



# Island County CEDS 2024-2028 Progress Report 2024-2025

This report was developed by the Economic Development Council for Island County and was generously funded by Island County.

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**Questions or comments?**

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**Visit our webpage:**

<https://www.edcislandcounty.org>

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## About the EDC & the Island County CEDS 2024-2028

The Economic Development Council (EDC) for Island County is an independent nonprofit and the Associate Development Organization (ADO) for Island County. As the ADO, the EDC for Island County is therefore the County's designated partner for county-wide economic development. ADOs are local organizations working on economic development on behalf of the Washington State Department of Commerce.

The EDC collaborates with elected officials, government staff, and business and community organizations to create an economic environment where businesses can flourish, grow, and create high wage jobs, which enhances and maintains Island County's unique quality of life.

The EDC offers several services to small businesses and entrepreneurs operating in Island County, including but not limited to:

- Direct services that includes one-on-one business counseling
- Local economic data and resources
- Advocacy at the county, state, and federal level on behalf of our local businesses

Given the EDC's unique position as the only county-wide economic development service provider, in April 2023 Island County, the Town of Coupeville, and the Cities of Langley and Oak Harbor voted to cost-share the development of a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for Island County. The EDC was selected to oversee the process.

The development of the Island County CEDS was planned to run for approximately 18 months from April 2023 – September 2024. Incredibly, the EDC completed the project two months early and within budget. The final [Island County CEDS 2024-2028](#) was unanimously approved by [Resolution C-25-24](#) by the Island County Board of Commissioners on July 2, 2024. The CEDS can be leveraged by Island County to access many types of state, federal, and foundation grants. The document also has several additional benefits, including making economic and workforce development less siloed, more programmatic and less ad hoc.

Per the Island County CEDS 2024-2028 Section 4: Evaluation Framework (p. 62-64), Island County government opted to a third party monitor to evaluate progress on an annual and quarterly basis. The EDC for Island County was selected to serve as the third party monitor and funding was approved in July 2025.

# Message from the Executive Director of the EDC for Island County

Dear Partners and Colleagues,

Over the past year, Island County, its municipalities, and community partners have worked together to make progress toward Island County's CEDS goals. Through shared effort and coordination, partners across the county continued to address critical housing needs, invest in essential infrastructure, support local jobs and businesses, and strengthen regional collaboration.

During the reporting period, Island County and its jurisdictions advanced planning efforts, policy updates, and development strategies to support expanded housing options. Nonprofit housing partners were vital contributors, implementing multiple complex workforce housing projects in response to growing needs.

Significant progress was achieved through coordinated infrastructure planning and investment. Broadband improvements were driven by private-sector investment and targeted public funding to expand access and reliability. Rural County Economic Development funding supported infrastructure projects that benefit local employers and workers, while state and federal transportation investments supported road improvements critical to economic activity and mobility.

One of the most notable accomplishments during this period was the partnership between the Oak Harbor School District, Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, the State of Washington and the Department of Defense that secured more than \$200 million for school facility reconstruction and noise mitigation improvements.

Workforce development and business support also remained central to CEDS implementation. Organizations across Island County supported local businesses and workers through technical assistance, tourism promotion, entrepreneurial programming, and workforce development initiatives resulting in a more resilient and adaptable local economy.

This progress report reflects the dedication, expertise, and collaboration of Island County's jurisdictions and community stakeholders. Continued partnership across sectors and communities is strengthening our county's economy and enhancing quality of life for those who live and work here.

Thank you to all who contributed time, insight, and effort to this work. The progress documented in this report would not be possible without that shared commitment.

Sincerely,

Kristina Hines  
Executive Director



# Island County CEDS Goals 2024-2028

The Island County CEDS External Review Committee envisions a robust and diverse economy that leverages existing community assets; establishes, upgrades, and maintains resilient critical infrastructure; supports business and workforce vitality; sustainably manages natural resources; promotes equity and inclusivity; and increases resident quality of life.

The [Island County CEDS 2024-2028](#) contains a set of five overarching goals to achieve this vision.



**1. Improve and develop resilient critical infrastructure.**



**2. Support existing local businesses and community assets, increase diversification, and promote Island County as an attractive business environment.**



**3. Align quality education and skills training programs with employer needs and create living wage job opportunities in Island County.**



**4. Sustainably manage the natural beauty and resources of Island County.**



**5. Deepen collaboration and coordination between Island County and regional partners.**

You can find all of the related sub-goals and the Action Plan in the full document. The remainder of this Progress Report includes:

- Evaluation of the CEDS July 2024 - December 2025
- Public agency, including jurisdiction, contributions
- Nonprofit and other partner contributions
- Key data points and progress metrics update, where possible

Contributions were developed and submitted directly by the jurisdictions or agencies based on their preferences and capacity. Their progress report entries should therefore not necessarily be considered not exhaustive.

Please contact the agency in question for additional details on their economic and workforce development activities.

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# Island County CEDS 2024-2028 Evaluation Framework

Island County government selected the EDC for Island County to evaluate progress on an annual and quarterly basis. Funding was approved in July 2025. The first report therefore covers the reporting period of July 2024 - December 2025.

The Evaluation Framework and resulting work plan includes:

- An annual progress report
- A quarterly review schedule for all listed partners
- An annual Review Committee meeting
- A quarterly meeting to discuss deliverables
- An annual update of the CEDS project list

Since July 2025, the EDC for Island County has therefore completed the following tasks and deliverables:

- Island County CEDS Progress Report 2024-2025
- A quarterly review schedule for all listed partners for September-December 2025
- Annual Review Committee meeting was held on October 23, 2025 via Zoom
- Two quarterly meetings to discuss deliverables and coordinate via Zoom
  - The September 11, 2025 meeting covered Goals 1 and 2
  - The November 6, 2025 meeting covered Goals 3, 4, and 5
- An updated CEDS Project List for 2026, which was forwarded to Island County staff to be taken to the Island County Board of Commissioners for approval in early 2026

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## Quarterly Meetings: Breaking Down Silos and Enhancing Coordination

A key benefit of adopting a CEDS and implementing Island County's Evaluation Plan is that they extend beyond data collection to actively enhance coordination among local and cross-regional partners. Between July and December 2025, EDC hosted two quarterly meetings for those partners to share current initiatives and report on progress toward the CEDS goals since its adoption in July 2024.

The first quarterly meeting was held on September 11, 2025.

Attendees included Dan Abshere (Camano Chamber of Commerce), Cody Bakken (Island County ARPA/Broadband Coordinator), John Becker (Island County Emergency Management), Marissa Cahill (Northwest Workforce Council CEO), Michael Clyburn (Clinton Community Council and Island Roots Housing), Ryan Elting (Whidbey Camano Land Trust Executive Director), Cheryl Grehan (Oak Harbor Main Street Association Executive Director), Patricia Griffin (EDC), Allison Gubata (Langley Main Street Association Executive Director), Alyce Henry (Oak Harbor Marina Harbormaster), Meghan Heppner (Island Transit), George Henney (Whidbey Telecom CEO), George Hernandez (Island County Human Services), Kristina Hines (EDC Executive Director), Wendy Horn

## Quarterly Meetings: Breaking Down Silos and Enhancing Coordination

(Oak Harbor Grants Administrator), Kennedy Horstman (City of Langley Mayor), Orin Kailitis (Habitat for Humanity of Island County Executive Director), John Lanier (Island County Long Range Planner), Jesse Levesque (Coupeville Historic Waterfront Association Executive Director), Eric Marshall (Oak Harbor Chamber of Commerce Executive Director), Marian Myszkowski (Goosefoot Community Fund Program Director), Jennifer Noveck (EDC), Bryan Stuckey (Oak Harbor Councilmember and Tourism Board Chair), Brian Tyhuis (NASWI Community Planning Director), Jenny Veltri (Northwest Education Service District 189 Career Connect Northwest Director), Nicole Whittington-Johnson (Langley Chamber of Commerce Executive Director).

The focus of the first quarterly meeting was to discuss Goal 1: Resilient Critical Infrastructure and Goal 2: Enhanced Business Support. We reviewed the overall goals and sub-goals for each goal and proceeded to have a roundtable discussion around each goal and sub-goal. The discussion was robust and highlighted a great amount of progress towards Island County's first two goals.

The City of Langley reported continued progress on a multi-project water, sewer, and stormwater initiative focused on improving core utility systems and expanding sewer service to support environmental compliance and future housing development. Broadband expansion remains active countywide with Whidbey Telecom advancing multiple projects on both North and South Whidbey. Island Transit initiated development of its first 20-year long-range plan to ensure alignment with community priorities and long-term service sustainability. The City of Oak Harbor completed road reconstruction projects incorporating bike lanes and sidewalks and is pursuing additional grant funding to advance active transportation improvements. Naval Air Station Whidbey Island facilitated federal funding for noise mitigation for a number of schools in the Oak Harbor and Coupeville area. Emergency services and preparedness capacity expanded through increased Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training and preparedness education led by Island County Emergency Management. The City of Oak Harbor is constructing a second fire station and expanding full-time staffing to improve response capacity. In Coupeville, the Historic Waterfront Association partnered with fire services to provide community fire safety outreach and demonstrations in a high-activity tourism area.

Affordable housing development advanced countywide with multiple projects at various stages of implementation. The Camas Flats project (80+ units) entered is nearing completion and Mulberry Village in Oak Harbor (80–90 units) continues to move forward. Island Roots recently held a formal groundbreaking for Generations Place which provides 14 units of affordable housing in Langley. Habitat for Humanity reported ongoing construction activity across multiple projects, active pre-development planning, recent property acquisition to support funding steams from retail operations. Additional efforts include the Port of South Whidbey and the Port of Coupeville exploring affordable housing options on their properties.

## Quarterly Meetings: Breaking Down Silos and Enhancing Coordination

Childcare capacity, identified as a workforce participation constraint, continues to expand. The City of Oak Harbor reported the addition of five new childcare facilities over the past 18 months, along with expanded Parks and Recreation summer camp programming.

Progress is also being made to reduce regulatory barriers for military-affiliated home childcare providers through improved coordination between state agencies and Navy requirements.

Island County business support providers, including organizations such as the EDC, Chambers of Commerce, Main Street Associations, and Goosefoot Community Foundation reported significant activity in the Goal 2 roundtable discussion. Activities focused on business retention and expansion and participation in strategy development with local partners. The EDC continues to deliver no-cost technical assistance by providing direct one-on-one support to local businesses and funding a Washington SBDC advisor in Island County, alongside technical workshops, Coffee Chats, and targeted outreach. Goosefoot Community Fund continued delivery of business education programming, including a six-part tax workshop series delivered in partnership with the IRS. Chambers of Commerce and Main Street organizations reported complementary efforts such as economic vitality committees, mentorship programs, incubator storefronts and creative economy initiatives. The Workforce Development Council reported continued issuing of small business grants and workforce equity investments.

Tourism is central to a large portion of the local economy. The Island County Tourism Board is in a transition phase, working toward a new interlocal agreement and exploring a more stable staffing model. Event-based tourism and shoulder-season activities continue to support local businesses. Data collection and economic impact measurement tools are available to inform future tourism planning.

The second quarterly meeting was held on November 6, 2025.

Attendees included Dan Abshere (Camano Chamber of Commerce), Cody Bakken (Island County ARPA/Broadband), Kristina Hines (EDC Executive Director), Wendy Horn (Oak Harbor Grants Administrator), Kennedy Horstman (City of Langley Mayor), Darren Greeno (Skagit Valley College Vice President of Academic Affairs), Patricia Griffin (EDC), Allison Gubata (Langley Main Street Association), Shawn Morris (Island County Public Health Director), Marian Myszkowski (Goosefoot Community Fund Program Director), Jennifer Noveck (EDC), Meredith Penny (Langley Planning Director), and Jenny Veltri (Northwest Education Service District 189 Career Connect Northwest Director).

The focus of the first quarterly meeting was to discuss Goal 3: Workforce, Goal 4: Natural Environment, and Goal 5: Regional Partnerships. We reviewed the overall goals and sub-goals for each, then proceeded to have a roundtable discussion organization around each goal and sub-goal. The discussion was particularly robust for Goals 3 and 4.

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## Quarterly Meetings: Breaking Down Silos and Enhancing Coordination

The roundtable discussion around Goal 3 indicated strong regional workforce coordination through EDC, NW Workforce Council, Career Connect Northwest (NWESD 189), Skagit Valley College, and the Northwest Educational Workforce Coalition. Expanded exposure to career pathways and trades was reported through initiatives such as the Washington Apprenticeship and Vocational Education (WAVE) Tour (500 students), Try-a-Trade events at Skagit Valley College (200).

Discussion emphasized the importance of aligning education and training with actual labor market demand, avoiding unnecessary educational costs where on-the-job training is more appropriate, and addressing parental perceptions related to trades and post-secondary education. Increased focus on internships, work-based learning, and return on investment for students and families reflects a shift toward outcomes that better align education investments with workforce needs. The EDC participates in workforce strategy with partner organizations to monitor these trends and align training and skills with the needs of Island County businesses.

Underserved workforce populations were also discussed. Military spouses continue to face barriers related to childcare availability and regulatory misalignment. Workforce shortages and credentialing barriers within the veteran mental health sector were also noted.

The City of Langley reported progress on climate and infrastructure initiatives, including solar and battery storage feasibility studies, City Hall roof replacement to support future solar installation, identification of potential resilience hub sites, aquifer modeling to inform long-term water protection, and adoption of a comprehensive plan with a new climate element. Multimodal transportation strategies appropriate for a small, rural city context were also incorporated.

Island County reported continued implementation of the Shore Friendly shoreline protection program, septic system mapping within flood zones, Pollution Identification and Correction (PIC) programs, and updates to on-site septic codes. Efforts to reopen shellfish beds and improve water quality remain ongoing.

