIPOC, immigrant and refugee communities, and industry readiness and commitment. In recognition of the protracted uncertainty of these complex times, we anticipate and expect the Plan to evolve over time and be responsive to changing circumstances as needed.

Finally, we undertook an extensive landscaping of national and regional equitable workforce development practices and innovations to understand their efficacy and promise in supporting BIPOC communities, immigrants and refugees. We also looked at efforts in other regions to inform the selection of prioritized strategies.

II. COVID-19 IMPACTS

Since the onset of the COVID-19 virus in March of 2020, the pandemic has had a devastating impact on the region’s economy, workforce, health and well-being of the region’s residents. We sought to understand the economic impacts of the global pandemic on workers, sectors, occupations, and geography.

Qualitative feedback from the community suggest that many BIPOC communities, immigrants and refugees are in distress, struggling with financial, health, family needs and navigating multiple systems to access resources and supports. This is supported by data showing significant increases in requests for Basic Food, Medicaid, and housing related assistance as well as mental health services due to these multiple stressors. An analysis of the state’s Unemployment Insurance (UI) claims further affirms the disproportionate adverse economic impacts experience by these communities. Historical economic marginalization due to systemic racism, occupational segregation, and bias in hiring, have contributed to economic injustice and resulted in the overrepresentation of BIPOC workers, immigrants & refugees in those sectors hit hardest by job loss, as well as in low-wage occupations.¹ This economic hardship is further exacerbated as BIPOC and immigrant workers are facing increased exposure to COVID-19, working as caregivers, health care professionals, grocery store workers, delivery people and other essential jobs.

III. RECOVERY OUTLOOK

As context for the Regional Workforce Plan, we examined core drivers of economic recovery, trends in the changing nature of work, often accelerated or exacerbated by the pandemic, and qualitative research on recovery in the region.

There is general consensus among global business leaders that we should assume a recurrence of the virus, slow long-term growth, and a muted world recovery in the next one to two years.² Three factors: *consumer behavior, the development of a vaccine, and federal relief and stimulus* will in large part determine the timing and pace of the nation’s economic recovery. Recovery will also accelerate or exacerbate trends present prior to the pandemic, including rising income and racial inequality, shifts in global supply chains, a pervasive increase in automation and digitization in business operations including e-commerce, and an increase in remote work across many industries. Taken together, these factors will greatly shape the nature of work during and after the pandemic.³

REGIONAL SECTORS

Regional recovery is happening at a slow pace and varies by sector.⁴ Some sectors in the regional economy are starting to show signs of recovery in the short term, as indicated by decreases in continuing UI claims, increases in job postings, and changes in estimated employment since the peak of unemployment.⁵

The construction sector was initially hard hit by COVID-19, with new UI claims representing 32 percent of construction jobs. Since the peak of unemployment associated with COVID-19, continuing UI claims have dropped 76 percent, job postings have increased 38 percent, and estimated employment has increased by 36,900. Estimated year-to-year employment is down less than two percent or 1,300 jobs.

Other sectors showing signs of recovery include: some subsectors of manufacturing (e.g., computer and electronic products), retail trade (e.g., food and beverage stores and non-store retailers), some subsectors of transportation and warehousing (e.g. warehousing and storage), information, professional and technical services, and some subsectors of health care and social assistance.

WORKER RECOVERY

Recovery is slower for people of color, women and workers with lower levels of educational attainment who are even more disproportionately represented among continuing UI claims than new UI claims:

- **Blacks/African Americans** make up 13.4 percent of continuing UI claims, more than double their 6.1 percent representation in the labor force. By contrast, whites make up 46.6 percent of continuing UI claims, compared to 60.4 percent of the labor force. This pattern of disproportionality also holds true for American Indians/Alaska Natives and Pacific Islanders.
- **Women** are disproportionately represented among continuing UI claims. Women make up 47.7 percent of continuing UI claims, compared to 45.7 percent of the labor force. By contrast, men make up 51.8 percent of continuing UI claims, compared to 54.3 percent of the labor force.
- **Workers with lower levels of educational attainment** are also overrepresented among continuing UI claims. For example, those with a high school diploma or GED make up 26.3 percent of continuing UI claims, more than double their 13 percent representation in the labor force. By contrast, those with a BA or more make up 30.9 percent of continuing UI claims, about half their 58 percent representation in the labor force.⁶

IV. NORTH STARS

The Regional Strategic Plan is aimed at two north stars: *equitable economic recovery* and *job quality*. The first anchors on a recovery effort that prioritizes the inclusion of BIPOC workers and other economically marginalized communities; and the dismantling of structural and systemic racism across our institutions, such that all workers regardless of race or ethnicity have equitable access to high quality jobs and share in the region's economic prosperity.

The second anchor, job quality, raises the expectation and commitment of all partners in the workforce system to 1) improve the quality of existing jobs where BIPOC workers, immigrants and refugees are over-represented; and 2) placing BIPOC workers, immigrants and refugees in not just any job, but placement into a quality job with livable wages and benefits, opportunities for advancement and assurances of a safe and healthy workplace.

These north stars (described in more detail in *Section IV*) are undergirded by the following tenets:

- Recovery as an opportunity to rebuild better
- Centering equity
- Re-envisioning workforce development; and
- Broadening measures of success, including redefining job quality

V. SECTOR ANALYSIS

A building block in the focus of this plan is sector strategies, which as the foundation for a *sector-based* career pathway approach, has been shown to be more successful than training programs that place adults and dislocated workers in one-off, short-term trainings and low-wage jobs.⁷ Sector strategies help low income adults and people of color obtain quality, living wage jobs in targeted sectors and occupations; engage employers and unions as partners in the effort; and create systemic change within the targeted sector's and occupation's labor market.⁸

SECTOR ASSESSMENT

For this plan, we conducted a sector assessment to identify opportunity sectors using a set of eight criteria. Sectors were first evaluated regionally against quantitative indicators (size/presence & short-term indicators of recovery). We then evaluated sectors with significant regional presence and signs of short-term recovery against subjective criteria – including job quality and industry readiness.

OPPORTUNITY SECTORS

Using the assessment rubric and criteria described above, we identified eight opportunity sectors. While there were no sectors that rated high across all criteria, some showed promise in several criteria, while others present barriers to job access for workers of color, and/or opportunities to improve job quality. Taken together, our analysis identified eight critical sectors: **Construction, Manufacturing, Retail Trade, Transportation and Warehousing, Information Technology (IT), Healthcare, and Maritime.** (*Additional detail on Opportunity Sectors can be found in Section V*).

VI. STRATEGIES

Equitable economic recovery will require an explicit and intentional set of strategies to support BIPOC workers, immigrants and refugees – those historically left-behind and at-risk again of further economic marginalization. The Plan prioritizes strategies which are informed by research and the identification of innovative national and regional practices aimed at equitable economic recovery. We evaluated strategies for their promise of impact as well as the degree of difficulty in their implementation. On the latter, many of the strategies will require collaboration and commitment from multiple partners in the workforce ecosystem. Their execution will necessitate the regional workforce system evolving into an innovative, industry, and outcome-driven system with racial equity at its core. Strategies are organized as follows and are detailed in *Section VI, and the Strategy Summary*.

- Workforce Development
 - Relief Strategies
 - Recovery Strategies
 - Population Based Strategies

- Advocacy
- Systems Change

Historically, the workforce development system has emphasized skills, training, and job placement. In fact, our recovery strategies in critical sectors are anchored in opportunities to build workplace skills and expand career-based pathways within a specific sector or are emerging in collaboration with sector leadership and/or other partners.

However, in many instances, an exclusive emphasis on skills development fails to result in actual employment or at best, the placement into a low-wage job. In the absence of addressing the barriers to work and higher quality jobs often facing low-income workers and workers of color, continuing this approach is likely to exacerbate existing income disparity and occupational segregation. Barriers to work include lack of financial resources to pay for education & training, lack of access to supports that enable work (child care and transportation), structural racism, and exclusionary policies that relegate BIPOC to low-wage work with little to no opportunity for growth and advancement. As such, the strategies presented here recognize and include the criticality of advocacy and changes in policies that enable greater access to or the removal of barriers to jobs; as well as systemic changes to dismantle racialized practices that historically result in inequitable economic outcomes for BIPOC workers, immigrant and refugees.

By design, each strategy centers equity and is explicit in its intent to support BIPOC workers, immigrants, refugees and other historically marginalized workers. As noted, sector strategies are featured prominently in our recovery strategies informed by our sector analysis and identification of opportunity sectors as defined in *Section V*.

Finally, while the strategies are intended to help our intended beneficiaries, they may be insufficient for some populations who face additional barriers to employment. As such, additional strategies are included for opportunity youth and the immigrant and refugee community.

VII. WDC'S UNIQUE ROLE & PARTNER ROLES

This Plan is intended as a high-level blueprint for the region's workforce and recovery efforts. The Regional Strategic Plan builds on the Regional Workforce Transformation Plan which directed the WDC to facilitate an inclusive process to develop a 3-5-year regional workforce development strategy to:

- Prioritize employment and training for those who face the most barriers to opportunity, prioritizing strategies and funding that promote racial equity.
- Improve coordination between employers, labor, and educators to make sure job seekers are prepared for the best career opportunities available right now.
- Better align local, federal, and philanthropic funding to maximize the impact and produce better results; and
- Leverage and coordinate federal, city, county and state funds to create efficiencies for the delivery of workforce development services.

The Regional Strategic Plan incorporates and builds on current promising strategies in our region as well as new strategies informed by an extensive landscaping of national and regional equitable workforce development practices and innovations. Their implementation in the region will require extensive planning, leadership, and partnership from other workforce development entities, industry, government, labor, community colleges, and community-based providers. Most

of the strategies will require shared ownership and collaboration across sectors and organizations, as they are highly dependent on the actions and commitments of others.

The WDC is well positioned to lead or has the potential to fulfill leadership gaps to drive a subset of the strategies proposed in the Plan. These strategies build on and leverage the WDC's WIOA infrastructure and funding and align with the backbone functions prioritized in the regional transformation plan. They include:

- Invest in Subsidized Transitional Employment w/Pathways
- Advance Sector Partnerships and Strategies
- Co-Create & Co-Invest in High-Demand Career Pathways
- Partner w/Employers & Industry on Equitable Recovery Commitments
- Measure & Track Equitable Economic Recovery
- Build Meaningful and Sustainable Community Influence & Power

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

The WDC will expand its role as the regional backbone organization to lead research and innovation – this in alignment with another one of the 2020 transformation priorities: research, development, and innovation. The WDC will use its current data resources; partner relationships; system knowledge; connections to public workforce agencies, think tanks, and foundations at various levels; and convening capacity to advance research and innovation tied to this Plan. It will also expand its research, data and evaluation, prototyping, and strategy and policy development capabilities. By partnering across federal, state, and local systems, pairing that with a unique system convener role and partnership with BIPOC and immigrant communities, the WDC will bring resources and insight into the challenges facing communities furthest from opportunity.

ADVOCACY

The WDC will leverage its voice in partnership with others to fulfill this Plan's acknowledgment of advocacy and policy as a powerful lever in driving systems change. Historically, the organization has not played an intentional role on this front. As this is a new role for the WDC, new organizational capabilities will be built to use the organization's voice and advocacy, within the bounds of its legal authority, to support advocates in executing against the strategies articulated in the Plan.

This Plan provides the WDC along with regional partners the blueprint for advancing transformation of the region's workforce development system to one that is equity centered, outcome focused, and industry driven, all towards the overarching goal of building an equitable economic recovery.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. CONTEXT

The Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County (WDC) aspires to lead transformative change to evolve our region's workforce development efforts into an innovative industry, community, and outcome-driven system with racial equity at its core. More specifically, the WDC strives to become a best in class, innovative, regional workforce development backbone organization that is a catalyst for leveraging and aligning resources to increase equity and maximize outcomes.⁹ In May of 2018, with support from King County, the City of Seattle and philanthropic partners, the WDC engaged the Boston Consulting Group to design and develop an operating model to execute toward this end. The WDC board subsequently hired Marie Kurose, a tenured and well-respected leader in the economic and workforce development field, as the organization's CEO to lead this major change effort in July of 2019.

Fast forward to March of 2020: the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the urgency of the WDC's work and the compelling need for a regional workforce development plan to ensure equitable economic recovery for all workers in King County. The region's economy has experienced unprecedented job loss - as of September 2020, the unemployment rate in King County stood at 7.0%, down from its peak of 14.9% in May, but more than double the rate of under 3% at the start of the year.¹⁰ Disproportionately impacted are Black, American Indians, Alaska Natives and Pacific Islanders workers, women and those without postsecondary credentials who are experiencing higher unemployment rates as compared to the overall population.¹¹ The massive job loss, particularly to lower wage workers has exacerbated already stark income inequity observed in the region pre-pandemic.¹²

B. PURPOSE

The Regional Workforce Plan ('the Plan') is intended as a strategic blueprint for establishing a set of shared priorities for the WDC and its regional partners: county and city government, industry, labor, community colleges, educational & training partners, community-based organizations, and the community over the next 3-5 years. The Plan is intended to align regional and partner resources, and to strategically and collaboratively respond to the unprecedented job loss and massive economic disruption resulting from the COVID-19 global pandemic. The Plan intentionally and explicitly prioritizes equitable economic recovery, improving job quality and the placement of dislocated workers into quality jobs as its ultimate north stars. The strategies here are designed to support Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) and immigrant and refugee communities, who have historically experienced economic marginalization, and now made more vulnerable without an intentional and concerted effort to center their needs and ensure equitable participation in the region's recovery.

C. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

A set of guiding principles informed the planning and development of the Plan as well as its, priorities and strategies:

- Centering racial equity at the core of the Plan by focusing on Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) workers, immigrant and refugee communities, and those disproportionately impacted in the current economic recession.

- A dogged insistence on moving dislocated workers into quality jobs offering living wages and benefits, the opportunity for advancement, and safe workplaces to minimize personal risk & prioritize health; and improving the quality of jobs historically occupied by low-income workers.
- Attention to equitable access to economic opportunity and the removal of barriers that have historically precluded BIPOC workers, immigrants, and refugees from accessing quality jobs.
- A cross-sector and expansive solutions-orientation inclusive of human services, advocacy and policy solutions.
- Strategy selection informed by both research, evidence, and data, as well as industry, labor, the community, and other partner perspectives.
- Leading with innovation and best practices in workforce development and resisting an impulse to default to the status quo and other real or perceived constraints.

D. APPROACH

As there are a number of partner planning and recovery initiatives underway, concerted effort and attention was paid to these parallel processes, with an aspiration to coordinate and complement our respective efforts. While not exhaustive, we sought the perspectives of industry, labor, government and the community whenever possible to understand enablers and barriers to employment; and to complement data analyses, research, and evidence. The Plan relied on existing sources of community feedback to minimize burdening community members with additional requests for engagement and input, while simultaneously managing the adverse impacts of the pandemic. The Systems Alignment Committee (SAC), a subset of WDC board members representing business, labor and government, served as a de facto Steering Committee providing guidance and direction throughout the planning process.

In addition, we examined economic projections at the national and regional levels to make reasonable assumptions about the region's recovery. We established a short-list of promising sectors based on short-term indicators of recovery, criteria associated with job quality, accessibility to those jobs by BIPOC, immigrant and refugee communities, and industry readiness and commitment. In recognition of the protracted uncertainty of these complex times, we anticipate the Plan to evolve over time and be responsive to changing circumstances.

Finally, we undertook an extensive landscaping of national and regional equitable workforce development practices and innovations to understand their efficacy and promise in supporting BIPOC communities and immigrants and refugees. In addition, we examined efforts in other regions to inform the selection of prioritized strategies.

E. WDC & PARTNER ROLES

The Plan is intended as a high-level blueprint for the region's workforce and recovery efforts. While many of the strategies called out in the Plan have been tested and tried in other parts of the country, their implementation in the Seattle-King County region will require both additional planning and thought, and importantly leadership, partnership and collaboration with and from other workforce development partners including industry, government, labor, community colleges, and community-based providers. Specific strategies lend themselves to WDC leadership, but most are highly dependent on the actions and commitments of others.

II. COVID-19 IMPACTS

Since the onset of the COVID-19 virus in mid-March of 2020, the pandemic has had a devastating impact on the region's economy, workforce, health and well-being of the region's residents. This section seeks to understand the economic impacts of the global pandemic on workers, sectors, occupations, and geography. Qualitative feedback from the community suggest that many BIPOC communities, immigrants and refugees continue to struggle to meet basic needs. An analysis of the state's Unemployment Insurance (UI) claims further reveals that these same communities have experienced disproportionately adverse impacts. Historical economic marginalization due to systemic racism, occupational segregation, and bias in hiring, have resulted in economic injustice and overrepresentation of BIPOC workers, immigrants & refugees in those sectors hit hardest by job loss, as well as in low-wage occupations which represent one-quarter of all Unemployment Insurance claims.¹³ This economic hardship is further exacerbated by additional risk factors facing BIPOC communities including underlying health conditions, language barriers, and lack of health care access.¹⁴

A. COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES

Low-income and essential workers diagnosed with COVID-19 are faced with daunting choices between the need to isolate and quarantine or continue working to support their families.¹⁵ As of October 2020, King County reports that rates for confirmed positive COVID-19 cases are statistically significant higher for all communities of color as compared to White residents. The rate of confirmed cases per 100,000 residents is highest among Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders and Hispanics, followed by Blacks and American Indians/Alaska Natives.¹⁶

Positive COVID-19 cases are disproportionately borne by Black and Hispanic/Latinx communities. Black residents represent 6.4% of all residents but 12.8% of positive cases recorded in King County. Hispanic / Latinx residents are 10% of the region's population but represent a staggering 27.5% of all positive cases as of October 2020.¹⁷

Community feedback regarding current workforce development challenges reveals families of color are in survival mode. Basic needs have taken precedence: food security, utility & rent assistance, mortgage relief, transportation subsidies and access to health care. King County reports increasing demand for housing, food, and health care assistance since the onset of the pandemic:¹⁸

- Calls to 2-1-1 requesting housing related assistance are up 58% as of September 2020
- 18,300 more households are receiving food assistance, an 18% increase since January 2020
- 13,900 more King County residents were enrolled in Medicaid in July than in January 2020
- Calls to behavioral health crisis lines increased 16% in August 2020 compared to 2019

Reports indicate communities of color are increasingly exhausted navigating normal job search and career barriers as the pandemic has increased the likelihood of prolonged unemployment.¹⁹ Career development opportunities for African American, Latinx, and immigrant and refugee workers appear to be at best secondary to issues of childcare, maintaining their children's education, and mental health and general wellness due to racial and political unrest. Prolonged unemployment continues to destabilize an already economically vulnerable community.²⁰

In particular women of color, already overrepresented in retail and other frontline jobs, are experiencing insufficient support for employment services due to redirection of investments to

COVID-19 related services.²¹ Feedback evidences African American women are at the intersection of the reduction in frontline opportunities and a lack of childcare options due to COVID-19.²² According to the state’s Child Care Collaborative Task Force, nearly one in five (18.3%) parents surveyed turned down a job offer or promotion due to childcare issues, more often among Black and Native American parents. Nearly half (47%) of unemployed parents found childcare issues a barrier to seeking employment—51% among female jobseekers compared to 41% among male jobseekers.

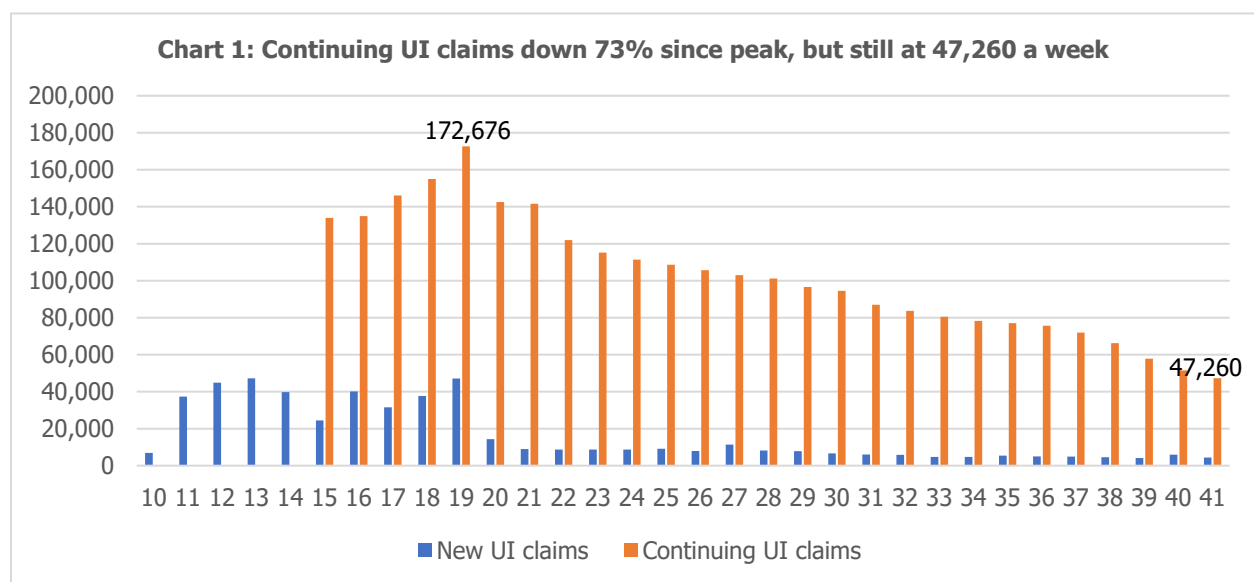
Clearly, a dramatic investment in childcare is needed for a robust, equitable economic recovery in Washington State.²³

Communities of color, including immigrant and refugee populations, report feeling overwhelmed mentally and emotionally, navigating historic racism and language barriers. Timely and more comprehensive language access is a fundamental building block of an equitable recovery. Community based-organizations report a need for government information and materials to be centrally translated; and more bi-lingual community health workers and cultural navigators to support community access systems and resources. Undocumented individuals are further vulnerable given the prohibitions on accessing federal assistance and other forms of support.²⁴

Too often requests for community engagement on COVID-19 relief unduly request their feedback. Efforts to gather community feedback while vulnerable communities simultaneously struggle to navigate a multitude of economic and social issues is exhausting and problematic. Workers report feeling skeptical of future possibilities given political uncertainty and recovery from past economic downturns. *(See Section VI – Equity Explicit Strategies: Community Engagement & Influence)*

B. OVERALL EMPLOYMENT

Over a half-million cumulative new UI claims have been filed in King County since the start of COVID-19 (Weeks 10-41 or March 8 – October 17, 2020), with over one in three jobs potentially affected. New UI claims peaked at 47,233 in Week 13, while continuing UI claims peaked at 172,676 in Week 19. By the week of October 17th, continuing UI claims had dropped 73 percent since the peak, but still stood at 47,260.



Source: Washington State Employment Security Department, UI dataset

At the peak, unemployment stood at 14.9 percent, compared to 2.4 percent pre-COVID-19. As of September, the unemployment rate stood at 7.0 percent.²⁵

C. SECTOR AND OCCUPATION

COVID-19 has hit some sectors and occupations harder than others. Almost half of all new UI claims are found in five sectors: accommodation and food services, health care and social assistance, retail trade, manufacturing, and construction. Over half of accommodation and food services jobs have been impacted.

