

April 26, 2026

TO: Whatcom County Council Work Session
FROM: Eric Johnson, Partner, Columbia Policy Advisors
SUBJ: Developing SMART Key Actions

I am excited to join you again on May 5, 2026, as we work to develop a set of key actions to support the “Strategic Themes” identified at your February 17, 2026, Whatcom County Council Planning Workshop. To this end, I am asking that you each prepare for our May 5, 2026, work session by doing the following:

- 1. Reviewing the meeting summary of February 17, 2026.*
- 2. Familiarize yourself with SMART Objectives/Key Actions.*
- 3. Identify any SMART Key Actions for Strategic Themes (Worksheet Included) for those items you have specific interest/knowledge in.*
- 4. Take a look at Skagit County’s Objectives to get an idea of activities they have include.*

As a reminder, here are the Strategic Themes you developed in February:

CORE STRATEGIC VALUES

- AN ENGAGED COMMUNITY
- AN EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT COUNTY GOVERNMENT: MEASURING PERFORMANCE

STRATEGIC POLICY PRIORITIES

- HOUSING
- WATER RESOURCES
- ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
- COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WELLNESS

ONGOING STRATEGIC FOCUS

- WHATCOM COUNTY BIENNIAL BUDGET
- WHATCOM COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE AND DEVELOPMENT REGULATION UPDATES

SMART Actions/Objectives

The next step is to develop a set of SMART Key Actions/Objectives that are:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Realistic/Relevant
- Timebound

SMART key actions are best when they:

- Include all components of SMART
- Relate to a single result
- Are clearly written (use plain language, avoid jargon and acronyms)

SPECIFIC Key Actions/Objectives

- Are precise
- Are clear to staff, public, partners, and other groups
- Use plain language and avoid jargon
- Use verbs that document action

MEASUREABLE Key Actions/Objectives

Key actions need to be quantifiable to know when the desired outcome has been achieved.

Ensure your SMART key actions mention specific numbers, lengths of time, costs and any other metrics and benchmarks that are easy to track.

ACHIEVABLE Key Actions/Objectives

Key actions should be within reach to achieve for the Council, County, staff, partners, community, or others charged with implementation. Consider available capacity, resources, knowledge, and time.

Complex, long-term issues require years of work for change so understanding the sequence and scope of each – many – key actions.

RELEVANT Key Actions/Objectives

Relevant key actions are those that directly align with the strategic issues, and if implemented will have a positive and direct impact for the organization and community. They are important to partners, community members, and decision-makers, and they help achieve meaningful change.

TIME-BOUND Key Actions/Objectives

Time-bound objectives include a reasonable date by which the key action will happen.

- Not too soon: Give enough time to achieve the key action.
- Not too far away: it is ok and appropriate to push and create a sense of urgency. Stretch goals. Don't encourage procrastination or remove the ability to forget the linkage between action and outcome.
- Create a realistic time frame to complete the task.

I look forward to seeing you all next week. If you have any questions in advance of our works session on May 5th, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Eric Johnson, Columbia Policy Advisors

360-481-2241

Eric@columbia-policy.com

Whatcom County Council - Key Action Worksheet

<p>SPECIFIC What will be accomplished?</p>	
<p>MEASUREABLE Quantifiable to know when the desired outcome has been achieved.</p>	
<p>ACHIEVABLE Within Reach? Resources Available?</p>	
<p>RELEVANT How does this directly align with the strategic issues?</p>	
<p>TIME-BOUND The reasonable date by which the key action will start and be completed.</p>	

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
2026-2027 Strategic Focus
and Key Actions







WHATCOM COUNTY
WASHINGTON

2026-2027

AN ENGAGED COMMUNITY

Key Issue/s:

- I.
- II.

 Completed	 On Track	 Cautionary	 At Risk
---	--	--	---

Key Actions	Desired Outcome	Council Lead	Staff Liason	Timeframe	Status	Help Needed

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
2026-2027 Strategic Focus
and Key Actions



WHATCOM COUNTY
WASHINGTON

AN EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT COUNTY GOVERNMENT: MEASURING PERFORMANCE

Key Issue/s:

- I.
- II.

Completed
 On Track
 Cautionary
 At Risk

Key Actions	Desired Outcome	Sponsor	Member	Timeframe	Status	Help Needed

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
2026-2027 Strategic Focus
and Key Actions



WHATCOM COUNTY
WASHINGTON

HOUSING

Key Issues

- I.
- II.

● Completed
 ● On Track
 ● Cautionary
 ● At Risk

Key Actions	Desired Outcome	Sponsor	Member	Timeframe	Status	Help Needed

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
2026-2027 Strategic Focus
and Key Actions



WHATCOM COUNTY
WASHINGTON

WATER RESOURCES

Key Issues

- I.
- II.

● Completed
 ● On Track
 ● Cautionary
 ● At Risk

Key Actions	Desired Outcome	Sponsor	Member	Timeframe	Status	Help Needed

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
2026-2027 Strategic Focus
and Key Actions



WHATCOM COUNTY
WASHINGTON

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Key Issues

- I.
- II.

Completed
 On Track
 Cautionary
 At Risk

Key Actions	Desired Outcome	Sponsor	Member	Timeframe	Status	Help Needed

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
2026-2027 Strategic Focus
and Key Actions



WHATCOM COUNTY
WASHINGTON

COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Key Issues

- I.
- II.

● Completed
 ● On Track
 ● Cautionary
 ● At Risk

Action	Desired Outcome	Sponsor	Member	Timeframe	Status

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
2026-2027 Strategic Focus
and Key Actions



WHATCOM COUNTY
WASHINGTON

WHATCOM COUNTY BIENNIAL BUDGET

Key Issues

- I.
- II.

Completed
 On Track
 Cautionary
 At Risk

Action	Desired Outcome	Sponsor	Member	Timeframe	Status

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
2026-2027 Strategic Focus
and Key Actions



WHATCOM COUNTY
WASHINGTON

WHATCOM COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS

Key Issues

- I.
- II.

● Completed
 ● On Track
 ● Cautionary
 ● At Risk

Action	Desired Outcome	Sponsor	Member	Timeframe	Status