Participants emphasized the importance of preparing small businesses for climate- and disaster-related disruptions. Planning is underway by EDC to develop business continuity and preparedness workshops in coordination with emergency management partners, informed by lessons learned from recent regional flooding events.

Finally, Goal 5 was discussed briefly where collaboration remains a central outcome of the CEDS process and a key mechanism for implementation. The EDC continues active engagement with statewide and regional partners, including the Washington Economic Development Association (WEDA), the regional ADO/EDO network, local Ports, and the Department of Commerce.

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## Quarterly Meetings: Breaking Down Silos and Enhancing Coordination

Advocacy efforts during the reporting period included addressing new sales tax impacts and monitoring regulatory changes affecting small businesses. Cross-county collaboration opportunities were identified particularly with Stanwood and Camano, and Whidbey and Anacortes.

The two quarterly meetings and roundtable discussions reinforced that information-sharing, coordination, and relationship-building are central outcomes of the CEDS process and enhance Island County's economic resilience. Attendees highlighted that these quarterly meetings offer a unique opportunity to exchange information and gain clearer insight into the active economic initiatives of jurisdictions, business support organizations, and nonprofit partners.

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## Evaluation: Broad Performance Measures

Island County's CEDS Evaluation Framework uses quantitative labor market and income data alongside qualitative context to assess regional economic conditions over time. These measures provide insight into the structure of the local economy, labor force dynamics and affordability pressures that influence economic resilience and quality of life. Because Island County's economy is influenced by state, national and global forces, these indicators are not intended to attribute outcomes to any single policy or program, but rather to identify trends and constraints that inform strategic decision-making.

### Employment by Industry Sector

Island County's CEDS Evaluation Framework uses quantitative labor market and income data alongside qualitative context to assess regional economic conditions over time. These measures provide insight into the structure of the local economy, labor force dynamics and affordability pressures that influence economic resilience and quality of life. Because Island County's economy is influenced by state, national and global forces, these indicators are not intended to attribute outcomes to any single policy or program, but rather to identify trends and constraints that inform strategic decision-making.

Growth during the reporting period was concentrated in private education and health services, which added 230 jobs year over year (+8.3%), reflecting sustained demand driven by an aging population and essential service needs. Professional and business services also expanded, adding 70 jobs (+3.8%), signaling modest growth in higher-skill service sectors. Additional detail is provided in **Table 1**, below.

# Evaluation: Broad Performance Measures

Table 1. Island County Employment by Industry (August 2025)

NAICS Industry	Aug 2025	Jul 2025	Aug 2024	Monthly Change	Annual Change	% Change
Total Nonfarm	19,010	18,890	18,920	+120	+90	0.50%
Goods-Producing	1,930	1,910	2,010	+20	-80	-4.00%
Construction	1,240	1,230	1,320	+10	-80	-6.10%
Manufacturing	680	670	680	+10	0	0.00%
Service-Providing	17,080	16,980	16,900	+100	+180	1.10%
Retail Trade	2,140	2,180	2,230	-40	-90	-4.00%
Professional & Business Services	1,900	1,890	1,830	+10	+70	3.80%
Private Education & Health Services	3,010	2,980	2,780	+30	+230	8.30%
Leisure & Hospitality	2,760	2,720	2,810	+40	-50	-1.80%
Government	4,800	4,760	4,820	+40	-20	-0.40%

Note: Data benchmarked through March 2025; updated September 15, 2025.

In contrast, construction employment declined by 80 jobs (-6.1%) compared to the prior year, despite a small month-over-month increase. This decline likely reflects elevated interest rates, housing supply constraints, and infrastructure limitations rather than reduced long-term demand. Retail trade employment declined by 90 jobs (-4.0%), consistent with broader shifts in consumer behavior and labor reallocation within the service economy.

Goods-producing industries overall declined by 4.0% year over year, underscoring Island County’s continued reliance on service-based employment and the structural challenges associated with expanding industrial activity in a constrained geographic and environmental setting.

**Source:** Washington Employment Security Department (2025). - Island County Profile. <https://esd.wa.gov/jobs-and-training/labor-market-information/reports-and-research/labor-market-county-profiles/island-county-profile>

## Labor Force and Unemployment

Island County’s labor force dynamics reflect its role as both an employment center and a retirement destination. In August 2025, the not seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was 4.5%, slightly above July 2025 (4.3%) but below August 2024 (4.9%). This suggests a relatively stable labor market with modest seasonal fluctuation.

The civilian labor force totaled 35,496 workers, an increase of 73 workers year over year and 722 workers month over month, indicating short-term re-entry into the labor force during the summer period. Despite this growth, Island County’s overall labor force participation rate remains lower than state and national averages due primarily to demographic composition rather than labor market weakness.

## Evaluation: Broad Performance Measures

A significant share of the population is aged 55 and older, with participation rates dropping sharply among residents aged 65 and over. At the same time, participation among prime working-age cohorts (ages 20 - 44) is very high, driven in part by military-related employment and associated civilian occupations. This “two-track” labor force dynamic (low overall participation but high participation among core working ages) has important implications for workforce availability, housing demand, and service provision.

**Sources:** Washington Employment Security Department (2025) - Island County Profile. <https://esd.wa.gov/jobs-and-training/labor-market-information/reports-and-research/labor-market-county-profiles/island-county-profile>

Federal Reserve Economic Data (FRED) (2025) - Civilian Labor Force. <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/tags/series?t=island+county%2C+wa>

U.S. Congress Joint Economic Committee / Bureau of Labor Statistics (2025). <https://www.jec.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/republicans/wa/>

### Per Capita Personal Income and Wages

Wage and income data highlight a persistent affordability challenge in Island County. As **Table 2** below demonstrates, in 2024, average annual covered employment totaled 18,271 jobs, with an average annual wage of \$58,930, substantially below the Washington State average of \$92,467. This gap reflects the county’s industry mix and the limited presence of high-wage sectors.

Employment is concentrated in government, accommodation and food services, retail trade, health care and social assistance, and construction—sectors that provide essential services but generally offer lower average wages. In contrast, the highest wages are found in professional, scientific, and technical services, finance and insurance, and information, which together represent a smaller share of total employment.

This disparity between prevailing wages and the cost of living places pressure on households and employers alike, reinforcing the importance of strategies that support workforce advancement, business productivity, and economic diversification where feasible.

**Table 2. Employment and Wage Characteristics (2024)**

Indicator	Value
Average Annual Covered Employment	18,271
Average Annual Wage – Island County	\$58,930
Average Annual Wage – Washington State	\$92,467

**Source:** [Washington Employment Security Department \(2025\) - Island County Profile.](https://esd.wa.gov/jobs-and-training/labor-market-information/reports-and-research/labor-market-county-profiles/island-county-profile) <https://esd.wa.gov/jobs-and-training/labor-market-information/reports-and-research/labor-market-county-profiles/island-county-profile>

## Evaluation: Broad Performance Measures

### Cost of Living

Island County’s cost of living significantly exceeds national averages, driven overwhelmingly by housing costs. Even relative to Washington State, which already has elevated living costs, Island County households face higher baseline expenses.

According to the [MIT Living Wage Calculator](#), shown in **Table 3**, a single adult must earn well above the state minimum wage to meet basic needs, and households with children face substantially higher required wages. This mismatch between wages and living costs contributes to workforce recruitment and retention challenges, particularly for employers in lower- and mid-wage sectors and for public sector and nonprofit organizations.

**Table 3. Living Wage Estimates Island County**

Household Type	Living Wage Each Adult	Annual Household Living Wage
1 Single Adult	\$23.69	\$49,275.20
2 Adults (1 Working), 2 Children	\$45.58	\$94,806.40
2 Adults (Both Working), 2 Children	\$32.24	\$134,118.40

**Source:** [MIT Living Wage Calculator - Island County, 2025.](https://livingwage.mit.edu/counties/53029)  
<https://livingwage.mit.edu/counties/53029>

## Evaluation: Specific Performance Measures

### Goal 1: Infrastructure Metrics

#### Grant Investments in Infrastructure Projects

During the 18-month period from July 1, 2024, through December 31, 2025, Island County’s infrastructure grant investments were characterized by a combination of competitive local funding awards and significant state and federal investments, particularly in broadband and transportation. Across all funding sources, the County prioritized infrastructure projects that demonstrate a clear nexus to private-sector job creation, workforce stability, and long-term economic resiliency.

#### Rural County Economic Development (RCED) Infrastructure Grants

Island County’s primary local mechanism for infrastructure investment is the Rural County Economic Development (RCED) Infrastructure Investment Program, which utilizes state-authorized sales tax rebates to support public facilities that promote economic development and job growth. RCED funds are awarded competitively to local public entities, including cities, ports, and special purpose districts for infrastructure projects that address documented economic barriers.

# Evaluation: Specific Performance Measures

## Goal 1: Infrastructure Metrics

### 2025 RCED Award Cycle

The 2025 RCED funding cycle occurred within this reporting period. The application process opened in March 2025, with applicant presentations to the Island County Board of County Commissioners on August 20, 2025, and final project awards determined in September 2025.

- **Port of Coupeville** was awarded \$112,500 to support port-related infrastructure improvements, consistent with prior investments aimed at maintaining and modernizing port facilities critical to local economic activity.
- **Opportunity Council / Shelter Resources, Inc.** was awarded \$2,000,000 in RCED funds for infrastructure development supporting affordable workforce housing. This application leveraged newly clarified state rules allowing RCED funds to finance public facilities for housing serving households at or below 120% of Area Median Income (AMI). The proposal represented a significant strategic investment in resolving infrastructure constraints, such as water, sewer, and road access, that directly impact workforce availability and economic stability.

### Regional and State Infrastructure Grant Investments

In addition to locally administered RCED funding, Island County and its jurisdictions secured several major external infrastructure grants.

### Broadband Infrastructure Expansion

Whidbey Telephone Company was awarded \$4,494,620 in broadband construction funding from the Washington State Public Works Board, including a grant component of \$764,547. This investment supports the design and construction of fiber infrastructure to serve approximately 1,536 previously unserved users in the Clinton area, directly addressing a critical gap in Island County's digital infrastructure and supporting remote work, business operations, and access to education and healthcare.

### Transportation Capital Funding

Island County jurisdictions continue to advance transportation capital projects through a combination of state and federal funding programs. During the reporting period, the City of Oak Harbor secured Transportation Improvement Board (TIB) funding for two arterial preservation projects: SW Swantown Avenue Overlay (\$348,136) and SE Barrington Drive Overlay (\$669,252).

In addition, Island County's Transportation Improvement Plan received federal Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) funding in prior years, with planning and construction activities advancing during the reporting period. These investments support roadway preservation and mobility improvements essential to freight movement, workforce commuting, and access to employment centers.

# Evaluation: Specific Performance Measures

## Goal 1: Infrastructure Metrics

### Public Health and Emergency Infrastructure

Island County Public Health and Public Works departments received a one-time allocation of \$320,000 in state-supported funding for infrastructure and emergency preparedness improvements. This funding is designated for the development and maintenance of public health facilities and emergency infrastructure, strengthening the County's capacity to respond to public health and emergency events while supporting community resilience.

**Sources:** Broadband Infrastructure Award (Clinton). WA State Department of Commerce – Public Works Board Awards Release (May 3, 2024). <https://www.commerce.wa.gov/public-works-board-approves-21-million-in-broadband-construction-pre-construction-and-emergency-grants-and-loans/>.

Public Health Facilities and Emergency Infrastructure. Page 2.  
[https://www.islandcountywa.gov/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Agenda/\\_05062025-943](https://www.islandcountywa.gov/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Agenda/_05062025-943)

RCED 2025 Cycle & Affordable Housing Application. Island County BOCC Work Session Minutes (August 20, 2025).  
[https://www.islandcountywa.gov/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Minutes/\\_08202025-1015](https://www.islandcountywa.gov/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Minutes/_08202025-1015)

Transportation Improvement Board. Performance Management Dashboard.  
<https://www.tib.wa.gov/Dashboard/modules/ProjectInventoryStatus/CountyInventoryStatus.cfm?cn=15>

## Water System Efficiency

### Water loss, electricity consumption, etc. from Consumer Confidence Reports - Data Availability Limitations

Island County is served by more than 200 independent water systems and efficiency data is reported when available at the individual system level through Consumer Confidence Reports (CCRs). As a result, these metrics have not been made available in aggregate form.

System efficiency is an important infrastructure indicator and is highlighted where publicly reported data is available:

- City of Oak Harbor - Customer Consumer Confidence Report (2024): The City reports distribution system leakage of 2.85% for 2024, with an established goal of maintaining leakage at or below 10%, indicating strong system performance relative to industry benchmarks.
- City of Langley - Consumer Confidence Report (2023, June 2024): The City reported 14% water loss through distribution leakage in 2023, with a three-year average of 15.1%. The report identifies a goal of reducing leakage to 10%, reflecting ongoing system improvement efforts.

# Evaluation: Specific Performance Measures

## Goal 1: Infrastructure Metrics

### Water System Efficiency

**Sources:** Water Customer Consumer Confidence Report 2024. City of Oak Harbor. <https://www.oakharbor.gov/DocumentCenter/View/1733/2024-Water-Quality-Report-PDF?bidId=>

Water Consumer Confidence Report 2024. City of Langley. [https://www.langleywa.org/departments/public\\_works\\_department/ccr.php#revize\\_document\\_center\\_rz5861](https://www.langleywa.org/departments/public_works_department/ccr.php#revize_document_center_rz5861)

### Water/Wastewater

**Capacity limitations, number of systems with compliance issues, consumption rates - Data Availability Limitations**

Island County is served by a large number of independently owned and operated water and wastewater systems. Water and wastewater system metrics have not been made available for this report. However, state-level data from the Washington State Department of Health indicates at least one serious drinking water system violation within Island County, reported for a residential community water system that failed to obtain a required certified operator.

