
Economic Security for All Final Evaluation Report

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Executive Summary

Economic Security for All (EcSA) is a poverty reduction initiative of the Washington Employment Security Department (ESD) that supports the development and testing of comprehensive, locally driven approaches to help low-income people move toward sustained economic self-sufficiency. EcSA was started in 2019 with federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Statewide Activities funds, and in 2022, state funding was added, allocated from the general fund.¹ A total of \$15.2 million in federal funds and \$15.5 million in state funds were allocated to Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) between July 2019 and July 2023².

At the time of this report, funding for the program was continuing to increase, most notably with the addition of a partnership finalized in July 2023 with the Department of Commerce that provides an additional \$48 million from the Community Reinvestment Fund for the expansion of incentives and business services in all 12 LWDBs. Additionally, the Washington College Grant was expanded in 2023 to all EcSA participants, enabling them to get additional financial support for education and training at Washington Community Colleges and elsewhere. EcSA programming also expanded in July 2023 to serve a limited number of individuals above 200 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL), and at risk of experiencing poverty. And importantly, in early 2024, the state legislature passed a new law codifying the State EcSA program³, which will enable long-term planning for the preservation and expansion of the program.

While the EcSA service model has evolved over time and varied widely among grantees, ESD requires that all EcSA programming addresses these goals:

- Serve people who are at or below 200 percent FPL to help them move out of poverty to a self-sufficiency wage, using the University of Washington’s Self-Sufficiency Calculator.
- Focus on equity, with specific efforts to enroll marginalized communities, unhoused individuals, and include the voice of lived experience in program design.
- Bundle workforce, education and social services to stabilize participants’ lives.
- Establish and implement customized career plans for each customer to reach their personalized self-sufficiency wage goal.
- Remove barriers at the local, state and federal levels that prevent coordinated delivery of multiple benefits.

During the period of the data analyzed in this report (July 2019 through January 2024), EcSA grantees collectively enrolled a total of 3,298 people, with an average program duration of about five months (20 weeks). Median quarterly earnings of EcSA participants at the time of enrollment were \$2,928, increasing by \$5,280 after completing the program, to \$8,208 in the fourth quarter after program exit.

¹ ESD, 2023, *Economic Security for All Legislative Report June 2023*

² Confirmed in communications with ESD, January 2024

³ HB 2030 was signed by the governor on March 14, 2024 and becomes law on June 6, 2024
<https://app.leg.wa.gov/billssummary/?BillNumber=2230&Year=2024&Initiative=false>

In January 2020, ESD awarded a contract to Social Policy Research Associates (SPR) to evaluate the implementation and early outcomes of the EcSA initiative. The evaluation examined how EcSA projects implemented their local programming and explored which practices showed promise for replication by other communities to reach similarly positive systems-building results.

This Final Evaluation Report provides an overview of the implementation and expansion of the EcSA program from July 2019 through January 2024, and analyzes program data on key participant outcomes. SPR based this report on data gathered from multiple sources, including grantee documents (such as approved grant proposals, logic models, meeting minutes, and internal reports), program administrative data provided in aggregate format by ESD, virtual and in-person interviews with EcSA grantee staff and partners, and remote and in-person interviews with program participants.

Participant Characteristics

While participants were broadly similar to that of the statewide WIOA Adult population in their age and gender, they tended to have lower educational attainment, were less likely to be White, and were more likely to be homeless. They were also more likely to be employed when they entered the program.

- ESD data on race and ethnicity indicated that Black, Indigenous, and Other People of Color (BIPOC) represented two-thirds of EcSA participants. This distribution differed from the statewide WIOA Adult population, with proportionally fewer White participants being served in EcSA.
- In the EcSA group, the proportion of those who had less than a high school diploma was higher than that of the WIOA Adult population, the proportion of high school graduates and equivalent was higher than that of the WIOA Adult population, and the proportion of those with bachelor's degrees and above appeared notably smaller. This suggests that overall, the EcSA population had a slightly lower educational attainment.
- Thirteen percent of EcSA participants experienced homelessness, a proportion that was almost four times higher than that reported for Washington State's WIOA Adult population.
- About half of the participants were employed in the three quarters prior to participating in the program. This represents a much higher percentage compared to the typical population served by the WIOA Adult programs in Washington, whose pre-participation employment levels typically hovered between 10 and 12 percent in program year 2021-2022. This suggests that EcSA's recruitment strategy was much more focused on incumbent workers than a typical workforce development program, with emphasis on quick retraining and placement in better-paying jobs.

Labor Market Outcomes

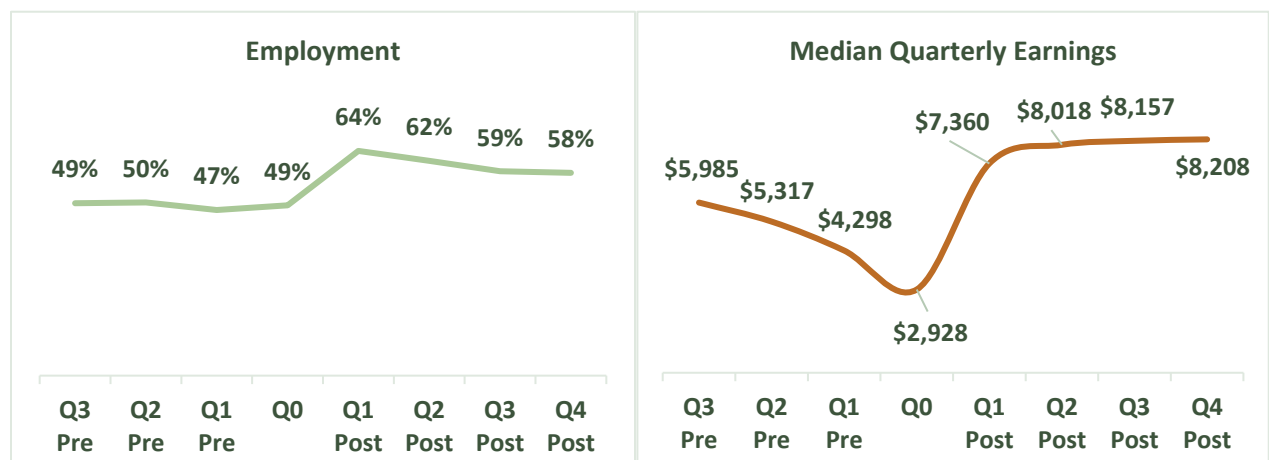
While in many workforce development programs most participants tend to return to their pre-participation earnings levels, EcSA exiters' post-completion earnings appeared considerably

higher than their pre-participation levels, with median quarterly earnings increasing by more than \$2,000 (Exhibit ES-1). This was a remarkable outcome given that the average pre-program earnings of EcSA participants were considerably lower than those of WIOA Adult participants (less than half on average).

The large increases in earnings suggested that the program may have led participants to change employment from lower-paying jobs to higher-paying jobs (as the large pre-post increases cannot not be explained by higher employment levels alone). Findings were limited by the timing of this analysis, as many participants had either not exited the program at the time of data extraction and analysis or had not exited the program with a sufficient time lag to allow for the calculation of program outcomes. Therefore, additional analyses may be needed to illuminate longer-term outcomes.

- Employment gains for women were equal to men, whereas earnings gains were higher for men. This suggests continued gender inequities in labor markets that persist despite investments in training.
- Unhoused participants experienced post-program increases in employment that were similar to those of housed participants, and their earnings gains were higher than those of housed participants.
- Compared to Washington’s WIOA Adult exiters, EcSA participants were more likely to find employment in healthcare (21% compared to 17%) and transportation (11% compared to 6%) and less likely to be employed in accommodation and food services (7% compared to 11%).
- Overall, there were small pre-post changes in employment levels of EcSA participants (Exhibit ES-1). These findings were not surprising given the large baseline employment levels.

Exhibit ES-1: Labor Market Outcomes



Service Provision

Our evaluation suggests that EcSA should be viewed as a suite of services that complement the typical WIOA and Wagner-Peyser program service offerings, which might be called a “WIOA Plus” approach, rather than a standalone program. This approach consists in providing the required elements listed above and significantly more supportive services and training compared to what participants in WIOA programs typically receive. While each EcSA program had unique features (described in the individual EcSA program profiles in Appendix A), they generally followed similar patterns of service delivery starting with equity-focused outreach and recruitment, enrollment, assessment and planning, self-sufficiency wage goal calculation, bundling of WIOA and non-WIOA services for stability, training services, and on-going coaching and mentoring. In early 2024, two new services were added for EcSA participants: \$1000 per month incentive payments for progress on career plans, and automatic income eligibility -- without completing a FAFSA -- for the Washington College Grant, which covers the full cost of university, community and technical college, and some apprenticeships and shorter-term training.

Outreach and Referral

Grantees employed multiple strategies to recruit participants who met the EcSA enrollment criteria. In addition to recruiting participants from current customers of WIOA Title I services, most EcSA programs worked with partner organizations to identify potential participants to enroll, and some developed promising referral practices.

- Multiple EcSA programs worked closely with community colleges and other local postsecondary institutions to enroll students in EcSA.
- Several EcSA programs conducted outreach to refugee communities through close working relationships with partner organizations. In addition, several EcSA programs implemented specific strategies to reach underserved communities such as co-locating staff at Native American organizations.
- Many EcSA programs relied on partnerships with local Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) staff to recruit current participants in Basic Food and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) programs.

Enrollment

During the period of this report (July 2019 through January 2024), EcSA grantees collectively enrolled a total of 3,298 people, with an average duration of about 5 months. This robust level of enrollment is a considerable achievement, especially considering that the effects of the COVID pandemic significantly limited initial recruitment (as explained in our interim evaluation report⁴).

- The completion of the enrollment process was generally the first step in EcSA participation. Some programs found that an orientation session to EcSA could help

⁴ Levin et al, 2022. *Economic Security for All Initiative Midpoint Evaluation Report*

ensure that people who wanted to enroll were a good fit for the program and they had the motivation to begin participating.

- Most of the program participants we interviewed shared that their decision to join was significantly influenced by the comprehensive array of services offered, which included access to training, financial assistance, and employment support.

Assessment and Planning

As enrollment was completed, EcSA programs typically conducted assessment and individualized planning with EcSA participants. The two key elements of this phase of the program, reported by all EcSA staff, were using the self-sufficiency calculator and developing an individualized plan for participants' activities in the program, sometimes called an individual employment plan. While developing an individual plan for a program participant is a standard feature of most workforce development programs, the focus on determining a living wage is a special feature adopted by EcSA that is especially important for the target population of the program. Interviewed participants did not always remember the calculator specifically, but generally reported positive experiences with planning their financial future as a part of their coaching services.

Coaching, Career Navigation, and Related Services

In most cases, the coaching services provided to EcSA participants were similar to those offered in other WIOA and workforce development programs. EcSA program staff generally reported that, as a result of the COVID pandemic, they increased the use of remote communication options for coaching contacts, such as texting and video-calling, but still preferred in-person meetings.

- Regular contact by coaches or navigators (at least monthly) was the EcSA service cited most often by staff and participants as playing an important role in participants staying enrolled in training and attaining a living wage.
- The data provided by ESD indicated that on average, each EcSA participant received about seven individualized career services, including but not limited to career guidance, soft skills development, participation in job clubs, job search strategies, and referrals. This is a relatively high number of career services—by comparison, only a small proportion of WIOA Adult exiters in Washington received any individualized career services other than an individual employment plan.
- Many EcSA programs included services geared toward barrier removal, such as financial literacy, mentorship, and personal stability workshops. However, according to data collected by ESD, the take-up of these types of services was low. One possible explanation is that many participants chose to focus on training while maintaining employment, leaving little time available for additional activities.
- EcSA programs used supportive services and incentives (often as cash payments) as key strategies to relieve financial pressure on participants and help them to stay in training programs. The proportion of EcSA participants who received supportive services was

considerably higher than that of WIOA Adult exiters in Washington State over a comparable period.

Training Services

Training and the pursuit of skills-based credentials in high demand fields was a major component of EcSA both as an activity during the program and as a desired outcome for participants leaving the program. All EcSA programs had a strong focus on supporting participants as they pursued the credentials they needed for a sustainable, living wage.

- EcSA programs employed various strategies to maximize training opportunities for participants, often leveraging EcSA funding with other funding sources, including WIOA funding, scholarships and Basic Food Employment and Training program funds.
- According to ESD data, more than a third of EcSA participants enrolled in at least one training program during their participation. The proportion of EcSA participants who received training was more than triple the proportion of WIOA Adult exiters receiving this service, demonstrating EcSA's focus on skill building.

Summary of Promising Practices and Lessons Learned

A range of program models developed by EcSA grantees across Washington state demonstrated promising practices for replication in the future.

- Co-location in community-based settings is an effective strategy for reaching priority populations. As a recruitment and service provision strategy, many EcSA programs co-located services at community-based organizations including human service providers, community colleges, refugee centers, and Native American human services centers. These strategies were implemented successfully in both rural and urban settings.
- To participate in training with a view of obtaining a job with self-sufficiency wages, program participants often faced immediate financial trade-offs and challenges such as needing to reduce hours of paid employment, find additional childcare, and meet financial obligations. EcSA programs were able to provide important support to help participants through this gap in income through financial assistance during their training period.
- Intensive career coaching was a key feature of program success, according to participants and staff. Regular contact by coaches or navigators (at least monthly) was the EcSA service cited most often by staff and participants as playing an important role in participants staying enrolled in training and attaining a living wage. Roughly half of all participants interviewed for the evaluation relayed that they met with their coaches or navigators monthly, while the other half shared that they had more frequent communications, sometimes on a weekly basis through email or by phone.
- Leveraging multiple sources of public funding in some cases had unanticipated consequences, such as increased administrative burden and/or pressure to meet federal performance standards. Attending to funding requirements may have made it more challenging for some programs to try new, innovative strategies.

Recommendations for Long-term Sustainability

While EcSA is clearly a successful program, challenges remain for ensuring its long-term existence and continued ability to focus on poverty eradication and the underserved populations it was designed to serve. The recent attainment of permanent funding status should enhance the ability of EcSA to meet its goals and allow local programs to continue to innovate to meet local needs. Below are a few recommendations for ensuring the program continues to thrive and grow.

- ESD should work to balance desired outcomes with realistic expectations of program intensity and length for a population that has multiple service needs. Performance metrics may be overshadowing EcSA's intended goal of creating long-term economic change, pushing forward a cycle of compliance-driven performance. On the other hand, performance metrics may also be significant contributors to EcSA's demonstrated success moving people out of poverty and increasing income. Therefore, a balanced approach that maintains performance metrics while encouraging intensive services for true long-term poverty reduction may also be a worthwhile option.
- In order to keep EcSA focused on those most in need, programs could increase their efforts to invite participants to advise programs on how to make changes to meet their needs. Systemic barriers to make long-lasting changes in economic well-being and equity will not be addressed unless all segments of the community have a voice. In a promising development, the new EcSA state law requires this as a meaningful and robust requirement for EcSA, going forward.
- Given that EcSA has existed for several years, during which the program model and several components may have reached maturity, the program may be ready for more rigorous evaluation. An impact evaluation would estimate the gains experienced by program participants in comparison to the gains they would have experienced in the absence of the program. A rigorously conducted impact evaluation can be a powerful driver for program sustainability as it can convince legislators, stakeholders, and the public at large that the program provides added value to its participants.

ECONOMIC SECURITY FOR ALL: EcSA AT A GLANCE



3,298

EcSA PARTICIPANTS
ENROLLED



143

AVG ENROLLMENT
DURATION (DAYS)



\$7,936

MEDIAN QUARTERLY
INCOME AFTER EcSA
(AVERAGE)

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

EDUCATION



- No HS Diploma (12%)
- HS Graduate (45%)
- Some college (17%)
- AA or Technical Degree (14%)
- BA Degree (9%)
- Graduate Degree (3%)

AGE



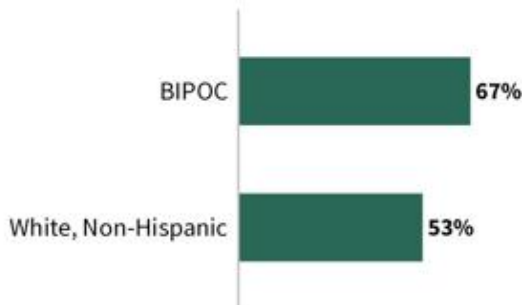
- 18 - 21 (4%)
- 22 - 29 (18%)
- 30 - 44 (45%)
- 45 - 54 (20%)
- 55 + (14%)

GENDER

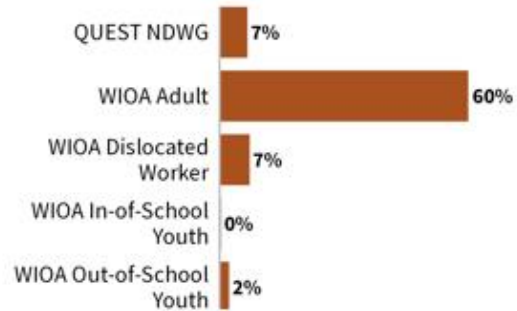


- Male (51%)
- Female (47%)
- Decline to state (2%)

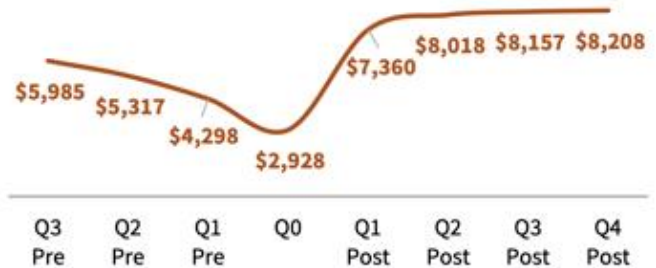
RACE & ETHNICITY



CO-ENROLLMENT PARTICIPATION



MEDIAN QUARTERLY EARNINGS



SERVICES



1. Introduction

Economic Security for All (EcSA) is a poverty reduction initiative of the Washington Employment Security Department (ESD) that supports the development and testing of comprehensive, locally driven approaches to help low-income people move toward sustained economic self-sufficiency. Despite Washington’s strong economy, nearly one in four Washingtonians – 1.75 million people, including 500,000 children – struggled to make ends meet.⁵ The EcSA initiative grew out of Governor Jay Inslee’s administration’s goal to dismantle poverty, which is coordinated by the Poverty Reduction Work Group (PRWG).⁶ PRWG is co-led by the state Departments of Commerce, Employment Security, and Social and Health Services, in partnership with tribal and urban Indians, state racial and ethnic commissions, employers, community-based organizations, legislators, advocates, and philanthropic organizations. Its Steering Committee consists entirely of people with lived experience of poverty.

EcSA began in 2019 with federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Statewide Activities funds, and in 2022, state funding was added, allocated from the general fund.⁷ The program started with grants to four local workforce development boards (LWDBs) and grew to include grants to all 12 of Washington’s LWDBs. Approximately \$15.2 million in federal funds and \$15.5 million in state funds were allocated to LWDBs for the ECSA program between July 2019 and July 2023⁸. Exhibit 1 shows funding allocations across the 12 WLDBs during this period. At the time of this report, funding for the program was continuing to increase, most notably with the addition of a partnership finalized in January 2024 with the Department of Commerce that will provide an additional \$48 million for the expansion of incentives and business services in all 12 LWDBs. And importantly, in early 2024, the state legislature passed a new law⁹ codifying the State EcSA program, which will enable long-term planning for the preservation and expansion of the program.

Currently, ESD defines the program’s goals¹⁰ to:

- *Help people move all the way out of poverty to a self-sufficiency wage, with a strong focus on equity.*
- *Bundle workforce, education and social services to stabilize customer’s lives.*
- *Establish and implement customized career plans to reach self-sufficiency.*
- *Remove barriers at the local, state and federal levels that prevent coordinated delivery of multiple benefits.*

Several members of Washington’s Congressional delegation are working on federal bill language to remove barriers to EcSA’s success, in particular easing coordination of multiple

⁵ DSHS/ESD analysis of 2019 American Community Survey data

⁶ Dismantling Poverty in Washington website: <https://dismantlepovertyinwa.com/>

⁷ ESD, 2023, *Economic Security for All Legislative Report June 2023*

⁸ Confirmed in communications with ESD, January 2024

⁹ HB 2030 was signed by the governor on March 14, 2024, and becomes law on June 6, 2024
<https://app.leg.wa.gov/billssummary/?BillNumber=2230&Year=2024&Initiative=false>

¹⁰ ESD, 2023, *Economic Security for All Legislative Report June 2023*

federal benefits and addressing benefit cliffs and unpredictable benefit tapers as earned income increases.

The EcSA initiative has grown significantly since the mid-point evaluation report that documented its first two years of operation.¹¹ Over time, the focus of EcSA has evolved from piloting targeted approaches focused on particular geographic communities and individuals earning at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL) to encouraging local innovation of approaches that support individuals who are unhoused, immigrant, Black, Indigenous, or people of color (BIPOC), or who have multiple barriers to employment. The variation in these approaches provides valuable insight into how local efforts can increase their collective impact on reducing poverty.

Exhibit 1: Funding Allocation for EcSA July 2019 – July 2023

EcSA Grantee	Federal Funds PY19 (7/1/2019 - 6/30/2022)	Federal Funds PY20 (7/1/21- 3/31/23)	State Funds FY 23 (7/1/22 – 6/30/23)	Federal Funds PY21 (7/1/22- 3/31/24)	Federal Funds PY22 (1/15/22- 3/31/25)	State Funds FY24 (7/1/23 – 6/30/24)
01 OLYMPIC		\$203,288.28	\$368,207	\$210,045.41	\$247,144.00	\$587,124
02 PAC MOUNTAIN		\$13,390	\$522,444		\$354,945	\$781,150
03 NORTHWEST		\$231,894.00	\$69,694	\$234,358.51	\$294,048.00	\$349,766
04 SNOHOMOISH		\$219,019.91	\$591,165	\$223,416.33	\$401,663.00	\$879,886
05 SEATTLE-KING CTY		\$351,449.19	\$1,039,448	\$335,973.06	\$858,165.00	\$1,734,586
06 WORKFORCE CENTRAL	\$1,750,000		\$745,364	\$488,544.00	\$497,153.00	\$1,060,809
07 WORKFORCE SW	\$1,600,000		\$557,764	\$361,739.00	\$346,724.00	\$775,794
08 NORTH CENTRAL		\$280,544.00	\$518,711	\$223,012.36	\$273,082.00	\$626,045
09 SOUTH CENTRAL		\$269,858.36	\$552,518	\$266,625.89	\$357,398.00	\$785,797
10 EASTERN				\$195,353.50	\$214,156.00	\$524,622
11 BENTON FRANKLIN	\$856,775.00	\$62,000	\$459,166	\$280,489.00	\$249,047.00	\$590,729
12 SPOKANE	\$1,700,000	\$62,000	\$613,519	\$369,630.00	\$359,861.00	\$790,462
Totals	\$5,906,775	\$1,693,444	\$6,038,000	\$3,189,187	\$4,453,386	\$9,486,770

Source: ESD 2024

Evaluation Approach

In January 2020, ESD awarded a contract to Social Policy Research Associates (SPR) to evaluate the implementation and early outcomes of the EcSA initiative. The evaluation examined how EcSA projects implemented their local programming and explored which practices showed promise for replication by other communities to reach similarly positive systems-building results. As mentioned above, from its inception EcSA has experienced multiple changes in structure, program eligibility requirements, and service philosophy. Moreover, the program is still ongoing, with its funding approved to continue in future years. In this situation, the most appropriate evaluation design is a formative evaluation.

¹¹ Levin et al, 2022. *Economic Security for All Initiative Midpoint Evaluation Report*

Formative evaluations are conducted in conjunction with policies and programs that are newly implemented or when an existing program is being modified or is being used in a new setting or with a new population. This approach is typically conducted to examine if proposed program components are robust and well aligned to the outcomes being pursued. Unlike summative evaluations, which seek to answer whether the program, policy, or organization met its intended goals or had the intended impacts, a formative evaluation focuses on learning and improvement and generally does not aim to answer questions about overall effectiveness. Findings from formative evaluations have the potential to identify implementation barriers and suggest necessary modifications to continue program implementation. SPR's formative evaluation consisted of two main evaluation components: an implementation study and an early outcomes study.¹² We describe these components below.

Implementation Study

Implementation studies (also known as process studies) assess how programs or services are delivered relative to their intended program model or theory of change. These studies can help to assess whether programs, policies, or strategies were implemented as intended and to understand the factors that may have led to successful implementation or may have necessitated changes in direction or approach.

EcSA's implementation study relied on data from multiple sources:

- **Document review.** The evaluation team reviewed multiple types of program documents, including grantee quarterly reports, grantee contracts, grantee outreach materials, and ESD quarterly and annual reports.
- **Interviews with program staff.** The evaluation team interviewed multiple types of staff, including EcSA project coordinators, direct service provider staff such as case managers and career counselors, workforce board leadership, and partner staff. Approximately 32 EcSA and partner staff participated in interviews across the seven EcSA programs visited by the evaluation team.
- **Interviews with program participants.** The evaluation team conducted 25 interviews – both remote and in-person -- with EcSA participants from nine grantees.

The evaluation team conducted an initial round of remote interviews with the first four EcSA grantees, followed by brief quarterly phone interviews over the course of the evaluation period. Other programs received an initial remote interview in the first six months of their first EcSA grant and a final interview in fall 2023. Overall, the evaluation team conducted over 100 interviews with program staff during the course of the evaluation. The evaluation team conducted a final round of in-person site visits in summer and fall 2023.

SPR analyzed the data gathered using these methods using NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software package. Analysts created codes that were consistent with interview protocols, and then coded qualitative data to these codes. The main codes used for analysis were: overall program structure/philosophy; leadership and partnership structure; outreach and referrals;

¹² The study procedures were reviewed and approved by an Institutional Review Board set up by HML IRB.

program eligibility and enrollment; program services; employment strategies and partnerships; and program adaptations and innovations. For each category, SPR researchers looked for consistent themes, aiming to identify clusters of grantees that conducted specific types of activities and variations in how programs were implemented across grantees.

Early Outcomes Study

Outcomes studies focus on how well programs are doing in helping workforce program participants find work, receive training, or obtain credentials. Such a study examines the specific outputs and outcomes obtained by grantees and program participants and generally explores what characteristics or services are associated with desired outcomes. Because of the formative nature of the evaluation, however, the outcomes study for this report was not designed to evaluate EcSA's final outcomes. Rather, it was an early outcomes study that was designed to assess whether the program was moving towards its intended outcomes, highlight promising practices, and suggest additional strategies that may improve outcomes.

