

A photograph of a woman with long dark hair, wearing a white and black striped sweater, holding a baby. The woman is looking at the baby with a smile. The baby is wearing a white and black striped onesie. The background is a window with light coming through. A teal overlay covers the bottom half of the image, containing white text.

CHILD AND FAMILY WELL-BEING TASK FORCE

March 2022

PHASE II REPORT

**Prepared by the Child and Family Well-being
Task Force and Whatcom County Health
Department Staff**



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LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Child and Family Well-being Task Force opens each meeting by acknowledging that we gather on the ancestral homelands of Indigenous Peoples who have lived in the Salish Sea basin and the North Cascades watershed from time immemorial, in particular, the Lhaq'temish people who we recognize today to be the Lummi Nation, the Nooksack Tribe, and Semiahmoo.

We ask to be mindful of the inherent owners of this land, our children, who are our future: future stewards of the land and advocates for the generation to come. May that truth guide our work and efforts to improve the well-being of all families and children, native and non-native, living in this beautiful county.

This land acknowledgment is not meant to be a substitute for authentic relationship-building and understanding. It is meant to introduce us to one way we can show respect, honor, and gratitude to our Indigenous neighbors, the first people of this land, for their enduring stewardship of our shared lands and waterways.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Increase long-term and sustainable funding streams to support child and family programs, services, and infrastructure, most immediately by exploring the specifics of the Children's Fund levy.
- Increase investments in and build upon the work that's already happening in the community.
- An Office of Children and Families is essential to ensure the health and well-being of children and families is prioritized, sustained, and equitable in Whatcom County.
- The Office should utilize the Help Me Grow framework. Help Me Grow Washington's core components align with several key objectives for county infrastructure for children and families: a coordinated access point, family and community outreach, child health care provider outreach, data collection and analysis, equity, and advocacy.
- Establish a formalized, equitable pathway for the allocation of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds set aside for children and families in Whatcom County. The process for applying for and allocating funds should be inclusive of innovative and equity-driven strategies to support children and families, and the opportunity should be shared widely throughout the county. The Children and Families First workgroup commits to researching how ARPA funds focused on children and families are distributed in other counties. The Child and Family Well-being Task Force should be a collaborator on any process developed for fund distribution.
- Show commitment to authentic family engagement and make it part of everyday policies and practices by:
 - Developing an environment of trustworthiness and belonging that is fully inclusive of all Whatcom County residents using a two-way flow of information and influence within communities.
 - Developing, supporting, and ensuring access to leadership development, shared decision-making, power-sharing, and collaborative leadership while using culturally responsive and trauma-informed engagement with underrepresented community members.

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- Remove barriers for meaningful engagement and collaboration. Barriers to engagement can be: financial, communication, and physical, among others.
- Using the model established by the Child and Family Well-Being Task Force, expand compensated positions on all County task forces, boards, and commissions for members from groups who have been historically marginalized and excluded from governmental decision-making and power.
- Expand and resource collaborative, community planning such as the process to develop Whatcom County's Community Health Improvement Plan.
- Identify where participatory budgeting already occurs within the County and launch it more comprehensively across County departments. Establish and allocate resources to launch participatory budgeting as a formal process within Whatcom County and set aside a portion of funds for projects within County departments for which allocation will be determined through a participatory budgeting process. Participatory budgeting is a process in which community members decide how to spend part of a public budget.

“A community that supports its youngest children will become a community that is more fully engaged, equitable, and vibrant.”

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Child and Family Well-being Task Force is to continually review Whatcom governmental impacts on children and families, and make specific recommendations for improvements for all departments (Whatcom County Ordinance 2020-079). The Task Force will consider input from diverse families throughout Whatcom County and evidence-based and promising practices. Using this information, they will report on and make recommendations to the County Council, the County Executive, and other appropriate officials regarding the implementation of recommendations in Whatcom Working Toward Well-Being: An Action Plan for County Government (most often referred to as the 2020 Child and Family Action Plan) adopted on February 4, 2020.

To this end, the Task Force has developed recommendations for Council that focus on our four priority areas:

- 1. Identifying the metrics and strategies needed to achieve our desired results***
- 2. Identifying the necessary infrastructure to support children and families as a priority throughout County government***
- 3. Increasing family involvement in County government processes and decision-making***
- 4. Resources and funding needed to increase and stabilize programs for families***

The ordinance structures the Task Force's work into three phases with several objectives. The Task Force delivered the Phase I report in June 2021 (see Appendix E), which called on the Task Force to:

- Establish Task Force processes and procedures.
- Clarify goals and metrics.
- Establish processes for shared accountability for results.
- Evaluate and recommend an infrastructure model for County adoption.
- Propose scope and approach for County fiscal analysis to identify existing and potential funding streams for child and family programs.
- Review and identify existing child and family serving collaborative resources and initiatives, and infrastructure. Recommend strategies to fill the gaps identified.

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As the Task Force was newly formed when the Phase I report was written, its content focused on the establishment of Task Force processes and procedures. This included discussion of the process of explicitly building trusting relationships among a large Task Force whose members have diverse lived experiences and shared learning about the three guiding Task Force principles: equity, with specific attention to racial equity; authentic family engagement; and results-based approaches.

The remaining deliverables of the Phase I report have been folded into this Phase II report along with the core deliverable of Phase II: developing and establishing methods to increase and stabilize funding streams for child and family programs, services, and infrastructure. We recognize that we have expanded the scope of this report significantly but feel that the recommendations from each priority area make the funding methods offered in this report:

- More lasting and durable by embedding consideration of children and families in all government decision-making, regardless of county leadership and administration.
- More accountable to the community by aligning government action with strategies and results identified and elevated by community members who are Black, Indigenous, and other people of color (BIPOC).
- More authentically representative of the community by ensuring that policy and funding decision-makers include families using the system.

THE DATA DRIVING OUR WORK

We know that early childhood experiences impact health and well-being throughout a person's lifespan. Stories and statistics in several recent local reports highlight stark disparities in both experience and impact for Whatcom children and their families:

*Families in Whatcom County, especially those with low/no incomes, racial/ethnic minorities, and those with members who have special health or behavioral healthcare needs **face significant challenges** in finding safe and stable housing, and affordable child care so they can attend school and work....For immigrant families and those living in rural areas, the challenges for meeting children's and families' needs are even greater.*

-2020 Child and Family Action Plan

*When children don't have access to early learning opportunities, the results are devastating. **Early learning lays the foundation for later success**; when children start school unprepared, they stand in stark contrast to their peers for years. Because high-quality child care and early learning are associated with higher costs, damaging racial and economic disparities develop before children even begin school.*

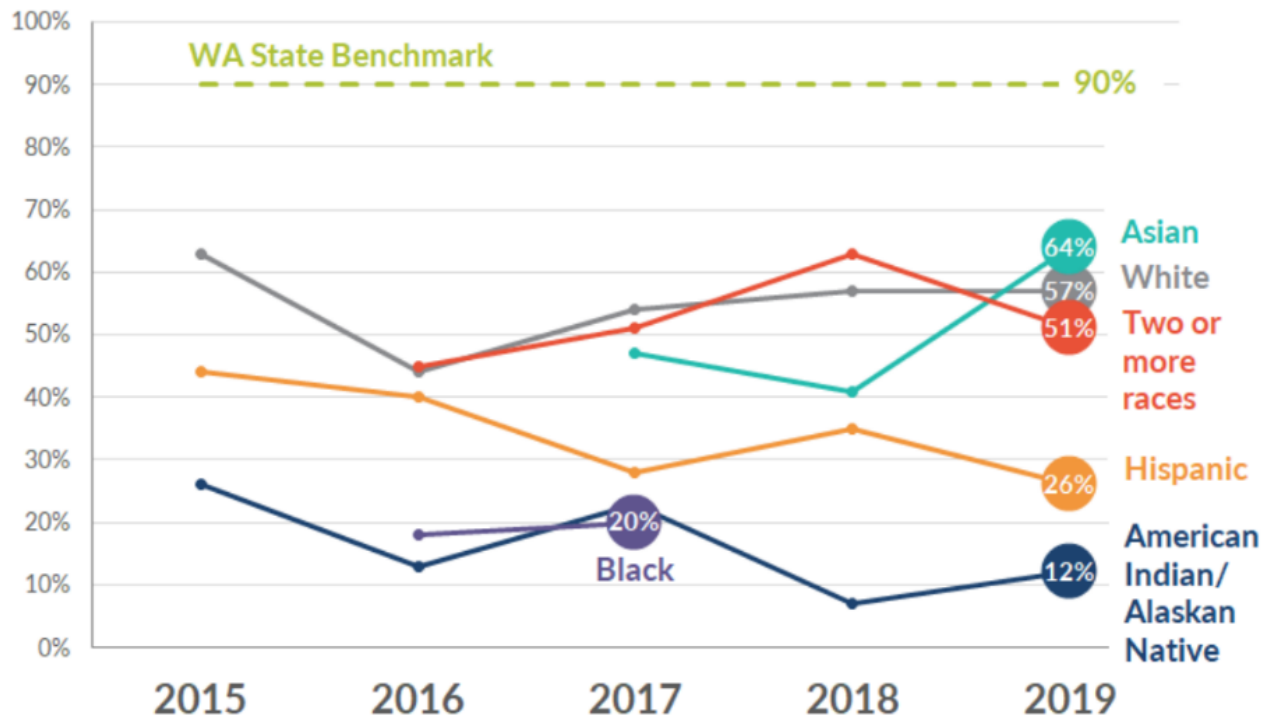
-COVID-19 Community Health Impact Assessment

To measure early childhood well-being, we use kindergarten readiness data, disaggregated by race, as an indicator of how our community is supporting the needs of young children of all races and ethnicities. All public schools, and some tribal nation schools, use a process called the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing. This data is based on six domains: Physical, Social-Emotional, Cognitive, Language, Math, and Literacy. In Whatcom County, less than half of all kindergarten students arrive developmentally ready for school, and for BIPOC or low-income children, that number shrinks to 25%.

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Whatcom County Students: 6 Domains of Kindergarten-Readiness, by Race and Ethnicity



See [Appendix B](#) of this report for additional data we are using to monitor Whatcom County's progress.

OVERVIEW OF TASK FORCE WORKGROUPS

Work and Recommendations

The Task Force used the central questions outlined in the ordinance to organize itself into four workgroups that discuss, review, and develop proposals prioritizing child and family well-being through funding, policy, and family engagement. The workgroups then made recommendations to the larger Task Force for further review before making final recommendations to the County Council. This report includes recommendations from each workgroup, along with background information and discussion.

Each workgroup had a central question that they were answering as they developed recommendations to bring to the County government. It became clear that the primary content area of each workgroup was not distinct from that of others and, in fact, oftentimes were inter-related and/or interdependent. The resulting strategies are arranged by priority area and include those identified not only by the specific workgroup connected to the priority area but also those related recommendations from other workgroups.

The following strategies build on the work of Generations Forward, the 2020 Child and Family Action Plan, Healthy Whatcom, and other community-led efforts and are recommended by the Child & Family Well-Being Task Force. If a strategy originated in a community-led effort, the origin is indicated in parentheses after the recommendation.

Key for abbreviations found below:

- **CFAP:** Child & Family Action Plan, adopted by Whatcom County Council
- **HW:** Healthy Whatcom Results-Based Accountability (RBA) Initiatives

PRIORITY AREA 1

Identify the results and strategies that should be shared across government and the community to improve the well-being of young children and their families.

The County-Community Collaboration Workgroup

Central question: *What results and strategies should be shared across government and the community to improve the well-being of young children and their families?*

This workgroup is building on the work of Healthy Whatcom in bringing the Results-Based Accountability (RBA) approach to the work of the Task Force. Healthy Whatcom is the group guiding Whatcom County's community health improvement process. Community health improvement (CHI) is a multi-year, collaborative cycle of assessment, strategic planning, and action to advance health equity so that people have fair and just opportunities to be as healthy as possible. Results-Based Accountability (RBA) is a step-by-step, data-driven process that identifies powerful indicators in need of improvement, and ends in the development of a shared Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP).

During the past year, Task Force members participated in a series of Results-Based Accountability (RBA) workshops, hosted by Healthy Whatcom, which focused on early childhood well-being, child and youth mental health, housing for children and families, and early learning and child care. Workshop participants included community members who represent the systems we operate in and are working to change and those with lived experience. Lived experience participants are community members who have used the services and systems we are trying to reform, and those who have experienced racism or marginalization in Whatcom County. Participants went through a facilitated RBA process to determine what strategies and actions to include in Whatcom County's next community health improvement plan (CHIP). A CHIP is a long-term action plan with measurable results, written to directly address community health priorities identified through a collaborative process. Our priority areas, the results we hope to achieve, and the actions we will take to do so are compiled in Whatcom County's 2022-2026 CHIP. Infusing results-based approaches in the Task Force's work ensures a solid connection to community-based work using data-driven results with a focus on racial equity.

See [Appendix B](#) for the full set of data being used to monitor progress towards the results listed in this section.

Results:

Source: *Child and Family Action Plan, 2020 and Healthy Whatcom Community Health Improvement Plan, 2022-2026*

- Children are safe, healthy, and ready to learn. Children of all races and ethnicities in Whatcom County have opportunities for high-quality, culturally relevant, affordable, accessible, and professional childcare and early learning experiences, allowing their parents to work or attend school, and ensuring all children enter kindergarten ready to learn.
- Families are strong, stable & supported from the start. Children, youth, parents, and caregivers have the support, connections, and healthy relationships they need to belong and thrive.
- Communities are welcoming & supportive places for children & families to live, learn, work & play. Children and families of all races and ethnicities in Whatcom County have the assurance of stable, high-quality, safe, and affordable housing

Strategies to achieve our results

Priority Area 1: Identify the results and strategies that should be shared across government and the community to improve the well-being of young children and their families.

1.1 Join businesses, community partners, and state government to advocate for strategies to address urgent childcare shortages, affordable housing for families with children, and other priority needs. (CFAP)

1.2 Ensure early learning and care is culturally responsive* and free of implicit bias. (HW)

Examples:

- Deliver kindergarten readiness assessments in a culturally relevant way that validates and includes the child's culture.
- Increase the number of Whatcom County early learning centers and childcare locations that use the Since Time Immemorial & other BIPOC-created curricula.
- Ensure workplace cultures, policies, and practices support retention of BIPOC educators and administrators in childcare and early learning settings.

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1.3 Ensure early learning and care programs (EL&C) meet the needs of families throughout Whatcom County: locations, hours of operation, program model, quality of care and learning, integration of family support, culturally responsive resources, and affordability. (HW)

1.4 Implement workforce development strategies including increased compensation packages, expanded supports and other educator recruitment strategies, and support professional teachers and administrators with increased access to obtain the qualifications and training necessary to support children and families. (HW)

Examples: Create a community-based hub for early learning & childcare providers for professional development with access to scholarships, mentoring, work release time, and childcare while in class and studying.

1.5 Develop and implement an EL&C business model that ensures quality care is sustainable for providers; affordable for families; and educators are well-compensated. (HW)

1.6 Work with partners to expand the availability of affordable family housing options and accompanying services throughout the County. (CFAP, HW)

1.7 Restructure access to housing assistance to focus on prevention, remove implicit bias, and center child well-being through racial equity and trauma-informed care. (HW)

1.8 Ensure safe, stable, affordable housing in every neighborhood and rural community by increasing the supply of available units for rent and purchase. (HW)

1.9 Build wealth for families who are Black, Indigenous, and people of color through increased opportunities for homeownership. (HW)

1.10 Increase the number of protective factors for children, youth, and parents/caregivers, by creating more opportunities for connections, especially for LGBTQ+ and BIPOC children and youth. (HW)

Example: Increase opportunities for one-to-one and group peer support for parents, caregivers, and those expecting children.

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1.11 Create and share trauma-informed, LGBTQ+, anti-racist, and cultural humility training for parents, caregivers, and professionals who interact with children & youth to better support children who are struggling with anxiety, depression, suicidality, including their root causes. (HW)

1.12 Expand and resource collaborative, community planning such as the process to develop Whatcom County's Community Health Improvement Plan.

1.13 Identify where participatory budgeting* already occurs within the County and launch it more comprehensively across County departments. Establish and allocate resources to launch participatory budgeting as a formal process within Whatcom County and set aside a portion of funds for projects within County departments for which allocation will be determined through a participatory budgeting* process.

*Participatory budgeting (PB) is a process in which community members decide how to spend part of a public budget.

PRIORITY AREA 2

Identifying the necessary infrastructure to support children and families as a priority throughout County government.

The Children and Families First Workgroup

Central question: *What innovative government infrastructure is needed to prioritize child and family well-being?*

The 2020 Child and Family Action Plan laid out a detailed roadmap of action for the county government, built on the collaborative work of the Whatcom County Health Department, Generations Forward, the Public Health Advisory Board, and Healthy Whatcom. It is vital that this momentum continues and commitment to children and families is sustained across generations. Dedicated county infrastructure focused on child and family well-being will help achieve this.

Over the last 10 months, this workgroup has reviewed existing county structures that support children and families. Currently, the Health Department is the only county agency directly supporting children and families. These community health programs include:

- Nurse-Family Partnership
- Children and Youth with Special Healthcare Needs
- Chronic Disease Prevention
- Developmental Disabilities program
- Human Services Behavioral Health and Housing programs.

Otherwise, this area is primarily supported by private community-based agencies and collaboratives such as Opportunity Council and Generations Forward. Opportunity Council supports several child and family needs including housing, child care, early childhood education, and Whatcom Taking Action's Single Entry Access to Services (SEAS) program.

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The workgroup defined goals and objectives for dedicated county infrastructure:

- Provide a central navigation system for families.
- Promote culturally responsive county services.
- Incorporate minority voices and be actively anti-racist.
- Bridge existing community resources and be a hub for community conversations around children and families.
- Hold government agencies accountable to ask at every decision point, how this will impact children and families.
- Have strong leadership.
- Have sustainable funding.
- Outlast changes in county leadership and administrations.

They reviewed different types of infrastructure models, in particular, [Pierce County's Help Me Grow pilot](#) and [King County's Children, Youth, and Young Adults Division](#), which houses King County's Best Starts for Kids program. They learned more about the Help Me Grow framework and began developing a model for an Office of Children and Families that uses Help Me Grow as a guide. [Help Me Grow Washington's](#) core components align with several key objectives for county infrastructure for children and families:

- A coordinated access point
- Family and community outreach
- Child health care provider outreach
- Data collection and analysis
- Equity and advocacy

The workgroup met with representatives from groups who have built foundations for this work, including Healthy Whatcom, Generations Forward Policy, Advocacy, and Funding Action Team, and the Whatcom Early Learning Alliance.

Result:

- The well-being of all children and families is a policy and funding decision-making consideration and priority throughout all Whatcom County departments.

Strategies to achieve our results

Priority Area 2: Identifying the necessary infrastructure to support children and families as a priority throughout County government.

2.1 Promote family-friendly employment policies and practices within municipal governments (County, City of Bellingham, and small city governments) and serve as a model employer(s). (CFAP)

2.2 Put anti-racism into practice by strategically changing the policies, processes, and decision-making of organizations supporting child, youth, and family mental well-being. (HW)

2.3 Establish new structures within county government that prioritize child and family well-being. (CFAP)

These structures should:

- Coordinate efforts across agencies and sectors
- Ensure dedication to equity and trauma-informed practices
- Champion a “children and families first” approach for policy and funding decisions across government
- Integrate parents, caregivers, and child-serving providers into decision-making that impacts children and families

2.4 Utilize the Help Me Grow Washington (<https://helpmegrowwa.org/>) model as a framework for an Office of Children and Families. The office should include service navigation, community outreach, data collection and review, advocacy, and equity.

Example:

- Pierce County’s Help Me Grow pilot (<https://www.helpmegrowpierce.org/>) serves as a connection point for families.

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2.5 Develop the job description for the Health Department's Child and Family Well-Being Manager/Strategic Lead position in collaboration with the Task Force.

2.6 Join the Counties for Kids Peer Learning Network to collaborate with other counties working to strengthen systems and outcomes for young children.

2.7 Support countywide training for County staff to promote culturally and linguistically appropriate services and trauma-informed approaches in all County departments. (HW)

2.8 Add resources to ensure GARE membership leads to policy and practice changes.

2.9 Conduct policy reviews using equity tools and processes to assess existing policies and programs. Explore changes to existing County policies and practices, and create new ones, to support equity broadly and race equity specifically. (CFAP)

PRIORITY AREA 3

Increase family involvement in County government processes and decision-making.

The Increasing Family Involvement Workgroup

Central question: *What practices will increase the involvement of parents and caregivers, especially those with diverse life experiences, in county government?*

This workgroup has been looking at ways to fully integrate parents, caregivers, and stakeholders from under-represented communities (specifically BIPOC families) into county committees and workgroups. This includes examining current practices around advisory board application processes, meeting times and processes, compensation, expectations, and accessibility. Current government practices and processes around community engagement can have barriers to authentic interactions. This workgroup's recommendations seek to eliminate these barriers to full contribution.

Selection of Task Force members intentionally prioritized members who identify as a parent or caregiver, particularly those with various lived experiences. This includes those working in the systems supporting families, those trying to access the system of services, and those experiencing racism or marginalization in Whatcom County. One of the Task Force's guiding principles is to develop meaningful and authentic family engagement with county government. The National Academy of Medicine's Organizing Committee for Assessing Meaningful Community Engagement in Health & Health Care Programs & Policies describes components of effective community engagement: building trust, being trustworthy, adapting to community preferences for engagement, ensuring access to decision-making and power-sharing, and designing for a two-way flow of information and influence. The Task Force believes that this type of engagement with families will bring us closer to our desired result of transformative, structural changes to systems that improve the health of the community and all of its members.

Results:

Government demonstrates a commitment to family engagement by:

- Ensuring people changing the system are representative of the community using the system.
- Being transparent in how government provides support and information so that families are able to be informed participants in making system changes.
- Sharing with families how their feedback and participation is creating changes in the systems supporting families through a variety of ways including actual system changes. Example:
 - To Be More Than a Statistic: An open letter to city planners and officials

Strategies to achieve our results

Priority Area 3: Increase family involvement in County government processes and decision-making.

3.1 Elevate and activate principles of anti-racism in participating organizations & increase the representation of client and community members who are Black, Indigenous, and people of color within and across agencies for program/process design and review. (HW)

3.2 Fully integrate parents, caregivers, and child-serving providers into all committees, task forces, and workgroups where policy strategies that impact young children and their families are considered. (CFAP)

3.3 Eliminate voter registration and U.S. citizenship requirements for participation on county government volunteer committees, boards, commissions, or task forces.

3.4 Meet families where they are physically and virtually and create welcoming environments.

Example:

- Schools, neighborhoods, community events, housing complexes, family-friendly social media spaces.

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3.5 Shift power to communities of color to adapt and design curriculum, programs, and services to uplift and include non-dominant cultural characteristics, honoring BIPOC community contributions at the local, state, and national levels. (HW)

3.6 Develop a collaborative leadership model, such as the Generations Forward Family Council and Family Champion.

3.7 Make the cost of running for office more equitable.

3.8 Decrease barriers to family participation in government meetings and events by scheduling when families can attend, welcoming children in attendance, and offering childcare, meals, easy transportation access, and free parking.

3.9 Support opportunities for families to learn about county government, civic engagement, and advocacy, such as the Parent Leadership Training Institute

3.10 Have a process for following up with families who engage with Whatcom County government in order to communicate impact.

3.11 Ensure culturally responsive outreach to underrepresented community members by requiring county departments and committees to have strategies in place to gather input from parents, caregivers, and community members around issues/policies impacting children and families. (CFAP)

3.12 Using the model established by the Child and Family Well-Being Task Force, expand compensated positions on all County task forces, boards, and commissions for members from groups who have been historically marginalized and excluded from governmental decision-making and power.

PRIORITY AREA 4

Identify resources and funding needed to increase and stabilize programs for families.

The Resources and Funding Workgroup

Central question: *What resources are needed to support programs and services for young children and their families?*

In 2021, this workgroup used fiscal mapping to review how county dollars are currently spent to support young children and families and to identify gaps and opportunities for stable, sustainable funding. They also drafted recommendations to Council for using a significant portion of ARPA funds to create permanent solutions to child care affordability in Whatcom County.

According to Ordinance 2020-079 where the Whatcom County Council established the Child and Family Well-Being Task Force (CFWBTF), our Phase II report requests information regarding “methods to increase and stabilize funding streams to child and family programs, services, and infrastructure.”

Furthermore, in Resolution 2022-005, Whatcom County Council continued its affirmation that it “remains committed to identifying and pursuing additional funding to address permanent solutions to affordable childcare in Whatcom County.”

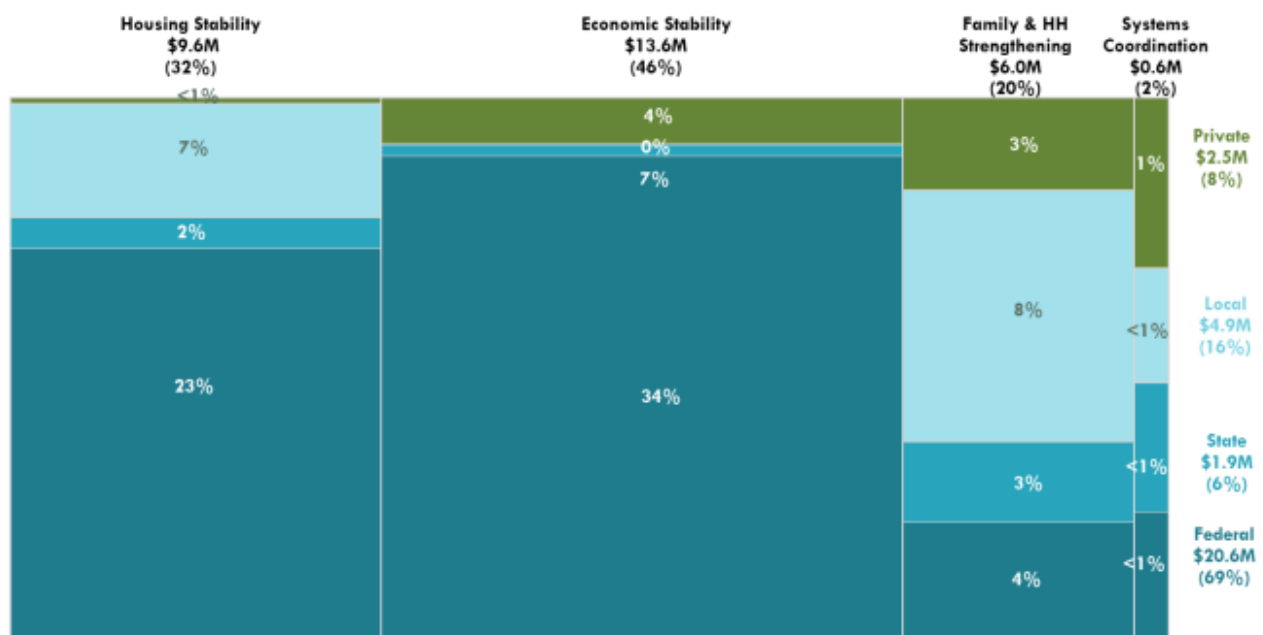
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In order to understand the funding landscape, the Task Force commissioned BERK Consulting (Appendices C and D) to conduct a fiscal analysis of the federal, state, local, and philanthropic funding streams supporting children and families in Whatcom County. Some key findings of the report are:

- Of the \$4.9 million in local dollars invested in supporting and strengthening family stability, only \$1.6 million comes from Whatcom County government. This equates to 1.7% of the General Fund budgeted expenditures of \$95,503,831.
- The need in Whatcom County far outstrips the available resources, and the pandemic has exacerbated this gap.
- These funds are not equally available to families in Whatcom County. For example, families in Bellingham and families with the lowest incomes (below the federal poverty line) generally have access to greater types and amounts of resources leaving many ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) families without needed supports.
- The majority of funds available are restricted in their uses limiting their ability to adapt to emergent needs in the community.
- Local funds are needed to address local conditions and can provide leverage with certain funding sources.

