

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy 2019 Update



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The statements, findings, conclusions, and recommendations are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Economic Development Administration or the US Department of Commerce.

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Introduction

What is a CEDS?

The US Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA)¹ recently designated the Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments (CWCOG) as an Economic Development District to include Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties. The CWCOG developed a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) designed to identify regional priorities for economic and community development. This Update reflects some of the changes and activities impacting the region over the last 12 months.

This document includes the following updates: economic conditions, progress towards CEDS implementation, projects listed in the 2018-2022 CEDS, and performance measures.

Economic Conditions Update

For the most part, economic conditions have remained stable over the last few years as the country has moved beyond the recession. The region saw a gain in average employment over the last 24 months, matching the gains at the national level in employment and improved in comparison, but still trailing behind national numbers.

Despite the region's struggles with overall income rate, health factors, and other related indicators, both counties are seeing strong economic activity in certain sectors. Cowlitz County is experiencing some significant development opportunities that could result in as much as \$4 billion in investments from several projects in the coming years. Wahkiakum County faces continuing challenges based on its limited existing economic base; however, the recent sale of the 38 Mile Brewery, among other activities, has bolstered confidence in the Wahkiakum market to some degree.

Housing continues to be a significant priority in the area. In addition to the traditional concerns of affordability and accessibility for entry- through executive-level workers, housing market pressures from the Vancouver area have provided new opportunities and contributed to an increased cost of housing. The limited supply of housing in both counties continue to challenge the economic vitality and is perceived to be slowing growth opportunities. Housing stats are up significantly over recent years with indications that this trend will continue.

The following table shows the new permit activity in the region according to the State of the Cities Data Systems site.

	2018	2017	2016	2015
Single Family Permits	221	197	167	124
Multi Family Permits	0	8	0	0

Table 1: Recent Permit Activity
Source: socds.hususer.gov/permits

¹ 13 CFR Part 304 (2016)



Fig 1: Planning Area
Source: CWCOG

Planning Area

The EDD encompasses Cowlitz and Wahkiakum Counties, spanning 14,303 square miles located in Southwest Washington. The 2-county region contains 6 incorporated jurisdictions, five in Cowlitz County (Castle Rock, Kalama, Kelso, Longview, and Woodland) and one in Wahkiakum County (Cathlamet).

Emerging Issues

As the region approaches the 40th anniversary of the Mount St. Helens Eruption, Spirit Lake and sediment in the Toutle-Cowlitz river system remain topics of discussion. The CWCOG has joined with federal and other partners to address and inform long-term management decisions regarding the changes caused by the 1980 eruption of Mount St. Helens. The result will address the ongoing risk of moderate and potentially catastrophic flooding due to the buildup of sediment in the system.

The eruption of Mount St. Helens caused ecological disruptions far away from the volcano. Chief among these was the choking of the Toutle, Cowlitz, Green, and Columbia rivers with sediment deposited by the lahars. Some 140 million tons of sediment entered the Cowlitz and Columbia rivers in the first four months after the eruption. Today, the sediment load of the Cowlitz and Columbia is estimated at 10 to 40 million tons per year. This poses problems for navigation and flooding as the channels continuously fill with sand, ash, and silt².

The largest river in the area, the Columbia, runs from southeast to northwest forming much of Cowlitz County's western/southwestern boundary. The Columbia River is a major commercial waterway enabling international commerce. Cowlitz County's three largest port areas are on the Columbia River near the cities of Woodland, Kalama, and Longview. Both Longview and Kalama currently serve international markets. The Port of Woodland has begun the long process to establish deep water draft facilities on the Columbia River. This will bolster the international traffic through the District.

²Cowlitz County Comprehensive Plan, 2017 update



Figure 2: Economic Development District
Source: CWCOG

Regional Priorities and Goals

The following list is in no order and is made up of the regional priorities of partners and stakeholders. These partners and stakeholders will move initiatives forward based on their capacity and needs. The CWCOG will assist where possible and focus on its yearly action plan.

1. Continue efforts to support operations of area ports and the management of the Columbia River Channel for trade.

Area partners continue to work to attract new investment and expand opportunities for area residents through a variety of projects in the region. The ports have been working to build the infrastructure to support existing employers' expansion needs and attract new employers to the area.