Chart 2: Almost Half of All New UI Claims in Five Sectors

Industry	New UI Claims (Weeks 10-41)	% of Total New UI Claims	% of Industry Jobs Impacted
Total, all industries	513,626	100%	33%
Accommodation and food services	66,763	13%	56%
Health care and social assistance	52,990	10%	32%
Retail trade	48,504	9%	30%
Manufacturing	41,087	8%	39%
Construction	31,224	6%	35%

Source: Washington State Employment Security Department, UI dataset

BIPOC workers are disproportionately employed in the sectors most heavily impacted by COVID-19. They make up 47 percent of workers in the accommodation and food services sector, compared to about one third of the overall workforce; 41 percent of workers in the health care and social assistance sector; and 39 percent in the retail trade sector.²⁶

Although most occupations have been affected by COVID-19, those that pay less than \$50,000 a year dominate the list of occupations with the greatest number of new UI claims. Examples include waiters and waitresses, retail salespersons, taxi drivers, cashiers, production workers, maids and housekeeping cleaners, childcare workers, and janitors and cleaners. Twenty percent of all new UI claims are found in 20 occupations that pay under \$50,000 a year.

Chart 3: One Quarter of All New UI Claims in 20 Occupations Paying Less Than \$50,000/year

Occupation	New UI Claims (Weeks 10-41)	% of Total New UI Claims	Median Wage
Sales managers	18,261	4%	\$140,358
General and operations managers	15,401	3%	\$120,302
Waiters and waitresses	15,315	3%	\$30,934
Retail salespersons	12,889	3%	\$33,342
Taxi drivers and chauffeurs	9,689	2%	\$29,743
Marketing managers	8,303	2%	\$152,400
Managers, all other	7,970	2%	\$105,095
Bartenders	7,323	1%	\$37,018
Hairdressers, hairstylists, and cosmetologists	7,313	1%	\$37,992
Customer service representatives	7,023	1%	\$40,905
Cashiers	6,921	1%	\$30,002
Counter attendants, cafeteria, food concession, and coffee shop	6,521	1%	\$28,934
Administrative service managers	6,114	1%	\$121,595
Carpenters	6,278	1%	\$62,906

Production workers, all other	6,027	1%	\$31,874
Maids and housekeeping cleaners	5,508	1%	\$28,914
Stock clerks and order fillers	5,404	1%	\$36,319
Childcare workers	5,261	1%	\$28,492
Cooks, restaurant	5,112	1%	\$35,546
Food service managers	4,814	1%	\$63,126
Construction managers	4,737	1%	\$99,209
Janitors and cleaners	4,720	1%	\$34,676
Construction laborers	4,517	1%	\$49,109
Electricians	4,422	1%	\$76,916

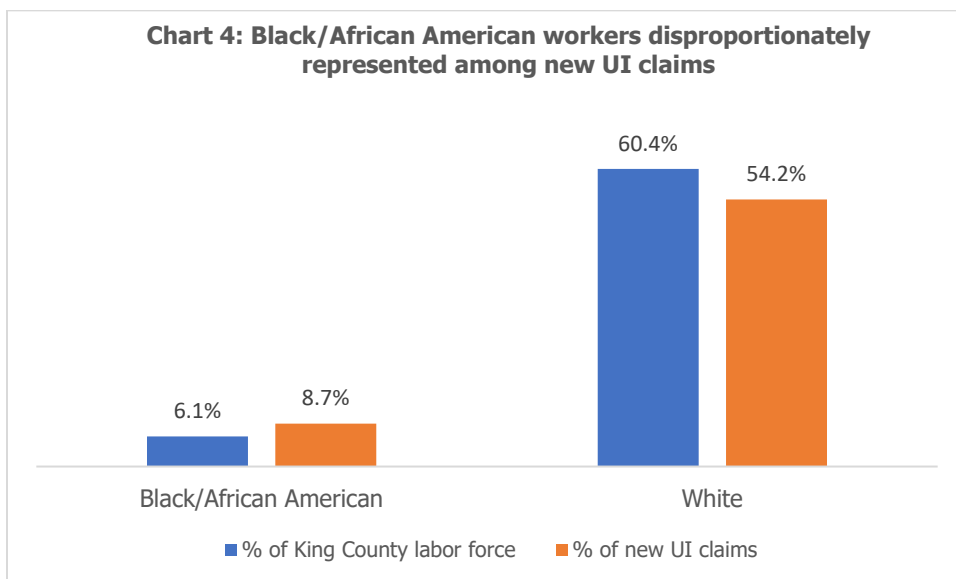
Source: Washington State Employment Security Department, UI dataset (UI claims); and EMSI (median wage)

Again, BIPOC workers are disproportionately employed in occupations paying less than \$50,000 a year. For example, BIPOC workers make up 56 percent of restaurant cooks, 56 percent of maids and housekeeping cleaners, 42 percent of all other production workers, and 41 percent of waiters and waitresses.²⁷

D. WORKERS

1. RACE/ETHNICITY

COVID-19 has had a disproportionate impact on people of color. For example, Blacks/African Americans make up 6.1 percent of the King County labor force, but 8.7 percent of new UI claims. By contrast, whites make up 60.4 percent of the King County labor force, but 54.2 percent of new UI claims.



Source: Washington State Employment Security Department, UI dataset

This pattern of disproportionality also holds true for American Indians/Alaska Natives and Pacific Islanders.

New and continuing UI claims data do not show this same disproportionality for Latinos/Hispanics. There are several possible reasons why this may be the case: exclusion of undocumented workers from UI; the current political environment in which certain groups are

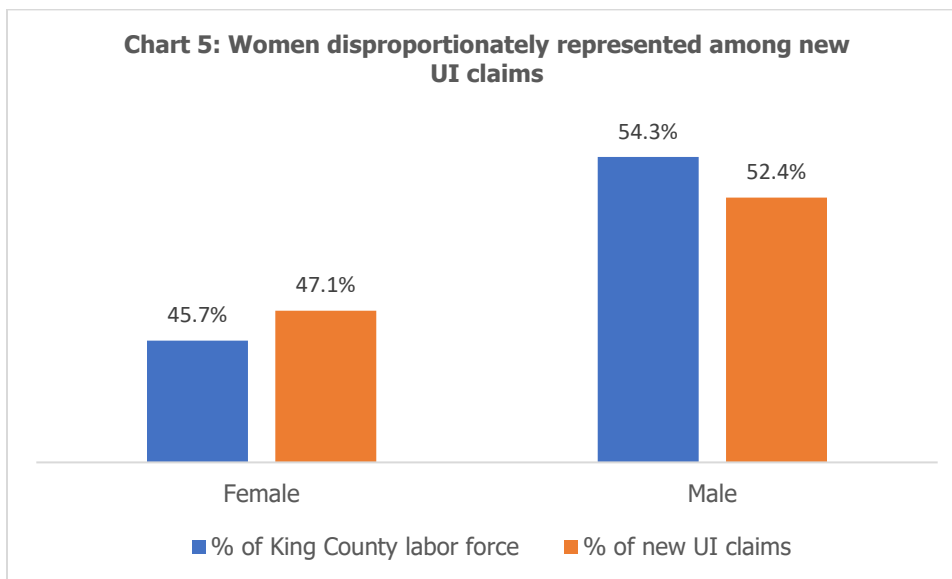
wary of providing information to government agencies; lack of access to or familiarity with the UI system; and employment of large Latino/Hispanic workforces in sectors considered essential such as agriculture and food processing with a lower risk of unemployment, but also a higher risk of exposure to Coronavirus.²⁸

An analysis by Public Health – Seattle & King County shows the following new UI claims per capita (percent of workforce):

- 49.5 percent of Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander workers
- 38.3 percent of Black/African American workers
- 36.6 percent of American Indian/Alaska Native workers
- 22.7 percent of white workers (lowest per capita)²⁹

2. GENDER

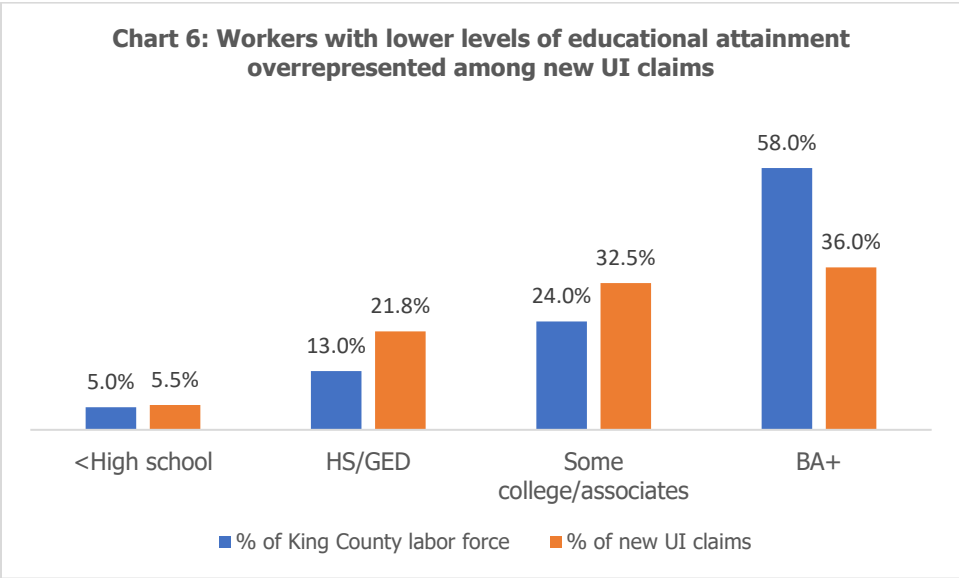
Women are also overrepresented among new UI claims. Women make up 45.7 percent of the labor force, but 47.1 percent of new UI claims. By contrast, men make up 54.3 percent of the labor force, but 52.4 percent of new UI claims.



Source: Washington State Employment Security Department, UI dataset

3. EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Workers with lower levels of educational attainment are also overrepresented among new UI claims. This is particularly pronounced at the high school diploma/ GED level: 21.8 percent of new UI claims versus 13 percent of the labor force. By contrast, those with a BA or more make up 36 percent of new UI claims, compared to 58 percent of labor force.



Source: Washington State Employment Security Department, UI dataset

E. GEOGRAPHY

COVID-19 has also had a disproportionate impact on diverse, low income communities. For example, there are six ZIP codes in King County that have new UI claims per capita rates of 45 percent or more – all are in one concentrated area of South Seattle and South King County. They are among the most diverse ZIP codes in the county and have a high portion of people living below 200 percent of poverty.

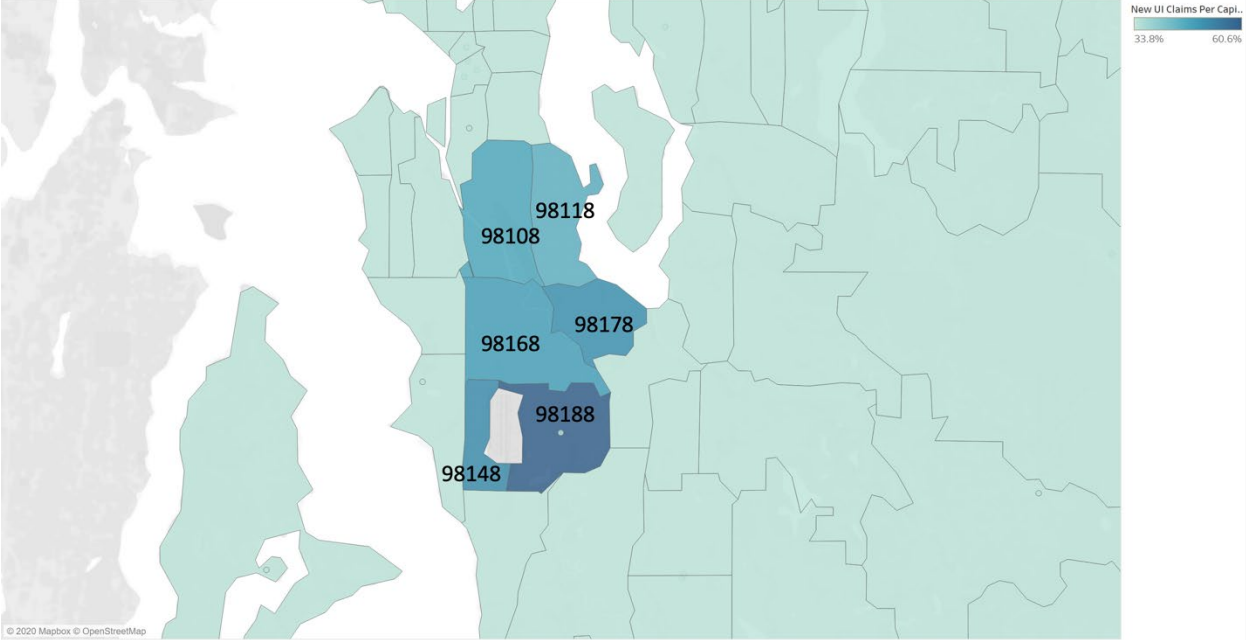
Chart 7: COVID-19’s Disproportionate Impact on Diverse, Low Income Communities

ZIP Code	City/Area	New UI Claims Per Capita	Percent BIPOC	Percent Below 200% of Poverty
98188	SeaTac, Tukwila	60.6%	63.2%	33.7%
98148	Burien, SeaTac, Des Moines	52.0%	52.6%	33.8%
98178	Seattle, Tukwila, Renton, Skyway	51.2%	74.9%	31.5%
98168	Tukwila, Burien, White Center, SeaTac	48.5%	64.4%	36.5%
98108	Seattle, Tukwila, Burien	46.9%	79.1%	38.2%
98118	Seattle	45.2%	76.4%	32.4%
All	King County	33.8%	40.4%	20.7%

Source: Public Health – Seattle & King County, COVID-19 Impacts/Unemployment dashboard (new UI claims per capita); and Communities Count dashboard (percent BIPOC and percent below 200% of poverty)

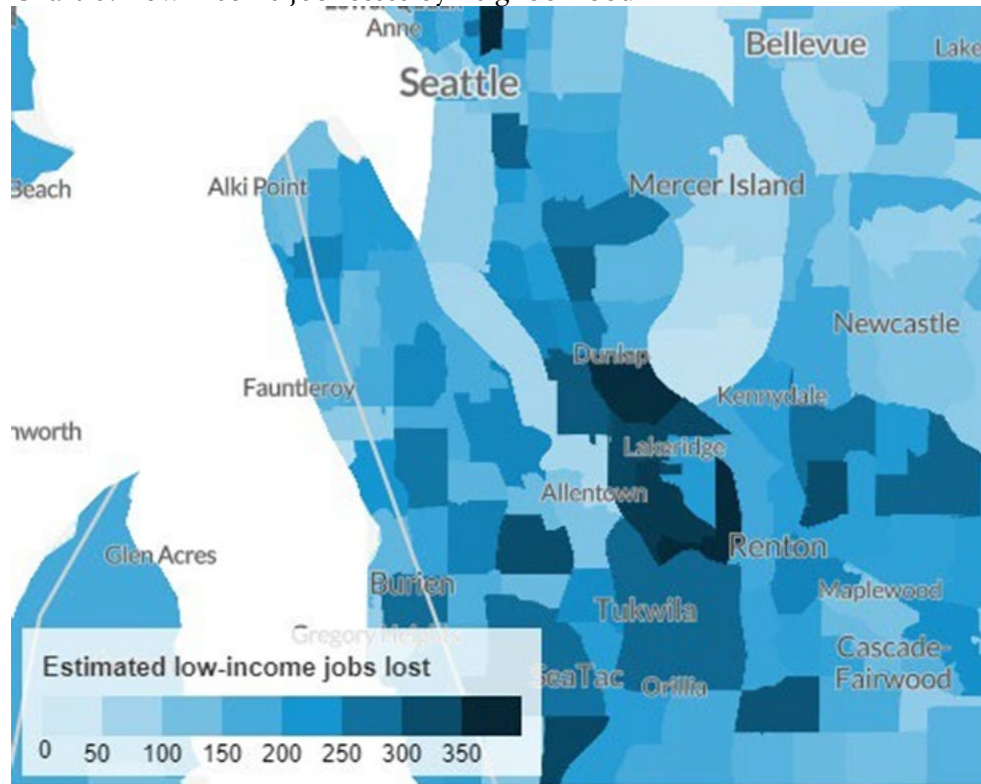
King County has lost over 38,000 low income jobs since the start of COVID-19, based on calculations by the Urban Institute. The neighborhoods hardest hit by these job losses are home to workers in sectors such as accommodation and food services, transportation and warehousing, and health care and social services. Many of these neighborhoods are in South Seattle and South King County.

New UI Claims Per Capita for Focus ZIP Codes



Map based on Longitude (generated) and Latitude (generated). Color shows sum of New UI Claims Per Capita. Details are shown for ZIP Code.

Chart 8: Low income job losses by neighborhood



Source: <https://www.urban.org/features/where-low-income-jobs-are-being-lost-covid-19>

III. RECOVERY OUTLOOK

As context for identifying opportunity sectors (*see Section V.*) and strategies for the Regional Strategic Plan, we examined core drivers of economic recovery, trends in the changing nature of work accelerated or exacerbated by the pandemic, and qualitative research on recovery in the region.

There is consensus among global business leaders who assume a recurrence of the virus, slow long-term growth, and a muted world recovery in the next one to two years. Three factors: consumer behavior, the development of a vaccine, and federal relief and stimulus will in large part determine the timing and pace of the nation's economic recovery.

Recovery will also accelerate or exacerbate trends present prior to the pandemic, including rising income and racial inequality, shifts in global supply chains, a pervasive increase in automation and digitization in business operations including e-commerce, and an increase in remote work across many industries. Taken together, these factors will greatly shape the nature of work during and after the pandemic.³⁰

Regional recovery is happening at a slow pace and varies by sector.³¹ Some sectors in the regional economy are starting to show signs of recovery in the short/near term, as indicated by decreases in continuing UI claims, increases in job postings, increases in estimated employment since the peak of unemployment associated with COVID-19, and rebounds in estimated employment year-to-year.

Recovery is slower for people of color, women and workers with lower levels of educational attainment who are even more disproportionately represented among continuing UI claims than new UI claims. Assumptions and additional analysis on macro-economic projections, regional sector projections, and worker recovery are detailed below.

A. MACRO-ECONOMIC PROJECTIONS

1. RECOVERY FACTORS

The outlook for recovery is depending on several factors that are uncertain and for which there is not yet clarity on how they will play out. These factors include consumer behavior, vaccine development and treatment, and federal relief funding.

a. CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

Consumer behavior will play a major role in determining the timing and nature of economic recovery, with several significant shifts currently in play: rapid growth in digital shopping along with rise of the “homebody economy”, prioritizing of essential and non-discretionary items, deferral of major purchases, need for hygiene and safety in products and services (for example, contactless purchasing, curbside pickup), and surge in hyperlocal shopping.³² Surveys by Deloitte indicate that consumers are still skittish to re-engage in many activities like traveling, staying in hotels, and attending mass events.³³

b. VACCINE DEVELOPMENT

Economic recovery is highly dependent on control of the virus, especially in that it will drive consumer confidence, key to restarting the economy.³⁴ One estimate holds that a delay of three months in developing a vaccine is a six-month delay in economic recovery.³⁵

Vaccine development is being undertaken at an historically accelerated pace.³⁶ An array of candidates are currently in human clinical trials, with estimates for availability in early 2021, and distribution taking most of 2021.³⁷ Vaccine rollout is likely to meet with additional challenges including prioritizing access, crafting delivery systems, defining dosing, monitoring for side effects, and ensuring credibility with the public.³⁸

c. FEDERAL RELIEF FUNDING

Federal dollars have acted as a lifeline for businesses devastated by the pandemic, and for many those resources have not been enough. Uncertainty about whether and when there will be additional relief funding is a major factor in determining the viability of businesses as well as business recovery planning.³⁹ For example, airlines received payroll funding support that expired September 30th, leading to additional cost cutting. As of the time of completing of this plan in early December Republican and Democratic Congressional leaders remained at an impasse over an additional relief bill.⁴⁰

2. SCENARIO ANALYSIS

Given the inter-related uncertainties previously described, some economic analysts have crafted multiple scenarios as a basis to make projections for economic recovery. These scenarios consider varying degrees of pandemic severity, public response/social cohesion, and healthcare response.⁴¹

Management consulting firm McKinsey developed an array of nine scenarios for recovery outlook, based on two factors: vaccine development/public health response and economic response. They used these scenarios to survey 2,000 global business executives three times (April, May and June of 2020), asking them to rank the likelihood of scenarios occurring over the next year. Across the three survey periods, business leaders consistently chose two “middle” scenarios that reflect virus recurrence, slow long-term growth, and a muted world recovery in 2021 and 2023, respectively.⁴² A takeaway from these scenario-based efforts is that recovery planning by any jurisdiction and agency should remain flexible and adaptable in developing strategies and policies, especially over the long-term.

3. CHANGING NATURE OF WORK

The pandemic has accelerated or exacerbated several significant pre-existing issues and trends. These include rising income and racial inequality, shifts in global supply chains, a pervasive increase in automation and digitization in business operations including e-commerce, and an increase in remote work across many industries. Taken together, these factors will greatly shape the nature of work during and post-pandemic.⁴³

a. INCOME INEQUALITY

Many workers and families had not yet recovered from the 2008 Great Recession, reflected in rising economic inequality and racial disparities, stagnant wages and increasing household debt. Despite low official inflation rates, the costs for rent, childcare and higher education outpaced increases in median family income,⁴⁴ with disproportionate inequities falling on communities of

color, particularly Black and Brown people. This racial disparity has been exacerbated during COVID-19, which has disproportionately impacted BIPOC communities, who both have greater vulnerability to the disease and who disproportionately make up the workers in the occupations and sectors most at risk for exposure to COVID-19.⁴⁵

b. TRADE WARS/GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAINS

Trade wars between the U.S. and China had slowed trade since 2018 and fueled growing calls for the U.S. to diversify supply chains by re- or near-shoring. The breakdown of supply chains from Asia caused by COVID-19 has amplified the conversation about restructuring supply chains.⁴⁶

c. REMOTE WORK

In the first half of 2020 the pandemic catapulted businesses across many sectors to stand up remote work arrangements for employees, including building infrastructure for remote communication and collaboration. Since the start of the pandemic, businesses have been deliberating whether remote work will last. Some have recognized the cost savings in doing so while others, like virtual health, are responding to enormous growth in consumer demand for virtual services. Many are thinking of the “virtualization” of work as part of the “next normal” and are planning to continue it permanently, such as Facebook.⁴⁷

d. AUTOMATION, DIGITIZATION AND TECHNOLOGY

There is a growing body of research around the world focusing on how automation, digitization and technology will impact economic and business activity in what some experts call the “4th Industrial Revolution.” Both businesses and consumers are making greater use of technology in a myriad of ways, from e-commerce to telemedicine to remote work to the automation of manufacturing tasks, and recovery is forcing businesses to adapt operations for the next normal.⁴⁸ However, predictions about how exactly these changes will impact jobs and occupations is less clear, particularly automation.