Exhibit 3. Distribution of Funds Supporting Strong, Stable Families in Whatcom County, Average of FY19-FY21(\$29.8m)



Source: BERK, 2021.

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Based on the directives of the cited ordinance and resolution, and the findings of the fiscal map, it is the recommendation of the Task Force that the Whatcom County Government increase long-term and sustainable funding streams to support child and family programs, services, and infrastructure.

One mechanism for directing public investments to ensure that children are safe, healthy, and ready to learn is through the voter approval of additional public resources for a specific purpose. Voter approval of a levy lid lift would turn relatively small investments by homeowners (~\$100/year based on median home price) into a county fund that would generate \$8.2 million annually.

The Children’s Fund, a levy proposed by the Children’s Initiative Committee, would fund targeted interventions to increase the number of quality child care slots, and reduce the cost burden on families across Whatcom County. It would also provide more coordination of programs and services to make measurable progress towards shared goals and outcomes.

The Task Force will continue to explore the specifics of this opportunity, as well as other options. We will share any recommendations with the council when finalized.

Result:

Resources and funding supporting child and family programs, services, and infrastructure are stable and meet the needs of all Whatcom children and families.

Strategies to achieve our results

Priority Area 4: Identify resources and funding needed to increase and stabilize programs for families.

4.1 Increase long-term and sustainable funding streams to support child and family programs, services, and infrastructure. (CFAP, HW).

Example action step:

- Explore the specifics of the Children’s Fund levy.

4.2 Establish a formalized, equitable pathway for the allocation of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds set aside for children and families in Whatcom County.

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4.3 Support children and families by directing strategic investments in early intervention or prevention programs and services for children 0-5 that improve the likelihood that children of all races and ethnicities in Whatcom County thrive through fair and just opportunities to be as healthy as possible. (CFAP)

4.4 Allocate dollars in a way that is targeted, based on data, and supported by strategies raised by our community. (HW)

4.5 Provide access to land, grants, and/or loans to support the startup/expansion of childcare and early learning programs. (CFAP)

4.6 Allocate resources to scale up effective prevention and intervention systems for family homelessness. (CFAP, HW)

4.7 Increase resources and funding for child and youth mental health approaches focusing on prevention. (HW)

Example:

- Increase educational programming to K-12 students at public schools and Lummi Nation schools, to educate children and youth on mental health and self-care.

4.8 Provide resources to improve access to family services and supports, particularly behavioral health supports. (CFAP, HW)

4.9 Support funding for and implement a culturally and linguistically responsive health navigation system for families seeking information and assistance with health and social services. (CFAP, HW)

4.10 Prioritize preservation and expansion of behavioral health funds to increase the availability of child and family mental health programs and services integrated within childcare, school, healthcare, and other community settings. (CFAP, HW)

4.11 Ensure families with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) have access to qualified interpreters and translated materials.

WHAT'S NEXT

We are excited about the work ahead of us. We will continue to look to the original ordinance as a guide and are also prepared to adapt to emerging opportunities. Some of the key areas we will be focusing on during the next six months include:

- Continue to prioritize other funding streams for Children and Families.
- Elevate and prioritize community engagement metrics developed and reviewed by those with lived experience.
- Identify additional opportunities within county government to prioritize children and families.
- Bring specific recommendations based on the fiscal map to the County Council.
- Continue to bring recommendations for ARPA funding to Council.
- Continue to strengthen the partnership between the County Council and Task Force.
- Support the transition of the Task Force to being member-led in an ongoing partnership with County staff.
- Reinforce and further align work in order to best collaborate with other groups (Children's Initiative Committee, Healthy Whatcom, Whatcom Racial Equity Commission, etc.).

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APPENDICES

- Appendix A: Current Task Force Membership
- Appendix B: Data to Monitor Progress
- Appendix C: [Whatcom County Strong Stable Families Fiscal Map](#)
- Appendix D: [Children and Families Fiscal Map Presentation](#)
- Appendix E: [Phase I report](#)
- Appendix F: [2021 Stipend Pilot Program Report](#)

APPENDIX A: CURRENT TASK FORCE MEMBERSHIP

Key to workgroup abbreviations:

CCC=County-Community Collaboration

CFF=Children and Families First

IFI=Increasing Family Involvement

RAF=Resources and Funding

* indicates member is serving as a Task Force Co-chair

Member Name, Role	CCC	CFF	IFI	RAF
Alicia Hanning* , Community Member, 2-year term			X	
Anne Granberg , Community Member, 2-year term				X
Annie Taylor , Department of Children, Youth, & Families, permanent			X	
Beverly Porter , Whatcom Taking Action, permanent	X			
Brian Nelson , Community Member, 2-year term				X
Carol Frazey , Whatcom County Health Board, permanent	X			
Chris Cochran , Community Member, 2-year term		X		
Debbie Ahl , Community Member, 4-year term	X			
Escarleth De Leon , Community Member, 2-year term	X			
Gregory Hansen , Small Cities Partnership, permanent				X
Jamie Desmul , Community Member, 4-year term				X
Jed Holmes , Whatcom County Executive, permanent				X

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Member Name, Role	CCC	CFF	IFI	RAF
Jennifer Wright* , Community Member, 4-year term				X
Keith Montoya* , Generations Forward Family Council, permanent		X		
Komal Shah , Community Member, 4-year term		X		
Mary Sewright , School Superintendents, permanent	X			
Melissa Isenhardt , Community Member, 2-year term	X			
Mike Ford , Community Member, 4-year term		X		
Monica Koller , Generations Forward Family Council, permanent			X	
Ray Deck , Community Member, 4-year term				X
Rosalva Santos-Guzman , Community Member, 4-year term			X	
Samya Lutz , City of Bellingham, permanent	X			
Sarah Cook , Lummi Nation, permanent			X	
Sativa Robertson , Nooksack Tribe, permanent	X			
Sterling Chick , Public Health Advisory Board, permanent		X		
Urvashi Graham* , Community Member, 2-year term			X	
Vesla Tonnessen , Whatcom Early Learning Alliance, permanent				X
Yarrow Greer , Generations Forward Family Council, permanent			X	

Also served in 2021

Astrid Newell, Whatcom County Health Department

Brian Heinrich, City of Bellingham

Katrice Rodriguez, Nooksack Tribe

Mara Kelley, Community Member

Silvia Johnson, Department of Children, Youth, & Families

Whatcom County Ordinance 2020-079, which formed the Child and Family Well-being Task Force, calls for 30 Task Force members representing a variety of stakeholders, identities, and perspectives in Whatcom County. Half are permanent members appointed by their designated organization or agency specifically called out in the ordinance. The remaining 15 members are community members who applied directly to the County Council and were appointed to serve either a two- or four-year term. In soliciting applications, every effort was made to reach community members with lived experience with issues facing young children and families, particularly those from under-represented communities and diverse backgrounds.

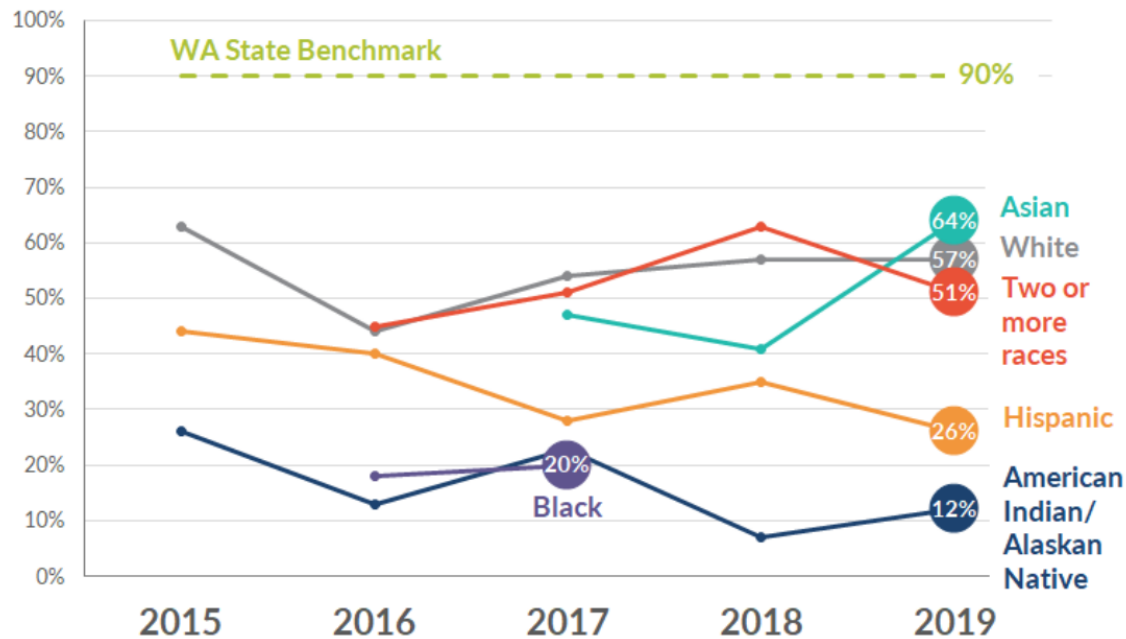
Members appointed from the community represent at least one of the following experiences or communities:

- Under-represented communities: Hispanic/Latino, American Indian/Alaska Native, Black/African American, Immigrant, Rural (up to 5 members)
- Community action agency, non-profit housing organization, or social service agency (up to 2 members)
- Faith community
- Private school, home school, higher education, or child care provider (up to 2 members)
- Medical and behavioral health care providers serving young children and families
- Child caregivers such as a parent, foster parent, grandparent, or guardian (up to 3 members)
- Private business, corporation, or philanthropic organization

APPENDIX B: DATA TO MONITOR PROGRESS

To measure early childhood well-being, we use kindergarten readiness data, disaggregated by race, as an indicator of how our community is supporting the needs of young children of all races and ethnicities. All public schools, and some tribal nation schools, use a process called the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing. This data is based on 6 domains: Physical, Social-Emotional, Cognitive, Language, Math, Literacy. In Whatcom County, less than half of all kindergarten students arrive developmentally ready for school, and for BIPOC or low-income children, that number shrinks to 25%.

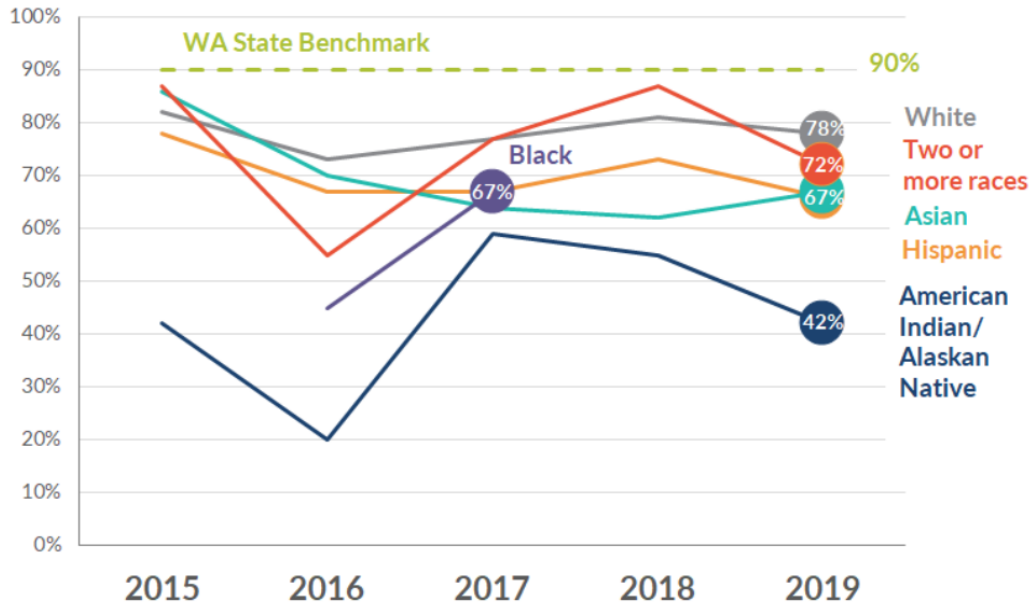
Whatcom County Students: 6 Domains of Kindergarten-Readiness, by Race and Ethnicity



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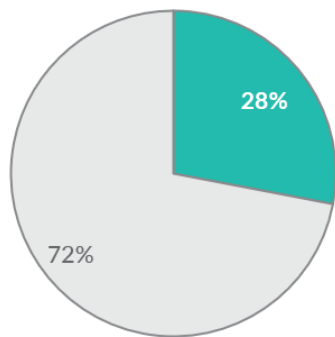
Whatcom County Students: Social-Emotional Readiness, by Race and Ethnicity



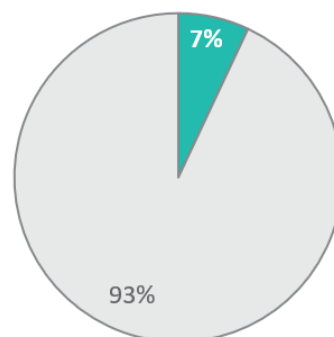
Child Care Costs: Parent/Caregiver Burden

Note: A “family of four” is defined as two adults, one infant, and one preschooler. Source: [ALICE report 2020](#) and [OC Supply Report](#).

In Whatcom County, a family of four is paying approximately one third of their household budget to **child care costs**. This is four times the amount recommended by the 2021 American Families Plan.



2020 Whatcom County Family of 4:
Percent of family's budget allocated to child care.



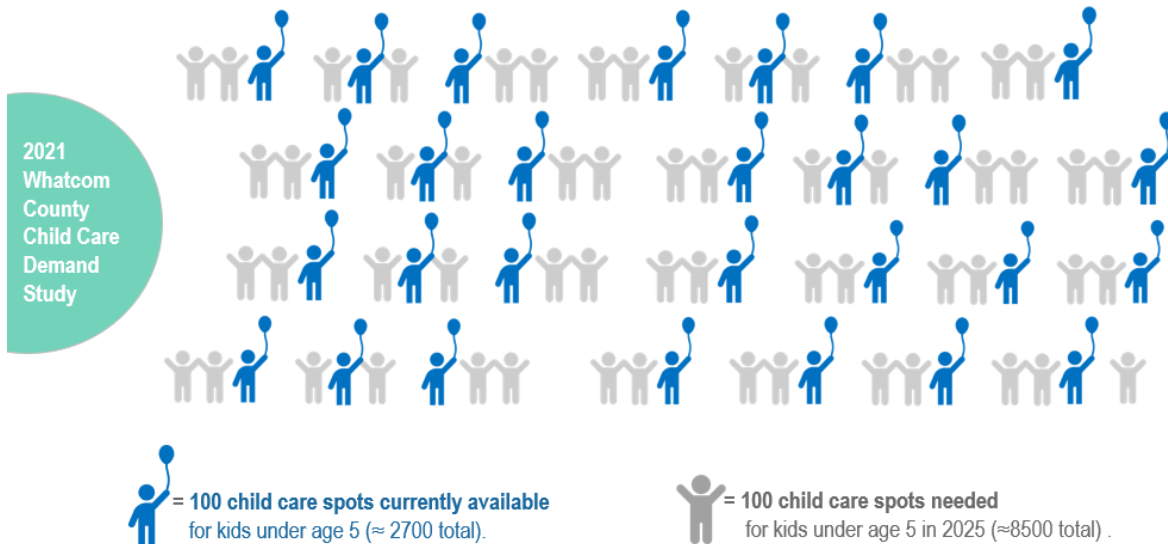
2021 "American Families Plan" Family of 4:
Percent of family's budget allocated to child care

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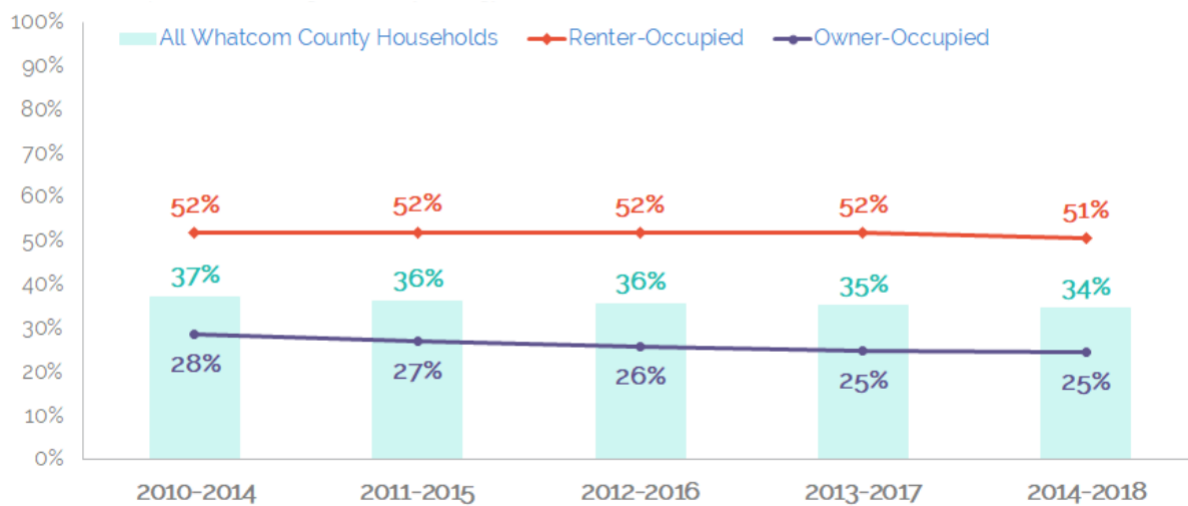
Child Care Costs: Parent/Caregiver Burden

The amount of **currently available child care for kids under age 5** will need to triple by the year 2025 in order to meet Whatcom County's anticipated child care needs.



Housing: Cost-Burdened Households, renter vs. owner-occupied

Percent of households that spend more than 30% of income on housing (Cost-Burdened):
Whatcom County, 2010-2018



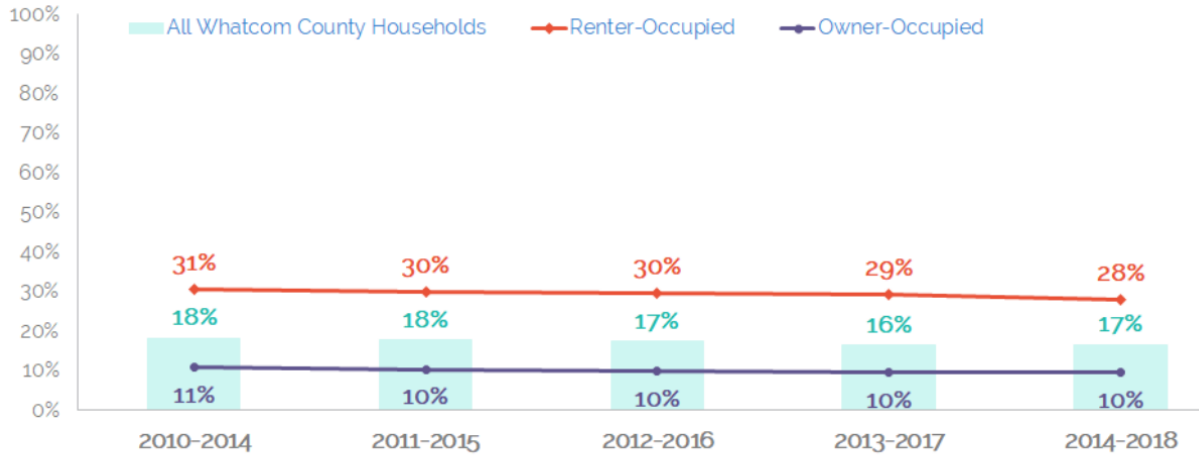
HUD Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy Datasets

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Housing: Severely Cost-Burdened Households, renter vs. owner-occupied

Percent of households that spend more than 50% of income on housing (Severely Cost-Burdened): Whatcom County, 2010-2018



HUD Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy Datasets

APPENDIX C: WHATCOM COUNTY STRONG STABLE FAMILIES FISCAL MAP



Whatcom County Strong Stable Families Fiscal Map

February 2022

Prepared by BERK Consulting for the Whatcom County Child and
Family Well-Being Task Force

Land Acknowledgement

Whatcom County acknowledges that we reside on the traditional and unceded territory of the Lummi, Nooksack, Samish and Semiahmoo People who have cared for and tended this land since time immemorial. Truth and acknowledgment are critical to building mutual respect and connection across all barriers of heritage and difference. We begin this effort to acknowledge what has been buried by honoring the truth. We are on the unceded ancestral lands of the Lummi, Nooksack, Samish and Semiahmoo People. We pay respect to their elders past and present.

Fiscal Map Acknowledgments

Fiscal Mapping Workgroup of the Child and Family Well-Being Task Force

- Ray Deck III
- Urvasi Graham
- Jed Holmes
- Melissa Isenhardt
- Jennifer Wright

Project Managers

- Astrid Newell, Whatcom County Health Department
- Judy Ziels, Whatcom County Health Department

Strategic Advisor

- Kylie Wheeler, Children's Funding Project

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- Brien Thane, Bellingham and Whatcom County Housing Authorities
- Cherie Berthon, State Board of Community and Technical Colleges
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- Debbie Ahl, Mount Baker Foundation
- Debbie Paton, Lorena Shah, Katie Sly, and David Webster, Opportunity Council
- Emily O'Connor, Lydia Place
- Erin Malone, Sierra James, and Ken Bronstein, Whatcom Center for Early Learning
- Patricia Boyce, United Way of Whatcom County
- Samya Lutz and Katy Sullivan, City of Bellingham
- Shannon Steed, Cascade Natural Gas
- Lucy Cantu and Mary Bartolo, Sea Mar Community Health Centers
- Mary Kinder, Washington Department of Social and Human Services
- Mauri Ingram and Pamela Jons, Whatcom Community Foundation
- Melissa Pickel, Brigid Collins Family Support Center
- Meredith Hayes, Child Care Consultant, Chuckanut Health Foundation
- Michelle DeBell, Washington Department of Commerce

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Introduction and Background

The Child and Family Well-Being Action Plan

Whatcom Working Toward Well-being, also known as the Child and Family Well-Being Action Plan, was developed in a collaboration between Whatcom County Public Health Advisory Board, Whatcom County Health Department, Generations Forward, and Healthy Whatcom. It includes detailed steps for the County government to take toward the vision of a “Beloved Community” in which every child in every family flourishes. The plan was published in January 2020 and completion of this fiscal map was an initial step to help the Child and Family Well-Being Task Force identify existing and potential new funding streams for child and family programs.

What is a Fiscal Map?

Governments support child and family well-being using a complex array of services and funding streams. For example, a single family may be eligible for services that are delivered through the public K-12 school system, the health care system, Medicaid system, the workforce system, public utilities, public health, and various local initiatives. Each of these systems is typically siloed from the others and represents a separate web of programs and funding that are typically not coordinated at any level. Each funding stream also holds its own complexity in how it is administered and how funds or services and support reach families.

A fiscal map is an exercise to inventory and analyze funds directed toward a particular population, service array, outcome, or intervention. It can help “see through” multiple funding streams to the ultimate outcomes you care about and then identify gaps and opportunities for alignment. This fiscal map is intended to take us beyond usual siloed budgeting to show how much money *overall* is going to **Strong, Stable Families**, and identify gaps and opportunities to make that funding more consistent and/or robust.

Fiscal Map Limitations

Fiscal mapping is not a precise science. It is by nature an exercise for which data is not easily available, because it is asking questions that go beyond our usual reporting and processes. The primary challenge is data availability within the timeframe for collection (September to December 2021). We report on sources for which data was available, acknowledging that we are offering an incomplete approximation of the full picture.

The scope of the fiscal map (i.e., geography, time period, population) applies a framework to the data analysis. Of course, some data that is available does not fit neatly into the framework. For example, available data might be reported as totals for multiple counties or over multiple year time frames. In these cases, we made estimates and assumptions informed by stakeholder interviews and secondary research to align the funds to the fiscal map framework.

Fiscal mapping represents only the funds spent, without capturing how effective those resources were in meeting their intent. It also does not capture important investments in program quality. The quality of program implementation might include things like the capacity to do home visits in a trauma-informed way for example. There are also significant contributions in Whatcom County in the form of volunteerism and underpaid labor that are not captured in this map.

While they are often undertaken as a first step, fiscal maps by definition map the current availability of resources. It does not model the costs of fully implementing a vision for strong, stable families, which would be another significant body of work. This study does begin to characterize income related gaps, and we hope the data can fuel further conversation about what the level of resources *should be*.