The Port of Woodland received a \$628,500 grant from the Community Economic Revitalization Board (CERB) for the Howard Way extension that will support Guild 1 and Guild 2 industrial park endeavors. The combined projects will add about 14 industrial sites to the community inventory.

The Port of Kalama is developing the 70-acre Spencer Creek Business Park, located north of Kalama River Road right off of Interstate 5. Facilities will be built over many years, and construction and operational activities are projected to support more than 1,000 jobs and millions of dollars in new local economic activity. The facility will support a mix of light industrial, office, commercial, and retail uses. Initial road construction has begun.



Figure 3: Port of Kalama – Spencer Creek Development starts construction in 2019
Source: Port of Kalama

The Port of Longview signed a new lease on the Bridgeview terminal with International Raw Materials that will support more than 30 jobs at the Port. The Port will begin engineering work on the \$100 million Industrial Rail Corridor Expansion Project in 2019. The Project was placed on the Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP) in early 2019.

Funds from the Cowlitz County Trails fund were provided to support CWCOG funds to develop initial cost estimates for the Six River Trail Plan implementation and to construct Phase I of the plan in Castle Rock. This trail spanning Cowlitz County will provide a huge resource for tourism development in the region.

3. Encourage and promote programs intended to enhance new business start-ups, entrepreneurial development, and small business growth.

Jeffery Peterson, Business Program Specialist from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), attended the October 31 CEDS Committee meeting educating the Committee on aspects of the USDA's revolving loan fund program. Jeffery provided several handouts to attendees that explained the Rural Business Development Grant Program, the Intermediary Relending Program, and the Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program.

A Revolving Loan Fund Task Force was established and meetings will continue during the remainder of 2019 to plan for the enhancement of the existing revolving loan fund resources available within the region.

The Longview Revolving Loan Fund Plan was updated per Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration requirements. The document was available for public comment at the beginning of September and was approved by the CWCOG Board of Directors and the City of Longview at their respective September meetings.



Figure 6: Wahkiakum Chamber of Commerce Trunk Sale
Source: Wahkiakum Chamber of Commerce



Figure 7: Castle Rock Farmers Market
Source: City of Castle Rock

Wahkiakum County continues to build its small farm niche to help create jobs and take advantage of the local food sourcing trends. The Wahkiakum Food and Farm Network continues to grow and attract interest within the community.



Figure 8: USDA Presentation in Cathlamet
Source: CWCOG

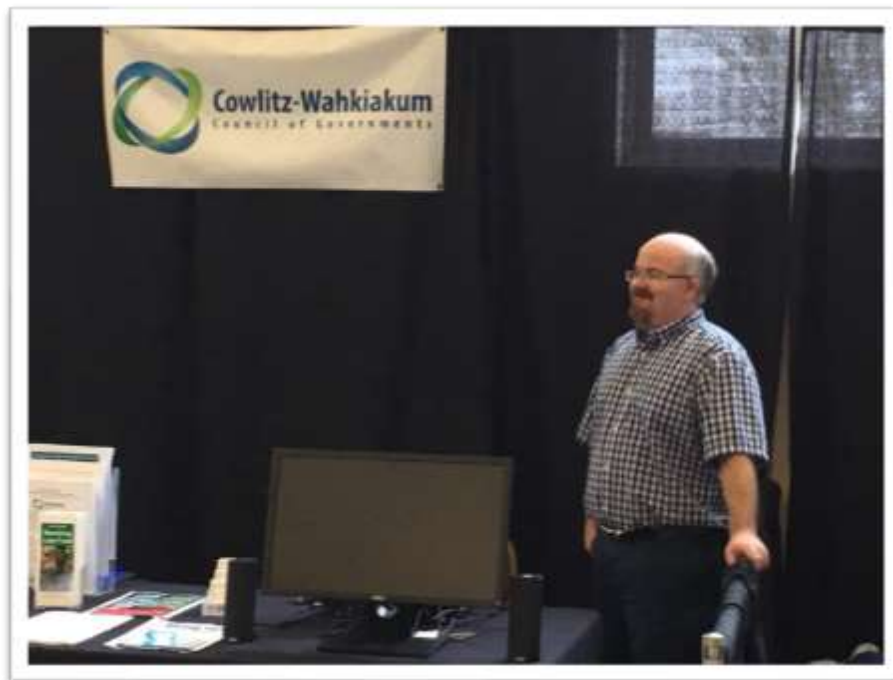


Figure 9: CWCOG at the Tourism and Business Expo
Source: CWCOG

The CWCOG has promoted a variety of programs including the Longview Revolving Loan Program at public events such as the Tourism and Business Expo as well as public speaking engagements.