Some researchers, industry analysts and business leaders believe that while automation will eliminate some jobs, it may also transform other jobs. Some assert that most occupations will not be directly replaced but the skills needed will change over time, especially for jobs where human interaction will be needed to operate or manage new technology. And new jobs will likely be created but we do not know exactly what they are yet.⁴⁹

While projections vary greatly, there is consensus on some of technology’s broader impacts. According to Washington State’s Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board, in their 2019 Policy Report on the Future of Work, most experts believe:

- 39 to 58 percent of worldwide work activities in operationally intensive sectors could be automated using currently available technologies.⁵⁰ Automation will occur more rapidly and at greater frequency for occupations that focus on repetitive, manual tasks (such as cashiers, clerks, assembly line workers, and office support jobs), which also tend to be ones that require lower levels of formal education.
- Demand for advanced cognitive and emotional skills will increase in the future across all industries and in all economies, from emerging to advanced.
- Workers will increasingly need lifelong learning opportunities to develop a more diverse skill set that responds to occupational changes as they occur.⁵¹

The Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board report further notes:

“In Washington, close to half of work (44.5 percent) could be automated by adapting currently demonstrated technology, according to one estimate by think tank McKinsey Global Institute. This is particularly important for lower-skill, lower-paying jobs, like retail personnel, which often are at the greatest risk of automation.”⁵²

The report highlights manufacturing as an example of a sector where skill requirements will shift. One Georgetown University study concluded that manufacturing workers with only a high school education represented 43 percent of the sector’s workforce in 2016, down from 79 percent in 1970. Over the same period, the share of middle-skilled workers in the industry doubled, underscoring the need for upskilling and lifelong learning.⁵³

Critical skills will fall into two broad categories: digital literacy and technology skills, and non-technological/human skills. McKinsey Global Institutes projects that over the next decade, the demand for technological skills is expected to rise by more than 50 percent, and the need for complex cognitive skills and high-level social emotional skills will increase by one-third.⁵⁴ (*See Appendix 1 for skill sets*)

The rising use of technology will widen the digital divide between those who can access technology and those who cannot. Around 24 million American households lack access to reliable, affordable, high-speed internet, and 80 percent of those households are in rural areas. Challenges include physical gaps in local broadband networks, unaffordable subscriptions and devices, and a lack of digital skills. In 2018, the Census Bureau found that 27.9 million households, or 10.8 percent of the urban population, lived without a broadband internet subscription. One in 10 of the lowest-income children in the U.S. have little or no access to technology for online learning, and the lack of access is strongly correlated to race.⁵⁵ The gap is wider for Black and Latino households, as well as households with lower income or lower educational levels.⁵⁶

As the world becomes more digital, this “information poverty” is connected to a lack of job opportunities, professional development, educational opportunity and income, and widens racial economic disparities.⁵⁷

B. REGIONAL SECTOR PROJECTIONS

Some sectors in the regional economy are starting to show signs of recovery in the short/near term, as indicated by decreases in continuing UI claims, increases in job postings, increases in estimated employment since the peak of unemployment associated with COVID-19, and rebounds in estimated employment year-to-year. (*See Appendix 3*).

For example, the construction sector was initially hard hit by COVID-19, with new UI claims representing 32 percent of construction jobs. Since the peak of unemployment associated with COVID-19, continuing UI claims have dropped 76 percent, job postings have increased 38 percent, and estimated employment has increased by 36,900 in King County. And estimated year-to-year employment is down less than 2 percent or 1,300 jobs.

Other sectors showing signs of recovery include: some subsectors of manufacturing (e.g., computer and electronic products), retail trade (e.g., food and beverage stores and non-store retailers), some subsectors of transportation and warehousing (e.g. warehousing and storage), information, professional and technical services, and some subsectors of health care and social assistance.

Regional recovery is happening at a slow pace and varies by sector.⁵⁸ The following chart compiles data from national and local sources on projected recovery by sector. Blue highlights indicate national projections and “SKC” indicates projections specifically for the Seattle-King County region. Due to multiple sources, the chart includes a mix of sectors and sub-sectors and the indicators vary. For example, recovery for the first thirteen sectors is defined as the time to regain the sector’s pre-COVID GDP; recovery of the Hospitality sector is defined as the timeframe to regain pre-COVID Revenue per Available Room (RevPAR); and recovery of Freight and Logistics, Air Cargo and Rail Cargo is defined as the timeframe to regain pre-COVID cargo volumes.

The span of years reflects the uncertainty of key drivers of recovery previously described, particularly virus containment and the timing of vaccine availability, that will shape a faster or slower recovery. For example, in the Arts, Entertainment and Recreation sector, McKinsey projects that a scenario where the virus is contained sooner could lead to sector recovery in 2024; in a less optimistic scenario, recovery could take until 2025. (*Also see Appendix 3 for qualitative trends and recovery factors for select sectors*).

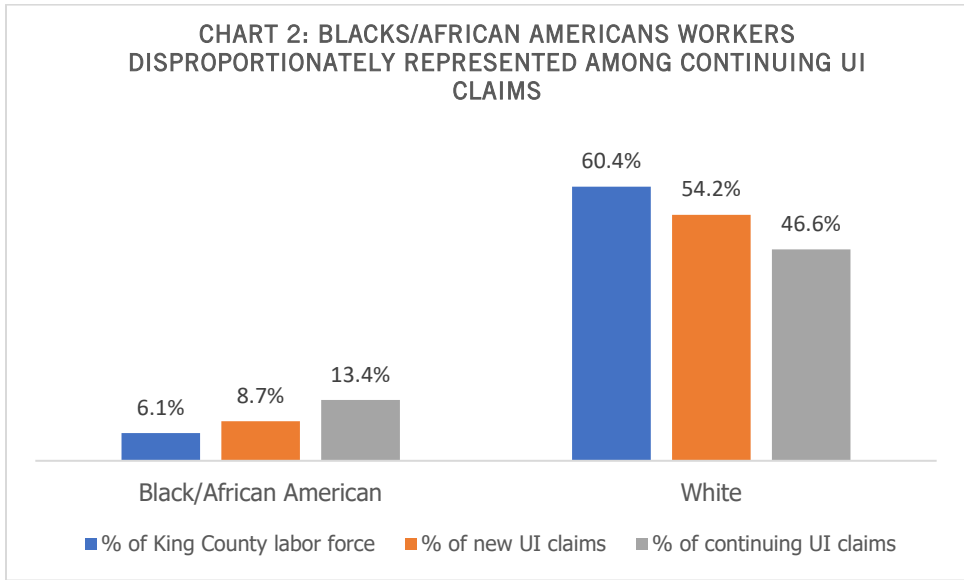
Chart 1 – Projected Recovery by Sector

Source	Indicator	Sector or Sub-Sector*	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
McKinsey	Time to regain pre-COVID sector GDP ⁵⁹	Arts, Entertainment and Recreation				○	●
		Accommodation and Food Services				○	●
		Educational Services			○		●
		Transportation and Warehousing	○				●
		Manufacturing	○				●
		Mining, Oil and Gas Extraction			○		●
		Wholesale Trade	○		●		
		Power and Utilities	○		●		
		Finance and Insurance	○		●		
		Construction	○		●		
		Retail Trade	○	●			
		Real Estate, Rental and Leasing	○	●			
		Professional, Scientific and Technical	○	●			
		Information Services	○	●			
IATA		Air Passenger Traffic ⁶⁰				○	●
McKinsey	Volume	Freight and Logistics ⁶¹				○	●
McKinsey	Volume	Air Cargo ⁶²				○	●
McKinsey	Volume	Rail Cargo ⁶³					○●
McKinsey	Revenue per Available Room (RevPAR)	Hospitality ⁶⁴					○●
Local source	Anecdotal data	Travel ⁶⁵					SKC
Local source	Airplane production and # of jobs	Aerospace ⁶⁶					SKC
Local source	Office occupancy	Commercial Real Estate ⁶⁷					SKC

C. WORKER RECOVERY

1. RACE/ETHNICITY

Recovery is slower for people of color, who are even more disproportionately represented among continuing UI claims than new UI claims. For example, Blacks/African Americans make up 13.4 percent of continuing UI claims (Week 41), more than double their 6.1 percent representation in the labor force. By contrast, whites make up 46.6 percent of continuing UI claims, compared to 60.4 percent of the labor force.

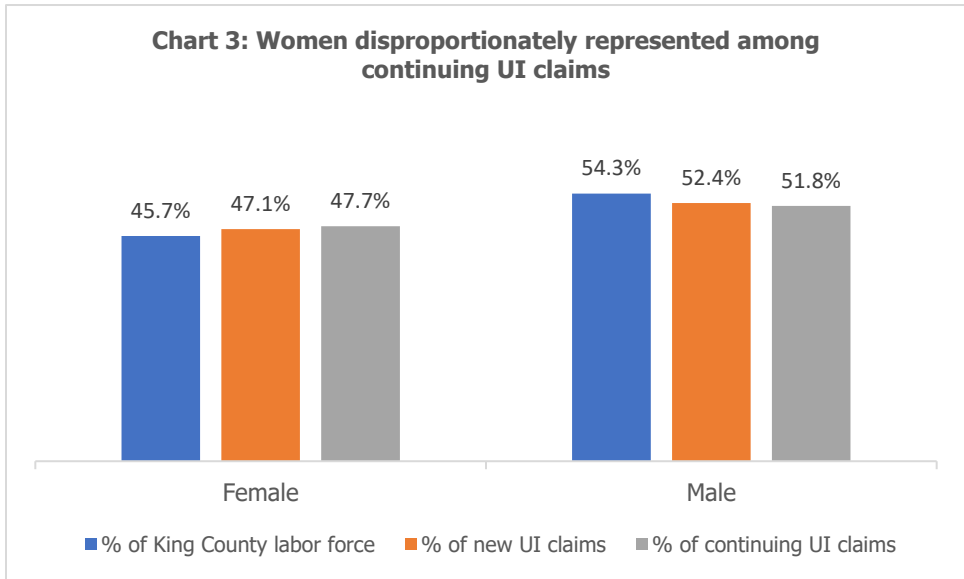


Source: Washington State Employment Security Department, UI dataset

This pattern of disproportionality also holds true for American Indians/Alaska Natives and Pacific Islanders.⁶⁸

2. GENDER

Similarly, women are disproportionately represented among continuing UI claims. Women make up 47.7 percent of continuing UI claims, compared to 45.7 percent of the labor force. By contrast, men make up 51.8 percent of continuing UI claims, compared to 54.3 percent of the labor force.

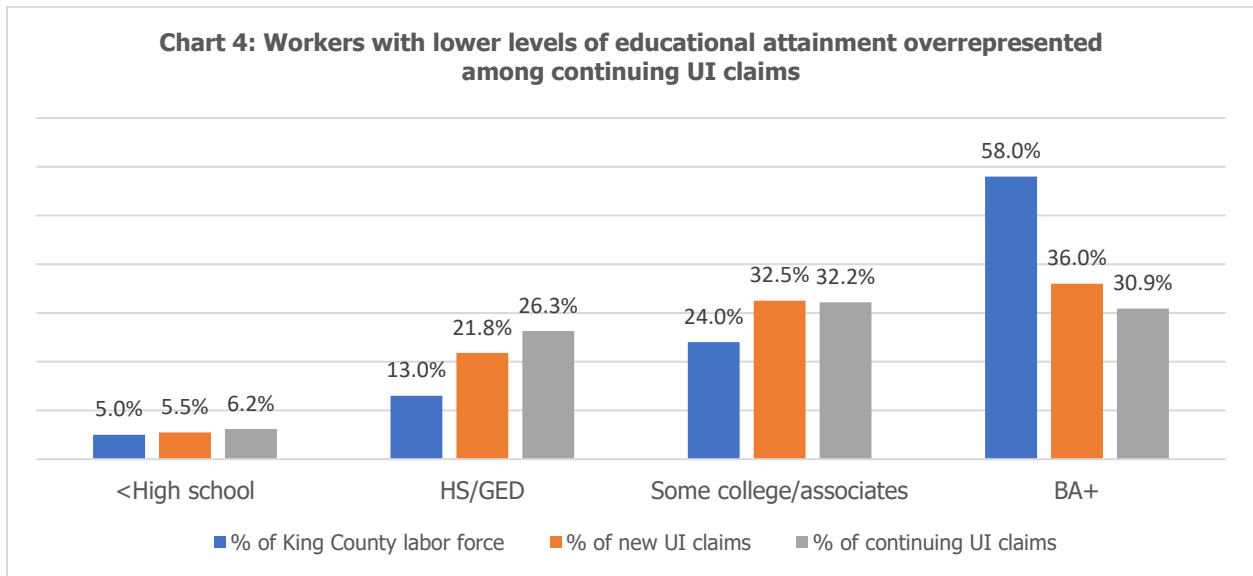


Source: Washington State Employment Security Department, UI dataset

3. EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Workers with lower levels of educational attainment are also overrepresented among continuing UI claims. For example, those with a high school diploma or GED make up 26.3 percent of continuing UI claims, double their 13 percent representation in the labor force. By contrast, those

with a BA or more make up 30.9 percent of continuing UI claims, about half their 58 percent representation in the labor force.



Source: Washington State Employment Security Department, UI dataset

IV. NORTH STARS

The Regional Strategic Plan aspires to achieve two north stars: **equitable economic recovery** and **job quality**. The first anchors on a recovery effort that prioritizes the inclusion of BIPOC workers and other economically marginalized communities and the dismantling of structural and systemic racism across our institutions, so that all workers regardless of race or ethnicity have equitable access to high quality jobs and share in the region's economic prosperity.

The second anchor, job quality, raises the expectation and commitment of all partners in the workforce system to 1) improve the quality of existing jobs where BIPOC workers, immigrants and refugees are over-represented; 2) support BIPOC workers, immigrants and refugees in not simply gaining employment in any job but instead placement in a quality job with livable wages and benefits, opportunities for advancement and assurances of a safe and healthy workplace.

These two north stars are undergirded by the following tenets:

- Recovery as an opportunity to rebuild better
- Centering equity
- Re-envisioning workforce development and
- Broadening measures of success, including redefining job quality

A. RECOVERY AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO REBUILD BETTER

“Coronavirus has made the mighty kneel and brought the world to a halt like nothing else could. Our minds are still racing back and forth, longing for a return to ‘normality,’ trying to stitch our future to our past and refusing to acknowledge the rupture. But the rupture exists.

And in the midst of this terrible despair, it offers us a chance to rethink the doomsday machine we have built for ourselves. Nothing could be worse than a return to normality. Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next. We can choose to walk through it, dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our data banks and dead ideas, our dead rivers and smoky skies behind us. Or we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world. And ready to fight for it.”⁶⁹ – Author Arundhati Roy, April 2020

COVID-19 has created a “new normal” for people and communities, some of which may remain permanently. As a result, many communities, governments, business leaders, organizations and advocates are recognizing that long-term recovery presents a major opportunity to be proactive in defining that “new normal.”

For some, the new normal means rebuilding better by addressing economic, social and environmental vulnerabilities so that communities can become greener, more resilient and more inclusive. This includes stimulating innovation, adopting more digital solutions, decentralizing production and restructuring supply chains.⁷⁰

Others, including business leaders, see it as a “once in a generation” opportunity to rethink the shareholder-driven capitalist system, and as economies around the world rebuild, doing so in a way that works for all people.⁷¹

In the U.S., cities have crafted economic recovery plans with a range of focal points. Many are investing in infrastructure projects, like Chicago, or in business-led recovery, like Houston and Boston. Globally, some cities are rebuilding arts, culture and tourism sectors like Barcelona and Paris. Some have an intentional focus on vulnerable communities, including San Francisco and New Orleans, while others like Mexico City and Milan, are focusing on creating “recovery sector” jobs. (See: *Appendix 2 for information recovery plans in other locales.*)⁷²

But rebuilding better cannot be done in a vacuum without understanding different impacts on different people. Major disasters or public crises expose underlying inequities and pervasive structural disparities in society. Whether Hurricane Katrina or the 2008 recession, recovery efforts that do not explicitly address these inequities will serve to worsen them.^{73 74}

B. CENTERING EQUITY

Centering equity means explicitly advancing race-conscious policies by applying an equity lens to every dimension of planning and implementation, not isolating it as a separate set of strategies, or adding it as an afterthought.⁷⁵ Race Forward is a national organization that brings systemic analysis to complex race issues to help people take effective action toward racial equity. They posit that remedies to inequity must include three aspects to be effective:

1. Systemic,
2. Race-explicit
3. Outcome-oriented⁷⁶

Without those, there is a risk that equity commitments are never actualized. In a survey of over 90 workforce development sector partnerships across the country, researchers at the University of Texas at Austin found that many had adopted goals for diversity, equity and inclusion, but less than one-third had achieved results on those goals and over one-third reported encountering challenges in their efforts to advance equity.⁷⁷

Globally, there are growing efforts to build inclusive economies as part of pandemic recovery. The OECD, in its efforts to track and share recovery efforts, has cataloged a wide array of policy responses to create an inclusive recovery.⁷⁸ And mayors across the globe as part of the C40 group that includes Seattle, have united in calling for an inclusive economic recovery.⁷⁹

Likewise, business leaders have increasingly embraced the concept of “inclusive capitalism”, which treats all stakeholders, not just shareholders, as key to success. In an inclusive economy, workers of all backgrounds have the opportunity to earn living wages, access healthcare, and pursue career pathways. This approach is seen not just as a “good thing to do” but also as “good for business”, because it leads to increased retention, employee engagement and stronger performance, which in turns strengthens long-term resilience of both individuals and businesses.

C. RE-ENVISIONING WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Centering equity in workforce development means re-envisioning and re-structuring how it is done, from underpinnings to goals and intended outcomes.

Livia Lam of the Center for American Progress, in a 2019 framing paper, explains why this is necessary.⁸⁰ She describes a current workforce development system that emphasizes skills gaps, job training, and job placement and asserts that these alone do not address growing inequality, in part because they do not address other barriers low-income workers and workers of colors face,

such as financial constraints from costs of training, child care, transportation, housing, health care and other demands.

Likewise, Glenn Scott Davis and OneAmerica, in a report on economic recovery, state that, “Public workforce employment systems in their current form are centered on job placement and skills development and are simply not designed to solve the core problems of economic instability, poor quality jobs, and equity.”⁸¹

Overemphasizing skills attainment, notes Race Forward, “fails to recognize the historical and inter-generational way in which multiple systems, including not only workforce, but also education, housing, criminal justice and others, have created an inherent set of disadvantages for people of color. What is glaringly absent in this rhetoric are the realities of systemic racism including implicit bias that pervade both the labor market and workforce development programs. Often, rhetoric about employability and opportunity drives social inequity, creating impenetrable roadblocks for workers of color along pathways that are already limited.”⁸²

Together, these structural barriers perpetuate economic inequality based on race, immigration status, gender, income, and class. Notes Lam, “Continued evidence of persistent racial, economic, and employment disparities belies the simplistic narrative of increased individual skills attainment as a silver bullet for the lack of mobility and equally shared outcomes across groups.” In short, it is not just education that matters in employment and economic outcomes.

Lam, Race Forward, and others argue that addressing inequities cannot be done through “safe changes at the margins.” They call for a shift away from the skills narrative to a redesign that advances workforce equity as the system’s guiding priorities and core values, and whose goal is equitable employment outcomes, not just matching skills with any job.⁸³

And JFF, who was a key player in the federal government’s \$2 billion retraining efforts after the 2008 recession, shared its most important lesson learned in writing about what is needed in pandemic recovery: “Using stimulus funds to build hundreds of good but isolated programs is not enough. Nothing less than a complete transformation of our postsecondary and workforce systems will suffice. To counter the recession...of COVID-19, we will need sweeping, systemwide change that enables our most vulnerable populations to gain the skills that are in greatest demand.”⁸⁴

D. BROADENING MEASURES OF SUCCESS INCLUDING JOB QUALITY

One overarching principle in a re-design of workforce development is to align it with economic development approaches. Doing so would broaden the traditional scope of workforce development from skills training and job placement, to promoting family economic stability and job quality. These can then become the basis for a redefinition of measures of success to include helping families move from instability to stability, from which public investments could then be made accordingly.⁸⁵

Broadening measures of success includes redefining job quality. Notes Glenn Scott Davis and OneAmerica, recovery should not simply provide unemployed and underemployed workers access to more jobs but should support broader efforts to make job quality better for low-income workers.

They define quality jobs as possessing the following elements:

- A living wage sufficient to support a decent standard of living.
- Basic benefits that increase economic security, improve health, and promote work-life balance among workers.
- Career-building opportunities that help employees develop the skills, networks, and experiences necessary to launch a career or advance along a career path.
- Wealth-building opportunities that enable and incentivize an employee to build the assets they need to manage financial emergencies and achieve long-term financial security.
- A fair and engaging workplace that balances the priorities and well-being of employees with the needs of the business.⁸⁶

For the purposes of the Regional Workforce Plan, job quality is defined as the following:

- **Livable Wage / Family Wage:** inclusive of higher wage / without benefits; or lower wages and benefits
- **Benefits:** health care & other worker supports
- **Career Advancement:** pathways to higher wage or higher skill jobs; can be developed in partnership if non present
- **Workplace Safety:** minimal exposure to adverse health or physical risks

V. SECTOR ANALYSIS

A. CRITERIA FOR SECTOR SELECTION

A building block in the focus of this plan is sector strategies, which as the basis for a sector-based career pathway approach, has been shown to be more successful than training programs that place adults and dislocated workers in one-off, short-term trainings and low-wage jobs.⁸⁷ Sector strategies help low income people and people of color obtain quality, living wage jobs in targeted sectors and occupations; engage employers and unions as partners in the effort; and create systemic change within the targeted sectors and occupations in the labor market.⁸⁸

For this plan, we conducted a sector assessment to identify ‘Opportunity Sectors’ – those sectors that we believe should be a focus of regional recovery – using eight criteria (see *Table 1* below). Regional sectors were first evaluated against quantitative indicators captured in the first two criteria (size/presence & short-term indicators of recovery). Sectors with significant regional presence and signs of short-term recovery were then evaluated against subjective criteria – including job quality factors and industry readiness, using a red-yellow-green rating system as defined below.

Table 1: Opportunity Sector Criteria

CRITERIA AND DEFINITION	RED RATINGS	YELLOW RATINGS	GREEN RATINGS
1. Size and Presence of Sector in Regional Economy – Sectors are regionally significant (e.g. # of jobs and location quotient).	Relatively small absolute # of jobs and low location quotient		Critical mass of jobs and/or location quotient close to or above 1.0
2. Short-term Job Recovery/Growth - Sector is starting to show signs of recovery in short-term (e.g. decrease in UI claims, increase in job postings indicating unmet need, increase in estimated employment).	Limited rebound in estimated employment	Some rebound in estimated employment	Significant rebound in estimated employment
3. Longer-term Job Recovery/Growth - Longer-term outlook promising based on qualitative information on sector trends, change in demand, and impact on jobs.	Strong trend toward significant long-term or permanent job loss	Moderate and/or slow job recovery or uncertain outlook	Strong trend toward full pre-COVID job recovery or significant new job growth
4. Wages and Benefits – Targeted occupations within the sector provide a living wage/family wage and benefits.	Relatively small % of jobs pay above \$30/hour	Moderate % of jobs pay above \$30/hour	Significant % of jobs pay above \$30/hour
5. Education and Training Requirements – Targeted occupations require some postsecondary education and training, but less than a four-year degree (e.g., on-the-job	4-year degree or more required		Some postsecondary education and training but less than 4-year degree

CRITERIA AND DEFINITION	RED RATINGS	YELLOW RATINGS	GREEN RATINGS
training, short-term certificates, one- and two-year certificates and degrees, apprenticeships, etc.).			
6. Career Pathways – Sector has targeted occupations that offer pathways to higher wage, higher skill jobs or can be developed in partnership with employers, unions and regional workforce development system.	Limited pathways and/or significant barriers to advancement, especially for workers of color	Some barriers to advancement and/or partially established pathways	Clear and established pathways, especially for workers of color
7. Workplace Safety - Low-risk occupations and/or employer assurances to minimize exposure to adverse health or physical risks where they exist.	High risk for COVID-19 exposure	Moderate risk for COVID-19 exposure	Minimal or no risk for COVID-19 exposure
8. Sector Engagement, Commitment and Readiness – Employers, industry associations, and unions in the sector are engaged, committed, and ready to partner (or can be). This includes readiness in terms of racial equity and job quality.	Little or no engagement or readiness	Moderate engagement or readiness	Strong engagement or readiness

B. SECTOR ASSESSMENT

Using the assessment rubric and criteria described above resulted in the sector assessment shown in *Table 2*. There were no sectors that were green across all criteria; however, some showed promise in several criteria, while others have opportunities to improve job quality or job access for BIPOC workers. Taken together, our analysis identified seven Opportunity Sectors: Construction, Manufacturing, Retail Trade, Transportation and Warehousing, Information Technology (IT), Healthcare and Maritime.