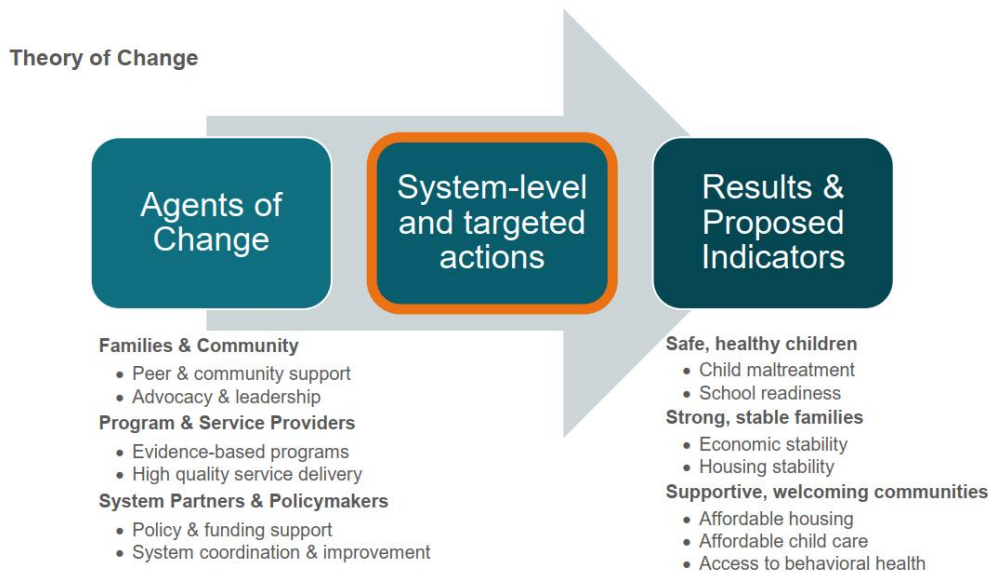
Fiscal Mapping Process

Scoping

BERK Consulting met with the fiscal map work group from August - September 2021 to determine the scope of the project to characterize funding for child and family well-being in Whatcom County. The groups explored various frameworks, and decided to focus on the **Strong, Stable Families** outcome of the Child and Family Well-Being Action Plan Theory of Change as the primary lens for the fiscal map. This means that this fiscal map includes funds that contribute to families’ financial stability; housing stability; and social, emotional, and relationship strengths. It does not map:

- **Child care funds.** These are mapped in the 2021 [Early Learning and Child Care Fiscal Map](#).
- **Health care and mental health funds.** While the ability to pay for health care is connected to financial stability and mental health is deeply intertwined with all aspects of family and child well-being, it was outside the scope of this study to map all health and mental health-related funds.
- **K-12 basic education dollars.** This fiscal map includes family supports administered through the K-12 education system that contribute to economic stability, housing stability, and/or family strengthening; but does not include K-12 dollars dedicated to basic education and instruction. Mapping these funds is outside the scope of this report.

Exhibit 1. Whatcom Working Toward Well-being Theory of Change



Source: Whatcom Working Toward Well-being Action Plan, 2020

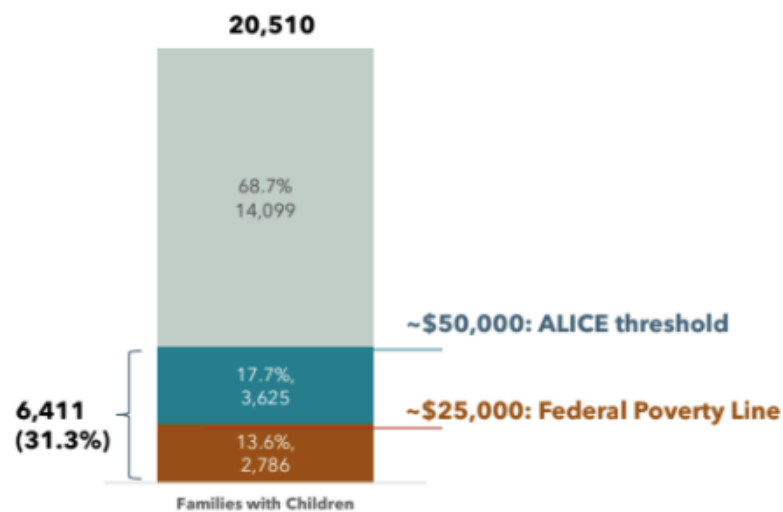
To operationalize the goal of Strong, Stable Families in terms of activities, we elected to map funding for programs intended to impact family and household strengthening along with housing stability and economic stability. There was also interest in understanding more about funding to support system coordination functions to ensure effective and efficient use of resources across these programs. Scope would cover the last three most recent fiscal years with an attempt to separate COVID-related funding and focus on the Asset-Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE) population. The goal set by this workgroup was to understand programs disaggregated by age of children (pre-natal to 5 and up to 12 years old) to the extent possible, race and ethnicity, and geography. The workgroup also expressed interest in understanding more about programs and funding available to migrant farmworkers as a target population.

About ALICE

The definition of the ALICE population is a concept supported by the United Way to highlight the many families that are working and above poverty levels, but still struggling because wages have not kept up with the costs of basic household essentials. They will qualify for fewer programs based on income, poverty level, and/or employment status. In the ALICE methodology, a Household Survival Budget is calculated for each county accounting for a conservative estimate of the cost of housing, child care, food, transportation, health care, and technology, plus taxes and a 10% contingency (miscellaneous expenses). Families living below that threshold are considered ALICE. The threshold in Whatcom County is \$50,000 for householders under 65 years old (Hoopes, 2020). This is roughly equivalent to 200% of the federal poverty line (FPL) or 80% of Area Median Income (AMI), depending on household sizes. These FPL and AMI benchmarks are often used as eligibility criteria for services.

According to the 2018 ALICE profile, Whatcom County is home to 20,510 families with children. Of those, 6,411 (31.3%) are below the ALICE threshold. Of those below the ALICE threshold, 2,786 meet the poverty threshold (United for ALICE, 2018).

Exhibit 2. Distribution of Whatcom County Families with Children below ALICE and Federal Poverty Income Thresholds (2018)



Note: Income thresholds shown are approximate annual amounts for a family of four. In most program determinations the exact threshold varies by household size and types of income.

Source: United for ALICE, 2018; BERK, 2022

We use the following terms in the remainder of the report to compare resources available to different groups of families.

- Whatcom County families *in poverty*: 2,786
- Whatcom County families *between poverty and ALICE*: 3,625
- Whatcom County families *below ALICE* (total of families in poverty and between poverty and ALICE): 6,411

Data Collection

For each element of the map, BERK conducted a series of systems level interviews, agency and organization data research and requests, and exchange of data collection tools with fiscal staff. Systems level interviews were used to get a high-level overview of the landscape and generate leads for the more detailed data required for the fiscal map. BERK collected publicly available data as well as specific agency and organization data by the major funding streams to form a landscape of resources spent in Whatcom County. BERK also consulted with program staff close to the terminal point of spending to help interpret the data and apply expert insight in allocating funds by outcome and fill in other gaps.

Definitions

Housing Stability

Housing stability means that systems are in place that ensure a household has control over when and where it moves (Corporation for Enterprise Development, 2015). Housing stability programs are intended to keep families in housing and include foreclosure prevention, eviction prevention, tenant services, landlord liaison programs, legal aid, mobile and manufactured home relocation assistance, farmworker housing, and rapid-re-housing rental assistance. This scope does not include the homelessness crisis response system (i.e., emergency shelter, transitional housing). We separately explored funding for development of affordable family-size units, and these funds are excluded from our estimates of funding for housing stability.

Economic Stability

Economic stability programs reduce fluctuations and build resilience in household budgets. They can include income, flexible funds, financial education and counseling, credit building, employment services, and asset-building programs, including higher-education for parents. We separately present data on earned income tax credits and child tax credits under this scope.

Family and Household Strengthening

This includes programs designed for family support (social, emotional, and/or relationship-based). This includes parent and family education; home visiting; parent support programs; child welfare programs intended to support parents and reduce maltreatment; and resource connections such as Nurse-Family Partnership, Early Head Start, Parents as Teachers, and Parenting Academy.

System Coordination

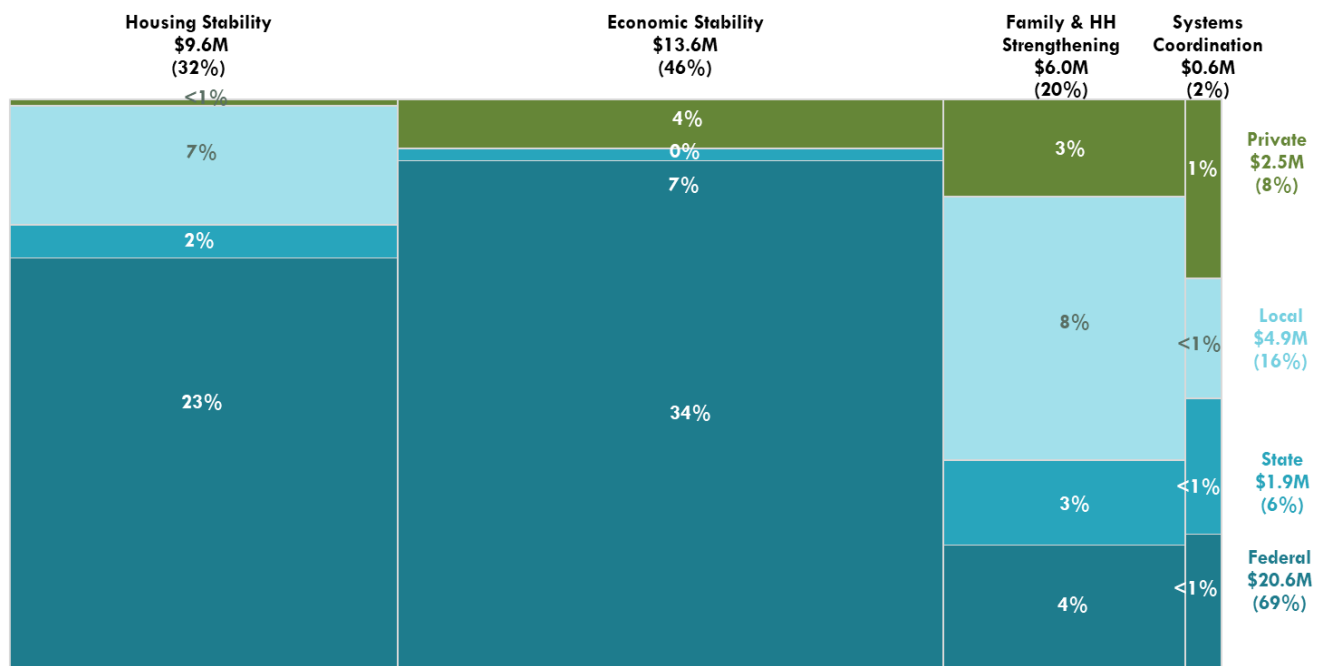
Systems coordination includes efforts to align activities related to any of the programs mentioned above. It also includes research and professional services to inform the system.

Fiscal Map Findings

Overview

Based on available data from federal fiscal years 2019 through 2021, an annual average of \$29.8 million in funds supported strong, stable families in Whatcom County. Of these funds, on average, around 32% were for housing stability, 46% were for economic stability, and 20% were for family and household strengthening. Another 2% went to systems coordination activities. See Exhibit 3.

Exhibit 3. Distribution of Funds Supporting Strong, Stable Families in Whatcom County, Average of FY19-FY21 (\$29.8m)



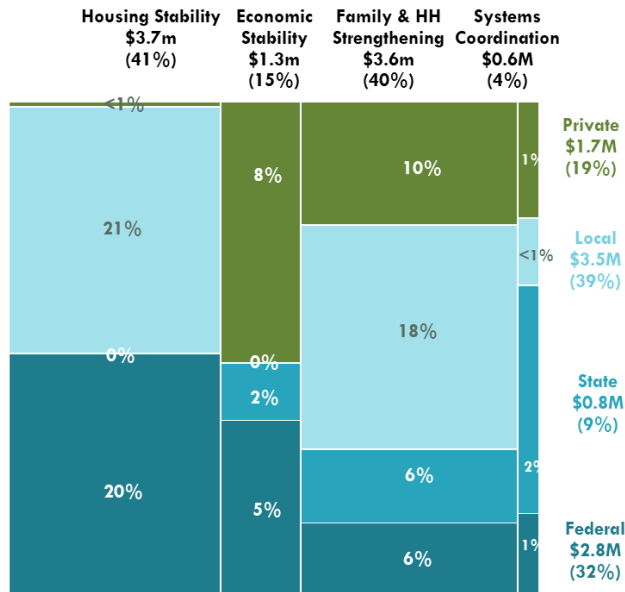
Source: BERK, 2021.

The funding landscape for funds supporting strong, stable families is quite complex, with funding derived from a variety of public sources, including from federal, state, and local government sources, as well as private sources such as from foundations and individual donors. Federal sources are the most significant source of funds for housing stability funds and economic stability funds in Whatcom County over this time period. Federal sources make up a smaller portion of family and household strengthening funds, where local, state, and private funds play a more significant role. Funds that are specific to the City of Bellingham or the Bellingham School District represent over half (52%) of the \$4.9 million of local funds represented in this map, with the remaining 48% either targeted to areas outside of Bellingham or available to residents throughout the entire county. Local private funds play the most significant role in funding family and household strengthening. The following sections go into each element of funds supporting strong, stable families in Whatcom County in more detail.

Most of the funds inventoried for this fiscal map have income eligibility requirements. Depending on the income threshold, these can restrict families that are between poverty and the ALICE threshold from accessing these funds. Families between poverty and the ALICE threshold are explicitly *not* eligible for

about two-thirds of the funds mapped in this study (approximately \$19.0 million). Funds for which families between poverty and the ALICE threshold *may* be eligible for tend to focus more on family and household strengthening and include a much more diverse mix of funding sources, including local funds.

Exhibit 4. Distribution of Program Funds Supporting Strong, Stable Families in Whatcom County Available to Families Making \$50,000 a year, Average of FY19-FY21(\$9.0m)



Source: BERK, 2021.

Housing Stability

There are 100,064 housing units in Whatcom County (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020) and an estimated 33% of units are renter occupied (American Community Survey, 2019). The rental vacancy rate as of fall 2021 was very low, 1.0%, indicating a tight and competitive market for rental housing. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, in fall 2019, the vacancy rate was even lower, at just 0.2% (Washington Center for Real Estate Research, 2019).

Average rents in Whatcom County in fall 2021 were \$1,179 (\$14,148 annually) for 1-bedroom units and \$1,351 (\$16,212 annually) for 2-bedroom units. (Washington Center for Real Estate Research, 2021). Recent real estate analysis has estimated the median home price in Whatcom County to be \$556,000, having increased 23.6% year over year (Perine, 2021). This equates to a roughly \$2,000 mortgage and a down payment of well over \$100,000 (with 20% down). Wages in Whatcom County, on the other hand, only increased between 7.8% and 10.9% total in real terms between 2000 and 2019 (Office of Financial Management, 2021).

The combination of high housing costs and stagnating wages have contributed to high housing cost burdens in Whatcom County. As of 2018, the most recent year for which data are available, 34% of all Whatcom County households were housing cost-burdened by U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) standards, meaning they spent 30% or more of their income on housing costs. This cost burden is disproportionately experienced by renter households, particularly BIPOC renter households. Fifty-one percent (51%) of all renter households and 57% of Hispanic/Latino renter households were cost-burdened in Whatcom County as of 2018. This level of cost burden is higher than

even some of the highest-cost counties in Washington State – for example, in King County, where 42% of renter households are cost-burdened (HUD, 2018).

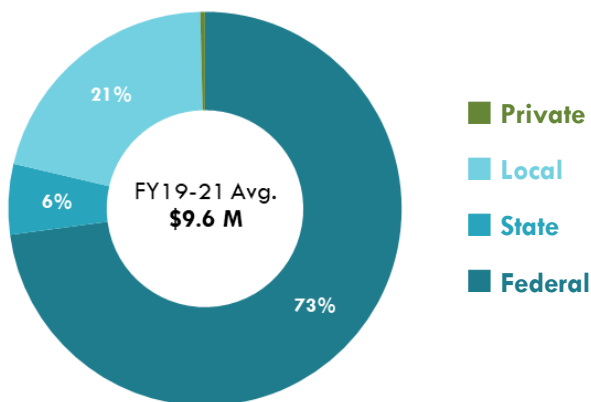
Across all HUD programs, there are 2,324 subsidized housing units available in Bellingham through the Housing Authority of the City of Bellingham and 63 through the Housing Authority of Whatcom County. In Bellingham, only about one-quarter (26%, 600) of these units house children. The Whatcom County units are 62% occupied by children (HUD Office of Policy Development and Research, 2020).

Whatcom County’s [COVID-19 Community Health Impact Assessment](#) found that **the pandemic has worsened housing instability in the county**. After a brief dip early in the pandemic, housing costs in Whatcom County have continued to increase. These factors, in combination with employment impacts due to COVID-19, the expiration of Washington State’s eviction moratorium, and rising costs to construct new housing, have exacerbated Whatcom County’s housing stability challenges. Support systems were inadequate to bridge families through crisis and the need for emergency housing assistance, including motel stays, increased dramatically during the pandemic. These impacts have not been felt evenly across the population. BIPOC individuals are disproportionately likely to experience both housing cost burden and homelessness in Whatcom County (Whatcom County, 2021).

Funding Overview

Based on available data from federal fiscal years 2019 through 2021, Whatcom County saw around \$9.6 million in annual housing stability funds serving families with children from a variety of funding sources. This excludes COVID related funding as well as funds for affordable housing development, which are both reported elsewhere. It is also important to note that a variety of assumptions based on expert insights and estimates were used to isolate the portion of housing stability funds in the County that were going to specifically families with children during this time period as many funding sources do not track recipient information at that level of detail. See Exhibit 5.

Exhibit 5. Estimated Housing Stability Funds for Families with Children by Funding Level, Average of FY19-FY21



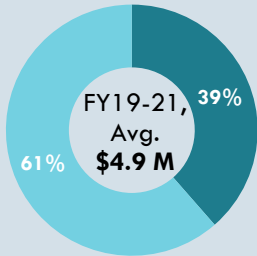
Note: COVID-related funding as well as affordable housing development funds are not included in the figure above.

Source: BERK, 2021.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

Funding for affordable housing development for families with children was not captured in the housing stability funds documented above. In recent years, two new affordable housing development funds have become available in Whatcom County: a local state-shared sales tax for affordable and supportive housing (1406 sales tax) and an affordable housing and related services sales tax (1590 sales tax). In Whatcom County, Whatcom County started collecting the 1406 sales tax in FY 21 and the City of Bellingham began collecting the 1590 sales tax in FY 21.

Exhibit 6. Affordable Housing Development Funds for Families with Children, Average of FY19-FY21



Source: BERK, 2021.

On average, 73% of housing stability funds during this period came from federal sources, with 6% coming from state sources and 21% coming from local sources. A small portion of housing stability funds during this period also came from private, philanthropic sources.

For context, annual total housing funds, excluding COVID related funding, flowing into the County over the time period was around \$44.8 million, on average. Roughly a quarter of these funds are allocated to affordable housing development (26%), which are not included in the fiscal map (see sidebar). About half of these funds cover administration costs and other housing related activities allowable under these sources, including homelessness crisis response and housing stability for households without children. Annual housing stability funds for families with children represent around 21% (\$9.6 million) of total annual housing funds, excluding COVID related funding, going to the County, on average. See Exhibit 7.

Exhibit 7. Estimated All Housing Funds by Funding Level, Average of FY19-FY21



Note: COVID-related funding is not included in the figure above.

Source: BERK, 2021.

While we attempted to collect data on the race and ethnicity of recipients of housing stability funds, many funding sources and housing programs do not require reporting at that level of detail, particularly for recipients that are families with children. Because we were only able to collect program demographic data for less than 30% of annual housing stability funds for families with children going to the County during this time period, we are not reporting that race and ethnicity data here.

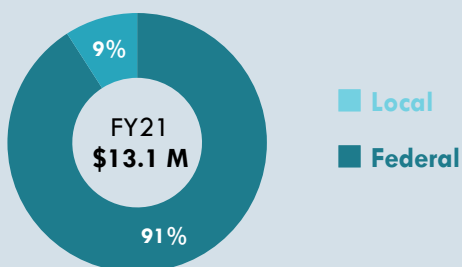
Major Funding Sources

- HUD Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers.** Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers are the largest housing stability funding source in Whatcom County for families with children and are federal funds from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Housing Choice Vouchers in Whatcom County are received from HUD by the Bellingham Housing Authority to be administered to individuals and families in the County. In terms of eligibility, Housing Choice Vouchers are restricted to recipients that make at or below 50% of the annual area median income (AMI) for county or metropolitan area in which the recipient chooses to live. However, the Bellingham Housing Authority must also provide at least 75% of its vouchers to applicants whose incomes do not exceed 30% AMI. In terms of use, vouchers are restricted to rental assistance for units that meet an acceptable level of health and safety. The income thresholds largely exclude families between poverty and the ALICE threshold.
- City of Bellingham Housing Levy.** The City of Bellingham’s Housing Levy, otherwise known as the Bellingham Home Fund, is the second largest funding source in the County for families with children and is a property tax levy lid lift. Funds are distributed by the City to local organizations such as Opportunity Council, Lydia Place, and Kulshan Community Land Trust (CLT) as well as funding various City programs. Funds are fairly flexible and are to be dedicated towards providing, producing, and/or preserving affordable housing for low income and very low-income households with 2/3 of funds being required to benefit households earning at or below 50% AMI. These funds primarily benefit families in the Bellingham area and have limited ability to serve families between poverty and the ALICE threshold.

COVID-19 FUNDING

In FY 21, Whatcom County also saw a significant amount of COVID-19 related housing relief funding flow into the County. Around 91% of COVID-19 related housing funding came from the federal government with the rest coming from state sources. The largest COVID related funding came from the U.S. Department of the Treasury’s Emergency Rental Assistance Program.

Exhibit 8. COVID-19 Housing Stability Funding for Families with Children, FY 21



Source: BERK, 2021

- **HUD Public Housing.** Public housing funds are federal funds from HUD to operate and maintain public housing units. Public housing in Whatcom County is operated and maintained by the Bellingham Housing Authority and the Whatcom County Housing Authority, who manage nearly 600 units combined around the County. In terms of eligibility, recipients of public housing must be making 80% AMI or below. Most families under the ALICE threshold are eligible.
- **HUD HOME Investment Partnership Program.** The Home Investment Partnerships Program (HOME) are federal funds provided by HUD to states and localities to fund a wide range of activities that generally fall into four categories: rehabilitation of owner-occupied housing, assistance to homebuyers, acquisition, rehabilitation, or construction of rental housing, and tenant-based rental assistance. HOME funds in Whatcom County are received by the City of Bellingham from HUD and are distributed to local partners such as Opportunity Council and Kulshan CLT as well as used by the City's Homebuyer Program. The City is required to match the HOME funds it spends with the City's own 25% permanent contribution to affordable housing activities. The City typically matches the HOME funds it spends with expenditures from its Housing Levy and General Fund, with those expenditures accounted for in the fiscal map under those revenue sources. In terms of eligibility for recipients, all HOME-assisted housing units must benefit households with incomes at or below 80% AMI. In addition, 90% of HOME-assisted rental units and recipients of tenant-based rental assistance must have incomes at or below 60% AMI. These funds primarily benefit families in the Bellingham area and have limited ability to serve families between poverty and the ALICE threshold.
- **WA State Department of Commerce Consolidated Homeless Grant.** Consolidated Homeless Grants (CHG) are state funds provided by the WA State Department of Commerce to local governments and nonprofits for funding homeless crisis responses systems to support communities in ending homelessness. Funds are fairly flexible and can be used for interim housing, rental assistance, permanent supportive housing, and other housing services. In Whatcom County, CHG funds are received by Whatcom County and distributed by the County's Health Department to local partners such as Opportunity Council and Lydia Place. In terms of eligibility for recipients, eligible individuals or families are either homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness AND at or below 30% or have a referral from the State's Housing and Essential Needs (HEN) Program or are enrolled in Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). The income thresholds largely exclude families under the ALICE thresholds but above 30% AMI.
- **Whatcom County Document Recording Fees.** Whatcom County dedicates a portion of document recording fees collected towards funding local homeless housing services, programs, and grants. These funds are distributed to local partners such as Opportunity Council, Lydia Place, and Catholic Community Services to fund housing stability programming. These funds are quite flexible in use; however, there are many competing purposes due to the wide range of allowable expenses and eligible populations, which are all low-income or at-risk populations. Given the less stringent income restrictions, most families below the ALICE threshold should be eligible for these funds.

Of note is that nearly all programs with the federal, state, and local housing stability systems are designed primarily to meet the needs of those living in poverty and currently do not address the housing stability needs of families above the poverty threshold but below the ALICE threshold.

Economic Stability

Due to gaps in the support system and market failures for essential needs like childcare, many families with children in Whatcom County live in a state of economic instability. The 2018 ALICE profile found that 14% of families with children in the county have incomes below the federal poverty level (FPL) and a further 18% are between poverty and the ALICE threshold (see the section About ALICE for more details about ALICE). In total, this means that nearly a third of families with children in Whatcom County may struggle to cover key household expenditures (United for ALICE, 2018).

This is exacerbated by the high costs of many child-related services – the 2017-18 Opportunity Council Community Needs Assessment found that childcare costs for a family with an infant and preschool-aged child would equal 34-38% of annual income for the median household in the county. Furthermore, 4.3% of children in the county had no health insurance coverage, and 11% of pregnant individuals did not receive prenatal care until the fifth month of pregnancy or later (Opportunity Council, 2018).

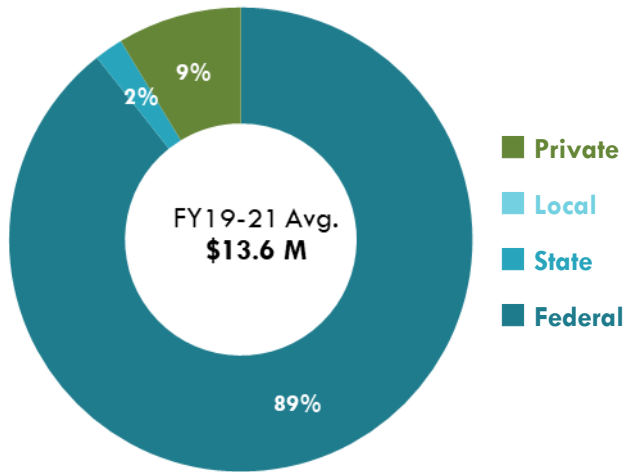
Economic instability has worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic. The County's COVID-19 Community Health Impact Assessment found that COVID-related school and childcare closures have led many parents to leave the workforce. These parents are disproportionately likely to be women, and BIPOC single mothers experienced the greatest impact (Whatcom County, 2021). **This has reduced incomes for many of these families, contributing to increased economic, housing, and food insecurity.**

Funding Overview

On an average annual basis, Whatcom County saw roughly \$14 million in funds supporting the economic stability of families with children. This includes major programs such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Basic Food, National School Feeding Program, Low Income Home Energy Assistance (LIHEAP), and Women Infants and Children (WIC). Economic stability funds may go directly to families or to providers to deliver services and programming more broadly. We report separately on federal income tax credits which also represent a significant dollar amount going to keep household budgets stable. A variety of assumptions based on expert insights and estimates were used to isolate the portion of economic stability funds in the County that were going to specifically families with children during this time period as many funding sources do not track recipient information at that level of detail.