Through a new partnership with Western Governors University (WGU), Lower Columbia College (LCC) has added eight new options for students looking to continue their higher education at home. WGU joins three other universities in the Lower Columbia Regional University Center, an on-campus program that provides “local opportunities for four-year degrees and beyond,” said LCC President Chris Bailey. Chris Bailey and WGU Washington Chancellor Tonya Drake, a Cowlitz County native and LCC graduate, made the announcement in April 2019.



Figure 10: WGU Community Announcement
Source: CWCOG

4. Maintain and enhance the district’s quality of life and quality of place efforts by supporting and coordinating cooperative efforts throughout the district.

A wide variety of events and activities have been held throughout the region to build quality of life and place for area residents.

Efforts to increase opportunities for youth sports and activities, regional trails, local parks, and outdoor recreation received a great deal of attention in the past 12 months.

Woodland, Longview, and Kelso are currently working on developing regional parks to support our youth and promote tourism. The City of Longview is considering a master plan for a regional athletic facility intending to move forward with construction in the coming years. The City of Woodland has acquired 40 acres of land on the top of Scott Hill that has been designated for use as a sports complex. The City and the Woodland Rotary are working on fundraising and development ideas. Kelso’s Tam O’Shanter Park will see a significant investment in parking and other amenities in 2019 and the Port of Longview’s Willow Grove park will see an influx of over \$800,000 in maintenance and development work.



Figure 11: Scott Hill Park logo
Source: City of Woodland



Figure 12: Community meeting seeking input on the Six Rivers Trail project
Source: CWCOG



Figure 13: Idea Sharing at the Wahkiakum County Regional Information Forum
Source: CWCOG

Significant progress was made during the year on the Six Rivers Trail project. The project team completed the initial visionary plan and received funding to conduct a follow-up study to identify initial cost estimates and for the first small project to be completed. An interactive Six Rivers Bike Trail map was created for the public to view and is available on the CWCOG website or on mobile devices using Explorer for ArcGIS.

The CWCOG is producing a quarterly newsletter to assist partners with funding options. This resource is received by over 200 people each quarter.

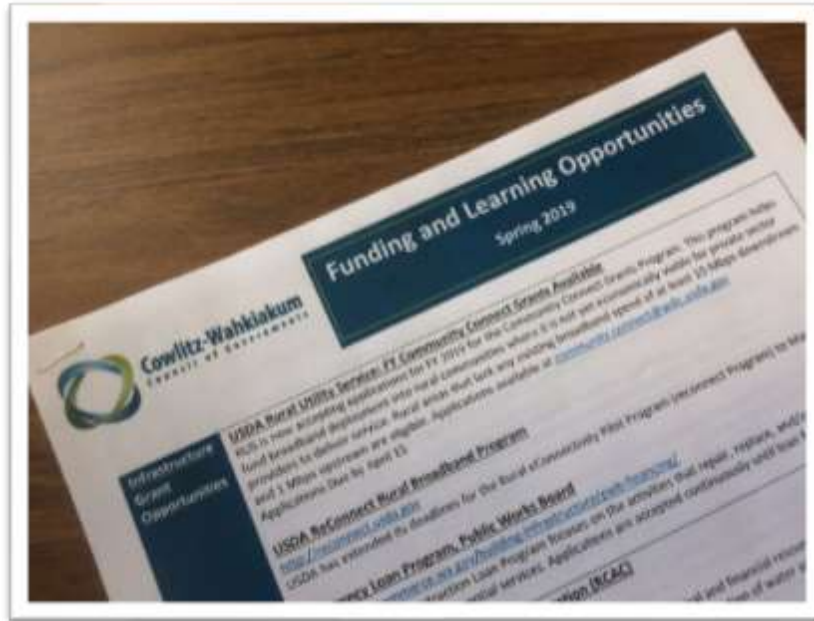


Figure 14: CWCOG's Spring 2019 Newsletter
Source: CWCOG

After earning a first place for cities under 3,000 in the America in Bloom Competition for the third straight year, volunteer Nancy Chennault commented that Castle Rock Blooms is a way to continue improving livability and prosperity within the community. Cathlamet has created a bloom team following in Castle Rock's footsteps. Other communities in the region are exploring variations of the positive improvements that Castle Rock continues to make toward enhancing livability and economic development.