ESD provided the data used for the outcomes study in aggregate form. Because preliminary discussions suggested it would be difficult to obtain earnings data from ESD's unemployment insurance (UI) division at the individual level, ESD agreed to prepare aggregate data reports using a template that was previously discussed with and approved by SPR. The reports contained data on participant characteristics and services received, which were extracted from the state's Efforts-to-Outcomes database, and on labor market outcomes (employment and earnings) that were extracted from UI records. Data on both services and outcomes were available overall, by grantee, and by several sociodemographic characteristics including race and ethnicity, highest educational achievement, housing status, gender, and age group.

SPR used the data provided by ESD to calculate key labor market outcomes, specifically employment and median earnings. These were tracked for three quarters before EcSA participation and up to four quarters after EcSA completion for each participant. In addition, SPR calculated average pre-post gains in employment and earnings by comparing average outcomes before participation with average outcomes after completion of the program.

Roadmap to the Report

This final evaluation report provides an overview of the implementation and expansion of the EcSA program from July 2019 through December 2023 and analyzes program data on key participant outcomes. The next section of this report reviews the service models and programs that LWDBs implemented, highlighting promising practices. The report then provides an analysis of program data on the demographics of EcSA participants (compared to the WIOA Title I and statewide populations), services and service length, and preliminary outcomes. This is followed by a summary of lessons learned and recommendations for continued program development and sustainability. The appendices include profiles of 11 of the 12 individual EcSA grantees¹³ and a more detailed description of the methodology used in the evaluation.

¹³ This report includes Efforts to Outcomes data collected from all 12 EcSA grantees, and qualitative data collected from 11 of the 12 grantees. Due to Pac Mountain LWDB's short time in program at the time of writing, this report does not include a summary of its services.

2. EcSA Service Models and Structures

While the EcSA service model has evolved over time and varied widely among grantees, ESD requires that all EcSA programming addresses these goals:

- Serve people who are at or below 200 percent of FPL to help them move out of poverty to a self-sufficiency wage.
- Focus on equity, with specific efforts to enroll marginalized communities and unhoused individuals, and to include the voice of lived experience in program design.
- Bundle workforce, education, and social services to stabilize participants' lives.
- Establish and implement customized career plans to reach self-sufficiency.
- Remove barriers at the local, state, and federal levels that prevent coordinated delivery of multiple benefits.

EcSA programs assigned a job coach or navigator to participants to work with them as they pursued their individual plans for reaching their self-sufficiency goals. Services were generally individualized and covered a broad range of training, coaching, and job readiness skill development. Future sections provide detailed descriptions of these services.

Leadership Structure and Staffing

The leadership structure among EcSA grantees was similar, with LWDBs administering grants and then disbursing funds to their contracted service providers and partner organizations. Most EcSA programs had an advisory board that generally met quarterly and consisted of key partner organization leaders, such as the directors of local Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) offices, community action agencies, Goodwill, and other workforce services providers.

Staffing arrangements varied across EcSA programs, with some hiring dedicated staff to provide services while others used existing or expanded contracted WIOA staff to deliver some services. Most EcSA grantees used EcSA funds for one or more dedicated staff to enroll, coach, and provide case management services to EcSA enrollees. Generally, contracted service providers employed these staff, although two LWDBs directly employed these staff members.

Partnerships

Partnerships with other organizations were a key ingredient to EcSA programs, and all EcSA programs reported having multiple partners. These partnerships ranged from community colleges to refugee resettlement programs to reentry programs for people leaving incarceration. Through these partnerships, programs both recruited participants and provided joint services to meet the complex needs of people who would otherwise have had difficulty accessing WIOA services and entering or reentering the workforce. For example, it was typical for an EcSA participant to be receiving training services from one partner and housing or mental health services from another partner. The following examples from EcSA grantees illustrate some specific EcSA partnerships.

- The EcSA program of Eastern Washington Workforce Development Council (WDC) built and maintained partnerships in targeted counties through a co-hosted monthly round table meeting with county WIOA service providers and community partners and agencies. The roundtable led to the formation of new partnerships, mutual referrals, and assistance for Clarkston Worksource. Round-table members included representatives from DSHS Whitman County, YWCA of Lewiston, Community Action Center (Pullman), Community Action Partnership (Lewiston), Quality Behavioral Health, St. Vincent de Paul, Asotin County Housing Authority, Washington State Employment Security, Washington State Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, Lewis Clark Early Childhood, Blue Mountain Action Council, Stonebridge Re-entry Services, Rural Resources Community Living Connections, Rural Resources Employment & Training, and Whitman County Health Department.
- Seattle-King County’s EcSA had four key partnerships through which EcSA services were delivered:
 - YWCA Seattle provided services that were tailored to meet the needs of African American women and domestic violence survivors.
 - Neighborhood House provided services that were tailored to meet the needs of immigrants, refugees, and unhoused individuals.
 - TRAC Associates provided services that were tailored to meet the needs of BIPOC and refugee communities.
 - Asian Counseling and Referral Service provided services that were tailored to meet the needs of Asian American and Pacific Islander communities.
- The Spokane Workforce Council’s EcSA program was built on strong partnerships with co-located service providers at the Resource Center of Spokane County. The center features 11 social service agencies that provide services to EcSA participants (and others), including housing and utility assistance, DSHS application assistance, mental health and chemical dependency counseling, transportation, justice re-entry, and healthcare. Co-located partners conducted coordinated case management meetings and held weekly meetings of all partners to discuss shared resources, safety issues, and other programming concerns.

Some partnerships developed differently than expected. For example, despite significant commitment and efforts by DSHS staff at multiple levels of EcSA programs (including participation in the State Technical Advisory Committee and Community Service Office Administrators at the local level liaising with their workforce development board), initial efforts to conduct recruitment of EcSA participants jointly with local DSHS staff were met with challenges. A lack of designated funding for DSHS staff for this effort was exacerbated by the pandemic, which created barriers related to data sharing across partners, especially after remote work required more virtual services (e.g., staff could no longer be co-located in the same office serving participants simultaneously). This challenge was partially addressed in 2021 when, at the request of the Workforce SW LWDB, DSHS successfully requested and received written permission from the US Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service to share

County Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program recipient contact information with ESD. While this data sharing agreement was expanded in 2022 to include all LWDBs that have the appropriate data security infrastructure in place, few additional agreements had been finalized at the time of this report. Despite these challenges, DSHS Community Services Division regularly referred participants to EcSA programs statewide through its Employment Pipeline, a voluntary program that supports DSHS clients accessing community-based employment and training services.

Major Program Components

While each EcSA program had unique features (these are described in the individual profiles included in Appendix A), they generally followed similar patterns of service delivery, starting with recruitment, and continuing with enrollment, assessment and planning, training services, and on-going coaching and mentoring.

Outreach and Referral

Since EcSA was implemented by the first four programs in 2019, outreach and referral systems continued to evolve, with programs employing multiple strategies to recruit participants who met the EcSA enrollment criteria and who were motivated to access training that would significantly increase their earnings. In addition to recruiting participants from current customers of WIOA Title I services, most EcSA programs worked with partner organizations to identify potential participants to enroll, and some developed promising referral practices. For example, the Tacoma-Pierce EcSA program used the Common Referral System, which was supported by United Way, to make service referrals among partners. This system is a user-friendly Smartsheet that allows participating partners to see all incoming and outgoing participant referrals. Further, this EcSA program also created a self-referral page online through WorkSource Pierce, which was a useful tool for outreach, as interested individuals could directly request services.

Multiple EcSA programs worked closely with community colleges and other local postsecondary institutions to enroll students in EcSA. For example, Benton-Franklin EcSA staff worked closely with its local WIOA Title II partner, the Workforce Education Center at Columbia Basin College, to enroll eligible students in its EcSA program. The college co-located staff at the WorkSource Columbia Basin to promote college programs. In addition, the Workforce Education Center established a funding committee to evaluate students requests for funding assistance. The committee included a WorkSource staff member, who helped screen students for any workforce programs for which they qualified, including EcSA.

Another way EcSA programs connected with potential participants was through presentations made to college students and counselors. Several North Central/SkillSource participants shared how an EcSA staff presentation during their nursing program orientation motivated them to access services. At least six interviewed participants noted that college staff (and their partnerships with workforce programs) connected them to their respective EcSA programs. One participant shared, “I had just got my AA and I wasn't sure what direction I was going to go or what I was really going to do and, so [my college counselor] gave me a lot of resources to reach out to.”

Sarah's story¹⁴ (in the following text box) illustrates the effect of outreach and referrals from post-secondary partners to introduce potential participants to EcSA programming and the resources available to help them achieve their career goals.

Sarah came to her EcSA provider after she heard a presentation from the local WorkSource provider staff at the college where she was enrolling in classes. She was interested in the opportunities and resources the WorkSource could offer and how the program could help achieve her goal of becoming a nurse. A single mom, she had worked several jobs in retail, and it had been hard figuring out her next career move.

Her journey wasn't easy—Sarah needed help covering the cost of her tuition and support in overcoming self-doubt. EcSA supported Sarah by providing tuition assistance, helping with books and supplies, and providing the encouragement she needed to complete her program. She appreciated staff regularly “checking in” and was “thankful for them...because the program hasn't been like any other program” she's been in.

At the conclusion of her nursing program, Sarah had the opportunity to become a full-time nurse, and she wishes to continue her education in the field. She attributes completing her studies to the reassurance and financial support she received from EcSA.

In addition to connecting with post-secondary institutions, multiple EcSA programs conducted outreach to refugee communities through close working relationships with partner organizations. These organizations maintained multi-lingual staff who were trusted by members of the community and could assist with the enrollment process. For example, Workforce Snohomish's EcSA program partnered with the Carl Gipson Senior Center and Refugee & Immigrant Services Northwest to conduct outreach to Ukrainian refugees. EcSA staff attended weekly events that provided clothing and food donations, enabling them to network within the wider Ukrainian community. In Spokane, EcSA staff members worked closely with partner staff from the Community Health Association of Spokane (CHAS), which had full time staff on site who spoke French, Marshallese, Russian, and Ukrainian.

Multiple EcSA programs implemented specific strategies to reach underserved communities. For example, Workforce Southwest Washington's EcSA program (known as Thrive) implemented a strategy in late 2023 to increase its community presence through co-location at the Cowlitz Indian Tribe Center in Longview. EcSA staff publicized the program, enrolled new participants, and held follow-up appointments.

¹⁴ Not the participant's real name. Details and participant profiles have been blended to protect the privacy of participants.

Many EcSA programs relied on partnerships with local DSHS staff to recruit current participants in Basic Food and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) programs. For example, one participant shared that they found information about the program by coming across a flyer while picking up an EBT card from the DSHS office. This unexpected discovery sparked their interest, leading them to explore the program and eventually participate.

Finally, many programs discussed the power of word of mouth for recruiting participants. Many interviewed program staff and participants shared that hearing about the program from a trusted friend, was an important element to seeking out services. For example, one EcSA participant shared that based on a friend’s positive experience, she asked the friend to connect her to the program; the friend provided the staff with her contact information, and they reached out to her. This personal recommendation from a friend played a crucial role in the participant's decision to engage with the program.

Enrollment

As a result of these recruitment efforts, EcSA grantees collectively enrolled a total of 3,298 people in EcSA programs, with an average duration of a little under six months (Exhibit 2). This robust level of enrollment is a considerable achievement, especially considering that the effects of the COVID pandemic significantly limited initial recruitment (as explained in our interim evaluation report).

Exhibit 2: Enrollment and Average Program Duration¹⁵

	Number
Total Enrollment (Unduplicated)	3,298
Average Participation Duration (Days)	143

The completion of the enrollment process was generally the first step in EcSA participation. Some programs found that an orientation session to EcSA could help ensure that people who wanted to enroll were a good fit for the program. Staff shared that they felt this was a good step to assess whether potential participants were ready and motivated to enter training services or needed to pursue other pre-employment services first, such as mental health services or basic education classes. For example, Spokane’s EcSA program conducted an optional weekly EcSA orientation session for newly recruited or referred individuals to explain the program services and eligibility criteria.

Staff shared their efforts to balance the desire to be comprehensive in their approach to enrollment and initial services, with the intention not to create barriers to participation. For example, Seattle-King County EcSA staff noted that paperwork was one of the biggest challenges for clients during the enrollment process, particularly if they did not speak English. Since their partners tried to check eligibility across all programs, the enrollment packets were large. This caused administrative burdens, long wait times for participants, and slowed down

¹⁵ Unless otherwise specified, all the tabulations and charts in this report are based on administrative data from ESD extracted in February 2024. To avoid repetition, we have refrained from adding a source note for each exhibit.

the process overall. This is one example among many of a local program trying to make federal programs work smoothly together but being stymied by the inherently incompatible designs of the federal programs themselves. The local areas have worked with ESD to highlight federal reforms that would help these programs serve people more effectively. To date, the local areas and ESD, in partnership with other state agencies, have developed two federal waiver requests, both of which were rejected by the cognizant federal agencies; as well as a federal legislative proposal, which is currently being considered by members of Washington’s Congressional delegation.

Interviewed participants shared a variety of reasons that they enrolled in the program, each motivated by distinct circumstances and personal goals. Most shared that their decision to join was significantly influenced by the comprehensive array of services offered, which included access to training, financial assistance, and employment support. A few examples of participants’ motivations for enrollment give a sense of the variety of circumstances that participants were experiencing at the time of enrollment.

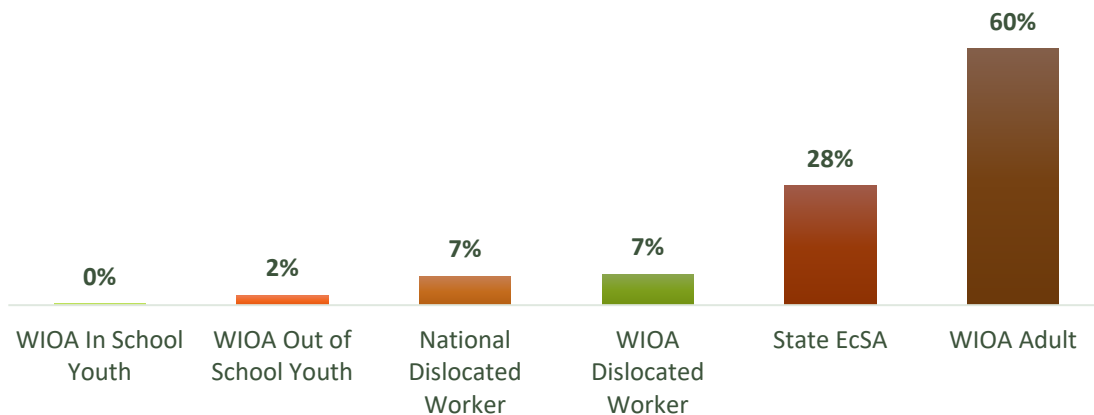
- One participant, who faced homelessness, enrolled in the program with the primary objective of accessing training. This decision was fueled by the immediate need for skill development to secure stable employment and overcome the challenges associated with homelessness.
- Another participant enrolled with the goal of further educational advancement – breaking the cycle of “no family members attending college.” Their aspiration was to use financial support and coaching from EcSA to obtain a college degree, not only for personal growth but also to enhance family income and support. The emphasis was to acquire training for a stable, better-paying job, to mark a transformative step toward economic stability.
- A third participant, recently released from prison and facing financial constraints, enrolled in the program due to challenges in accessing education and affording a laptop. The program's support was instrumental in providing a laptop, aiding in the participant's resume building, and subsequently saving them money.

In most programs, participants were enrolled in EcSA and WIOA simultaneously, with almost all EcSA participants co-enrolling in a WIOA funded workforce development program (Exhibit 3). This is not surprising since EcSA grantees also administered local WIOA workforce development programs, which meant that there were many opportunities for co-enrollment and co-participation. It also reinforces the notion that EcSA should not be viewed as a standalone program, but rather as a suite of services that complement the typical WIOA and Wagner-Peyser program service offerings, which might be called a “WIOA Plus” approach. In fact, almost all EcSA participants were also enrolled in the WIOA Adult Program, which focuses on serving people with significant employment barriers such as “recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient.”¹⁶ EcSA programs’

¹⁶ <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/workforce-investment/adult/>

similar focus on people with significant employment barriers likely explains the very high proportion of co-enrollment between the two programs.

Exhibit 3: Co-Enrollment in Other Workforce Development Programs



Assessment and Planning

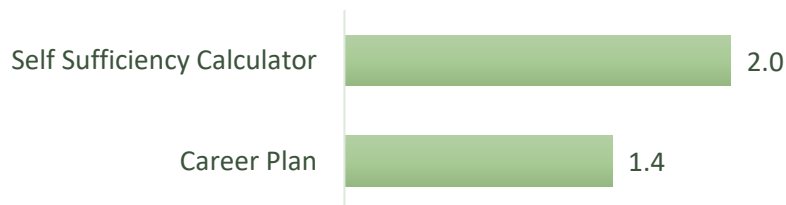
As enrollment was completed, EcSA programs typically conducted assessment and individualized planning with EcSA participants. James' story (in the following text box) illustrates a participant's perspective on the assessment and planning process and how the resources provided during this phase were often revisited during and even after program participation was completed.

James learned about the EcSA program through a flyer at a social services agency when he was at a point in his life when he needed guidance after landing on hard times financially due to an injury. Through the program, James developed short and long-term goals and checked in with staff about them every time they talked. One of the goals he outlined with program staff was to work on his finances. His EcSA coach walked him through the self-sufficiency calculator, and he participated in the program's personal finance workshops. At first, he was overwhelmed with the information, but he shared that, now he looks back at the handbook the program provided regularly. "A lot of times people just don't know stuff and so they don't ever think about it," James said, adding, "Just being shown that information got me thinking about it."

The two key elements of this phase of the program, reported by all EcSA staff, were using the self-sufficiency calculator and developing an individualized plan for participants' activities in the program, sometimes called an individual employment plan. While developing an individual plan for a program participant is a standard feature of most workforce development programs, the focus on determining a living wage is a special feature adopted by EcSA that is especially

important for the target population of the program. The use of the self-sufficiency calculator became a required element of EcSA in 2022. This online tool¹⁷, developed by the Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County, supports career planning and tracking progress toward economic self-sufficiency. It was first implemented in EcSA in 2020 by the Tacoma-Pierce program. As shown in Exhibit 4, EcSA grantees provided this service to most participants. On average, staff coded time spent on the self-sufficiency calculator two times per individual participant, and 1.4 times for developing career plans per participant.

Exhibit 4: Career Services: Average Services per Participant



EcSA staff shared varying views of the calculator. Some felt that it was just a first step that should be followed by additional financial literacy training. For instance, the Benton-Franklin EcSA program developed an additional tool called Bridge to Employment, which employed goal-setting strategies to help participants acquire the resources and skills they needed to achieve their goals. Other staff shared that the process of working with a participant to look at their budget and the amount needed to achieve a self-sufficiency wage could often be enough to change a participant’s view of their desired career path.

Interviewed participants did not always remember the calculator specifically, but generally reported positive experiences with planning their financial future as a part of their coaching services. In the words of one EcSA participant, *“That meeting opened my eyes to the fact that we’re actually, like every month just starting over in the red. We are just perpetually negative financially. So that was another big push to get an education that could give us more income in the future.”* Other participants focused on the positive effects of budgeting and financial planning, stating that they acquired valuable skills in budgeting through the self-sufficiency calculator. One interviewed participant shared that they had gone on to analyze their spending habits, ultimately enhancing their ability to manage and budget money effectively. Another interviewed participant shared her experience of gaining crucial insights into the financial aspects of independent living, having previously shared a household with a partner who covered part of the bills. Through working with the self-sufficiency calculator with her navigator, the participant obtained a clearer understanding of the financial requirements for supporting herself and her two dogs.

Some grantees used additional types of assessments with participants depending on program and participant characteristics, in addition to the self-sufficiency calculator. For example, South Central WDC’s EcSA program offered an opportunity to build on the lessons learned with intergenerational assessments from a previous local workforce development initiative. The

¹⁷ <https://www.thecalculator.org/>

program staff used the Family Stability and Self Sufficiency Assessment—a whole-family assessment tool used to identify employment goals, service needs, and natural supports. Because the assessment covers the entire household, participants were encouraged, but not required, to include other household members in the process.

Coaching, Career Navigation, and Related Services

Staff from all EcSA programs described the assessment process as the first step in providing coaching and career navigation services. In most cases, the coaching services provided were similar to those offered in other WIOA and workforce development programs. EcSA program staff generally reported that, because of the COVID pandemic, they increased the use of remote communication options for coaching contacts, such as texting and video-calling, but still preferred in-person meetings.

Regular contact by coaches or navigators (at least monthly) was the EcSA service cited most often by staff and participants as playing an important role in participants staying enrolled in training and attaining a living wage. Roughly half of all participants interviewed for the evaluation relayed that they met with their coaches or navigators monthly, while the other half shared that they had higher rates of contact with EcSA staff, sometimes on a weekly basis through email or by phone. One participant shared how often they communicated with their EcSA staff, *“Because they have their phones, and so we can just text back and forth or call...[we] just work through it that way.”* Amanda’s story (in the following text box) illustrates a participant’s perspective on the importance of the participant coach relationship.

Amanda was facing many challenges in her life -- dealing with housing insecurity and in the past had been a victim of domestic violence. She relied on Basic Food benefits and food pantries to get by. To build a better life, Amanda enrolled in school to become an allied medical professional. She found EcSA through a recommendation from another social service agency. After enrolling in the program, EcSA provided Amanda with much needed financial assistance for her tuition, rent, and bills. They also connected her with a case manager and a wider team of staff ready to assist her.

Amanda was grateful for the support of program staff support, “They've just really got together and helped me with almost everything I needed.” She appreciated that they didn’t just provide one-time assistance but continued to check in with her and offer ongoing support. She added, “They’ll message me or call me just to check in. I know they don’t have to, but they do. Just here and there, they’ll just make sure I’m doing okay.”

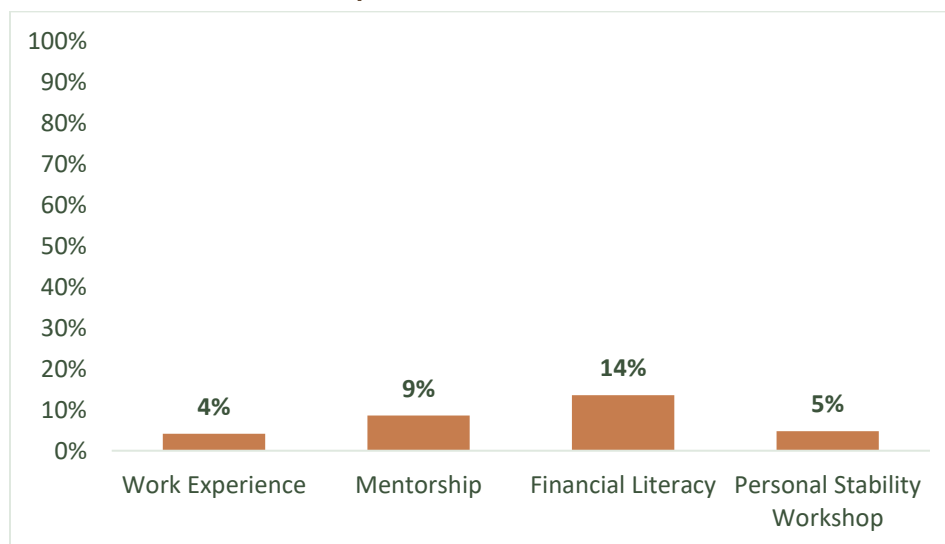
Amanda is now a medical professional and looks forward to a brighter future for herself. She is grateful for the compassion and dedication of her EcSA staff, noting “I didn’t ever feel like I was on my own...[my case manager] is like family too.”

The data provided by ESD indicated that on average, each EcSA participant received about seven individualized career services, including but not limited to career guidance, soft skills development, participation in job clubs, job search strategies, and referrals. This is a relatively high number of career services—by comparison, only a small proportion of WIOA Adult exiters

received any individualized career services other than an individual employment plan.¹⁸ This suggests that EcSA participants generally received a generous amount of individualized staff attention focused on career guidance and job search.

In addition to coaching and case management, programs offered a range of referrals to partner services, workshop training, and supportive services. One of the major aspects of EcSA’s service philosophy was that many low-income job seekers have significant employment barriers that require a comprehensive approach that targets several areas at the same time. To this end, many EcSA programs made the provision of barrier removal activities a key piece of their strategy. This included areas that have not traditionally been regarded as important to workforce development, such as financial literacy, executive functioning, and self-esteem. However, according to data collected by ESD (Exhibit 5), the take-up of these types of services was low. Fewer than a fifth participated in financial literacy sessions, fewer than 10 percent participated in mentorship activities, and only five percent participated in personal stability workshops. Because the participants who received these types of services also reported greatly benefitting from them (see the previous section), strategies that seek to increase participation in them could have a substantial positive impact. In addition, evolving research suggests that these approaches are effective even in the absence of hard skills acquisition or training, especially for low-income individuals.¹⁹

Exhibit 5: Participation in Barrier Removal Activities



There are several possible reasons for the lower-than-expected take-up of these services. One is that not all EcSA programs offered these services. In addition, many participants chose to focus on training while maintaining employment, leaving little time available for any additional

¹⁸ ESD, 2023, *Economic Security for All Legislative Report June 2023*, p. 60.

¹⁹ Meckstroth, A., Moore, Q., Burwick, A., Heflin, C., Ponza, M., & McCay, J. (2019). Experimental Evidence of a Work Support Strategy That Is Effective for At-Risk Families: The Building Nebraska Families Program. *Social Service Review*, 93(3), 389-428.

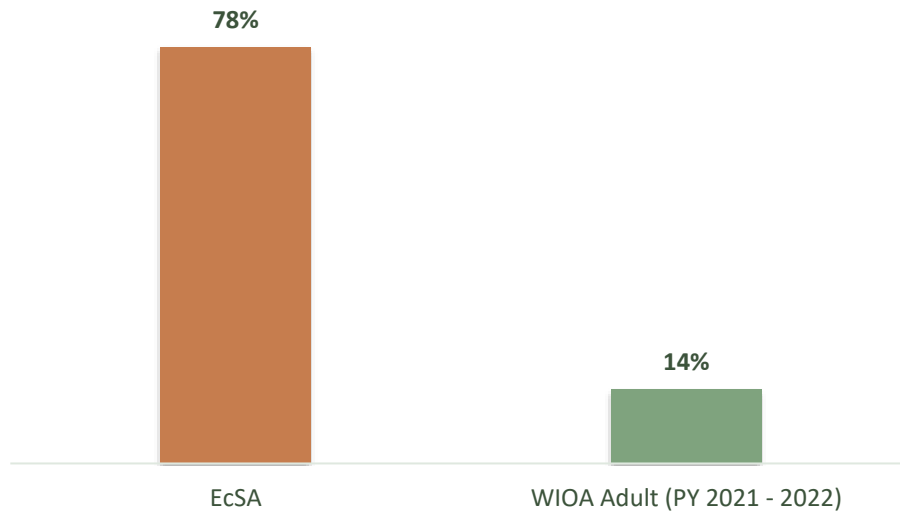
activities. As discussed further in the Labor Market Outcomes section below, about half of EcSA participants were employed in the months prior to participating in the program, a much higher percentage compared to the typical population served by workforce development programs in Washington. EcSA staff shared that many participants struggled to take time away from low-wage work to address their barriers to employment. Furthermore, in some cases, programs found it difficult to retain participants in the program long enough to participate in these activities. Staff and participants shared that especially for single parents, childcare (see text box below) was a significant challenge and was often hard to find and expensive.