Economic stability funds are largely funded by the federal government. Sixty-one (75%) of the funding in this programmatic area originate at the federal level. Nearly one-third of the funds in this area are represented by the USDA national school lunch program, which is highly restrictive funding provided on a reimbursement basis. Basic Food and TANF distributions are two major funding sources recorded within Economic Stability that blend federal programs with state funding (for simplicity, they are represented in the map as State dollars because Washington provides most of the total funds). Nearly 4% of the funds in this area come from local private philanthropy sources. Local public funds for economic stability programs are negligible.

Exhibit 9. Estimated Economic Stability Funds by Funding Source, Average of FY19-FY21



Sources: PSE, 2021; Department of Commerce, 2021; Cascade Natural Gas, 2021; Opportunity Council, 2021; SBCTC, 2021; DSHS, 2021; BERK, 2021.

The only economic stability programs for which we were able to obtain demographic data came from the Employment Security Department which administers Basic Food, Diversion Cash Assistance, TANF, and the Consolidated Emergency Assistance Program which account for around one-fifth of annual average economic stability funds for families with children going to the County during this time period. As such we are unable to represent the demographic distribution of economic stability funds in Whatcom County.

Tax Credits

Tax credits that keep income in household budgets are a measure for economic security primarily funded by the federal government. We did not include these credits in the fiscal map, but they are described here.

- **Federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).** Federal EITC credits workers earning below a threshold set by number of dependents and filing status. 2020 credits were between \$538 and \$6,660 per household. The American Rescue Plan (ARP) significantly expanded the credit through 2021 to payout roughly triple the previous amount. The IRS estimates that 74.4% of eligible taxpayers in Washington State receive the EITC. In tax year 2018, 11,940 filers in Whatcom County received \$22.8 m in Federal EITC (an average of \$1,911 per taxpayer).
- **State Earned Income Tax Credit.** In 2008 Washington State enacted a state-level EITC, the “Working Families” tax credit that was set at 10% of the federal credit. However, this credit was never funded. It was revisited and expanded in 2021 with HB 1297. Starting in 2023, more than 400,000 working Washington households with low and moderate incomes will be eligible for \$300 for a single person and \$1,200 for a family of four or more.
- **Child Tax Credit.** Child tax credits are intended to enhance the economic security of families with children, particularly low to moderate income households. Under the American Rescue Plan (ARP) this was expanded to \$3,600 per child under 6 and \$3,000 per child under 7, from a previous maximum of \$2,000. In tax year 2018, 23,770 filers in Whatcom County received \$57.79m in Child or Other Dependent Tax Credits (an average of \$2,431 per taxpayer). Further 8,850 filers claimed Additional Child Tax Credits totaling \$16.14 m or \$1,824 per taxpayer.
- **Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit.** This credit is specifically to offset the costs of care for working families regardless of income. In tax year 2018, 2,990 filers in Whatcom County received \$1.63m in Child Tax Credits (an average of \$545 per taxpayer).

Major Funding Sources

- **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)** is the largest source of funds for economic stability captured in Whatcom County. TANF alone accounts for nearly two-thirds of the funding inventoried for economic stability. The program, administered by the DSHS Economic Services Administration, distributes state and federal cash assistance to approximately 1,600 very low-income families in Whatcom County or roughly \$13,750 a year per family. These funds are intended to support children and may be drawn on behalf of minor children by their caregivers.
- **Basic Food Employment and Training (BFET)** is a national model for state implementation of Supplemental Nutrition and Assistance Program (SNAP) employment and training benefits. The program is available to those enrolled on Basic Food (food stamps) can pay for tuition for degrees, work training programs, books and supplies, childcare. BFET draws federal funding through DSHS and SBCTC and services are provided through contracted community & technical colleges and/or community-based organizations. Eligibility is tied to enrollment on Basic Food.

COVID-19 Funding

Several economic stability programs were deployed or enhanced in response to COVID-19 at all levels. Those that went directly to families and children to offset household expenses aside from housing and child care would be considered as economic stability funds. Some examples include the Pandemic EBT program, Puget Sound Energy's COVID Bill Assistance, and local emergency flex funds.

- **Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and other utility assistance** is a federal program that assists households with low incomes, particularly those with the lowest incomes that pay a high proportion of household income for home energy, primarily in meeting their immediate home energy needs, including heating and cooling. It can also support weatherization. There are several other utility assistance programs captured in this map that complement LIHEAP and can expand eligibility beyond LIHEAP's low income threshold. These include Puget Sound Energy's Home Energy Lifeline Program (HELP), and Cascade Natural Gas' Washington Energy Assistance Funds. Roughly half of the Whatcom County households helped by energy assistance are families with children.

As is the case with housing stability funds, the central programmatic components of economic stability systems, including TNAF and BFET, are restricted primarily to families with very low incomes and exclude other families facing economic instability, including families above the poverty threshold but below the ALICE threshold, creating a systemic gap.

Family and Household Strengthening

Families with children may have a variety of needs for strengthening services depending on their individual circumstances – these could include social, emotional, and relationship-based supports; home visiting; parenting support and education; and child welfare programming. The Opportunity Council's 2017-18 Community Needs Assessment found that many families that are eligible for Early Head Start (EHS)/Head Start (HS) (low-income families with children ages birth to 5) identified as needing family strengthening services. One hundred percent (100%) of Opportunity Council EHS families self-identified as needing health education and parenting education services, and 48% self-identified as needing emergency or crisis intervention services. Among HS families, 61% self-identified as needing parenting education, 42% health education, and 48% emergency or crisis intervention services.

In a survey of low-income families with young children, conducted as part of the same assessment, the Opportunity Council found that 37% of respondent families considered domestic violence services to be extremely important and 22% considered substance use disorder treatment to be extremely important (Opportunity Council, 2018). In a different community needs assessment survey conducted in 2021, the Opportunity Council found that 22% of respondents in Whatcom County considered substance use disorder services very hard to get, 20% of respondents considered domestic violence services very hard to get, and 15% considered life skills services very hard to get (Opportunity Council, 2021).

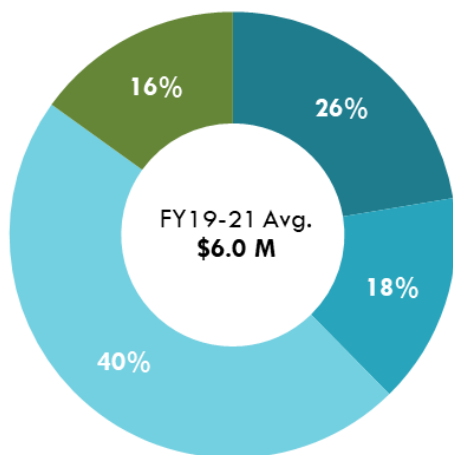
Many family struggles have been worsened at the same time that systems of support were constrained from delivering services due to the pandemic related factors. The County's COVID-19 Community Health Impact Assessment found that both the prevalence and severity of behavioral health issues among children have increased during the pandemic. Lockdowns and school closures caused some children and youth to spend more time in abusive home environments, without access to the social and emotional supports provided in schools. The same challenges have held true for adults, and the Impact Assessment found that parents, particularly single parents were hit hard by the compounding losses of child care,

work, income, and social and emotional supports as broader systems were strained or broken by the challenges of the pandemic (Whatcom County, 2021).

Funding Overview

Based on available data from federal fiscal years 2019 through 2021, Whatcom County saw an average of \$6.0 million in annual family and household strengthening funds from a variety of funding sources. It is important to note that a variety of assumptions based on expert insights and estimates were used to isolate the portion of family and household strengthening funds in the County that were going to specifically families with children under age 5 during this time period as many funding sources do not track recipient information at that level of detail. See Exhibit 10.

Exhibit 10. Estimated Family and Household Strengthening Funds by Funding Level, Average of FY19-FY21



Sources: Bellingham Public Schools, 2021; Brigid Collins Family Support Center, 2021; Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2021; Opportunity Council, 2021; Washington State Department of Health, 2021; Whatcom Center for Early Learning, 2021; Whatcom County Department of Health, 2021; BERK, 2021.

On average, 26% of family and household strengthening funds during this period came from federal sources, with 18% coming from state sources, 40% from local sources, and 16% from private sources, both philanthropic and fees-for-service (including user fees and private insurance reimbursements).

Demographic information on recipients of family and household strengthening funds was only collected for a subset of funding sources as many funding sources do not require reporting at that level of detail. Based on average annual funds, we were able to collect demographic information for around 48% of annual family and household strengthening funds going to the County during this time period.

While we attempted to collect data on the race and ethnicity of recipients of family and household strengthening funds, many funding sources and programs do not require reporting at that level of detail, particularly around isolating only recipients that are families with children. Because we were only able to collect program demographic data for less than half of annual family and household strengthening funds going to the County during this time period, we are not reporting that race and ethnicity data here.

Major Funding Sources

- **Early Head Start (EHS).** Early Head Start programs provide development and support services to low-income pregnant individuals and children under age 3. In Whatcom County, the Opportunity

Council provides EHS services, with 50 available slots per year. Dedicated, restricted federal EHS dollars fund these services.

- **Local government general funds.** Local governments in Whatcom County support family and household strengthening programs via allocated dollars from their general funds. Notable examples include:
 - **School districts,** which partially fund student and family support services; including wellness programs, parent and family engagement, family resource coordination and support, homeless student support, and early childhood programs; through dollars from their general funds. In general, these student and family support programs are not income eligibility-restricted, though there are some early childhood programs for low-income families.
 - **Whatcom County,** which supports the County Department of Health’s Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) program via dollars from its General Fund, as well as dedicated dollars from the County’s Behavioral Health Sales Tax. The NFP is a home visiting program for low-income first-time mothers that offers home regular visits from pregnancy up to the child’s second birthday.
- **Home Visiting Service Account (HVSA) State I-502 Funds.** The County’s NFP program is also partially funded by state HVSA funds, which are generated from the State’s marijuana excise tax. HVSA also funds the Lummi Nation Family Spirit family support program and the Parents as Teachers home visiting program at Lydia Place. While HVSA dollars going to the County NFP program are included in the funding totals in this profile, we were unable to obtain specific dollar amounts of funding from the HVSA to the Lydia Place Parents as Teachers program and Lummi Nation Family Spirit program, so those dollars are not included in the funding totals.

Cornerstone family strengthening programs, including EHS and home visiting programs, are income-restricted, meaning that many families above the poverty threshold but below the ALICE threshold are excluded from these systems of support.

System Coordination

System coordination was difficult to estimate because it is a “slice” of many people’s jobs that is not explicitly compensated. Most interviewees offered a percentage of their time and staff time as dedicated to system coordination. Very few funds are explicitly dedicated to system coordination, though it includes several thousands of hours of staff time that are typically funded by program budgets and organizational overhead. The County serves as convener for several family strengthening bodies, including the child and family well-being task force. The Asset Building Coalition hosted by the Opportunity Council is another example coordination body. A few explicit examples of funded system coordination activities include planning grants and funded research and professional facilitation services. In total, this amounted to approximately \$623,000 on average.

Though it is major service point, the operating budget of the DSHS Community Services Office, \$3.7m, was not included in the map as representing system coordination. We were not able to obtain separate operating budgets for other service points such as the East County Resource center, though the budget is likely partially covered by some of the other Opportunity Council program funds already included.

Qualitative findings from interviews about system coordination reflected a perception that a lot of time is dedicated to coordination activities. However, without resources dedicated to fund the actions discussed,

they are limited to program coordination, and unable to invest in significant initiatives in partnership. This means that providers have not always been able to collectively track outcomes, collaborate on professional development events, smoothly transition families between services, and leverage programmatic efforts.

Interviewees also highlighted that resource navigation and lack of case management capacity in the County has been an issue. For example, the center of operations for 211 sits outside the county, limiting the ability to keep up to date with local knowledge. There is a perceived lack of “one-stop” referral centers that encompass the full range of supports that might be available for strong, stable families. Currently, the Whatcom County government is funding the expansion of resource navigation for children with families prenatal to age five, with a focus on increasing access to services for Spanish-speaking families and recent immigrants. The Whatcom Early Learning Alliance (WELA) is taking the lead in this work using the Help Me Grow model for implementation.

Migrant Farmworkers Spotlight

As of 2018, Whatcom County is home to an estimated 1,315 year-round and covered agricultural jobs, with an estimated 3,388 migratory agricultural jobs available during the peak months. Compared to statewide averages, Whatcom County relies heavily upon migrant, covered employment with very few H-2A workers. These workers are likely to struggle the most in securing child and family well-being supports.

Estimated wages for farmworkers are well below the median family income (MFI) for Whatcom County at all family sizes. The average annual income for farmworkers in the region was \$30,245 in 2018, which equates to 39% of MFI in Whatcom County. Households making the average annual income for farmworkers would classify as very low-income (30-49% MFI) for families of 2+ members. In addition, this is around half of the ALICE threshold for Whatcom County households.

Within Whatcom County there are several programs dedicated to towards supporting farmworkers:

- Opportunity Council’s Early Learning and Family Services Department has a farmworker program that provides services such as Head Start to farmworker families
- Mercy Housing Northwest manages a 51 unit affordable housing community in Bellingham called Sterling Meadows Apartments that is designed to serve agricultural workers and their families. Sterling Meadows includes an after-school program, Homework Club, and computer lab for children in its units.
- Sea Mar’s Everson Clinic sees many farmworker families, particularly, through their Maternity Support Services programming
- Catholic Community Services developed Villa Santa Fe, a 50-unit housing development for farmworkers and their families in Bellingham
- Community to Community Development has programming toward advocating for farmworker rights and food sovereignty

However, based on interviews with agency and organization staff, there are significant barriers that make it challenging for farmworkers and their families to access supports. These include language barriers (e.g., lack of Spanish-speaking staff and translated materials), eligibility requirements (e.g., car

insurance), access to transportation, access to technology (e.g., Zoom or other remote communication tools) and lack of trust in organizations or government.

Due to these barriers, farmworker populations are more difficult to reach with child and family well-being supports and may require more extensive resources in systems coordination to aid farmworkers with learning about and navigating the supports available to them.

Key Findings and Next Steps

Key Findings

On an average annual basis, there are about \$29.8 million dollars in the Whatcom County system to support child and family well-being through housing stability, economic stability, and family strengthening. While this number may seem large at first glance, it includes significant administrative costs and transactional costs that mean not all of these dollars directly benefit families. These funds are not equally available to families in Whatcom County. For example, families in Bellingham and families with lower incomes generally have access to greater types and amounts of resources.

The majority of funds available in the system are restricted in their uses. Most funds in the system have limited uses and eligible beneficiaries or are tied by a cost reimbursement model greatly limiting flexibility in the system to see a need and address it. Another significant portion of funds are direct cash grants, vouchers, or subsidies to families. Funds that were unrestricted largely came from local and private philanthropic funds. Though restricted, large block grants¹ can have a wide range of allowable uses and may hold opportunities to direct resources in more strategic ways.

The need in Whatcom County far outstrips the available resources, and the pandemic has exacerbated this gap. Even the programs operating at the greatest scale such as Housing Choice Vouchers and TANF serve only a fraction of the families that are eligible for services, and an even smaller fraction of families that could benefit from those services (regardless of eligibility). Due to eligibility requirements, families below the poverty line are eligible for the most available funds, but there are many families between poverty and the ALICE threshold who are experiencing economic instability, are housing cost-burdened, and could benefit from family strengthening services. Indeed, there are services that could benefit all families with children in Whatcom County.

Prior to the pandemic, levels of economic and housing instability were already high relative to many other Western Washington counties. In 2018, 31.3% of families with children were under the ALICE threshold, one indicator of economic instability. In the same year, 34% of all Whatcom County households and 51% of renter households were housing cost-burdened, a potential indicator of housing instability. Among low-income families with young children, the need for family strengthening supports is high – in 2018, 100% of Early Head Start-eligible families indicated they are in need of parenting education. Both quantitative and qualitative assessments have found that the COVID-19 pandemic has deepened these needs. The loss of work and income, which was felt most acutely by low-income households, has

¹ Block grants are funds that have comparatively fewer restrictions on their usage than other federal grants. They typically can be used across multiple programs and can be used either by the receiving agency or passed through to community organizations.

contributed to economic and housing instability, while school and childcare closures and isolation have impacted family well-being.

The Opportunity Council is a major hub for strong, stable family service delivery in Whatcom County and the community of service providers is a small group. As a community action agency, the Opportunity Council is part of the federal human service delivery infrastructure and a channel for many federal and state funding sources. They serve low-income and homeless households in Whatcom County, Island County, and San Juan County with a wide range of programs. Of the funds that come to Whatcom County for strong stable families (excluding COVID-related funds), the Opportunity Council “touches” approximately 12% as either a recipient and provider of direct services or pass-through agency for these funds.

Beyond the Opportunity Council, the Whatcom County community serving families is a small and close-knit community. Because of the lack of top-down systems development to coordinate services across service areas, the community of service providers rely on close working relationships and informal connections that have developed in response in order to magnify their impact as individual providers. Interviewees for this fiscal mapping project expressed strong relationships with each other, significant histories of working together, and many shared objectives though this collaboration time is not explicitly compensated by the current funding structure.

On average, Whatcom County directly funds about \$1.6 million annually to support child and family well-being through housing stability, economic stability, and family strengthening. This equates to around 5% of all funds supporting child and well-being through housing stability, economic stability, and family strengthening in the County, on average. For further context, this equates to around 2% of the County’s average annual General Fund budgeted spending from 2019 to 2021. As another point of comparison, this spending also equates to around 4% of the County’s average annual spending on public safety (i.e., police, court services, etc.) operations.

Local funds are needed to address local conditions. When federal and state funds set eligibility requirements, they often do not account for local conditions such as rapid growth in housing costs, the cost of goods, and trends in real wages. A prime example is any funding source that is tied to the Federal Poverty Level. In Whatcom County, low-to-moderate income families are also struggling and not eligible for the majority of dollars available to support. Families in the City of Bellingham have the opportunity to benefit from more locally generated funds than families in the rest of Whatcom County.

- The Best Starts for Kids Levy in King County was first passed in 2015 and then renewed in 2021 for another six years with a levy of 19 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value in property taxes. It generates approximately \$135 million annually in King County, 50% of which are targeted towards Investing Early in Programs for Pregnant Parents and Children prenatal to 5. This local funding source equates to \$609 per household with children 5 and under. A similarly structured levy in Whatcom County could raise an estimated \$368 per household with children 5 and under.
- Whatcom County has the ability to ask voters to support children and families across the community to thrive through fair and just opportunities to be as healthy as possible. Voter approval of a levy lid lift at a rate of 20 cents per thousand dollars of assessed property value, an average of \$100 for homeowners each year, would provide approximately \$8.2 million annually.

Increasing enrollment and participation can increase resources. Some funding sources draw down funds automatically, but only if a household enrolls and/or their “headcount” is reported by a provider.

An example is the Earned Income Tax Credit, where the IRS estimates that 74.4% of eligible taxpayers in Washington State receive the EITC. Medicaid (Apple Health) enrollment is another way to ensure that each client is able to access the full range of services they are eligible for. However, this requires intentional campaigns and sustained efforts in outreach to connect people to resources.

There are opportunities to access additional funding with strategic investments. Some funding mechanisms may be missed opportunities or underutilized due to lack of staff capacity to monitor and pursue grants. These sources tend to have complex requirements and applications. Many also require demonstration of local commitments and coordination across multiple stakeholders. While provider organizations may have grant writers and development staff, there are insufficient staff resources dedicated to pursuing funding for services at a coordinated County-wide level.

Local funding can provide leverage with certain funding sources. Funding sources and programs that require a match to draw down and operate on reimbursement models can benefit from local funding to create leverage. Basic Food Employment and Training is one such example where local matches can be used to draw down federal dollars. King County Education and Employment Resources recently joined the BFET program as a provider (funding staff) and are finding it to be a significant revenue source. Providers operating reimbursement programs often rely on local sources and private philanthropy sources to ensure cash flow, allowing them to operate at greater scale.

There are many other ways that Whatcom County providers and agencies support families that were not captured by the definitions of this map. For example, the Bellingham Public Library's children's services include story time, early learning experiences, play spaces, and baby time classes. These services are open to all children, with no income eligibility restriction, and contribute to early childhood development and learning. They also serve as a needed referral point to more targeted services. While the exercise of developing the fiscal map required drawing some boundaries, the actual practice of delivering services should be more expansive to take advantage of all opportunities for partnership.

Implications for the Child and Family Well-Being Action Plan and Next Steps

The next steps in the Child and Family Action plan are to use these data and the above findings support subsequent actions. These discussions will be held by the Child and Family Well-Being Task Force.

The related actions in this plan and potential uses for these fiscal map data include:

- **Adopt a “children and families first” approach for policy and funding decisions:** Develop processes to ensure that county funding decisions prioritize supporting strong, stable families through maintaining and increasing funding for children and families and protect existing programs and services from harmful cuts.
 - Based on these fiscal map data the Task Force may recommend a level of funding for Strong Stable families from existing resources be maintained or increased. However, the target level of funding needs to first stem from an understanding of the goals and outcomes desired.
- **Pursue new funding mechanisms to significantly increase resources for well-being promotion and crisis prevention:** Generate new and sustainable revenue for evidence-based and innovative child and family programs and services.
 - Based on these fiscal map data the Task Force may identify target programs and services that are inadequately funded by existing sources and develop a new funding target.

- Fund grant writing capacity at the County level to pursue federal and state applications associated with target programs and services.
- Provide resources to improve access to family services and supports, including behavioral health services: Support funding for a culturally and linguistically responsive health navigation system for families seeking information and assistance with health and social services:
 - Uptake of services by eligible families is important for “drawing down” resources available. Investments in stronger navigation systems can be partially self-sustaining by increasing providers’ ability to access funds based on enrollment numbers.
- Fund countywide system coordination efforts to develop and monitor system-wide goals and outcomes, and align resources and efforts. Actions identified in the Child and Family Action Plan are:
 - Dedicating staffing and resources within the County to lead cross-agency and cross-sector child and family well-being efforts, including data, evaluation, and communication capacity.

Appendix

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Partial Inventory of Funding Sources

National School Lunch Program

- **What does it fund?** Nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free lunches to children each school day.
- **Who is eligible?** Public and nonprofit private schools and residential child care institutions.
- **How is it funded?** USDA Food and Nutrition Service funds pass to OSPI. OSPI reimburses schools and providers. The NSLP is generally operated by public or non-profit private schools of high school grade or below. Public or non-profit private residential child care institutions may also participate in the NSLP, and charter schools may participate in the NSLP as public schools. Participating school districts and independent schools receive **cash subsidies and USDA Foods** for each **reimbursable meal** they serve. In exchange, NSLP institutions must serve lunches that meet Federal meal pattern requirements and offer the lunches at a free or reduced price to eligible children. School food authorities can also be reimbursed for snacks served to children who participate in an approved afterschool program including an educational or enrichment activity.

Foundational Community Supports

- **What does it fund?** Foundational Community Supports is a Medicaid enhancement that can fund supports to help people find and keep stable, independent housing such as housing assessments, identifying housing resources, support obtaining a lease, independent living skills development, landlord relations, and crisis management. It also can support **employment services** to help people find jobs (in competitive or customized work settings or self-employment) and gain the skills necessary to be successful. These services include vocational/job-related discovery or assessment, planning for employment, job placement, development, coaching, skills-building for negotiating with prospective employers. The supported employment benefit will not cover or supplement a beneficiary's wages.
- **Who is eligible?** Providers participate in the FCS program by enrolling with Amerigroup Washington (the State's third-party administrator). Amerigroup authorizes providers to provide FCS services and manages their reimbursement for provision these services. These services are only eligible to be delivered to targeted groups within the Medicaid population. These include people experiencing chronic homelessness (as defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development), frequent or lengthy institutional contacts, frequent or lengthy stays in adult residential care, frequent turnover of in-home caregivers, PRISM (Predictive Risk Information System) Risk score of 1.5 or above, people enrolled in the Aged, Blind or Disabled program or the Housing and Essential Needs program, people diagnosed with severe and persistent mental illness (SPMI), substance use disorder (SUD), or co-occurring mental illness and SUD, vulnerable youth and young adults with behavioral health needs, people who receive long-term services and supports.
- **How is it funded?** Medicaid.
- **Other considerations:** Foundational Community Supports is by federal law, a payer of last resort. This support is not guaranteed to continue. It was created under the 2016 Medicaid Transformation Program, a 5 year demonstration project that included a waiver to allow the use of Medicaid funds for housing and employment. This is due to expire in 2022 without legislative action.

Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)

- **What does it fund?** To assist households with low incomes, particularly those with the lowest incomes that pay a high proportion of household income for home energy, primarily in meeting their immediate home energy needs, including heating and cooling. It can also support weatherization.
- **Who is eligible?** States, federally recognized tribes and tribal organizations (including Alaska native villages), and territories may apply for direct LIHEAP awards. The Department of Commerce is the state-level awardee and administers funds through providers, including the Opportunity Council. The program targets low income households, and grantees set their own income eligibility limits. For Washington State basic eligibility is as follows: average monthly income is at or below 150% of the federal poverty level (FPL), paying for energy directly to an energy vendor or indirectly through rent, not received a LIHEAP grant during the current program year. Income, number of household members, households with elderly members, disabled members, or young children are priority criteria. Payments are typically made directly to the energy utility.
- **How is it funded?** Congressional appropriations awarded in a block grant formula. Each year all 50 states, 5 territories, and about 150 tribes apply for funds by September 1.

Basic Food Employment and Training

- **What does it fund?** BFET services are provided through contracted community & technical colleges and/or community based organizations (CBO). BFET is an important part of the state's comprehensive workforce development system, helping low-income individuals, displaced workers, and employers reach their human potential by encouraging economic well-being through skill acquisition, personal responsibility and gainful employment.
- **Who is eligible?** Basic Food (SNAP) recipients who **are not** participating in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
- **How is it funded?** BFET funding is complex, using reimbursement and matching mechanisms. Federal funds originate in the Department of Agriculture Food & Nutrition Services. There is a 50% match component from non-Federal sources to draw income. Most of these funds come from state (DSHS grants). There is also potential for local matches. A very limited amount of BFET funding may be distributed as "100% funds" that do not require match.
- **Other considerations:** The 50% match model allows the program to scale according to local commitment and each community's capacity to provide match funding. Match funding then leverages federal funding.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families and State Family Assistance

- **What does it fund?** Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) provides temporary cash for families in need. Persons who are caring for a relative's child, are legal guardians or who are acting in the place of a parent, are also able to apply for TANF benefits on behalf of these children. Clients in the TANF system can be children. Some families participate in the WorkFirst Program to help find and keep jobs.
- **Who is eligible?** Basic Food (SNAP) recipients who **are not** participating in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

- **How is it funded?** TANF is funded by a federal block grant. As a condition of receiving federal TANF funds, states are required to spend a certain amount of their own funds, known as Maintenance of Effort on TANF-allowable categories.
- **Other considerations:** State Family Assistance is a state funded expansion of cash assistance to cover people not eligible for TANF, including pregnant individuals, students aged 19 and 20 and legal immigrant families.