Figure 15: Castle Rock in Bloom Volunteers
Source: Castle Rock in Bloom



Figure 16: Becky McCray at the Woodland Chamber of Commerce Meeting
Source: CWCOG

Becky McCray, a national consultant, spent four days working with local community members and leadership. Following her visit, several volunteers have acted on ideas generated in discussions throughout the region. McCray has mentioned our region in her blog twice since her visit. An article in a recent Cowlitz Economic Development Council newsletter detailed the positive impacts following McCray's visit. A local business person hosted the first Downtown Kelso meeting and there was an eagerness in proceeding with a more formalized approach.

5. Maintain and expand the base infrastructure, with an emphasis on freight mobility and broadband, in efforts to support the development of business/industry throughout the region.

Wahkiakum County is currently conducting a study to identify broadband opportunities to serve the county. They received a Community Economic Revitalization Board (CERB) grant to lead the work. The Port of Woodland recently completed a Dark Fiber Analysis for the Cougar, WA area.



Figure 17: Broadband is a crucial element of the regional economy
Source: NoaNet



Figure 18: Coordinated efforts to improve major freight corridors like the Industrial Way/Oregon Way interchange are high priorities.
Source: Cowlitz County

The economy is dependent on trade and moving goods through the region, thus the support for investment in freight mobility. Coordinating transportation and economic development planning continues to develop. The CWCOG approved the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) in late 2018 that included discussion on the economic development needs of the region. The CWCOG participates in the Lower Columbia Transportation Association and continues to support a regional freight advisory committee.

6. Provide information and forums for discussion of resilience issues within the region and promote interdisciplinary planning efforts.

A proposed business continuity outreach calendar for 2019 was presented and a Resilience Task Force was established. Tasks Force meetings will be scheduled in 2019 to discuss how to promote business resilience. The Kelso-Longview Chamber held an event focusing on business continuity resulting in the distribution of planning tools to over 100 area businesses.

The Economic Development Program Board and Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee held a joint meeting on December 10 featuring a Resilience Training. The seventeen attendees heard from Phil Jurmu of Cowlitz 911 and Lorraine Churchill of the Department of Emergency Management. Several handouts were provided explaining disaster preparedness for businesses and homes.

7. Facilitate the development of an educated and skilled workforce with an emphasis on pre-apprentice pathways for high school graduates that will prepare them for apprenticeship programs.

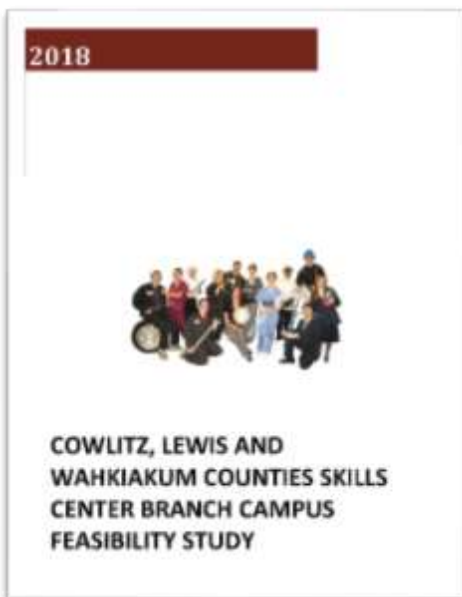


Figure 19: Skills Center Feasibility Study
Source: CWCOG

The community collaborated to complete the Skills Center Feasibility Study, which was then submitted to the Washington Superintendent of Public Instruction. The CWCOG provided key demographics for the study. The CWCOG Board of Directors approved a letter of commitment for the Skills Center that was included in the final Feasibility Study. Work is continuing to establish a regional facility to assist in preparing high school students with career-focused educational opportunities.



Figure 20: The Kelso Mural Project—bolstering area youth and improving quality of place
Source: Workforce Southwest Washington

Workforce Southwest Washington developed a Construction Workforce Development Plan to assist in training the 15,000 new construction workers expected in their service area.



Figure 21: National Association of Development Organizations Conference
Source: CWCOG

8. Provide support for enhancing the quality and quantity of housing units throughout the region to include workforce housing through executive housing.