Reconnec2Work: Addressing the Childcare Crisis

Spokane Workforce Council, along with other community partners, has developed the Reconnec2Work (RC2W) childcare initiative to support childcare costs for families who earn too much to qualify for the childcare subsidy but are still struggling to meet their basic needs. Leveraging American Rescue Plan Act funds from Spokane County, and a Congressional directed spending allocation from Washington Senator Patty Murray, the program helps cover childcare costs for families living in Spokane County with income that is below 160 percent of the state median income – including co-pays and up to \$8,000 per family per calendar year. As they work with EcSA participants to help increase their wages and long-term income, these childcare supports are an important element to participant success. The program provides payment directly to childcare providers; it is not considered income to the family. This is important because it doesn't not interfere with the receipt of other income-dependent benefits. It also serves to support the stability of childcare availability in the county. This is part of a larger initiative around the state to address the low wages of childcare providers while training additional childcare workers. The Spokane Workforce Council is also working with area employers to encourage increased availability of childcare for their workers. For more information, go to www.reconnect2work.org.

EcSA programs also used supportive services and incentives (often as cash payments) as key strategies to relieve financial pressure on participants and help them to stay in the program. Typical supportive services included transportation assistance (e.g., gas cards), books and other school supplies, work clothing, glasses and tools, to complete a training program or to start a new job. Multiple EcSA programs worked to leverage multiple funding streams (including the Federal WIOA set-aside funds earmarked for EcSA, State EcSA funds and Basic Food Employment and Training), allowing them to provide more supportive services to participants, and for a longer period, than otherwise would have been possible. Exhibit 6 shows that the proportion of EcSA participants who received supportive services was considerably higher than that of WIOA Adult exiters in Washington over a comparable period.

Exhibit 6: Receipt of Supportive Services



Sources: EcSA (ESD, 2024); WIOA Adult (SPR, 2022)

The following examples illustrate how two EcSA programs used supportive services and incentive funds to encourage continued participation in program services and training.

- Olympic Workforce Development Council provided up to \$500 per program year in incentives to youth in their EcSA program. Milestones and amounts included earning the state GED or a high school diploma (\$100), completing successfully the first quarter of post-secondary education (\$100), and obtaining unsubsidized employment and remaining employed for three months (\$100). Adult participants could earn incentives during the program and in the few months after completion based on achieving various milestones, with an annual cap of \$5,000 per participant. For example, there was an initial enrollment incentive that participants received once they completed their plan and goals with their case manager. The incentives ranged in amount, with the largest payment of \$1,000 for completing training.
- North Central/SkillSource used state EcSA funding to develop a program model that primarily served students at Wenatchee Valley College engaged in associate and bachelor's degree level nursing training. The program provided a monthly stipend of \$500 to \$1,000 per month for up to 12 months to enrolled students in good standing. Staff shared that they were inspired to develop the robust incentive program for students based on their experience administering the Trade Adjustment Act program when a large Alcoa plant closed in their area. They saw the power of income support to keep people enrolled in training.

Training Services

Training and pursuit of skills credentials in high demand fields was a major component of EcSA both as an activity during the program and as a desired outcome for participants leaving the program. All EcSA programs had a strong focus on supporting participants as they pursued the

credentials they needed for a sustainable, living wage. Jessica's story (in the following text box) illustrates a participant's perspective on the challenges they needed to overcome to achieve their goals.

Jessica came to her EcSA program with the goal of becoming a truck driver. She had struggled in the last couple of years with substance use and homelessness. She had had a few jobs in food processing, but struggled with addiction, and lost those jobs again and again. Now sober, she reached out to DSHS to see what types of support she could access, and they referred her to EcSA.

Excited about the scholarship opportunities available through the program, Jessica is actively working on passing her commercial driver's license written exam so she can transition to the hands-on portion of the training. She credits her EcSA staff with continuing on a path towards self-improvement. "[My case manager] builds me up to succeed where I might feel down on myself for not being able to."

Similarly, one participant highlighted the importance of EcSA's tuition assistance in completing their education. They said, "[EcSA] was just something that helped me stay in school.... I don't even know if I would've been able to figure it out if I hadn't had their help, and I might've not been able to stay in school."

EcSA programs employed various strategies to maximize training opportunities for participants, often leveraging their funding with other funding sources, including WIOA funding, scholarships and Basic Food Employment and Training program funds. Some programs developed targeted skills training programs. For example, Seattle YWCA provided a wide range of trainings for in-demand jobs to EcSA participants, such as pharmacy assistants and bank tellers. These training programs, BankWorks and PharmacyWorks, prepared EcSA participants with skills and work placements. After completion of these programs, EcSA participants successfully entered bank and pharmacy jobs. Other programs worked in collaboration with existing training programs to leverage other financial aid available to students, but who needed additional assistance to be successful.

According to data provided by ESD, more than a third of EcSA participants enrolled in at least one training program during their participation (Exhibit 7). EcSA enrollees participated in training at a higher rate compared to a typical workforce development program. According to the *PY 2021 Washington State Data Book*, 11.4 percent of the Adult exiters accessed training; the proportion of EcSA participants who received training is more than triple, demonstrating EcSA's greater ability (because of its additional funding) to focus on skill building. Those EcSA participants who enrolled in training also typically accessed several training programs—almost one per participant on average that were funded through EcSA and almost one per participant that was funded through other programs.

Exhibit 7: Participation in Training

	Metric
Total Unique Training Recipients (% of Total Participants)	35%
Training Spells (EcSA) per Training Recipient	0.9
Training Spells (Other Programs) per Training Recipient	0.8
Training Completed (EcSA)	78%

Summary of Promising Practices and Lessons Learned

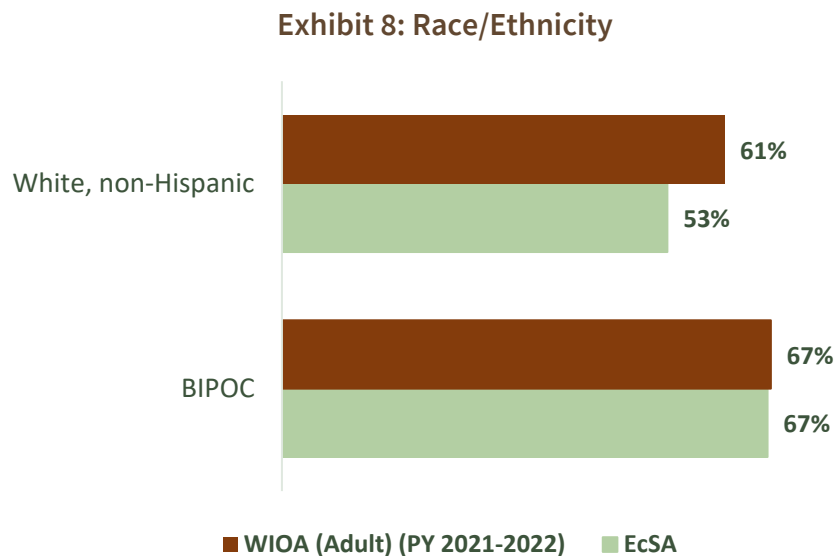
The previous section described several innovative models for reducing poverty developed by EcSA grantees across Washington state that other workforce programs may want to consider replicating in the future. These promising practices are summarized below.

- **Co-location in community-based settings is an effective strategy for reaching priority populations.** Many EcSA programs implemented community-based co-location of services as a recruitment and service provision strategy at community-based organizations including human service providers, community colleges, refugee centers, and Native American human services centers. These strategies were successfully implemented in both rural and urban settings.
- **Financial assistance is vital to help program participants undergo training to obtain a job with self-sufficiency wages, as they often face immediate financial trade-offs and challenges such as needing to reduce hours of paid employment, find childcare, and meet financial obligations.** EcSA programs were able to provide important support to help participants through this gap in income through financial assistance during the training period.
- **Intensive financial and career coaching was a key feature of program success, according to participants and staff.** Regular contact by coaches or navigators (at least monthly) was the EcSA service cited most often by staff and participants as playing an important role in participants staying enrolled in training and attaining a living wage. Roughly half of all participants interviewed for the evaluation relayed that they met with their coaches or navigators monthly, while the other half shared that they were sometimes in contact with EcSA staff on a weekly basis through email or by phone.

3. Participants’ Sociodemographic Characteristics

The previous section described EcSA’s main service philosophy and components. This section provides a description of the sociodemographic makeup of EcSA participants. Throughout the section, we compare the findings on EcSA participants with the characteristics of WIOA Adult participants available from the Department of Labor.²⁰

Findings from administrative data on race and ethnicity (Exhibit 8) indicate that White participants made up slightly more than half of the EcSA population, with Black, Indigenous, and Other People of Color (BIPOC) representing two-thirds of the participants. This distribution is broadly similar to that of the statewide WIOA Adult population, with the exception of proportionally fewer White participants being served in EcSA.

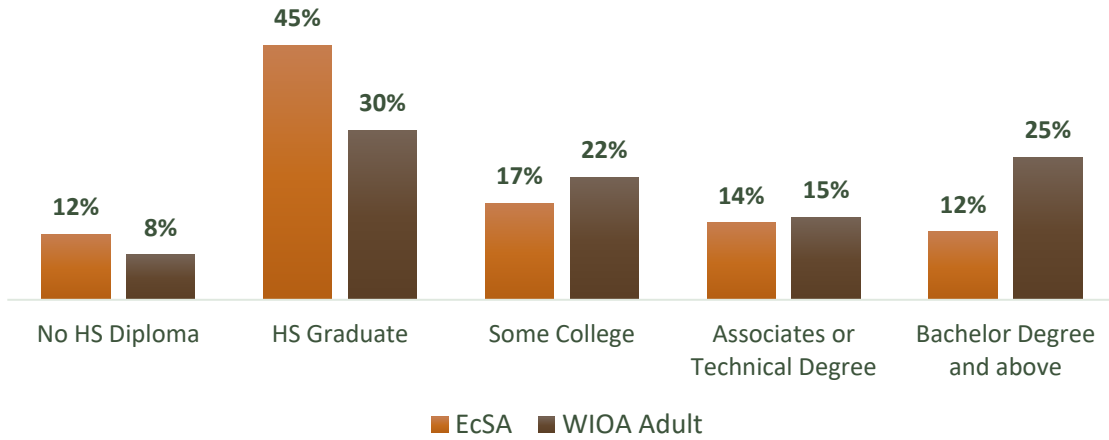


Sources: EcSA (ESD, 2024); WIOA Adult (SPR, 2022)

From the perspective of educational attainment (Exhibit 9), the EcSA and WIOA Adult populations remained broadly similar. However, in the EcSA group, the proportion of high school graduates and equivalent appeared to be notably higher than that of the WIOA Adult population, and the proportion of those with bachelor’s degrees and above appeared notably smaller. This suggests that overall, the EcSA population had a slightly lower educational attainment in comparison to the WIOA Adult population.

²⁰ SPR prepares these reports for DOL as part of a different contract.

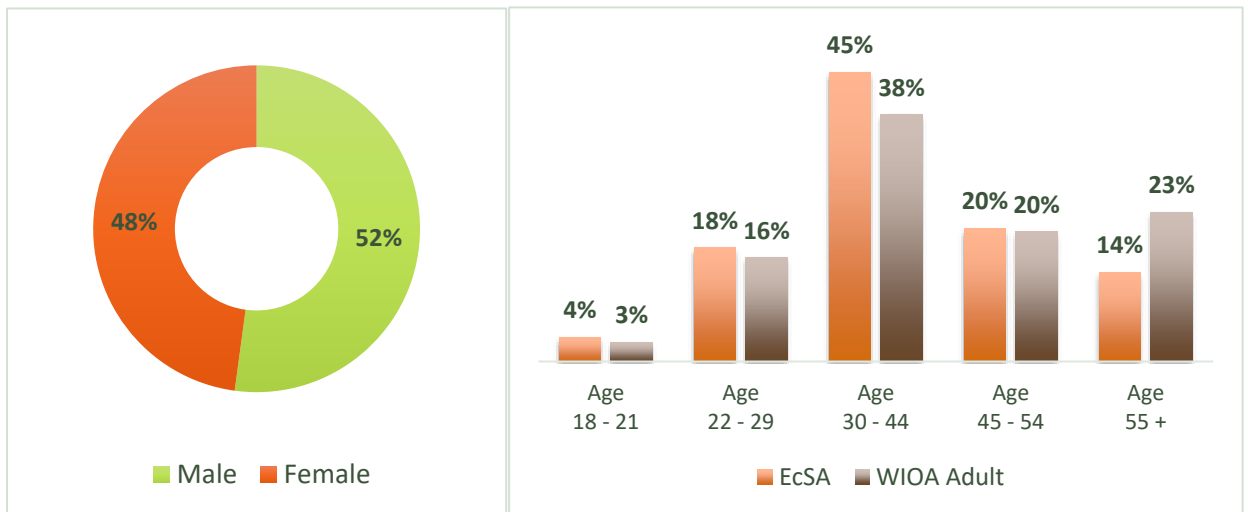
Exhibit 9: Highest Educational Attainment



Sources: EcSA (ESD, 2024); WIOA Adult (SPR, 2022)

About half of the EcSA participants who disclosed their gender were men, and about half were women, a profile that was very similar with that of Washington State’s WIOA Adult population (Exhibit 10). From the perspective of age, the distribution of EcSA participants was broadly similar to that of WIOA exiters; the only notable differences were that EcSA participants were slightly more likely to belong to the 30- to 44-year-old age group and less likely to be over 55 years of age.

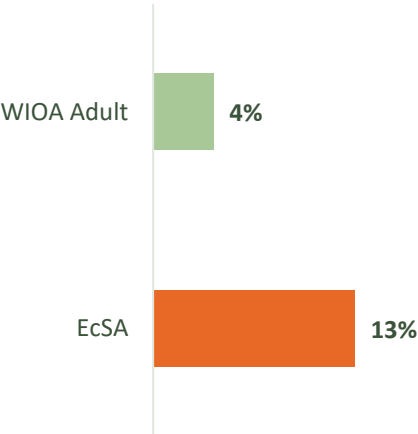
Exhibit 10: Gender and Age



Sources: EcSA (ESD, 2024); WIOA Adult (SPR, 2022)

Finally, 13 percent of EcSA participants experienced homelessness, a proportion that was almost four times higher than that seen in the WIOA Adult population (Exhibit 11), supporting EcSA respondents’ assertion that the EcSA group faced more employment barriers than typical participants in WIOA programs.

Exhibit 11: Unhoused



Sources: EcSA (ESD, 2024); WIOA Adult (SPR, 2022)

4. Labor Market Outcomes of Participants

EcSA primarily aimed at improving the economic self-sufficiency of participants. As such, the labor market outcomes of participants, such as employment and earnings, are of central importance both as a way of reflecting on the program’s achievements and as a means to improve its future iterations (as the state has already committed to sustaining EcSA in the future). Utilizing aggregate data provided by ESD,²¹ this report provides findings on the program’s short-term outcomes. Due to the timing of the final report and COVID-induced delays in program recruitment, many participants had either not exited the program at the time data was extracted and analyzed for this report or had not exited the program with a sufficient time lag to allow the calculation of program outcomes. Therefore, the findings presented here should only be considered the program’s early outcomes, as these results could change significantly once more data on program participant outcomes can be analyzed.

Employment and Earnings Findings

From the perspective of employment, the available data indicate that about half of the participants were employed in the three quarters prior to participating in the program (Exhibit 12). This represents a much higher percentage compared to the typical population served by the WIOA Adult programs in Washington, whose pre-participation employment levels typically hovered between 10 and 12 percent in program year 2021-2022. Combined with their very low preprogram earnings (see below), this suggests that EcSA’s recruitment strategy was much more focused on Asset-Limited Income Constrained Employed (ALICE) workers than a typical workforce development program, with emphasis on quick retraining or graduating from an existing program and subsequent placement in better-paying jobs. This is a very important and often neglected group, which does not typically benefit from much policy support. The traditional assumption is that employment by itself can lift people out of poverty; in the current environment, however, this is no longer the case. Due to decreases in real wages and increasing polarization over time, a majority of poor Americans currently live in families or households where at least one person is working.²²

The distribution of median earnings shows a decline of earnings in pre-participation months, reaching its lowest point during the participation quarter and beginning to rise thereafter. This pattern is typical and expected for workforce development program participants.²³ Notably, while in many workforce development programs most participants tend to return to their pre-participation earnings levels,²⁴ EcSA completers’ post-completion earnings appear considerably higher than their pre-participation levels. Although, in the absence of a comparison group, we cannot determine whether EcSA participation was the sole factor behind this pattern, it is

²¹ Employment and earnings data were obtained from ESD’s UI Division and shared with SPR in aggregate form.

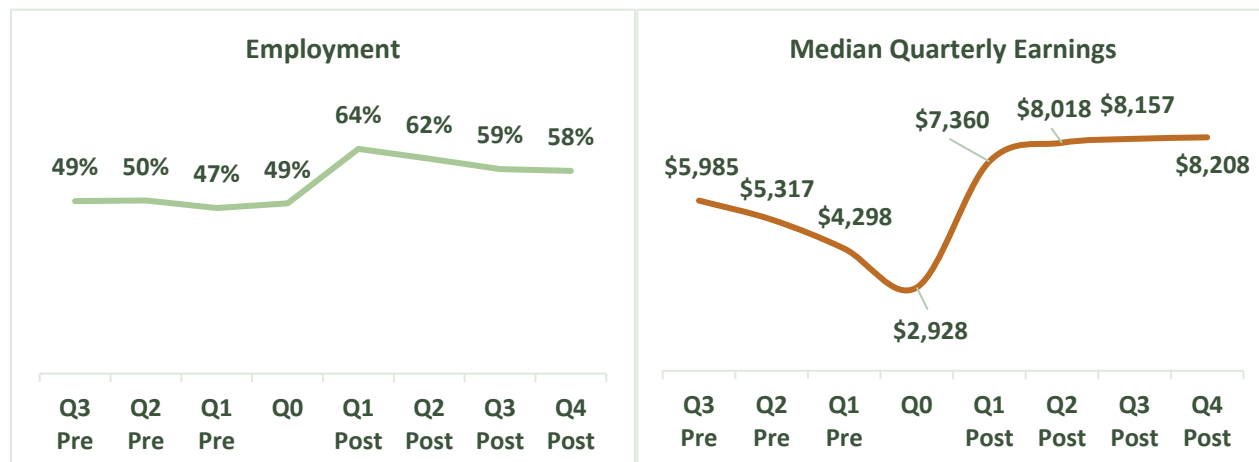
²² Thiede, B. C., Lichter, D. T., & Sanders, S. R. (2015). America’s working poor: Conceptualization, measurement, and new estimates. *Work and Occupations*, 42(3), 267-312.

²³ The pattern is known in the literature as the “Ashenfelter dip” because it was first discovered by the American economist Orley Ashenfelter (Ashenfelter, O. (1978). Estimating the effect of training programs on earnings. *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, 47-57).

²⁴ Holzer, H. J. (2009). Workforce development as an antipoverty strategy: What do we know? What should we do? In M. Cancian & S. Danziger (Eds.), *Changing Poverty, Changing Policies*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

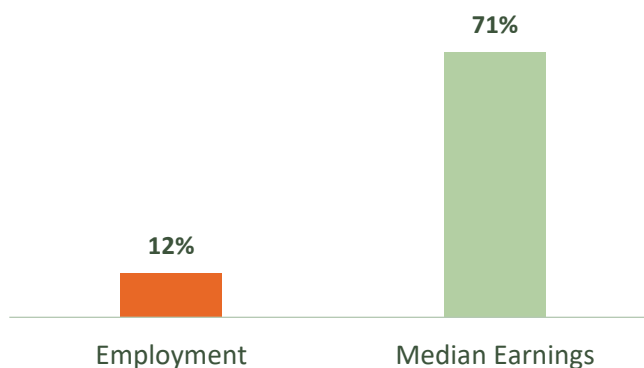
certainly the case that the program appeared to reach its goals in this regard. Also, although the earnings data available for Adult exiters were not directly comparable with the EcSA data, preliminary data from ESD on a slightly smaller sample received in 2023 suggest that the average preprogram earnings of EcSA participants were considerably lower than those of Adult participants (less than half on average).

Exhibit 12: Labor Market Outcomes



Participation was generally associated with modest increases in employment and large increases in earnings.²⁵ The small pre-post changes in employment were not surprising given the high baseline employment levels (Exhibit 13). However, the large increases in earnings were a positive trend and suggested that the program might have been associated with getting participants to switch from lower-paying jobs to higher-paying jobs (as the large pre-post increases cannot not be explained by increased employment levels alone).

Exhibit 13: Pre-Post Changes in Labor Market Outcomes



²⁵ Another way to examine the findings presented above is through the means of a pre-post analysis, which compares pre-intervention and post-completion trends for program participants. For employment, pre-post changes were calculated as the difference in percentage points between the average employment level in all available post-completion quarters and the average employment level in all baseline quarters (preparticipation quarters and the participation quarter). For earnings, we calculated the percentage change in the average earnings between baseline quarters and post-completion quarters.

An analysis of the industry of employment (Exhibit 15) shows that Health Care and Social Assistance, Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services, and Transportation and Warehousing were the industries that hired the most EcSA completers. Compared to Washington’s WIOA Adult exiters, EcSA participants were more likely to find employment in healthcare (21% compared to 17%) and transportation (11% compared to 6%) and less likely to be employed in accommodation and food services (7% compared to 11%).²⁶

Exhibit 14: Industries of Employment



The rest of this chapter explores labor market outcomes by several types of subgroups: race and ethnicity, education level, housing status, gender, and age.

Findings by Education Level

The distribution of employment by education levels (Exhibit 15) shows that the pattern for most subgroups was similar to that of the whole EcSA. It is noteworthy that the post-intervention earnings of EcSA participants with bachelor’s and advanced degrees appeared to grow much faster than those of other educational subgroups (Exhibit 16). This is not surprising, reaffirming a longstanding finding from the literature,²⁷ according to which education “pays off” in the labor market.

²⁶ See for example <https://www.bls.gov/charts/employment-situation/employment-and-average-weekly-earnings-by-industry-bubble.htm>.

²⁷ Heckman, J. J., Humphries, J. E., & Veramendi, G. (2018). Returns to education: The causal effects of education on earnings, health, and smoking. *Journal of Political Economy*, 126(S1), S197-S246; Gunderson, M., & Oreopolous, P. (2020). Returns to education in developed countries. In *The economics of education* (pp. 39-51). Academic Press.

Exhibit 15: Employment by Education Level and Quarter

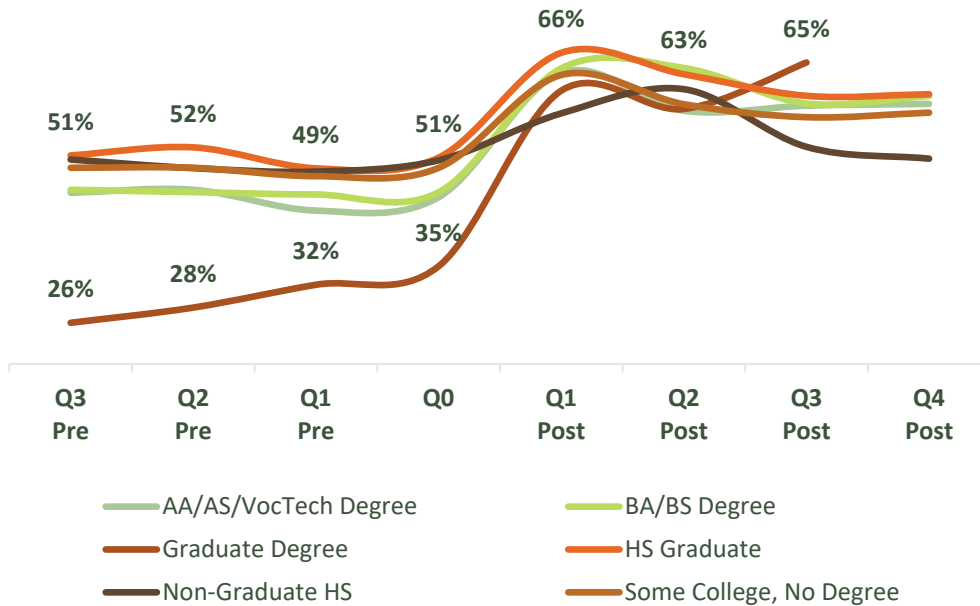
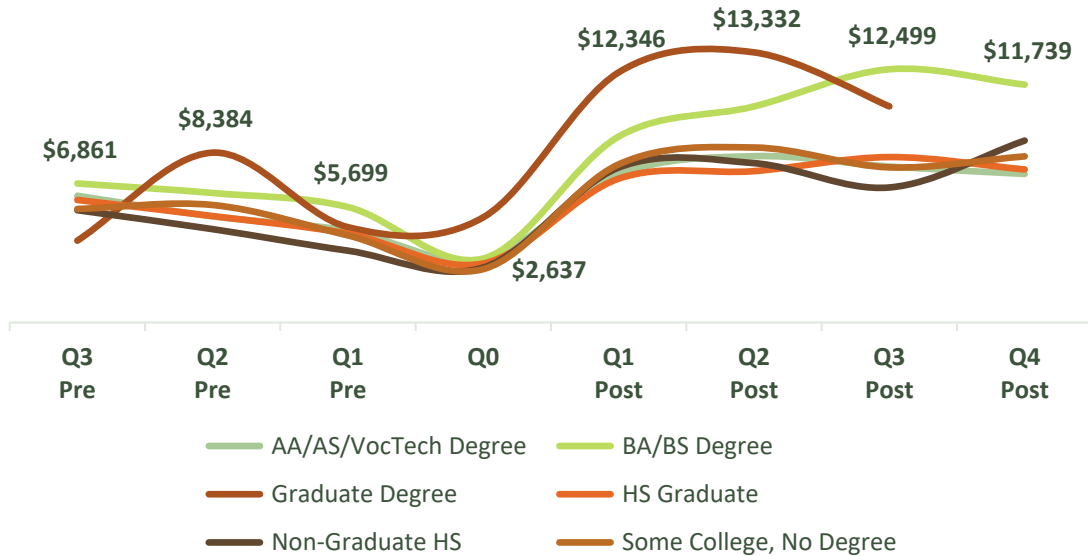
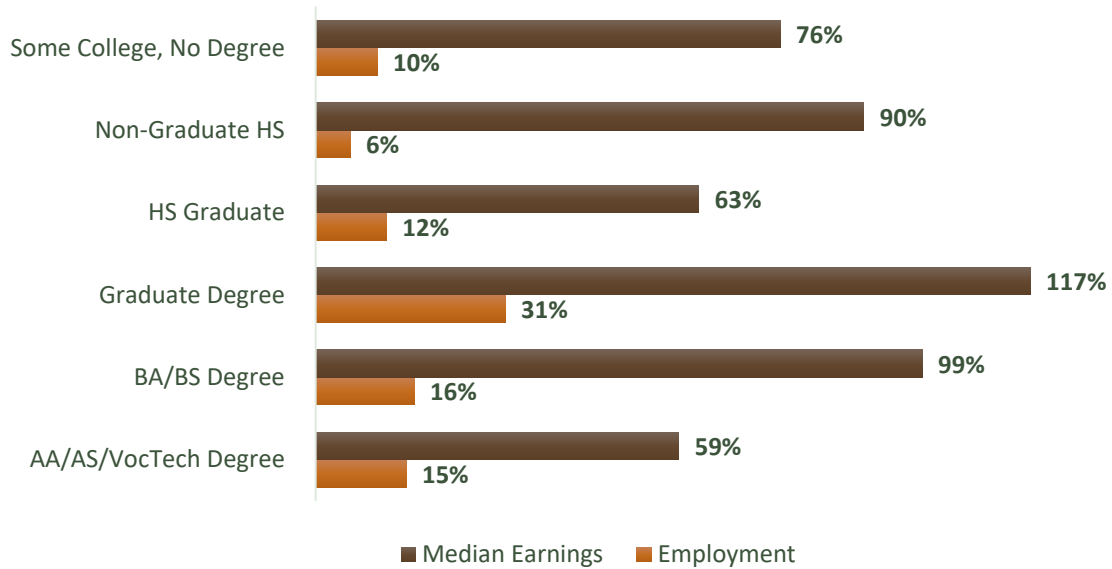


Exhibit 16: Median Earnings by Education Level and Quarter



A pre-post analysis (Exhibit 17) confirms that pre-post gains in earnings were much larger than employment gains. Those with completed postsecondary degrees registered the highest pre-earnings post gains, along with those who had not completed a high school diploma. This was likely the result of a combination between low baseline earnings and the ability to earn a GED and switch to a higher-earning occupation.