Early Head Start (EHS)

- **What does it fund?** Early Head Start programs provide development and support services to low-income pregnant individuals and children under age 3.
- **Who is eligible?** Low-income pregnant individuals and children under age 3.
- **How is it funded?** Dedicated, restricted federal EHS dollars fund these services.
- **Other considerations:** In Whatcom County, the Opportunity Council provides EHS services, with 50 available slots per year.

School District General Funds

- **What does it fund?** The school districts in Whatcom County (Bellingham, Blaine, Ferndale, Lynden, Meridian, Mt Baker, and Nooksack Valley school districts) partially fund student and family support services; including wellness programs, parent and family engagement, family resource coordination and support, homeless student support, and early childhood programs; through dollars from their general funds.
- **Who is eligible?** In general, these student and family support programs are not income eligibility-restricted, though there are some early childhood programs for low-income families.
- **How is it funded?** The school districts fund these programs in part through dollars from their general funds.

Whatcom County General Fund

- **What does it fund?** Whatcom County supports the County Department of Health’s Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) program. The NFP is a home visiting program for low-income first-time mothers that offers home regular visits from pregnancy up to the child’s second birthday.
- **Who is eligible?** Low-income first-time mothers and their children up to age 2.
- **How is it funded?** Whatcom County supports the NFP program via dollars from its General Fund

Whatcom County Behavioral Health Sales Tax

- **What does it fund?** The County Behavioral Health Sales Tax supports, among other programs, the County Department of Health’s Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) program. The NFP is a home visiting program for low-income first-time mothers that offers home regular visits from pregnancy up to the child’s second birthday.
- **Who is eligible?** Low-income first-time mothers and their children up to age 2.

- **How is it funded?** Whatcom County supports the NFP program via dollars from the countywide 0.1% Behavioral Health Sales Tax.

Home Visiting Service Account (HVSA) Funds

- **What does it fund?** State HVSA funds support the County Department of Health’s Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) program. The NFP is a home visiting program for low-income first-time mothers that offers home regular visits from pregnancy up to the child’s second birthday. HVSA also funds the Lummi Nation Family Spirit family support program and the Parents as Teachers home visiting program at Lydia Place.
- **Who is eligible?** Low-income first-time mothers and their children up to age 2.
- **How is it funded?** From the State’s HVSA.

Home Visiting Service Account (HVSA) I-502 Funds

- **What does it fund?** HVSA State I-502 funds support the County Department of Health’s Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) program. The NFP is a home visiting program for low-income first-time mothers that offers home regular visits from pregnancy up to the child’s second birthday. HVSA also funds the Lummi Nation Family Spirit family support program and the Parents as Teachers home visiting program at Lydia Place.
- **Who is eligible?** Low-income first-time mothers and their children up to age 2.
- **How is it funded?** State HVSA I-502 funds are generated from the State’s marijuana excise tax.

Federal McKinney-Vento Funds

- **What does it fund?** Services for students and families experiencing homelessness.
- **Who is eligible?** K-12 students experiencing homelessness and their families.
- **How is it funded?** Federal McKinney-Vento Act funds, allocated to school districts.

Federal Medicaid Funds

- **What does it fund?** Federal Medicaid dollars fund several family and household strengthening programs in Whatcom County, including a case management program for pregnant and parenting women using drugs and alcohol or with a history of substance use disorder and a coordinated care program for families with children with chronic illnesses, both of which are provided by Brigid Collins Family Support Center.
- **Who is eligible?** Eligibility varies by program.
- **How is it funded?** Funded by federal Medicaid dollars.

Community Services Block Grant (CSBG)

- **What does it fund?** Federal CSBG dollars fund Project X-it at the Opportunity Council. Project X-it is a program focused on moving families out of poverty – program services include financial education, mentorship, incentives for reaching financial plan goals, and workforce development.

- **Who is eligible?** Families receiving Head Start and Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) services. Will be expanded to other low-income families in the future.
- **How is it funded?** Federal CSBG dollars, allocated to the Opportunity Council.

Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) Parenting Support Program Funds

- **What does it fund?** DCYF parenting support program dollars fund evidence-based parent coaching, home visiting, and parent groups.
- **Who is eligible?** Parents with a dependency case open with local Child Protective Services – parenting support services are typically part of a plan to avoid separation from a child and work towards reunification. Parents who don't meet these criteria can also participate in parenting programs on a self-pay, sliding scale basis.
- **How is it funded?** DCYF state dollars, allocated to Brigid Collins Family Support Center. For parents who don't meet the dependency case criteria, participation is self-funded or covered by a scholarship program that is funded by private donations.

HUD Case Management Program

- **What does it fund?** Intensive case management for families living in Bellingham – children who have experienced abuse, have family members with substance use disorder, or family members transitioning out of incarceration.
- **Who is eligible?** Families living in Bellingham – children who have experienced abuse, have family members with substance use disorder, or family members transitioning out of incarceration.
- **How is it funded?** Federal dollars administered to Brigid Collins Family Support Center by HUD.

North Sound Accountable Communities of Health (ACH) Medicaid Transformation Initiative

- **What does it fund?** Supports ongoing costs and capacity in existing family support services.
- **Who is eligible?** Providers (Brigid Collins Family Support Center) that offer family support services.
- **How is it funded?** Federal dollars administered to Brigid Collins Family Support Center by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS)/North Sound ACH.

Whatcom County Health Department Building Healthy Communities Funds

- **What does it fund?** Parenting groups, seminars, and parenting coaching through the Whatcom Family & Community Network.
- **Who is eligible?** The target population is Shuksan Middle School families, but the programs can serve families outside that area as well.
- **How is it funded?** County Health Department Building Healthy Communities funds.

Washington State Homeless Student Stability Program (HSSP)

- **What does it fund?** Services for students and families experiencing homelessness, including both in-school supports and housing services.

- **Who is eligible?** K-12 students experiencing homelessness and their families.
- **How is it funded?** State funds, allocated to school districts by the State Department of Commerce. Commerce also makes grants to housing support providers to offer services including diversion, navigation, financial and rent assistance, and case management.

Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant (SABG)

- **What does it fund?** Case management for pregnant and parenting women in substance use recovery; also supports parenting groups, seminars, and parenting coaching as part of the Whatcom Family & Community Network.
- **Who is eligible?** Pregnant and parenting women in substance use recovery.
- **How is it funded?** Federal SABG grants are administered to providers by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA).

Washington State Health Care Authority (HCA)/Department of Behavioral Health and Recovery

- **What does it fund?** Case management program at Brigid Collins Family Support Center for pregnant and parenting women using drugs or alcohol or with a history of substance use disorder.
- **Who is eligible?** Pregnant and parenting women using drugs or alcohol or with a history of substance use disorder.
- **How is it funded?** Administered to providers by state HCA/Department of Behavioral Health and Recovery.

Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS)

- **What does it fund?** DSHS provides funding that supports the GRADS program for pregnant and parenting students at Bellingham Public Schools.
- **Who is eligible?** Program serves pregnant and parenting students at Bellingham Public Schools.
- **How is it funded?** State DSHS dollars, administered to Bellingham Public Schools.

Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers

- **What does it fund?** Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers are housing assistance funds to allow very low-income families to choose and lease or purchase privately-owned rental housing.
- **Who is eligible?** Families at or below 50% AMI; most voucher funds go to families at or below 30% AMI as public housing agencies must provide 75% of vouchers to applicants at or below 30% AMI.
- **How is it funded?** Federal funds from HUD to local public housing agencies.

City of Bellingham Housing Levy

- **What does it fund?** Funds from the Housing Levy, or the Bellingham Home Fund, are to be dedicated towards providing, producing, and/or preserving affordable housing for low income and very low-income households.
- **Who is eligible?** 2/3rds of funds are required to benefit households earning at or below 50% AMI.

- **How is it funded?** Voter-approved property tax levy lid lift every six years, approved in 2012 and again in 2018.

HUD Public Housing

- **What does it fund?** Public housing funds are used by public housing agencies to operate and maintain public housing units. Public housing is housing provided for low-income households which are subsidized by public funds.
- **Who is eligible?** Households making at or below 80% AMI.
- **How is it funded?** Federal funds from HUD to local public housing agencies.

HUD HOME Investment Partnership Program

- **What does it fund?** The HOME Investment Partnership Program funds a wide range of activities that generally fall into four categories: rehabilitation of owner-occupied housing, assistance to homebuyers, acquisition, rehabilitation, or construction of rental housing, and tenant-based rental assistance.
- **Who is eligible?** HOME-assisted housing units must benefit households with incomes at or below 80% AMI. In addition, 90% of HOME-assisted rental units and recipients of tenant-based rental assistance must have incomes at or below 60% AMI.
- **How is it funded?** Federal funds from HUD to local states and localities.

Consolidated Homeless Grants

- **What does it fund?** Consolidated Homeless Grants (CHG) are state funds provided by the WA State Department of Commerce to local governments and nonprofits for funding homeless crisis responses systems to support communities in ending homelessness. Funds are fairly flexible and can be used for interim housing, rental assistance, permanent supportive housing, and other housing services.
- **Who is eligible?** Households that are either homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness AND at or below 30% or have a referral from the State's Housing and Essential Needs (HEN) Program or are enrolled in Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).
- **How is it funded?** State funds from WA State Department of Commerce to local governments and nonprofits.

Whatcom County Document Recording Fees

- **What does it fund?** Funds can be used to fund local homeless housing services, programs, and grants.
- **Who is eligible?** Low-income or at-risk populations.
- **How is it funded?** From a portion of document recording fees collected by the County.

APPENDIX D: CHILDREN AND FAMILIES FISCAL MAP PRESENTATION

WHATCOM COUNTY STRONG, STABLE FAMILIES FISCAL MAP

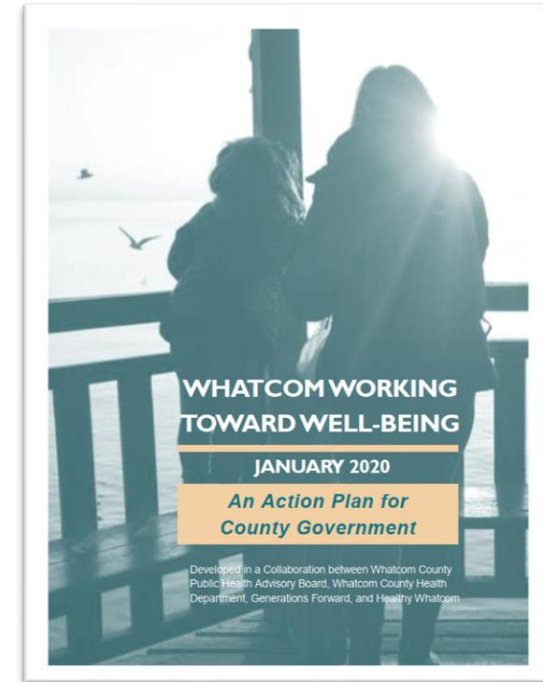
REPORT BRIEFING FEBRUARY 2022



WHY FISCAL MAP

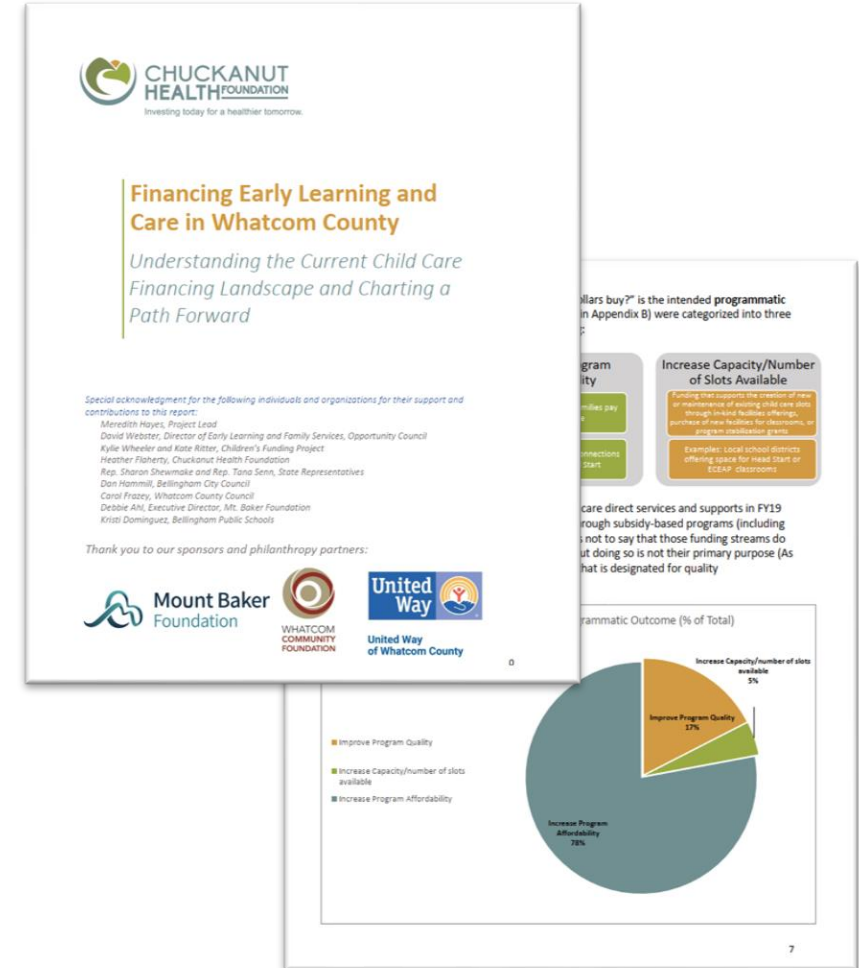
In 2020, Whatcom County Council adopted a Child and Family Action Plan after several years of community partnership.

One of the first steps identified in the action plan is developing a fiscal analysis/map to understand the levels and flow of current investment in children and family services, and the necessary investment to fully realize the vision for Child and Family Well-Being in Whatcom County.



WHAT IS (AND IS NOT) A FISCAL MAP?

- A fiscal map identifies and analyzes **funds directed toward a particular population, service array, outcome, or intervention.**
- It can help see through multiple funding streams to the ultimate outcomes you care about, identify gaps and opportunities for alignment.
- The process of developing a fiscal map is **an art and a science.**

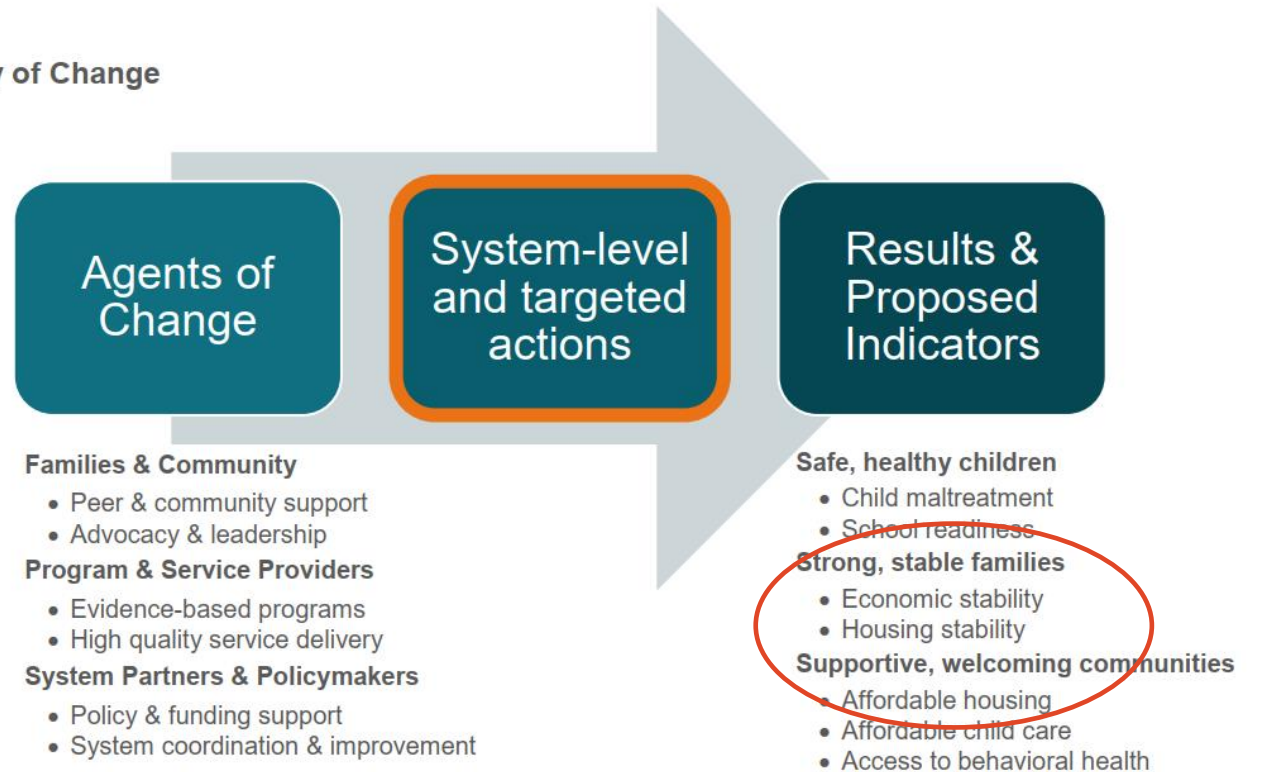


SCOPING

- Building on and contributing to ongoing community conversations
- ALICE
- Families with young children
- COVID-19

Whatcom Working Toward Well-being Theory of Change

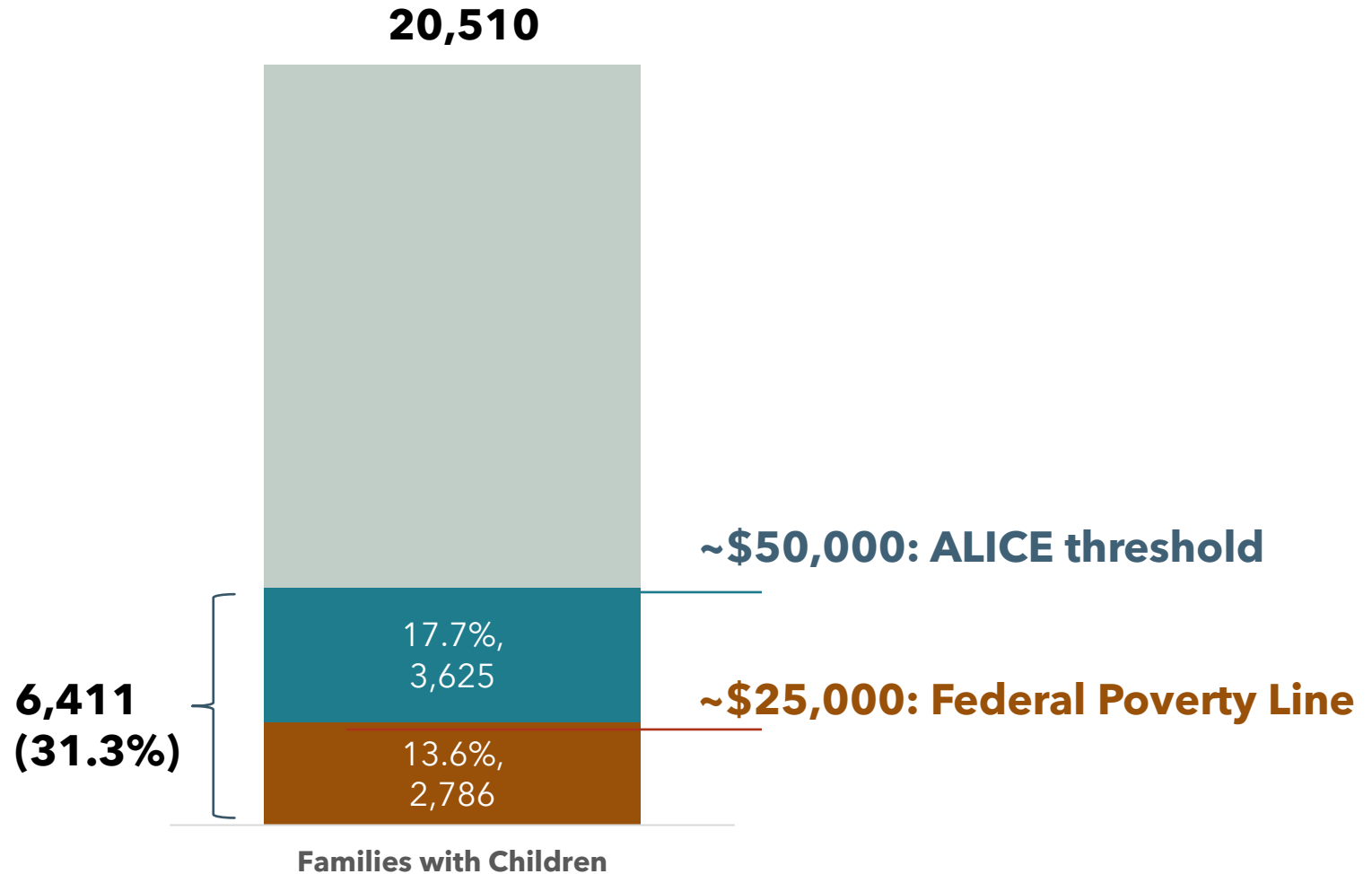
Theory of Change



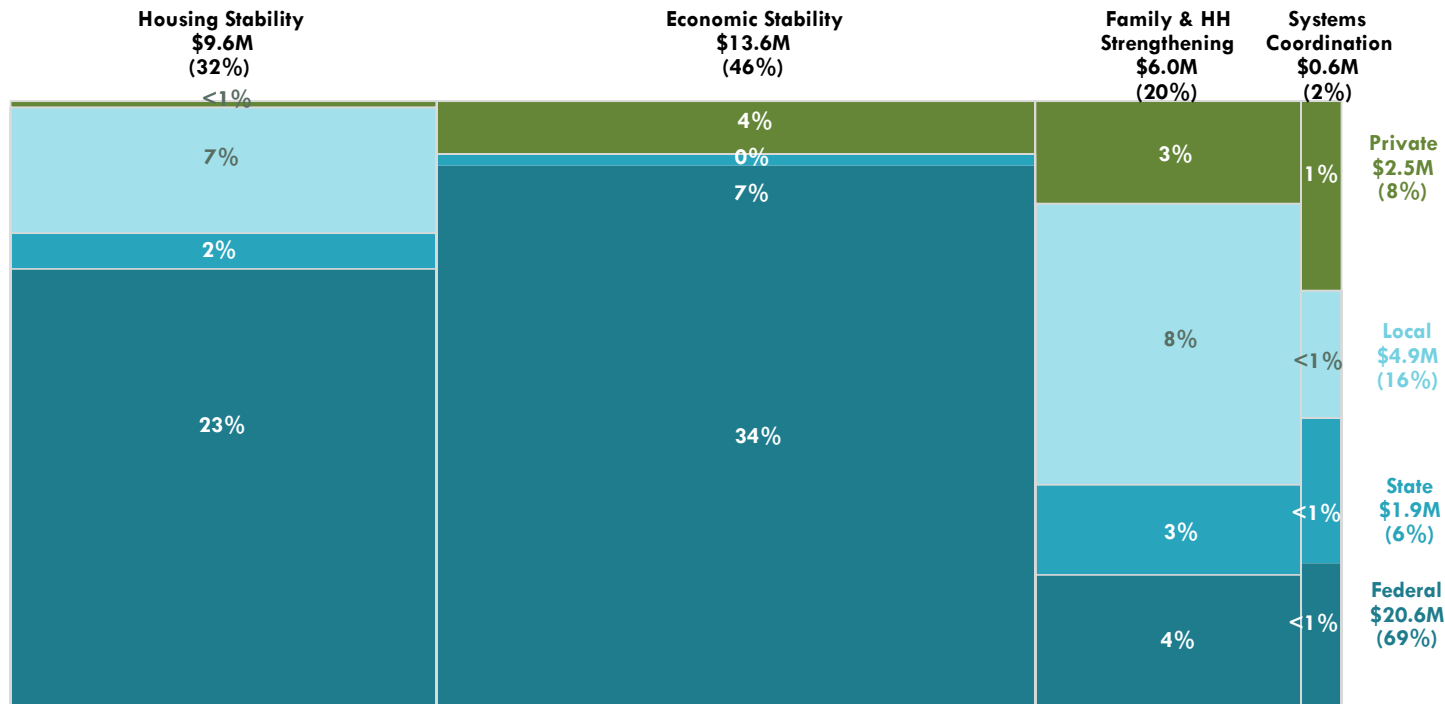
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES BY INCOME

Almost one-third of families live with less than \$50,000 in household income.