The CWCOG participated in a number of meetings and discussions on the regional housing needs and challenges. Staff prepared an overview of the housing market and presented it to local service groups during the time since the CEDS was finalized. The CWCOG also assisted Housing Opportunities of Southwest Washington in the mapping of existing public housing projects and other housing data.

CWCOG staff attended the National Association of Regional Councils 2018 National Conference and participated in training sessions on housing and other topics of relevance to the economic development program. Conversations regarding possible housing solutions continue at CEDS meetings and with other partners.

Goal	Primary Partner	Supporting Partners
Continue efforts to diversify the regional economic base.	CEDC, Wahkiakum Chamber	CWCOG, Cities, Counties, Ports
Continue efforts to support operations of area ports and the management of the Columbia River Channel for trade (combined with the goal above in the report).	Ports	CEDC, Wahkiakum Chamber, CWCOG, Chambers
Enhance the attractiveness of the area for economic development by promoting tourism and tourism investment throughout the region.	Wahkiakum Chamber, Cowlitz Tourism, Cities	Cities, Chambers
Encourage and promote programs intended to enhance new business start-ups, entrepreneurial development, and small business growth.	CWCOG, CEDC, Wahkiakum Chamber, SBDC	Cities, Counties, Chambers, LCC
Maintain and enhance the district's quality of life and quality of place efforts by supporting and coordinating cooperative efforts throughout the district.	All	Cities and Counties
Maintain and expand the base infrastructure, with an emphasis on freight mobility and broadband, in effort to support the development of business/industry throughout the region.	CWCOG	Cities, Counties
Provide information and forums for discussion of resilience issues within the region and promote interdisciplinary planning efforts.	CWCOG	Cities, Counties, WSDOT
Facilitate the development of an educated and skilled workforce	Workforce SW WA, LCC, K-12 Schools	CWCOG, CEDC, Wahkiakum Chamber
Provide support for enhancing the quality and quantity of housing units throughout the region to include workforce housing through executive housing.	Cities, Counties	CWCOG

Table 2: Regional Goals and Priorities
Source: CEDS Committee

Although a primary partner or partners are listed, these priorities go beyond any individual organization and will rely on the overall community to support and work to move all of these priorities forward as resources and circumstances allow.

Evaluation Framework

The CWCOG has set several initial performance metrics to work toward under this Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. These metrics will be monitored over the life of the CEDS and will be included in annual reports. In addition, the CEDS Committee will study and consider additional metrics each year as partner organizations share their individual metrics and the group clarifies the most relevant metrics for consideration and tracking.

The Metrics will work to track progress on the overall implementation of the CEDS as required by the EDA. Yearly updates will be shared with partners and stakeholders as well as the general community in an effort to understand how we are doing and what we can do better.

Performance Metrics

Metric	Region	US	Threshold	Target
Stats USA Distress Criteria - 24-Month Avg. Unemployment Rate (4-2018)	7.57%	5.00%	2.57	Decrease by 0.5
As of 3-2019	5.9%	4.9%	1.89	Improved (Decreased) by 0.68
Per-Capita Money Income (5-Year ACS)	\$24,868	\$29,829	83.36%	Increase to 86%
As of 3-2019	\$25,919	\$31,777	83.14%	Dropped by 0.22%
High Tech Employment	1.30%	12%	10.7	Increase to 2%
Updated data not available	1.30%	12%	10.7	Unchanged
Young Adults (25 to 44) 2016	22.8 % of population	26.4 % of pop.	3.6	Increase to 24%
Young Adults (25 to 44) 2017	22.9%	26.4%	3.5	0.1 Point Improvement
Educational Attainment AA or Higher 2016	26.0%	38.50%	12.5	Increase to 30%
Educational Attainment AA or Higher 2017	26.6	39.2	12.6	Dropped 0.1 point

Table 3: Performance Metrics
Source: CEDS Committee

As part of the CEDS updates, the CWCOG will monitor and track the number and types of investments undertaken in the region to promote job development and to support quality of life or quality of place initiatives. Over time, these measures will assist in determining which investments may have spurred the desired changes to the metrics that are included here and may be added in the future.