**Source:** Washington State Department of Health. Drinking Water Systems Under Advanced Enforcement. 2025. <https://doh.wa.gov/community-and-environment/drinking-water/regulation-and-compliance/enforcement/systems-under-advanced-enforcement>

### Broadband

**Increase in number with access to high-speed internet, affordability rate - Data Availability Limitations**

Broadband infrastructure and service delivery in Island County is provided entirely by private service providers and therefore availability and affordability metrics are not currently tracked or reported in a consolidated, countywide format.

### Energy

**Megawatts of installed local power generation, outage time per year - Data Availability Limitations**

Island County does not host major, utility-scale power generation facilities and relies on imported electricity from regional providers. Service on Whidbey Island and Camano Island is delivered by Puget Sound Energy and Snohomish County PUD, respectively. These utilities do not publish consolidated, publicly accessible outage logs at the county level.

# Evaluation: Specific Performance Measures

## Goal 1: Infrastructure Metrics

### Transportation

#### Transit ridership by purpose, number of fixed routes

From mid-2024 through the end of 2025, Island County's public transportation system supported a total of 797,898 passenger trips, reflecting the importance of transit services to regional mobility, workforce access, and essential services. The transit system operates through a dual service model, consisting of high-capacity Fixed Route Services and specialized Paratransit and On-Demand Services, each serving distinct mobility needs across Whidbey Island and Camano Island.

Fixed Route Services form the backbone of the county's transit network and accounted for the majority of total ridership during this period. A total of 716,026 passengers utilized scheduled fixed routes, which operate across 15 routes countywide. Service coverage is geographically distributed, with 10 routes serving Whidbey Island and 5 routes serving Camano Island, supporting daily commuting, access to employment centers, education, healthcare, and essential services.

Paratransit and On-Demand Services provided critical point-to-point mobility for residents requiring flexible or accessibility-focused transportation supporting nearly 82,000 riders during the reporting period. Standard paratransit services represented the largest share of this category, serving 72,458 riders. On-demand service options further supplemented the system by addressing specific geographic and population needs, including 4,763 riders through Island County On-Demand services, 2,671 riders through Navy-focused On-Demand services, and 1,980 riders through Camano Island On-Demand services.

**Source:** Island Transit CEDS reporting tool (see page 57).

### Housing

#### New units built

Affordable housing development advanced countywide during the reporting period, with multiple projects at various stages of implementation:

- In Oak Harbor, the Camas Flats project (80+ units) is nearing completion, while Mulberry Village (80 - 90 units) continues to move forward through the development process.
- In Langley, construction on Generations Place (14 units) has commenced.

#### Housing stock volume

Island County experienced modest growth in housing stock primarily in single-family housing for the reporting period. As shown in **Table 4**, below, total housing units increased by 196 units, from 42,954 in 2024 to 43,150 in 2025. Growth was concentrated in unincorporated areas, with limited increases within incorporated jurisdictions. See **Table 5** for detail by jurisdiction.

# Evaluation: Specific Performance Measures

## Goal 1: Infrastructure Metrics

### Housing continued

**Table 4. Housing stock volume, by unit type in 2024 and 2025.**

Housing Unit Type	2024	2025	Net Change
<b>Total Housing Units</b>	42,954	43,150	<b>+196</b>
One-unit (single-family)	33,374	33,555	+181
Two-or-more-unit	4,715	4,724	+9
Mobile homes & special units	4,865	4,871	+6

**Table 5. Housing stock volume, by jurisdiction in 2024 and 2025.**

#### Housing Stock by Jurisdiction

Jurisdiction	2024 Units	2025 Units	Net Change
<b>Island County (total)</b>	42,954	43,150	<b>+196</b>
Unincorporated Island County	30,950	31,128	+178
Incorporated areas (total)	12,004	12,022	+18
City of Oak Harbor	10,184	10,198	+14
Town of Langley	773	776	+3
Town of Coupeville	1,047	1,048	+1

### Housing prices

Home prices moderated slightly in 2025 following strong appreciation in 2024, while affordability indicators showed slight improvement. Housing prices remain elevated relative to local incomes resulting in homeownership access limitations for workforce households.

**Table 6. Home Sales and Prices in 2024 vs. 2025**

#### Home Sales and Prices

Period	Median Home Price	Price Change	Affordability Index	Interpretation
<b>Q4 2024</b>	\$635,000	+6.8% YoY	65	Median income households earn only 65% of the income needed to qualify
<b>Q3 2025</b>	\$617,781	-4% YoY	68	Median income households earn only 68% of the income needed to qualify

# Evaluation: Specific Performance Measures

## Goal 1: Infrastructure Metrics

### Housing continued

#### Permits issued by type

Residential permitting activity in Island County during 2024 and 2025 reflects continued housing demand with production dominated by single-family units across all jurisdictions and limited multifamily development primarily within incorporated areas.

In 2024, Island County permitted a total of 402 new residential units. Unincorporated Island County accounted for the largest share of permitted units, with 247 units of which 235 units were single-family homes, reflecting continued low-density residential growth in rural areas. Limited multifamily development occurred in unincorporated areas, consisting of two duplex units and 10 units in small-scale 3 to 4 unit buildings.

The City of Oak Harbor permitted 141 residential units in 2024 and was the primary location for multifamily development countywide. Of the total units permitted in Oak Harbor, 56 were single-family homes, while 85 units were in multifamily structures, including 37 units in 3 to 4 unit buildings and 46 units in buildings with five or more units. Oak Harbor accounted for all 5+ unit multifamily permits issued in Island County during the year.

The Town of Coupeville permitted nine residential units in 2024, primarily single-family housing (six units), along with three units in a 5+ unit multifamily building. The Town of Langley permitted five residential units, all within 5+ unit multifamily development, with no single-family permits issued during the year.

Through Q2 2025, Island County permitted 104 residential units. Unincorporated Island County again accounted for the majority of activity, with 78 units permitted, all of which were single-family homes. The City of Oak Harbor permitted 26 residential units during this period, including 14 single-family units and 12 units in 3 to 4 unit multifamily buildings. No residential permits were issued in the Towns of Coupeville or Langley during the first half of 2025. Early 2025 permitting patterns are consistent with prior years, characterized by single-family construction in unincorporated areas and limited multifamily development concentrated in Oak Harbor.

#### Local ordinance updates related to affordability, ADUs/DADUs

The Island County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy identifies housing availability and affordability as critical economic development challenges. Policy directions for the 2024-2028 period include:

- Expansion of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) and Detached ADUs (DADUs)
- Expedited permitting and regulatory flexibility for affordable housing
- Support for a broader range of housing types aligned with workforce needs

# Evaluation: Specific Performance Measures

## Goal 1: Infrastructure Metrics

### Housing continued

An emergency development moratorium, effective July 8, 2025 through April 14, 2026, temporarily halts new building permits and land use applications within Mixed-Use Rural Areas of Intense Development (RAIDs), including designated Rural Centers. This temporary action is anticipated to support longer-term planning and infrastructure considerations.

Draft code changes related to ADUs, co-living housing, and unit density were under active review by the Island County Planning Commission in 2025 consistent with state legislative requirements.

Island County opted in to state-authorized affordable housing programs HB 1590 / HB 1406, establishing a dedicated revenue stream to support the development, operations, and maintenance of affordable housing.

In addition to the County administered funding, the Whidbey Community Foundation Affordable Housing Fund provides a locally managed philanthropic funding source to support affordable housing across Whidbey Island.

### Vacancy rates

Island County continues to report among the lowest apartment vacancy rates in Washington State, particularly for one-bedroom units, highlighting shortages of rental housing for the local workforce.

**Table 7. Rental Vacancy Rates and Average Rents in 2024 and 2025**

**Rental Vacancy and Average Rent (All Bedroom Types)**

<b>Quarter</b>	<b>Average Rent</b>	<b>Vacancy Rate</b>
<b>Q4 2024</b>	\$1,119	1.4%
<b>Q3 2025</b>	\$1,165	1.7%

### Sources:

Island County Affordable Housing. <https://www.islandcountywa.gov/996/Affordable-Housing>

Island County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) 2024-2028. <https://www.edcislandcounty.org/assets/pdf/Island+County+CEDS+2024-2028+-revised+04152025/>

Washington Center for Real Estate Research (WCRER). County and Place Building Permit Data Report, Q2 2025. <https://wcrer.be.uw.edu/housing-market-data-toolkit/>

# Evaluation: Specific Performance Measures

## Goal 1: Infrastructure Metrics

### Housing continued

**Sources:** Washington Center for Real Estate Research (WCRER). Housing Completions Report 2025. <https://wcrer.be.uw.edu/housing-market-data-toolkit/>

Washington Center for Real Estate Research (WCRER). Washington Housing Market Report – 4th Quarter 2024. <https://wcrer.be.uw.edu/housing-market-data-toolkit/>

Washington Center for Real Estate Research (WCRER). Washington Housing Market Report Q3 2025. <https://wcrer.be.uw.edu/housing-market-data-toolkit/>

Washington State Legislature (HB 1220). <https://app.leg.wa.gov/billssummary/?BillNumber=1220&Year=2025>

Washington State Legislature (HB 1337). <https://app.leg.wa.gov/billssummary?BillNumber=1337&Initiative=false&Year=2023>

Whidbey Community Foundation. Whidbey Affordable Housing Fund. <https://www.whidbeyfoundation.org/whidbey-affordable-housing-fund/>

### Childcare

#### Number of providers, number of slots available

Access to affordable and reliable childcare is a critical component of workforce participation and economic resilience. The 2024 Island County Childcare Data Report published by Childcare Aware of Washington and licensing records from the Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families provide an approximate view of the current childcare system in Island County.

The childcare system consists of approximately 18 family childcare homes, 17 licensed childcare centers, and 3 school-age-only programs with a combined capacity of approximately 875 slots. While this mix reflects a diversified system, the overall scale is limited particularly for households requiring full-day care for younger children.

Licensed capacity represents the maximum number of children that could be served and does not necessarily reflect real-time availability, staffing constraints, or affordability.

Childcare availability remains a key enabling infrastructure issue for Island County's economic development strategy. Constraints in this sector have implications for workforce recruitment and retention, business expansion, and overall economic competitiveness.

# Evaluation: Specific Performance Measures

## Goal 1: Infrastructure Metrics

### Childcare continued

**Sources:** Childcare Aware of Washington. <https://childcareawarewa.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Island-County-2024.pdf>

Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families.

<https://data.wa.gov/api/views/was8-3ni8/rows.csv?accessType=DOWNLOAD>

## Goal 2: Business Support Performance Measures

Island County's economy is anchored the military/government, tourism (hospitality), healthcare, retail, and construction sectors which together drive local employment and income. The County's largest employer is U.S. Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, which remains a cornerstone institution for regional jobs and household earnings. In the most recent publicly available Naval Air Station Whidbey Island economic impact summary, NAS Whidbey Island reported \$548 million in direct military and civilian payroll expenditures to personnel residing in its region of influence, as well as 9,078 military/civilian personnel residing in the region of influence (FY2017 basis). Overall job growth during 2024-2025 was modest but positive, driven primarily by gains in tourism-related industries and healthcare services, while construction and some service categories experienced small declines.

### Job Creation in Key Sectors

Total nonfarm employment in Island County was 18,730 jobs in September 2025, which was 80 jobs above September 2024 (+0.4%). Sector gains were led by Leisure and Hospitality (+160 jobs; +5.8%) and Private Education and Health Services (+150 jobs; +5.2%), consistent with continued demand in tourism-related industries and core community services. Retail Trade (+30 jobs; +1.4%) also increased slightly. These increases offset smaller declines in other areas, including Construction (-20 jobs; -1.6%), Professional and Business Services (-80 jobs; -4.4%), and Government (-120 jobs; -2.6%). This pattern reflects steady growth concentrated in hospitality and healthcare while the defense/government sector remains a foundational pillar of the economy.

### Net Increase in Average Annual Wage

Island County's average annual covered wage increased to \$58,930 in 2024, up from \$55,071 in 2023, a net gain of \$3,859 (about +7.0%). This rise indicates improved earnings for many covered workers during the reporting period. At the same time, wage growth continues to be constrained by the County's industry mix and cost pressures, particularly in sectors with higher shares of entry-to-mid level wage occupations.

### Number of Companies in Key Sectors

Island County's business base is characterized by a significant number of small establishments

# Evaluation: Specific Performance Measures

## Goal 2: Business Support Metrics

### Number of Companies in Key Sectors Continued

with under 10 employees alongside a small number of very large employers in the public and defense sectors. Key sectors are identified based on employment and wage impact, including government, accommodation and food services, retail trade, health care and social assistance, and construction.

Employer establishment counts (approximate) in these sectors include:

- Retail Trade: 304 employer establishments
- Health Care and Social Assistance: 299 employer establishments
- Construction: 272 employer establishments
- Accommodation and Food Services: 150 employer establishments
- Government: public-sector employing entities (federal, state, local)

Across the full economy, Island County includes 1,941 employer establishments and 6,509 non-employer businesses, for a total of approximately 8,450 businesses. The predominance of non-employer businesses (self-employed/sole proprietors) underscores the importance of tailored business support services for microenterprises and very small firms operating within even the County's highest-impact sectors.

### Number of Networking Events and Number of Attendees

Between July 2024 and December 2025, business networking and engagement opportunities were delivered through the local Chambers of Commerce, EDC programming, and entrepreneurial partner events. During the reporting period, the Oak Harbor, Coupeville, Freeland, Langley, Clinton, and Camano Chambers of Commerce collectively hosted an estimated 99 networking events, reaching approximately 1,665 attendees.