Table 2 - Opportunity Sector Assessment

NAICS CODE	OPPORTUNITY SECTORS (Noted in CAPS)	1. Size and Presence of Sector (2019)	2. Short-term Job Recovery/Growth	3. Longer-term Job Recovery/Growth	4. Wages and Benefits (% of jobs paying \$20/hr. in 2019)	5. Education and Training Requirements	6. Career Pathways	7. Workplace Safety	8. Sector Engagement
23	CONSTRUCTION	90,168 jobs; 0.99LQ ¹		Varies by segment	64%				
31-33	MANUFACTURING	107,619 jobs; 0.86LQ	Varies by segment		61%				
44-45	RETAIL TRADE	165,125 jobs; 1.06LQ	Varies by segment	Varies by segment	45%				
445	Food and beverage stores								
452	General merchandise								
454	Nonstore retailers	57,291 jobs; 8.18 LQ							
48-49	TRANSPORTATION AND WAREHOUSING	58,340 jobs; 0.97LQ	Varies by segment	Varies by segment	44%				
484	Truck transportation								
488	Support activities for transportation								
493	Warehousing, storage								
51	INFORMATION	123,064 jobs; 4.26LQ			91%				

¹ LQ = Location Quotient. An analytical statistic that measures a region's industrial specialization relative to a larger geographic unit (usually the nation equal to one indicates that regional employment matches the proportion of national employment in that industry. For example, a Location Quotient greater than one indicates that the region has a higher concentration of employment in a particular industry compared to the national average

NAICS CODE	OPPORTUNITY SECTORS (Noted in CAPS)	1. Size and Presence of Sector (2019)	2. Short-term Job Recovery/Growth	3. Longer-term Job Recovery/Growth	4. Wages and Benefits (% of jobs paying \$20.45+ in 2019)	5. Education and Training Requirements	6. Career Pathways	7. Workplace Safety	8. Sector Engagement
541	PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL SERVICES	153,675 jobs; 1.46LQ			74%				
62	HEALTH CARE AND SOCIAL ASSISTANCE	167,137 jobs; 0.82LQ	Varies by segment		40%				
3366; 4831 & 4832 (part); 4883	MARITIME (focus on ship and boat building, repair and maintenance; and maritime logistics and shipping)								

C. OPPORTUNITY SECTORS

We grouped the seven Opportunity Sectors into three categories, or archetypes, centered on similarities in recovery outlook combined with job quality (living wages & benefits, advancement & workplace safety) and job access (amount of education & training required and/or structural barriers). This will help inform the development of strategies and interventions that are targeted and appropriate to each sector. Below is description of each archetype and the sectors in each of them.

Chart 3: Sector Archetypes

SECTOR ARCHETYPE	DESCRIPTION	SECTORS
Moderate Recovery Outlook, Job Quality & Job Access	Sectors rated mostly green and/or no red across the assessment criteria, reflecting a combination of recovery outlook that is moderate to strong, moderate job quality and moderate job access or fewer barriers (particularly around training requirements) compared to other sectors identified.	Construction, Transportation and Warehousing, Maritime
Moderate Recovery Outlook / Lower Job Quality / Higher Job Access	Sectors included here are those with more mixed ratings: moderate to strong recovery outlook and comparatively lower barriers to job access, but need improvement in some dimensions of job quality, including workplace safety.	Manufacturing, Retail Trade
Strong Recovery Outlook / Higher Job Quality / Lower Job Access	Sectors included here are those with strong outlook for recovery and higher job quality (in terms of wages and	IT, Healthcare

	workplace safety) but have significant training requirements, as well as structural barriers to job access for BIPOC workers.	
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1. MODERATE RECOVERY OUTLOOK, JOB QUALITY & JOB ACCESS

a. CONSTRUCTION

NAICS CODE	OPPORTUNITY SECTOR	1. Size and Presence of Sector (2019)	2. Short-term Job Recovery/Growth	3. Longer-term Job Recovery/Growth	4. Wages & Benefits (% of jobs paying \$30/hr+; 2018)	5. Education & Training Requirements	6. Career Pathways	7. Workplace Safety	8. Sector Engagement
23	CONSTRUCTION	90,168 jobs; 0.99LQ		Varies by segment	64%				

Locally, the construction sector in 2019 was relatively sizable with over 90,000 jobs and a location quotient of 0.99. In Washington State, even though construction was hit hard, short-term job recovery has shown positive signs, with some projects beginning or resuming within the Governor’s phased re-opening guidelines.⁸⁹ Transportation-related construction and other essential projects are operational.⁹⁰ Longer-term prospects vary by segment. Economic analysts predict that construction in hospitality, retail and entertainment projects are likely to be less attractive given the impact of COVID-19 on this sector, while public institutional and infrastructure, transportation and healthcare-related projects could see more activity.⁹¹ Local analysts expect the industry in Washington to rebound fully once the pandemic abates.⁹²

Across the construction sector, over 60 percent of jobs pay more than \$30/hour, established career pathways exist, and education and training requirements are relatively accessible. Workplace safety is influenced by a range of factors including sub-activity, type of project, unionization, site and project owner/management. In King County, the sector is well engaged on workforce development issues. The construction sector has historically been and continues to be predominantly white and male – workers of color comprise 26 percent of the Construction workforce in King County, compared to 34 percent of the workforce overall. This presents an opportunity for greater racial and gender diversity.

Taking all the criteria into account, the Construction sector is a promising sector for WDC and workforce partner engagement and support.

b. TRANSPORTATION AND WAREHOUSING

NAICS CODE	OPPORTUNITY SECTOR	1. Size and Presence of Sector (2019)	2. Short-term Job Recovery/Growth	3. Longer-term Job Recovery/Growth	4. Wages and Benefits (% of jobs paying \$30/hr+; 2018)	5. Education and Training Requirements	6. Career Pathways	7. Workplace Safety	8. Sector Engagement
48-49	TRANSPORTATION AND WAREHOUSING	58,340 jobs; 0.97 LQ	Varies by segment	Varies by segment	44%				
484	Truck transportation								
488	Support activities for transportation								
493	Warehousing, storage								

Pre-pandemic, the Transportation and Warehousing sector had 58,340 jobs in our region. The impact of COVID-19 on this sector has also varied widely by segment. Overall, the surge in e-commerce and home delivery have significantly reshaped the mobility landscape, including transportation of both cargo and people. In cargo, volumes have dropped significantly in air, railroad (20 percent) and ocean shipping (25 percent).⁹³ In contrast, in truck transportation last-mile deliveries have increased tenfold. Trucking volumes rose 30 percent from panic buying, dropped, and started to rise again.⁹⁴

On the consumer side, many people don't feel safe traveling right now and/or have increased customer expectations for safety, hygiene and flexibility.⁹⁵ Technology-dependent companies such as Uber and Lyft have been hit hard.⁹⁶ Air passenger traffic, which at its peak after the start of the pandemic, plunged up to 90 percent in many locales, remained 30 percent below in early summer.⁹⁷ The greatest impact has been on long-haul routes.^{98 99}

Looking ahead, industry experts anticipate 4 to 5 years to full recovery in most modes including air travel. Other trends will include increased remote operations, such as for long-haul trucking¹⁰⁰, expanded deployment of automated delivery via robots and drones, and shift from heavy to light freight.^{101 102} Consumer travel will return, varying by activity. Local travel will recover before long-distance and international travel. Leisure travel will recover before business travel. Business conferences will recover last.^{103 104 105} Travel-heavy industries, such as professional services and sales, may permanently reduce travel needs as they adopt virtual work.^{106 107 108} The International Air Transport Association (IATA), predicts air passenger travel will recover in 2025.¹⁰⁹ Locally, Alaska Airlines, our region's flagship airline, saw a modest recovery in June and July, and declined again following new COVID surges in other states.¹¹⁰ As of June 4, the airline predicted 3,000 job reductions in 2021, including 1,583 in Seattle.¹¹¹

Taken as a whole, Transportation and Warehousing jobs are relatively accessible in terms of educational requirements and there is some sector engagement to support workforce development. Though some sub-industry areas have been significantly impacted, others including trucking,

warehousing and support activities look strong. Taking all the criteria into account, some of the sub-sectors in Transportation and Warehousing offer promising job prospects.

c. MARITIME

NAICS CODE	OPPORTUNITY SECTORS (Noted in CAPS)	1. Size and Presence of Sector (2019)	2. Short-term Job Recovery/Growth	3. Longer-term Job Recovery/Growth	4. Wages and Benefits (% of jobs paying \$30/hr+; 2018)	5. Education and Training	6. Career Pathways	7. Workplace Safety	8. Sector Engagement
3366; 4831 & 4832 (part); 4883	MARITIME (focus on ship and boat building, repair and maintenance; and maritime logistics and shipping)								

Maritime covers a wide range of industrial activities that cross many industries. As such, data on the sector can be challenging to analyze precisely; however, looking across multiple data sources gives a snapshot of COVID-19 impact and outlook for the sector’s recovery.

Washington’s strategic position in the northwest of the U.S. combined with natural deep-water bays and inland access make the state a maritime shipping hub, particularly in connecting Asia to the Midwestern U.S. In 2015, Washington state’s maritime sector included close to 70,000 jobs, including 18,700 jobs in ship building and repair, and 22,300 jobs in logistics and shipping.¹¹²

Driven largely by drops in demand and disruptions in supply chains, the pandemic resulted in thousands of job losses in key maritime segments including seafood processing, ship and boat building and repair, port and harbor operations, and marine cargo handling. As of the date of this analysis, continuing UI claims have dropped by almost two thirds, and in September, Seattle and Tacoma docks saw their best month of the year in marine cargo handling, with exports increasing 21 percent compared with August, although this was still an 11 percent decrease from one year ago¹¹³. Job postings have remained constant since August. Globally, some container lines are maxing out capacity to meet a surge of U.S. imports, in large part driven by anticipation of the holiday shopping season.¹¹⁴ Taken together, these signs indicate some recovery.¹¹⁵

Looking ahead, the maritime sector will continue to be shaped by several key factors that predated the pandemic and may be accelerated because of it. These include increased use of technology, reshoring and restructuring of supply chains, shifts and expansions in trade routes, and an increased focus on sustainability.¹¹⁶

Our analysis surfaced two maritime sub-sectors as particularly promising: Ship and Boat Building and Repair, and Maritime Logistics and Shipping. These segments include occupations with comparatively good wages, and local industry organizations have demonstrated readiness for engagement in workforce development. Education and training requirements, career pathways and workplaces vary by specific job.¹¹⁷

The Maritime sector has historically been and today remains predominantly white and male, presenting an opportunity for greater racial and gender diversity.¹¹⁸ While some of the subsectors within this sector are more diverse, many of those jobs are lower quality.

2. MODERATE RECOVERY OUTLOOK / LOWER JOB QUALITY / HIGHER JOB ACCESS

a. MANUFACTURING

NAICS CODE	OPPORTUNITY SECTOR	1. Size and Presence of Sector (2019)	2. Short-term Job Recovery/Growth	3. Longer-term Job Recovery/Growth	4. Wages and Benefits (% of jobs paying \$30/hr+;	5. Education and Training Requirements	6. Career Pathways	7. Workplace Safety	8. Sector Engagement
31-33	MANUFACTURING	107,619 jobs; 0.86LQ	Varies by segment		61%				

Our region’s manufacturing sector in 2019 provided over 100,000 jobs, has a location quotient of 0.86, and had been experiencing pre-COVID workforce shortages, especially in workers trained to use technologies, a trend across the sector as a whole.¹¹⁹ Across the state, short-term job recovery has shown some positive signs, though with variation by sector. Most manufacturers remained open because they were deemed essential, but suppliers to hotel, aerospace and restaurant industries were hard hit. Many quickly retooled to meet COVID-related demand for items such as personal protective equipment and sanitizer.

Looking ahead, analysts expect continued growth in use of technology in manufacturing, especially drones, augmented reality and virtual reality, and 3D printing.¹²⁰ Provoked by the pandemic, the sector is also expected to look at how to making supply chains more resilient such as through reshoring or localizing production,¹²¹ as well as increasingly looking to aftermarket services as a revenue stream.¹²² Job recovery will depend on the length of the pandemic and permanency of changes in consumer habits.¹²³

Across the manufacturing sector, over 60 percent of jobs pay more than \$30/hour, and education and training requirements are relatively accessible. Workplace safety can be high risk depending on the sub-sector or type of production. In Seattle-King County, the sector is well engaged on workforce development issues. Taking all the criteria into account the Manufacturing sector is promising for WDC and partner engagement and support.

b. RETAIL TRADE

NAICS CODE	OPPORTUNITY SECTORS (Noted in CAPS)	1. Size and Presence of Sector (2019)	2. Short-term Job Recovery/Growth	3. Longer-term Job Recovery/Growth	4. Wages and Benefits (% of jobs paying)	5. Education and Training Requirements	6. Career Pathways	7. Workplace Safety	8. Sector Engagement
44-45	RETAIL TRADE	165,125 jobs; 1.06LQ	Varies by segment	Varies by segment	45%				
445	Food and beverage stores								
452	General merchandise								
454	Nonstore retailers	57,291 jobs; 8.18 LQ							

Prior to COVID-19, the retail trade sector had a very sizable presence in our region, with over 165,000 jobs, including 57,000 in non-store retailers (e.g., Amazon). The impact of the pandemic has varied, with physical retail outlets hit hard due to stay-at-home orders, but a huge surge in online shopping, especially among older first-time online shoppers, along with contactless purchasing such as curbside pickup. Shortly after the pandemic began, Amazon hired 175,000 new workers and in September announced they would hire an additional 100,000 fulfillment workers and 33,000 corporate and technology positions in the U.S. and Canada.¹²⁴ Essential retail has been in high demand (groceries, drug and pharmacy, health and hygiene products, home improvement, mass and discount stores)¹²⁵ while discretionary spending has slowed, especially spending on high-end/luxury items, which has been decimated.

Looking ahead, analysts anticipate that U.S. e-commerce will grow 38 percent this year (vs 13 percent pre-COVID), an acceleration by three years, with most believing the trend likely to become permanent. Like manufacturing, this sector also experienced major disruptions to supply chains, some of which have started to come back online but which may also lead the sector to focus on localizing supply chains in the future.

Compared with other sectors identified, the retail sector has fewer than 50 percent of jobs that pay more than \$30/hour, in large part reflected in lower-paying cashier jobs. Education and training requirements are relatively accessible. Career pathways are not well established, and workplace safety is higher risk given the many retail jobs that are frontline work. In Seattle-King County, the sector is somewhat well engaged on workforce development issues. Taking all the criteria into account, some of the sub-sectors in Retail Trade offer promising job prospects.

3. STRONG RECOVERY OUTLOOK / HIGHER JOB QUALITY / LOWER JOB ACCESS

c. INFORMATION (IT ADJACENT CLUSTERS)

d. PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL SERVICES (IT ADJACENT CLUSTERS)

NAICS CODE	OPPORTUNITY SECTORS	1. Size and Presence of Sector (2019)	2. Short-term Job Recovery/Growth	3. Longer-term Job Recovery/Growth	4. Wages and Benefits (% of jobs paying \$30/hr+; 2018)	5. Education and Training Requirements	6. Career Pathways	7. Workplace Safety	8. Sector Engagement
51	INFORMATION	123,064 jobs; 4.26LQ			91%				
541	PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL SERVICES	153,675 jobs; 1.46LQ			74%				

Prior to the pandemic, the Information and Professional and Technical Services sectors provided over 120,000 and 150,000 jobs, respectively, in our region. Nationally, the rise in remote work, school closings and stay-at-home orders have led to a surge in network usage.¹²⁶ Videoconferencing and remote collaboration exploded.

Digital entertainment services have skyrocketed, including gaming, streaming, and music consumption seeing usage up 20 to 70 percent.¹²⁷ This has led to related growth in demand for hardware, software and IT services. However, hardware supply chains have also seen major disruptions, particularly for electronics products manufactured in Asia.

Locally, IT has also remained strong. Local employers continually cite a need for workers with IT skills, report lengthy vacancy periods for job openings, and lack of available talent as a reason for automating jobs.¹²⁸ And health and life sciences companies in the region have been raising significant venture capital. As one example, in April, three biotech companies, 98point6 (telemedicine), Avalyn (respiratory disease therapies) and Blaze Bioscience (brain tumor identification) raised a combined \$101 million.¹²⁹

Factories have started coming back online and outlook projections indicate there will continue to be a need for IT skills across all sectors. Economic analysts predict that the global content delivery network (CDN) market will reach US\$15.5 billion in 2020, up more than 25 percent from 2019.¹³⁰ Many telecom companies are looking at long term investments in 5G technology.

Despite the uncertainties in pandemic recovery, the IT sector is one of two sectors that most labor market and economic development experts believe will continue to grow.

The Washington Workforce Training & Education Coordinating Board, in its draft Economic Recovery Plan for Washington state’s workforce, includes IT among the three sectors it focuses on. The Board is prioritizing this sector both because of growth projections and the opportunity to create career pathways that are not yet well established, especially for historically marginalized populations.¹³¹

The Workforce Board’s recovery analysis notes that, “Before and through the pandemic, IT-based jobs flourished, and will continue to do so as all industry sectors move towards greater virtualization, digitization, and automation. The ability to use IT is a growing necessity of most jobs in the labor market today—and the proportion of IT to non-IT functions is expected to

continue growing. Employers continually call out the need for workers with IT skills, report lengthy vacancy periods for job openings, and cite the lack of available talent as a reason for automating away jobs.”

Besides positive signs of short- and long-term job growth, the IT sector (and IT jobs in adjacent clusters) also has the largest percentage by far of jobs paying over \$30/hour (74 percent and 91 percent) among the sectors in our assessment. As largely white-collar jobs, this sector is very low risk for workplace safety.

However, it has historically required advance educational credentials and does not have well established pathways to access and move up in jobs, especially for workers of color, leading to a largely white workforce.

Race Forward, in an analysis of both the technology and healthcare sectors, underscores the challenges to job access and mobility for workers of color in these sectors.¹³² Strategies should recognize and address these barriers, which include:

- Employer racial bias in hiring of Black/African American and Latinx workers
- Barriers for workers to attain needed credentials to access jobs, including cost of training or education, transportation, and childcare accessibility
- Lack of cultural competence in One-Stop Centers providing assistance to job seekers, in particular lack of understanding of barriers that workers of color face, and
- Lack of peer group support once hired into a job

e. HEALTHCARE

NAICS CODE	OPPORTUNITY SECTORS	1. Size and Presence of Sector (2019)	2. Short-term Job Recovery/Growth	3. Longer-term Job Recovery/Growth	4. Wages and Benefits (% of jobs paying \$30/hr+; 2018)	5. Education and Training Requirements	6. Career Pathways	7. Workplace Safety	8. Sector Engagement
62	HEALTH CARE AND SOCIAL ASSISTANCE	167,137 jobs; 0.82LQ	Varies by segment		40%				

With over 167,000 jobs in King County, the healthcare sector is the second largest industry in our region, behind only Government. Many healthcare jobs across the country were in high demand pre-pandemic, especially for nurses and home care, and that need has only increased further.¹³³ As the virus unfolded, some facilities were stretched to capacity, leading to dire need for healthcare workers at all levels.¹³⁴

The National Governors Association (NGA), in its July 2020 report, “Reimagining Workforce Policy in the Age of Disruption,” wrote, “Preexisting shortages in the workforce exposed an acute need for rapid reskilling in high-demand fields. During COVID-19, shortages of trained workers in essential fields, including health care, dramatically affected quality of services.”

Locally, the Washington Workforce Board cites U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data indicating that there are currently 4,800 statewide openings for home health aides and as indicated on the job board Indeed, nearly 900 long-term care nurse positions open in the state. Skilled nursing facilities and home health agencies are recruiting heavily, but grapple with the perception of a high-risk, low-reward job.¹³⁵

While initially most healthcare systems focused capacity on COVID-related care, and deferred non-urgent care, the latter are now starting to return as capacity for COVID care has begun to stabilize and/or facilities have been able to increase capacity. Amid these shifts, there has also been a move to virtual healthcare. While virtual health services were growing pre-pandemic as part of general automation of some healthcare roles, it has skyrocketed since, both to optimize limited capacity and to support patient safety.^{136 137138139}

Looking ahead, the sector is expected to recover fully once a vaccine is developed.¹⁴⁰ Healthcare systems will need to address supply chain issues (e.g. PPE) and make up for lost revenue from deferred care.¹⁴¹ Demand for nurses will continue, especially with one-third anticipated to retire in the next ten years.¹⁴²

Along with IT, healthcare is the other sector where there is widespread agreement among experts that it will continue to be high growth.

The Washington Workforce Board includes healthcare among their three focus sectors, prioritizing it both because of anticipated growth and the opportunity to build pathways for workers of color that so far have not been created.¹⁴³ Like IT, healthcare also presents significant barriers to job access and mobility for workers of color, including employer hiring biases, educational and training requirements and cost, and isolation and lack of peer supports once workers of color are hired into a job.¹⁴⁴

Despite the soaring demand, entry into livable wage healthcare jobs can take months if not years, due to lengthy education and licensing requirements. There is often a disconnect between job seekers and employers seeking workers, and the lack of established occupational tracks for many healthcare roles leave many potential workers unable to access jobs and/or achieve job mobility, especially workers of color.¹⁴⁵ As a result, like in IT, the workforce in healthcare, particularly in higher-paying jobs like nursing, is disproportionately white while lower-paying jobs like home care are disproportionately workers of color.

This sector offers a major opportunity to address the longstanding need for healthcare workers, while re-deploying those who are unemployed due to COVID-19. It also is an opportunity to make careers that are higher skilled, higher demand and better paying more accessible and navigable for underserved communities.

VI. STRATEGIES

Equitable economic recovery will require an explicit and intentional set of strategies to support BIPOC workers, immigrants and refugees. The Plan prioritizes the following strategies which are informed by research and the identification of innovative national and regional practices aimed toward this end. We evaluated strategies for their promise of impact and degree of difficulty in implementation. On the latter, many of the strategies require collaboration and commitment from multiple partners in the workforce ecosystem. Their execution will necessitate the regional workforce system evolve to an innovative, industry & community informed, and outcome-driven system with racial equity at its core. Strategies are organized as follows and detailed in the attached summary.

- Workforce Development
 - Relief Strategies
 - Recovery Strategies
 - Population Based Strategies
- Advocacy
- Systems Change

Historically, the workforce development system has emphasized skills, training, and job placement. In many instances, this exclusive emphasis fails to result in actual employment or at best, the placement into a low-wage job. In the absence of addressing the barriers to work and higher quality jobs often facing low-income workers and workers of color, continuing this approach is likely to exacerbate existing income disparity and occupational segregation. Barriers to work include financial resources to pay for education & training, supports that enable work (childcare, and transportation), structural racism, and exclusionary policies that relegate BIPOC workers to low-wage jobs with little to no opportunity for growth and advancement. As such, the strategies presented here recognize and include the criticality of advocacy and changes in policy enabling greater access or the removal of barriers to work; as well as systemic changes to dismantle racialized practices that historically result in inequitable economic outcomes for BIPOC workers, immigrant and refugees.

By design, each strategy centers equity and is explicit in its intent to support BIPOC workers, immigrants, refugees and other historically marginalized workers. Sector strategies are featured prominently in our recovery strategies informed by our sector analysis and identification of ‘opportunity sectors’ as defined in *Section V*.