APPENDIX

Demography

Basic demographics for each county are included below. Numbers are rounded. At more than halfway through the decennial census period, the 2010 census results are considered a bit stale. For raw population, the 2016 April 1 estimate from the US Census, Community Facts is used.

County Overviews

Cowlitz County is 1,140.13 square miles in size, with a density of about 90 people per square mile.³ Slightly more than 39 percent of the population is considered to be in the work force. Manufacturing is the backbone of jobs in Cowlitz County, although three Washington counties rank higher in terms of the percentage of manufacturing jobs. Jobs in healthcare are on the rise. At the same time, though, the median household income is increasing but has moved from a ranking of 23 to 28 in the state.

People & Income Overview, 2017 (By Place of Residence)	Value	Rank in State	Industry Overview, 2017 (By Place of Work)	Value	Rank in State
Population	106,910	<u>12</u>	Covered Employment	38,748	<u>14</u>
Growth (%) since 2010 Census	4.4%	<u>25</u>	Average Wage per Job	\$47,624	<u>10</u>
Households	42,491	<u>12</u>	Manufacturing – % All Jobs in County	15.9%	<u>4</u>
Labor Force (persons)	42,010	<u>12</u>	Average Wage per Job	\$69,217	<u>6</u>
Unemployment Rate	6.1	<u>15</u>	Transportation & Warehousing - % All Jobs in County	4.5%	<u>4</u>
Per Capita Personal Income	\$42,888	<u>22</u>	Average Wage per Job	\$70,525	<u>1</u>
Median Household Income	\$50,617	<u>28</u>	Health Care, Social Assist. – % All Jobs in County	16.3%	<u>6</u>
Poverty Rate	16.8%	<u>7</u>	Average Wage per Job	\$49,247	<u>10</u>
High School Diploma or More - % of Adults 25+	88.6%	<u>26</u>	Finance and Insurance – % All Jobs in County	2.0%	<u>14</u>
Bachelor's Degree or More - % of Adults 25+	16.1%	<u>35</u>	Average Wage per Job	\$55,459	<u>15</u>

Table A1: Cowlitz County Overview
Source: StatsAmerica July 1, 2017

³ Census QuickFacts (2010)

Wahkiakum County has 263.38 square miles in land area and a density of slightly more than 16 people per square mile.⁴ It ranks as the county having the second lowest number of “covered employment”⁵ jobs in the state. At the same time, its median household income is higher than Cowlitz County.

People & Income Overview, 2017 (By Place of Residence)	Value	Rank in State	Industry Overview, 2017 (By Place of Work)	Value	Rank in State
Population	4,264	<u>37</u>	Covered Employment	712	<u>38</u>
Growth (%) since 2010 Census	7.2%	<u>15</u>	Average Wage per Job	\$35,759	<u>36</u>
Households	1,823	<u>37</u>	Manufacturing - % All Jobs in County	5.8%	<u>25</u>
Labor Force (persons)	1,307	<u>38</u>	Average Wage per Job	\$30,401	<u>36</u>
Unemployment Rate	7.1	<u>4</u>	Transportation & Warehousing - % All Jobs in County	1.1%	<u>29</u>
Per Capita Personal Income	\$41,270	<u>27</u>	Average Wage per Job	\$41,188	<u>33</u>
Median Household Income	\$53,694	<u>21</u>	Health Care, Social Assist. – % All Jobs in County	0.0%	<u>33</u>
Poverty Rate	12.3%	<u>28</u>	Average Wage per Job	N/A	
High School Diploma or More - % of Adults 25+	91.5%	<u>14</u>	Finance and Insurance – % All Jobs in County	0.0%	<u>39</u>
Bachelor's Degree or More - % of Adults 25+	17.1%	<u>14</u>	Average Wage per Job	N/A	<u>39</u>

Table A2: Wahkiakum County Overview
Source: [StatsAmerica](https://www.statsamerica.com) July 1, 2017

⁴ Census QuickFacts (4-2017)

⁵ <http://www.bls.gov/opub/hom/pdf/homch5.pdf>

Who Lives Here?

Race

The EDD region lacks racial and ethnic diversity, both in individual counties and the region as a whole. The counties within the region are predominantly white and are fairly homogenous in terms of their respective racial composition. Altogether, the area is about 15 percent higher in white-only population than the state as a whole. This could be an enduring reflection of settlement patterns and Euro-centric workers who came west to work in the timber industry, combined with lack of immediate proximity to an immigration port. Even given Native Americans' historic presence in the region, the current-day tribal population is below that of other races, just about two percent of the white population. Less than ten percent of the region's population identifies as Hispanic, close to three percent under the statewide segment.