In addition, the EDC delivered 40 events during the reporting period, reaching 1,006 attendees through workshops, entrepreneur meetups, virtual coffee chats, and community engagement sessions. RAIN Catalysts also hosted two events with approximately 40 attendees. In total, Island County businesses participated in more than 140 networking and business-support events, representing over 2,700 attendee engagements during the reporting period.

### Number of Entrepreneurs Receiving Counseling Services

During the reporting period, the EDC directly supported 107 unique businesses through one-on-one counseling and technical assistance. Support included business planning, financing readiness, operational troubleshooting, workforce challenges, regulatory navigation, and growth strategy assistance across a wide range of sectors.

# Evaluation: Specific Performance Measures

## Goal 2: Business Support Metrics

### Number of Recruitment Leads Responded To

During the reporting period, the EDC responded to 7 business recruitment and site-selection inquiries, including requests for information related to available sites, workforce conditions, and the local operating environment. These efforts supported Island County's readiness for prospective investment opportunities and business expansion decisions.

### Increase Volume of Small Business Lending

During the reporting period, capital access support was delivered through business counseling, lender referrals, and financing readiness assistance, helping local entrepreneurs and small businesses pursue lending and investment opportunities. The specific volume of business loans is private lender-based data unavailable for public reporting.

### Annual Cost of Living Comparison

Island County's cost of living continues to influence business operations and workforce recruitment and retention. Based on the MIT Living Wage Calculator for Island County, estimated living wage thresholds during the reporting period were:

- Single adult: \$23.69 per hour / \$49,275 annually
- Two adults (one working), two children: \$45.58 per hour / \$94,806 annually
- Two adults (both working), two children: \$32.24 per hour each / \$134,118 combined annually

These thresholds remain above wages for many occupations, particularly in service-oriented sectors, and contribute to workforce constraints. While nominal wages increased during the reporting period, wage growth did not fully offset elevated housing and childcare costs, contributing to ongoing workforce recruitment and retention challenges identified elsewhere in the CEDS.

**Sources:** Washington State Employment Security Department (ESD). Island County Profile. <https://esd.wa.gov/jobs-and-training/labor-market-information/reports-and-research/labor-market-county-profiles/island-county-profile>

NAS Whidbey Island Operations and Economic Contributions.

<https://media.defense.gov/2022/Apr/13/2002976417/-1/-1/1/NASWI%20ECONOMIC%20IMPACT%20FINAL.PDF>

U.S. Census Bureau. County Business Patterns.

<https://data.census.gov/table?q=Island+County+Washington+County+Business+Patterns>

U.S. Census Bureau. Nonemployer Statistics.

<https://data.census.gov/table?q=Island+County+Washington+Nonemployer>

# Evaluation: Specific Performance Measures

## Goal 2: Business Support Metrics

**Sources:** U.S. Census Bureau. QuickFacts: Island County, WA.  
<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/islandcountywashington>

MIT Living Wage Calculator. Island County, WA. <https://livingwage.mit.edu/counties/53029>

## Goal 3: Workforce Development Metrics

### Graduation / High School Completion Rates

Education and workforce indicators for Island County are reported using Class of 2023 outcomes as the benchmark year as they are the most recent complete and consistently published cohort available at the time of this CEDS progress update.

Graduation outcomes across Island County school districts demonstrate strong high school completion rates.

For the Class of 2023, district-reported four-year graduation outcomes were as follows:

- Oak Harbor High School: 92.0% graduation rate
- Coupeville High School: 90.5% graduation rate
- South Whidbey High School: 82.0% graduation rate
- Stanwood High School (serving Camano Island): 87.3% graduation rate

These outcomes show that the majority of Island County students complete high school within four years, supporting a stable track into postsecondary education, training, or direct workforce entry. Differences among districts highlight the importance of locally tailored interventions and continued coordination between education and workforce partners.

### Enrollment in Postsecondary Education

Postsecondary enrollment data for the Class of 2023 reflect pathways taken by graduates across Island County districts, including enrollment in four-year institutions, community and technical colleges, or non-enrollment in the first year following graduation.

Postsecondary enrollment outcomes for the first year after high school graduation were as follows:

Oak Harbor School District:

- 27% enrolled in four-year institutions
- 22% enrolled in two-year/community or technical colleges
- 51% did not enroll in postsecondary education within the first year

Coupeville School District:

- 32% enrolled in four-year institutions
- 19% enrolled in two-year/community or technical colleges
- 49% did not enroll in the first year after graduation

# Evaluation: Specific Performance Measures

## Goal 3: Workforce Development Metrics

### Enrollment in Postsecondary Education, Continued

South Whidbey School District:

- 50% enrolled in four-year institutions
- 18% enrolled in two-year/community or technical colleges
- 33% did not enroll in the first year after graduation

Stanwood-Camano School District:

- 30% enrolled in four-year institutions
- 24% enrolled in two-year/community or technical colleges
- 46% did not enroll in the first year after graduation

Community and technical college enrollment represents a significant share of postsecondary education, highlighting the importance of Skagit Valley College as a regional access point for workforce-aligned education and training. The proportion of students not enrolling in postsecondary education within the first year indicates the need for continued career-connected learning, advising, and transition support.

### Labor Force Participation Rates

Island County's labor force participation reflects both an older resident population and the influence of a large military installation with a younger workforce.

Based on American Community Survey data published by the Washington State Employment Security Department, Island County's overall labor force participation rate is approximately 57%, below both the Washington State and national averages of approximately 62%. This lower rate is driven primarily by the county's age profile rather than by weak labor demand.

Prime working-age residents exhibit very strong labor force engagement. Participation among residents ages 20-24 exceeds 90%, while participation among ages 30-44 averages above 82%. These participation rates reflect the influence of Naval Air Station Whidbey Island and its associated military, defense, and civilian workforce demographics.

Labor force participation declines sharply among older residents with participation of approximately 19.5% for residents ages 65-74 and less than 9% for those ages 75 and older. Island County's role as a retirement destination contributes to this pattern and materially lowers the countywide participation rate.

# Evaluation: Specific Performance Measures

## Goal 3: Workforce Development Metrics

### Labor Force Participation Rates, Continued

**Table 8. Labor Force Participation Rates by Age Group with Interpretation Notes**

**Island County Labor Force Participation Rates by Age Group**

Age Group	Rate	Notes / Context
<b>Overall</b>	<b>57.0%</b>	Lower than state and national averages
16–19 years	46.5%	Students balancing school and employment
<b>20–24 years</b>	<b>91.2%</b>	High participation influenced by military
25–29 years	80.5%	Strong workforce during early career phase
<b>30–44 years</b>	<b>82.6%</b>	Prime working-age with high participation
45–54 years	81.7%	Continued strong participation
55–59 years	75.2%	Gradual decline as retirement planning begins
60–64 years	49.7%	Significant drop reflecting early retirement
<b>65–74 years</b>	<b>19.5%</b>	Sharp decline associated with retirement
<b>75+ years</b>	<b>8.9%</b>	Minimal labor force participation

### Military Spouse Employment

County and state level employment data specific to military spouses is not available. However, national surveys conducted by the Department of Defense and Blue Star Families provide detailed and consistent benchmarks that are directly applicable to Island County due to the presence of Naval Air Station Whidbey Island.

According to the 2024 DoD Survey of Active Duty Spouses, 69% of active-duty military spouses participate in work force. Despite this high participation rate, the survey reflects a 23% unemployment rate among spouses. This level has remained largely stagnant for decades and is significantly higher than civilian unemployment rates.

For those military spouses who are employed, underemployment is prevalent. The survey finds that 66% of employed active-duty spouses report experiencing some level of underemployment. The reported underemployment conditions include: pay that is lower than appropriate for work experience (40%), pay that is lower than appropriate for education level (39%), and being overqualified for the current position (37%). These findings indicate that employment alone does not equate to effective job matching or economic stability for military households.

# Evaluation: Specific Performance Measures

## Goal 3: Workforce Development Metrics

### Military Spouse Employment, Continued

Findings from the 2024 Blue Star Families Military Family Lifestyle Survey - Spouse Employment and Child Care Comprehensive Report show military spouse employment as the top issue of concern for active-duty families, cited by 54% of active-duty spouse respondents. Financial necessity is a primary driver of workforce participation with 77% of active-duty spouses reporting that two incomes are vital to their family's well-being.

Childcare availability and affordability remain a significant barrier to employment. The survey reports that 70% of active-duty spouses need childcare. Among those not currently employed, 64% cite childcare costs and 43% cite lack of available childcare or long waitlists as reasons for not working. Following relocation, 54% of spouses reported it took over two months to secure childcare delaying workforce reentry after permanent change-of-station (PCS) moves.

These findings demonstrate that military spouses exhibit strong labor force participation but face persistently high unemployment and underemployment driven by structural barriers, including frequent relocations, job mismatch, wage suppression, and limited access to affordable and timely childcare. While Island County specific military spouse employment data is not available, these national findings indicate that military spouse workforce dynamics impact the local labor supply and represent a meaningful opportunity for targeted workforce strategies, employer engagement, and supportive policies.

### Jobs that Align with the Skills of Island County's workforce

Island County's employment base is concentrated in sectors that typically require a mix of postsecondary credentials, on-the-job training, and military experience; however, wage levels in many sectors remain below county living-wage thresholds.

A significant share of employment in the county is associated with Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, which supports military, defense-related civilian, and government jobs that typically require specialized training, technical skills, and security credentials.

Employment data published by the Washington State Employment Security Department show that Island County's largest employment sectors include government, health care and social assistance, accommodation and food services, retail trade, and construction.

Job demand is strongest in sectors that provide essential public services, healthcare delivery, and infrastructure support, including government, healthcare, and construction, which represent a substantial share of total employment. In contrast, accommodation and food services and retail trade account for a large volume of jobs but are more heavily weighted toward entry-level and lower-wage positions.

# Evaluation: Specific Performance Measures

## Goal 3: Workforce Development Metrics

### Jobs that Align with the Skills of Island County's workforce, Continued

Higher-wage employment in Island County is most concentrated in government and defense-related civilian occupations, healthcare professions requiring licensure or advanced credentials, skilled trades and construction roles with specialization or supervisory responsibility, and professional and technical occupations.

Accommodation and food services and retail trade, while significant sources of employment, include a high share of jobs that do not consistently meet local living-wage thresholds, limiting long-term income stability for many workers.

These conditions suggest that workforce development efforts in Island County must address not only whether residents can access jobs, but whether available jobs fully utilize local skills and provide pathways to higher wages and career advancement.

**Sources:** Blue Star Families. 2024 Military Family Lifestyle Survey: Spouse Employment and Child Care Comprehensive Report.

[https://bluestarfam.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/BSF\\_MFLS24\\_Comp\\_Report\\_Spouse\\_Emp.pdf](https://bluestarfam.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/BSF_MFLS24_Comp_Report_Spouse_Emp.pdf)

Department of Defense / Military OneSource. 2024 Survey of Active Duty Spouses.

<https://download.militaryonesource.mil/12038/MOS/Presentations/2024-active-duty-spouse-survey-full-briefing.pdf>

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<https://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/Home/Index>

U.S. Census Bureau – American Community Survey S1501 (5-Year Estimates)

<https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST5Y2023.S1501>

Washington State Education Research & Data Center. High School Graduate Outcomes.

<https://erdc.wa.gov/publications-and-reports/high-school-graduate-outcomes>

Washington State Employment Security Department. Island County Profile.

<https://esd.wa.gov/jobs-and-training/labor-market-information/reports-and-research/labor-market-county-profiles/island-county-profile>

# Evaluation: Specific Performance Measures

## Goal 4: Climate Resiliency Metrics

### Number of public information events regarding required adaptations to sea-level rise

For the period of June 1, 2024, to December 31, 2025, Island County conducted a series of public information events specifically addressing sea-level rise (SLR) and coastal adaptation. These efforts were primarily driven by the 2025 Comprehensive Plan Update and the development of its new Climate Resiliency Sub-Element.

Based on publicly noticed workshops, community meetings, and formal comment opportunities documented in County planning records, there were a minimum of seven (7) distinct public events or event series focused on sea-level rise and coastal adaptation during this period.

These included targeted climate resiliency workshops hosted by the Planning Department, as well as countywide draft review meetings and a formal public comment period associated with release of the draft Climate Element.

In 2025, the County held a series of review meetings to present the Climate Element, which includes specific policies for sea-level rise adaptation (e.g., Policy CL 3.3 regarding shoreline resilience). See **Table 9** for review meeting dates, locations, and topics.

**Table 9. Comprehensive Plan Climate Element Meeting Dates, Locations, Topics**

Date	Location	Primary Focus
January 15, 2025	Oak Harbor (The Center)	Climate & Natural Resources Drafts
January 20, 2025	South Whidbey (Clinton Hall)	Coastal Resilience & SLR Policies
January 24, 2025	Camano (County Annex)	Shoreline Adaptation & SLR
December 10, 2025	Virtual / County-wide	Launch of 60-day Comment Period for SLR Policies

### Number of public information events regarding wildfires and wildfire smoke

Island County conducted multiple public-facing events and engagement activities addressing wildfire risk, wildfire smoke, and extreme heat during the reporting period. These activities supported both climate planning and emergency preparedness objectives.

Documented events included a Planning Commission workshop focused on extreme heat and wildfire smoke (November 1, 2024), the Camano Safety & Preparedness Fair (August 23, 2025), and an extended public survey process supporting updates to the Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) and the 2026 Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan.

In addition to discrete events, Island County maintained ongoing outreach through preparedness programs such as Island County Ready Neighbors and Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training, which include wildfire preparedness and suppression modules.

