

LEGISLATIVE REPORT

Economic Security for All

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Executive summary

In 2022, the Legislature appropriated state funds for Economic Security for All (EcSA) in proviso¹, expanding its capacity to deliver comprehensive and coordinated services to the 26% of Washingtonians who live in poverty.

EcSA is a poverty reduction model that coordinates existing programs to increase their collective ability to support low-income Washingtonians in their pursuit of equity, dignity and sustained self-sufficiency. A combination of intensive program navigation, local innovation and flexible support fills gaps and meets needs within existing programs and regulations. At the local level, EcSA is run by partnerships of community service providers, includes the voices of those who have experienced poverty, and is convened and coordinated by Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs). EcSA takes an innovative approach to equitably reduce poverty, focusing on historically marginalized populations and people with multiple obstacles to self-sufficiency.

In July 2022, EcSA began receiving state funding to continue the program. In response, Employment Security and LWDB partners committed to serving an additional 925 customers by June 2023, and in fact served 1,285 customers by that date. In the following year, July 2023 through June 2024, Employment Security committed to serving 1,324 customers to provide coordinated access to training and support, helping them and their families move out of poverty and become self-sufficient. EcSA is demonstrating performance above planned performance in the first quarter of the second year (July-September 2023), with enrollments, training, people reaching self-sufficiency, and spending all exceeding their targets for the quarter.

Highlights for July 2023 through September 2023

- Enrolled and established personalized self-sufficiency wage goals for 896 customers.
- Increased recruitment and participation of historically marginalized populations and unhoused individuals. Through September, close to half of EcSA participants were people of color and 10% unhoused.
- Placed 156 customers in training that leads to employment at self-sufficiency earnings.
- 149 customers have obtained employment at self-sufficiency earnings.

¹ [Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5693\(225\) \(25\), ch. 297, Laws of 2022](#)

- Median annualized earnings for those exiting the program with employment is \$45,282. This is for a population starting in poverty, 77% of whom had income below \$10,000 at the time of enrollment.

Background

Economic Security for All (EcSA) is a poverty reduction model that coordinates existing programs to increase their collective ability to support low-income Washingtonians in their pursuit of equity, dignity and sustained self-sufficiency.

Providers are required to:

- Build career plans around individualized self-sufficiency goals.
- Bundle services for each participant based on their individual needs.
- Focus efforts based on equity outcomes, in particular services to individuals who are BIPOC or unhoused.
- Coordinate services via local teams across all partner programs.
- Include voices of those with lived experience.

Within that framework, communities are empowered to innovate based on local opportunities and needs. At the local level, EcSA is run by partnerships of community service providers, including the voices of those who have experienced poverty, and is convened and coordinated by Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs).

EcSA serves low-income Washingtonians with an equity focus.

Over 1.8 million Washingtonians, 26% of the state's population, are currently living in households that earn less than 200% of the federal poverty level (FPL). Of those, more than 500,000 are children, a number greater than the populations of the cities of Spokane and Tacoma combined.

Local EcSA partnerships are implementing new models to increase their collective impact for Washingtonians experiencing poverty, with a strong focus on equity. The model's commitment to equity and inclusion is reflected in customer demographics.

- Almost half of the customers served are people of color — compared to 22% of the statewide population.

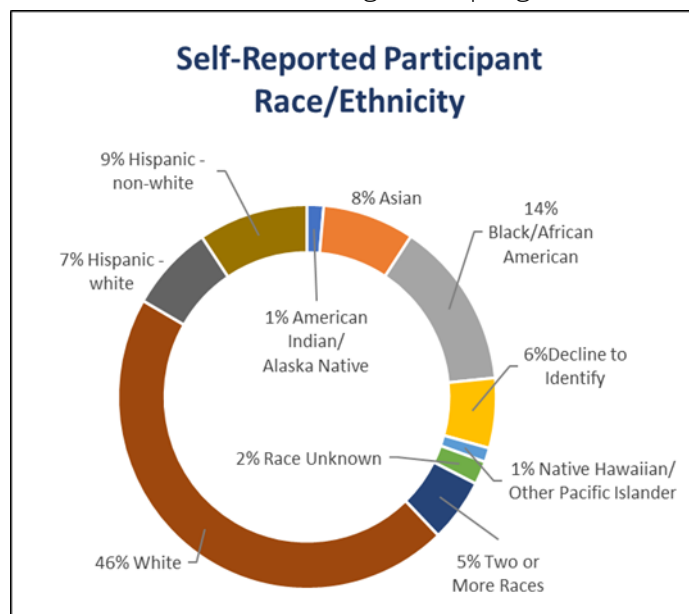
- About 10% of EcSA customers are unhoused, and all are in poverty, with income below the eligibility threshold for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).
- EcSA serves customers in rural and urban areas of the state.