Exhibit 17: Pre-Post Changes in Labor Market Outcomes by Education Level



Findings by Race/Ethnicity

Trends in employment by race/ethnicity (Exhibit 19) reveal a more heterogenous pattern compared to educational subgroups. Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders showed consistently high levels of employment, whereas other groups including American Indian/Alaska Native and white/non-Hispanic had lower levels of employment. From the perspective of earnings (Exhibit 20), most of the subgroups display an Ashenfelter dip followed by subsequent recovery and growth.

Exhibit 18: Employment by Race/Ethnicity and Quarter

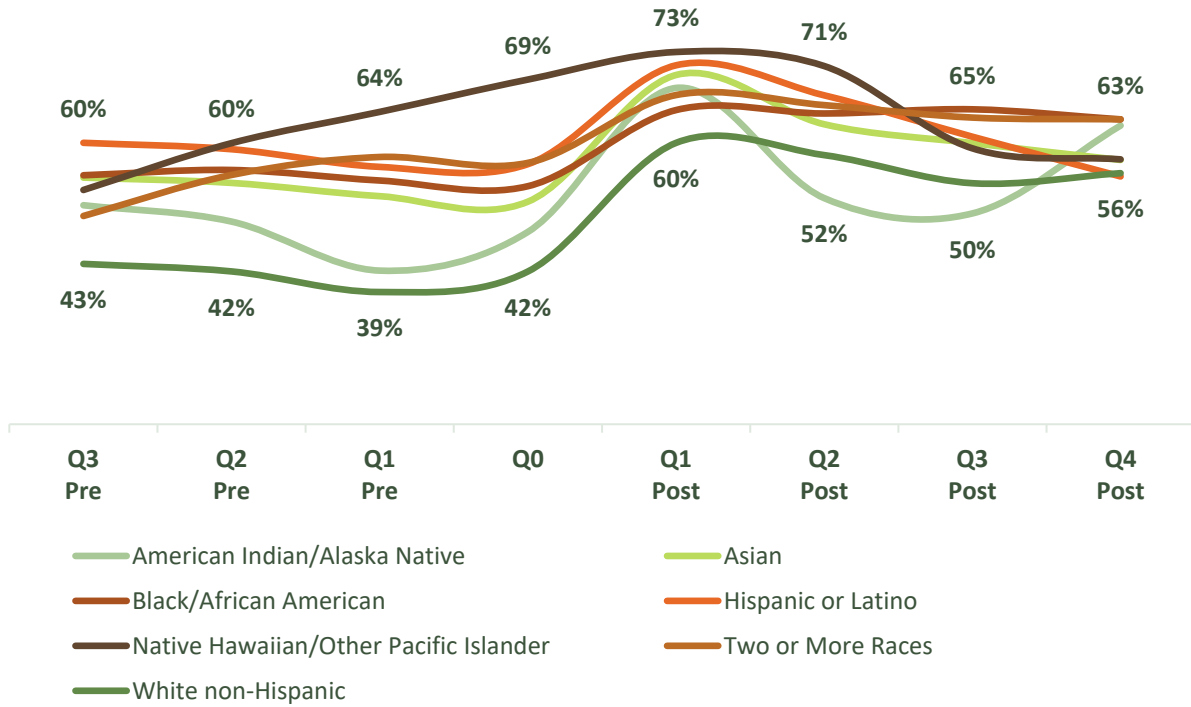
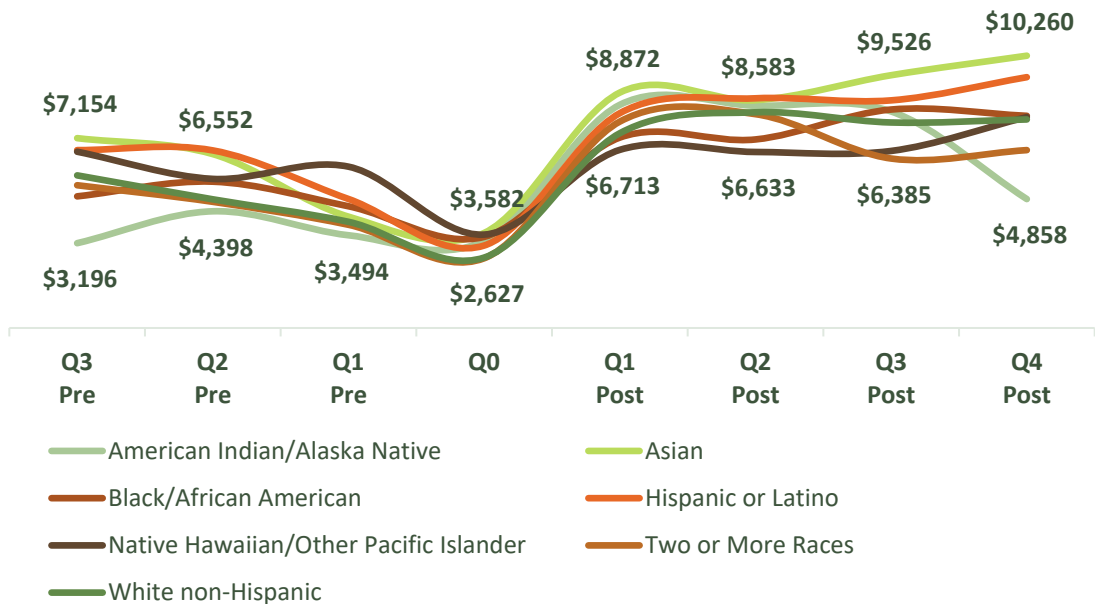
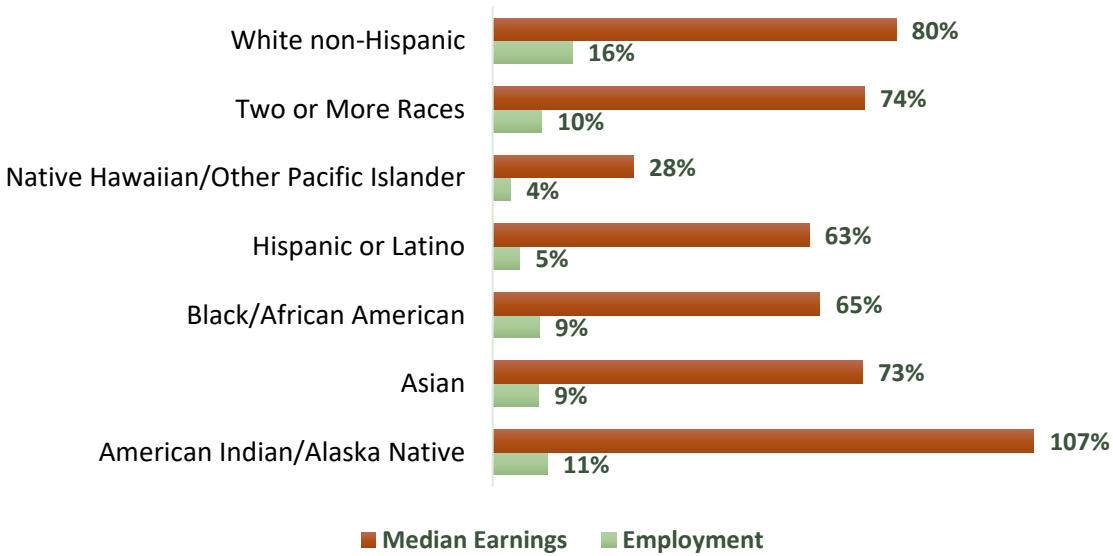


Exhibit 19: Median Earnings by Race/Ethnicity and Quarter



The pre-post analysis (Exhibit 18) confirms the pattern of small employment and large earnings gains:

Exhibit 20: Pre-post Changes in Labor Market Outcomes by Race/Ethnicity



Findings by Housing Status

Given that people experiencing homelessness are also likely to experience other employment barriers, it is not surprising that they were less likely to be employed (Exhibit 21) and also had lower earnings overall (Exhibit 22) compared with other participants. However, as shown in Exhibit 23, unhoused participants experienced post-program increases in employment that were similar to those of housed participants, and that, in fact, their earnings gains were higher than those of housed participants.

Exhibit 21: Employment by Housing Status and Quarter

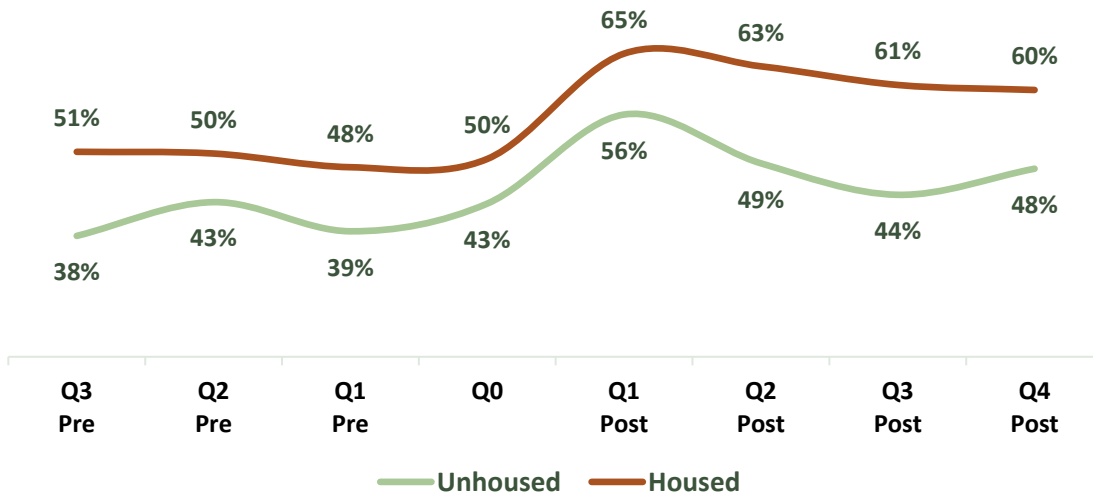


Exhibit 22: Median Earnings by Housing Status and Quarter

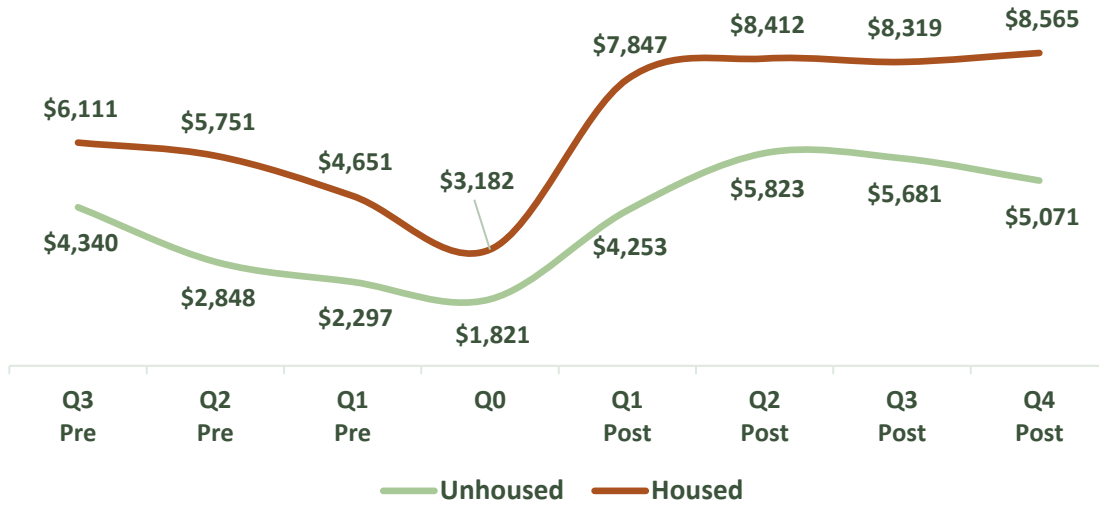
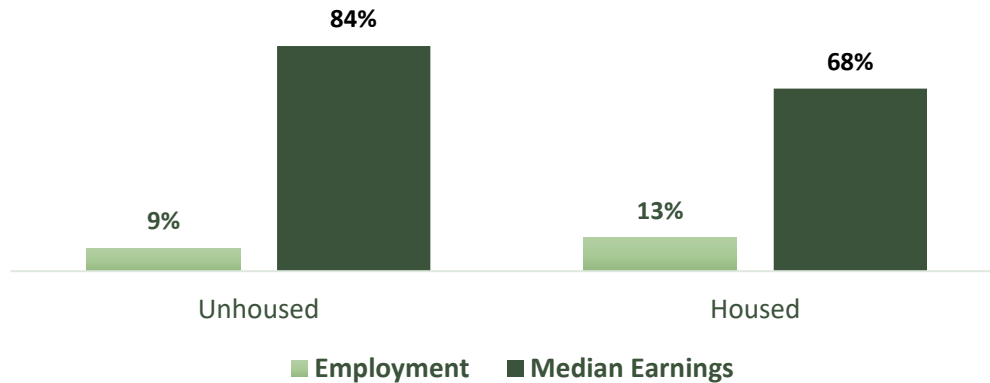


Exhibit 23: Pre-Post Changes in Labor Market Outcomes by Housing Status



Findings by Gender

The distribution of labor market outcomes by gender shows patterns broadly in line with the ones already described in previous section. Notably, however, women had slightly higher employment levels than men throughout, but generally lower median earnings, especially after completing the program (Exhibit 24). Previous research has already identified this pattern for WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker participants, with one study²⁸ estimating that a large part of the earnings imbalances could be explained by women having higher rates of employment barriers, such as being a single parent and being less likely to have completed high school.

²⁸ Maxwell, N., Hock, H., Verbitsky-Savitz, N., & Reed, D. (2012). How are women served by the WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs? Findings from administrative data. *Report submitted to the US Department of Labor. Oakland, CA: Mathematica Policy Research.*

Although the available data do not allow us to verify this assumption, it is a distinct possibility for EcSA participants as well. The pre-post analysis of labor market outcomes (Exhibit 25) confirms that the employment gains for women were equal to men, whereas earnings gains were higher for men.

Exhibit 24: Labor Market Outcomes by Gender

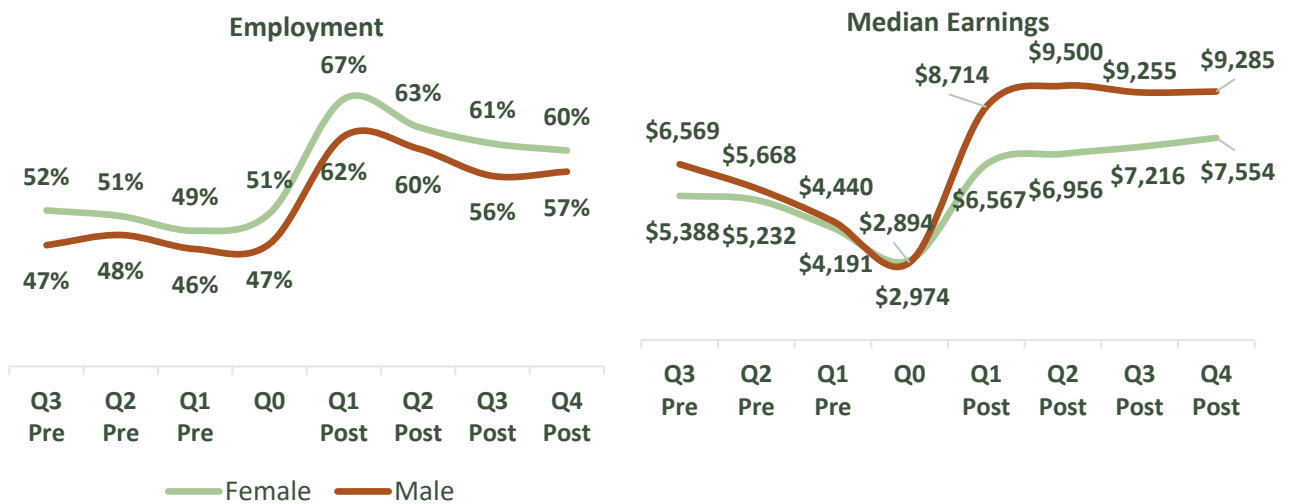
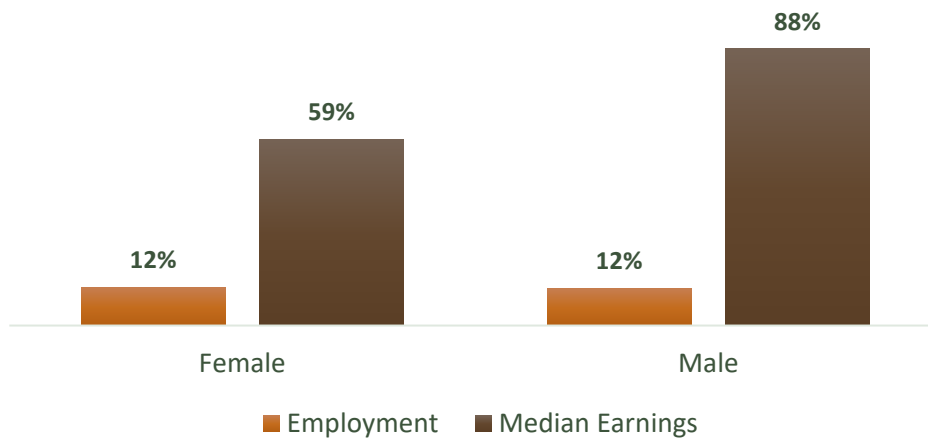


Exhibit 25: Pre-Post Changes in Labor Market Outcomes by Gender

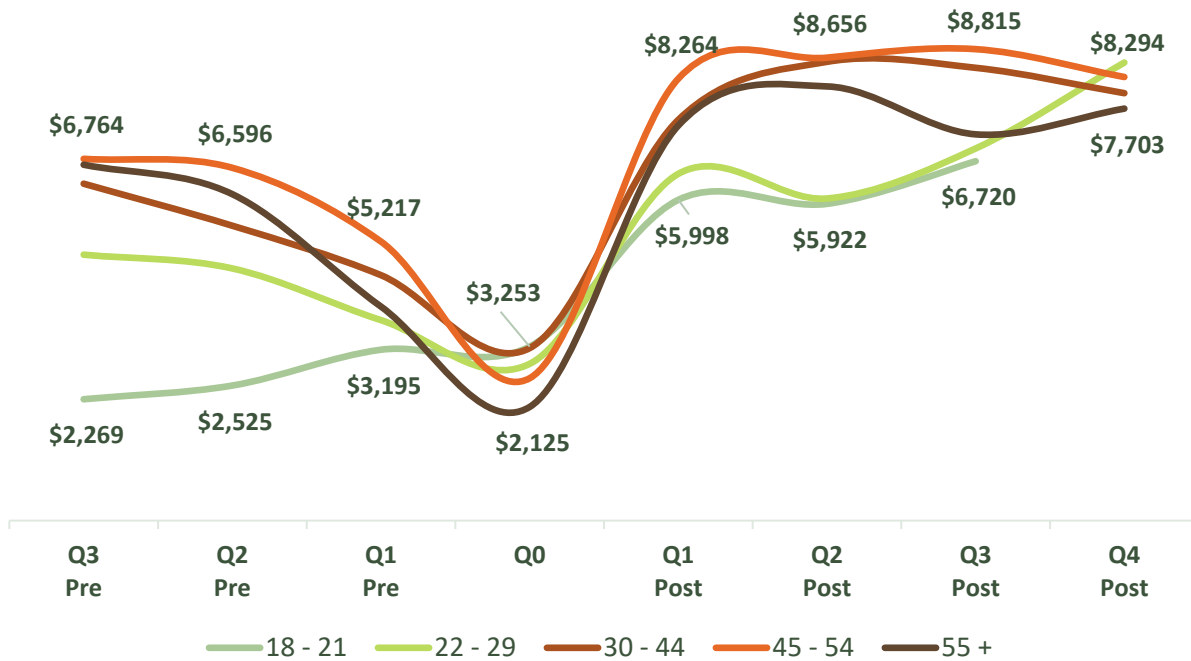


Findings by Age

A look at quarterly earnings by age (Exhibit 26) shows that the pattern for most age groups was the expected Ashenfelter dip followed by recovery. The youngest age group stood out for two reasons. First, this group did not register a preprogram earnings dip—likely because its starting

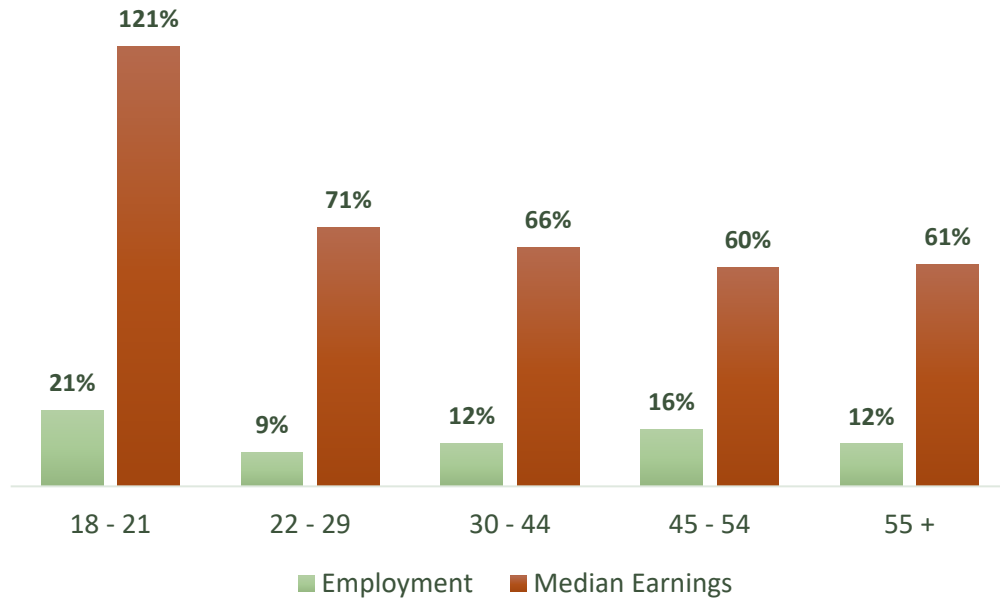
median earnings was very low. Secondly, this group’s median earnings caught up with the other age groups. This is a remarkable achievement for this age group and suggests that additional research might be needed to clarify the mechanisms that were associated with this pattern.

Exhibit 26: Median Earnings by Age Group and Quarter



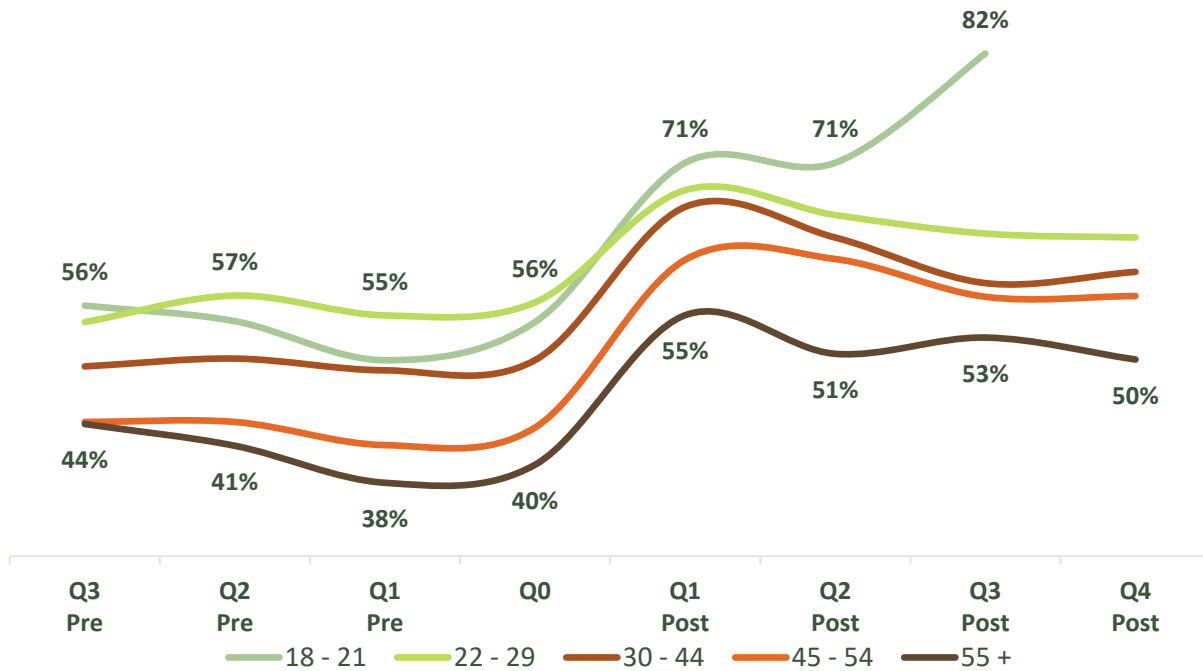
A pre-post analysis of outcomes (Exhibit 27) confirms the substantial gains in both employment and earnings experienced by the youngest age group.