Finally, while the strategies are intended to help our intended beneficiaries, they may be insufficient for some populations who face additional barriers to employment. As such, additional strategies are included for opportunity youth and the immigrant and refugee community.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

IMMEDIATE RELIEF STRATEGIES

INVEST IN SUBSIDIZED TRANSITIONAL EMPLOYMENT W/ PATHWAYS

- Invest in and create a ‘Recovery Corps’ to connect dislocated workers of color, bilingual workers and youth with high-demand relief and recovery jobs.¹⁴⁶

- Leverage awarded DOL funds and other public sources of funding to subsidize relief & recovery jobs and in-demand jobs in prioritized sectors that can be connected to long-term career pathways that lead to better jobs and better pay.¹⁴⁷

Subsidized employment is one way to provide people who are unemployed with jobs and income in the near/short term, especially during economic downturns. It can also help build skills and networks and provide on-ramps to longer term career pathways. Subsidized employment can take the form of publicly subsidized, private sector jobs or newly created public or nonprofit sector jobs. Possible examples of the latter include COVID-19 contact tracers and testers, green jobs, and infrastructure jobs.

A number of policy research and advocacy organizations have called for making subsidized employment part of COVID-19 response and recovery.¹⁴⁸ The National Skills Coalition’s *Skills for an Inclusive Economic Recovery: A Call for Action, Equity, and Accountability* includes the following as part of its eight-point policy agenda:

Publicly funded job creation that includes training for those in need of a new career. Ensure job creation efforts such as those around infrastructure or an expanded public health workforce to fight the pandemic, include investments in skills that expand access to long term careers for local workers.

State and federal investments in physical, digital, and clean energy infrastructure, as well as in public health capacity for new contact tracers and tests, could create millions of good jobs. We must ensure that these and any other job creation efforts include dedicated, comprehensive training and support service investments with a focus on inclusion of local workers most impacted by the pandemic, including people of color, immigrants, and women.

Studies show that subsidized employment programs are effective at helping the unemployed, including those with barriers to employment, get jobs and earn an income. However, subsidized employment programs working to place participants with nonprofits, public agencies or social enterprises have higher job placement rates.¹⁴⁹

COVID-19 has created a need for jobs related to crisis mitigation, relief and recovery. As the pandemic has progressed, needs have arisen or surged for essential workers in areas including health and medical care; essential infrastructure and public services; essential consumer products and services like groceries and pharmacies; and manufacturing, transportation and logistics related to soaring e-commerce activity.

As the United States pursues efforts to control spread of the virus, there will continue to be job needs, even well after a vaccine is developed. Workers will be needed for roles including large scale testing, contact tracing, making and distributing test kits and personal protective equipment, collecting samples and performing community outreach and education. Additionally, as businesses continue to reopen and public transit and other spaces are being shared, frequent cleaning and disinfecting of trains, buses, and buildings will be essential to slow the spread of the virus. And there will continue to be a need for workers to support the new “stay-at-home era”, including delivery workers, contactless services and work to help close digital access gaps for underserved communities.¹⁵⁰

Public health experts estimate that the United States may need to ramp up testing capacity to 25 to 35 million tests per day. Effective contact tracing alone would require between 300,000 and 500,000 new or redeployed workers across the country.¹⁵¹

All of this presents both a need and an opportunity to create jobs for unemployed workers while promoting public health and supporting economic recovery.¹⁵² Many cities and local governments have responded to this call by creating “recovery sector” employment, targeting transitional jobs, public service jobs, and infrastructure jobs for which to train and transition new and existing workers.¹⁵³ In a Harris Poll/U.S. Conference of Mayors survey of 124 mayors, 69 percent said “investing in infrastructure to generate jobs and economic growth was their top immediate priority” as well as their long-term priority for 71 percent. And 92 percent said that “updating roads, signaling, sidewalks, or tunnels/bridges will help bring back jobs and revitalize their city’s economy.”¹⁵⁴ These efforts offer valuable lessons on how to rapidly train individuals for high-demand careers.¹⁵⁵

EXPAND CAPACITY OF UI CLAIMS SYSTEM TO ENSURE MORE EQUITABLE ACCESS

- Collaborate with Employment Security Department to simplify and implement sustainable improvements to expand the capacity of UI system to ensure greater access to interim financial relief for those with language and/or digital access barriers.

Employment Security Department (ESD)’s UI system relies heavily on both its website and phone system to process and manage UI claims, with limited availability of in-person support for individuals needing immediate assistance. This results in 1) many applicants falling through the cracks due to system backlogs and phonenumber failures; 2) applicant challenges in following confusing automated instructions for filing claims; and/or 3) perpetual delays in claims being processed for clients with no alternative financial safety net.

In addition, the system lacks essential multilingual language support needed for many limited English speaking (LEP) populations seeking access to UI or claims filing information – language barriers for many UI clients lead to questions being answered incorrectly on applications and claims resulting in rapid denials. Where interpretation is made available, applicants still face barriers including: 1) fear of sharing personal information without a trusted source; and 2) interpreters not adequately trained or well-versed in UI terms or policies. There is a significant lack of translated forms and materials for LEP populations. WDC-contracted service provider staff have invested significant time and resources creating translated documents to meet applicant needs.

Digital literacy and access to technology poses an additional challenge for BIPOC and immigrant/refugee communities attempting to navigate the UI system – many communities of color relied on WorkSource and other public locations (e.g. libraries and community centers) to access computers and receive support in filling out UI applications. COVID-19 closures have eliminated most avenues of access for these populations, resulting in an increased reliance on WDC-contracted service providers and their multilingual staff to assist with UI questions and applications in a complicated virtual environment.

RECOVERY STRATEGIES

ADVANCE SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS AND STRATEGIES

- *Develop new and strengthen existing sector partnerships and strategies, which can not only help firms within targeted sectors meet their workforce and skill needs and people get jobs, but also address racial equity and job quality, and promote broader policy/systems change. Initial targeted sectors include:*

- **Construction.** *Support the work of Regional Public Owners and the Priority Hire program, as way to address racial equity in the construction sector.*
- **Information Technology.** *Create alternative points of entry and pathways to the IT sector as well as tech occupations that cross sectors to diversify the IT workforce.*
- **Other Sector Strategies.** *Identify additional sector strategies as opportunities emerge, leveraging existing industry tables (e.g., Healthcare Industry Leadership Table).*

Sector partnerships and strategies, as noted by Maureen Conway, et al., represent ‘a systems approach to workforce development – typically on behalf of low-income individuals.’ They:

- Target a specific industry and/or cluster of occupations
- Intervene through a credible organization (workforce intermediaries or backbone organizations, which can include workforce development boards such as the WDC)
- Support workers in improving their skills and employment prospects, including quality jobs, living wages, benefits, working conditions, and advancement opportunities
- Address the needs of firms within an industry and improve industry competitiveness
- Create lasting change in the labor market system to the benefit of both workers and employers (e.g., industry practices, workforce development systems, and public policy)¹⁵⁶

These partnerships typically include employers and unions within the targeted industry, along with the public workforce development system, education and training providers, economic development agencies, and community-based organizations.

There is a growing base of evidence for sector partnerships and strategies, with evaluations showing labor market payoffs for participants in terms of employment, earnings, and advancement.¹⁵⁷

Regional Public Owners (RPO) is a local example of a robust sector partnership. RPO is a collaboration of regional public agencies—including the City of Seattle, King County, Port of Seattle, and Sound Transit—that partners to meet public construction demand by expanding, diversifying, training, and retaining the construction workforce. Among its efforts:

- Engaging labor, employers, joint apprenticeship committees, and the community
- Aligning priority hire policies and practices that give priority to residents of economically distressed neighborhoods on public construction projects, along with sharing related resources and data
- Gathering and analyzing regional workforce data to identify and address specific equity gaps
- Jointly funding efforts such as construction worker outreach, training, and retention services to increase the representation of women, people of color, and those from economically distressed neighborhoods in the construction sector

There are several ways workforce development boards such as the WDC can advance sector partnerships and strategies, according to the research. These include industry engagement, innovative financing, driving systems change, and acting as a data broker.¹⁵⁸

The research also identifies the ways in which sector partnerships and strategies can help advance racial equity and job quality. With regard to racial equity, this includes incorporating targeted participant services and supports; working with industry partners to change hiring and workplace practices that have a disproportionate impact on people of color; disaggregating data to better

understand disparities, set goals, and establish accountability; and defining a policy/systems change agenda.¹⁵⁹ In terms of job quality, this includes setting job quality standards.¹⁶⁰

Sector partnerships provide the infrastructure and capacity to plan, develop, and implement strategies such as development of career pathways and expansion of apprenticeships (described below).¹⁶¹

CO-CREATE & CO-INVEST IN HIGH-DEMAND CAREER PATHWAYS

- *Co-create and co-invest with sector partners in high-demand career pathways, leveraging the resources of existing systems.¹⁶² Determine priority areas for training programs, build demand-driven training programs, and remove barriers to employee participation.¹⁶³*
- *Create on-ramps and integrate education & training, hands-on paid experience (e.g., apprenticeships) & leverage wraparound supports into pathways responsive to specific circumstances and needs of workers of color.*
- *Leverage and increase public funds for wrap-around supports – County, State childcare subsidies, & Basic Food Education & Training (BFET) funding.*

Historically, workforce development interventions have often been delivered in silos. At the same time, traditional college models often do not work for learners, especially adults aiming to gain new skills while juggling other jobs and/or family responsibilities. They need flexible programs and pathways that meet them where they are at.¹⁶⁴

Livia Lam, Director of Workforce Development at the Center for American Progress, in her review of the literature on the efficacy of workforce development interventions, notes that there is a growing body of evidence that integration of education, training, hands-on work experience and wraparound supports improves outcomes and return on investment for both students in secondary and postsecondary education and skilled technical workers in different career stages. Additionally, Brookings writes that a sector-based career pathway approach has been shown to be more successful than training programs that place adults and dislocated workers in one-off, short-term trainings and low-wage jobs.¹⁶⁵

Specific to the pandemic, strategies to expand access to pathways for people of color and low-income workers should target jobs that are suitable for socially distanced or remote working arrangements. A study of COVID-19 job impacts by PolicyLink and Burning Glass found that workers of color are underrepresented in many higher wage occupations that require less physical proximity and are more likely to recover more quickly, while white workers are overrepresented in 13 of the 15 largest occupations studied. Efforts to strengthen worker pipelines should include racial equity targets to support people of color entering these roles.¹⁶⁶

EXPAND APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS

- *Further invest in existing pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs with culturally-competent organizations and/or organizations that are led/owned by communities of color.¹⁶⁷*
- *Replicate construction ‘Priority Hire’ programming for other sectors to establish pre-apprenticeship & apprenticeship programs with focus on people of color and others living in economically distressed regions of King County.*
- *Support State Healthcare Workforce Council and work in collaboration with the Healthcare Industry Leadership Table (HILT) to establish apprenticeship programs to include dual language instruction.*

- *Build linkages between K-12 and apprenticeship partners to expand high-quality youth apprenticeships, serving school districts in King County by supporting pathways for youth ages 16-24.*
- *Implement incentives to encourage employers to hire and train apprentices of color, or if incentives exist, expand them to include a prioritization of workers of color.*¹⁶⁸

In difficult economic times, when businesses are weakened, new apprentices are often the first to go. From 2008 to 2011, the U.S. lost 86,000 apprentices, a 20 percent drop tied to the Great Recession. Similar effects were seen after 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina. Yet, research shows that apprenticeships and other work-based learning are effective ways to meet employer workforce needs. Apprenticeships especially address barriers workers of color often face in job access because they provide formal pathways into jobs instead of requiring workers to rely on only existing professional and social networks.¹⁶⁹

Studies have shown the return on investment (ROI) for apprenticeships is very high. In a review of literature by the Washington Workforce Training & Education Coordinating Board, the Board states that “Overall employment and earnings resulting from apprenticeship participation outpace traditional education pathways after program exit and even a few years past exit, with no discernable debt load incurred by the apprentice. Registered Apprenticeship can be an equalizer for economically vulnerable populations, with access and participation supports at each stage of participation.”¹⁷⁰

The Washington State Apprenticeship and Training Council (WSATC) has a legal obligation to focus on equitable access and benefit across our diverse population. The WSATC sees this as a priority, working with apprenticeship sponsors and the Department Labor and Industries to modify program development and oversight protocols accordingly. The WSATC also recognizes a growing number of preparatory programs with articulated pathways to Registered Apprenticeship, further promoting models proven to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion.¹⁷¹

INVEST IN DIGITAL LITERACY

- *Close technological and digital literacy gaps by focusing on reskilling to help vulnerable workers navigate shifts in employer demands.¹⁷² Coordinate, align and further invest in existing digital literacy efforts; incorporate digital literacy goals as part of workforce investments.*¹⁷³

According to Washington State’s Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board, in their 2019 Policy Report on the Future of Work:

“In Washington, close to half of work (44.5 percent) could be automated by adapting currently demonstrated technology, according to one estimate by think tank McKinsey Global Institute. This is particularly important for lower-skill, lower-paying jobs, like retail personnel, which often are at the greatest risk of automation.”¹⁷⁴

The rise in the use of technology will not impact people equally, as studied by researchers at the University of Massachusetts in a project, “Understanding Emerging Technologies, Racial Equity, and the Future of Work.” The trends have significant implications for certain workers who are especially vulnerable because they are overrepresented in industries susceptible to automation, such as construction, agriculture and transportation. Being overrepresented in jobs requiring lower skills and lower educational levels also means they may have fewer resources and less opportunity to retrain and adapt, and as a result are at higher risk of job displacement.¹⁷⁵

The National Skills Coalition, in their “*Roadmap for Racial Equity*”, cites:

- The thirty highest-employment and highly automatable occupations in the U.S. are mostly low-wage with a disproportionate share of Black and Latinx workers.
- Over 31 percent of all Latinx workers and 27 percent of Black workers are concentrated in these high-risk jobs like cashiers, cooks, and laborers.
- Service sector workers, a majority of whom are people of color, women, middle-aged, and/or parents, are also vulnerable. Nearly two-thirds (62 percent) of service-sector workers have limited literacy skills and three-quarters have limited numeracy (74 percent) or digital problem-solving skills (73 percent).
- At the same time, these groups have been historically underserved by traditional education and training programs.¹⁷⁶

These workers will need targeted support for reskilling or upskilling, particularly the former, which will be especially relevant in operationally intensive sectors, such as manufacturing, transportation, and retail, and operations-aligned occupations, such as maintenance, claim processing, and warehouse order picking.¹⁷⁷ Without targeted interventions, displacements due to technology could exacerbate racial economic inequalities.¹⁷⁸

EXPAND ACCESS TO CREDENTIALS WITH LABOR MARKET VALUE (E.G., “OFF THE SHELF” CERTIFICATES, MICRO-CREDENTIALS, INDUSTRY CERTIFICATIONS, STACKABLE CREDENTIALS, ETC.), ESPECIALLY WORKERS OF COLOR RAPIDLY AND AT SCALE. ¹⁷⁹

- *Facilitate new partnerships and serve as resource for private sector and non-profit entities to support skills development in the region.*
- *Support efforts to establish a transparent credential infrastructure that communicates skill acquisition to learners and training providers.*

Credentialing and learning that occurs on the job or through life experience can be an educational lifeline for many people who have not chosen or have been unable to take advantage of traditional postsecondary pathways. The Washington Workforce Training & Education Coordinating Board notes that, “Credentials can especially provide economic momentum for traditionally marginalized populations when those credentials are deconstructed by skills, competencies, and experiences; when they can validate mastery; when they stack towards higher order credentials, and when they recognize and value all learning equally—in the classroom, on the job, on one’s own.”¹⁸⁰

A recent study identified more than 738,000 credentials in the U.S. credential marketplace, including badges, micro-degrees, registered apprenticeships and other on-the-job training certifications, massive open online course credentials, along with traditional and non-traditional college degree programs. Yet there is no universal standard for describing the skills, competencies, and experiences of a particular credential, so it is difficult to determine what is learned in a given program. The sheer volume and diversity of credentials make it difficult for employers and individuals to understand their value and for policymakers to invest in skills training.

There is a need for a transparent credential infrastructure that communicates skill acquisition to employers, learners and training providers. Students, workers, and jobseekers would benefit from the ability to identify and compare credential and program options before they invest limited resources or secure loans. And portability of credentials from one employer or job to another, and which are stackable toward higher levels of education or workplace upskilling, supports the long-term economic security of workers.¹⁸¹

Washington state’s credentialing systems—education, training, occupational and professional licenses, must be modernized and made transparent and portable. Washington’s postsecondary providers have worked to design new pathway models but there is more room for improvement, especially in serving adult workers and marginalized populations. Working across silos, and with cultural understanding, systems can expand access for a wider range of student groups, accelerate economically meaningful credential acquisition, and improve lifetime workforce and economic outcomes.¹⁸²

POPULATION-BASED STRATEGIES

YOUTH

Using recommendations from the Regional Workforce Strategy group, Career Connect Washington, a recent regional youth planning process led by the WDC, City of Seattle, and King County, the Roadmap Project’s Youth Action Plan, and the 14 elements required of WIOA for youth programming, the WDC’s existing youth workgroup identified an overarching desire to invest in communities of color utilizing the resources of the WDC and leveraging system partners. Workgroup members highlighted youth voice, outreach, and access as necessities for any successful youth-focused strategy.

INVEST IN AND PRIORITIZE YOUTH OF COLOR

- *Set goals for funding projects that require BIPOC-specific approaches, with a possible focus on Justice-involved, homeless, Black opportunity youth, and immigrant & refugee youth.*
- *Align funding for population-focused strategies with existing partners like the Seattle Foundation and Communities of Opportunity.*
- *Use the population-specific policies of partners like Seattle Public Schools Highline Public Schools to inform the investments of the WDC and system partners.*

The Regional Workforce Strategy Group recommended the development of a system of flexible, diversified, long-term (3 to 5-year) funding supports that meets the unique challenges of Opportunity Youth and Young Adults and the providers that serve them. Intentionally focus on opportunity youth of color, foster youth, juvenile justice involved youth, undocumented youth, ELL youth, youth with disabilities and young parents to ensure these young adults are not left out of the system.

The San Diego Workforce Partnership is presently engaged in a youth RFP process that focuses on funding for services for specific populations (Black youth, homeless, immigrant & refugee, and justice-involved youth). Within WIOA's prescriptive bounds, innovations to serve specific high-need communities of youth is possible. Studies show that focused financial resources on specific populations of youth lead to better outcomes.

ENSURE WORK EXPERIENCE IS HIGH QUALITY AND LINKED TO EMPLOYERS AND PATHWAYS IN IN-DEMAND FIELDS

Our region’s workforce system requires a coordinated employer engagement strategy that reduces fragmentation and bridges demand and supply. A successful youth strategy should strengthen employer engagement activities across the system to support employers willing to hire opportunity

youth and young adults including youth of color, foster youth, juvenile justice involved youth, undocumented youth, ELL youth, youth with disabilities and young parents by:

- *Moving from transactional relationships with employers to co-investment partnerships*
- *Providing a longer on-ramp into full-time employment*
- *Building on existing investments, employ a variety of work-based learning models including apprenticeships, paid externships, or internships tailored to individual youth*
- *Aligning programming with the Career Connect Washington framework that includes Career Launch, Career Prep, and Career Exploration*
- *Identifying resources to support increased access to apprenticeship pathways for opportunity youth, including the expansion of pre-apprenticeship programs in high-demand sectors like IT and healthcare*
- *Removing barriers through continuing wrap-around support*

The Pathways to Careers Fund, led by the Aspen Institute's Forum for Community Solutions and Jobs for the Future, engaged five communities and launched 25 programs over the course of three years. Their learnings¹⁸³ highlight specific ways youth can succeed in work experiences through the power of small pilot programs, the need to move from quick job attachment to career pathways, and the contributions of multi-sector collaboratives. The pilot, the pathway, and the opportunity for youth to make a choice all resulted in positive program outcomes.

EMBED YOUTH VOICE IN PLANNING, PROCESS, AND SERVICE DELIVERY

- *Create a Youth Advisory Committee that includes youth*
- *Ensure that youth voice is a metric of success and required programmatic component of any investment from the WDC*
- *Align with and engage existing organizations that highlight the voices of youth, including The Roadmap Project and the Latinx Youth Reengagement Project*

This summer young people took to the streets to voice their anger at police brutality and the continued disinvestment in BIPOC communities. The Youth Workgroup shared an interest in engaging youth to not only hear from them, but for youth to lead. As Stephen Patrick from Aspen Community solutions puts it, we should focus on, "...youth-led strategies and approaches that harness youth civic engagement and activism focused on systems change. Regardless of the issue area, from climate change to homelessness, now more than ever, funders need to share power, invest in young leaders, and tap into the expertise and energy of young people to shape their grantmaking." Funders must, "...set aside highly prescriptive and over-engineered approaches and tackle the long-term structural inequities in America – with youth at the center of recovery and reinvention." ¹⁸⁴

HIGHLIGHT NAVIGATION AND SUPPORT

- *Strengthen transitions and prevent youth from falling through system cracks by identifying resources to pilot extended post-program, post-training and employment follow up/retention supports.*
- *Use funding to support programmatic models that include support for credential completion and supports in the first year of college or career.*

Success for disconnected youth is deeply tied to individualized supports. Local participants in the recent Opportunity Works program were three times as likely to enroll in postsecondary education and showed a 71% persistence rate one year after enrollment for students engaged with

a navigator.¹⁸⁵ The program provides individualized postsecondary access, readiness, and retention support to young people with significant barriers to success. The approach draws heavily on Jobs for the Future's Back on Track model.

IMMIGRANTS / REFUGEES

INCREASE LANGUAGE ACCESS FOR IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

- *Convene stakeholders within the city, county and state to create a regional, coordinated language access plan that is applied to the workforce system; which results in providing Limited English Proficient (LEP) job seekers information in their primary language, to ensure equitable access to critical workforce information and the provision of public workforce services and benefits.*
- *Leverage City, County, and State partnerships and resources to fund translation of key workforce documents, create formal agreements, and operationalize an effective strategy to distribute translated materials and information throughout multilingual communities.*

The onset of COVID-19 has accelerated the need for interpretation & translation for the 27.2% of King county residents who speak a language other than English at home.¹⁸⁶ It is estimated that King County residents speak 170 different languages. This combined with the unprecedented number of unemployment insurance claims, and limited access to technology has created significant barriers for immigrants and refugees who need to apply for unemployment insurance benefits and access employment and training programs.

Working strategically and collaboratively with local government, stakeholders, and industry partners to develop a streamlined approach to translation and interpretation will ensure a swift response and equitable access to services. Other states, such as New York, have recognized the need for language access policies, and enacted a state-wide policy to address it in 2011.¹⁸⁷

INVEST IN, AND SCALE-UP WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT MODELS IN WASHINGTON STATE THAT CREATE BRIDGES TO VOCATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES, OFFER APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS OFFERED IN LANGUAGES OTHER THAN ENGLISH, AND PROGRAMS THAT FOCUS ON CREDENTIAL FOR FOREIGN EDUCATED PROFESSIONALS

- Support State Healthcare Workforce Council and work in collaboration with Healthcare Industry Leadership Table (HILT) to offer apprenticeship programs, curriculum, and instruction in languages other than English (See also: Expand Apprenticeship Programs)
- Expand Highline Colleges Welcome Back Center, which is based on a national model to build bridges to the local pool of internationally trained professionals through credit evaluation, connection to industry and career counseling.
- Evaluate existing regional employment and training programs with an immigrant & refugee equity lens; increase coordination to avoid duplicative services and create a continuum of career pathways within existing employment programs that promotes career growth and longer-term strategies to increase income and alleviate poverty.

Although our state is one of the top recipients in the nation for refugees, existing refugee and immigrant workforce programs have limitations that inhibit career progression and the opportunity to obtain living wage employment. Programs in Washington such as the Limited English Proficient (LEP) pathways or the Office of Refugee & Immigrant Basic Food Employment & Training (BFET) programs help participants gain employment. However, limited support to

provide continued career counseling is only available for 90 days after the participant becomes employed.