# Evaluation: Specific Performance Measures

## Goal 4: Climate Resiliency Metrics

### Number of events for business disaster preparedness

Island County organized or promoted a minimum of four (4) targeted training events specifically relevant to business continuity, disaster recovery, and post-event facility safety. These events were supplemented by ongoing business-oriented preparedness resources.

Business-focused and business-relevant preparedness activities during this period included the Island County Emergency Preparedness Fair, Community Points of Distribution Exercise, ATC-20: Post-Earthquake Safety Evaluation of Buildings, FEMA P-2055: Post-Disaster Building Safety Evaluation Guidance, Camano Safety & Preparedness Fair, and MGT 415: Disaster Recovery in Rural Jurisdictions. These activities addressed business continuity planning, post-disaster safety evaluation, and recovery readiness for employers and facility operators.

### Communications sent to businesses and residents regarding climate resiliency

During the reporting period, Island County used a combination of formal legal notices, digital platforms, newsletters, and public surveys to communicate climate resiliency requirements and planning efforts to residents and businesses.

Communications were primarily associated with development of the Climate Resiliency Sub-Element of the Comprehensive Plan and included notices for climate workshops, promotion of the County's Climate Resiliency Explorer StoryMap, publication of draft Climate Element policies, and a 60-day public comment period launched on December 10, 2025.

Ongoing messaging also occurred through commissioner newsletters, GovDelivery announcements, and hazard mitigation surveys soliciting public input on vulnerable areas and climate risks.

### Number of local ordinances reviewed and amended to create incentives for forest, wetland, and farmland conservation

In alignment with the 2025 Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update, Island County reviewed and advanced three (3) major legislative vehicles that strengthened incentives for conservation of forests, wetlands, and farmlands during the reporting period. These actions included adoption of updated Countywide Planning Policies, review and amendment of Critical Areas regulations, and development of new conservation incentives within the draft Climate Element of the Comprehensive Plan. Together, these measures emphasize compact development, stewardship-based conservation, and protection of high-value natural resource lands. In addition, Island County reaffirmed existing incentive programs such as the Open Space Tax Act (RCW 84.34) and the Conservation Futures Fund, which provide tax-based and acquisition-based tools for long-term land conservation.

# Evaluation: Specific Performance Measures

## Goal 4: Climate Resiliency Metrics

### Investments in public lands, reserves, and parks

Island County made substantial investments in public lands, reserves, and parks during the reporting period through the Conservation Futures Fund (CFF) and related maintenance and operations funding.

Notable investments included acquisition of shoreline and forest lands at Double Bluff Preserve and Holmes Harbor Community Forest, as well as funding for park maintenance and the Keystone Farm & Forest Preserve ADA Trail, which expanded public access to conserved lands. These investments followed a formal public application and review process and were approved by the Board of County Commissioners in mid-2025.

- Keystone Farm & Forest Preserve – ADA Trail  
Funding: \$127,000  
Purpose: ADA-accessible trail and public signage
- Double Bluff Preserve  
Funding: \$300,000  
Purpose: Shoreline and coastal forest conservation acquisition
- Holmes Harbor Community Forest  
Funding: \$250,000  
Purpose: Forest conservation and public access acquisition
- County Parks Maintenance  
Funding: \$100,000 (M&O)  
Purpose: Maintenance and operations

### Investments in blue and green infrastructure

Island County advanced investments in both blue infrastructure (water systems, stormwater management, and shoreline planning) and green infrastructure (natural lands, parks, and low-impact development). Key actions included issuance of a County RFP to update the Coordinated Water System Plan, addressing groundwater sustainability and seawater intrusion risks, and continued investment in natural lands that function as flood buffers, stormwater management systems, and habitat protection areas.

The draft 2025 Comprehensive Plan also formally integrated Low Impact Development (LID) and green infrastructure principles into capital facilities and utilities planning, prioritizing nature-based solutions such as rain gardens and permeable surfaces.

**Sources:** Island County Calendar. <https://www.islandcountywa.gov/Calendar.aspx>

## Evaluation: Specific Performance Measures

### Goal 4: Climate Resiliency Metrics

**Sources Continued:** Island County Climate Resiliency Workshop Notices (Fall 2024).  
<https://www.islandcountywa.gov/DocumentCenter/View/8081/Legal-Notice-Climate-Workshops>

Island County Coordinated Water System Plan (CWSP) RFP.  
<https://islandcountywa.gov/bids.aspx?bidid=30>

Island County Conservation Futures Fund.  
<https://www.islandcountywa.gov/353/Conservation-Futures-Program>

Island County Open Space Tax Act / Public Benefit Rating System (RCW 84.34)  
<https://www.islandcountywa.gov/596/Land-Use-Applications>

Island County Title 17. <https://www.islandcountywa.gov/DocumentCenter/View/141/Title-17-Zoning-PDF>

### Goal 5: Regional Collaboration Metrics

#### Increased communication between organizations, businesses, municipalities, counties

During the reporting period, the EDC strengthened countywide and regional communication among businesses, chambers, municipalities, and partner organizations. The EDC initiated the Chamber Alliance to improve coordination and information sharing across Island County's chambers of commerce, and CEDS implementation activities increased routine communication among participating organizations through structured partner engagement and shared reporting.

Between July 2024 and December 2025, business networking and engagement opportunities were delivered through local Chambers of Commerce, EDC programming, and entrepreneurial partner events. During the reporting period, the Oak Harbor, Coupeville, Freeland, Langley, Clinton, and Camano Chambers of Commerce collectively hosted an estimated 99 networking events, reaching approximately 1,665 attendees.

In addition, the EDC delivered 40 events during the reporting period, reaching 1,006 attendees through workshops, entrepreneur meetups, virtual coffee chats, and community engagement sessions. RAIN Catalysts hosted two additional events with approximately 40 attendees. In total, Island County businesses participated in more than 140 networking and business-support events, representing over 2,700 attendee engagements during the reporting period.

# Evaluation: Specific Performance Measures

## Goal 5: Regional Collaboration Metrics

### Increased collaboration between municipalities and county

From July 1, 2024, through December 31, 2025, intergovernmental collaboration between Island County and its three municipalities, Oak Harbor, Coupeville, and Langley, focused on infrastructure, public health services, and public safety systems. This collaboration is documented through interlocal agreements and reimbursable service arrangements.

### Shared Infrastructure and Public Works

Island County utilized reimbursable agreements under which the County performs work for municipalities at actual cost plus overhead, enabling smaller jurisdictions to access county equipment, labor, and technical capacity.

- Town of Coupeville Pavement Preservation (2024–2025): Interagency Reimbursable Agreement (RM-PW-2024-42) provided chip sealing and fog sealing for approximately 9,411 square yards of municipal roads, with project costs not to exceed \$120,000.
- City of Langley Water Replacement (2024–2025): The Edgecliff Drive Water Replacement Project coordinated county drainage improvements with municipal water main replacement to reduce total construction costs.
- City of Oak Harbor Hot Mix Asphalt Overlays: Reimbursable Agreement (RM-PW-2024-41) supported county-led asphalt paving within city limits, with a fiscal impact of \$285,000.

### Public Health and Emergency Services

A contract model allows Island County to serve as the administrative hub for state-funded public health services across municipal boundaries.

- Consolidated Public Health Services (2025): Contract No. CLH32052 (Amendments 6, 7, and 9) supports shared management of WIC Nutrition Services, Foundational Public Health Services, and immunization programs. Amendment 9 increased the shared allocation to \$6,235,865.
- Emergency Dispatch (E-911) Professional Development: Contract No. E25-056 (RM-BOCC-2024-411) funded a Professional Development Coordinator serving the integrated E-911 system used by Oak Harbor, Coupeville, and Langley.

### Shared Social Services and Housing

- Mental Health Diversion in Jail (2025): Contract No. K8223 with the Health Care Authority provides mental health services for individuals from all municipal jurisdictions housed at the county facility.
- Coordinated Homeless Grant: Contract No. 26-46108-12 directs state funds through the County for rental assistance and emergency motel vouchers countywide, including Camano and Whidbey communities.

# Evaluation: Specific Performance Measures

## Goal 5: Regional Collaboration Metrics

### Regional Economic Coordination

- Rural County Economic Development (RCED) Grants: County-administered RCED funding in 2024 supported municipal and port infrastructure, including the Port of Coupeville Wharf Restoration (Amendment No. 3, \$870,804, project extended through December 31, 2024) and the City of Oak Harbor Marina Boatyard project (extended through December 31, 2024). In 2025, RCED awards included \$112,500 to the Port of Coupeville for port-related infrastructure improvements and \$2,000,000 to the Opportunity Council / Shelter Resources, Inc. to support infrastructure development for affordable workforce housing serving households at or below 120% of Area Median Income (AMI), addressing critical water, sewer, and access constraints that affect workforce availability and economic stability.

### Legislative and Regional Governance

The Island County Council of Governments (COG), comprised of the three County Commissioners and municipal mayors or representatives, served as the primary forum for intergovernmental coordination. During the reporting period, the COG met 15 times to align priorities within the region.

### Number of SWISS meetings with Island County elected officials in attendance

From July 1, 2024, to December 31, 2025, the SWISS Regional Partnership (Snohomish, Whatcom, Island, Skagit, and San Juan Counties) scheduled five quarterly meetings. Island County elected officials, primarily the County Commissioners, are core members of the partnership and typically attend these sessions to coordinate on regional issues including broadband, behavioral health, and transportation.

### Number of regional meetings related to economic resiliency

Within Island County and the surrounding region, economic resiliency activities during the reporting period included ongoing collaboration among the EDC, ports, local governments, and regional partners to support infrastructure planning, funding applications, and coordinated economic development efforts.

As part of this broader regional collaboration, three (3) stakeholder meetings were convened specifically for CEDS monitoring, providing a formal forum to align data, document activity and inputs, and share information across the broad stakeholder community. In addition, the EDC contributed subject-matter expertise through participation in cross-regional and statewide economic development forums, including engagement with economic development associations, policy and legislative committees, and Washington State Department of Commerce Associate Development Organization best-practice forums.

# Evaluation: Specific Performance Measures

## Goal 5: Regional Collaboration Metrics

### Number of regional meetings related to workforce development

Island County maintained active participation in regional workforce development coordination through the Northwest Workforce Council (NWC) and the NW Education & Workforce Coalition.

#### Northwest Workforce Council

EDC participated in monthly NWC board and committee meetings addressing workforce alignment across Island, San Juan, Skagit, and Whatcom Counties. The NWC is a 19-member, business-majority board authorized under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, with representation from business, labor, education, economic development, and government.

#### NW Education & Workforce Coalition

The Coalition convenes twice annually to align K-12, postsecondary, and workforce partners across the same four-county region, with a focus on increasing postsecondary enrollment and connection to family-wage careers. EDC serves as an active partner and contributing member.

### Number of regional meetings related to transportation

Island County's regional transportation coordination is conducted through the Island Regional Transportation Planning Organization (IRTPO), the County's designated regional transportation planning body. The IRTPO includes Island County, the cities of Oak Harbor, Coupeville, and Langle, Port Districts, Island Transit, and WSDOT.

Both the policy-level Executive Board and the staff-level Technical Advisory Committee meet regularly. From July 2024 through December 2025, the IRTPO Executive Board is estimated to have convened 18 meetings on a monthly basis, supporting coordinated transportation planning, programming, and investment decisions.

**Sources:** Island County Agenda Center. <https://www.islandcountywa.gov/AgendaCenter>

Island County Council of Governments. <https://www.islandcountywa.gov/503/Council-of-Governments>

Island County Interlocal Agreements. <https://www.islandcountywa.gov/565/Interlocal-Agreements>

Island Regional Transportation Planning Organization (IRTPO). <https://www.islandcountywa.gov/488/Island-Regional-Transportation-Planning->

Northwest Workforce Council. Full Council Meetings & Events. <https://nwboard.org/events/category/full-council/list/>

NW Education & Workforce Coalition (NWESD). <https://www.nwesd.org/nw-workforce-coalition/>

SWISS Regional Partnership. Meeting Calendar. <https://whatcom.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx>



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## **CEDS Related Activities + Projects - July 2024 to December 2025**

### **Goal 1: Improve and develop critical resilient infrastructure.**

**1.11.3:** The EDC collaborated with Naval Air Station Whidbey Island to support Navy Region Northwest efforts in Washington State to reduce administrative barriers for home-based childcare providers, a key component of the military childcare system. This work supports potential increases in licensed childcare capacity in Island County.

**1.11.4:** The EDC distributed information on childcare funding opportunities to the local community, including Washington State childcare grant programs and the \$10,000 grant offered by the Whidbey Community Foundation to open new childcare centers on Whidbey Island.

### **Goal 2: Support existing local businesses and community assets, increase diversification, and promote Island County as an attractive business environment.**

**2.1.7:** The EDC provided ongoing, data-driven support to Island County to inform funding requests. During this reporting period, EDC provided economic impact data related to approximately \$5 million in disaster recovery needs for damaged marine infrastructure and is contracted to monitor the CEDS.

**2.2.1:** The EDC maintains an online collection of demographic and economic datasets compiled from the U.S. Census and other trusted sources, translating complex information into accessible, usable formats. This resource supports business attraction efforts, informs data-driven decision-making by small businesses, nonprofits, and local governments, and provides supporting data for loan applications, funding requests, and grant submissions.

**2.2.2:** The EDC continues to collaborate with San Juan, Skagit, and Whatcom County ADOs to identify opportunities to highlight NW Washington as a great place to do business.

**2.3.1:** The EDC conducted business outreach through digital channels, including social media and email, generating approximately 3,500 Facebook visits and more than 75,000 content views. The EDC also conducted direct outreach to more than 2,500 businesses through email communications and both in-person and virtual events. These efforts supported the identification of business challenges and workforce needs and informed follow-up assistance, referrals, advocacy, and business education that supported stabilization and growth.