Exhibit 27: Pre-Post Changes in Labor Market Outcomes by Age



Lastly, an examination of employment levels by age group (Exhibit 28) suggests that a correlation exists between employment and age—EcSA participants from younger age groups had a higher employment rate. However, the shape of employment patterns for most groups was similar, suggesting that employment gains were similar across.

Exhibit 28: Employment by Age Group



Summary of Key Findings of Labor Market Outcomes

Analysis of state administrative data demonstrated robust outcomes for the first half of EcSA program exiters. Findings were limited by the timing of this analysis, as many participants had either not exited the program at the time of data extraction and analysis or had not exited the program with a sufficient time lag to allow the calculation of program outcomes. Therefore, additional analyses may be needed to illuminate outcomes for the full group of EcSA participants who were served during the period of the evaluation.

- EcSA completers' post-completion earnings appeared considerably higher than their pre-participation levels.** The large increases in earnings were a positive outcome and suggested that the program was associated with getting participants to switch to higher-paying from lower-paying jobs (as the large pre-post increases cannot not be explained by higher employment levels alone.) This contrasts with many workforce development programs, in which most participants tend to return to their pre-participation earnings levels.
- Overall, there were small pre-post changes in employment levels of EcSA participants.** These findings were not surprising given that many participants were asset limited, income constrained, employed (ALICE).
- There was considerable variation among subgroups in employment levels and earnings.** Significant variations include the following:
 - Both the youngest and oldest age groups showed substantial pre-post gains in employment and earnings. This represents a distinct achievement of the

program given that these groups have significantly more employment barriers compared to other age groups.

- Women had slightly higher employment levels than men but generally lower median earnings, especially after completing the program when the earnings gap increased. While this pattern has been identified in prior research, it suggests additional effort might be needed to ensure women experience comparable gains to men.
- **EcSA served a much higher percentage of incumbent workers compared to the population typically served by workforce development programs in Washington.** This suggests that EcSA’s recruitment strategy focused on quick retraining and placement in better-paying jobs.
- **Health care and social assistance and transportation and warehousing were the industries that hired the most EcSA completers.** Compared to Washington’s WIOA Adult exiters, EcSA participants were more likely to find employment in healthcare (21% compared to 17%) and transportation (11% compared to 6%) and less likely to be employed in accommodation and food services (7% compared to 11%).

5. Summary of Main Findings and Recommendations

Main Findings

Begun as a pilot program aimed at testing new poverty reduction models, EcSA has evolved considerably in the years it has been in operation. The early vision for the program was that it would be run by LWDBs in close collaboration with other state agencies (notably DSHS) and community-based organizations, help stabilize families by addressing personal and historical trauma, and break the cycle of poverty for families by permanently moving them to a living wage. In the span of almost five years, LWDBs have implemented EcSA as an additional resource to WIOA funded programs, in a model primarily focused on employment and training, with significant attention to supportive services and barrier removal. Although non-workforce agencies continued to play a significant role in recruitment and service delivery, workforce development boards were clearly the centers of gravity behind EcSA, as suggested by the very high level of co-enrollment with other WIOA-funded programs (especially the Adult program).

The evidence gathered as part of this evaluation points to EcSA operating as something we might call a “WIOA Plus” model that leverages the additional funding to enhance the range and depth of services that participants can receive, compared to a typical WIOA-funded program. All the comparisons between the levels of service in the WIOA Adult and EcSA programs shown in this report—including the receipt of supportive services, the frequency and depth of case management, and the provision of individualized career services and training—suggest that the levels of service in EcSA were more substantial compared to what is typically available in WIOA-funded workforce development programs. Considering that the levels of federal spending on workforce development have been declining dramatically across the nation in both real and relative terms in the last four decades²⁹, state-funded initiatives like EcSA are a very welcome development.

Another distinctive feature of EcSA was its emphasis on working with people who were already employed. Almost half of the EcSA participants held a job at participation, and as shown in the Outcomes section of this report, the gains in employment after completing EcSA were relatively modest, while the earnings gains were large. This suggests that the program’s emphasis on rapid training may have provided many participants working in low-wage jobs with an effective way to quickly increase their skills and subsequently switch to higher-paying jobs. As we have seen earlier in the report, WIOA serves relatively few incumbent workers. However, many incumbent workers (anywhere from 2% to 19% of the workforce according to some estimates³⁰) are still in poverty. Therefore, it appears that EcSA may be filling another key workforce program gap by helping low income working people achieve self-sufficiency.

There was also evidence that some EcSA grantees targeted people already enrolled in a training program and supported them to complete their program. Given the high dropout rate in many

²⁹ Holzer, *op. cit.*

³⁰ Thiede, B. C., Lichter, D. T., & Sanders, S. R. (2015). America's working poor: Conceptualization, measurement, and new estimates. *Work and Occupations*, 42(3), 267-312.

community college programs nationwide³¹, initiatives that promote retention and graduation, such as EcSA, are also extremely important.

The early labor market outcomes of EcSA's exiters suggest that the program's WIOA Plus model appeared to be paying off—participants regularly experienced earnings gains of 50 percent or more after completing the program compared to the period before participation. Without an impact study that would estimate the earnings of the participants if they hadn't participated in the program, we cannot attribute these earnings gains entirely to program participation. However, these findings are promising, and they do suggest that the WIOA-Plus approach provided through EcSA has considerable potential.

Together with these positive outcomes, our evaluation surfaced some challenges as well. One of EcSA's founding ideas was to serve low-income individuals (mostly SNAP recipients) to move them out of poverty. This was (and still is) a laudable goal because traditionally the workforce development system has struggled to serve low-income, marginalized participants.³² Because local workforce programs must meet performance criteria set by the federal government around employment and earnings, there is a tendency in many areas to predominantly enroll low-income individuals perceived as being likely to obtain and keep a job. The fact that most EcSA participants were co-enrolled in other WIOA programs suggests that the programs may have not strayed too far from their original recruitment formula. In addition, the analysis of the sociodemographic makeup of EcSA participants, presented in an earlier section of this report, reinforced the sense that EcSA participants had a roughly similar (although not identical) profile compared to WIOA Adult participants. While EcSA participants appeared to have more employment barriers (for example, a higher proportion of people experiencing homelessness), the differences were not very large. In other words, EcSA may not have spurred grantees to recruit people with more employment barriers compared to the individuals they were already serving.

Another challenge we noted was the low take-up rate of mentorship and personal stability workshops. One of the main principles behind EcSA's service philosophy was blending a traditional focus on enhancing the human capital of participants through the acquisition of "hard" skills and supportive services with a more recent emphasis on improving "self-regulation", defined as "a set of skills that allow us to intentionally control thoughts, emotions, and behavior".³³ Several of the components of EcSA's service mix, including mentorship and personal stability workshops, are arguably interventions meant to improve self-regulation. Yet, as shown in the report, the take-up of these services was low. This represents a missed

³¹ Davidson, J. C., & Wilson, K. B. (2017). Community college student dropouts from higher education: Toward a comprehensive conceptual model. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 41(8), 517-530.

³² Eyster, L., & Nightingale, D. S. (2017). Workforce development and low-income adults and youth: The future under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014.

³³ Cavadel, E. W., Kauff, J. F., Anderson, M. A., McConnell, S., & Derr, M. (2016). *Self-Regulation and Goal Attainment: A New Perspective for Employment Programs*. OPRE Report# 2017-12, Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, US Department of Health and Human Services, p.2.

opportunity because evolving research (cited above in the report) suggests that these approaches are effective, especially for low-income individuals.

Lastly, another founding EcSA principle was involving low-income individuals in the design of EcSA programs. However, this principle has been challenging for programs to apply, with few participants involved in program advisory boards or hired as navigators or coaches. While some EcSA programs have successfully hired staff with lived experience of poverty and other barriers to employment, generally, recruitment of staff in the COVID era has proved to be challenging for human service agencies.

Recommendations for Sustainability

While EcSA is clearly a successful program, challenges remain for ensuring its long-term existence and continued ability to focus on poverty eradication and the underserved populations it was designed to serve. At the time of this report, funding for the program was continuing to increase, most notably with the addition of a partnership finalized in January 2024 with the Washington State Department of Commerce that will provide an additional \$48 million for the expansion of incentives and business services in all 12 LWDBs. Additionally, the Washington College Grant was expanded to all EcSA participants, enabling them to get free education at Washington Community Colleges and elsewhere.

Below are a few recommendations for ensuring the program continues to thrive and grow.

Work to balance desired outcomes with realistic expectations of program intensity and length for a population that has multiple service needs. As explained above, EcSA may not have been as successful as intended in recruiting individuals with significantly different sociodemographic profile compared to typical WIOA participants. This is likely the result of US Department of Labor performance metrics which may inhibit EcSA's intended goal of serving people in poverty to create long-term economic change, as LWDB's respond to a cycle of compliance-driven performance. EcSA stakeholders noted that funding and performance pressures did not foster an environment where they felt they could work with individuals in the long-term or try new approaches. Reducing or temporarily waiving the performance burden on EcSA grantees, could enable them to serve more people with significant employment barriers. On the other hand, the focus on performance may contribute to EcSA's notable success increasing earnings by over 50% and producing stronger outcomes than the WIOA Adult program alone. Therefore, maintaining performance measurement while also emphasizing intensive and long-lasting services may be a positive option.

Continue to look for ways to center the voices and expertise of people who have experienced poverty. In order to keep EcSA focused on those most in need, programs need to listen to their communities and invite participants to advise programs on how to make changes to meet their needs. There are systemic barriers to making long-lasting changes in economic well-being and equity, and these will not be addressed unless all segments of the community have a voice.

Build an impact evaluation of the program. Given that EcSA has existed in one form or another for several years, during which the program model and several components may have reached maturity, the program may be ready for an evaluation of its impacts. An impact evaluation would estimate the gains experienced by program participants in comparison to the gains they

would have experienced in the absence of the program. A rigorously conducted impact evaluation could be a powerful driver for permanent funding for the program as it could convince legislators, stakeholders, and the public at large that the program provides value added to its participants.

Appendix A. EcSA Program Profiles

1. Benton-Franklin*
2. Eastern
3. Northwest
4. Olympic
5. Seattle-King County +
6. North Central/SkillSource+
7. Snohomish
8. South Central+
9. Southwest*
10. Spokane*
11. Tacoma- Pierce*

*Original four grantee programs, visited in person by evaluation team in fall 2023

+ Additional three grantees visited in-person by evaluation team in fall 2023

Note: Pac Mountain does not have a profile because its program started later than the others, and so it was not included in the qualitative data collection activities.

1. Benton Franklin Workforce Development Council

The Benton-Franklin Workforce Development Council (BFWDC), one of the first four EcSA programs launched in 2019, first focused its service provision in Connell, Washington. The program later expanded to serve all of rural Franklin County, and during subsequent rounds of funding, added on the more populous Benton County. The program now serves all of Franklin and Benton Counties.

The BFWDC's regional and local workforce plan forecasts that the area's population will grow steadily at roughly 2 percent every year for the next 10 years.³⁴ As of September 2023, the unemployment rate for Benton County was 3.5 percent, and the unemployment rate for Franklin County was slightly higher at 3.9 percent.³⁵ These figures closely follow the state's unemployment rate of 3.6 percent. However, according to BFWDC staff, the fall and winter months typically produce an uptick in unemployment rates in Benton-Franklin due to the adverse impact of weather conditions on agriculture and construction industries.

Key Program Design Elements

The BFWDC EcSA, which is funded by both state and federal funding, focuses on addressing participant barriers to employment through barrier identification, planning, and employment assistance. Employment specialists utilize an online tool called "Bridge to Employment," which draws from The Bridge to Self-Sufficiency, a comprehensive tool developed by EMPATH, which helps individuals plan and reach their goals. In an initial one-on-one meeting, employment specialists use the Bridge tool to assess a participant's access to basic needs, including food, housing, clothing, health insurance, and transportation. They also identify any skill gaps and assess a participant's current employment status, strengths, and goals.

Based on this information, EcSA staff develop a customized employment plan and goals to address the participant's specific needs and aspirations. Staff work with participants to obtain assistance to appropriate resources and services, including training. According to staff, popular training options include commercial driver's license, certified nursing assistant, program management, and forklift operation. Participants and Employment Specialists schedule time together as needed, though at the minimum, Employment Specialists reach out to participants at least once a month.

Staffing and organization

The BFWDC contracted with its WIOA service provider, Career Path Services, to carry out its EcSA program. Career Path employs Employment Specialists to work individually with EcSA participants. At the start of the initiative, when the program primarily served Connell, the program employed two dedicated bilingual employment specialists. As the program evolved to serve a larger area, the service provider expanded the team and strategically allocated staff time among various programs to maximize funding opportunities. In practice, this meant that employment specialists were funded partially by EcSA and in part by other sources. The EcSA

³⁴ https://www.bentonfranklinwdc.com/files/ugd/337ef4_708f2883f7f9450893e57253d583b30f.pdf

³⁵ <https://esd.wa.gov/labormarketinfo/monthly-employment-report>

program includes a team of employment specialists and a program operator. The BFWDC also supports a community programs manager to coordinate the work.

Key Partnerships

Throughout the program, BFWDC has maintained a strong connection to DSHS. Earlier in the program, BFWDC EcSA and DSHS established a local process in which EcSA staff could obtain SNAP documentation from DSHS, which they used for eligibility and recordkeeping. DSHS continues to serve as a referral source for EcSA. BFWDC and Career Path Services have also cultivated a partnership with their local Title II partner, Columbia Basin College, particularly the college's Workforce Education Center. The center provides students comprehensive support, including financial assistance. The college co-locates staff at the WorkSource Columbia Basin (operated by Career Path Services) to promote college programs. In addition, the Workforce Education Center established a funding committee to evaluate students' requests for funding assistance. The committee includes a WorkSource staff, who helps screen students for any workforce programs for which they may be qualified for, including EcSA.

Successes and Lessons Learned

EcSA staff note that they are meeting their enrollment goals and continue to see a need in the community for their services. There have also been implementation successes:

- The WorkSource instituted group orientations to accommodate community demand. These group orientations, also known as meet and greets, are in person, twice a week in English and Spanish, and provide potential participants an overview of all services at the WorkSource, eligibility requirements, and warm hand-off connections to resources, including EcSA. Staff note that these group orientations have helped streamline the outreach and eligibility process and help meet demand. Staff shared that they are seeing about 15 to 20 people per week at these group orientations.
- The partnership with Columbia Basin College, and its funding committee, has also helped to streamline referrals from the college. WorkSource staff help identify students who could benefit from workforce development programs and assist in making a supportive connection to WorkSource.
- EcSA staff celebrated The Bridge to Employment tool as a promising practice. The tool utilizes goal setting to help participants acquire the resources and skills they need to achieve their aims.
- EcSA stakeholders are facing some challenges in pursuing innovative programmatic decisions due to external factors such as the state's funding cycle and limited clarity from the state on the scope for programmatic experimentation and innovation.
- While performance metrics are important, there is concern that they may be taking precedence over EcSA's ultimate goal of encouraging long-term enrollment. This has led to a cycle of compliance-driven performance. EcSA stakeholders have noted that the demand for services remains high, as evidenced by increased caseloads, but funding and performance pressures make it difficult for them to engage with individuals on a long-term basis or to explore new approaches.

ECONOMIC SECURITY FOR ALL: BENTON FRANKLIN



233

**EcSA PARTICIPANTS
ENROLLED**



151

**AVG ENROLLMENT
DURATION (DAYS)**

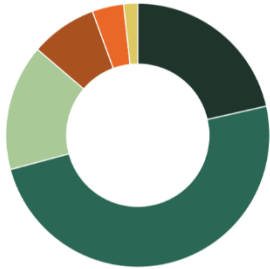


\$7,957

**MEDIAN QUARTERLY
INCOME AFTER EcSA
(AVERAGE)**

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

EDUCATION



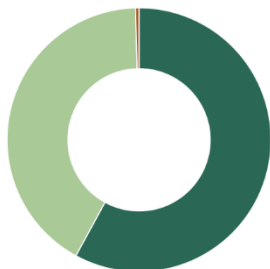
- No HS Diploma (21%)
- HS Graduate (49%)
- Some college (15%)
- AA or Technical Degree (8%)
- BA Degree (4%)
- Graduate Degree (2%)

AGE



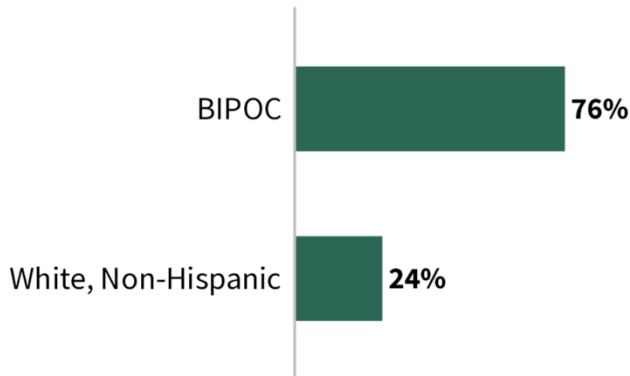
- 18 - 21 (3%)
- 22 - 29 (25%)
- 30 - 44 (46%)
- 45 - 54 (15%)
- 55 + (11%)

GENDER

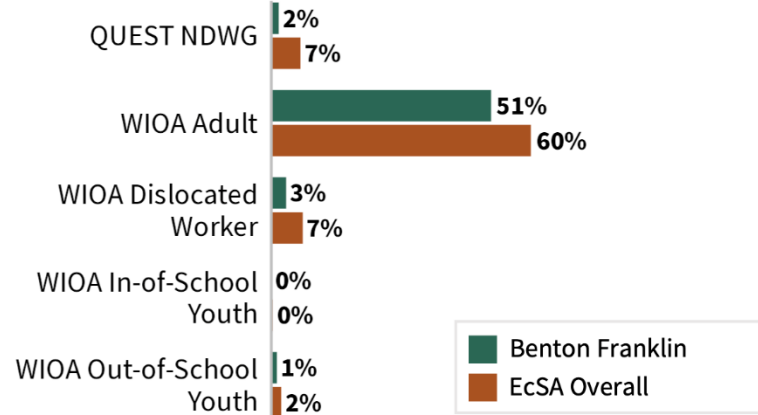


- Male (58%)
- Female (42%)
- Decline to state (1%)

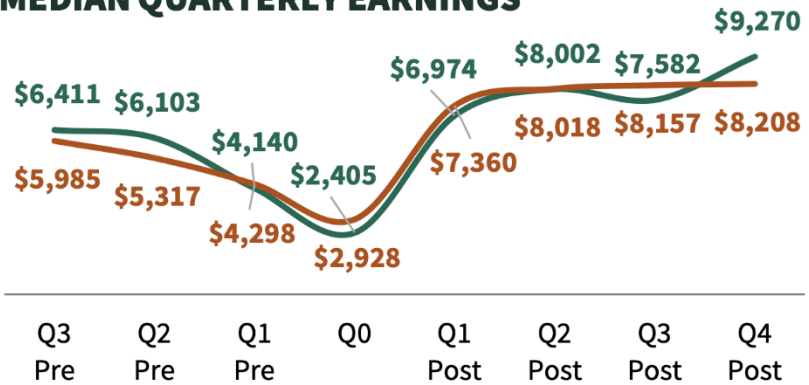
RACE & ETHNICITY



CO-ENROLLMENT PARTICIPATION



MEDIAN QUARTERLY EARNINGS



SERVICES

8
CAREER SERVICES
(AVG PER PARTICIPANT)

2
CAREER PLAN
(AVG PER PARTICIPANT)

1
SUPPORTIVE SERVICES
(AVG PER PARTICIPANT)

3
SELF SUFFICIENCY
CALCULATOR
(AVG PER PARTICIPANT)

1%
RECEIVING
WORK EXPERIENCE

3%
RECEIVING
MENTORSHIP

6%
RECEIVING
FINANCIAL LITERACY

3%
RECEIVING
PERSONAL STABILITY
WORKSHOP

2. Eastern Washington Workforce Development Council

The Eastern Washington WDC comprises nine counties. However, its EcSA program focuses on the three counties in the southeastern corner of the state around Pullman – Asotin, Garfield, and Whitman. The largest employer in the area is Washington State University, and the second largest employment sector is agriculture. Training often focuses on industrial mechanics and nursing since the manufacturing and health care sectors are growing in Whitman and Asotin Counties.

Key Program Design Elements

The Eastern Washington EcSA program focuses on co-enrolling participants through WorkSource, the WIOA operator. Most prospective participants first hear about the program when they engage with DSHS and other WorkSource programs. These clients are notified by staff if they are eligible to receive additional assistance through EcSA.

Eastern Washington’s program has had one consistent project coordinator overseeing grant activities and partnerships. However, the program has struggled with retaining experienced staff, such as case managers. It was continuing to work at hiring additional staff including a career navigator or similar position.

Key Partnerships

Eastern Washington EcSA has maintained a strong partnership with Rural Resources Community Action and Walla Walla Community College. Rural Resources provides short-term and long-term assistance in multiple areas including housing, workforce training and connection to public benefits. Eastern Washington WDC and Rural Resources have also cultivated a strong partnership with Walla Walla Community College. The college refers students for comprehensive support services through EcSA to help them maintain successful engagement with their education program.

Eastern Washington EcSA co-hosts monthly round table meetings with Asotin, Garfield and Whitman WIOA service providers to connect with community partners and agencies within the targeted counties. The roundtable has led to the formation of new partnerships, mutual referrals, and assistance for Clarkston Worksource. Round-table members include representatives from DSHS, WA State Employment Security, Rural Resources, and other local human services organizations, including Quality Behavioral Health, St. Vincent de Paul, Asotin County Housing Authority, Lewis Clark Early Childhood, and Blue Mountain Action Council.

Participant Success Story

One Eastern Washington EcSA participant (interviewed by the evaluation team) was referred to EcSA by an instructor at her community college after she shared how much she was struggling financially. Despite continuing to live in her car, she expressed optimism about her future. She was planning to graduate in 2024 with a nursing degree and shared that she may not have been able to stay in school without EcSA’s help. She received assistance with gas, tuition, phone bills, and renewing her CNA license. She expressed deep appreciation that staff reached out to her through multiple means (email, text, phone, and Facebook Messenger) to provide

encouragement and offer assistance. She emphasized that in addition to the financial help, just knowing she had people supporting her had a positive influence on her as a person.

“I don’t want to pick one specific thing because I might start crying. Everything being done for me, it helped me stay in school. I don’t know if I would have got through my first year if it weren’t for them.”

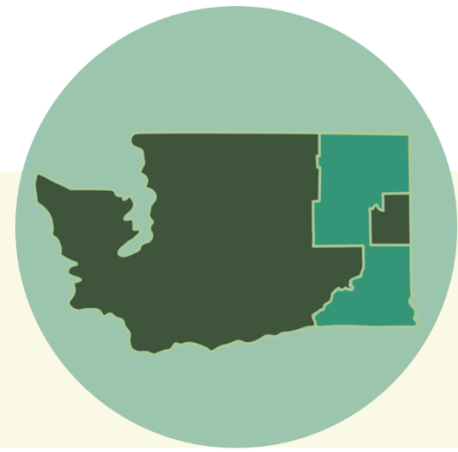
Successes and Lessons Learned

EcSA staff at Eastern Washington reported meeting their enrollment goals and noted that they have had success in elevating the status of EcSA. A few other successes are outlined below:

- **Increased buy-in.** Staff shared that their EcSA program services have evolved and expanded due to increased buy-in from community organizations, which has led to increased collaboration with their old and new partners.
- **Monthly round-table meetings.** The round-table meetings with service providers from Asotin, Garfield, and Whitman Counties have been successful and could serve as a model for other areas looking to create a network between service providers. Staff noted that monthly meetings have strengthened connections with community partners, improved cross-agency collaboration, and enhanced service delivery within the targeted counties.
- **Resource guide.** Rural Resources developed a resource guide for all programs, which has assisted staff with outreach and improved services for program participants.

While staff are pleased with their success, they expressed that staff vacancies and limitations have hampered their ability to innovate programming. They anticipate hiring a career navigator, which will allow them to expand their EcSA services.