Local refugee resettlement agencies such as the International Rescue Committee are working in states such as New York and California to increase coordination with their Workforce Investment Boards and American Job Centers to address some of these systemic issues. Other local resettlement agencies such as Jewish Family Services are creating small but innovative efforts, such as the CLEVR program which partners with the Welcome Back Center to develop mentorship opportunities for foreign educated immigrants. Those partnerships with industry have resulted in jobs for participants in their chosen field.

Increased coordination between WIOA required partners and the WDC is necessary to integrate services and programs so that they align and create a sustainable plan to increase skills and wages for immigrants and refugees.

ADVOCACY

LEVERAGE CREATIVE FUNDING MODELS

- *Advocate for funding for state legislated Lifelong Learning Accounts (LiLA) program.*
- *Co-create and lay groundwork for Workforce Equity Trust Fund.*
- *Catalyze philanthropic investments to support innovative mission driven organizations committed to advancing workforce equity.*
- *Blend funding to support regional strategic plan strategies – leverage and braid multiple funding resources to support implementation.*

Creating equity in workforce development requires funding that supports it. This includes shifting the mindset that worker training is a business ‘cost’ to one that views worker training as an investment in an asset. And it requires taking a race-conscious approach to funding decisions to create equitable opportunities rather than perpetuate inequities.¹⁸⁸

As technologies evolve and employer skills needs shifts, workers, especially lower-income workers and those with financial constraints, will need help to afford additional reskilling. Recent studies conducted by the Urban Institute and Gallup found that the greatest barrier to participating in continuous training and education is funding. The cost burden has exacerbated disparities in access to education and training programs, especially for Black, Latino, Pacific Islander, Native American and certain Asian American workers. Employer-sponsored training programs are less often oriented toward lower-skill workers.

Lifelong Learning Accounts (or LiLAs) are employee-owned accounts that are increasingly being considered as a way to provide flexible, continuous support to help pay for education and training expenses, with both employers and employees contributing. They are administered by private financial institutions, community-based non-profits, or other non-government entities, and function like a 401(k) plan with employees making regular contributions that are matched by their employer.¹⁸⁹

Washington initiated a successful LiLA pilot program in 2009, leading to it being codified in state statute in 2012, making Washington the first state to legislate LiLAs. The accounts focus on lower-wage workers and can be used for tuition and a range of related expenses including childcare, books, and admission test fees. Education and career counseling is required. It is

designed to be implemented by a network of private entities with guidance from the state. Budget shortfalls have hindered further implementation.¹⁹⁰

Workforce Equity Trust Fund.¹⁹¹ Livia Lam, senior fellow and the director of Workforce Development at the Center for American Progress puts forth the concept of a Workforce Equity Trust Fund as one of four pillars for transforming workforce development. Undergirding the trust fund concept is the notion that people should have a right to training, similar to approaches in other countries like France, where education, including vocational training, is a statutory right.

Lam notes, “Under the French statutory training scheme, employers are obligated to ensure adaptation of France’s workforce to their workplaces. As a result, employers finance the bulk of the country’s vocational training system through a payroll tax. In addition, the French training system is characterized by lifelong learning for workers. Personal training accounts (CPFs) entitle workers to training throughout their professional life. This universal right to training serves as a model of a legal principle for the United States to follow as it redesigns its workforce system to one aimed at advancing equity.”

She proposes changing the funding paradigm for job training in the U.S., from an in-kind transfer from government, to a sustainable financial instrument that would leverage contributions from employers through a levy on gross receipts. Revenues generated through a trust would have the advantage of being a steady source of funding. Businesses would benefit through increases in productivity and decreases in worker turnover and the economy as a whole benefits from a more educated workforce.¹⁹²

Catalyzing Philanthropic Funding. ETF@JFFLabs is the investment arm of Jobs for the Future and provides an example of financing innovative mission-driven startups building innovative tools to help workers and businesses adapt in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. They have partnered with sources of capital including the ECMC Foundation to support entrepreneurs who are building “scalable, high-growth companies that assist underserved adult learners often overlooked by traditional workforce and education systems, technologies and market players.”¹⁹³ Recently they made their first set of investments in high-impact startups, all of whom are focused on creating a more equitable future of work. They work only with entrepreneurs and companies who are “poised to both grow and make a meaningful, positive difference for workers and learners.”

EXPAND PORTABLE BENEFITS & WRAP-AROUND SUPPORTS

- Expand access to portable benefits for on-demand workers who are at greater risk of becoming under-skilled. Support state legislation that would require gig economy companies to make contributions to nonprofit benefit providers.¹⁹⁴
- Mitigate permanent displacement from the workforce for those with family obligations by supporting childcare reform, including direct investment, calling on employers to contribute, and passing paid family leave policies.¹⁹⁵

Many people, and especially workers of color, struggle to address fundamental needs such as food, housing, childcare, transportation, affordable health care and financial security. These needs often prevent them from accessing the training they need to fully participate in the workforce.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁷ Comprehensive wraparound supports are needed to help workers overcome these barriers. Policymakers and service providers must prioritize equitable delivery of these opportunities to ensure that the workforce, education, housing and criminal justice systems do not further disadvantage people of color and individuals with disabilities.¹⁹⁸

At the same time, in a dynamic labor market with rapidly evolving skill needs, increasing automation, and job opportunities that are often transient, more and more workers are turning to on-demand work (as many as one-third of Americans, according to McKinsey), which often does not come with benefits because our society continues to often rely on an outdated model of workplace-sponsored benefits. There is a need to expand worker protections to ensure that a more flexible labor market does not leave workers without essential benefits.^{199 200}

ELIMINATE PROHIBITIVE POLICIES TO SUSPENDING AND REINSTATING DRIVER'S LICENSES

- *Reduce the use of driver's license suspensions*
- *Ease restrictions on re-licensing to enable gainful employment*

At present there are national, regional, and local advocacy efforts seeking to ensure employment opportunities are not lost by the suspension of driver's licenses due to non-violent offenses, and the inability to pay court fees, tickets, or other related issues. Forty-one states, including Washington, suspend, revoke or refuse to renew driver's licenses for unpaid traffic, toll, misdemeanor and felony fines and fees²⁰¹. Locally, the Washington Drivers Relicensing Taskforce is seeking to reform laws and regulations surrounding re-licensing.²⁰²

For many low-income workers and workers of color, the inability to retain driving privileges prohibits them from job pursuing and retaining opportunities. Construction workers, for example, are unable to get to different job sites, or drive company vehicles, often expected for managerial positions. Additionally, traffic congestion and public transportation challenge many workers who carry tools from job to job. Opportunities in delivery services or transportation are impacted by the employer's unwillingness to insure workers with a suspended license due to an inability to pay court fees. In many instances the fees are unrelated to driving infractions.

In Washington, unpaid tickets, fines and fees lead to swift driver license suspension and high costs for reinstatement. One recent study found that over half of the people who lost their licenses also lost their jobs, resulting in havoc for families and workplaces.²⁰³ Both state reforms and changes at the municipal level can lead to record expungement and license restoration. In North Carolina, the city of Durham identified dismissible traffic charges and fees and proactively worked with residents to restore licenses, ending the cycle of debt from unpaid traffic tickets, mitigating against racial disparities in traffic stops, and keeping residents on the road and able to get to work.

Community advocates have identified employees losing their driver's license due to an inability to afford court related fees as an important barrier to retaining employment. In effect, it is a policy that excludes low-income and workers of color from workforce participation. Strategically, reducing driver's license suspensions can address a systemic barrier to employment for low-income and communities of color and will require regional advocacy.

REMOVE CRIMINAL BACKGROUND AS A BARRIER TO EMPLOYMENT

- *Review state licensure and certification for restrictions on hiring individuals with previous offenses*
- *Explore use of employability certificates issued by local courts*

In 2018, the State Legislature passed the Washington Fair Chance Act²⁰⁴ to enable job applicants with a criminal record to fairly compete for job opportunities for which they are otherwise

qualified. Sometimes referred to as 'Ban the Box,' the law limits the exclusionary language related to criminal records in job advertisements, applications, and hiring processes. In 2013, the City of Seattle also adopted a *Fair Chance Employment* ordinance to the same effect.²⁰⁵

However, additional policy reforms beyond 'Ban the Box' are needed. Washington state's laws and regulations continue to limit employment for those with criminal records. On average, states have 56 occupational and 43 business licensing laws with restrictions against hiring those with felonies. More than 1 in 4 workers require a license or certification, and fast-growing occupations in health care support and personal care require licenses.²⁰⁶ State and local policymakers should undertake a comprehensive review of the implications of these restrictions, with the ultimate aim of eliminating discriminatory policies that have no connection to job competency or public safety. Employment restrictions should focus on reducing actual risks, applying only to crimes that relate to the type of work regulated. Restrictions should be time limited, with the opportunity for exceptions.

In other parts of the country individuals can seek employability certificates from local courts, with a judge considering evidence and issuing a certificate. Studies show the certificate improves chances of getting an interview,²⁰⁷ allowing applicants to demonstrate that an impartial authority determined work readiness. Employability certificates can also shield employers from negligent hiring lawsuits.

PARTNER W/EMPLOYERS & INDUSTRY ON EQUITABLE RECOVERY COMMITMENTS

- *Engage with employers to build inclusive economic recovery commitments – jointly develop set of employer commitments to include bolstering outreach and training to under-represented communities in the workforce, diverse and inclusive hiring, relaxing of credential requirements where required competencies can be demonstrated, removal of barriers to employment (e.g., disclosure of previous offenses, driver license requirements).*
- *Advocate for employers to commit to job quality and racial equity and inclusion training as a prerequisite for client referral.*²⁰⁸

Partnering with employers is at the heart of workforce development. An explicit focus on equity in workforce presents a host of new opportunities to deepen the impact. Business leaders have begun stepping into this realm by increasingly talking about inclusive economies.²⁰⁹ In 2019 at Davos, 181 business leaders in the Business Roundtable redefined their definition of a corporation from its traditional focus on shareholders, to include all stakeholders, including employees, communities and customers. Other national pledges include, *Getting Back To Work* - an employer commitment to change hiring practices to include those with criminal backgrounds.²¹⁰

However, due to a variety of reasons such as a rapidly changing workplace, perceptions of cost constraints, or company culture, employers may be reluctant to engage on equity, leading to detrimental impact on both workers and the business, for example when workers miss out on opportunities to upskill or reskill, or employees of color in predominantly white sectors (like IT) feel isolated, leading to higher turnover/lower retention.²¹¹ In those cases, they may need focused engagement, encouragement or incentivizing by workforce development partners.²¹²

SYSTEMS CHANGE

STRENGTHEN THE CONNECTION BETWEEN ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- *Strengthen the connection between economic development and workforce development, with a focus on an equitable and inclusive economic recovery.*

One overarching principle in a re-design of workforce development is to align it with economic development approaches. Doing so would broaden the traditional scope of workforce development from skills training and job placement to promoting family economic stability and job quality. These can then become the basis for a redefinition of measures of success to include helping families move from instability to stability, from which public investments could then be made accordingly.²¹³

MEASURE & TRACK EQUITABLE ECONOMIC RECOVERY

- *Build cross-sector partnership(s) that include education, business, labor, workforce development and community-based organizations all aligned on a shared vision of equitable outcomes.*²¹⁴
- *Align inclusive economic recovery definition & indicators with State Workforce board; track progress in King County using disaggregated data by race and ethnicity, income and other sub-populations.*
- *Shift current measurement rubric to include multiple measures of job quality; set and track goals for racial equity & inclusion to inform decision making*

WIOA does not require tracking outcomes by race, resulting in data gaps on racial disparities. Many workforce development organizations track participants by race, but not outcomes.²¹⁵ From an equity lens, it is not sufficient to show traditional, program-specific performance.²¹⁶ In addition, the current measurement rubric should shift to include multiple measures of job quality including growth and advancement, job sustainability and labor market security. Measurement should include not just the performance of the job seeker but how the system is performing overall.

INVEST IN DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE

- *Support creation of a local digital equity office as a permanent local administrative unit whose mission would be to ensure the digital economy reaches all households, with a priority on historically disadvantaged groups and neighborhoods.*²¹⁷
- *Invest in digital infrastructure (e.g. broadband, cloud and 5G technology).*²¹⁸ *Explore options for establishing broadband as a utility.*

Disparities in access to digital infrastructure including broadband internet is well documented. Tens of millions of American households cannot access the digital economy due to physical gaps in local broadband networks, unaffordable subscriptions and devices, and a lack of digital skills. In 2018, the Census Bureau found that 27.9 million households, or 10.8 percent of the urban population, lived without a broadband internet subscription. The gap is wider for Black and Latino or Hispanic households, as well as households with lower income or lower educational levels.²¹⁹ As the world becomes more and more digital, this “information poverty” is connected to a lack of job opportunities, professional development, educational opportunity and income and widens racial economic disparities.²²⁰ In King County, it is estimated that 67,000, or 7.5% of households have no access to internet; and 21,200 children lack access to hardware and broadband internet access.²²¹

BUILD MEANINGFUL AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY INFLUENCE & POWER

- *Center the voice of the BIPOC community to achieve equitable recovery.*
- *Invest in sustained capacity to support BIPOC, immigrant and refugee led research and workforce development policy and program development-including strategies and investments, advocacy (engagement, data, and systems recommendation) and implementation.*
- *Ensure that BIPOC, refugee & immigrant leaders are invited to participate in workforce initiatives and workforce policy decisions. Convene immigrant & refugee leaders, community-based organizations, workforce leaders and policy makers to elevate workforce needs, incorporate recommendations, align strategies and inform program designs.*
- *Actively listen to community members when they describe their specific needs and how programs should be designed to meet those needs; implement workforce development programs intersectionally and in response to community-specific challenges, especially in light of a current resurgence during COVID-19 recovery.*
- *Build an enduring infrastructure to ensure it is culturally responsive to the communities and based in a participatory framework.*

Too often, underserved communities are left out of the planning and implementation of policies and programs intended to serve or support them. Sometimes the omission is unintentional, but the consequence remains that people become recipients of interventions that are done “to” or “for” them. Opportunities to partner with organizations or partners from communities of color, who usually know their communities best, are missed.

Communities of color may be lumped together or seen as monolithic, such as often happens with Asian communities, leading to blind spots and inaccurate understanding of needs. Specific to this pandemic, given its initial emergence in China, has been a surge in anti-Asian discrimination and hate crimes, which has wrought devastating impact on people of Asian descent, especially those who are in frontline/essential occupations where they are overrepresented such as healthcare and personal appearance workers, as well as Asian-owned small businesses, who are disproportionately represented among small businesses.²²²

Notes researchers at Brookings who have put forward a framework for economic recovery: “If cities, regions and states rely primarily on traditional civic institutions to carry out local recovery strategies, they will sacrifice credibility with a diverse set of stakeholders and are likely to end up with the same underwhelming results.”²²³ And ultimately, this approach upholds entrenched systems of white dominance.

Ongoing community feedback efforts to communities of color, including immigrant and refugee communities, should consider how to engage residents during the pandemic to ensure equitable recovery, as well as responsiveness to the short-term challenges. Evaluating how responsive employment outreach work is to current community needs is an essential question.

Having mechanisms in place to reduce the overburdening of community with requests for information will also require an awareness of and coordination with other outreach and community engagement efforts. Participatory efforts that meet people in culturally responsive ways may require employment outreach and engagement, and a holistic understanding of the multi-pronged impacts workers are experiencing in navigating COVID-19.

Engagement with those most impacted, women, as well as Black and Hispanic/Latinx workers, provide opportunities to learn the barriers to employment experienced by workers and their communities. Community engagement often requires the development and implementation of recommendations from which strategies are later designed and implemented. While this process is

relevant to social and human services programs, workplace and workforce issues also require policy approaches. Community building approaches can also serve to create the ability to address policy challenges for workforce development.

In addition, most workers in different sectors could benefit from regular participation through a public-private and community-centered structure. Workers, through community building, can hold employers accountable to equity goals, create regional equity measures, and set equity standards across an entire sector, occupations, or careers. Instead of an elongated information gathering community engagement approach, community building is an ongoing process of collecting data, providing recommendations on wealth and upward mobility, and alerts sectors on boundaries and barriers to employment in times of economic uncertainty.

In sum, regional community building is a power-building and power-sharing approach allowing workers and community to collaborate, convene, and communicate challenges faced by the most vulnerable and disenfranchised. As a public-private partnership, strategies and recommendations can come from those most proximate to workforce development challenges.

BUILD INTERNAL ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY ON EQUITY

- *Organizational leaders convey that equity is a priority through explicit communications, setting the tone, and leading by example.*
- *Equity work is normalized throughout the organization, including establishing collectively shared terminology, definitions, vision and values for equity work.*
- *Conduct initial and ongoing activities to normalize equity within the organization, including formal and informal training and education for staff and leaders at all levels*
- *Integrate equity principles and practices into internal policies, programs, operations and structures, including but not limited to strategic planning, budget planning and budgeting practices, and performance metrics and personnel evaluations*
- *Equity principles are infused throughout all external-facing activities including all community engagement.*
- *Racial equity impact assessments are conducted for proposed programs, policies and practices to determine if the program, policy or practice will exacerbate or ameliorate inequities.*

To ensure lasting commitment to equity-guided work, organizations cannot focus solely on program work. We encourage all workforce development partners and organizations to build equity knowledge and capacity into the structures and infrastructure of organizations, from normalizing equity values to fully integrating it into operations.²²⁴

VII. ROLE OF WDC SEATTLE-KING COUNTY

As noted upfront, this Plan is intended as a high-level blueprint for the region’s workforce and recovery efforts. The Regional Strategic Plan builds on the Regional Workforce Transformation Plan, which directed the WDC to facilitate an inclusive process to develop a 3-5-year regional workforce development strategy to:

- Prioritize employment and training for those who face the most barriers to opportunity.
- Prioritize strategies and funding that promotes racial equity.
- Improve coordination between employers, labor, and educators to ensure job seekers are prepared for the best career opportunities available right now.
- Better align local, federal, and philanthropic funding to maximize the impact and produce better results; and
- Leverage and coordinate federal, city, county and state funds to create efficiencies for the delivery of workforce development services.

The Regional Strategic Plan incorporates and builds on current promising strategies in our region as well as new strategies informed by an extensive landscaping of national and regional equitable workforce development practices and innovations. Their implementation in the region will require extensive planning, leadership, and importantly partnership from other workforce development partners, industry, government, labor, community colleges, and community-based providers. Most of the strategies will require shared ownership and collaboration across sectors and organizations, as they are highly dependent on the actions and commitments of others.

The WDC is well-positioned to lead or has the potential to fulfill leadership gaps to drive a subset of the strategies proposed in the Plan, as envisioned in its regional transformation. Assets of the organization and/or roles the WDC can uniquely play include:

- Regional purview of work; support by both County & City entities - charged to serve as regional backbone for workforce development
- Fiscal agent for federal Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act funding and intermediary for strategic resource allocation
- Leverageable infrastructure: network of providers, WorkSource Centers
- Influence with multiple state systems, including ESD, DSHS, Workforce Training Board
- Current convener of employers and labor to find common ground and purpose
- Access to local philanthropic knowledge and thought partnership; including relationships with national thought leaders: Casey Foundation, New America, National Fund for Workforce Solutions, National Skills Coalition, Jobs for the Future, Brookings, Urban Institute, Center for American Progress
- Access to state level data sets and competencies to analyze and surface implications
- Multi-sector orientation; ability to provide innovative training, prototyping
- Emerging, growing collaborative partnerships with BIPOC, immigrant and refugee communities and commitment to racial equity

In 2018, the WDC Board adopted a set of *2020 Transformation Priorities* to realize its vision for the WDC to become “a best in class, innovative, regional workforce development backbone organization that is a catalyst for leveraging and aligning resources to increase equity and maximize outcomes.” These transformation priorities included the following:

- Engage and partner with diverse communities
- Prioritize “Opportunity Sectors”

- Implement a regional industry engagement strategy
- Identify occupational growth, career pathways, equity, job quality
- Build strategic partnerships with regional stakeholders
- Improve and streamline data – reporting out data – outcomes
- Research, development, and innovation

Concurrently, the board also adopted the following *racial equity priorities*:

- Mission and Goals: Commitment to racial equity
- Governance, Leadership
- Advocate/Champion Equity in Employer Practices
- Authentic Community Engagement
- Funding process to reflect equity and racial justice
- Accountability Measures – Equity at the Center
- Transparency – Funding, Served, Outcomes
- System Change

In alignment with these 2018 transformation & racial equity priorities, and given its unique positioning and current assets, the WDC seeks to lead and drive the execution and implementation of the Plan’s following strategies:

TABLE 1: RECOMMENDED WDC-LED STRATEGIES

Strategy	Alignment to Transformation Priorities	Alignment to Racial Equity Priorities
Invest in Subsidized Transitional Employment w/Pathways	Identify growth and demand, career pathways, equitable outcomes, job quality metrics	
Advance Sector Partnerships and Strategies	Identify growth and demand, career pathways, equitable outcomes, job quality metrics	
Co-Create & Co-Invest in High-Demand Career Pathways	Prioritize ‘Opportunity Sectors’ Build strategic partnerships with regional stakeholders Implement regional industry engagement strategy	Commitment to racial equity Champion equity in employer strategies System Change related to sector strategies and career pathways
Partner w/Employers & Industry on Equitable Recovery Commitments	Implement regional industry engagement strategy	Advocate/Champion Equity in Employer Practices
Measure & Track Equitable Economic Recovery	Improve and streamline data collection and presentation, including reporting out and disaggregated outcomes data	System Change Accountability Measures – Equity at the Center

Build Meaningful and Sustainable Community Influence & Power	Create accountability systems focused on equity, populations with highest barriers Engage and partner with diverse communities	Commitment to racial equity Authentic Community Engagement System Change
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Implementation of the Plan and the regional workforce development system transformation vision requires the WDC to make significant shifts in focus, functions, and operations. It requires a shift from institutional ownership to collective ownership with regional partners, from WDC driven to industry and community driven, from a focus on WIOA target populations to a centering of racial equity, from worker centric, with a focus on skills and training to systems change, from job placement to equitable economic recovery, and from neutrality to advocacy.

MAJOR SHIFTS IMPLEMENTING THE REGIONAL WFD TRANSFORMATION VISION	
FROM	TO
WIOA Compliance Driven Plan	Regional Workforce Plan
Institutional Ownership	Collective Ownership
WDC Driven	Industry & Community Driven
Focused on WIOA Target Populations	Centering Racial Equity
Worker Centric (Skills & Training)	Systems Change
Job Placement (Outputs)	Equitable Economic Recovery (Results)
Neutrality	Advocacy

These shifts will require expanding the WDC’s capabilities in a number of areas, including research, innovation and advocacy.

Research and Innovation. The WDC will expand its role as the regional backbone organization to lead research and innovation – this in alignment with another one of the 2020 transformation priorities: research, development, and innovation. The WDC will use its current data resources; partner relationships; system knowledge; connections to public workforce agencies, think tanks, and foundations at various levels; and convening capacity to advance research and innovation tied to this Plan. It will also expand its research, data and evaluation, prototyping, and strategy and policy development capabilities. By partnering across federal, state, and local systems, pairing that with a unique system convener role and partnership with BIPOC and immigrant communities, the WDC will bring resources and insight into the challenges facing communities furthest from opportunity.

Advocacy. The WDC will leverage its voice in partnership with others to fulfill this Plan's acknowledgment of advocacy and policy as a powerful lever in driving systems change. Historically, the organization has not played an intentional role on this front. As this is a new role for the WDC, new organizational capabilities will be built to use the organization's voice and advocacy, within the bounds of its legal authority, to support advocates in executing against the strategies articulated in the Plan.