Whatcom County Families with Children (2018)

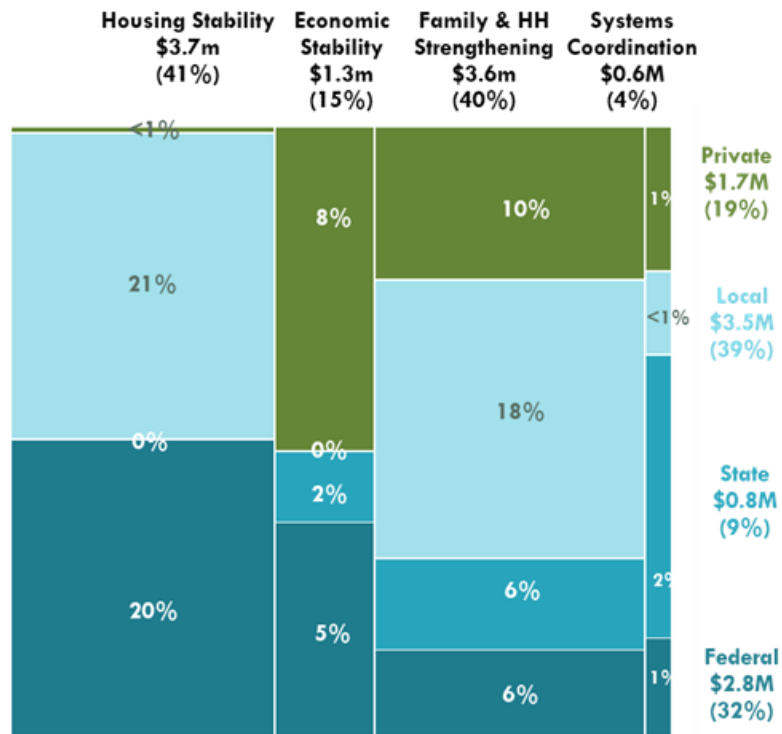


DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS SUPPORTING STRONG, STABLE FAMILIES IN WHATCOM COUNTY, AVERAGE OF FY19-FY21 (\$29.8M)



- There are almost \$30 million of funds supporting strong stable families in Whatcom County with housing stability, economic stability, and family strengthening programs.
- These resources are not equitably distributed among families experiencing needs and are not adequate to meet all the needs in Whatcom County.
- There are very little explicit resources to coordinate and optimize available funds (Systems Coordination)

DISTRIBUTION OF PROGRAM FUNDS SUPPORTING STRONG, STABLE FAMILIES IN WHATCOM COUNTY AVAILABLE TO FAMILIES MAKING \$50,000 A YEAR, AVERAGE OF FY19-FY21 (\$9.0M)

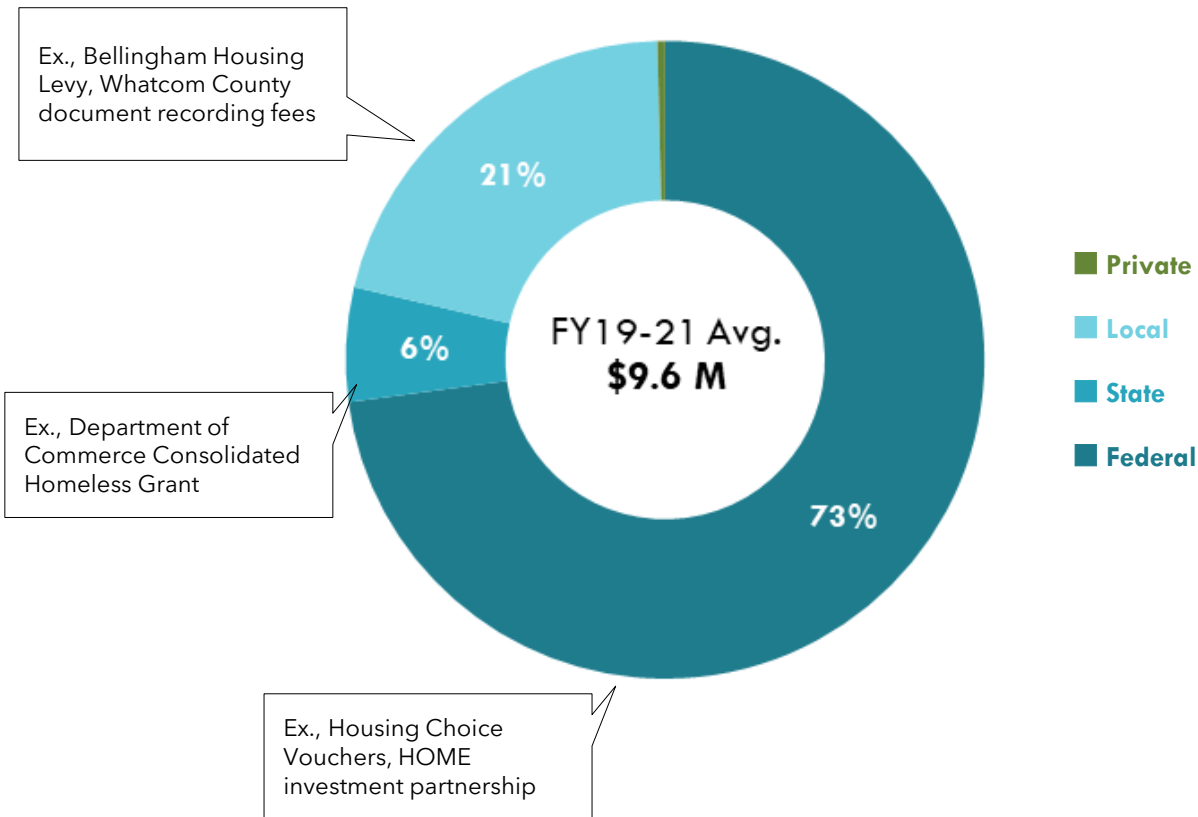


- Households with incomes between the poverty level and the ALICE threshold are eligible for many fewer funding sources and total dollar amounts.
- The mix of resources available for this group is much more heavily reliant on private philanthropy, and local funding.

HOUSING STABILITY

- One third of housing in Whatcom County is renter occupied with vacancy rates below 1.0%
- Housing prices continue to rise despite the pandemic, worsening instability.
- One third (34%) of households are housing cost burdened*. This proportion is higher for renting households and BIPOC households. 57% for Hispanic/Latino renters.

Estimated Housing Stability Funds for Families with Children by Funding Level, Average of FY19-FY21



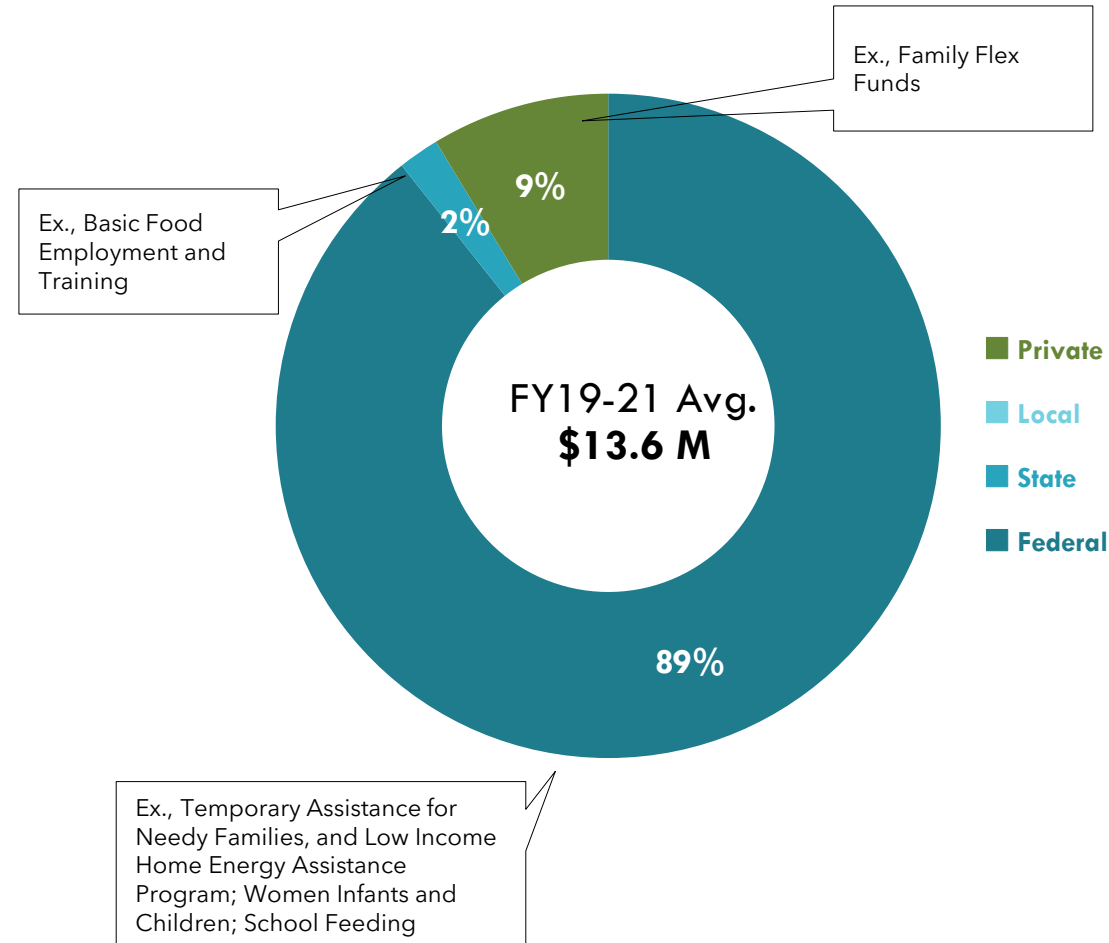
* Paying more than 30% of household income for housing costs.

Note: Does not include funds for affordable housing development and COVID relief funds.

ECONOMIC STABILITY

- Systems are inadequately funded to ensure families of all incomes can meet key household expenditures (housing, utilities, food, clothing, childcare).
- The pandemic reduced incomes for many families through childcare losses, health concerns, involuntary hours reduction, furloughs, and layoffs, with disproportionate impact for BIPOC households.
- Families are forced to make economic choices between essentials, leading to 4.3% of children with no health care coverage, and 11% of pregnant individuals not receiving timely prenatal care.

Estimated Economic Stability Funds for Families with Children by Funding Level, Average of FY19-FY21

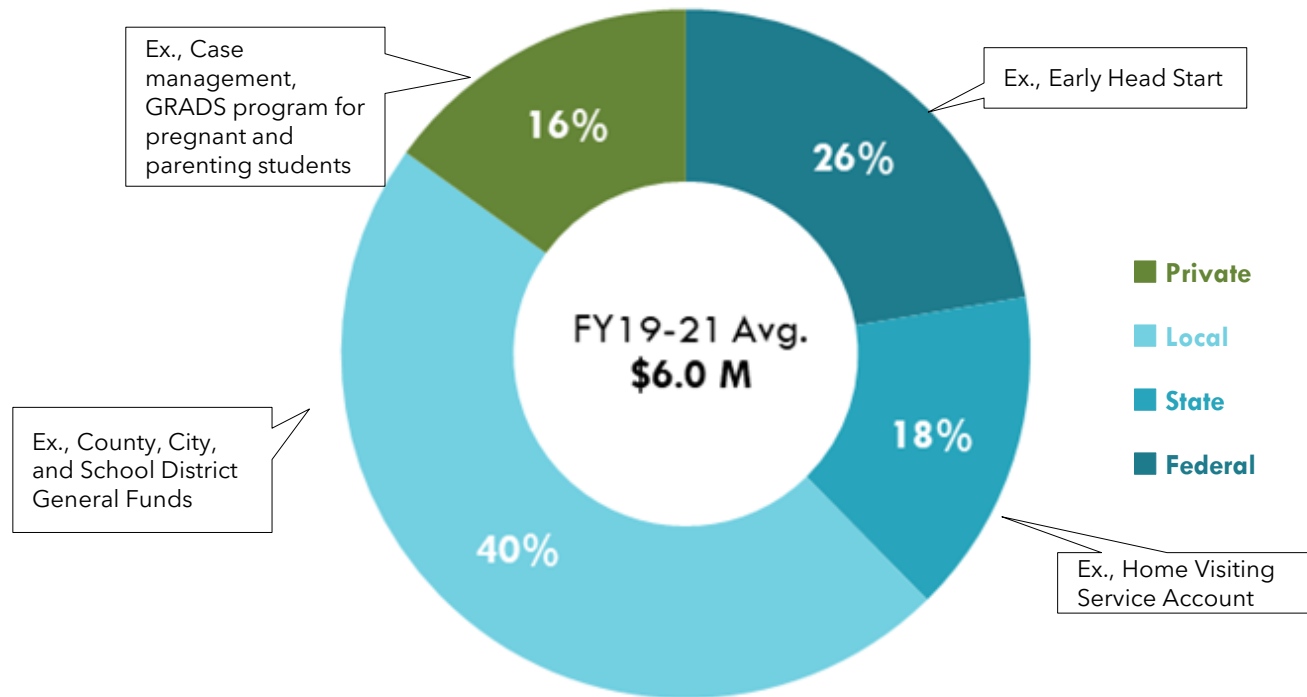


Note: Does not include COVID relief funds and tax credits.

FAMILY AND HOUSEHOLD STRENGTHENING

- One hundred percent (100%) of Opportunity Council Early Head Start families self identified as needing health education and parenting education services, and 48% self identified as needing emergency or crisis intervention services.
- Among Head Start families, 61% self identified as needing parenting education, 42% health education, and 48% emergency or crisis intervention services.
- Many family struggles have been worsened at the same time that systems of support were constrained from delivering services due to the pandemic related factors.

Estimated Family and Household Strengthening Funds for Families with Children by Funding Level, Average of FY19-FY21



Note: Does not include COVID relief funds.

SYSTEMS COORDINATION

- Very few funds are explicitly dedicated to system coordination, though it includes several thousands of hours of staff time that are typically funded by program budgets and organizational overhead.
- A few explicit examples of funded system coordination activities include planning grants and funded research and professional facilitation services. In total, this amounted to approximately \$623,000 on average.
- Providers have not always been able to collectively track outcomes, collaborate on professional development events, smoothly transition families between services, and leverage programmatic efforts.

Note: Though it is major service point, the operating budget of the DSHS Community Services Office, \$3.7m, was not included in the map as representing system coordination.

KEY FINDINGS

Fiscal Baseline

- On an average annual basis, there are about \$29.8 million dollars in the Whatcom County system to support child and family well-being through housing stability, economic stability, and family strengthening.
- The majority of funds available in the system are restricted in their uses.
- The need in Whatcom County far outstrips the available resources, and the pandemic has exacerbated this gap.
- On average, Whatcom County directly funds about \$1.6 million of this annually

Opportunities

- There are opportunities to access additional funding with strategic investments.
- The Opportunity Council is a major hub for strong, stable family service delivery in Whatcom County and the community of service providers is a small group.
- Local funds are needed to address local conditions
- Increasing enrollment and participation can increase resources.
- Local funding can provide leverage with certain funding sources. There are many other ways that Whatcom County providers and agencies support families that were not captured by the definitions of this map.

NEXT STEPS FOR CHILD AND FAMILY WELL-BEING ACTION PLAN

- **Adopt “child and family” priorities for programs and services:**
Develop processes to ensure that county funding decisions prioritize supporting strong, stable families through maintaining and increasing funding for children and families and protect existing programs and services from harmful cuts.
- **Pursue new funding mechanisms to significantly increase resources for well-being promotion and crisis prevention:** Generate new and sustainable revenue for evidence-based and innovative child and family programs and services.
- **Provide resources to improve access to family services and supports, including behavioral health services:** Support funding for a culturally and linguistically responsive health navigation system for families seeking information and assistance with health and social services:
- **Fund countywide system coordination efforts to develop and monitor system-wide goals and outcomes, and align resources and efforts.**



APPENDIX

FISCAL MAP ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Fiscal Mapping Workgroup of the Child and Family Well-Being Task Force

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- Jed Holmes
- Melissa Isenhardt
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- Chris D'Onofrio and Judy Ziels, Whatcom County Health Department
- Debbie Ahl, Mount Baker Foundation
- Debbie Paton, Lorena Shah, Katie Sly, and David Webster, Opportunity Council
- Emily O'Connor, Lycoming College
- Erin Malone, Sierra James, and Ken Bronstein, Whatcom Center for Early Learning
- Lucy Cantu and Mary Bartolo, Sea Mar Community Health Centers
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- Mauri Ingram and Pamela Jons, Whatcom Community Foundation
- Melissa Pickel, Brigid Collins Family Support Center
- Meredith Hayes
- Michelle DeBell, Washington Department of Commerce
- Patricia Boyce, United Way of Whatcom County
- Samya Lutz and Katy Sullivan, City of Bellingham
- Shannon Steed, Cascade Natural Gas

SCOPING DEFINITIONS

Housing Stability

Housing stability means that systems are in place that ensure a household has control over when and where it moves (Corporation for Enterprise Development, 2015). Housing stability programs are intended to keep families in housing and include foreclosure prevention, eviction prevention, tenant services, landlord liaison programs, legal aid, mobile and manufactured home relocation assistance, farmworker housing, and rapid-re-housing rental assistance. This scope does not include the homelessness crisis response system (i.e., emergency shelter, transitional housing).

Economic Stability

Economic stability programs reduce fluctuations and build resilience in household budgets. They can include income, flexible funds, financial education and counseling, credit building, employment services, and asset-building programs, including higher-education for parents. We separately present data on earned income tax credits and child tax credits under this scope.

Family and Household Strengthening

This includes programs designed for family support (social, emotional, and/or relationship-based). This includes parent and family education; home visiting; parent support programs; child welfare programs intended to support parents and reduce maltreatment; and resource connections such as Nurse-Family Partnership, Early Head Start, Parents as Teachers, and Parenting Academy.

System Coordination

Systems coordination includes efforts to align activities related to any of the programs mentioned above. It also includes research and professional services to inform the system.

APPENDIX E: PHASE I REPORT



Whatcom County
HEALTH
Department



Child and Family Well-Being Task Force

Phase I Report

6/1/2021

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Introduction

The Child and Family Well-Being Task Force was established by Whatcom County Ordinance 2020-079 following the Whatcom County Council approval of the Child and Family Action Plan. The plan is a result of significant community efforts to build broad and deep understanding that a community that supports its youngest children will become a community that is more fully engaged, equitable, and vibrant.

The Task Force is directed to ensure that diverse community partners are informed, collaborated with, and empowered in the implementation of the Child and Family Action Plan. The plan focuses on identifying ways that Whatcom County Government can best meet the needs of all young children and families in Whatcom County, specifically children from prenatal to age 5, with particular attention to low income families and families of color.

The Task Force will consider evidenced-based and promising practices, along with input from diverse families throughout Whatcom County, and make recommendations to the County Council, Executive, Health Board, and other appropriate officials regarding issues related to young child and family well-being. The Task Force is asked to embed guiding principles of equity, with specific attention to racial equity, family engagement and results-based approaches into their work. They are asked to develop recommendations for:

- County infrastructure to promote child and family well-being and a “children and families first” approach for County policy and funding decisions across all departments.
- Shared governmental and community accountability for child and family results.
- Coordination and enhancement of existing county initiatives focused on issues impacting young children and their families.
- New, or enhancement of existing, funding streams to support child and family programs and services that are aligned with desired results.

The ordinance structures the work of the Task Force into three phases and several objectives. The focus of Phase I is to begin the following work:

- Establish Task Force processes and procedures.
- Clarify goals and metrics and establish processes for shared accountability for results.
- Evaluate and recommend an infrastructure model for County adoption.
- Propose scope and approach for County fiscal analysis to identify existing and potential funding streams for child and family programs.

To address these work objectives, the Task Force has divided into the following four Work Groups, each with a central question to answer:

- **Children and Families First:** What innovative government infrastructure is needed to sustain child and family well-being as a priority?
- **Increasing Family Involvement:** What practices will increase involvement of parents and caregivers, especially those with diverse life experiences, in County government?
- **Resources and Funding:** What resources are needed to support programs and services for young children and their families?
- **County-Community Collaboration:** What results and strategies should be shared across government and the community to improve the well-being of young children and their families?

The Task Force met for the first time on March 8, 2021 and meets for 90 minutes every second and fourth Monday of each month from 4:00-5:30 pm via Zoom.

Task Force Membership – Who’s at the table?

Permanent	Appointed
Sterling Chick, Public Health Advisory Board	Debbie Ahl, Mt. Baker Foundation
Sarah Cook, Lummi Nation	Chris Cochran, Bellingham Public Schools
Carol Frazey, County Health Board	Ray Deck, Skookum Kids
Yarrow Greer, Generations Forward Family Council	Escarleth DeLeon, Mental Health Provider
Gregory Hansen, Small Cities Partnership	Jamie Desmul, YMCA
Brian Heinrich, City of Bellingham	Mike Ford, Cornwall Church
Jed Holmes, Whatcom County Executive’s Office	Urvasi Graham, Whatcom Center for Early Learning
Silvia Johnson, Dept. of Children, Youth, & Families	Anne Granberg, YMCA
Monica Koller, Generations Forward Family Council	Alicia Hanning, Agape House
Keith Montoya, Generations Forward Family Council	Melissa Isenhardt, Victim Support Services
Astrid Newell, Whatcom County Health Department	Mara Kelley, PeaceHealth
Beverly Porter, Whatcom Taking Action	Brian Nelson, Latter Day Saints
Sativa Robertson, Nooksack Tribe	Rosalva Santos-Guzman, GRADS
Mary Sewright, School Superintendents	Komal Shah, Lummi Tribal Health Center
Vesla Tonnessen, Whatcom Early Learning Alliance	Jennifer Wright, Blaine Schools

The ordinance calls for 30 Task Force members representing a variety of stakeholders, identities, and perspectives in Whatcom County. Half are permanent members appointed by their designated organization or agency specifically called out in the ordinance. The remaining 15 members are community members who applied directly to the County Council and were appointed to serve either a two- or four-year term. In soliciting applications, every effort was made to reach community members with lived experience with issues facing young children and families, particularly those from under-represented communities and diverse backgrounds. The outreach and application materials were shared in English, Spanish, Russian, and Punjabi. No specific formal educational or employment experience is required to be on the Task Force.

Lived experience is a valued form of expertise. To broaden Task Force perspectives, the outreach team sought applications from community members with at least one of the following experiences:

- Caring for children as a primary caregiver.
- Being a community member from an under-represented racial, ethnic, or geographic community.
- Serving young children and their families as a medical or behavioral health care provider.
- Working within one the following sectors: faith community; community action agency, non-profit housing, or social service agency; private school, home school, higher education, or child care; private business, corporation, or philanthropic organization.

Desired qualities of task force members include:

- Commitment to the well-being of all of Whatcom County's youngest children and their families.
- Commitment to listen to diverse opinions.
- Commitment to share their passion and experience.
- Collaborative.

To encourage community participation in the Task Force, the County is piloting a stipend program. The goal of the pilot is to determine if helping with participation costs will increase the diversity of participants by reducing barriers. Stipends are a way of incentivizing participation and demonstrating that value. Parents and community members that are not getting paid by an agency or organization to participate in the task force are eligible for a stipend of \$40 per 90-minute meeting, up to a maximum of \$599 per member during 2021. At this time, seven Task Force members are receiving stipends.

Other support for community member participation includes scheduling meetings for maximum participation of community members, keeping meetings relatively short, and making additional work done between meetings optional. Please see Appendix A for more information about the stipend program.

A Snapshot of Task Force Membership

The Task Force work focuses on issues that impact the lives of families every day. Each member brings a variety of experiences and community roles to this work. These experiences shape the unique and overlapping ways a person identifies themselves, what they value, and how they approach the work of the Task Force. In an effort to understand the variety of lived experiences of Task Force members, with the hope of improving communication and collaboration between members, many members completed an anonymous survey. Some of the key findings of the survey are below. The full report is attached as Appendix B and includes both graphs and short answer text.

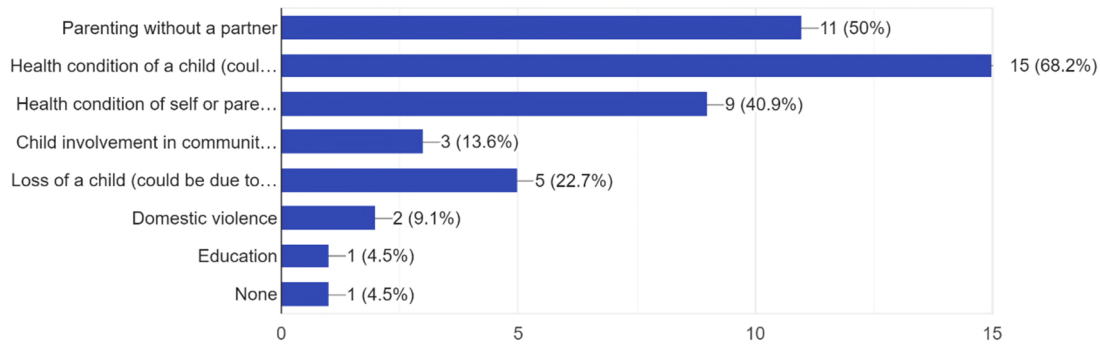
Nearly all Task Force members have parenting/caregiving experience, including children of all ages and needs. Many have children whose age or developmental needs currently require continual or significant supervision. Of the responses received:

- About two-thirds identify as white. Others identified as multiracial, Asian/Pacific Islander, Indigenous, or Latinx.
- Most learned English as their first language, with Spanish and Mixteco as other first languages.
- Most live within the Bellingham School District, with members also living within the Ferndale, Mt. Baker, and Nooksack districts.
- About two-thirds identified their gender as female and sexual orientation as heterosexual.

Additional lived experiences of Task Force members are graphed below and in Appendix B.

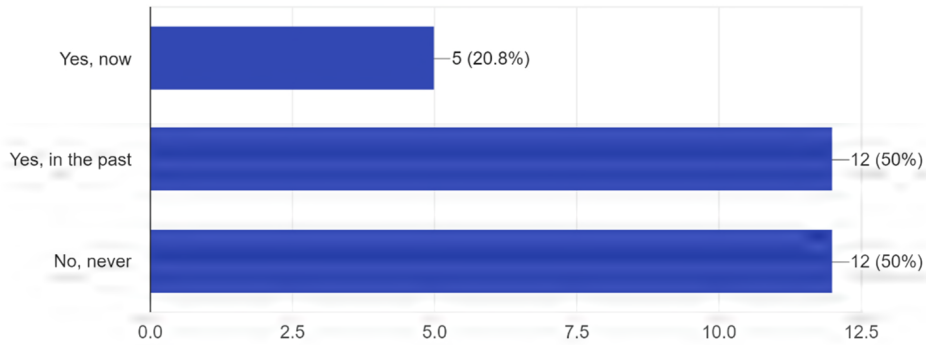
I have experience parenting/caregiving in these situations (check all that apply):

22 responses



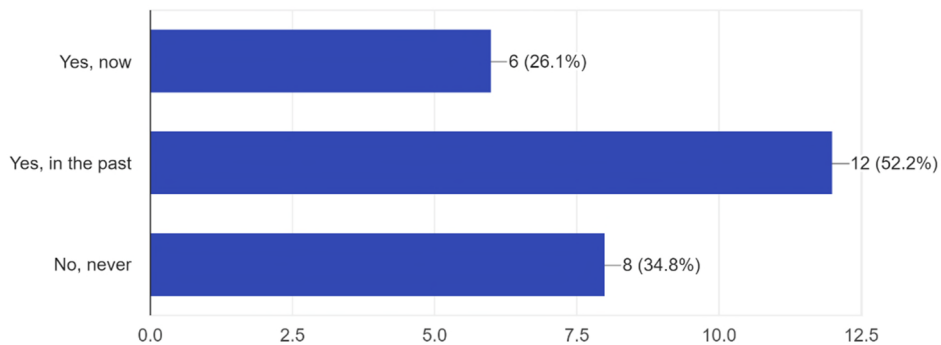
My family has sometimes struggled to get our basic needs met (housing, transportation, food, etc.).