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## **CEDS Related Activities + Projects - July 2024 to December 2025**

### **Goal 2: Support existing local businesses and community assets, increase diversification, and promote Island County as an attractive business environment.**

**2.3.2:** The EDC provided individualized advising on financing, business planning, operations, marketing, human resources, and cash-flow management, delivering one-on-one technical assistance to 107 businesses across multiple sectors. EDC-assisted businesses reported \$1.87 million in capital infusion in 2024 and \$943,410 in 2025, as well as 164 jobs supported in 2024 and an additional 111 jobs supported through Q3 2025, reflecting workforce retention and incremental expansion.

**2.3.4:** The EDC supported existing major employers and port partners by providing letters of support, participating in state-level advocacy on issues affecting the business environment, and contributing to strategy teams for local jurisdictions and cross-regional economic initiatives. These activities helped elevate employer priorities, inform policy discussions, and reinforce the economic role of major employers within Island County.

**2.3.6:** The EDC delivered 40 targeted workshops, educational presentations, and entrepreneurial meetups focused on business fundamentals, current economic conditions, and peer learning. Programming was designed to be agile and responsive to evolving business trends and needs, supporting ongoing business capacity building.

**2.6.1:** The EDC supported the entrepreneurship ecosystem by pursuing public, private, and philanthropic funding opportunities; strengthening relationships with state resources, local lenders, and philanthropic partners; expanding engagement on Camano Island through collaboration with a placemaking and makerspace focused nonprofit (Arrowhead Ranch); and supporting reinvigoration of a local lending program while sharing information about the Impact Investment Loan Program administered by the Whidbey Community Foundation.

**2.8.6:** The EDC supports the County Tourism Committee by serving as a nonvoting member of the tourism board, contributing coordination, information sharing, and economic development perspective.

**2.10:** The EDC continued to market and promote Whidbey Island Local Lending (WILL), worked with WILL leadership to support the local lending program, and delivered financial literacy workshops and technical training for businesses on Whidbey and Camano Islands throughout the year.



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## **CEDS Related Activities + Projects - July 2024 to December 2025**

### **Goal 3: Align quality education and skills training programs with employer needs and create living wage job opportunities in Island County.**

**3.2:** The EDC collaborated with workforce development councils, educational institutions, and employer partners to collect and share information on labor shortages, workforce participation barriers, and in-demand skills. This work included coordination and learning activities to better understand employer skill needs, training programs, and credentialing pathways, as well as facilitating early introductions and discussions to support future connections between businesses and training providers. In addition, the EDC worked with Naval Air Station Whidbey Island to explore skill translation and career pathway development for military service members transitioning to civilian employment, informing longer-term efforts to align workforce skills with living-wage opportunities.

### **Goal 4: Sustainably manage the natural beauty and resources of Island County.**

**4.7.1:** The EDC participated in the County's Comprehensive Plan update by contributing to the economic element, including development of goals and focus areas, and by participating on climate and housing planning teams and advisory panels. This ensured that economic conditions, business considerations, and workforce needs were reflected in long-term planning.

**4.8.1:** The EDC identified business continuity and disaster preparedness as emerging needs and initiated outreach to disaster response and emergency management organizations, informing the development of future workshops and educational content focused on business resilience and preparedness.

**4.8.2:** The EDC identified collaboration on business preparedness as a future focus area and will plan a collaborative learning session for chambers of commerce and local service providers in 2026.



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## **CEDS Related Activities + Projects - July 2024 to December 2025**

### **Goal 5: Deepen collaboration and coordination between Island County and regional partners.**

**5.1.1:** The EDC provides leadership in regional and statewide economic development forums by contributing subject-matter expertise, facilitating peer learning, and participating in policy discussions. This includes leadership participation on local committees such as the Oak Harbor Economic Development Steering Committee and the Coupeville Historic Waterfront Association’s Economic Vitality Committee, as well as engagement with professional organizations including the Washington Economic Development Association (including service on legislative committees), the International Economic Development Council, and a local chapter of the Society for Human Resource Management. The EDC also contributes leadership at cross-regional economic development summits and Washington State Department of Commerce Associate Development Organization best practices forums.

**5.1.2:** EDC maintains active working relationships with regional economic development organizations across Washington State, including Economic Development Alliance of Skagit County, Economic Development Council of San Juan County, Thurston County Economic Development Council, Jefferson County Economic Development Council, Clallam County Economic Development Council, and Port of Bellingham. EDC also serves as a facilitator for Washington State Department of Commerce ADO Best Practices meetings, supporting structured peer exchange and shared learning among ADOs statewide.

**5.1.3:** EDC worked with ports to provide data supporting planning and decision-making, coordinated and utilized port-generated data to develop economic impact reports to support County funding applications, contributed letters of support for grant requests, and fostered relationships to enhance coordinated business support.

**5.2.1:** The EDC participated in cross-county economic development discussions with neighboring jurisdictions to explore opportunities for coordinated business support and shared economic strategies.

**5.3.1:** The EDC engaged with regional partners and creative economy stakeholders to support cross-county collaboration related to arts- and culture-based economic development.



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## **CEDS Related Activities + Projects in July 2024 to December 2025**

### **Goal 1: Improve and develop critical resilient infrastructure.**

**1.1:** Completed a comprehensive study of wastewater infrastructure to determine where alternative systems, such as Large Onsite Sewage Systems (LOSS) and Step Systems, to single family onsite systems can benefit and support housing and climate resiliency. Now developing related code update and state advocacy plans to implement findings.

**1.1:** Island County locally funded a comprehensive report updating the Coordinated Water System Plan (CWSP), which will provide updated technical guidance for community water systems. The report and CWSP comprehensive recommendations were completed November 2025.

**1.1:** Launched pollution identification and correction (PIC) program and coordinated enforcement case review to address aging septic infrastructure and make corrections in areas of high pollution.

**1.1:** Updated surface water quality monitoring program with evidence-based quality assurance standards.

**1.1:** Formed cross-department case review team and continued our on-site operations and maintenance efforts, addressing and correcting many failed on-site septic systems in sensitive areas.

**1.1:** Secured funding to retain consultant for sanitary code update in 2026, following initial scoping and draft language development.

**1.3:** Island County Department of Emergency Management are in the process of updating the Hazard Mitigation Plan and will use information from the Comprehensive Plan once drafts are released.

**1.9:** Public Health supported STEPS in the development and adoption of a 5-year strategic plan. The plan includes actionable goals and strategies to increase STEPS operational and financial sustainability, as well as ongoing efforts/investments in staff- and community-centered culture of care. The plan is set to begin in 2026.

**1.9:** Mobile service vehicle buildout completed, and initial integrated mobile services provided to community.



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## **CEDS Related Activities + Projects in July 2024 to December 2025**

### **Goal 1: Improve and develop critical resilient infrastructure.**

**1.9:** Multiple advocacy actions undertaken to support WhidbeyHealth, including Medicaid advocacy and Rural Health Transformation Plan (RHTP) coordinated advocacy for essential funding.

**1.9:** WA-DOH Community Health Workers (CHW) training program continues to provide essential training for local CHW.

**1.10:** New proposed housing and zoning codes to incentivize affordable housing. Island County Board of County Commissioners to consider adopting regulations in beginning of 2026.

**1.10:** Board of County Commissioners to consider updated zoning codes that supports inclusive and mixed use housing in beginning of 2026.

**1.10:** Proposed zoning updates to ADU code to be considered by Board of County Commissioners during Comprehensive Plan update during beginning of 2026.

**1.10:** Island County permitting departments met monthly with representatives from the Skagit Island County Builders Association (SICBA) to discuss improvements and updates to the permitting process.

### **Goal 2: Support existing local businesses and community assets, increase diversification, and promote Island County as an attractive business environment.**

**2.1:** Island County Planning and Community Development department continues to improve upon consistent training and retention of staff. Standard Operating Procedures have been put in place to enable staff to review and process permits in a consistent and efficient manner.

**2.1:** Island County permitting departments coordinate and ensure that policy direction comes from the Board of County Commissioners for consistent direction. Standard Operation Procedures are also in place for staff to follow that direction.

**2.1:** Island County Planning and Community Development department continues to improve upon consistent training and retention of staff. Standard Operating Procedures have been put in place to enable staff to review and process permits in a consistent and efficient manner.



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## **CEDS Related Activities + Projects in July 2024 to December 2025**

### **Goal 2: Support existing local businesses and community assets, increase diversification, and promote Island County as an attractive business environment.**

**2.1:** Island County permitting departments coordinate and ensure that policy direction comes from the Board of County Commissioners for consistent direction. Standard Operation Procedures are also in place for staff to follow that direction.

**2.1:** Public Health developed and distributed several educational campaigns related to septic permitting, maintenance, water systems, and our food program. The Department of Natural Resources developed and shared educational guidance on shore friendly development and septic systems through brochures, community workshops, newsletters, and other approaches.

**2.1:** Options for expedited, transparent permitting process for green, sustainable projects, especially those related to affordable or worker housing to be considered by Board of County Commissioners for future code updates.

**2.1:** County events code with a goal of simplifying and modifying to account for small businesses to be considered by Board of County Commissioners for future code updates.

**2.1:** Improved equity in food fee schedule to support food vendors, temporary establishments, and farm stand permitting, and developed several educational guidance documents.

**2.5:** Public Health supported initial scoping for additional commissary kitchens to support value-added food processing and mobile food units.

**2.7:** Island County currently provides an online mapping system, ICGeoMap, that includes geographical information layers for zoning and critical areas. This could be used for identification of buildable lands that are appropriately zoned for industrial, commercial, residential, or RAID development in the future.

### **Goal 3: Align quality education and skills training programs with employer needs and create living wage job opportunities in Island County.**

**3.2:** Public Health offered internship/volunteer opportunities to Skagit Valley College Nursing students to work alongside Public Health nursing staff.



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## **CEDS Related Activities + Projects in July 2024 to December 2025**

### **Goal 4: Sustainably manage the natural beauty and resources of Island County.**

**4.1:** Launch pollution identification and control (PIC) program for improved tracking and correction of nonpoint source pollution in key areas for shellfish harvesting and recreation

**4.1:** Current Shoreline Master Program and Flood Damage Prevention ordinance restricts development in flood prone and critical areas. Further restrictions would need to be considered by the Board of County Commissioners in the future 2030 update to the Shoreline Master Program.

**4.1:** Sea level rise and rainfall project modeling and historical data to inform short- and long-term decisions and policymaking would need to be considered in the future updates to shoreline and critical areas codes.

**4.1:** Subcontracted with Puget Sound resiliency consultant to map all privately-owned septic systems in the shoreline that are vulnerable to sea level rise; these results will be arranged in a prioritization matrix of several factors, and will be utilized for homeowner education and outreach, and technical and financial assistance in 2026.

**4.1:** Completed innovative wastewater infrastructure study examining incentives and regulatory updates for community systems in shoreline areas. Working towards implementation.

**4.1:** Shared evidence-based health promotion information for wildfire smoke and extreme heat with vulnerable communities.

**4.1:** Education and outreach to PWS has increased seawater intrusion monitoring compliance from 25% in October 2024 to 63 % through September 2025.

**4.1:** Climate Resiliency Element draft is a part of the Comprehensive Plan update and will be considered by the Board of County Commissioners for adoption at the beginning of 2026.

**4.2:** Shore Friendly Program, Pollution, Identification, and Correction (PIC) program, on-site outreach.

**4.3:** Recent proposed updates to the Public Benefit Rating System (PBRS) code around forest practices and stewardship. The Board of County Commissioners plans to re-evaluate the PBRS program in the next three to five years.



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## **CEDS Related Activities + Projects in July 2024 to December 2025**

### **Goal 4: Sustainably manage the natural beauty and resources of Island County.**

**4:3:** Completed a review of the Conservation Futures Fund program to provide more equitable access as well as climate resilience elements such as the additional use of conserved land for stormwater parks.

**4.3:** The Island County Planning Department is required to update the Critical Areas Ordinance in 2026 and could consider the development of a wetland mitigation bank at that time.

**4.3:** Island County Comprehensive Plan and Housing Element updates considered impacts on affordable housing, with a focus on urban growth, preserving rural lands for forest, wetlands, and agriculture.

**4.4:** Shared several communications campaigns via social media and health newsletters that promoted access to green and blue spaces, as well as evidence-based health benefits.

**4.5:** Island County protections, such as riparian areas, are included in the current Critical Areas Ordinance and will be addressed further in the 2026 update to the Critical Areas Ordinance.

**4.6:** Expanded Conservation Futures Fund (CFF) project criteria to specifically consider public access to green spaces and waterfronts, as a social driver of health, particularly for low-income communities.

**4.6:** CFF criteria expanded to also promote accessibility in trail design, access to students, and access to diverse communities for recreational opportunities. Adopted projects in 2025 reflect these criteria.

**4.6:** Funding provided to Freund Marsh.

**4.7:** Public Health provided comprehensive feedback on all Comprehensive Plan Goals and Policies, in collaboration with community advisory boards. Island County Planning has addressed the population growth in the Countywide Planning Policies.

**4.8:** The Department of Emergency Management (DEM) and PHEPR continue to work with businesses and community partners to share information about preparedness best practices. Both groups also provide training opportunities and exercises.



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## **CEDS Related Activities + Projects in July 2024 to December 2025**

### **Goal 5: Deepen collaboration and coordination between Island County and regional partners.**

**5.4:** Public Health and DEM maintain ongoing regional collaborations with Regional Emergency Response Coordinator (RERC) at Snohomish County, as well as the Northwest Healthcare Response Network.

**5.4:** Local efforts focus on CERT training for community members and groups, as well as tabletop exercises (TTX) for public health staff and healthcare-adjacent community partners.