Providing services

Employment Security and local teams have engaged over 160 local partner organizations to ensure that customers get all the services for which they are eligible, with as few barriers as possible. This requires intentionality at the local, regional and state levels.

Local. LWDBs and their subcontractors consider how best to leverage local programs and resources to coordinate delivery of the following services:

- Bundling multiple benefits to stabilize customers' households.
- Creating career plans for customers to reach a self-sufficiency earnings goal.
- Coordinating wrap-around support across programs to fill gaps in benefits.
- Connecting to training or education, with supports to cover living expenses.
- Supporting customers until they achieve self-sufficiency.



Regional. LWDBs lead local partnerships with community organizations as well as people experiencing poverty. Depending on local need, partnerships include housing insecurity programs, workforce development programs, local Department of Social & Health Services (DSHS) service providers and other community-based organizations. The LWDBs also manage subcontractors, ensuring that all applicable rules are followed and sharing best practices across programs.

State. EcSA has a technical advisory committee, comprising representatives from state agency partners, labor unions, nonprofit organizations, and local implementation leaders. It advises Employment Security, providing guidance on programmatic decisions related to required elements, service delivery, program alignment and policy.

Including people who have experienced poverty

People experiencing poverty have often been treated as the greatest barrier to their own advancement. The EcSA program recognizes that the best source of expertise is the people who live there. Human-centered design is foundational to EcSA. Many of EcSA's staff and partners have lived experience of poverty. Local programs partner with others who have escaped poverty. EcSA programs place their experience at the center of the work.

Goals, outcomes and expenditures

The EcSA program is dedicated to accomplishing the following goals:

- 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.

Bundling services

Cycles of poverty are reinforced and maintained by the complexity of program requirements and by a lack of awareness of available resources. Even when people in need are aware of programs, accessing them often becomes a full-time job. EcSA combats this challenge by having experienced staff navigate and leverage all available services. This support allows customers to maintain focus on the details of their plan.

Using career plans to achieve self-sufficiency.

People live in poverty for different reasons. A one-size-fits-all program is not sufficient to address their needs. Differences in personal circumstances, individual needs and regional requirements all demand that each customer be assessed based on their own individual need. To accomplish this, EcSA has partnered with the University of Washington Self-Sufficiency Standard and Seattle-King County Workforce Development Council to assess customers using a *self-sufficiency calculator*. Each customer's self-sufficiency goal varies depending on family composition, geographic location, and individual economic factors. The self-sufficiency assessment establishes the goal that case managers and customers use to co-create career

plans, which are designed to stabilize and move customers and their households out of poverty permanently.

Coordinated wrap-around services provide stability.

During the process of exiting poverty, instability often occurs when people take the first steps to improve their situation. These steps often make them ineligible for the services they previously relied on for survival. For this reason, stability is one of the most vital parts of the process. The program uses a comprehensive approach to ensure that unexpected issues are avoided when possible — and addressed quickly when not. State EcSA funding is less restrictive than many federal support-service resources and allows local programs the flexibility to cover an unexpected change in child care costs, a heating bill, help with a rent payment, and other obstacles that often knock people off their path to self-sufficiency.

Removing barriers at local, state and federal levels

Many programs designed to serve people experiencing poverty have been developed and implemented independently of one another. As a result, eligibility, enrollment and outcome requirements often don't align across programs. Customers must go through multiple cumbersome application processes to secure the supports and services they need to be successful. This burden often discourages them from accessing services. It can also lead them to lose one benefit to receive another. The EcSA program is designed to address these risks wherever possible. At the service delivery level, case managers and staff must understand the rules of various programs and carefully plan to prevent unexpected loss of benefits and hardship. At the program level, EcSA is partnering with local front-line service providers, state agencies — including DSHS — and those at the federal level to identify and remove structural policy and process barriers, where possible, to improve cross-program partnerships.

Washington College Grant: Removing a barrier to access

Employment Security and the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) have entered an agreement to provide EcSA participants with automatic income eligibility for the Washington College Grant. This eliminates the requirement to complete state or federal financial aid applications for the first year of training enrollment. Both agencies are collaborating with local partners to implement this agreement in coordination with local EcSA teams and financial aid offices at postsecondary schools across the state.

Measuring outcomes

Methodology

The targets for each measure and each LWDB were established during contract development. Employment Security monitors the variation between targets and actuals each quarter.