Race and Hispanic Origin						
	Wahkiakum County		Cowlitz County		Washington State	
Population	4,234		106,910		7,405,743	
White alone	3,904	92.20%	97,608	91.30%	5,887,565	79.50%
Black or African American alone	21	0.50%	1,069	1.00%	311,041	4.20%
American Indian and Alaska Native	72	1.70%	2,138	2.00%	140,709	1.90%
Asian alone	67	1.60%	1,710	1.60%	659,111	8.90%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	8	0.20%	427	0.40%	59,245	0.80%
Two or More Races	160	3.80%	3,848	3.60%	348,069	4.70%
Hispanic or Latino	211	5.00%	9,621	9.00%	940,529	12.70%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	3,245	88.20%	89,483	83.70%	5,087,745	68.70%

Table A3: Race

Source: US Census Quick Facts 2017 US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates

Age

More than half the population throughout the region is between the ages of 45 and 64 – approaching retirement age or at least the latter part of their working lives. The population of young adults (age 25-44) coming up behind them trails by about 4,000 people. There is a considerable disparity between the population of children (preschool/school age) and college-age adults, and between young adults and college-age adults. This suggests that people in this age group are leaving the region in significant numbers, whether to attend school or for other reasons.

Age Group						
	Cowlitz County		Wahkiakum County		Region	
Preschool (0-4)	6,169	6%	138	3.3%	6,330	5.9%
School Age (5-17)	17,637	17%	511	12.4%	18,178	16.9%
College Age (18-24)	8,182	7.9%	284	6.9%	8,466	7.9%
Young Adult (25-44)	24,009	23.4%	636	15.4%	24,645	22.9%
Older Adult (45-64)	28,772	27.8%	973	23.7%	29,949	27.8%
Senior (65+)	18,821	18.2%	1,306	31.8%	20,127	18.7%

Table A4: Age

Sources: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates; median age calculated by the IBRC

Living Arrangements

The largest segment of the population is non-family households, which is closely followed by those in a marital relationship but with no children. These two areas account for almost 68% of the population.

Living Arrangements						
	Cowlitz		Wahkiakum		Region	
Total Households	40,668		1,823		42,491	
Family Households	26,811	65.9%	1,284	70.4%	28,095	66.1%
Married with children	6,937	17.1%	220	12.1%	7,157	16.8%
Married without children	13,183	49.5%	956	52.4%	14,139	33.2%
Single parents	6,691	16.5%	328	18.0%	6,653	10.1%
Non-Family Households	13,857	34.1%	539	29.6%	14,396	33.9%
Living alone	11,157	27.4%	430	23.6%	11,587	27.3%

Table A5: Living Arrangements

Source: US Census Bureau 2017

Educational Preparedness

About two thirds of the region’s population age 25 or older has attained either high school graduation/GED or has attended some college, but with no degree. This exceeds the statewide average, closer to a quarter of the working-age population. Only about 15 percent has a bachelor’s degree or higher, less than half of the statewide average of just over 33 percent. This suggests that without additional education, many working-age people are poorly positioned to qualify for jobs requiring degrees. At the same time, census data does not capture non-collegiate technical or certification programs, on-the-job training programs, and the like; some working-age people may have augmented their work skills through such efforts.

Educational Attainment						
	Cowlitz County		Wahkiakum County		Washington State	
Population 25 years and over	71,602		3,119		4,896,055	
Less than 9th grade	2,418	3.40%	72	2.30%	188,200	3.80%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	5,790	8.10%	192	6.2%	260,358	5.30%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	22,062	30.8%	1,039	33.30%	1,101,904	22.50%
Some college, no degree	22,631	31.60%	917	29.4%	1,174,696	24.00%
Associate's degree	7,194	10.00%	365	11.10%	483,549	9.90%
Bachelor's degree	6,908	9.60%	283	9.10%	1,064,440	21.70%
Graduate or professional degree	4,599	6.4	251	8.00%	622,908	12.70%
Percent high school graduate or higher	88.50%		91.50%		90.80%	
Percent bachelor's degree or higher	16.10%		17.10%		34.50%	

Table A6: Education

Source: US Census, American Community Survey 2013-2017

Where Do People Live?