ECONOMIC SECURITY FOR ALL: EASTERN



16

**EcSA PARTICIPANTS
ENROLLED**



282

**AVG ENROLLMENT
DURATION (DAYS)**

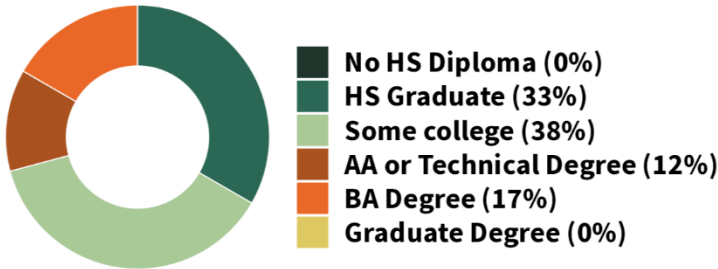


\$8,084

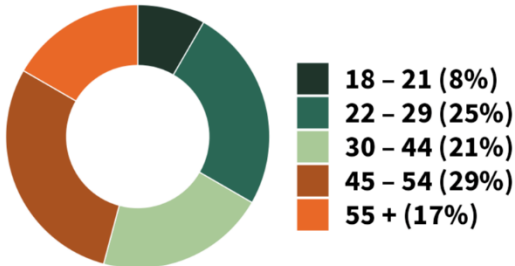
**MEDIAN QUARTERLY
INCOME AFTER EcSA
(AVERAGE)**

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

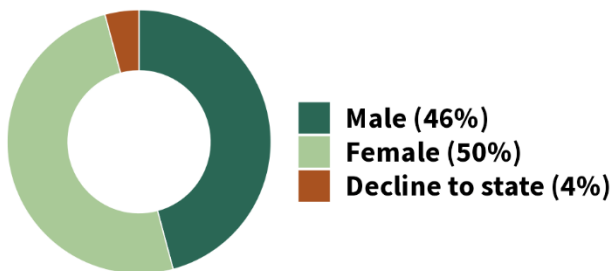
EDUCATION



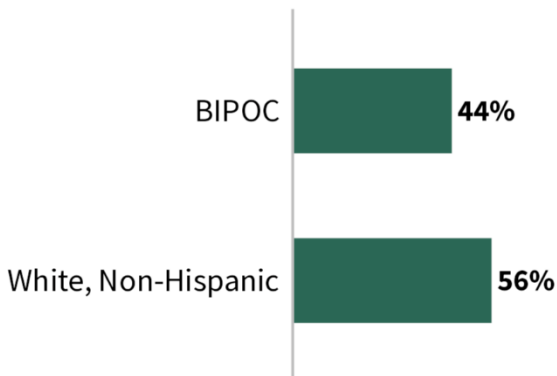
AGE



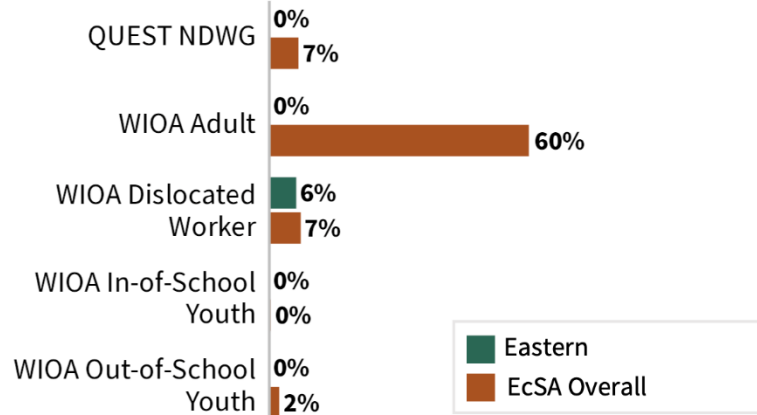
GENDER



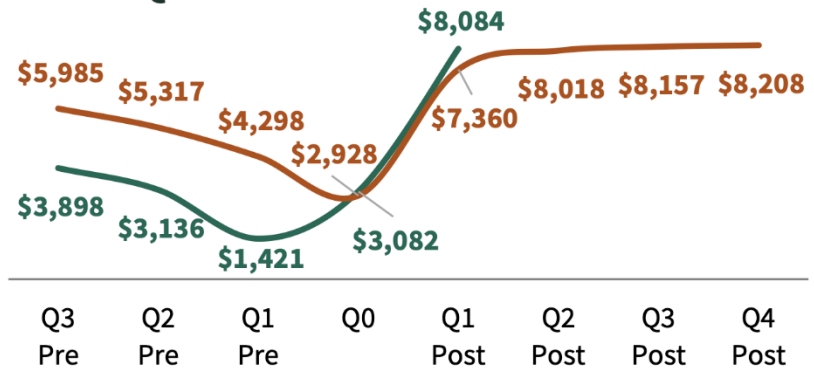
RACE & ETHNICITY



CO-ENROLLMENT PARTICIPATION



MEDIAN QUARTERLY EARNINGS



SERVICES

11
CAREER SERVICES
(AVG PER PARTICIPANT)

2
CAREER PLAN
(AVG PER PARTICIPANT)

3
SUPPORTIVE SERVICES
(AVG PER PARTICIPANT)

3
SELF SUFFICIENCY
CALCULATOR
(AVG PER PARTICIPANT)

0%
RECEIVING
WORK EXPERIENCE

519%
RECEIVING
MENTORSHIP

12%
RECEIVING
FINANCIAL LITERACY

0%
RECEIVING
PERSONAL STABILITY
WORKSHOP

3. Northwest Workforce Council

The Northwest Workforce Council (NWC) EcSA program works with its local community action agency partner, the Opportunity Council, to offer financial literacy and resiliency training, career services, mentorship, and a range of financial incentives to EcSA participants. While the original focus of NWC's EcSA program was Whatcom County, the program expanded into Island County in 2023.

Key Program Design Elements

One of the key elements of NWC's EcSA program model has been its two-generation approach. The NWC EcSA program began with a focus on Head Start families, with the goal of providing financial literacy training and workforce services to parents, and incentives for parent and child activities.

Opportunity Council staff members provide the financial literacy training, called Financial Literacy and Renters Education (FLARE), during weekly sessions with cohorts of EcSA participants. Once they complete FLARE, participants are paired with mentors, who work with them to develop a plan for reaching their financial and employment goals. After a year of EcSA program participation, the cohorts have a graduation ceremony, during which time they receive a check with the incentive amount they earned during their time in the program.

In addition to serving families through this two-generation approach, the NWC EcSA program expanded its recruitment pool to include individuals in early 2023. As part of this new model, the workforce staff offers individualized career services and financial resiliency training, rather than the formal FLARE training sessions. Participants in this model also receive incentive payments when they complete the EcSA program. NWC program staff noted that providing the payment when participants obtain employment helps them handle some expenses of starting a new job.

Participant Success Story

One recent participant joined NWC's EcSA program after working several temporary jobs, drawn to the potential for career guidance, budgeting lessons, and incentives. After joining the program, the participant took part in and accessed a range of services, including a career assessment, mock interviewing sessions, financial workshops, mentorship, and training that led to an industry-recognized credential. The participant successfully obtained employment after receiving the credential. When asked to share what they learned in the program that would help them most in the future, the participant stated, "To just have a framework, and a simple set of tools on how to achieve your goals. With that, I think that'll probably drastically change my long-term future."

Successes and Lessons Learned

The program identified two significant areas of learning that have come from EcSA program implementation.

- **The two-generation model can present opportunities and challenges for serving historically marginalized populations.** On the one hand, this type of model is a holistic approach to addressing poverty experienced by families. On the other hand, because EcSA's goal is to help people move into self-sufficiency, recruitment has been a challenge, in that the goals of potential participants were not always to obtain full-time employment that would be associated with a self-sufficiency wage.
- **NWC's model highlights ways in which financial literacy or resiliency training can be combined with workforce training.** Participants noted the advantages of combining these two types of training for financial and career success.

ECONOMIC SECURITY FOR ALL: NORTHWEST



100

**EcSA PARTICIPANTS
ENROLLED**



230

**AVG ENROLLMENT
DURATION (DAYS)**



\$9,686

**MEDIAN QUARTERLY
INCOME AFTER EcSA
(AVERAGE)**

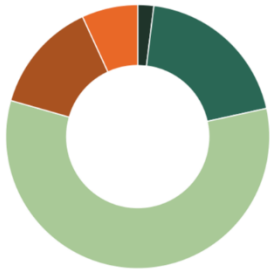
SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

EDUCATION



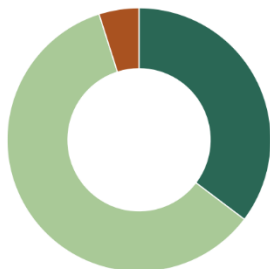
- No HS Diploma (10%)
- HS Graduate (32%)
- Some college (28%)
- AA or Technical Degree (14%)
- BA Degree (15%)
- Graduate Degree (1%)

AGE



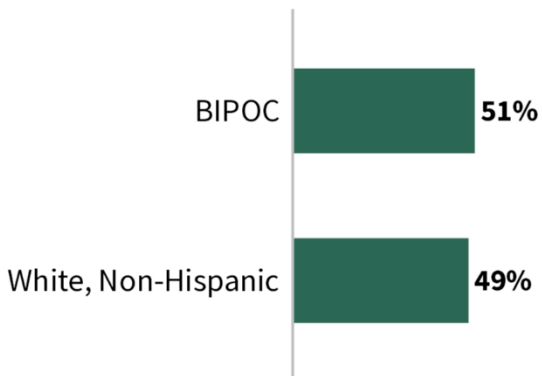
- 18 - 21 (2%)
- 22 - 29 (20%)
- 30 - 44 (58%)
- 45 - 54 (14%)
- 55 + (7%)

GENDER

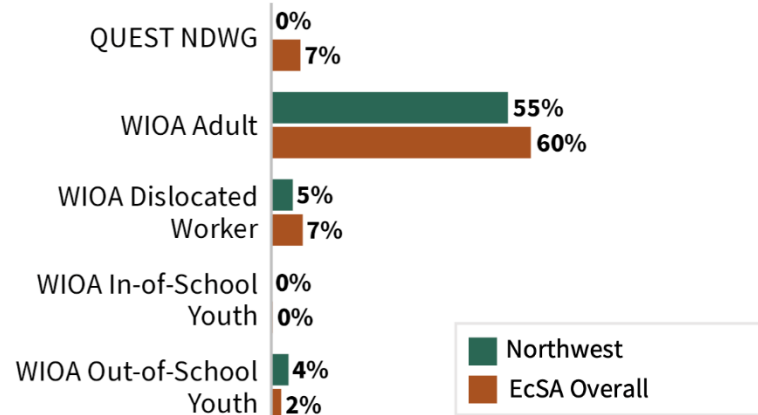


- Male (35%)
- Female (60%)
- Decline to state (5%)

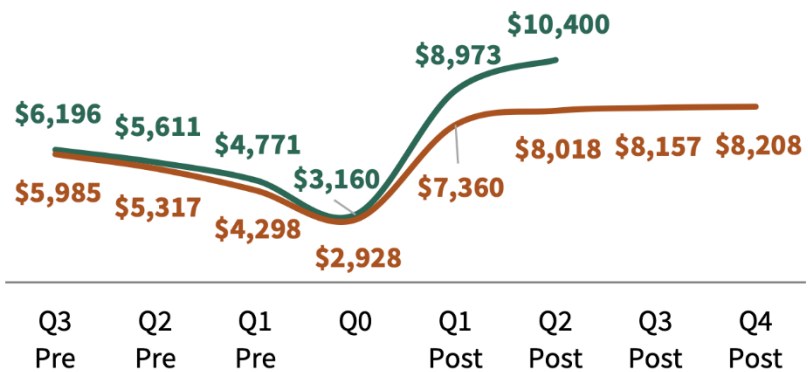
RACE & ETHNICITY



CO-ENROLLMENT PARTICIPATION



MEDIAN QUARTERLY EARNINGS



SERVICES



4. Olympic Workforce Development Council

The Olympic EcSA program serves Clallam, Jefferson, and Kitsap Counties, a rural area in Western Washington. Generally, the EcSA program supplements their WIOA Youth and Adult programs. The EcSA program started with the federal funding, which has been dedicated to supporting the WIOA Youth programming in Kitsap County. Later, when state funding became available, it was used to supplement the WIOA Adult services across the entire service area.

Youth Program Services

The EcSA youth program is built on a strong partnership between the Olympic LWDB and Olympic Educational Services District 114, which has been a longtime provider of WIOA Title I youth services. In the EcSA model, youth are matched with a navigator (jointly funded by the WIOA Youth program and EcSA), who works with participants to develop a career plan and facilitate their access to a coordinated network of support and resources, such as SNAP benefits, childcare, housing assistance, healthcare, and transportation assistance.

Youth participants can receive supportive services up to \$500 per program year, depending on funding availability. Acceptable milestones and amounts include earning the state GED or a high school diploma (\$100), completing successfully the first quarter of post-secondary education (\$100), and obtaining unsubsidized employment and remaining employed for three months (\$100).

Adult Program Services

Generally, participants for the program developed with EcSA state funding are recruited from adults applying for WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs. The staff use EcSA funds to assist with training and supportive services. The program's WIOA application doubles as its EcSA application, so staff flag anyone who is eligible for possible co-enrollment. Generally, all EcSA participants are also enrolled in WIOA, and funding from both sources are used to support individuals completing training and achieving their individual goals. Staff shared that they are able to provide a wider range of supportive services with the EcSA program and that they have established a significant incentive program for participants.

State EcSA enrollees can earn incentives during the program and in the few months after completion, based on achieving various milestones, with an annual cap of \$5,000 per participant. For example, participants receive an initial enrollment incentive once they complete their plan and goals with their case manager. Also, they can earn an incentive for reporting their progress to their case manager. The incentives range in amount, with the largest payment being \$1,000 for completing their training. Program staff explained that setting up incentive disbursement in conjunction with participants reporting back to the program supports the ability of the program to document their success. They also shared that they felt most comfortable with incentives tied to milestones, rather than general payments to participants not connected to achieving and reporting goals. Allowable incentives and amounts include completion of a financial literacy course (\$200), earning the state GED or a high school diploma (\$1000), upgrading skills in their chosen occupational industry (\$250), earning an industry-recognized credential (\$500), submitting a credential or certificate to their case manager

(\$500), and successfully completing a work experience, on-the-job training, or apprenticeship (\$500).

Participant Success Story

A young adult who enrolled with the Olympic EcSA youth program wanted to pursue a nursing career. They were completing a high school education program and needed to be employed at the same time. With EcSA program support, this individual was able to complete high school and CNA training at the same time. The participant started working as a CNA immediately after completing training and received EcSA staff support applying for post-secondary educational programs as well as financial aid. They have been accepted to college to pursue a nursing degree with a financial aid packet in place to support their success.

Successes and Lessons Learned

Program staff identified several significant areas of learning that have come from EcSA program implementation.

- **Take the time to assess EcSA applicants during the enrollment process.** Staff reflected that it didn't work well when they rushed to enroll anyone who met the basic income requirements for participation in EcSA. They look for participants who want to improve their skills to enter a career with higher wage levels, rather than just find a job in low-wage employment. As one staff member stated, "We are certainly doing things differently this year than we did last year. Last year, we had a big push on enrollments...and so we took some calculated risks that we don't need to take this year because we don't have such a high expectation for enrollments... We're going to make sure that we take high-quality enrollments and make sure they run through the program the way it should be."
- **The combination of incentives with regular contact with EcSA staff is a powerful approach to supporting youth** who are working to overcome significant barriers to achieve credentials and sustainable employment. As one staff member stated, "The incentives absolutely, but also just a consistency of meeting with us... We're constantly checking in with them, even if we're not physically meeting them every week when they get to that point that they're working, or they're in school. We are still constantly saying, 'Hey, how are you doing? Do you need anything? Where can we help you?' And I think that's a big thing with the age group we work with. It's just knowing that somebody's in your corner."
- **Incentives bring people to the program.** Staff reflected that a key role played by incentives was getting more people to learn about their programs and ultimately get into training. They also acknowledged that these funds do make a real difference for participants' success, "You know, we had one individual who with the help of the \$2,000 at the end of their training was able to put a down payment on a car so they could actually have transportation to go to work. Something like that is, is life altering for someone at that poverty level."

ECONOMIC SECURITY FOR ALL: OLYMPIC



162

**EcSA PARTICIPANTS
ENROLLED**



144

**AVG ENROLLMENT
DURATION (DAYS)**



\$9,143

**MEDIAN QUARTERLY
INCOME AFTER EcSA
(AVERAGE)**

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

EDUCATION



- No HS Diploma (16%)
- HS Graduate (42%)
- Some college (19%)
- AA or Technical Degree (12%)
- BA Degree (7%)
- Graduate Degree (4%)

AGE



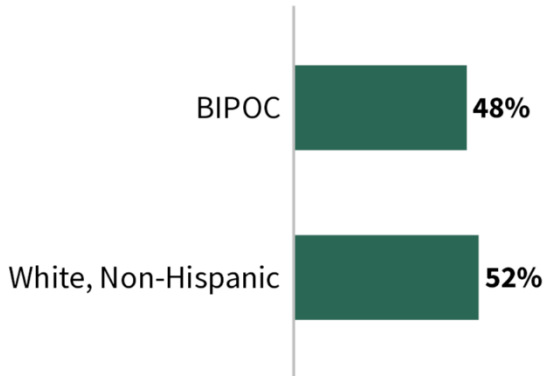
- 18 - 21 (15%)
- 22 - 29 (27%)
- 30 - 44 (33%)
- 45 - 54 (14%)
- 55 + (11%)

GENDER

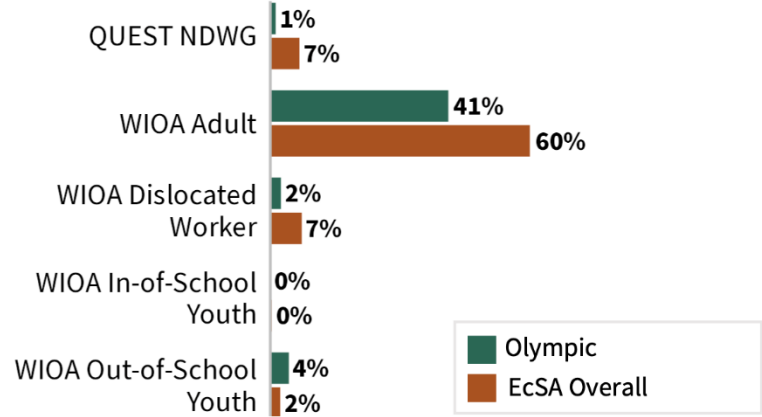


- Male (50%)
- Female (47%)
- Decline to state (3%)

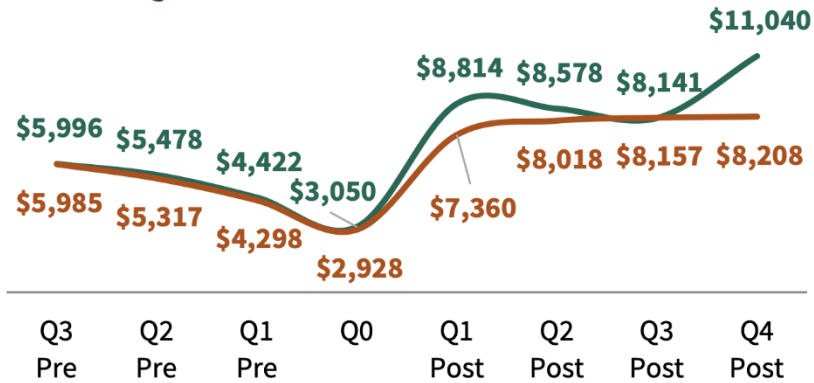
RACE & ETHNICITY



CO-ENROLLMENT PARTICIPATION



MEDIAN QUARTERLY EARNINGS



SERVICES

5
CAREER SERVICES
(AVG PER PARTICIPANT)

2
CAREER PLAN
(AVG PER PARTICIPANT)

2
SUPPORTIVE SERVICES
(AVG PER PARTICIPANT)

2
SELF SUFFICIENCY
CALCULATOR
(AVG PER PARTICIPANT)

4%
RECEIVING
WORK EXPERIENCE

0%
RECEIVING
MENTORSHIP

22%
RECEIVING
FINANCIAL LITERACY

0%
RECEIVING
PERSONAL STABILITY
WORKSHOP

5. Seattle-King County Workforce Development Council

The Seattle-King County Workforce Development Council’s (WDC) EcSA program, which launched in October 2021, focuses on marginalized communities in specific zip codes. In particular, the program prioritizes individuals who are BIPOC, refugees/immigrants, and justice impacted. Their outreach team uses a “targeted universalism” framework to tailor strategies to reach their priority populations.

King County has recently seen an expansion of professional and business services, and high-tech jobs, and an increase in remote work for these jobs. Construction and manufacturing – specifically in the aerospace industry – are also areas of labor market focus in the region, which has seen expansion in employment in these sectors.³⁶ Seattle- King County’s EcSA partners have seen a high demand for pharmacists, bank placements, aerospace placements, and CNA placements.

Key Program Design Elements

A key element of Seattle-King County’s EcSA program design is that all services and training programs are provided through community-based partnerships. At the WDC, there is one project coordinator and a project director dedicated to EcSA. The WDC project coordinator meets with the directors and program managers of their four key partner organizations every other week. During these meetings, the team discusses EcSA and other grants.

The program’s partners provide a range of programming based on community needs. In addition, Seattle-King County has integrated its EcSA funding with other program funding sources (such as WIOA), with EcSA participants co-enrolled in ongoing partnerships and internal programs. EcSA funding has created additional capacity for the systems that the WDC had in place previously, which allowed the team to focus on building upon what already existed. This is a strength because it builds sustainability into the program; it will continue providing services, even if EcSA funding stops.

Key Partnerships

Seattle-King County’s EcSA program has maintained four key partnerships through which services are delivered.

- YWCA provides services that are tailored to meet the needs of African American women and domestic violence survivors.
- Neighborhood House provides services that are tailored to meet the needs of immigrants, refugees, and unhoused individuals.
- TRAC Associates provides services that are tailored to meet the needs of BIPOC and refugee communities.
- Asian Counseling and Referral Service provides services that are tailored to meet the needs of Asian American and Pacific Islander communities.

³⁶ ESD King County Labor Market Profile, <https://esd.wa.gov/labormarketinfo/county-profiles/king#labor>

A few key highlights from YWCA and Neighborhood House’s services are listed below.

YWCA

YWCA Seattle provides a wide range of trainings for in-demand jobs. One of their most popular trainings is a financial literacy course called “Money Mechanics”, which provides a deeper understanding of money management to help participants build financial stability. Participants receive both instruction and one-on-one financial coaching, with access to the coach continuing for six months post completion of the training. Other training programs completed by EcSA participants include the BankWorks and PharmacyWorks programs. After completion of these programs, EcSA participants have successfully entered bank and pharmacy jobs. YWCA has seen a particularly high demand for pharmacy assistants.

Neighborhood House

Neighborhood House provides housing programs, including rapid rehousing. It is situated within public housing authorities and serves the public housing community. It also provides many in-house programs – such as its community health and youth development programs– as well as access to work-based learning through Quest and Career Services.

Successes and Lessons Learned

Seattle-King County WDC staff identified multiple successes and areas of learning with its EcSA program.

- **Self-sufficiency calculator.** Seattle-King County WDC developed the use of the self-sufficiency calculator, which it had been using before EcSA, administering it when someone enters and exits the program. It is now a required element in all EcSA programs.
- **Community-based partnerships.** Seattle-King County WDC built its EcSA program within its service model, which relies on community-based partnerships. These community-based organizations are highly responsive to the culture and service needs of the EcSA target populations since they have extensive connections to local community networks.
- **Universal intake process.** Staff noted that while it is advantageous to check eligibility across all programs, the enrollment packets are large, and paperwork is one of the biggest challenges for clients during the enrollment process, particularly if they don’t speak English. This causes administrative burden, wait times for participants, and slows down the process overall. Staff are developing an improved universal intake process to streamline and reduce unnecessary paperwork.
- **Internal referral network.** Seattle-King County EcSA has a high number of internal referrals, built on its network of community-based service providers leveraging their extensive networks and resources. Providers use Unite Us,³⁷ a cross-sector collaboration software, to facilitate the referral process. EcSA service providers can send a secure referral to the most appropriate partner within the network based on a person’s human service needs.

³⁷ Unite Us is a coordinated care network consisting of healthcare, government, nonprofit, and other organizations. <https://uniteus.com/networks/washington/>

ECONOMIC SECURITY FOR ALL: SEATTLE-KING COUNTY



429

**EcSA PARTICIPANTS
ENROLLED**



229

**AVG ENROLLMENT
DURATION (DAYS)**



\$10,964

**MEDIAN QUARTERLY
INCOME AFTER EcSA
(AVERAGE)**

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

EDUCATION



- No HS Diploma (12%)
- HS Graduate (41%)
- Some college (16%)
- AA or Technical Degree (13%)
- BA Degree (14%)
- Graduate Degree (4%)

AGE



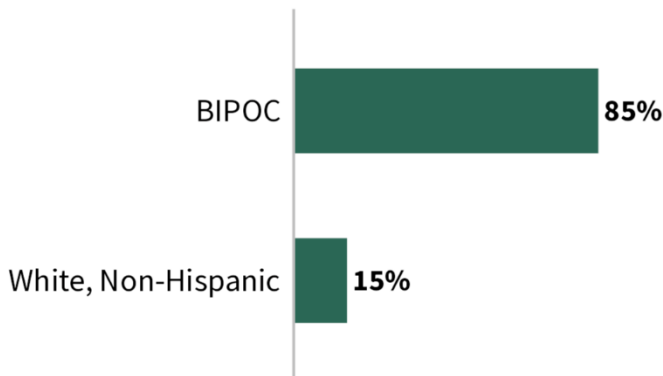
- 18 - 21 (1%)
- 22 - 29 (19%)
- 30 - 44 (45%)
- 45 - 54 (18%)
- 55 + (17%)

GENDER

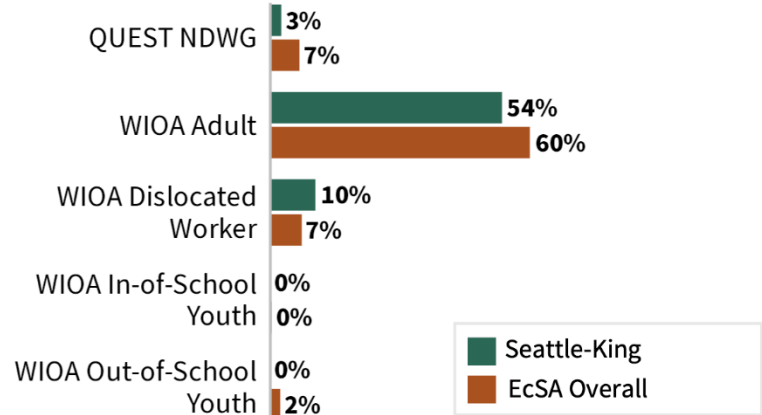


- Male (43%)
- Female (54%)
- Decline to state (3%)

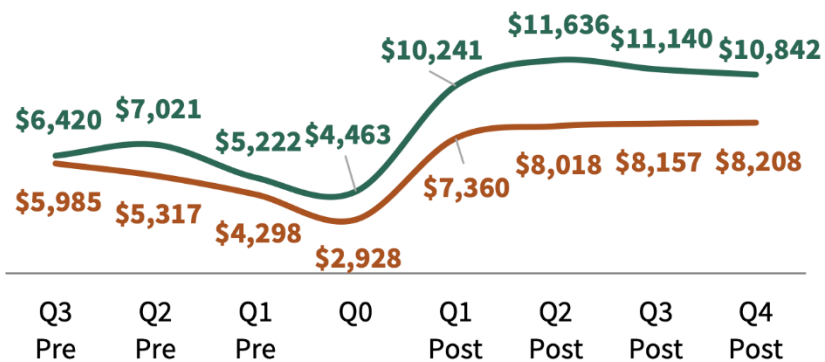
RACE & ETHNICITY



CO-ENROLLMENT PARTICIPATION



MEDIAN QUARTERLY EARNINGS



SERVICES



6. North Central Washington Regional Workforce Board

SkillSource, the entity that administers workforce development programming across a wide swath of north central Washington (14,000 square miles), used its initial federal EcSA funding to develop a program to bring occupational skills training to rural communities. Its commercial driver's license training course, located in the small community of Mattawa, has enrolled three cohorts of students, resulting in 12 employed truck drivers, with additional students seeking employment at the time of this report. In addition, the program has supported other individual students enrolled in training programs, including nursing and massage therapy. SkillSource used state EcSA funding to develop a different program model in Wenatchee, primarily serving students at the Wenatchee Valley College engaged in nursing training. This program provides a monthly stipend of \$500 to \$1,000 per month for up to 12 months to enrolled students in good standing.

Key Program Design Elements

SkillSource is one of only two WDCs in Washington that provide services directly, rather than subcontracting with another entity as the direct service provider. It generally co-enrolls their EcSA participants in WIOA Adult Title I and Dislocated Worker programs. Leadership staff credit their successful outcomes to strong relationships that their career and training staff build with participants to develop and execute individualized career plans. Prospective EcSA enrollees go through an orientation and career assessment workshop to make sure that they are a good fit for enrollment in the program. This is a nine-hour workshop conducted over the course of three mornings; it includes skills and ability assessments and labor market research.