Highlights

Employment Security and LWDB partners committed to serving an additional 1,324 customers with the FY24 EcSA funding. Through the end of the first quarter of performance (Sept. 30, 2023), EcSA has already exceeded the first quarter enrollment, training and attaining self-sufficiency commitment and is on track to enroll far more customers than anticipated by the end the fiscal year. Below is a summary of key program indicators for the first quarter of FY24 (July 1 through Sept. 30, 2023):

- Enrolled and established personalized self-sufficiency wage goals for 896 customers.
- Focused on historically marginalized populations for customer recruitment.
- Served almost 50% people of color and 10% unhoused.
- Placed 156 customers in training that leads to employment at self-sufficiency earnings.
- Helped 149 customers obtain employment at self-sufficiency earnings.
- The median annualized earnings for those exiting the program with employment is \$45,282. This is for a population starting in poverty, 77% of whom had income below \$10,000 at the time of enrollment.

Enrollments over life of the program:

LWDB	Year 1 Target	Year 1 Actual	Year 1 First Quarter Target	Year 1 First Quarter Actual	Total Actual July 22-Sep 23
Olympic	57	95	47	55	150
Pacific Mountain	79	128	39	30	158
Northwest	7	88	81	88	176
Snohomish	72	80	50	57	137
Seattle-King	136	259	173	337	596
Tacoma-Pierce	155	162	65	99	261
Southwest	156	188	40	55	243
North Central	40	42	28	44	86
South Central	64	64	42	40	104
Eastern			6	0	0
Benton-Franklin	59	72	19	26	98
Spokane	106	107	40	65	172
Statewide Total	931	1285	630	896	2181

Training services

Training services are connections to training offered at community colleges or other local training providers to provide specific vocational skills that lead to employment with self-sufficiency earnings. Training services include training funded through partner resources, including Pell Grant, Washington College Grant, DSHS (BFET, WorkFirst) or WIOA programs. EcSA training funding is used to fill the gap when there is unmet need or when a training does not qualify for other resources.

Through September 2023, a total of 156 customers have entered training that leads to employment with self-sufficiency earnings. Employment Security is finding that customers need longer to complete training programs, which results in delays for people obtaining jobs that pay self-sufficient wages.

Customers receiving training over life of the program:

LWDB	Year 1 Target	Year 1 Actual	Year 2 First Quarter Target	Year 2 First Quarter Actual	Total Actual July 22-Sep 23
Olympic	9	51	5	0	51
Pacific Mountain	41	49	8	13	62
Northwest	3	32	34	32	64
Snohomish	21	21	3	4	25
Seattle-King	51	138	0	32	170
Tacoma-Pierce	117	54	7	21	75
Southwest	96	9	5	6	15
North Central	40	36	28	20	56
South Central	40	45	35	23	68
Eastern			6	0	0
Benton-Franklin	25	32	2	1	33
Spokane	29	26	2	4	30
Statewide Total	472	493	135	156	649

Placements in employment with self-sufficiency earnings

Through September 2023, local EcSA models have helped 167 customers, or 67% of exited customers, obtain jobs that pay self-sufficient wages. This is 73% of the statewide target of 228. Many of the local areas below target on this indicator have a high number of customers currently engaged in training with anticipated end dates in summer 2023.

LWDB	Year 1 Target	Year 1 Actual	Year 2 1st Quarter Target	Year 2 1st Quarter Actual	Total Actual July 22-Sep 23
Olympic	14	37	17	10	47
Pacific Mountain	34	55	0	0	55
Northwest	3	12	5	23	35
Snohomish	51	19	2	20	39
Seattle-King	34	106	0	17	123
Tacoma-Pierce	69	43	5	16	59
Southwest	86	50	0	26	76
North Central	20	11	4	7	18
South Central	22	21	5	8	29
Eastern			0	0	0
Benton-Franklin	36	36	3	3	39
Spokane	8	34	4	19	53
Statewide Total	377	424	45	149	573

Career and support services

Career services. Case managers help customers navigate career services, which include customer assessments, referrals to partner resources, career counseling and plan development, mentorship, financial literacy, workforce preparation activities, and job search and placement assistance. The table below includes only those career services provided directly with EcSA funding. The table does not include career services provided through partner resources.

Support services. Services include only those supports directly provided with EcSA funds: rental assistance, child care, healthcare, transportation, incentive payments and other work and training related expenses. The table does not include supports provided to customers through partner resources.