24 responses



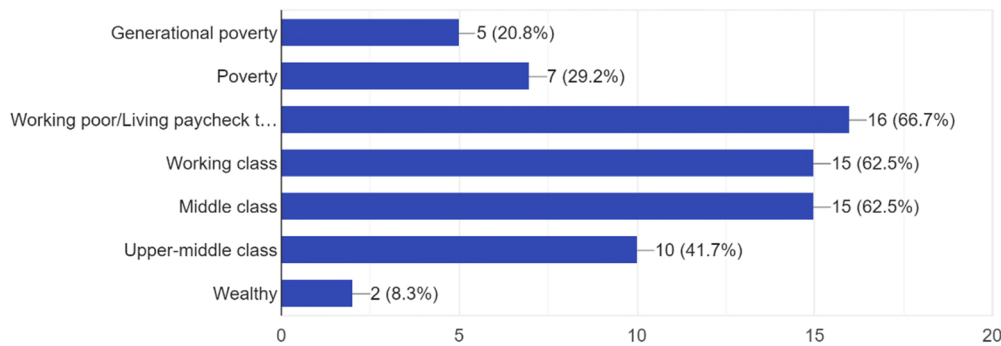
My family has struggled to get services needed by our children.

23 responses



Which income statuses do you have lived experience with? Check all that apply.

24 responses



Progress of Task Force Work

The initial work of the Task Force is to develop processes and procedures to ensure that all of its work is guided by the following three principles:

- Equity, with specific attention to racial equity
- Authentic family engagement
- Results-based approaches

Embedding these principles will require ongoing nurturing, attention, and learning. In order to guide the group in accomplishing this, the County has contracted with Kenesha Lewin of Lewin Education & Consulting to facilitate meetings. Lewin brings a diversity-centered approach to her work and has extensive experience helping organizations develop the self-awareness necessary to becoming anti-racist. Led by Lewin, the Task Force has spent much of the first four meetings working to understand these principles and discussing why and how to apply them. This includes creating a scaffold to build the trusting relationships that will help ensure the success of Task Force actions. Establishing meeting norms and a decision-making process that are accessible, equitable, and family friendly were top priorities. One of Lewin's first steps in building organizational self-reflection necessary for anti-racist action was working with a Nooksack Tribal member and Task Force member on a land acknowledgement that recognizes the colonialism that allowed Whatcom County to come into being. The group has decided to open each meeting with a land acknowledgement (see Appendix C). Each meeting has also included group learning to ground all Task Force members in the [Child and Family Action Plan](#) and the [ordinance establishing the Task Force](#). Only recently, once these foundations have been established, has the Task Force turned to meeting in smaller work groups to focus on the work objectives outlined in the ordinance.

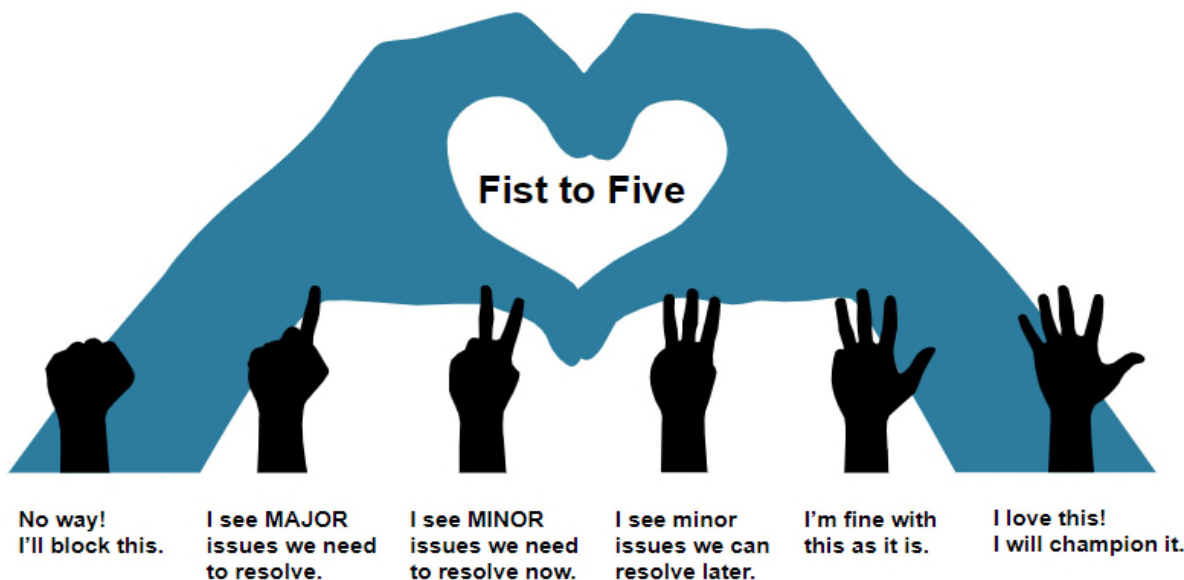
Building Trusting Relationships

Building trusting relationships is a deliverable not consistently called for in government work plans. When it is, it's often given short shrift regarding its importance or need for resources. But it is the foundation from which all activities happen. It is the glue that binds people to care for one another, encouraging them to share different perspectives and work on complex issues toward a common goal such as creating a community where all children thrive. Building good and trusting relationships takes commitment, time, practice and a willingness to have uncomfortable conversations. Although this is a first task, it will also be an ongoing process for the entire Task Force, especially as new members join this work.

Developing community agreements was the first step in not only building trust among Task Force members, but also helping a group of 30 individuals meeting in a virtual room begin to come together as a working team. Facilitator Lewin helped the group identify what each person needs from one another and commit to each other to create a safe, supported, open and trusting environment. The Task Force agreed to the following, with a commitment to revisit and revise as needed:

- Family and self-care come first.
- Be kind and gentle with yourself and others and assume everyone is coming from a positive place.
 - Everyone has the best intentions.
 - Listen with an open mind and heart.
- Be mindful of this space. Step-in and step-out. Step-up and step-back. Offer your truth and insights and listen to others' truths and insights.
- Treat each other with honor and grace. We are all working under difficult circumstances.
- Embrace diversity. Remember that we all come from different backgrounds giving us different perspectives and only when we embrace that diversity can we develop creative solutions to address the child and family well-being needs in Whatcom County.
- What is said here stays here.
- Have fun.

Developing a decision-making process was the second step in building trust and collaboration. Staff support to the Task Force proposed using a consensus-oriented decision-making process versus non-collaborative models that create approval through majority vote (like Robert's Rules) or decisions handed down by a small leadership group. Several members shared their positive experience using Fist to Five, a no pressure consensus building tool for quickly gaining insight about the level of agreement for a proposal and identifying areas of support and resistance.



Lack of Consensus

Consensus

One way to define the Fist to Five scale. Make sure to clarify what 0 to 5 mean for your group.

Image from [LucidMeetings.com](https://lucidmeetings.com)

Task Force members made the following recommendations for using Fist to Five, which will be finalized at the June 14 meeting:

- If any member indicates a level of agreement with two fingers or less, the group will use up to three rounds of Fist to Five, each time providing discussion between rounds. The final round is a straight yes or no, providing enough time to discuss further and still proceed with a majority decision.
- If a certain percent (to be determined) of members respond with two fingers or less, discussion continues but only if the percentage threshold is met.
- Regardless of the number of ones or twos indicated, anytime a fist is indicated discussion continues until no fists are shown.

Understanding the Three Principles Guiding Task Force Work

Before digging into core tasks of the Task Force, the group spent time developing a common understanding of the guiding principles of racial equity, family engagement, and results-based approaches and how it will impact their work. Key takeaways are below.

Equity

- Create an equitable system by meeting each community member where they are, work together to determine needs and solutions, and provide what they need to thrive, not just survive.
- Equity is different from equality. To quote [PolicyLink](#), “Equality gives everyone the right to ride on the bus, in any seat they choose. Equity ensures there are bus lines where people need them so they can get to school or the doctor or work. It means policies and investments that grow good jobs and expand entrepreneurship opportunities for low-income people and people of color. It means policies that build human capabilities by upgrading the education and skill of the nation’s diverse workforce. It means policies that dismantle destructive barriers to economic inclusion and civic participation, and build healthy communities of opportunity for all.”
- Approach the work with humility. Be self-aware of your own perspectives, assumptions, privilege, and bias.
- Build trusting relationships and social capital by addressing power dynamics and truly co-creating solutions with community members.
- Community feedback is not the same as decision-making power nor does it translate into effective action. Authentic community engagement and outreach requires respect and collaboration demonstrated by action.
- Food for thought: [To Be More Than a Statistic: An open letter to city planners and officials](#)

Family Engagement

- The Generations Forward Children’s Collaborative and the Child and Family Action Plan embraces Martin Luther King’s concept of a Beloved Community (from [The King Center](#)):
 - *Dr. King’s Beloved Community is a global vision in which all people can share in the wealth of the earth. In the Beloved Community, poverty, hunger and homelessness will not be tolerated because international standards of human decency will not allow it. Racism and all forms of discrimination, bigotry and prejudice will be replaced by an all-inclusive spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood.”*
 - *The core value of the quest for Dr. King’s Beloved Community was agape love.... which he described as “understanding, redeeming goodwill for all,” an “overflowing*

love which is purely spontaneous, unmotivated, groundless and creative” ...” the love of God operating in the human heart.” He said that “Agape does not begin by discriminating between worthy and unworthy people...It begins by loving others for their sakes” and “makes no distinction between a friend and enemy; it is directed toward both...Agape is love seeking to preserve and create community.

- Prioritizing equity is key to creating a Beloved Community in Whatcom County, by supporting every child and every family as much as you would your own.
- Authentic family involvement in shaping government policies and practices is essential action in building that equity. Families are key agents for implementing change in our community.
- When members were asked what it would look like to live in a community where government centers family voices and needs, they answered:
 - Normalize the different ways to process and be present.
 - Meet family needs where they are at so that they thrive, not just survive.
 - Reduce parent participation barriers by offering stipends, childcare, and meals.
 - Family voices are heard and valued. The community is a safe place to be heard. Government listening leads to valuing family participation and creating policy change.
 - Trust in government and institutions is necessary, achieved through actionable items, responsiveness to feedback, accountability and reporting on actions.
 - Leaders and parents collaborate.
 - Have adequate and appropriate resources available for mental health, social and physical needs, food and financial assistance.
 - Families are empowered.

Results-based Approaches

The Task Force is building on the good work of Healthy Whatcom in bringing the Results-Based Accountability (RBA) approach to the work of the task force. RBA is a process that starts with a goal in mind and then builds out community-driven strategies that are tied to an ongoing accountability cycle at both the population level and the program level. Task force members are participating in the series of RBA workshops hosted by Healthy Whatcom that are focused on early childhood well-being. Their participation will ensure that results-based approaches infuse the work of the task force as well as maintain a strong connection to additional community-based work.

Work Group Reports

Task Force work groups formed in early May 2021 and as of June 1 have met twice. Each work group is focusing on a central question to answer. Initial work products are informed by the Child and Family Action Plan, the ordinance, and member discussion.

Children and Families First	
Members	Keith Montoya, Sterling Chick, Komal Shah, Chris Cochran, Mike Ford, Mara Kelley (Staff Support: Aly Robinson)
Central question	What innovative government infrastructure is needed to sustain child and family well-being as a priority?

Initial Work Products	Review existing offices that support children and families in the county structure, clarify the objectives for creating County government infrastructure specific to child and family well-being, and decide on the pros and cons of different infrastructure models such as a County Office of Child and Family Well-being or a County Children’s Commission.
Summary of Work	The first two meetings of the C&FF work group have included a focus on relationship building between work group members, consideration and discussion of the guiding questions, and understanding of the current structure and focus on children and families in Whatcom County government. The work group has identified factors to consider when reviewing infrastructure models in other places, including the power the model holds, incorporation of minority voices, and the outputs and accomplishments of the model.
Recommendations and/or Next Steps	The next steps include building a shared understanding of the different possible models, reviewing existing models throughout the country, and developing recommendations for implementation in Whatcom County for full Task Force Review. The group will also invite local experts and community leaders to share their research and understanding about different models and considerations for Whatcom County.

County-Community Collaboration	
Members	Escarleth DeLeon, Sativa Robertson, Debbie Ahl, Mary Sewright, Vesla Tonnessen, Beverly Porter, Carol Frazey, Melissa Isenhardt (Staff Support: em Bigongiari)
Central question	What results and strategies should be shared across government and the community to improve the well-being of young children and their families?
Initial Work Products	Explore what results and strategies should be shared across government and community to improve the well-being of young children and their families in Whatcom County, attend the Results Based Accountability (RBA) workshop series hosted by Healthy Whatcom in May through July 2021, and identify specific actions for the County government to support community-identified strategies that come out of the workshop series and make initial recommendations for action.
Summary of Work	So far, the work group has focused on building relationships between members as well as processing the RBA workshop sessions. This includes diving into questions that arise from the workshops and exploring ideas that emerge from workshop content. What has been learned in the workshops so far is an overview of current data for Whatcom County children around kindergarten readiness and other metrics of child well-being across different demographics.
Recommendations and/or Next Steps	Workgroup members are hoping to learn more about how the RBA process has been used in other communities and examples of tangible success stories that came out of using this process.

Increasing Family Involvement	
Members	Alicia Hanning, Jamie Desmul, Urvasi Graham, Yarrow Greer, Monica Koller, Rosie Santos-Guzman, Sarah Cook (Staff support: Allison Williams)
Central question	What practices will increase involvement of parents and caregivers, especially those with diverse life experiences, in County government?
Initial Work Products	Recommend ways to fully integrate parents, caregivers, and stakeholders from under-represented communities (specifically BIPOC families) into county committees and work groups. Things to consider include: application process, meeting times, compensation, expectations, meeting processes, accessibility (language, abilities, technology).
Summary of Work	Work thus far includes building relationships among the group, including learning what motivated each member to join this particular work group. The group provided input about member survey questions. They discussed the wide range of barriers that families face in engaging with government and began to identify what leads to meaningful family engagement.
Recommendations and/or Next Steps	Next steps include learning more about past and current work to shift government culture to create a welcoming, diverse, equitable, and inclusive County government.

Resources and Funding	
Members	Anne Granberg, Astrid Newell, Brian Nelson, Jed Holmes, Jennifer Wright, Ray Deck, Gregory Hansen (Staff Support: Judy Ziels)
Central question	What resources are needed to support programs and services for young children and their families?
Initial Work Products	Defining the purpose and scope of a fiscal mapping of early childhood funding in Whatcom County. Reviewing the fiscal analysis to identify funding gaps and opportunities as they relate to the goals and priorities of the community.
Summary of Work	Learning about what a fiscal map is and how it can be used. Reviewing the Fiscal Mapping Coaching Document produced by the Children’s Funding Project Team. Evaluating the Early Learning Community Building Blocks framework as a tool to support defining the scope of the fiscal map. Reviewing Whatcom County budget and current funding for young children.
Recommendations and/or Next Steps	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review Early Learning Community Building Blocks framework. 2. Invite Children’s Funding Project staff in to hear more about the fiscal mapping process and potential outcomes. 3. Consider how to ensure diverse perspectives guide all aspects of the work when this work group is entirely white-presenting. 4. Learn about the use of cash transfers to families with young children as an intervention.

Appendix A

WHATCOM COUNTY
ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES



HUMAN RESOURCES
County Courthouse
311 Grand Avenue, Suite #107
Bellingham, WA 98225-4038
(360) 778-5300
hr@co.whatcom.wa.us
Karen Sterling Goens
Manager

TO: Satpal Sidhu, County Executive

THROUGH: Tyler Schroeder, Director of Administrative Services/Deputy Executive *TPS*

FROM: Karen S. Goens, Human Resources Manager *Karen*

DATE: January 21, 2021

SUBJECT: Request to Create a Stipend – Child & Family Well-Being Task Force

The Health Department is seeking to pilot a new pay mechanism, or stipend, in 2021 to encourage community participation in the recently formed Child & Family Well-Being Task Force (Ordinance 2020-279). They are proposing \$50 per meeting. Meetings are twice per month. The goal of the pilot program would be to determine if a nominal offset to costs would increase the diversity of participants by reducing barriers. Task Force members who attend as part of a paid position would not be eligible for a stipend. The Health Department estimates 8-10 Task Force members would qualify.

On the face of it, this request appears simple, however there are some important factors to consider.

Volunteer Status

The ordinance directs the new Task Force to:

“Recommend ways to fully integrate parents, caregivers, and stakeholders from underrepresented communities in county committees and workgroups, including compensation for time and childcare.”

We consider members of boards, commissions, and committees at Whatcom County as unpaid “volunteers.” Bona Fide Volunteers are not covered by the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) because they do not fall within the FLSA’s definition of employees. This is important to differentiate so it’s clear that the multitude of legal requirements related to employment do NOT apply, for example, verifying eligibility to work in the U.S., minimum wage, etc. A volunteer is generally defined as an individual who performs service for a public agency for civic, charitable or humanitarian reasons. Moreover, a volunteer performs these services without promise, expectation, or receipt of compensation for services rendered.

Payments to volunteers should be structured to NOT erode their status as volunteers. “Compensation for time” under the new ordinance sounds like employment. Under the FLSA, volunteers *may* be paid reasonable expenses and benefits without losing their status as volunteers, including a nominal fee intended to defray costs. The nominal fee must not be a substitute for compensation and must not be tied to productivity (29 C.F.R. §553.106(e). To be “nominal,” payments may be fairly characterized as tied to the volunteer’s sacrifice rather than productivity-based compensation. Further, any payment to a volunteer must represent no more than one-fifth of what an agency would have otherwise have paid a full-time worker to perform the same services. \$50 per meeting would meet the one-fifth test. If we are careful about NOT viewing service on an hourly basis and if we keep the amount nominal, we are more likely to stay within the FLSA’s volunteer definition.

Precedent Setting

Whatcom County demonstrates its strong commitment to citizen involvement as policy advisors across the organization. Currently we track Open Government Training Act for **52 groups** and roughly **500 different advisory board members**. Some members serve on multiple groups. Some members serve representing their elected office or paid position with an agency. The majority are stakeholders and citizens.

Creating a stipend may set this as an unfunded expectation for members of other groups.

I found two situations where departments provide nominal fees for board or committee participation covered in their budgets.

1. Board of Equalization

Authority: RCW 84.48.010 & County Code 2.21
Amount: \$75 per meeting
Participants: Three members; two alternates
Budgeted: County Council – Cost Center 1100.6120
Admin: Council pays as extra help; Finance issues 1099 tax forms to IRS
Duration: On-going

2. Floodplain Integrated Planning Process (FLIP) for the Nooksack River

Authority: WCFCZD
Amount: \$375 field trip & workshop #1; \$200 workshop #2 (must be less than \$600)
Participants: By invitation to farmers & landowners to gain agricultural perspective
Budgeted: Grant-funded; charged to 7190 Miscellaneous
Admin: Public Works uses Letter of Agreement; payment below IRS threshold
Duration: Limited to periodic planning processes

Other Considerations

The Health Department has a limited historical practice of allowing “incentives” in certain grant-funded programs to encourage participation. To date, these incentives have been paid by community providers, not by the County directly. The process for payment of incentives was an area carefully scrutinized by the State Auditor during their 2019 examination.

Recommendations

STIPEND SHALL NOT EXCEED \$599/YEAR

- Approve pilot Stipend Program for 2021 only at \$50 per meeting for eligible participants
- The Health Department (HD) will:
 - Avoid language to create any tie to compensation in forms & FAQs
 - Develop procedures to meet audit and IRS reporting requirements for Finance review
 - Collect a Form W-9 from each eligible Stipend Program participant, *IF NEEDED.*
 - Submit a report to the County Executive by 12/31/2021 – was goal achieved?
 - Assure any pay-related task force recommendations consider funding source, elements of the FLSA, and fiscal practices as discussed above

Concur Do Not Concur Comments: SEE ABOVE

Satpal Sidhu

Satpal S. Sidhu, County Executive

2/4/21
Date

cc: Judy Ziels, Kathleen Roy, Brad Bennett, Dana Brown-Davis, Paula Harris

Child and Family Well-being Task Force Stipend Fact Sheet

What is a stipend* and why are they being provided to task force members?

County government wants diverse participation in our governmental processes and stipends are one way of incentivizing participation and demonstrating that value. Stipends are being offered to members of this task force as a pilot project to see if it increases participation from diverse members of our community in county government task forces, committees and boards.

Who is eligible?

Parents and community members that are not getting paid by an agency or organization to participate in the task force are eligible for a stipend. The primary purpose of the stipends is to overcome barriers (such as transportation or childcare expenses) that might get in the way of members being able to participate in the task force.

Do I automatically get a stipend if I am eligible?

No. People interested in getting a stipend need to complete a stipend application form and the first page of the [IRS form W-9](#). Stipend applications will be sent to all task force members. Eligible members can submit the application form and W-9 form to Allison Williams at awilliam@whatcomcounty.us. Once a stipend application is received and approved, people will be paid a stipend for each meeting they attend up to a maximum of \$599 each year.

How much are the stipends for?

A \$40 stipend will be provided for each meeting attended by task force members who have been approved to receive it. Attendance will be taken at each task force meeting by support staff.

Is there a maximum amount I can receive each year?

Yes. There will be a maximum paid of \$599 per task force member during 2021.

Will task force members always be able to receive a stipend?

The stipends are only guaranteed for 2021. The County is providing a stipend to determine if it supports participation of more diverse community members within County Government. The stipend pilot project will be evaluated by staff and task force members at the end of 2021 and a recommendation will then be made for how best to use stipends going forward.

How do I fill out a stipend application form and W-9 form and where do I get them?

Stipend application forms will be distributed to all task force members. The stipend application form must include the name of the participant, a mailing address for the participant, and confirmation that the member is not being paid by an agency to participate. You can complete the [W-9 form here](#). Please remember to sign it.

Who do I send my stipend application form to?

All completed stipend application forms should be sent to Allison Williams at awilliam@whatcomcounty.us.

When will I receive my stipend?

Checks will be mailed to you monthly, approximately two weeks after the second monthly meeting.

Do I need to claim a stipend as income?

Typically, stipends do need to be claimed as income. Please consult with your tax preparer to understand how receipt of a stipend might affect your tax and/or benefit situation.

How else is community member participation being supported?

Every effort will be made to schedule meetings that allow for maximum participation of community members. The meetings will be relatively short and no additional work will be asked of members between meetings.

**Stipends are defined as a "nominal fee" to help off-set expenses such as child care and transportation.*

Appendix B

A Snapshot of Child and Family Well-Being Task Force Membership

25 responses

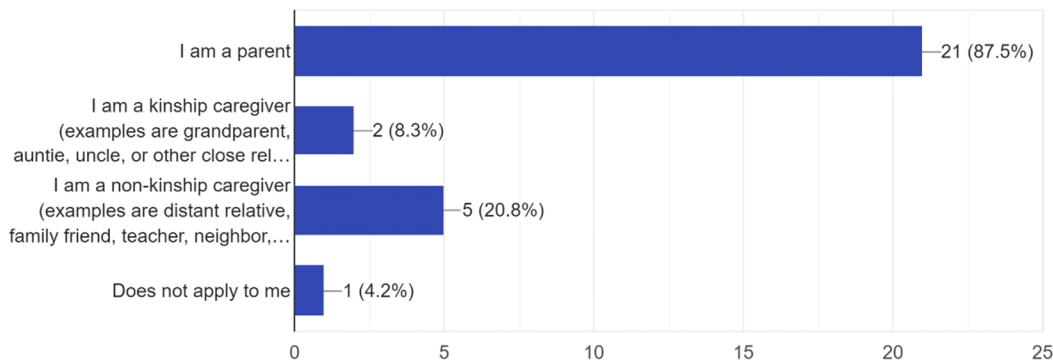
In ordinary times, when we sat next to each other at a table, we would probably have learned a bit more about each other by now. This survey is an effort to understand the variety of lived experiences of task force members with the hope of improving our collaboration.

Our task force work focuses on issues that impact the lives of families every day. Each of us brings a variety of experiences and community roles to this work. These experiences shape the unique and overlapping ways we identify ourselves, what we value, and how we approach our work.

This survey is anonymous and does not track your name, email address, or any identifiable information. The results will be shared with the task force and included in the initial report to the County Council but will remain anonymous.

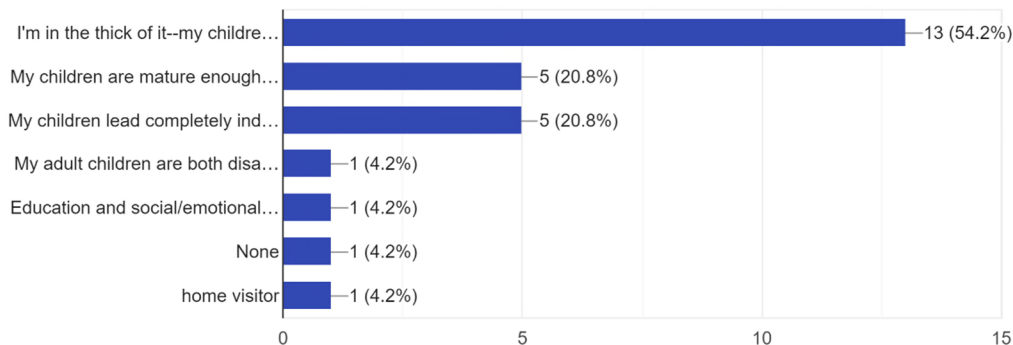
Are you a parent or caregiver of children? Check all that apply.

24 responses



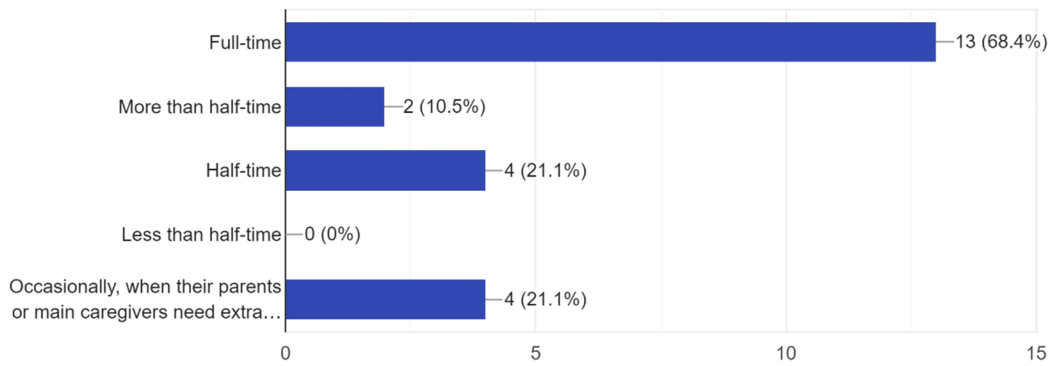
How would you describe your parenting/caregiving duties currently? Check all that apply.