Staff shared that they were inspired to develop the robust incentive program for students based on their experience administering the WIOA Trade Act program when a large Alcoa plant closed in their area. They saw the power of income support to keep people enrolled in training. Staff reported that they relied on their close partnership with state ESD staff in order to design their incentive program to ensure that the program did not violate any state or federal program rules. They currently have a waiting list for the program, and prioritize based on veteran status, income level, and need for basic skills training. One factor affecting the waiting list is the schedule for the training or degree programs at the local colleges. Another factor in the wait for services has been staff vacancies. Like many other EcSA programs, SkillSource has been affected by staff turnover, recently losing three seasoned staff members to retirement or relocation.

Key Partnerships

SkillSource staff shared that they spend considerable time in developing workforce collaborations in their service area. The EcSA program relies on long-established partnerships between SkillSource and the community colleges' workforce grants programs and assistance programs, including Basic Food Employment and Training, Opportunity Grant, and Washington State Opportunity Scholarships. SkillSource also partners with local community action councils and other local nonprofits for assistance with housing and financial education. Staff emphasized that EcSA funding provided another "tool in their belt" for working with the college and other training providers with whom they already had strong working partnerships.

Successes and Lessons Learned

SkillSource staff identified the following lessons learned through their EcSA program implementation.

- **Need for continuous funding.** Successful implementation of the incentive program is supported by reliable, on-going funding. The EcSA program could improve its implementation with steadier funding, without gaps that create obstacles for participants who rely on program funding to successfully complete their training. For example, there was uncertainty about incentive levels, until just before the 2023-2024 academic year began, and ultimately incentives had to be cut from \$1,000 per month to \$500. While staff have learned how to manage client expectations, more consistent funding and advanced notification would improve their ability to enroll and support participants.
- **Increased communication options.** Through adaptation during COVID, SkillSource has been able to modernize its phone and communication systems with clients, and now staff can text and conduct virtual calls and interviews in addition to in-person meetings. Staff report that, especially working with busy nursing students, who often have work and family care responsibilities as well, it has been very helpful using remote interviews and DocuSign for completing forms, etc.

ECONOMIC SECURITY FOR ALL: NORTH CENTRAL



99

**EcSA PARTICIPANTS
ENROLLED**



178

**AVG ENROLLMENT
DURATION (DAYS)**



\$9,086

**MEDIAN QUARTERLY
INCOME AFTER EcSA
(AVERAGE)**

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

EDUCATION



- No HS Diploma (6%)
- HS Graduate (46%)
- Some college (21%)
- AA or Technical Degree (21%)
- BA Degree (5%)
- Graduate Degree (1%)

AGE



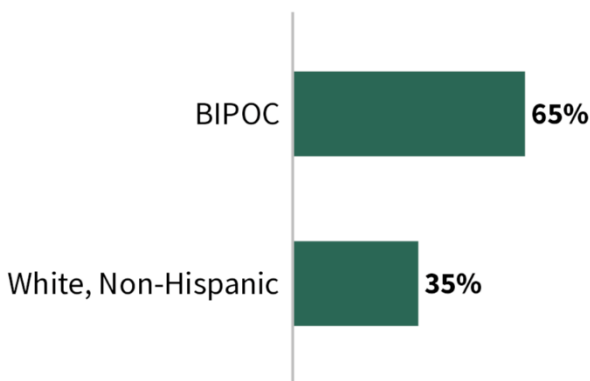
- 18 - 21 (4%)
- 22 - 29 (32%)
- 30 - 44 (53%)
- 45 - 54 (10%)
- 55 + (2%)

GENDER

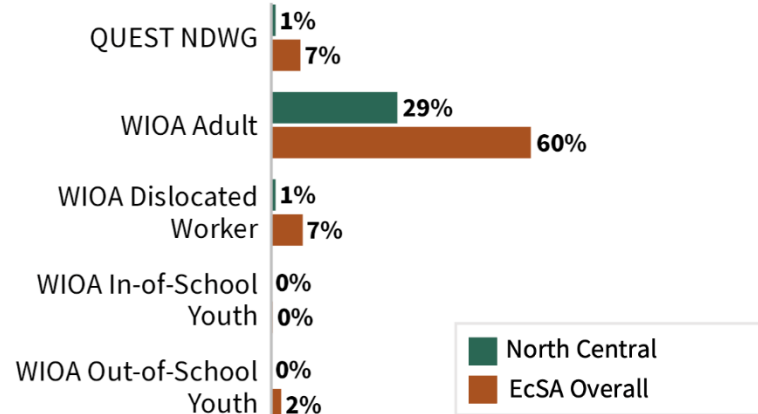


- Male (53%)
- Female (47%)
- Decline to state (0%)

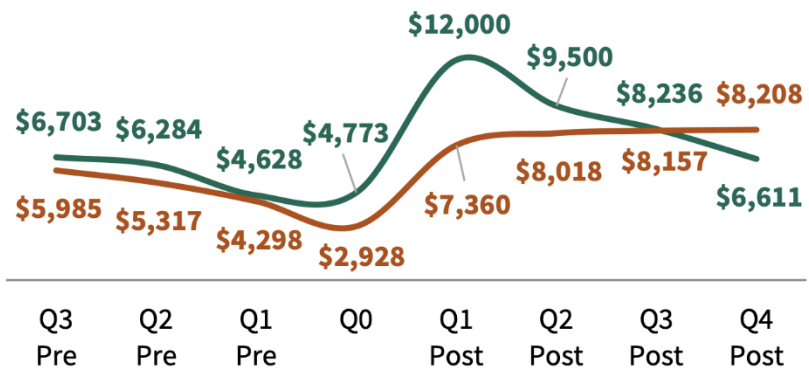
RACE & ETHNICITY



CO-ENROLLMENT PARTICIPATION



MEDIAN QUARTERLY EARNINGS



SERVICES

- | | |
|---|--|
| 9
CAREER SERVICES
(AVG PER PARTICIPANT) | 0%
RECEIVING
WORK EXPERIENCE |
| 1
CAREER PLAN
(AVG PER PARTICIPANT) | 0%
RECEIVING
MENTORSHIP |
| 1
SUPPORTIVE SERVICES
(AVG PER PARTICIPANT) | 18%
RECEIVING
FINANCIAL LITERACY |
| 1
SELF SUFFICIENCY
CALCULATOR
(AVG PER PARTICIPANT) | 1%
RECEIVING
PERSONAL STABILITY
WORKSHOP |

7. Workforce Snohomish

Workforce Snohomish uses its state funding to bring trainings for in-demand jobs to immigrants and refugees. Workforce Snohomish's EcSA program includes both state and federal funding, and it operates distinct programs with separate staff teams. Manufacturing is the top industry in Snohomish County. About half of all manufacturing jobs were in aerospace products and at Boeing. However, in 2021, the number of manufacturing jobs decreased by 21 percent, which is believed to be a delayed impact from the pandemic. The county's other major industries are government, education, health services, and retail trade.³⁸ In particular, Workforce Snohomish's state funded EcSA program has been targeting the healthcare, maritime, and manufacturing industries. It also had a cybersecurity training cohort, and the majority of participants have completed the certification process, but only a few have found employment in the field.

Workforce Snohomish's federally funded EcSA program continues to work with the business engagement team to seek out employers. Clients have attended commercial driver's license training and an artificial intelligence machine learning bootcamp.

Washington State became home to over 16,000 Ukrainian refugees after the Russian invasion in February of 2022.³⁹ Many refugees settled in the Snohomish area, so the site pivoted outreach to this population in urgent need. As a result, the majority of Workforce Snohomish's state-funded program's enrollment comes from a Ukrainian resettlement program offered in the Everett area.

Key Program Design Elements

In total, four staff members oversee the EcSA programs. One program manager implements the state funded EcSA program, one implements the federally funded EcSA program, one case manager/employment navigator works on the state funded EcSA program, and the programs share a supervisor. All other staffing is through subcontracts.

The state funded program conducts outreach to refugees and humanitarian parolees, largely those from Ukraine. One of the most effective forms of outreach has been staff traveling to the Carl Gipson Senior Center every Friday to connect with refugees and immigrants. Workforce Snohomish works with the partnership of Pacific Associates and Refugee & Immigrant Services Northwest, the latter of which holds these Friday events to provide clothing and food donations. Workforce Snohomish's presence at these events has also allowed them to network within the wider Ukrainian community. It also has partners who advertise throughout the community.

³⁸ <https://esd.wa.gov/labormarketinfo/county-profiles/snohomish>

³⁹ <https://www.king5.com/article/news/nation-world/ukraine/one-year-later-washington-welcoming-ukrainian-refugees/281-0d1a61b9-7439-47e5-9786-cab2dbcecf8a>

The target population of the federally funded EcSA program includes the WIOA Adult population, families with children, and the Head Start program population. This target evolved over the length of the program and found success with the WIOA Adult and Families with Children and the LGBTQ+ communities. Workforce Snohomish's key subrecipient is Career Path Services, which partners with local organizations to reach the target population and co-enroll WIOA participants.

Key Partnerships

Workforce Snohomish's state funded EcSA program has two key partners. Pacific Associates is a key subrecipient and provides services such as skill development, career counseling, and finding training institutions for participants. Through Pacific Associates, it also works with Refugee & Immigrant Services Northwest to connect with Ukrainian refugees.

Workforce Snohomish's federally funded program staff attend and recruit through LGBTQ+ Pride events and through Goodwill stores and classes. The program has recently partnered with Volunteers of America for outreach in rural areas. Through Career Path Services, it also partners with Edmonds College's to identify and engage with students who might benefit from EcSA services. It also partners with YWCA Homeward House, which provides support to infants and parents who are experiencing barriers to employment such as substance abuse, domestic violence, and homelessness.

Successes and Lessons Learned

Workforce Snohomish EcSA staff shared several lessons learned and key successes of their programs.

- **A successful emergency pivot.** Using their multilingual staff, Workforce Snohomish targeted outreach to refugees who had a pressing and urgent need for work and other resources. The program worked with the Ukrainian community network and reported success reaching out to refugees along with a high number of refugee referrals. Staff believe the flexibility of EcSA allowed them to address any unforeseen needs quickly. Like the pandemic crisis, this is an important reminder of the unexpected impact world events can have on Washington communities, and why flexibility in funding is important to quickly and successfully address these issues.
- **Importance of in-person outreach.** EcSA staff take advantage of in-person opportunities as often as possible to connect with the community. State EcSA staff travel to the Carl Gipson Center which serves as a community resource center and refugee gathering space in the community, and also travel to meet participants wherever it is convenient for them, as being available to speak to immigrant and refugee populations directly has been found to be most effective. Also, EcSA Federal staff are present at community events as often as possible and have a presence at Volunteers of America community sites throughout the county as well as at Edmonds College. They report that the most effective methods for outreach and engagement are those where employment

specialists are able to speak to people directly and collaborate with providers in the community.

- **Turn over issues.** Staff reported that staff turnover has been a key challenge. They believe that the post-pandemic availability of remote work led staff to pursue job opportunities that weren't available to them before. New staff need time to train and become knowledgeable about the position, so the number of staff only tells part of the story.

ECONOMIC SECURITY FOR ALL: SNOHOMISH



21

**EcSA PARTICIPANTS
ENROLLED**



109

**AVG ENROLLMENT
DURATION (DAYS)**



\$6,071

**MEDIAN QUARTERLY
INCOME AFTER EcSA
(AVERAGE)**

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

EDUCATION



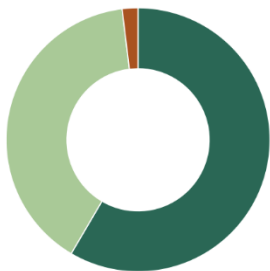
- No HS Diploma (4%)
- HS Graduate (29%)
- Some college (17%)
- AA or Technical Degree (19%)
- BA Degree (19%)
- Graduate Degree (12%)

AGE



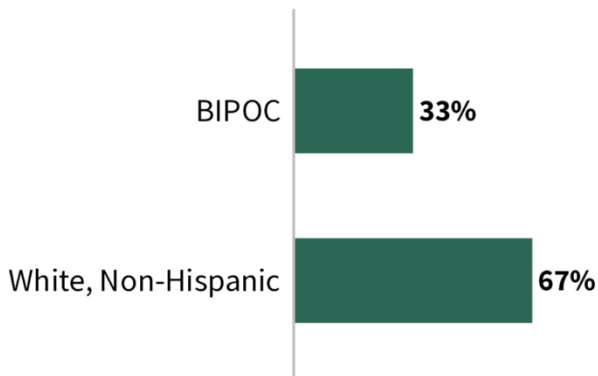
- 18 - 21 (3%)
- 22 - 29 (8%)
- 30 - 44 (44%)
- 45 - 54 (31%)
- 55 + (14%)

GENDER

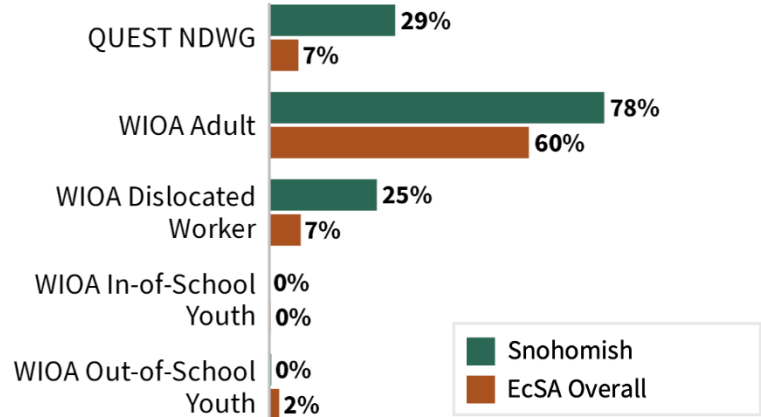


- Male (58%)
- Female (40%)
- Decline to state (2%)

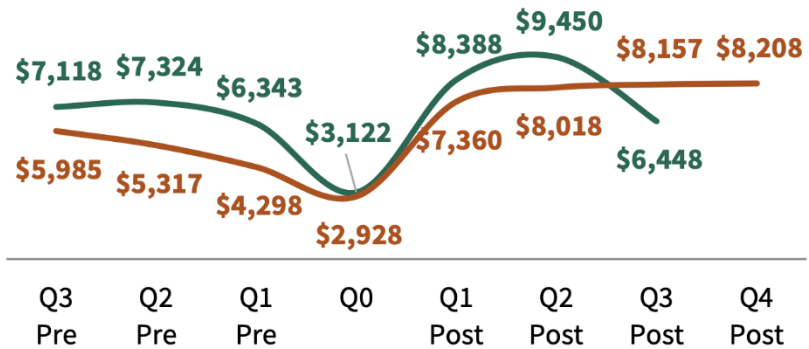
RACE & ETHNICITY



CO-ENROLLMENT PARTICIPATION



MEDIAN QUARTERLY EARNINGS



SERVICES

- | | |
|---|--|
| 7
CAREER SERVICES
(AVG PER PARTICIPANT) | 0%
RECEIVING
WORK EXPERIENCE |
| 3
CAREER PLAN
(AVG PER PARTICIPANT) | 0%
RECEIVING
MENTORSHIP |
| 1
SUPPORTIVE SERVICES
(AVG PER PARTICIPANT) | 0%
RECEIVING
FINANCIAL LITERACY |
| 3
SELF SUFFICIENCY
CALCULATOR
(AVG PER PARTICIPANT) | 5%
RECEIVING
PERSONAL STABILITY
WORKSHOP |

8. South Central Workforce Development Council

South Central Workforce serves the counties of Kittitas, Klickitat, Skamania, and Yakima. Yakima County is south central Washington’s largest and most populous county, with an estimated population of 257,001 in 2022.⁴⁰ The average 2023 seasonally-adjusted unemployment rate was 6.5 percent, down from the pandemic peak of 9.4 percent in 2020.⁴¹ Agriculture, a staple of the local economy, is the top employment industry, followed by health services and local government. Particular challenges faced by this area include a growing unhoused population, synthetic opioid addiction, gang involvement, and a large migrant and seasonal farmworker population.

Key Program Design Elements

South Central provides EcSA services through its subrecipient People for People (PFP), a community-based organization that provides WIOA services to Yakima residents. PFP participants commonly seek employment in agriculture, diesel technology, and construction. Commercial driver’s license training is a popular career pathway at PFP and is a highly in-demand job skill. PFP targets EcSA funding to services for people in the most difficult situations, with participants typically experiencing three to six barriers, such as single parenthood, justice involvement, or dropping out of high school.

Five employees work on the EcSA program: a program manager, a case manager lead, two case managers, and a career development counselor. The goal is for case managers to oversee 25 to 30 clients simultaneously. However, at times caseloads have been as high as 45 to 50. Staff at PFP use the following key design elements for their EcSA approach: assessment, stabilization, career discovery, the removal of barriers and financial stressors, training, and employment. PFP serves clients in three main ways: referrals, pre-screening on the website, and walk-ins. Staff identify potential EcSA participants primarily through word-of-mouth referrals, which are the largest drivers of recruitment. They also attend local community events, such as job fairs and food drives.

The PFP team focuses on ensuring that clients develop life skills and career skills such as interviewing and writing resumes. They provide soft skills workshops to their EcSA clients in self-esteem, stress management, time management, interviewing, and a career jobs employment program. In addition, PFP offers financial tuition assistance in addition to holistic support with costs such as housing, transportation, tools, work attire, utilities, and even gang-related tattoo removal.

Key Partnerships

PFP works closely with Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC), Union Gospel Mission, and Perry Technical College to develop a team approach to helping individuals succeed. Many EcSA clients co-enroll in programs offered by these organizations. A few key highlights from OIC and

⁴⁰ US Census Bureau

⁴¹ ESDWA, <https://esd.wa.gov/labormarketinfo/labor-force>

Union Gospel Mission's program services are listed below.

- **OIC:** Its target population is agricultural workers and their families, and it provides support for monolingual Spanish speakers and services such as energy and rental assistance, GED prep, and commercial driver's license training.
- **Union Gospel Mission:** It offers space for unhoused populations of all faiths, thrift stores, temporary housing, health and dental care, meals, and a Christian faith-based addiction recovery program. PFP staff work with the Union Gospel Mission to serve unhoused youth. The team focuses on getting potential participants housed first before getting enrolled in the EcSA program. Career development counselors work closely with participants and Union Gospel Mission staff to provide emergency rental assistance. The team focuses on removing barriers and allowing individuals to focus on training and acquiring full-time employment.

Further, PFP orchestrates quarterly EcSA partnership meetings to bring awareness to EcSA services and strengthen community relationships, leading to many referrals and fostering connections beyond PFP.

Participant Success Story

One participant called the EcSA program a "blessing in the sky" during a challenging period when she was homeless, unemployed, estranged from her abusive husband, and striving to support her son while pursuing a medical coding certificate. She sought financial assistance from PFP. "I didn't know where I was going with my life, and so this school was going to be important." PFP covered her tuition, books, and funds for three months' rent and other bills, enabling her to dedicate her full attention to her education. With assistance from her case manager, she established a self-sufficiency goal to save money to help with rent after she finished her program. At the time of the interview, she was completing her coursework and seeking an externship to conclude the certificate program.

Successes and Lessons Learned

PFP staff noted several successes and learnings through the implementation of the EcSA program.

- **Unhoused youth.** Ensuring that housing is secure first, before starting workforce training programs greatly increases these participants' chances of success and acquiring self-sufficiency. Career development counselors focus on building and nurturing relationships with partner organizations as well as providing emergency rental assistance to combat and overcome this barrier.
- **Mental health barriers.** Understanding mental health issues continues to be challenging for program staff, and they feel that participants need more mental health resources, particularly those that accept state insurance.
- **In-person events.** PFP leverages in-person events for outreach in the community. Warm referrals and word of mouth are the primary drivers of outreach, especially in the Yakima community.

ECONOMIC SECURITY FOR ALL: SOUTH CENTRAL



136

EcSA PARTICIPANTS
ENROLLED



267

AVG ENROLLMENT
DURATION (DAYS)



\$9,782

MEDIAN QUARTERLY
INCOME AFTER EcSA
(AVERAGE)

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

EDUCATION



- No HS Diploma (18%)
- HS Graduate (64%)
- Some college (9%)
- AA or Technical Degree (6%)
- BA Degree (3%)
- Graduate Degree (0%)

AGE



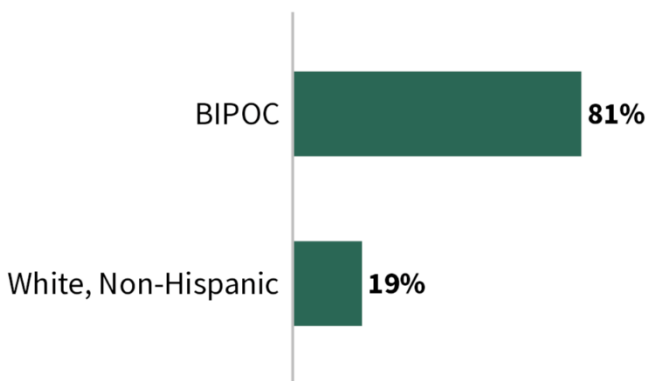
- 18 - 21 (10%)
- 22 - 29 (31%)
- 30 - 44 (42%)
- 45 - 54 (13%)
- 55 + (4%)

GENDER

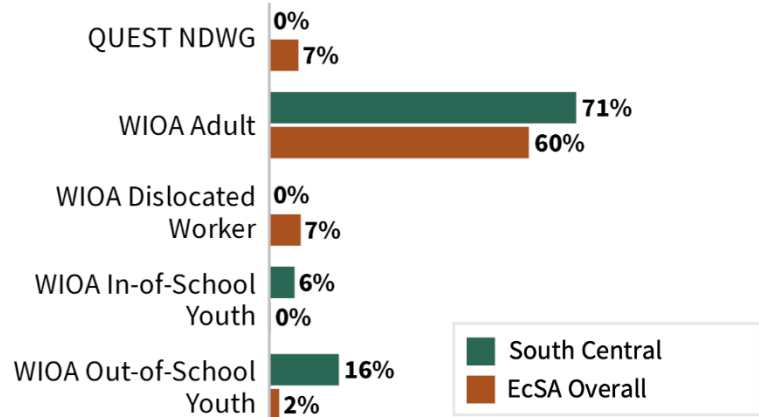


- Male (58%)
- Female (42%)
- Decline to state (1%)

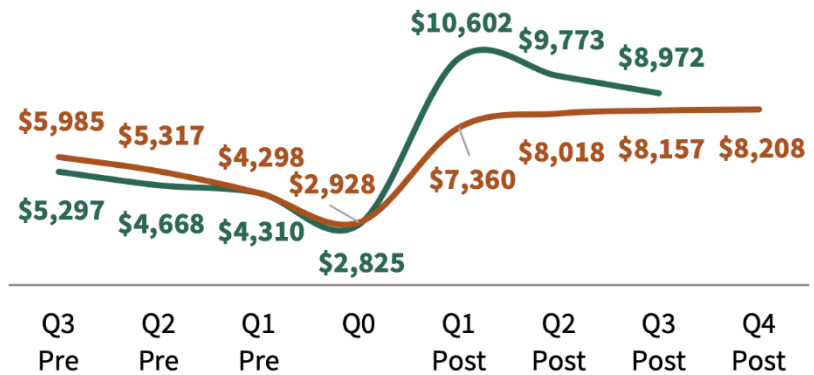
RACE & ETHNICITY



CO-ENROLLMENT PARTICIPATION



MEDIAN QUARTERLY EARNINGS



SERVICES

15
CAREER SERVICES
(AVG PER PARTICIPANT)

2
CAREER PLAN
(AVG PER PARTICIPANT)

3
SUPPORTIVE SERVICES
(AVG PER PARTICIPANT)

4
SELF SUFFICIENCY
CALCULATOR
(AVG PER PARTICIPANT)

13%
RECEIVING
WORK EXPERIENCE

43%
RECEIVING
MENTORSHIP

3%
RECEIVING
FINANCIAL LITERACY

1%
RECEIVING
PERSONAL STABILITY
WORKSHOP

9. Workforce Southwest Washington

Thrive, the EcSA program piloted by Workforce Southwest Washington, partners with social service and community organizations to help people move out of poverty and into careers in southwestern Washington. Thrive was one of the first four EcSA pilot programs, launched in 2019. While Thrive's geographic focus largely remains Cowlitz County, the program expanded into Wahkiakum County in 2022 and Clark County in mid-2023. Thrive participants commonly prepare for and seek jobs in manufacturing, construction, technology, and healthcare. As of mid-2023, popular training options were Washington State flagger certification, commercial driver's license, and forklift training certification.

Key Program Design Elements

One key program feature that has remained in place since implementation has been Thrive's focus on recruiting participants through its partnerships with local organizations such as DSHS, Lower Columbia Community Action Program, and Lower Columbia College. While the structure of these partnerships has evolved (as described in more detail below), Thrive's goal of working with partners to increase their collective ability to recruit and support people from underserved communities has remained constant over time.

Another key program element for Thrive is individualized career services, which are provided by Equus case management staff. Thrive case managers work with participants to develop career plans leading to high-wage, in-demand jobs and locally available training for those positions. Although Equus staff briefly tested out the idea of creating training cohorts in the spring of 2023, they found that in their rural community, the cohort model created additional barriers, and they resumed more individualized services for participants.

A final program design element of note is Thrive's effort to bring together resources available through multiple funding streams (including federal EcSA, state EcSA, and Basic Food Employment and Training) to support participants in moving to a self-sufficiency wage. Specifically, Thrive staff reported that they have worked to identify ways to blend funds that will allow them to provide more supportive services to participants for a longer period of time than otherwise would have been possible. These supportive services include assistance with transportation (giving gas cards based on distance), work clothing, books for college, school supplies, tools, and glasses (through Basic Food Employment and Training) if needed for a new job.

Staffing

Thrive's program staffing has evolved over time for a variety of reasons, including contextual factors (e.g., the onset of the COVID pandemic), partnership changes, and program shifts (e.g., the program's recent expansion into Clark County). One staffing role in particular that has had frequent turnover is the Workforce Southwest Washington program manager position. The structure for the case management staff has also changed somewhat over time; at the time of this report, an Equus case management supervisor and three case managers worked out of the WorkSource Center in Kelso, Washington, and a case management supervisor and case manager worked out of the WorkSource Center in Vancouver, Washington.

Key Partnerships

Thrive has maintained key partnerships with several local organizations since inception. One such partnership is with DSHS, which provided referrals to Thrive beginning in the early stages of implementation. As described in the midpoint evaluation report, the data sharing agreement that was developed between ESD and DSHS in 2021 was viewed by Thrive staff as a major contributor to the program's increase in enrollment at that time and as a starting point for discussion on how to regularly exchange information across other programs, not just Thrive. Other key partners from the beginning stages of implementation were Lower Columbia College and Lower Columbia Community Action Program, which have been important sources of referrals for Thrive.