This Plan provides the WDC along with regional partners the blueprint for advancing transformation of the region's workforce development system to one that is equity centered, outcome focused, and industry driven, all towards the overarching goal of building an equitable economic recovery.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 – DIGITAL LITERACY & HUMAN SKILLS

The table below includes key skills in both digital literacy and human skills, compiled from a number of sources including McKinsey analysis, The National Skills Coalition, The World Economic Forum, Burning Glass’ “The New Foundational Skills of the Digital Economy”, Accenture’s “Bridging the Skills Gap in the Future Workforce”, Pearson’s “The Future of Skills: Employment in 2030”, and PolicyLink.^{225 226}

Digital Literacy and Technology Skills	Human Skills
Interacting with technology	Communication, active listening
Coding	Initiative-taking and entrepreneurship
Digital security and privacy	Problem solving, reasoning, ideation, creativity
Technology design and programming	Agility and adaptability, active learning, ability to cross-train
	Customer service orientation
	Critical thinking and analysis
	Collaboration
Sector-specific technology skills	Managing data
	Negotiation
	Persuasion
	Socioemotional intelligence

APPENDIX 2 – ECONOMIC RECOVERY PLAN EXAMPLES

Inclusive recovery

On 17 June, the city of Chicago laid out a vision and guidelines for reopening the economy. An initiative of the Chamber's COVID-19 *Economic Recovery Task Force* includes multi-dimensional action items, including investments in infrastructure. USD 8.5 billion will be invested in the modernization of O'Hare Airport. Additionally, Chicago will push to accelerate zoning and planning approval for major projects like the Obama Presidential Center, ONE Central, Lincoln Yards, and the Michael Reese Hospital site development, as well as for companies seeking to build data centers locally.

Houston has established the Greater Houston Business Recovery Center to build a business-led recovery initiative, which will provide guidance on policy and financing tied to recovery programs.

The city of Barcelona, Spain has established an economic recovery project, "Barcelona Never Stops", with the implementation of a series of measures aimed at the regeneration of the economic and social tissue, as well as the economic stimulation of the city. The plan, lasting until the summer of 2021, aims to promote new business models to make Barcelona a more resilient city, encourage local consumption, protect and boost employment and relaunch the city's international reputation. To achieve these objectives, the city will carry out a series of measures in grants and funding, capacity building, promotion and communication, economic instruments and adapting the existing legislation.

On 8 May, the city of Bilbao, Spain approved a plan for social cohesion, economic recovery, employment and culture with over 50 measures. With a total budget of EUR 15 million directly contributed by the City Council, it will address three specific areas: Social Cohesion with more than EUR 2.2 million; Economy and Employment with more than EUR 11.4 million; and Culture with more than EUR 1,3 million. In the economic field, the main measures have been designed in two directions. On the one hand, in the fiscal field, certain taxes and fees will be lowered for a total value of EUR 3 million, for example on terraces (75%), rubbish (95%) or taxis. On the other hand, Bilbao will create bonds worth EUR 2.5 million to stimulate consumption in commerce, hotels and tourism.

San Francisco has convened a COVID-19 Economic Recovery Task Force to design a strategy to guide the city in its efforts to recover economically. The task force will be organized around three primary areas: i) jobs and business support (namely for small and medium enterprises); ii) vulnerable populations; iii) economic development. Over 30 members conducted research through interviews, focus groups, town halls, and surveys, hearing from more than one thousand people to prepare final recommendations on overall economic recovery that were presented in August.

Paraty, Brazil launched a COVID-19 economic recovery plan that includes a municipal program to support informal workers, with a specific project for street commerce and a culture incentive program based on public-private partnerships. In the mid-term, measures focus on decentralizing the tourism sector, as the city economy relies on tourism and gastronomy. In the long-term, measures involve renovation and refurbishment of public areas, such as the historic center and the pier, and the improvement of the sewage network in the historic center in areas where there is no sanitation infrastructure.

Cities have also developed specific programs to support local businesses, especially small and medium sized firms, with a variety of measures including financial assistance, campaigns

encouraging citizens to support their community businesses, help moving to telework, flexible use of public spaces and vocational training:

- Boston established the “Reopen Boston Fund”, to support small businesses with a majority of employees working near clients and each other.
- Paris developed a plan to support businesses, cultural actors and associations. The plan commits the city to the following engagements for the next 5 years: 9 out of 10 service providers of the city will be SMEs; EUR 6 million will be invested in businesses, artisans, cultural enterprises, and young innovative firms; EUR 5 million will support the tourism sector; and EUR 4 million will support actors of the social and solidarity-based economy.
- Tokyo focused on preventing the spread of the virus, accompanied by subsidies for small and medium-sized firms to invest in appropriate facilities and equipment. In parallel, and to support the hotel industry, Tokyo set up a program matching hotels providing teleworking facilities with employees who cannot telework at home, including a subsidy program to enhance wheelchair accessibility.
- Milan developed a comprehensive recovery strategy, “Milan 2020: Adaptation Strategy”, which includes promoting digitalization in services, production and distribution, boosting local production and management of resources, supporting the recovery of the construction sector, and assisting social innovation and start-ups.

Support to vulnerable populations

In its recovery strategy, Milan plans to ensure the participation of everyone including local institutions, representatives, non-profits, citizens’ associations and self-employed individuals through the enhanced use of digital tools and the implementation of appropriate measures for the most vulnerable in areas such as food, assistance and grocery delivery through collaboration with non-profits and donors.

New Orleans will devote USD 750,000 in immediate financial relief to immigrant workers, who have been heavily impacted by the Covid-19 crisis. The funding will eventually be distributed to approximately 500 families for direct financial assistance. The city has also started a Mass Feeding Program that provides meals to vulnerable residents in partnership with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

Vienna seeks to help young people who were severely affected by COVID-19 due to its impact on the labor market. Vienna plans to invest EUR 17 million to help the more than 16,000 young people currently without a job. The package includes intra-company vocational training, qualification passports, assistance for catching up on missed time and offers to enter professions in healthcare and IT.

Green recovery

Liverpool developed a GBP1.4 billion Economic Recovery Plan (LERP), which focuses on four key themes – Innovation, Housing, Employment and Creativity. LERP includes development of more than 200 new modular homes and community centers, and renovation of 4,000 homes for vulnerable households in the most deprived neighborhoods, which are also most at risk from COVID-19. The plan is estimated to create 25,600 jobs and provide an additional 12,000 construction jobs. The recovery plan includes investing into a new cruise terminal, a major housing development next to the International Festival Gardens site, the next phase of the city’s health innovation campus at Paddington Village as well as a Science and Tech Innovation Centre as part of the Liverpool John Moores University development at Copperas Hill in the city’s Knowledge Quarter (KQ Liverpool).

Mexico City has announced an economic recovery plan addressing the COVID-19 pandemic. The city government will invest USD 1 billion to create around 1 million new jobs in the construction sector. The investment will cover public infrastructure and social housing. The plan is expected to contribute to the redevelopment of 13 urban corridors through housing projects, mostly housing improvement projects and new social housing in areas with good transportation connections. For the city government the investment in infrastructure and social housing is essential in the recovery strategy due to the multiplier effect and the indirect jobs created. The strategy also uses resources for mobility projects that had already been announced before the crisis such as a new BRT line and two ‘cablebuses’ (cableways) lines.

Milan will reduce travel demand (e.g. promoting smart and remote work models); improve and diversify mobility options (e.g. promoting bicycles, electric scooters, shared vehicles); increase public transport safety (e.g. limiting the number of people in public buses and subways, reducing crowds at bus stops and train stations with safety distancing); clear sidewalks; integrate public transport with other mobility systems; enhance automation of transport and parking tickets and passes; and invest in short-term parking spaces (e.g. for delivery of essential goods for healthcare and emergency services). The strategy aims for supporting social innovation, and start-ups to integrate business and social objectives while creating community cohesion. It suggests stimulating the recovery of the construction sector by launching widespread maintenance and redevelopment projects on existing real estate assets, both public and private, alongside energy-saving initiatives, environmental redevelopment and improved home comfort.

Nice, France will support economic recovery after the pandemic with a pact for employment. Mayor Christian Estrosi announced an additional budget allocation of EUR 3.5 million, aimed at the most vulnerable entrepreneurs and public authorities, as well as strategic SMEs in the region. The program is targeting the economic sectors most strongly impacted, such as tourism and trade, but also industry and innovation to strengthen the economic attractiveness

Reykjavik, Iceland announced an action package for tourism including a marketing campaign for the city as a destination once the COVID-19 crisis improves.

Smart recovery

Digitalization has played a pivotal role in city’s emergency responses to the pandemic. With many countries now transitioning away from the lockdown, cities are solidifying and expanding the use smart city tools to facilitate and make new rhythms and habits permanent as the need for social distancing continues, while staying alert and monitoring the risk of contagion.

Tokyo committed to accelerate its efforts towards its digital transformation, with the promotion of online learning, telemedicine, telecommuting, and the digitalization of public services. The *Smart School Project* aims to enable all public-school children and students in Tokyo to study online.

The *adaptation strategy 2020* of Milan, Italy includes a section on digital services, planning for expansion, simplification and acceleration of the provision of these digital services for citizens. Digital tools are leveraged to support and complement public initiatives and sectors. For instance, the plan aims to develop a contagion monitoring system. To increase access to culture, the plan also expands online library catalogues, and promotes online cultural initiatives, alongside “traditional” live events. Finally, it will develop a digital platform for the city of Milan to rethink delivery logistics and encourage local consumption.

Florence, Italy is committing to the full digitalization of municipal services, aiming to go from the current 85% of digitalized citizen services to 100%. This also includes the digitalization of building and landscaping practices, which aims to simplify the authorization process. The city is also committed to facilitating remote and agile working by ensuring the provision of appropriate services and amenities and safe environments. To ensure universal access to the necessary internet connection for telework, called “right to the network”, the city is mapping the provision and quality of fiber optic connection to identify areas that need to be better serviced.

Other cities, such as Seoul, also recognize that these digitalization efforts must be accompanied by public interventions to close the digital gap and increase technological access for all. The Korean New Deal is focused on expanding digital infrastructure and services, such as data, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and promoting the green economy sector for climate change response. Seoul will continue to pioneer smart green mobility options by implementing driverless vehicles, delivery of goods via robots and smart parking lots. These measures come in addition to fast tracking a bike lane system, with an objective of attaining a modal share of 15% for bikes in 2030.

Vilnius, Lithuania is planning to exploit remote work opportunities even further and encourage small business to digitize.

APPENDIX 3 – SECTOR RECOVERY / LEADING INDICATORS

The following table presents key short/near term data points on COVID-19 impact and recovery by sector. These include:

Baseline

- **Jobs** – Number of jobs in 2019 by sector; and percent of all jobs by sector. *Source:* EMSI data.

COVID-19 impact

- **New UI claims** – Cumulative number of new UI claims from Week 10 (mid-March) through Week 35 (early September) by sector; and percent of jobs this represents by sector. *Source:* Washington Employment Security Department/LMEA UI claims data.

COVID-19 recovery

- **Continuing UI claims** – Number of continuing UI claims in Week 15 (mid-April) and Week 35 (early September) by sector, and percent change when comparing Week 35 to Week 15. A negative percentage suggests a sign of recovery – e.g., those losing jobs stopped receiving UI claims and were presumably re-employed within the sector. *Source:* Washington Employment Security Department/LMEA UI claims data.
- **Job postings** – Number of job postings for the months of April and August 2020 by sector; and percent change when comparing August to April. *Source:* EMSI data.
- **Employment estimates change** – Change in estimated employment from April to July 2020 by sector; and change in estimated year-over-year employment from July 2019 to July 2020 by sector. *Source:* Washington Employment Security Department/LMEA employment estimates (WA-QB) data.
- **Post-COVID forecast** – Adjusted 1-year growth forecast, post-COVID. *Source:* JobsEQ projections.

		Jobs		New UI claims	Continuing UI claims			Job postings			Employment - Est. Change			Post-COVID forecast
		2019	% of all jobs	Weeks 10-35	% of jobs	Week 15	Week 35	% change	Apr-20	Aug-20	% change	Apr 20 - Jul 20	Jul 19 - Jul 20	Adj. 1yr growth
23	Construction	90,168	6%	29,169	32%	13,541	3,293	-76%	2,443	3,379	38%	36,900	-1,300	-3.9%
236	Construction of buildings	26,631		7,801	29%	3,511	958	-73%	1,121	1,431	28%	7,900	-800	-3.5%
237	Heavy, civil engineering construction	6,786		2,106	31%	980	266	-73%	381	524	38%	2,300	-700	-1.4%
238	Specialty trade contractors	56,750		19,262	34%	9,050	2,069	-77%	941	1,424	51%	26,800	200	-4.5%
31-33	Manufacturing	107,619	7%	39,067	36%	13,742	6,354	-54%	7,310	8,935	22%	5,100	-11,100	-5.1%
	Durable goods													
332	Fabricated metal products	7,329		2,302	31%	751	477	-36%	332	395	19%	500	-800	-1.8%
334	Computer, electronic products	8,381		2,429	29%	497	373	-25%	1,491	1,742	17%	300	300	-0.1%
336	Transportation equipment	44,753		18,999	42%	7,139	2,853	-60%	1,721	1,950	13%	-100	-4,700	-8.8%
	Nondurable goods													
311	Food	12,978		4,371	34%	1,393	831	-40%	401	463	15%	1,700	300	-1.0%
42	Wholesale trade	64,130	4%	15,260	24%	4,594	2,715	-40%	1,884	2,144	14%	800	-4,500	-1.7%
44-45	Retail Trade	165,125	10%	45,972	28%	14,597	7,663	-48%	25,463	38,866	53%	16,200	-800	-4.9%
441	Motor vehicle and parts	11,331		6,067	54%	2,892	851	-71%	773	1,107	43%	2,000	-800	-7.0%
445	Food and beverage stores	23,787		4,298	18%	1,055	849	-20%	1,758	2,372	35%	1,200	900	0.5%
452	General merchandise	18,639		5,752	31%	1,393	953	-32%	674	1,044	55%	300	-2,000	-0.7%
454	Nonstore retailers	57,291		*	N/A	*	*	N/A	17,231	27,441	59%	N/A	N/A	-1.6%
	Transportation and													
48-49	Warehousing	58,340	4%	18,984	33%	4,540	5,345	18%	2,448	3,831	56%	1,000	-4,700	-8.7%
481	Air transportation	14,894		5,045	34%	1,179	1,489	26%	81	116	43%	-700	-5,300	-8.5%
484	Truck transportation	8,085		1,835	23%	551	260	-53%	1,092	1,624	49%	600	-800	-2.5%
485	Transit, ground passenger transportation	6,691		3,941	59%	684	1,246	82%	107	117	9%			-23.8%
488	Support activities for transportation	13,102		4,431	34%	1,400	1,483	6%	591	1,029	74%	500	-1,200	6.4%
493	Warehousing, storage	3,225		507	16%	159	115	-28%	72	166	130%	200	100	-3.0%
51	Information	123,064	8%	13,769	11%	2,277	2,791	22%	11,582	12,300	6%	-1,300	-1,800	-1.2%
511	Publishing (except Internet)	69,757		5,460	8%	667	483	-28%	8,308	7,776	-6%	500	900	-1.0%
52	Financial and insurance	48,078	3%	6,126	13%	903	667	-26%	3,387	4,160	23%	1,500	-1,200	0.1%
53	Real estate, rental and leasing	35,401	2%	7,769	22%	2,373	1,826	-23%	2,260	3,116	38%	2,700	0	-2.9%
541	Professional and technical services	153,675	10%	22,767	15%	4,941	4,035	-18%	15,483	19,592	27%	4,000	2,200	1.6%
551	Management of companies, enterprises	31,462	2%	902	3%	242	183	-24%	230	245	7%	-100	-2,200	-0.6%
561	Administrative and support services	76,430	5%	19,590	26%	6,456	5,150	-20%	20,237	20,671	2%	6,900	5,600	-5.8%
611	Educational services	31,283	2%	24,720	79%	3,187	2,893	-19%	4,234	4,183	-1%	-2,100	-4,800	-4.8%
62	Health care and social assistance	167,137	11%	50,772	30%	15,052	6,203	-59%	11,158	12,871	15%			-3.9%
621	Ambulatory health care services	65,995	4%	23,928	36%	9,442	2,239	-76%	5,852	6,636	13%	8,800	-5,300	-6.8%
622	Hospitals	32,145	2%	11,199	35%	1,329	686	-48%	2,098	2,435	16%	0	-1,500	0.5%
623	Nursing and residential care facilities	19,936	1%	3,307	17%	633	779	23%	1,399	1,573	12%	-200	-800	-0.2%
71	Arts, entertainment and recreation	32,703	2%	16,019	49%	5,246	3,499	-33%	434	502	16%	3,300	-19,000	-29.2%
72	Accommodation and food services	118,918	7%	62,786	53%	26,736	18,210	-32%	3,792	5,312	40%			-24.9%
721	Accommodation	16,024	1%	10,810	67%	5,068	4,328	-15%	514	667	30%	1,200	-8,700	-22.0%
722	Food services, drinking places	102,894	6%	51,976	51%	21,668	13,882	-36%	3,278	4,645	42%	33,500	-31,100	-25.4%
81	Other services	80,190	5%	19,813	25%	7,841	3,720	-63%	2,317	3,105	34%	9,100	-6,200	-9.2%
	Government	196,070	12%	5,532	3%	582	549	-6%				-6,200	-6,300	-1.3%

Source: Washington State Employment Security Department

APPENDIX 4 – SECTOR RECOVERY / QUALITATIVE TRENDS

Each economic sector has sub-sectors or sub-markets that may recover faster or slower depending on unique trends and dynamics in each area. The table below is a synopsis of qualitative data on recovery outlook by sector (gray rows) and sub-sectors (white rows), by NAICS classifications. The information is organized by geographic focus: national/global or local/regional.

NAICS Code	Sector or Sub-sector	Significant Trends or Factors	
		National/Global	Local/Regional
23	Construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shifts: hospitality, retail, and entertainment projects could be less attractive, while public institutional and infrastructure, transportation, and health care-related projects could see more activity.²²⁷ Technology is having an unprecedented impact in this sector: robots, smart project management, predictive design, AI.²²⁸ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construction in WA hit hard but currently rebounding slowly within phased re-opening guidelines.²²⁹ Currently, transportation-related construction and other essential projects are operational.²³⁰ Industry in WA is expected to rebound fully once the pandemic abates.²³¹
31-33	Manufacturing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tech: drones, augmented reality and virtual reality, 3D printing.²³² Pre-COVID significant shortages in workers trained to use technologies.²³³ Expect sector to look at making supply chain more resilient, e.g. reshoring, localizing.²³⁴ Increasingly turning to aftermarket services as a revenue stream, but shortage of talent with these skills sets (e.g. repair, refurbish).^{235,236} 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-COVID workforce shortages. Most manufacturers remained open because were deemed essential, but suppliers to hotel, aerospace and restaurant industries were hard hit. Many quickly retooled to meet COVID-related demand (PPE, sanitizer, etc.). Job listings slowly growing but will depend on length of pandemic and permanency of changes in consumer spending habits.²³⁷
336	Transportation equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commercial aerospace manufacturing shrinking as airlines cancel or defer planned aircraft buys. Aircraft makers experiencing both demand and supply side shocks.²³⁸ Impact on manufacturing supply chain, especially on mid-to-lower-tier suppliers.²³⁹ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Boeing plans to reduce more than 15% of jobs in 2020, mainly in the Seattle area. Slowing production of jets built in Everett and Renton.²⁴⁰ Regional aerospace employment projected to decline 12% in 2020. Regional aerospace jobs projected to remain below pre-COVID levels for next five years.²⁴¹

NAICS Code	Sector or Sub-sector	Significant Trends or Factors	
42	Wholesale trade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Varies by segment. Food suppliers weakened due to fall in restaurant demand. Constructions suppliers doing better.²⁴² 	
44-45	Retail Trade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supply chain disruptions/breakdown, some coming back, may refocus on localizing supply chains. Rapid increase in online shopping and contactless purchasing across consumer sectors. U.S. e-commerce expected to grow 38% this year (vs 13% pre-COVID), so growth accelerated 3 years. Growth especially strong among older first-time users.²⁴³ Trend likely to become permanent. Rise in consumer concerns about safety and hygiene in products and delivery. Non-discretionary spending bouncing back, discretionary spending slower. Work from home creating more demand for shopping locally and hyper locally.²⁴⁴ 	
452	General merchandise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Essential retail is in high demand (groceries, drug and pharmacy, health and hygiene products, home improvement, mass and discount stores).²⁴⁵ 	
454	Nonstore retailers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amazon hired 175,000 shortly after pandemic began. In September announced will hire additional 100,000 fulfillment workers and 33,000 corporate and technology positions in U.S. and Canada.²⁴⁶ 	
48-49	Transportation and Warehousing	<p>CARGO TRANSPORTATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Freight and Logistics (across all modes: 2021-25)²⁴⁷ Mixed recovery, some pockets of growth. A reconfigured mobility landscape as e-commerce and home delivery soar. Shift from heavy to light freight is a long-term trend. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will take 5 years to regain region's pre-COVID travel volume.²⁵⁵

NAICS Code	Sector or Sub-sector	Significant Trends or Factors	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanded deployment of automated delivery via robots and drones. • Nearly 3 million infrastructure workers expected to retire in the next decade. • Railroad volumes dropped 20% and have not recovered. Four years recovery.²⁴⁸ • Ocean shipping down 25%. <p>PEOPLE TRANSPORTATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most consumers do not feel safe traveling right now. • Travel will return but varies by segment. Local travel will recover before long-distance and international travel. Leisure travel will recover before business travel. Business conferences will recover last.²⁴⁹ • Travel-heavy industries, such as professional services and sales, may permanently reduce travel needs as they adopt virtual work.^{250 251252} • Technology dependent companies such as Airbnb, Uber and Lyft have been hit hard by the drop in travel.²⁵³ • Increased customer expectations for safety, hygiene and flexibility.²⁵⁴ 	
481	Air transportation	<p>Air Passenger Traffic (2025)²⁵⁶</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remain 30% below normal in 2021.²⁵⁷ • Greatest impact on long-haul routes. Short-haul routes to recover faster.^{258 259} • IATA predicts recovery by 2025.²⁶⁰ <p>Air Cargo (2021-24)²⁶¹</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Air cargo significant drop. Four years to recover. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alaska Airlines: Modest recovery in June and July, declined again following new COVID surges in other states.²⁶² As of 6/4, predicts 2021 workforce reduced by 3,000. In Seattle, 1,583 could lose their jobs by 10/1.²⁶³
484	Truck transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Last-mile deliveries have surged 10x over. • Trucking volumes rose 30% in 2020 from panic buying, dropped, and now rising again.²⁶⁴ 	

NAICS Code	Sector or Sub-sector	Significant Trends or Factors	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased remote operations for long-haul trucking.²⁶⁵ Use of drones.²⁶⁶ 	
485	Transit, ground passenger transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Telework, telemedicine, and e-learning reducing mobility needs. Public safety and health concerns significantly reducing use of public transit (especially passenger rail) and private ride sharing.^{267 268269} 	
51	Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital entertainment services have skyrocketed: gaming, streaming, and music consumption up 20% to 70% due to lockdowns, school closings, and working from home.²⁷⁰ Many theatrical releases have shifted to Direct-to-Consumer. Predict that the global content delivery network (CDN) market will reach US\$15.5 billion in 2020, up more than 25 percent from 2019.²⁷¹ Telecom historically less affected by recessions; many companies looking at long term investments in 5G technology. New demand from remote workers. Network usage skyrocketing; reliability an ongoing focus; unprecedented collaboration among competitors.²⁷² 	
52	Financial and insurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customers experiencing financial stress, including access to credit, in turn increasing probability of default.²⁷³ Consumers migrating to digital banking, contactless payments. Increased adoption of remote operating models. Trend likely to continue.^{274 275276277} 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Banks deemed essential, but many closed retail branches due to reduced demand for in-person services.²⁷⁸
53	Real estate, rental and leasing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hardest hit: retail, hospitality, offices space. Stronger: residential, industrial space Transactional activity will likely decline for a couple of quarters as pricing re-sets and then pick back up 2021. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Banks deemed essential, but many closed retail branches due to reduced demand for in-person services.²⁸⁰ Most office tenants paying rents but may not renew leases. Local office occupancy estimated to take four years to recover.