Population and Households

The following data sets create a snapshot of demographic patterns found within the region in 2013 based on 2010 Federal Census and 2008-2012 American Community Survey data. Information conveying characteristics of population, housing, and personal income trends and forecasts are organized by county. Key issues pertaining to the demographic trends include the growth in the aging population as well as slower population growth overall, due to slower natural increase and lower immigration to the region.

Housing						
	Cowlitz		Wahkiakum		Region	
Units	44,216		2,108		46,324	
Occupied housing units	40,668	92.0%	1,823	86.5%	42,491	91.7%
Owner-occupied	26,975	61.0%	1,477	70.0%	28,452	61.4%
Renter-occupied	13,693	31.0%	346	16.4%	14,039	30.3%
Vacant housing units	3,548	8.0%	285	13.5%	3,833	8.3%

Table A7: Housing

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2017

Coming and Going

Historically, population growth in the region has been fueled largely by in-migration rather than natural increase. Population growth has plateaued and has even decreased in some age brackets. The Washington State Office of Financial Management has revised its population growth forecast for the State of Washington to reflect a slowing in-migration following the Great Recession, as well as lower rates of household formation and significantly lower rates of natural increase, due to the continued aging of the Baby Boomer generation. This forecast affects the regional economic image as a declining and aging population. It is imperative that the region begin to focus on increasing job opportunities geared toward increasing in-migration.

Components of Population Change 2010-2018			
	Cowlitz	Wahkiakum	Region
Births	9,818	204	10,022
Deaths	8,824	904	9,728
Natural Increase	994	(700)	294
Net Migration	3,906	822	4,728

Table A8: Population Change

Source: Washington State Office of Financial Management 2018 Population Trends

Income and Poverty

The per capita personal income of the counties is substantially lower than Washington State's per capita personal income of \$53,493 for 2016⁶. In addition, Woodland, as a bedroom community to the Vancouver-Portland metro region, disproportionately increases the median for Cowlitz County. Overall, the area is seeing an increase in poverty rates, which has profoundly affected the school districts, as evidenced by increasing numbers of children receiving free and reduced-cost meals. One in four children in Kelso are in poverty and close to one in five seniors in Woodland are in poverty. Every community in the region, except Woodland, is below the US median household income level. Also, every community is below the national per capita income.

In comparison to a household with the median household income, one consisting of two working adults and a child, with an income below the median, would not meet self-sufficiency standards. This results in more "working poor" within the region with relatively more limited opportunities.

Overall, almost every household under the median household income fails to meet the sufficiency standards of a typical family household. Since the last CEDS in 2009, the poverty rate has increased for children and the elderly, and median household incomes have become stagnant. Without significant economic opportunities, these statistics will become more dire. The EDD and partner organizations will continue to focus on wealth creation and moving more residents toward self-sufficiency.

⁶ Washington Office of Financial Management

	Per Capita Income		
	Cowlitz	Wahkiakum	State
2017	\$25,878	\$26,964	\$34,869
2016	\$24,756	\$27,619	\$32,999
2015	\$24,260	\$24,483	\$31,762
2014	\$24,042	\$23,215	\$31,233
2013	\$23,557	\$22,334	\$30,742
2012	\$23,572	\$25,060	\$30,661
2011	\$23,575	\$21,455	\$30,481
2010	\$22,948	\$23,115	\$29,733
% change 2010-17	12.7%	16.6%	17.2%

Table A9: Income
Source: US Census, American Fact Finder

The Bureau of Economic Analysis published Gross Domestic Product data at the county level for the first time in early 2019. The most current data is included below.

County	Industry Name	Real Gross domestic product (GDP) by county growth (percent change from preceding period)		
		2013	2014	2015
Cowlitz	All Industries	2.0	4.1	-0.8
	Private goods-producing industries	2.5	0.0	1.9
	Private services-providing industries	2.5	7.3	-2.7
	Government and government enterprises	-1.8	3.8	-1.2
Wahkiakum	All Industries	-0.8	-6.6	4.3
	Private goods-producing industries	(D)	(D)	(D)
	Private services-providing industries	(D)	(D)	(D)
	Government and government enterprises	-1.8	1.6	-2.5

Table A10: Gross Domestic Product Data
Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA)

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