Over time, as the program expanded into new areas, additional partnerships formed and Thrive implemented new strategies for recruitment. For example, in 2023, Thrive increased its community presence through co-location at the Cowlitz Indian Tribe Center in Longview, the Wahkiakum Hope Center (as part of Thrive's partnership with Wahkiakum County Health and Human Services), and Lower Columbia College. As part of co-location in these spaces, case managers for Thrive were able to publicize the program, enroll new participants, and hold follow-up appointments. Thrive also resumed monthly partner meetings, which focused on creating space for partners to share resources and information about upcoming community events.

Successes and Lessons Learned

EcSA staff noted several successes and key learnings as the program has developed.

- **Partnerships with social service and community-based organizations are critical for recruitment and outreach to populations historically underserved by the workforce system.** Thrive's recent focus on co-enrollment, particularly in priority areas, has allowed Thrive and its partners to have greater collective impact together, and to avoid duplication of services.
- **At the same time, figuring out how to maintain partnerships and bring together resources from multiple sources has required the program to iterate and evolve.** A variety of factors including COVID, staffing changes, and program expansions have called for flexibility and willingness to experiment with new methods for outreach, service delivery, and training. Future programs that aim for coordinated service delivery may also take several iterations to figure out.
- **Participants noted that starting by looking at their budgets and what is needed for self-sufficiency helped them to develop long-term career plans.** In the words of one Thrive participant, "Yeah, when the first initial in-person appointment I had with [my case manager], actually, lasted quite a long time, and we did a ton of paperwork, including budgets and where all of our funds are going and everything. And that meeting opened my eyes to the fact that we're actually, like every month just starting over in the red. We are just perpetually negative financially. So that was another big push to get an education that could give us more income in the future."

ECONOMIC SECURITY FOR ALL: SOUTHWEST



435

**EcSA PARTICIPANTS
ENROLLED**



95

**AVG ENROLLMENT
DURATION (DAYS)**



\$7,537

**MEDIAN QUARTERLY
INCOME AFTER EcSA
(AVERAGE)**

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

EDUCATION



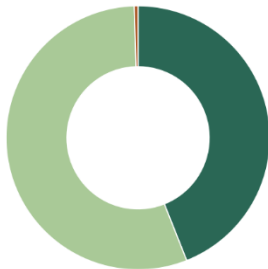
- No HS Diploma (11%)
- HS Graduate (46%)
- Some college (23%)
- AA or Technical Degree (13%)
- BA Degree (7%)
- Graduate Degree (1%)

AGE



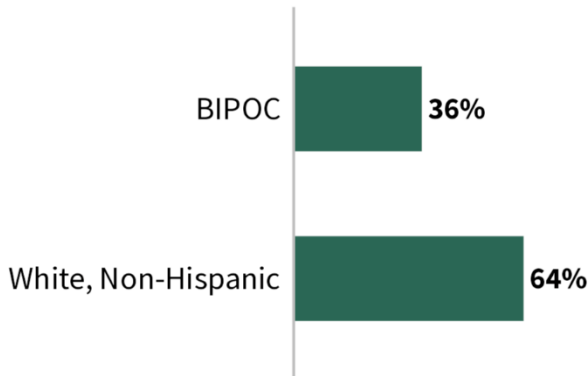
- 18 - 21 (3%)
- 22 - 29 (18%)
- 30 - 44 (43%)
- 45 - 54 (24%)
- 55 + (12%)

GENDER

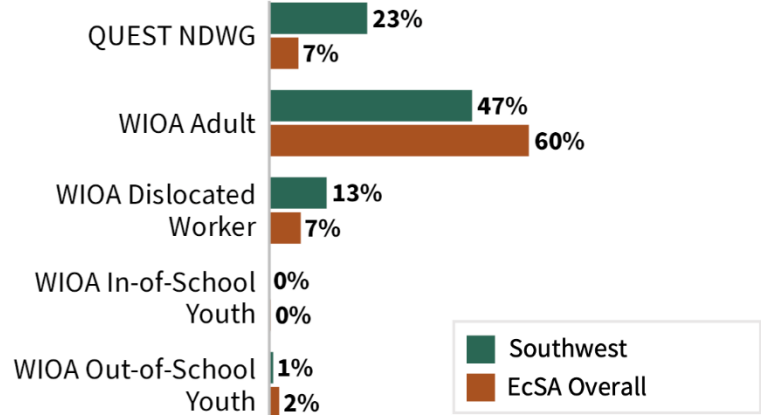


- Male (44%)
- Female (56%)
- Decline to state (1%)

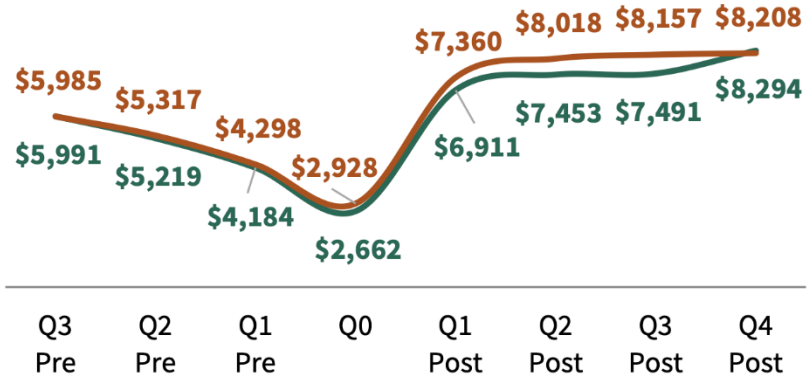
RACE & ETHNICITY



CO-ENROLLMENT PARTICIPATION



MEDIAN QUARTERLY EARNINGS



SERVICES

- | | |
|---|---|
| 9
CAREER SERVICES
(AVG PER PARTICIPANT) | 3%
RECEIVING
WORK EXPERIENCE |
| 2
CAREER PLAN
(AVG PER PARTICIPANT) | 6%
RECEIVING
MENTORSHIP |
| 1
SUPPORTIVE SERVICES
(AVG PER PARTICIPANT) | 3%
RECEIVING
FINANCIAL LITERACY |
| 3
SELF SUFFICIENCY
CALCULATOR
(AVG PER PARTICIPANT) | 13%
RECEIVING
PERSONAL STABILITY
WORKSHOP |

10. Spokane Workforce Council

One of the first four EcSA pilot programs launched in 2019, Spokane Workforce Council leveraged its EcSA funding to further its vision of a comprehensive social services center for low-income residents. It offers its program based out of the Resource Center of Spokane County, which features 11 social service agencies that provide services to EcSA participants (and others), including housing and utility assistance, DSHS application assistance, mental health and chemical dependency counseling, transportation, justice reentry, and healthcare. Spokane braids multiple funding sources to provide the intensive case management and support services that its EcSA clients need. For example, it has leveraged other non-WIOA grants to provide EcSA participants with direct rental and utility assistance, and it uses funding (50/50 match funds) through the Basic Food Employment and Training program for its strategies for success, financial literacy, and life skills training.

Key Program Design Elements

Spokane's approach and program structure are based in coordinated case management and workforce readiness and/or sector-based training services. The program and its staff are co-located in the Resource Center of Spokane County. EcSA funds support four staff positions: one intake specialist, two career navigators, and one supervisor. Staff conduct most of their job functions in person with clients and partner staff. Staff hired to fill these positions include people with lived experience of poverty and barriers to employment.

The EcSA program staff provide intensive case management services, pre-employment skills training, and placement in skills training. Their approach is to meet people where they are at—to address the most immediate needs first (e.g., by providing a meal) and then work across providers to determine what enrollment is most appropriate. They hold an optional weekly EcSA orientation session for newly recruited or referred participants to explain the program services and eligibility criteria. Navigators assess whether potential participants are appropriate for enrollment in EcSA or need to pursue other services first.

Enrollment in EcSA includes working with a navigator to build an individual employment plan, assessing a sustainable income goal, and working on a budget, which is a more comprehensive view of overall financial needs. Spokane's program provides supportive services based on needs related to completing each individual plan. Staff try to move people through the program in 6 to 8 months, but many participants stay in the program longer—up to 18 months—to achieve a sustained living wage and maintain employment. Staff meet in a group every week and discuss their caseloads individually with supervisors. Supportive service levels are set individually based on participants' individual plans.

Caring about what we do matters. EcSA doesn't just affect our clients, it affects the people that work here. What we go through here legitimately changes lives for everyone involved...These principles and things we implement with our clients, we do with each other – holding each other accountable. [Navigator]

Key partnerships

The program maintains strong partnerships with a total of 11 partner organizations, some of which are located at the center or send staff there on a regular basis. Co-located partners conduct coordinated case management meetings and hold weekly meetings to discuss shared resources, safety issues, and programming concerns. Key partners located at the center include the following:

- Community Health Association of Spokane (CHAS) has full-time staff on site providing medical advocacy and assistance signing up for health care insurance to people with limited English proficiency—communicating with clients in French, Marshallese, Russian, Ukrainian.
- Pioneer Health and Human Services has full-time staff providing services to people dealing with justice involvement, substance abuse, and homelessness. Their services include pre-employment training and services.
- Career Path Services provides workforce training programs for people with limited English proficiency, EcSA services, and a childcare subsidy program.
- Revive Reentry works with justice-involved individuals and provides diversity, equity, and inclusion training to all the partner staff.

The program maintains multiple additional partnerships and referral sources with organizations that are not co-located to meet the needs of EcSA participants.

Successes and Lessons Learned

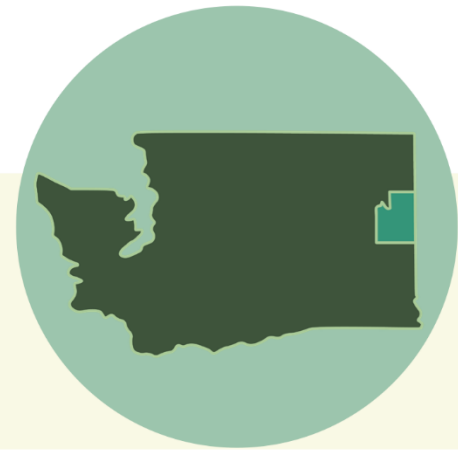
Spokane staff shared several recent successes and learnings from program implementation.

- **Blended funding.** Spokane continues to successfully leverage multiple sources of funding to provide ongoing, comprehensive, place-based services in Spokane to meet the needs of EcSA participants to achieve economic stability and growth.
- **Staff safety.** Rising homelessness and substance use in the community have created challenges for staff safety. These challenges have been met with additional staff training, the transition from a security officer to a resource specialist, and the creation of a safety plan to ensure that clients and staff are safe while accessing and providing services.
- **Childcare crisis.** Spokane has developed the Reconnec2Work (RC2W)⁴² childcare initiative along with other community partners to offset childcare costs for families who earn too much to qualify for the childcare subsidy but are still struggling to meet their basic needs. By leveraging American Rescue Plan Act funds from Spokane County, and a Congressional Directed Spending allocation from Washington Senator Patty Murray, the program helps cover childcare costs for families living in Spokane County with income that is below 160 percent of the state median income—including copays and up to \$8,000 per family per calendar year. It is working with EcSA participants to help support parents to increase their wages and long-term income. The program provides payment directly to childcare providers; it is not considered income to the family. It also serves to support the stability of

⁴² For more information, go to www.reconnect2work.org

childcare availability in the county. This is part of a larger initiative in the county to address the low wages of childcare providers while training additional childcare workers. Spokane is also working with area employers to encourage increased availability of childcare for their workforce.

ECONOMIC SECURITY FOR ALL: SPOKANE



502

EcSA PARTICIPANTS
ENROLLED



129

AVG ENROLLMENT
DURATION (DAYS)



\$7,196

MEDIAN QUARTERLY
INCOME AFTER EcSA
(AVERAGE)

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

EDUCATION



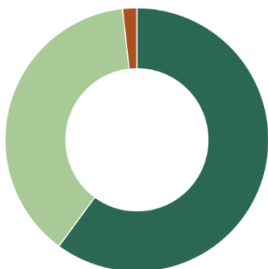
- No HS Diploma (10%)
- HS Graduate (45%)
- Some college (23%)
- AA or Technical Degree (13%)
- BA Degree (7%)
- Graduate Degree (2%)

AGE



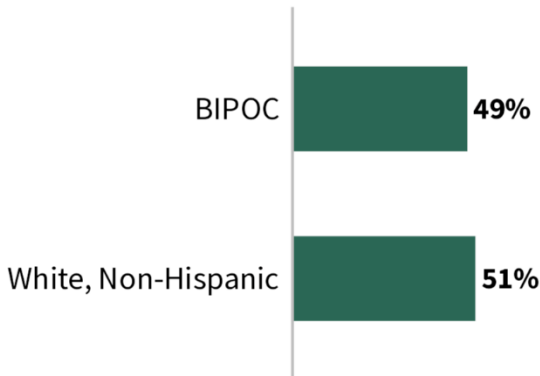
- 18 - 21 (1%)
- 22 - 29 (10%)
- 30 - 44 (46%)
- 45 - 54 (25%)
- 55 + (17%)

GENDER

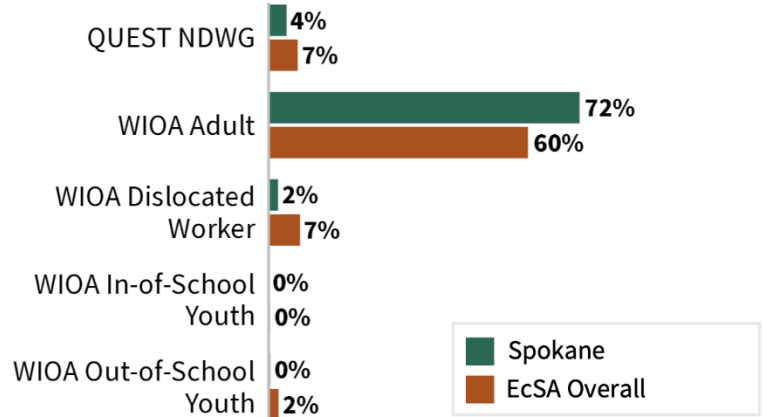


- Male (60%)
- Female (38%)
- Decline to state (2%)

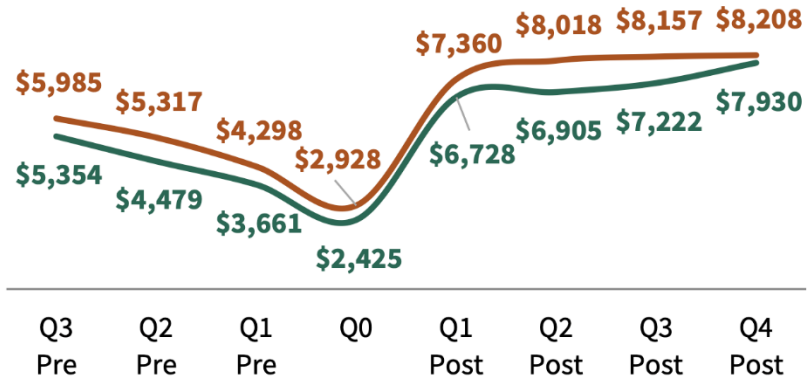
RACE & ETHNICITY



CO-ENROLLMENT PARTICIPATION



MEDIAN QUARTERLY EARNINGS



SERVICES

10
CAREER SERVICES
(AVG PER PARTICIPANT)

2
CAREER PLAN
(AVG PER PARTICIPANT)

2
SUPPORTIVE SERVICES
(AVG PER PARTICIPANT)

2
SELF SUFFICIENCY
CALCULATOR
(AVG PER PARTICIPANT)

1%
RECEIVING
WORK EXPERIENCE

0%
RECEIVING
MENTORSHIP

1%
RECEIVING
FINANCIAL LITERACY

13%
RECEIVING
PERSONAL STABILITY
WORKSHOP

11. Tacoma-Pierce County Workforce Development Council

The Tacoma-Pierce County WDC, referred to as WorkForce Central (WFC), was one of the first four EcSA pilot programs, launched in 2019. WFC expanded both its geographic focus and its target population as the EcSA program developed. It recruits participants with significant barriers to work with unmet social service needs, who are often disconnected from the WorkSource Center and workforce development programs. WFC first focused on the 98404 zip code in East Tacoma but later expanded to additional zip codes (98402, 98409, 98499, and 98444). The program has also expanded its approach by connecting EcSA participants to training for high-wage, in-demand jobs through community colleges in Pierce County. WFC has also developed a career boost training program, which is a cohort-based career-readiness training model. This program model provides individualized services for each program participant.

Key Program Design Elements

WFC's EcSA program is woven into all of its WIOA contracts, including its Youth, Adult, and Dislocated Worker programs. WFC employs approximately twenty case managers for its programs, with the number increasing significantly in response to the increased demand for services post-pandemic. Additionally, WFC has a program coordinator who monitors the contracts and oversees the partnerships and program activities. The WFC EcSA program has maintained the same program coordinator since the program began, which has been beneficial in building and maintaining relationships with partners.

WFC contracts with Career TEAM to provide WIOA and EcSA services. With its partners, WFC has developed an outreach team that hosts EcSA participant recruitment events in the community. This team consists of staff from partner agencies—Goodwill, Tacoma Housing Authority, and Career TEAM. Some key outreach methods that the team utilizes include hosting in-person or virtual workshops and events, attending resource fairs with community partners, reverse referrals from community colleges and training providers, and a self-referral form through WorkSource Pierce.

Over the last three years, WFC has led an outreach event called Collaboration for a Cause, hosted in partnership with Goodwill. This event is designed to bring employment, training, housing, basic needs, and other resources to communities throughout Pierce County, making them more accessible for eligible EcSA participants. WFC also hosted the Lakewood Thrive Outreach Run, which was designed to increase connections with multiple community partners.

The WFC EcSA program uses the United Way Common Referral System, which coordinates connections to supportive services. All partners can submit a referral on behalf of the EcSA participant for potential supportive services. The highest number of referrals have come from Tacoma Housing Authority and Goodwill. There is also a quarterly spike of college referrals around at the beginning of the quarter or at the end of the quarter.

Key Partnerships

WFC's EcSA partnerships have changed significantly over time. Some original community partners were unable to continue with the project due to the pandemic. WFC now maintains seven key partners: 1) Career TEAM, 2) Tacoma Housing Authority, 3) Bates Technical College, 4) Pierce Technical College, 5) Clover Park Technical College, 6) Goodwill, and 7) Metropolitan Development Council. The technical colleges provide training, while Goodwill provides personal stability and financial coaching services, and the Metropolitan Development Council provides mentoring services. The Career TEAM coordinates the partnerships, holding regular meetings with partner organizations. Meetings are structured around how to best serve customers and how to connect and partner with smaller community-based organizations (such as organizations hosting local food banks, clothes drives, etc.).

Successes and Lessons Learned

Staff shared several successes and learnings from their program implementation.

- **Training cohorts.** The EcSA team has developed two cohort training programs geared toward improving career and interview readiness—Career Boost and Career Launch. They have found the cohort model for trainings to be successful.
- **Common Referral System.** WFC uses the Common Referral System, supported by United Way, which consists of a user-friendly Smartsheet that coordinates connections to supportive services. All partners have access to the system, which allows them to see all incoming and outgoing participant referrals. There have been a few adjustments made over time, including using service names instead of grant names to make the process easier to understand and more user-friendly. WFC has also recently created the self-referral page through WorkSource Pierce, which has been a useful tool for outreach.
- **Partnering with community-based organizations.** WFC works with community partners to provide a unique set of services based on their geographic footprints and specializations. Post-pandemic, WFC has been partnering with smaller community-based organizations that host in-person events, such as food drives and clothing drives.
- **Self-sufficiency calculator.** WFC was the first EcSA program to use the self-sufficiency calculator, administering it when someone enters and exits the program. This served as the model for EcSA programs across the state, and it is now a required element in all EcSA programs.

ECONOMIC SECURITY FOR ALL: TACOMA-PIERCE



809

**EcSA PARTICIPANTS
ENROLLED**



108

**AVG ENROLLMENT
DURATION (DAYS)**



\$7,549

**MEDIAN QUARTERLY
INCOME AFTER EcSA
(AVERAGE)**

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

EDUCATION



- No HS Diploma (11%)
- HS Graduate (51%)
- Some college (9%)
- AA or Technical Degree (17%)
- BA Degree (9%)
- Graduate Degree (3%)

AGE



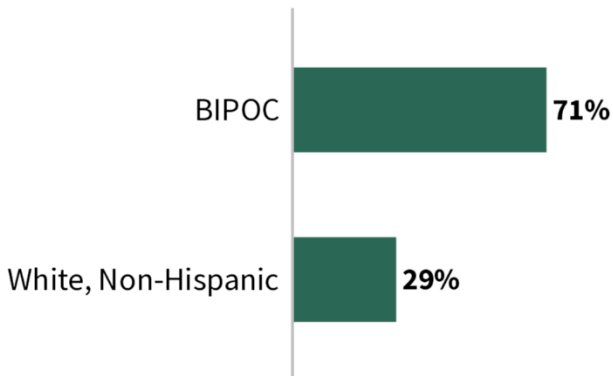
- 18 - 21 (4%)
- 22 - 29 (15%)
- 30 - 44 (45%)
- 45 - 54 (21%)
- 55 + (15%)

GENDER

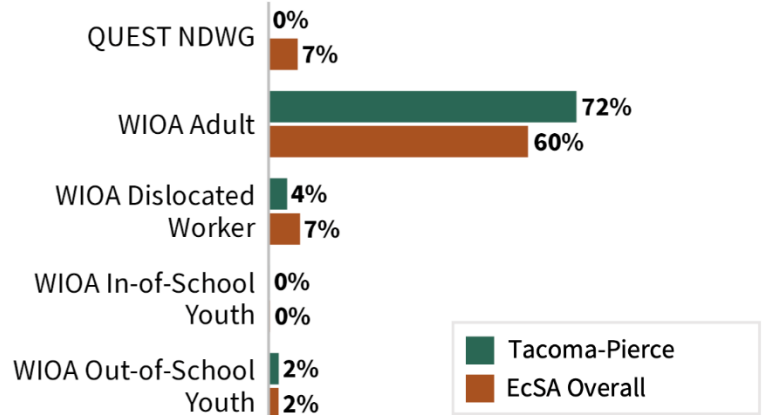


- Male (50%)
- Female (49%)
- Decline to state (1%)

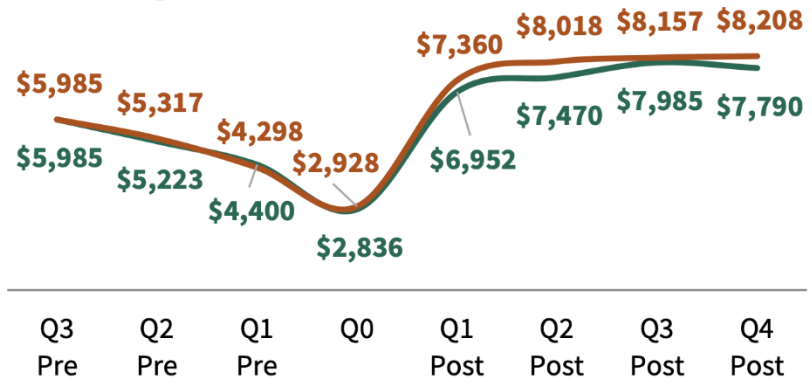
RACE & ETHNICITY



CO-ENROLLMENT PARTICIPATION



MEDIAN QUARTERLY EARNINGS



SERVICES

- | | |
|---|--|
| 3
CAREER SERVICES
(AVG PER PARTICIPANT) | 4%
RECEIVING
WORK EXPERIENCE |
| 1
CAREER PLAN
(AVG PER PARTICIPANT) | 0%
RECEIVING
MENTORSHIP |
| 1
SUPPORTIVE SERVICES
(AVG PER PARTICIPANT) | 4%
RECEIVING
FINANCIAL LITERACY |
| 3
SELF SUFFICIENCY
CALCULATOR
(AVG PER PARTICIPANT) | 1%
RECEIVING
PERSONAL STABILITY
WORKSHOP |

Appendix B. Administrative Data Collection and Measures

Data description

Preliminary conversations between SPR and ESD held in early 2023 suggested that the likelihood of SPR's ability to access individual-level data, which would include labor market outcomes from ESD's Unemployment Insurance division, was very low given the existing restrictions around data sharing. As a result, SPR proposed, and ESD accepted, exchanging administrative data in aggregate form, which would not conflict with any existing procedures. ESD and SPR collaborated in defining the data fields that would be included in the data transmission. The resulting set included several types of data, as described below:

- Enrollment, average program duration, and co-enrollment with other workforce development programs, by grantee.
- Types and frequency of services offered, by grantee and demographic groups (age, gender, race and ethnicity, educational attainment, housing status).
- The demographic profile of EcSA participants, by grantee and demographic group, as defined above.
- Employment data, defined as the number of participants who were employed. SPR received data for the three quarters before participation and up to four quarters after exit (if available). For participants who completed more than one EcSA participation spell, the enrollment quarter was defined as the quarter of first participation and the exit quarter was defined as the exit quarter of the last participation spell. SPR received these data by site and major demographic groups.
- Median quarterly earnings, by site and sociodemographic group. SPR received median quarterly earnings for the three quarters before participation and up to four quarters after exit, as defined above. SPR received data by site and major demographic groups.
- Counts of post-exit employment by the industry of employment (regardless of the quarter of enrollment). These data were only available by grantee.

Note About Constructed Measures

Several of the original data fields had to be processed to derive usable measures. Below, we offer brief descriptions of how these measures were constructed.

- Co-enrollment was defined as the percentage of EcSA participants who enrolled in various WIOA Title I-funded programs out of the unduplicated count of all EcSA participants.
- The percentage of BIPOC participants was calculated by calculating the sum of all the participants who mentioned belonging to a specific BIPOC group and of all participants who mentioned belonging to two or more racial groups, one of which belonged to the

BIPOC category, and then dividing this sum to the total number of participants who offered valid responses to this question.

- Employment was defined as the percentage of participants who were employed out of the total employment cohort for a given quarter (defined as the sum of the participants who were employed and the number of participants who were not employed). The employment cohort for each quarter included only participants who had exited long enough to qualify for the measure. For example, the Quarter 4 after exit cohort included only EcSA exiters who had exited at least four continuous quarters during the quarter when the measurement was made.
- For employment, pre-post changes were calculated as the difference in percentage points between the average employment percentage in all available post-exit quarters and the average employment percentage in all baseline quarters (defined as all preparticipation quarters and the participation quarter). For earnings, we calculated the percentage change between the average of median earnings of baseline quarters and the average of median earnings in the post-exit quarters.