NAICS Code	Sector or Sub-sector	Significant Trends or Factors	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Real estate servicing: rise in use of digital tools e.g. scheduling moves, managing rent payments, real-time analytics on air quality, heating and cooling.²⁷⁹ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moody's forecast: In 2022 22% of King County office space could still be vacant. Estimate four years to recover.²⁸¹
541	Professional and technical services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growth in demand for hardware, software and IT services due to rise in virtual work, but also supply chain disruptions on hardware. Factories starting to come back online. Videoconferencing and remote collaboration exploded. Freight and Logistics (across all modes: 2021-25)²⁸² 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IT has remained strong. Need for IT skills across all sectors likely to continue. Employers continually cite need for workers with IT skills, report lengthy vacancy periods for job openings, and lack of available talent as a reason for automating jobs.²⁸³ Health and life sciences companies in the region raising significant VC money. 98point6 (telemedicine), Avalyn (respiratory disease therapies) and Blaze Bioscience (brain tumor identification) raised a combined \$101 million in April.²⁸⁴
62	Health care and social assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced demand in non-urgent and non-COVID care initially, now starting to return. Explosion in virtual health.²⁸⁵²⁸⁶²⁸⁷²⁸⁸ Health care systems will need to address supply chain issues (e.g. PPE), and make up for lost revenue from deferred care.²⁸⁹ Future demand for nurses (1/3 to retire in next ten years), especially in rural areas. Increasingly will work in home settings.²⁹⁰ Automation is especially changing traditional health care administrative roles.²⁹¹ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short- and long-term demand continuing to rise even during pandemic.²⁹² Sector expected to recover fully once vaccine developed.²⁹³ Pre-existing workforce shortages, especially for nurses and home care (and in long-term care settings).²⁹⁴
71	Arts, entertainment and recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Live sports leagues and entertainment very hard hit. Ecosystem impact: broadcasters, players, owners, franchises, advertisers, fans.²⁹⁵²⁹⁶ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6/3 consumer spending in Seattle Metro: largest decrease on entertainment and recreation, transportation, and restaurants and hotels. Averaged a 60.5% drop.²⁹⁷
72	Accommodation and food services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technology dependent companies such as Airbnb, Uber and Lyft hit hard by drop in travel.²⁹⁸ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6/3 consumer spending in Seattle Metro: largest decrease on entertainment and

NAICS Code	Sector or Sub-sector	Significant Trends or Factors	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economy hotels will recover faster than luxury hotels.²⁹⁹ Increased customer expectations for safety, hygiene and flexibility.³⁰⁰ 	recreation, transportation, and restaurants and hotels. Averaged a 60.5% drop. ³⁰¹
721	Accommodation	Economy class faring better than others. In early May, occupancy was less than 15 percent for luxury hotels and around 40 percent for economy.	Hotel occupancy rates in Seattle around 10%-16% (normally 70%). ³⁰²
722	Food services, drinking places	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restaurants will have extra challenges of complying with safety regulations, packaging costs and low margins from delivery and takeout.³⁰³ 	

APPENDIX 5 – SECTOR STRATEGY EXEMPLAR: PRIORITY HIRE

Access to construction careers brings living-wage jobs to economically distressed communities – particularly for women and people of color – who have not seen that opportunity in the past. The industry has many strong leaders and examples of race-centered approaches to workforce development that can be built on in construction and replicated in other industries.

Many public agencies in the region have policies and investments in place that reduce economic inequities by opening doors to well-paying construction careers. The City of Seattle, King County, Sound Transit, Port of Seattle, Washington State Department of Transportation, Seattle Public Schools and others are focused on leveraging their investments in public infrastructure to address race-based disparities in the construction industry and demonstrate actions towards achieving racial and economic justice in workforce development.

The Priority Hire program helps people from underserved communities get in construction apprenticeship – and stay in – by requiring contractors on large scale public construction projects to hire workers who live in economically distressed zip codes, with the goal to create opportunities for women and people of color.

Priority Hire helps offset wage gaps among women and people of color in our community. These workers, who often live in economically distressed areas, earn more working on City construction projects than the regional average hourly wage for women and people of color. For example, by working on the City of Seattle’s big construction projects, Latino men earn an estimated 43% more per hour than the average Latino man working in King County. Since the beginning of Priority Hire in late 2013, workers living in economically distressed communities have earned \$25.7 million in wages, which the City estimates is \$12.4 million more than they would have earned without Priority Hire.

Construction contractors are required to ensure a respectful jobsite and provide supports like jobsite training to reduce bullying, hazing and harassment, ensuring construction work sites are respectful and appropriate. The City of Seattle, Port of Seattle, Sound Transit, and the Washington Department of Transportation have implemented stringent standards for acceptable behavior on City construction work sites that prohibit bullying, hazing and related behaviors—particularly those based on race, immigrant status, religious affiliation, gender identity or sexual orientation. Contractors must ensure an appropriate, productive and safe environment for all workers.

In response to the pandemic, short-term and medium / long-term equity explicit strategies include the following:

Short-term Priorities

- **Shift resources to retaining diverse construction workers**
 - **Coordinate financial support to reduce training-related costs** (apprenticeship books, tools, work clothes/boots, transportation, dues, etc.) A regional coordinated effort is needed to work with apprenticeship programs to identify how to do this organizationally vs one-off requests.
 - **Keep people working with retention services.** Childcare and mentorship were the two most critical elements impacting diverse workers in the construction industry, as mentioned in City of Seattle community engagement sessions. Mentorship was a high priority for community members, including those in the Black leadership

session. Those in the construction industry noted that childcare has been the most challenging for workers and is a barrier for accessing and keeping work.

- **Capacity building for Regional Pre-Apprenticeship Collaborative (RPAC).** Further technical/administrative/financial support and coordination needed for RPAC to sustain administration, communication, promotion, growth and impact.
 - **Continue supporting entry into construction and focus on justice-involved individuals.** Stakeholder groups were very interested in strengthening the pathway from prisons into construction. They saw pre-apprenticeship as a key step in that pathway. There was less interest in the more general outreach and recruitment PC currently funds. Many industry representatives noted that the anticipated economic downturn will result in fewer new opportunities in construction, and Priority Hire should not overpromise jobs.
 - **Continue training.** Pre-apprenticeship training is still seen as a critical pathway for diversifying the construction industry, helping workers remove barriers and learning key skills for success. In addition, pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship training providers mentioned needs for digital skill development now that programs have hybrid online and in-person models.

Medium/Long Term Priorities

- **Further building awareness, preparation, pathway from high school** – a major benefit from a construction career building personal wealth early + potential for early access to retirement vs other sectors
- **Develop common data** for strategic funding & policy setting
- **Create aligned data & policies** for accountability & efficiency
- **Broaden group of stakeholder partners & investors** in workforce diversity, systemic engagement with apprenticeship programs on:
 - Equitable access for women/BIPOC
 - What retention looks like for their members
- **Work with labor and other partners to align and champion greater workforce diversification in the trades**
- **Fund effective practices** to increase entry and retention of diverse workers into the construction trades
- Identify retention barriers for diverse workers
- **Develop policies** to address diverse worker retention barriers

APPENDIX 6 – ILLUSTRATIVE STRATEGY EXAMPLES

Recovery Strategies

Expand Apprenticeship Programs

New York created a two-tiered apprenticeship tax credit that provides a standard tax credit for hiring an apprentice and a larger credit for hiring an apprentice from a disadvantaged background (e.g., disconnected youth, people formerly in foster care, veterans, or people living below 200 percent of the poverty line). The nonprofit organization Young Invincibles has recommended that Illinois follow New York's lead to create more equitable access to apprenticeship.

Washington state and Alaska have adopted policies that require 15 percent of the work on public-supported construction projects to be performed by apprentices. San Francisco and Seattle have created similar requirements and seen increased participation among women and people of color.

Invest in Digital Literacy

Amazon has pledged \$700 million on technology training by 2025 to help employees move to higher skill jobs.

Microsoft's LinkedIn Learning Program provides online learning pathways for the most in-demand IT careers, providing learners training to attain industry-recognized certifications. Recently Microsoft announced it will make all its online training and certification programs, along with job searching and matching resources of LinkedIn and GitHub, available for free or very low cost to unemployed or under-employed individuals until Spring 2021.

Vermont enacted Flexible Pathways Initiative to support school districts as they expand teaching on 21st century skills. Increases access to work-based learning, virtual/blended learning and career and technical education.

California launched Maker Initiative, a three-year program to increase interest in STEAM education and scale a pilot with Hacker Lab in Sacramento to 114 community colleges to embed making into college curriculum and fund work-based learning.

Expand Access to Credentials with Labor Market Value

Lumina and JP Morgan Chase Foundations have researched, developed and funded Credential Engine, to develop a standard credentialing taxonomy and language, and to build a national credential registry that would list and describe every credential in the national (and eventually international) marketplace. Credential Engine's Credential Finder allows users to collect, search, and compare credentials from across the country. They have developed a Credential Transparency Description Language (CTDL), which allows for "apples-to-apples" comparisons of programs and credentials. Indiana has been a strong state in building out its Credential Engine.

Kansas allocates a \$500 bonus to school districts for each student trained in a field with industry-recognized credentials.

California community college system uses an online platform, LaunchPath, to assess students' learned skills and display "skill badges" on their profile when they apply for a job.

Advocacy Strategies

Leverage Creative Funding Models

Texas's Employment and Training Investment Assessment requires employers to contribute 0.10 percent of wages into an employment and training investment holding fund.

Massachusetts employers contribute a rate of 0.056 percent into the Workforce Training Fund, which provides state businesses with training grants for incumbent worker training.

California employers contribute annually a 0.001 percent Employment Training Tax on the first \$7,000 in wages paid to each employee to a workforce fund, for the purpose of “improving the competitiveness of state businesses” in certain industries.

Expand Portable Benefits & Wrap-Around Supports

New Hampshire Gov. Chris Sununu led the Recovery Friendly Workplace Initiative, allocating \$1 million to educate employers in evidence-based practices that reduce substance misuse in the workplace, offer specialized training for human resources staff and promote hiring those in treatment.

Project Jumpstart, run by Maryland’s Job Opportunity Task Force, uses SNAP dollars to provide support services for people of color. Project Jumpstart is a pre-apprenticeship construction training program that prepares its participants for well-paying jobs in construction, plumbing, electrical and related careers. The program provides participants with support services such as driver’s education, high-quality tools, and financial assistance to obtain a used vehicle.

Partner w/Employers & Industry on Equitable Recovery Commitments

Code2040, a nonprofit organization in San Francisco, created an innovative model in which a policy was forged with employers to hire new trainees in multi-person cohorts, instead of as single individuals. This cohort model allows newly hired workers of color to provide mutual support, encouragement, and troubleshooting for one another. It is also a proactive way for employers to take a bigger step towards shifting the stereotype of what kind of people can succeed in high-tech careers.

Systems Change

Measure & Track Inclusive Recovery

Oakland, California’s, Equity Indicators, a tool used to measure the disparities faced by disadvantaged groups. Developed by the City University of New York Institute for State and Local Governance and funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, the Equity Indicators tool was first piloted in New York City, and in addition to Oakland, the application of this tool has now expanded to Pittsburgh; Dallas; St. Louis; and Tulsa. These five cities have developed indicators comparing outcomes for groups likely to experience inequalities across six thematic areas: economy, education, health, housing, justice, and services.

Minnesota has disaggregated performance data on workforce programs by race and ethnicity through a public dashboard located on its Department of Employment and Economic Development website. The dashboard tracks data by race and specific immigrant subgroups prevalent within the state, including Hmong and Somali immigrants.

Invest in Digital Infrastructure

Boston provided high school students with a free cell phone/hotspot through 1Million Project. Boston Public Schools provided a Chromebook to students in need of a device.

New York stocked 25,000 Chromebooks to give to students.

King County funded community organizations to provide digital access and literacy to underserved populations who face barriers to digital access. Funded activities can include technology, internet connectivity and/or digital literacy support.

City of Seattle piloted a program partnering with Comcast to provide 200 refurbished laptops to underserved communities, identifying barriers to skills acquisition, increasing the availability of digital skills programs, increasing the capacity of instructors and volunteers, and providing additional resources and support for the community.

Build Internal / Organizational Capacity on Equity

Seattle's Race and Social Justice Initiative is the longest running and most comprehensive example of a U.S. city using racial equity impact assessments. The assessments have informed policy changes that helped the city triple the share of its contracting dollars going to women- and minority-owned businesses and mandated interpretation and translation services to help non-English-speaking residents meaningfully participate in civic life.

APPENDIX 7 – BOARD, PROJECT TEAM, AND STAFF

WDC Board members: Princess Ayers-Stewart, Gina Breukelman, Jane Broom Davidson, Kristen Fox, Angela Stowell, Shefali McDermott, Cos Roberts, Bookda Gheisar, Monty Anderson, Ligaya Domingo, Berit Eriksson, Katie Garrow, Jon Holden, John Bowers, John Welch, Ann Martin, Anne Goranson, Brian McGowan, Sharon Bias

Project team: Marie Kurose, Bob Watrus, W. Tali Hairston, Jill Nishi, Trang Tu, Jason Petrait, Aara Shaikh

WDC staff: Bryan Pannell, Michael Davie, Beth Blanchard, Erin Monroe, Sean Morrin, Joe Taylor, Shelan Aldridge, Jeff Sikora, Marta Kidane, Radhika Baliga, Vey Damneun, Liesel Schilperoort, Tracey Patrick, Kelly Wynkoop, Emily Williams

STRATEGY SUMMARY: PROPOSED REGIONAL WORKFORCE PLAN STRATEGIES

A. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

1. RELIEF STRATEGIES

Invest in Subsidized Transitional Employment w/ Pathways.

- Invest in and create a ‘Recovery Corps’ to connect dislocated workers of color, bilingual workers and youth with high-demand relief and recovery jobs.³⁰⁴
- Leverage awarded DOL funds and other public funding to subsidize relief & recovery jobs and in-demand jobs in prioritized sectors that can be connected to long-term career pathways that lead to better jobs and better pay.³⁰⁵

Expand Capacity of UI Claims System to Ensure more Equitable Access.

- Advocate for UI simplification & sustainable improvements to expand capacity of UI system to ensure greater access to interim financial relief for individuals with language and/or digital access barriers.

2. RECOVERY STRATEGIES

Advance Sector Partnerships and Strategies

- Develop new and strengthen existing sector partnerships and strategies, which can not only help firms within targeted sectors meet their workforce and skill needs and people get jobs, but also address racial equity and job quality, and promote broader policy/systems change. Initial targeted sectors include:
 - **Construction.** Support and advance the work of Regional Public Owners and the Priority Hire program, as way to address racial equity in the construction sector.
 - **Information Technology.** Create alternative points of entry and pathways to the IT sector as well as tech occupations that cross sector to diversify the IT workforce.
 - **Other Sector Strategies.** Identify additional sector strategies as opportunities emerge, leveraging existing industry tables (e.g., Healthcare Industry Leadership Table).

Co-Create & Co-Invest in High-Demand Career Pathways

- Co-create and co-invest with sector partners in high-demand career pathways, leveraging the resources of existing systems.³⁰⁶ Determine priority areas for training programs, build demand-driven training programs, and remove barriers to employee participation.³⁰⁷
- Create on-ramps and integrate education & training, hands-on paid experience (e.g., apprenticeships) & wraparound supports into pathways responsive to specific circumstances and needs of workers of color.
- Leverage and increase public funds for wrap-around supports – county, state childcare subsidies, & Basic Food, Employment & Training (BFET) funding.

Expand Apprenticeship Programs

- Further invest in existing pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs with culturally-competent organizations and/or organizations that are led/owned by communities of color.³⁰⁸
- Replicate Construction ‘Priority Hire’ Program for other sectors to establish pre-apprenticeship & apprenticeship programs with focus on people of color and others living in economically distressed regions of King County.
- Support State Healthcare Workforce Council and work in collaboration with the Healthcare Industry Leadership Table (HILT) to establish apprenticeship programs to include dual language instruction.
- Build linkages between K-12 and apprenticeship partners to expand high-quality youth apprenticeships, serving school districts in King County by supporting pathways for youth ages 16-24.
- Implement incentives to encourage employers to hire and train apprentices of color, or if incentives exist, expand them to include a prioritization of workers of color.³⁰⁹

Invest in Digital Literacy.

- Close technological and digital literacy gaps by focusing on reskilling to help vulnerable workers navigate shifts in employer demands.³¹⁰ Coordinate, align and further invest in existing digital literacy efforts; incorporate digital literacy goals as part of workforce investments.³¹¹

Expand access to credentials with labor market value (e.g., “off the shelf” certificates, micro-credentials, industry certifications, stackable credentials, etc.), especially for workers of color.³¹²

- Facilitate new partnerships and serve as resource for private sector and non-profit entities to support skills development in the region; work with providers on implementing requisite on-ramps and racial equity practices so programs are inclusive of BIPOC participants.
- Support efforts to establish a transparent credential infrastructure that communicates skill acquisition to learners and training providers.

Sub-Population Strategies

- Youth
 - Invest in and Prioritize Youth of Color
 - Ensure work experience is high quality and linked to pathways in in-demand fields.
 - Embed youth voice in planning, process, and service delivery.
 - Prioritize navigation and supports that lead to credential completion
-
- Immigrants & Refugees
 - Increase language access for immigrants and refugees
 - Invest in, and scale-up workforce development models in Washington state that create bridges to vocational training programs for immigrants and refugees
-

B. ADVOCACY

Leverage Creative Funding Models

- Advocate for funding for state legislated Lifelong Learning Accounts (LiLA) program.
- Co-create and lay groundwork for Workforce Equity Trust Fund.
- Catalyze philanthropic investments to support innovative mission driven organizations committed to advancing workforce equity.
- Blended fund to support regional workforce plan strategies – leverage and braid multiple funding resources to support implementation

Expand Portable Benefits & Wrap-Around Supports

- Expand access to portable benefits for on-demand workers who are at greater risk of becoming under-skilled. Support introduced state legislation that would require gig economy companies to make contributions to nonprofit benefit providers.³¹³
Mitigate permanent displacement from the workforce for those with family obligations by supporting child care reform, including direct investment, calling on employers, and passing paid family leave policies.³¹⁴
-

Eliminate prohibitive policies to suspending and reinstating driver’s licenses

- Reduce the use of driver’s license suspensions
- Ease restrictions on re-licensing to enable gainful employment

Remove Criminal Background as a Barrier to Employment

- Review state licensure and certification for restrictions on hiring individuals with previous offenses
- Explore use of ‘employability’ certificates issued by local courts

Partner w/Employers & Industry on Equitable Recovery Commitments

- Engage with employers to build ‘inclusive economic recovery’ commitments – jointly develop set of employer commitments to include bolstering outreach and training to under-represented communities in the workforce, diverse and inclusive hiring, relaxing of credential requirements where required competencies can be demonstrated, removal of barriers to employment (e.g., disclosure of previous offenses, driver license requirements)
- Advocate for employers to commit to racial equity and inclusion training as prerequisite for client referral.³¹⁵

C. SYSTEMS CHANGE

Strengthen the connection between economic development and workforce development

- Strengthen the connection between economic development and workforce development, with a focus on an equitable and inclusive economic recovery

Measure & Track Equitable Economic Recovery

- Build cross-sector partnership(s) that include education, business, labor, community colleges, workforce development and community-based organizations all aligned on a shared vision of equitable outcomes.³¹⁶
- Align inclusive economic recovery definition & indicators with partners; establish regional benchmarks and track outcomes in King County using disaggregated data by race/ethnicity, income and other sub-populations.
- Shift current measurement rubric to include multiple measures of job quality; set and track goals to inform decision making and hold all workforce partners accountable.
-
-

Invest in Digital Infrastructure

- Support creation of a local digital equity office as a permanent local administrative unit whose mission would be to ensure the digital economy reaches all households, with a priority on historically disadvantaged groups and neighborhoods.³¹⁷
- Encourage public sector to invest in digital infrastructure (e.g. broadband, cloud and 5G technology).³¹⁸
-

Build Meaningful and Sustainable Community Influence & Power

- Actively listen to community members when they describe their specific needs and how programs should be designed to meet those needs; implement workforce development programs inter-sectionally and in response to community-specific challenges, especially in light of a current resurgence during COVID-19 recovery.
- Build an enduring infrastructure to ensure it is culturally responsive to the communities and based in a participatory framework
- Ensure that Refugee & immigrant leaders are invited to participate in workforce initiatives and workforce policy decisions. Convene immigrant & refugee leaders, community-based organizations, workforce leaders and policy makers to elevate workforce needs, incorporate recommendations, align strategies and inform program designs.

Build Internal Organizational Capacity on Equity

- Organizational leaders explicitly convey that equity is a priority through explicit communications, setting the tone, and leading by example.
- Equity work is normalized throughout the organization, including establishing collectively shared terminology, definitions, vision and values for equity work.
- Conduct initial and ongoing activities to normalize equity within the organization, including formal and informal training and education for staff and leaders at all levels
- Equity principles and practices are integrated into internal policies, programs, operations and structures, including but not limited to strategic planning, budget planning and budgeting practices, and performance metrics and personnel evaluations
- Equity principles are infused throughout all external-facing activities including all community engagement.
- Racial equity impact assessments are conducted for proposed programs, policies or practices to determine if the program, policy or practice will exacerbate or ameliorate inequities.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Washington State Employment Security Department, Unemployment Insurance Dataset
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Urban Institute’s *How Government Jobs Programs Could Boost Employment* report notes that new and expanded programs could drive a faster and more robust economic recovery by creating and subsidizing jobs. Evidence-based recommendations highlighted: reviving the Works Progress Administration to help job centers, schools, and nonprofits hire workers to address critical needs during and after the COVID-19 pandemic; subsidizing private sector employers to hire workers for new jobs that pay family supporting wages; mobilizing a workforce to trace and contain COVID-19; and creating a robust green stimulus jobs package.

The Center for America Progress report, *Adjusting to a Post-Coronavirus Economy Requires Just Transitional Workforce Strategies*, cites interventions that directly connect training with work, including transitional workforce strategies such as subsidized employment initiatives that provide job seekers, especially those with limited work histories, with pathways to employment. “Subsidized job programs are publicly funded

and, if effectively targeted, have proven responsive to economic slowdowns.”

New America also argues for making transitional jobs a component of a COVID-19 recovery strategy, as a way to get vulnerable populations back to work quickly. “Transitional jobs are a form of temporary, subsidized employment that provides individuals with work that pays a living wage and allows them to gain valuable work experience, strengthen their resume, and build social and professional networks.” It also notes a portion of WIOA funding can be used for transitional jobs in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors for those with barriers to employment. It concludes: “subsidizing employment for displaced workers could help accelerate what might otherwise be a slow, painful, and inequitable recovery.”

Heartland Alliance’s *Why Transitional Jobs Are Needed Now* report spells out some elements of an effective subsidized jobs program, in addition to training and support services: placement in public service and infrastructure jobs in addition to private sector jobs; funding set-asides for programs targeting workers most in need; benchmarks and data reporting for racial and gender equity as well as a dashboard of indicators to measure job quality; and application of guardrails to ensure availability of subsidized employment is not used to deny basic supports.

¹⁴⁹ MDRC’s Bloom notes that “nonprofit organizations, public agencies, and social enterprises will need to play a substantial role as worksites in future subsidized employment programs in order to ensure that the most disadvantaged workers do not fall through the cracks... [A]n equitable approach will need to target funds and slots toward those most in need.” ***Need formal citation of study***

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