**5.4:** Public Health recently requested an Island County Agriculture Profile from USDA, as well as Island County-specific Agriculture Viability Survey results. The Agriculture Viability Survey was completed on the regional level, allowing us to compare results across our region.

**5.4:** Public Health is also actively working on a Food Security Report for Island County, which reflects many of the same elements captured in the Health Trust Food Security Report for Skagit County.



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## **CEDS Related Activities + Projects in July 2024 to December 2025**

### **Goal 1: Improve and develop critical resilient infrastructure.**

**1.1:** Drilled new well for our water service area on Keystone Hill. This is near our best performing well and we know it is in a good location as not to be susceptible to sea water intrusion.

**1.1:** Finishing a consolidation study for Sarkaisian Springs water district. Based on the results, we may be including this system into the Town's. They suffer from seawater intrusion and old leaking infrastructure.

**1.1:** Received a \$550,000 grant from the Department of Ecology to replace our water and wastewater plant telemetry. This allows the plants to communicate with our employees, even after hours, so we can keep on top of alarms and potential problems. This work is expected to be complete by June of 2026.

### **Goal 3: Align quality education and skills training programs with employer needs and create living wage job opportunities in Island County.**

**3.2:** Hired our first employee, a Public Works employee, in partnership with WorkSource. The employee receives a living wage and medical benefits.

### **Goal 4: Sustainably manage the natural beauty and resources of Island County.**

**4.1:** Applied for two grants to install fast charge EV stations. Unfortunately we did not receive either grant but we did make improvements in electrical infrastructure to be ready for the next grant. We are looking for new grants to apply for in 2026.

**4.2:** See Goal 1.1 progress on the well study as pertains to seawater intrusion.

**4.2:** Conducted a public education program in the Rec Hall with Department of Natural Resources, Fish and Wildlife, and Coupeville's Neighborhood Emergency Teams. The program covered how to make your property and home more fireproof in increasing temperatures and wildfire exposure.

**4.3:** Traded Whidbey Camano Land Trust a piece of land out of town for five acres of woods at the entrance to town. We are including this property in a new urban growth area in this Comprehensive Plan. The forest is protected from development for wildlife habitat, urban greening, and beautification to town entrance on Broadway.



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## **CEDS Related Activities + Projects in July 2024 to December 2025**

### **Goal 4: Sustainably manage the natural beauty and resources of Island County.**

**4.6:** Established a Parks and Recreation Committee who spent a year developing needs and priorities for recreation improvements in the Town.

**4.6:** Developed a capital facilities plan for Parks and Recreation.

**4.6:** Approved \$50,000 in the 2026 budget to develop a full Parks and Recreation Plan.

**4.8:** Taught the “Firewise” program. This program was open to all of Central Whidbey. Approximately 30 people in attendance.

**4.8:** Partnered with Coupeville Historic Waterfront Association and Central Whidbey Fire and Rescue to do a real-time fire drill on Front Street. This street has many historic, wooden building, built very close together. It was attended by business owners and many new firefighters.



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## **CEDS Related Activities + Projects in July 2024 to December 2025**

### **Goal 1: Improve and develop critical resilient infrastructure.**

**1.1:** Langley Infrastructure Project (LIP). The LIP is a set of 14 projects to extend sewer service, stormwater service and replace aging/failing water and sewer infrastructure. The project supports the following goals:

- Improve utility integrity, reliability, & maintainability
- Improve water quality
- Improve Public Safety
- Improve the health of the Puget Sound

**1.1:** LIP implementation began in 2025 and will conclude in 2026. The LIP is funded through a combination of an RCED grant, a municipal bond, a low interest loan from the WA St Dept of Commerce (PWB) and utility reserves. For more information:

[https://www.langleywa.org/departments/public\\_works\\_department/2019\\_bond\\_info.php](https://www.langleywa.org/departments/public_works_department/2019_bond_info.php)

**1.1:** In 2024, the City of Langley completed a Lead Service Line Inventory. In 2021, the US EPA implemented the Lead and Copper Rule Revision which included a requirement for all public water systems to complete an inventory verifying that both public and private water service lines are not made of lead. The City of Langley completed the inventory, and no lead service lines were discovered within the City of Langley Water System. However, the City of Langley has identified that all or a portion of 170 of 840 water service lines that connect buildings or other structures to the water main are made from galvanized material and may have absorbed lead. The EPA has defined these service lines as galvanized requiring replacement. The City mailed notification to each property having either the public or private service pipe identified as galvanized and provided an interactive map to assist residents.

**1.7:** The City conducted a Community Solar feasibility study for installing solar panels with backup battery storage at City Hall and the Langley Library. On the basis of this study, the City applied for and received a local community project grant from the WA State Legislature to retrofit the City Hall roof to support solar panels.

**1.7:** The City was awarded grant to replace and retrofit Langley City Hall roof to support solar panels and on site battery storage. Project planning commenced with the 2026 budget cycle and construction will complete by June 2027.



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## **CEDS Related Activities + Projects in July 2024 to December 2025**

### **Goal 1: Improve and develop critical resilient infrastructure.**

**Goal 1.7:** The City was awarded \$250,000 Grid Modernization Grant from the Washington State Department of Commerce's Clean Energy Fund. The grant will fund a desktop analysis of microgrid feasibility at 15 sites in Langley, as well as a full feasibility study for three of those sites. Five sites have already been selected for the initial analysis, with an additional ten under discussion. The first five sites for consideration for microgrids are:

- Brookhaven Senior Affordable Housing Development
- Upper Langley Affordable Cohousing neighborhood
- Fifth Street Commons mixed-generation neighborhood
- South Whidbey Community Center (on School District property)
- Fairgrounds operated by the Port of South Whidbey

**1.7:** City staff are partnering with an engineering team from Maul Foster & Alongi and Cascadia Renewables, along with a project management and community engagement team from For the People and Site Story.

**1.10:** In 2025 the City of Langley applied for, received and passed through Connecting Housing to Infrastructure Program (CHIP) funding to:

- Heron Park, a Habitat for Humanity affordable housing development (7 units) for \$110,875.
- Generations Place, an Island Roots Housing affordable housing project (14 units) for \$256,408, which broke ground in October 2025.

### **Goal 4: Sustainably manage the natural beauty and resources of Island County.**

**4.1:** The City of Langley established GMA mandated comprehensive plan climate element that addresses resilience and population growth.

**4.6:** The City applied for and received grant funding to conduct a study and create a refined model of city aquifers. Study and modeling to be completed in 2026.



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## **CEDS Related Activities + Projects in July 2024 to December 2025**

### **Goal 1: Improve and develop critical resilient infrastructure.**

**1.1:** Partnering with Island County to create a 20-year longterm interlocal planning and implementation effort to address new water and wastewater infrastructure to reduce or eliminate septic and well systems.

**1.1:** Partnering with Island County to create a group which will study and plan for a 20-40 year implementation to replace current septic and well systems with modern water and wastewater infrastructure.

**1.2:** Partnering with Whidbey Telecom to expand fiber inside City limits, especially to the new Fire Station in the SW corner and the Public Works facility in the north corner of the City.

**1.3:** The City of Oak Harbor Fire Department (OHFD) is partnering with all other fire districts in the county to provide mutual aid for all 911 calls for fire/ambulance/medic service to increase response to calls and decrease time to emergency scenes.

**1.3:** The City supports and partners with ICOM 911 to update communication towers, interoperability of devices, and the emergency network.

**1.3:** The City is working to address North Whidbey's emergency supply of water.

**1.5:** City Council adopted its Active Transportation Plan in April 2024.

**1.5:** The NE 7th Avenue Reconstruction Project was completed in 2025. It added a sidewalk, flashing crosswalk and a bike lane with enhanced markings.

**1.5:** The Swantown Road from Fort Nugent to Heller Street Overlay Project included adding a separated bike lane.

**1.6:** City Council adopted the Comprehensive Safety Action Plan for Island County in May 2025.

**1.6:** Applied for a \$4.8 million Safe Streets for All grant to enhance the safety along Highway 20 at six critical intersections.



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## **CEDS Related Activities + Projects in July 2024 to December 2025**

### **Goal 1: Improve and develop critical resilient infrastructure.**

**1.7:** Received a grant from Puget Sound Energy to install 12 EV charging stations at its Public Works Shop. The City is also exploring grants from the State to install EV charging stations for public charging in business sectors of the City.

**1.10:** Partnered with Opportunity Council in 2024 and 2025 to apply for a Connecting Housing to Infrastructure Program grant from the State to support the Mulberry Village Affordable Housing Project.

**1.10:** The City and Island County jointly partnered with Opportunity Council to provide a Rural County Economic Development grant to support the Mulberry Village Affordable Housing Project.

**1.11:** Updated building codes to make it easier for child care centers to open. Five new child care centers have opened since July 2024.

### **Goal 2: Support existing local businesses and community assets, increase diversification, and promote Island County as an attractive business environment.**

**2.3:** Partnered with Greater Oak Harbor Chamber of Commerce and Oak Harbor Main Street Association to support local businesses. The Mayor hosts “The Wright Blend”, a monthly roundtable, at a different local business each month.

**Goal 2.3 + 3.3:** Assisted a new business owner navigate the necessary paperwork and permits to open a bilingual preschool in Downtown Oak Harbor.

**Goal 2.4:** Adopted an Economic Development Action Plan in June 2025.

**Goal 2.8 + 5.4:** The OHFD offered a monthly CPR/AED certification course for anyone in the public.

**Goal 2.8 + 5.4:** The OHFD provided Emergency Management (ICS 300, ICS 400 & G191) courses to all fire districts on the island and specialty courses for elected officials.



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## **CEDS Related Activities + Projects in July 2024 to December 2025**

### **Goal 3: Align quality education and skills training programs with employer needs and create living wage job opportunities in Island County.**

**3.1:** The City of Oak Harbor Police Department is a member of the Regional Skagit County & Island County Drug Enforcement Unit which also provides training opportunities for officers around the region.

**3.3:** The City of Oak Harbor Fire Department (OHFD) transitioned from a Paid On-Call fire department to a Full-Time Career staff department.

**3.3:** OHFD is offering a 12-week Firefighting Academy open to all fire districts in the region. Participants earn the State-certified Firefighter 1 designation and Hazmat Operations certification.

**3.3:** OHFD is providing an 8-week Officer Development School for its staff to grow their skills and abilities.

**3.3:** The Communication Department hired two college interns in 2025 to increase their knowledge and awareness of government jobs.

**3.5:** The City of Oak Harbor Marina offered classes for preschool to middle school students on fish rearing and the marine environment featuring its Coho Salmon Rearing program.

### **Goal 4: Sustainably manage the natural beauty and resources of Island County.**

**4.1:** Incorporated a Climate Element into its Comprehensive Plan Update per Growth Management Act requirements.

**4.5:** Released 30,000 salmon fry in May 2025 as part of its annual salmon rearing program. Now in the third year of the program, Coho salmon are returning.

**4.7 + 1.10:** Working with Island County to update its Comprehensive Plan to include an additional 5,500 housing units over the next 20 years.

**4.7:** Updating comprehensive plans for water, wastewater, roads, and other infrastructure to support population growth and in-migration.

**4.7:** The City of Oak Harbor Development Services Department is updating housing and zoning codes to support population growth and in-migration.

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## **CEDS Related Activities + Projects in July 2024 to December 2025**

### **Goal 1: Improve and develop critical resilient infrastructure.**

**1.2:** The Port's broadband project is currently on hold as federal grants availability changed after January 2025. The Port is continuing to work with partners to move this forward.

**1.2:** Continued to support and advocate for improved cellular service.

**1.2:** Allowed Whidbey Telecom to use Port land to store materials during construction.

**1.4:** Supported increasing reliable ferry service.

**1.7:** Replaced the fuel tanks at the Port of Coupeville.

**1.7 + 4.1:** Spaces have been identified for 12 EV chargers to be put in at the Greenbank Farm. Engineering is completed and they are now working with PSE.

**1.10:** Actively looking at the Port's property, easements, and water allowances to see if there is a possibility to add workforce housing to its property.

### **Goal 2: Support existing local businesses and community assets, increase diversification, and promote Island County as an attractive business environment.**

**2.3:** Continued to support Port tenants and businesses.

**2.7:** Actively looking at the Port's property, easements, and water allowances to see if there is a possibility to add a multi-use facility to its property.

**2.7:** Continued to use social media and its newsletter to promote and advertise opening of rented spaces.

**2.8:** Continued to work with Island County to a implement noxious weeds program in the wetlands of the Greenbank Farm.

### **Goal 4: Sustainably manage the natural beauty and resources of Island County.**

**4.1:** The Port is actively looking for funding to raise the Wharf. The first step was to get the project added to Island County's list of areas under areas that are in danger of flooding.

### **Goal 5: Deepen collaboration and coordination between Island County and regional partners.**

**5.1:** Port staff and Commissioners continued to participate in WPPA.



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## **CEDS Related Activities + Projects in July 2024 to December 2025**

### **Goal 1: Improve and develop critical resilient infrastructure.**

**1.4:** Continued to work on permitting and design for the potential passenger only ferry terminal and dock. Funding has been secured to permit, and build floats. Additional funding is needed for terminal modifications.

### **Goal 5: Deepen collaboration and coordination between Island County and regional partners.**

**5.1:** Continued to participate with the WPPA. Commissioner Ng is serving as president of that state-wide association in 2026.



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## **CEDS Related Activities + Projects in July 2024 to December 2025**

### **Goal 1: Improve and develop critical resilient infrastructure.**

**1.6:** Continued to work with County planners on the Clinton Sub Area Plan to be included in the revised Comprehensive Plan. Traffic calming measures on State Highway 525 will be necessary to foster any significant growth in Clinton.