Career and support services over life of the program:

LWDB	Career services Year 1	Support services Year 1	Career Services Year 2 Q1	Support Services Year 2 Q1	Total Career Services Actual July 22-Sep 23	Total Support Services Actual July 22-Sep 23
Olympic	156	188	42	15	198	203
Pacific Mountain	136	135	0	0	136	135
Northwest	77	143	11	0	88	143
Snohomish	107	3	122	7	229	10
Seattle-King	704	99	205	36	909	135
Tacoma-Pierce	430	57	44	46	474	103
Southwest	261	19	209	42	470	61
North Central	34	147	17	11	51	158
South Central	316	137	109	30	425	167
Eastern			0	0	0	0
Benton-Franklin	336	70	37	7	373	77
Spokane	414	83	45	13	459	96
Statewide Total	2971	1081	841	207	3812	1288

Expenditures

Total contract (July 2022 – June 2023) and expenditures (July 2023 to September 2023)

LWDB	Total Contract	Total Expenditures
Olympic	\$368,207.00	339600.81
Pacific Mountain	\$522,444.00	522430.28
Northwest	\$69,694.00	69694
Snohomish	\$591,165.00	570541.48
Seattle-King	\$1,039,448.00	1020825.18
Tacoma-Pierce	\$745,364.00	745364
Southwest	\$557,764.00	557764
North Central	\$493,711.00	518711
South Central	\$552,518.00	542730.73
Benton-Franklin	\$459,166.00	443320.97
Spokane	\$613,519.00	613519
Statewide Total	\$6,013,000.00	\$5,944,501.45

Expenditures: by category

LWDB	Career Services 2nd Year 1st Qtr	Training Expend 2nd Year 1st Qtr	Support Services Exp 2nd Year 1st Qtr	Other Spending 2nd Year 1st Qtr *	Total Expend Qtr 1
Olympic	19,795.81	7,100.00	1,017.36	7,340.97	35,254.14
Pac Mtn	49,838.31	-	20,600.00	23,554.00	93,992.31
Northwest	16,578.06	563.00	15,400.00	2772.77	35,313.83
Snohomish	68,965.85	4,071.61	3,855.00	131,778.55	208,671.01
Seattle-King	0	0	1,368.14	238,654.81	240,022.95
Tacoma-Pierce	50,918.00	37,013.00	21,917.00	49,521.00	159,369.00
Southwest	84,129.44		5,195.38	75,169.86	164,494.68
North Central	19,664.74	7,909.50	27,561.32	12,745.72	67,881.28
South Central	176.67	13,855.50	4,551.46	119,758.38	138,342.01
Eastern **	0	0	0	0	0
Benton Franklin	0	0	0	10,801.63	10,801.63
Spokane	97,858.54	8,643.05	1,798.83	15,931.95	124,232.37
Statewide Total	407,925.42	79,155.66	103,264.49	688,029.64	1,278,375.21

*Includes navigators, customer outreach, case management staff and coordination with partner organizations.

** Eastern LWDB did not participate in EcSA Year 1 and began their program as of 7/1/2023.

Implementation highlights

Each LWDB is implementing innovative and locally driven practices to deliver EcSA services. Below is a description of local implementation highlights in four categories: recruiting and serving unhoused participants, recruiting, and serving refugee populations, two-generation financial literacy training, and cohort training.

Participants experiencing houselessness

Spokane Workforce Council created a network of partnerships that refer participants that are unhoused to the EcSA program knowing it can provide a path to self-sufficiency. Together, these organizations collaborate seamlessly to help stabilize participants who are unhoused with housing and basic needs assistance while also providing support services to bolster the well-being of the individual and prepare them to transition into educational and career development activities.

The Spokane County Resource Center is the central hub for these services and well known throughout the community as the starting point for unhoused individuals to receive assistance on their journey to self-sufficiency. Over 15% of Spokane's EcSA participants identify as homeless upon entering the program, compared to approximately 10% of EcSA participants statewide. **The partners in this network include:**

- SNAP (Spokane Neighborhood Action Partners).
- Revive (Reentry Homes & Services).
- Pioneer Human Services.
- Spokane Housing Authority.
- Department of Social & Health Services.
- Catholic Charities.
- The ARC of Spokane.
- Goodwill Industries of the Inland Northwest.
- Partners with Families and Children.

Refugee populations

In Tacoma and Pierce County, Workforce Central saw an influx in Russian and Ukrainian refugees requesting assistance through EcSA last year. In response, they focused resources on these populations, including adding multilingual staff, launching a WorkSource orientation in Russian and Ukrainian, advertising in both languages and creating new training opportunities.