24 responses



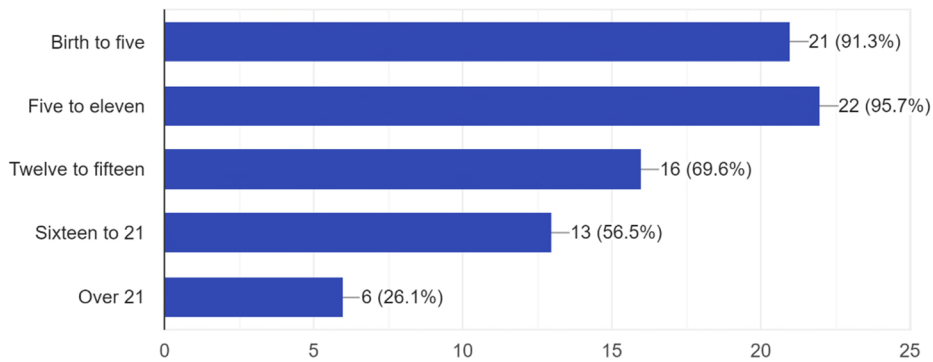
The children I care for are with me:

19 responses



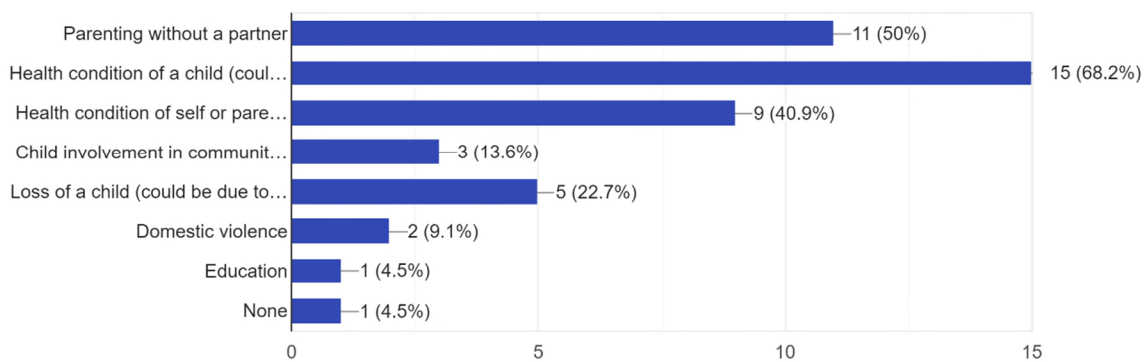
I have parenting/caregiving experience with children of these ages (check all that apply):

23 responses



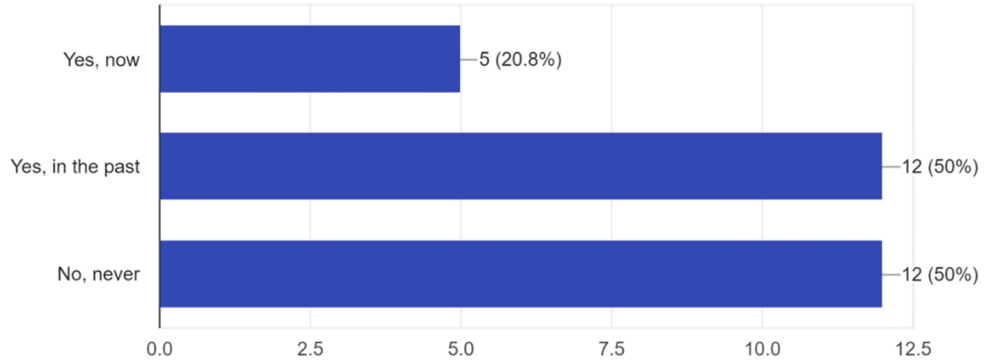
I have experience parenting/caregiving in these situations (check all that apply):

22 responses



My family has sometimes struggled to get our basic needs met (housing, transportation, food, etc.).

24 responses

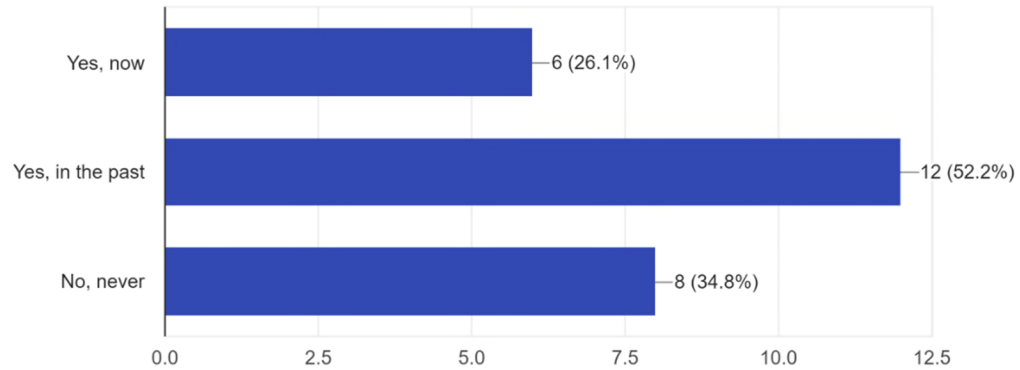


Is there anything you'd like us to know about this experience? 3 responses

- When our children were 2 & 6 yrs. old, my spouse was laid off. I was only able to work sporadically, due to our children's complex needs so I worked cleaning houses, taking jobs that allowed me to bring my children with me. A few of my housekeeping clients were extended family members who paid me with gift cards for groceries. The school was not always able to meet our 6 years old's needs, so both children were with me 1/3 of the time. We made it thru 1 year of no income from my spouse.
- We were able to overcome our challenges through hard work and assistance from our faith community
- I am answering as a representative of Mount Baker School District

My family has struggled to get services needed by our children.

23 responses

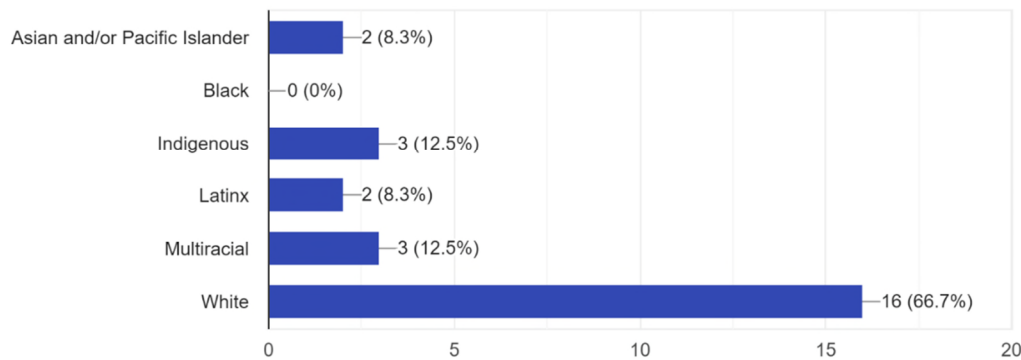


Is there anything you'd like us to know about this experience? 7 responses

- Available, competent mental health counseling in our county is greatly lacking
- I am answering as a representative of Mount Baker School District
- access to mental health providers
- School and health care systems not adequately resourced to address even common child health challenges such as ADHD
- Trying to get mental health care for my child while going through a divorce. Trying to get parenting assistance as a full-time working mother.
- Mental health services for youth have been hard to find
- It has been a struggle to get services when your children have some struggles but "don't struggle enough to qualify for certain services" yet it still impacts their experiences at school.

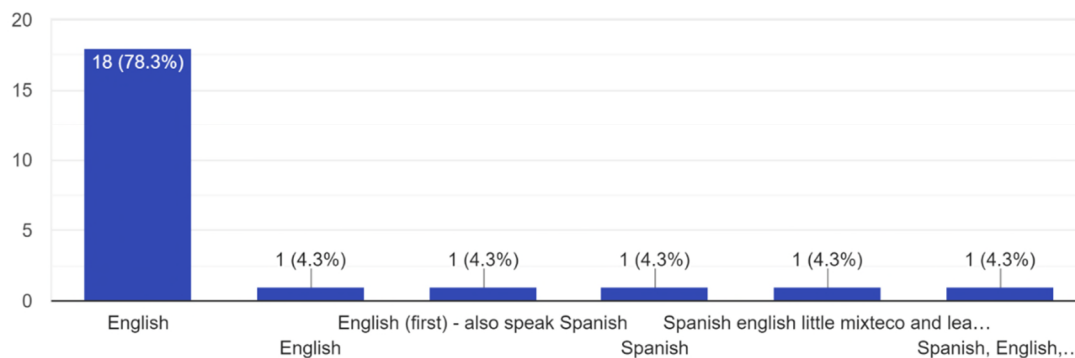
How do you identify in terms of race? Check all that apply.

24 responses



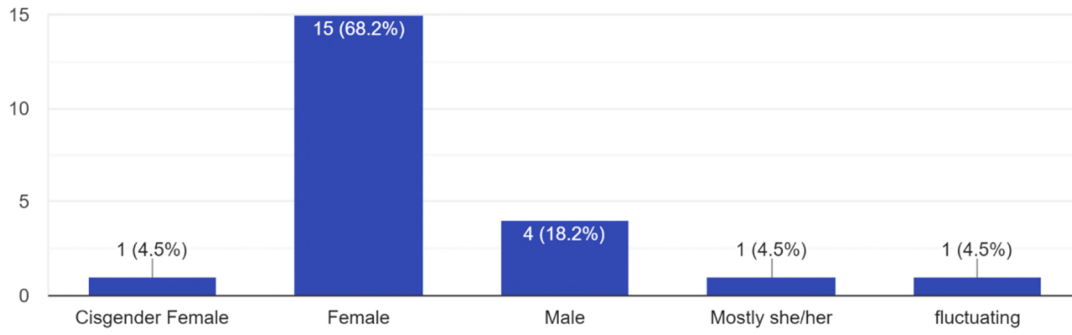
What was the first language you learned? If you speak more than one language, please share those as well.

23 responses



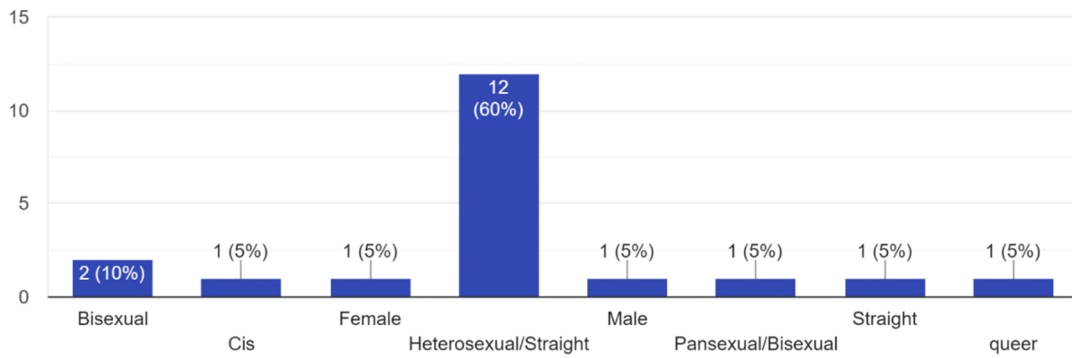
How would you describe your gender identity?

22 responses



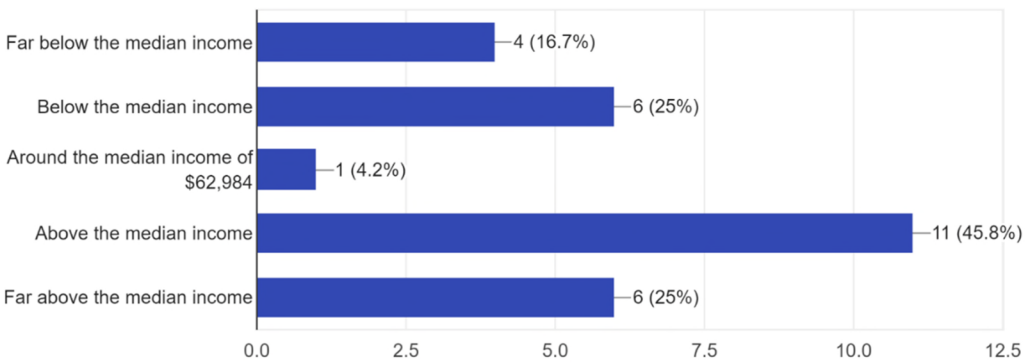
How would you describe your sexual orientation?

20 responses



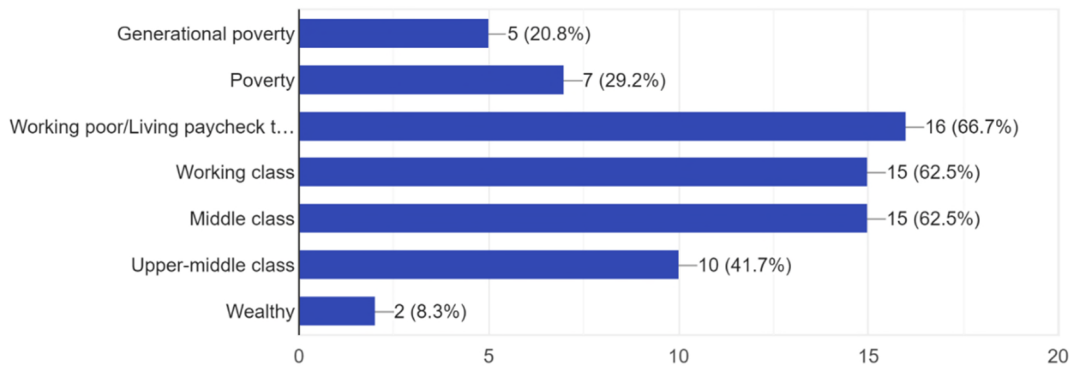
The U.S. Census Bureau calculated the median household income in Whatcom County for 2019 at \$62,984. Where do you identify your current income level?

24 responses



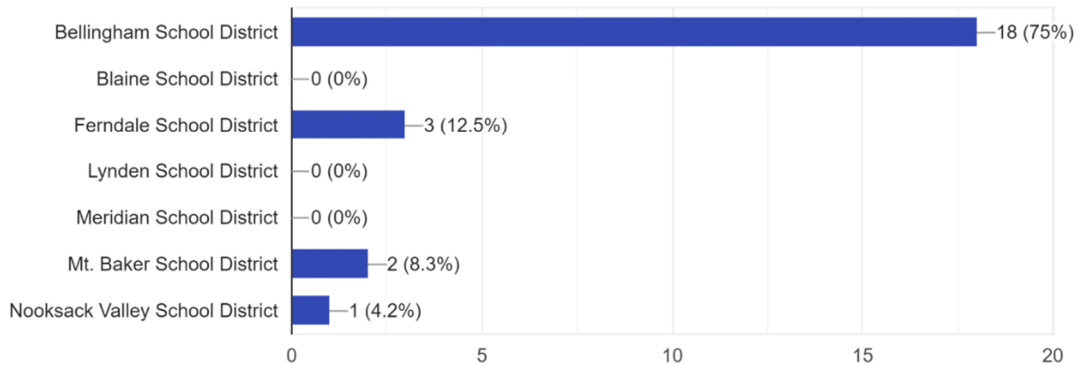
Which income statuses do you have lived experience with? Check all that apply.

24 responses



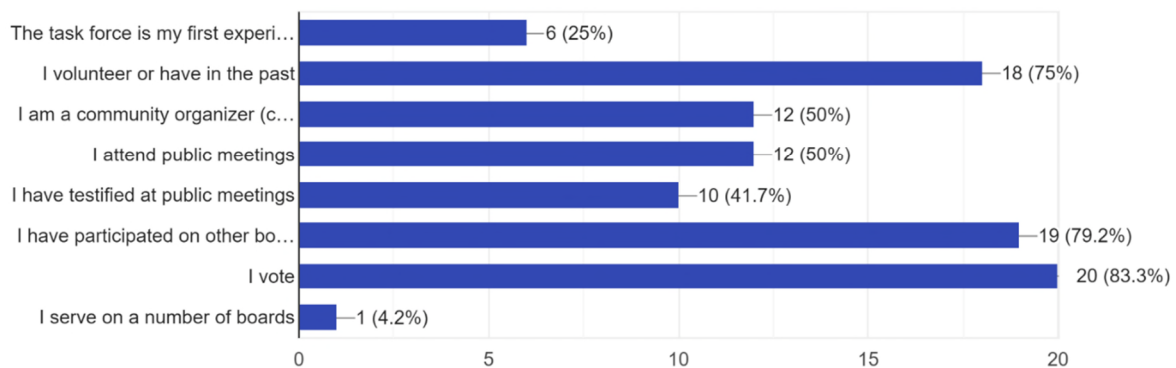
Which school district geographic area do you live in? (Many people identify their community in connection to schools and school districts. Zip cod...ll with the way many of us identify where we live.)

24 responses



How are you involved in community civic life? Check all that apply.

24 responses



What kinds of hobbies or activities bring you joy? 21 responses

- Walking, jogging, reading, and basketball
- Hiking, kayaking, gardening and landscaping, growing our own food, playing classical and folk music with friends,
- Reading, hiking, spending time with friends and family.
- Being outside
- Six adult kids, six grandchildren, gardening, boating, travel, community service
- Baseball, surfing, running, woodworking,
- All outdoor activities, gardening, being with family
- Athletic events, music and the arts, outdoor recreation
- Hiking, running, yoga, boating, reading, spending time with our dogs, traveling, wine tasting
- Hiking, reading, traveling
- Outdoors, hiking, family time, sewing
- Gardening, hiking, skiing, backpacking
- Socializing, reading, building community, bike riding, cooking, eating :), being on the water
- Gardening, kayaking, walking, running, being in nature, being with families and friends
- Hiking, running, gardening, going to the gym
- Time with family, yoga, bike rides
- Gardening, anything on a beach and in the water, reading, adventures with my son, hiking, cooking and eating
- Gardening - Woodworking - Home Improvement - Music
- Gardening, being in nature, sewing, dancing, connecting with good friends
- Hiking, gardening, dancing,
- Jogging, walking, basketball, swimming

Please describe any other identities or lived experiences that you would like to share about yourself or your family. 9 responses

- Coming to the United States as a young adult has required a lot of learning and adjustment.
- Single parent of three children for five years.
- We are members of a faith community. That fact is pretty central to our experience.
- I have worked for about 20 years in my faith community in welfare assistance to the poor and disadvantaged.
- I am concerned about access to food, health care, internet/cell access, and transportation in my community.
- I am a pediatrician who is active in my community and in the local schools.
- I am passionate about supporting children and families build resilience. Parents are their children's best advocate, and we need to enable them to use their advocacy right. Families know how to make better systems. We need to be better listeners to utilize their expertise. My experience as a parent of young children was honored and supported by systems early on, and it has changed my life and shaped my children's. I want every family to have that opportunity.
- I am a graduate student.
- Small business owner.

Thank you! As a reminder, this survey is anonymous and does not track your name, email address, or any identifiable information. It will allow the task force to understand the lived experiences of members represented in our work. The data collected from this survey will be included in the initial report to the County Council but will remain anonymous.

Appendix C

Land Acknowledgement

I would like to begin by acknowledging that we are here today on the ancestral homelands of Indigenous Peoples who have lived in the Salish Sea basin and the North Cascades watershed from time immemorial, in particular, the Lhaq'temish (LOCK-tuh-mish) people who we recognize today to be the Lummi Nation, the Nooksack Tribe, and Semiahmoo.

May we be mindful of the inherent owners of this land, our children, who are our future. Our future stewards of the land and advocates for the generation to come. May that truth guide our work and efforts to improve the well-being of all families and children, native and non-native, living in this beautiful county.

This land acknowledgment is not meant to be a substitute for authentic relationship-building and understanding. It is meant to introduce us to one way we can show respect and honor for the sacrifices of the first people of this land.

Please join me in expressing the deepest respect for our indigenous neighbors, and gratitude for the enduring stewardship of our shared lands and waterways.

APPENDIX F: 2021 STIPEND PILOT PROGRAM REPORT

2021 Stipend Pilot Program for the Child and Family Well-being Task Force

Introduction and background

In February 2021, the Health Department [sought and was granted approval by Whatcom County government](#) to pilot a stipend program in 2021 in order to encourage diverse participation in our governmental processes, specifically the Child and Family Well-being Task Force. Stipends are one way of incentivizing participation and demonstrating that value. As the pilot program comes to an end, this report summarizes program eligibility and participation, financial expenditures, feedback from Task Force members, and recommendations for next steps regarding the stipend program. Our aim is to determine whether offering a stipend increased the diversity of participants by reducing barriers to participation.

Who was eligible for the stipend payment?

Parents and community members that were not getting paid by an agency or organization to participate in the task force were eligible for a stipend. The primary purpose of the stipends was to overcome barriers (such as transportation or childcare expenses) that might get in the way of members being able to participate in the task force.

Stipend application forms were distributed to all Task Force members. Those interested in getting a stipend needed to complete a [stipend request form](#) and the first page of the [IRS form W-9](#). Completed forms were sent to a Health Department staff member who shared them with:

- the Finance Department in order to set a up vendor number for each stipend recipient and with
- the Health Department Business Office to process the stipend payments on a monthly basis after receiving a meeting attendance sheet certified by a Health Department staff.

Once a stipend application was received and approved, members were paid a \$40 stipend for each meeting they attended up to a maximum of \$599 each year.

How many people participated and how much did we spend?

Seven Task Force members applied, were determined to be eligible, and received stipends for meetings they attended. The stipend recipients included members appointed by County Council and members designated by an agency, if the entity did not provide compensation for participation.

As of December 14, a total of \$4,154.00 has been spent on the stipend pilot program. Six participants have reached the maximum payment limit of \$599.

Recipients who were paid the maximum limit of \$599 were paid for 15 meetings (\$600 is the threshold at which payors must issue a federal form 1099). However, there will be a total of 18 meetings for 2021, from March 8 through December 13.

Key takeaway: Although seven Task Force members received stipends totaling \$4154.00, the maximum allocation did not cover the full participation for the recipients.

Task Force member feedback

Health Department staff asked for anonymous feedback from Task Force members about the pilot stipend program, particularly from those who received stipends. Fifteen members offered responses; seven of those indicated that they were receiving a stipend.

When asked whether the stipend program fulfilled its purpose of increasing diversity of Task Force participants, few of the survey responses were definitive, including those from stipend recipients. Answers ranged from "I think so" to "Not sure." The identity of stipend recipients was not shared among the Task Force or the recipients. Given the small numbers of stipend recipients, asking and sharing their demographics would likely provide identifying information. Some comments on this question from all survey respondents included:

- It is attempting to. The reality is that it likely doesn't cover the number of hours that most "volunteers" are putting in.
- I think stipends are a good idea but should be more than \$40 to reflect the time needed for preparation & attendance.
- I don't think it would help much. Many diverse people are struggling financially, and the time requirement does not outweigh the financial benefit.
- I've heard some talk about the Task Force as if its work was intended to fit within the meeting times and not require any pre/post work from participants. I have not found that to be true.
- I can't speak entirely about diversity of other participants. But I can say that I probably would not have been able to justify the time away from my family without it.
- I'm not sure about this at this point. Although the money helps, it doesn't change that you need to have a job that will allow you to get off early in order to attend if it's during your work hours. I requested to leave work a 1/2 hour early each time to attend. It also could impact people negatively that might be on public assistance and need to report this income thus leaving out important voices from participating.

Key takeaway: The stipend pilot program was a good start towards removing barriers for participation in our government processes but it doesn't adequately address or acknowledge the adjustments that many participants would need to make for full participation in the Task Force.

Stipend availability and impact on participation

When asked whether the stipend availability influenced their decision to participate on the Task Force, three said yes and four said no. However, six out of seven said that the availability of stipends would influence their ability to recommend participation on county boards, commissions, or task forces. For those who didn't apply for a stipend, their reasons varied from not meeting the eligibility criteria to not having a financial barrier to participation to choosing to volunteer as community service. One member shared that the stipend would not cover the number of hours put

into Task Force work. They found that, although the work is part of their job description, participating required many more hours than budgeted for and that they had to seek additional funding to cover them.

Key takeaway: The availability of a stipend influenced some members decision to participate on the Task Force and would influence their ability to recommend participation to others. The stipend amount is a nominal sum and does not adequately compensate the hours many participants contributed. In some cases, the number of hours contributed exceeded the amount that participants budgeted for, even when participation fell into their job description.

Pilot program expectations

Four of the seven recipients said that the pilot program exceeded their expectations, two said it met expectations, and one said it did not meet expectations. Some reasons about why the program did or didn't meet expectations included:

- Payment was slow at first, but comes fairly promptly now.
- Once set up, the process has been straightforward and easy.
- I greatly appreciate the stipends. It takes time and energy away from my family to participate so being compensated for my work means a lot.
- I think it's a great pilot program. I think there should be additional significant funds available for leadership and special assignments where additional work is required. I've worked probably 100+ extra hours unpaid. If I don't do this, representation and perspective would be lost on the Task Force and someone with more wealth and privilege would be in my place. Additionally, uncompensated work becomes exploitation pretty easily. But if we don't have task force members who need financial compensation who are able to do the work, then it will be upholding existing power structures.
- Because I was not aware of the stipend before wanting to join, it was a great surprise and helpful.

Key takeaway: Nearly all of the stipend recipients said that they were provided with clear expectations about applying for and receiving a stipend. Four out of seven said that it was a good reflection of their time spent on Task Force work and that stipend payments were delivered in a timely manner.

Participant suggestions for stipend program improvement

Stipend recipients offered suggestions for improving the program. At the top of the list for nearly all recipients was expanding the stipend payment to include Task Force work group meetings or meetings scheduled beyond regularly scheduled Task Force meetings. Other suggestions included:

- Provide more clarity about the paperwork process and timeline and make the paperwork involved easier to use.

- Shorten the time frame between participating in meetings and receiving stipend compensation.
- Offer compensation in other ways such as paid access to training.
- Offer gratitude, recognition, and celebration of participant efforts, successes, and contributions.

Key takeaway: Recipients recommend expanding the stipend eligibility to include Task Force meetings and/or work beyond the monthly scheduled meetings to better reflect the time commitment necessary for many participants.

Summary

Although the stipend pilot program payment amount was a nominal sum compared to the time put into Task Force meetings and preparation, it was a good start towards removing barriers for participation in Whatcom County government processes. Many recipients acknowledged that it made a difference in justifying time away from family or work obligations and would make it easier to recommend participation to others.

Improving the application process and simplifying the paperwork process is an easier next step to work on than the suggestion to expand the stipend payment to include work beyond the regularly scheduled Task Force meetings. Payment is capped at \$599 due to IRS reporting requirements for payors to provide a 1099 form to those who receive income greater than \$600 in a calendar year. Expanding the payments could impact the volunteer status currently understood for Task Force participants and require a planning process with additional County departments such as Finance, Human Resources, and the County Executive's Office.

Health Department staff recommend continuing the stipend program as one tool to use in recruiting and retaining diverse participants on the Child and Family Well-being Task Force. We also recommend exploring ways to continue to reduce barriers to participation as well as expand the stipend payment to more adequately reflect the hours necessary for full participation, particularly for those members who step into a leadership position on the Task Force.