In addition to providing support with resume reviews, interview skills and job search activities, Workforce Central connected EcSA participants with partner resources to assist them with their needs outside of training and job placement. They continue to build relationships with new partners to best serve participants holistically, combining services from EcSA with those from community partners to create greater collective impact for the customer. Specifically, Tacoma Community House works with immigrants and refugees towards financial stability and Workforce Central continues in partnership through job placement.

Workforce Central hosted 20 outreach events, with the majority being in Ukrainian and Russian. Partner organizations hosted 36 additional outreach events. This resulted in 127 new participants enrolled into EcSA.

Two-generation financial literacy training

Northwest Workforce Council is partnering with the Opportunity Council to provide financial literacy training to participants using a two-generation approach. Families with children enrolled in either Head Start or the Early Childhood Education Assistance Program (ECEAP) receive financial resiliency training through EcSA with the parent and older children in the home attending training together. There are currently 47 families participating and receiving support with financial literacy, life skills, career services, mentoring and training.

With the last round of expanded EcSA funding, Northwest has increased staff and expanded programming to reach more rural communities throughout Island County with this two-generation approach. This model allows children to learn skills with their parents. Parents and children earn incentives throughout their training, which are banked until graduation. A single payment is made upon completion of the one-year financial literacy program. This helps mitigate the impacts of the benefits cliff as families move into higher income levels.

Cohort training

Pacific Mountain Workforce Board implemented a focused cohort approach placing EcSA participants together in groups, or cohorts, with a direct connection to a specific job and employer. The model provides peer support as EcSA participants complete training together. Cohort training can ensure that well-trained employees are equipped with the skills necessary for in-demand careers, while simultaneously providing local businesses with access to a pool of talented individuals.

The courses are tailored to meet the specific needs and demands of the job market, so EcSA participants receive training in areas where there is a demonstrated demand for workers with the specified skills. Training provided through this model emphasizes quality and relevance. Participants are equipped with industry-relevant skills, certifications and knowledge that align

with the current market requirements, increasing their employability and potential for career growth.

Participants gain an opportunity for hands-on work experience with local businesses. This not only enhances their practical skills but also provides them with insights into the real-world challenges and expectations of their chosen career paths. Businesses across industries including healthcare, transportation and construction benefit from the development of well-trained and motivated candidates, reducing recruitment costs, and minimizing onboarding time.

Recommendations

Based on results from the first three quarters and feedback from local implementation leaders, Employment Security has three recommendations.

Maintain high outcome standards as contractual requirements of EcSA and work with a third-party evaluator to evaluate their impact. EcSA adheres to the highest outcome standards for poverty reduction programs. These include:

- Achieving a full self-sufficiency wage.
- Bundling workforce, education and human services.
- Recruiting customers from demographics who have historically been marginalized..

Most poverty reduction programs do not require self-sufficiency wages as a customer outcome. They also rarely require a coordinated approach to bundling services or recruiting for equity. EcSA makes self-sufficiency, bundled services and equity contractual requirements that are measured, tracked and regularly reviewed with local partners.

Employment Security's Data Architecture Transformation & Analysis Division (DATA) is conducting a comprehensive evaluation of EcSA through June 2025. Developing and implementing a rigorous evaluation will help us understand the impact of EcSA on equity and poverty reduction, individually and collectively, as well as the impact of EcSA's strong accountability standards that require providers to recruit for equity, bundle multiple programs, and help customers reach full self-sufficiency wages.

Continue to support innovative local incentive payment models and evaluate their effectiveness. Incentive payment models are still early in implementation and being tested, but initial data indicate that these have potential. Employment Security's Data Architecture Transformation & Analysis division (DATA) is conducting a formal evaluation of EcSA incentive models to assess their effectiveness and compare outcomes for customers receiving

incentives against similar populations. These evaluations will be made available to all EcSA implementers for learning and development. The results will also help inform which models get funded in future.

Continue pursuing data sharing and waiver requests. Employment Security should continue to work with federal, state and local partners to identify and remove barriers that hinder the ability of local programs to streamline access to services and benefits. Specifically:

- Employment Security and DSHS should continue working together to identify and address partnership barriers and unintended negative impacts to customers' SNAP, TANF and other benefits. They should pursue data-sharing agreements, federal waiver requests and other remedies as appropriate.
- Employment Security and WSAC have finalized a data-sharing agreement and process to allow EcSA customers automatic income eligibility for the Washington College Grant. This will reduce a significant barrier to accessing postsecondary education by eliminating the requirement to complete state or federal financial aid applications for the first year of training enrollment. Employment Security and WSAC should monitor the early implementation of this new approach and continue it as appropriate in future years.

Endnotes

¹ DSHS analysis of 2020 American Community Survey data, using the SNAP threshold of 200% FPL as the poverty line.