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## **CEDS Related Activities + Projects in July 2024 to December 2025**

### **Goal 1: Improve and develop critical resilient infrastructure.**

**1.10:** Started construction of Generations Place apartments. The slabs have been poured for the first two buildings, with an estimated nine month construction period. We hope to have tenants moved in by the end of 2026.

**1.10:** Acquired the house next door to Generations Place, which will be integrated into the project.



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## **CEDS Related Activities + Projects in July 2024 to December 2025**

### **Goal 1: Improve and develop critical resilient infrastructure.**

**1.4:** Island Transit continues to advocate for consistent reliable ferry services.

**1.5:** Q1 2026 Island Transit commences the agency's first 20-Year Long-Range Transit Plan. The agency will work with residents, officials from local jurisdictions, stakeholders, and other Transit staff to develop a new Long-Range Transit Plan. The Plan will assess, contextualize, and develop upon past and current plans, federal, state, and local objectives, as well as implementation and funding strategies. The Scope of Services will focus on developing a comprehensive long-range service plan, inclusive of budget projections and establishing meaningful performance metrics. These elements will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of ongoing service delivery and assess Island Transit's capacity to adapt to evolving transportation dynamics within its service area over the next two decades.

**1.5:** Island Transit continues to support the implementation of the IRTPO Update 2024-2028.



**Website:** <https://whidbeycamanoislands.com>

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## **CEDS Related Activities + Projects in July 2024 to December 2025**

### **Goal 2: Support existing local businesses and community assets, increase diversification, and promote Island County as an attractive business environment.**

**2.8:** Worked closely with Whidbey Island Grown (WIG), the Organic Farm School, and local food and beverage producers to promote and elevate our island's agricultural community.

**2.8:** Collaborated on joint campaigns such as Eat Local Month, and the creation of engaging blogs, photography, and stories that highlight local farms, products, and makers.

**2.8:** Two of our feature stories on the Organic Farm School were picked up by national media, expanding awareness of Whidbey's sustainable agriculture beyond the region.

**2.8:** Connected travel writers and content creators with WIG for fresh produce deliveries, and provide detailed information on farm stands, markets, and restaurants that feature locally sourced ingredients. Through these efforts, we help visitors and residents alike experience and support Whidbey Island's vibrant local food economy.

**2.8:** Developed a marketing strategy places strong emphasis on celebrating and promoting local ingredients and products that define Whidbey and Camano Islands' sense of place. We regularly feature the island's farmers, fishers, ranchers, and beverage makers through storytelling, photography, and digital outreach.

**2.8:** Each month, we produced 5–10 new blog posts and related social media campaigns that highlight local food producers, seasonal harvests, and the restaurants that bring these ingredients to life. Visiting writers and media itineraries are intentionally designed to include farm-to-table and sea-to-table dining experiences, offering firsthand insight into the islands' sustainable food culture.

**2.8:** In November and December 2025, our marketing campaign focused on visiting the islands for unique, locally made gifts — an invitation to explore artisan studios, galleries, farm stores, and holiday markets.

**2.8:** In November and December 2025, ran bi-monthly campaigns across multiple media platforms, including broadcast, print, digital, and PR. It features four full-page magazine ads, earned media placements, and guest appearances on regional news programs, all reinforcing the message that the best holiday gifts come from the islands themselves.

**2.8:** Promoted events hosted by groups such as Sound Water Stewards, Whidbey Island Conservation District, and other local nonprofits dedicated to marine and land conservation.



Whidbey and Camano  
**ISLANDS**  
Washington State - USA

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## **CEDS Related Activities + Projects in July 2024 to December 2025**

### **Goal 2: Support existing local businesses and community assets, increase diversification, and promote Island County as an attractive business environment.**

**2.8:** Our guides, Trails off the Beaten Path and Culture and Heritage Guide, served to provide information, including conservation and responsible travel and have been extremely popular.

**2.8:** Our map brochure highlighted some ecology best practices.

**2.8:** Collected and analyzed event data for all major festivals and community gatherings across Island County to assess attendance, visitor origin, and economic impact. These evaluations provide a clearer understanding of ROI and community benefit.

**2.8:** Continued to refine our evaluation methods and explore new ways to track and quantify impact, including visitor surveys, collaboration with chambers and event organizers, and improved reporting tools.

**2.8:** Actively supported the arts, local makers, and retailers who produce and sell locally made goods, integrating their stories into our marketing campaigns, blogs, social media, and event promotions.

### **Goal 4: Sustainably manage the natural beauty and resources of Island County.**

**4.4:** Through storytelling highlighted outdoor recreation, cultural sites, and natural experiences that might otherwise go unnoticed, encouraging visitors to explore responsibly and engage with the islands in a sustainable way. We help balance tourism demand with environmental stewardship, promote equitable access to recreational and cultural spaces, and contribute to the long-term resilience of Island County's public infrastructure.

**4.4:** Showcased how natural assets support biodiversity, water quality, climate resilience, and community well-being, while also reinforcing sustainable tourism practices.



## **CEDS Related Activities + Projects in July 2024 to December 2025**

### **Goal 1: Improve and develop critical resilient infrastructure.**

**1.10:** Provided seed funding and administrative support to Island Roots Housing, which broke ground in Fall 2025 on a 14-unit multifamily affordable housing development in the City of Langley. See the Island ROOTS Housing entry above for more information.

### **Goal 2: Support existing local businesses and community assets, increase diversification, and promote Island County as an attractive business environment.**

**2.3:** Hosted a free business workshop on *The IRS and What Small Businesses Need to Know*, a six-part series, with IRS staff.

**2.3:** Hosted a free business workshop on *Small Businesses and Health Care Options* with the Washington State Health Care Authority.

**2.3:** Hosted a panel discussion on *How To Be A Working Artist*, featuring working artists.

**2.3:** Hosted a three-part series workshop geared towards backyard farmers and homesteaders on selling at farmers markets, farm stands, and wholesale called *Bring Your Food to Market*.

**2.3:** Goosefoot strives to work closely with 16 tenants at Bayview Center and Bayview Corner to provide manageable rents and ensure that buildings, property, and infrastructure are properly managed and maintained.

**2.5:** The Agriculture Resources Committee for Island County (ARCIC)—a working group administered by Goosefoot Community Fund—submitted formal recommendations and comments to the county planning department in July 2025 on the first draft of the Comprehensive Plan Update for Island County. The submission was based on input from 40+ farmers and ag adjacent organizations at a December 2024 Farmer Town Hall organized by ARCIC.

**2.5:** Despite Goosefoot having to end development of a shared incubator commercial kitchen in June 2025, we are looking for other entities to take on developing this facility. Goosefoot is happy to share the research, resources, and planning knowledge gained, which would serve to jumpstart such a project. A municipality, with septic and water infrastructure, experience with prevailing wage construction projects, and access to funding sources not available to non-profits, would be a good candidate to take this on.



goosefoot  
working for a thriving South Whidbey

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## **CEDS Related Activities + Projects in July 2024 to December 2025**

### **Goal 4: Sustainably manage the natural beauty and resources of Island County.**

**4.1.7:** Made plans to install high power EV charging stations on commercial property owned by the organization at Bayview Center and in the Bayview RAID in 2026.

**4.1:** Received technical advice for a feasibility study on installing solar panels and arrays at Bayview Center and the Goose Grocer. Unfortunately, the roof will not support these items and alternatives are cost prohibitive at this time.

**4.1 + 4.3:** Many of our local farms feature agricultural practices that help mitigate the effects of climate change. ARCIC's advocacy work on behalf of farmers and the challenges they face in remaining financially viable will hopefully serve to ensure the particular benefits of our agricultural economy are here to stay.



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## **CEDS Related Activities + Projects in July 2024 to December 2025**

**Goal 2: Support existing local businesses and community assets, increase diversification, and promote Island County as an attractive business environment.**

**2.2:** Organized signature events (e.g., Soup Box Derby), managed downtown beautification (e.g. hanging baskets), and promoted the historic and unique charm of Langley.

**2.3:** Provided direct, essential support to downtown merchants through focused promotion, educational resources, and grant funding facilitation for property owners, which increases business sustainability.

**2.3:** Ran promotional campaigns, facilitated networking, and future administration of Façade Improvement Grants.

**2.6:** Partnering with Washington Trust for Historic Preservation/DAHP on grants and communicating to our local businesses about these funding opportunities.

**2.10:** Promoted grant opportunities for building and property owner applicants.



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## **CEDS Related Activities + Projects in July 2024 to December 2025**

### **Goal 1: Improve and develop critical resilient infrastructure.**

**1.1:** Provided local jurisdictions information and contacts for both the state DCCA and federal DCIP grant programs should they decide to apply.

**1.1:** Hosted four public meetings in April 2025 to inform the community about its recent and ongoing efforts to test drinking water wells in sampling areas near the installation for certain PFAS substances.

**1.1:** Hosted a Restoration Advisory Board meeting in September 2025 to provide the public an update on our Environmental Restoration Programs.

**1.11:** Provided information to EDC Director about ongoing Navy Region NW efforts with the state on ways to reduce the administrative burden for certain childcare programs. Since any changes at the state level will impact all Navy providers throughout the region all coordination is taking place at the Navy Region NW level and so is outside local NASWI control. No timeline provided yet but any opportunity to reduce administrative barriers goes a long way to increase child care capacity in Island County.

### **Goal 2: Support existing local businesses and community assets, increase diversification, and promote Island County as an attractive business environment.**

**2.7:** Coordinated with City of Oak Harbor Development Services in maintaining industrial land use zones to the north of the City as part of the City's Comprehensive Plan update.

### **Goal 3: Align quality education and skills training programs with employer needs and create living wage job opportunities in Island County.**

**3:** Through a collaborative effort between Naval Air Station Whidbey Island and Oak Harbor Public Schools, more than \$162 million in combined federal and state investment was secured to rebuild two new schools. Funding includes over \$136 million from the U.S. Department of Defense's Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation and an additional \$26 million from Washington State's Defense Community Compatibility Account.

### **Goal 4: Sustainably manage the natural beauty and resources of Island County.**

**4.5:** Continued to support the Skagit River System Cooperative (SRSC) salmon habitat efforts at Crescent Creek on the Seaplane Base.

### **Goal 5: Deepen collaboration and coordination between Island County and regional partners.**

**5.4:** Supported City and County emergency services through various Mutual Aid Agreements for resource sharing in the event of a disaster.

## **CEDS Related Activities + Projects in July 2024 to December 2025**

### **Goal 3: Align quality education and skills training programs with employer needs and create living wage job opportunities in Island County.**

**3.1 + 5:** Coordinated the NW Education & Workforce Coalition. This Coalition, kicked off in 2024 with higher ed, workforce boards, K-12, government, and community organizations to build alignment across education and workforce systems.

- Members include: Bellingham Technical College (BTC), Career Connect NW hosted at the Northwest Educational Service District 189, Economic Development Alliance of Skagit County (EDASC), Economic Development Council for Island County, Economic Development Council of San Juan County (EDC), Northwest Career & Technical Academy (NCTA), Northwest Indian College, NW Workforce Council, Port of Bellingham, Skagit Valley College, Western Washington University, Whatcom Community College.

**3.4:** Ran Pre-ETS for youth with disabilities (ages 14–21), providing work-readiness training, job site tours, and paid internships.

**3.4:** NWESD reimburses employers for 40–120 hours of student wages, facilitating paid internships.

**3.4:** In 2024, Career Connect Northwest partnered with Northwest Career & Technical Academy and Economic Development Alliance of Skagit County to bring Labor & Industries (L&I) Youth Employment Agent Kristen Goodge to the Future Ready: Demystifying Minor Work Permits & Internships event.

**3.8:** CCNW facilitates regular convenings (virtual and in person) for educators, school leaders, community partners, and business partners to share best practices tied to the High School & Beyond Plan.

**3.8:** There are sector-aligned Communities of Practice (e.g., Advanced Manufacturing & Engineering, Computer Science/IT) composed of K-12 teachers, postsecondary faculty, CTE directors, and industry. These are explicitly designed to align high school courses with college and employer needs.

- Educators tour modern manufacturing worksites
- Building Stronger Computer Science Pathways

**3.8:** CCNW is leading a regional pilot (via the Dual Credit Proviso) to improve alignment, articulation, and transcription between high school CTE courses and community college programs. The pilot partners include SBCTC, community colleges (Everett CC, Skagit Valley CC, Bellingham Tech, Whatcom CC), to streamline systems. This alignment supports credit portability, which helps with workforce readiness and post-secondary attainment.

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## **CEDS Related Activities + Projects in July 2024 to December 2025**

### **Goal 3: Align quality education and skills training programs with employer needs and create living wage job opportunities in Island County.**

**3.9:** Hosted the Washington Apprenticeship Vocational Education (WAVE) Tour for construction trades: in 2023, 384 students from 23 high schools attended. The Tour returned in October 2025.

**3.9:** The Port of Bellingham hosted Blue Tech By The Bay, an event focused on Maritime trades in collaboration with CCNW and other industry and workforce partners. Island County students were invited to participate.

**3.9:** In 2024, CCNW hosted the Exploring Careers & Healthcare Opportunities (ECHO) Tour, in partnership with organizations across the region including Skagit Valley College and Whatcom Community College.

**3.11:** The CTE Dual Credit Proviso Pilot (described above) is directly expanding post-secondary attainment (by enabling students to earn college credit in high school).

**3.11:** NW Education & Workforce Coalition (described above) is focused on identifying priorities related to increasing post-secondary enrollment and connection to family wage careers.

**3.12:** CCNW facilitated STEM Like ME! events in middle and high schools region-wide. These events bring in employer presenters for hands-on, career exploration.

**3.12:** One STEM Like ME! events was specifically for teacher professional development, meaning STEM pedagogy and industry knowledge improve.

**3.12:** Curriculum-focused CoPs for STEM fields such as CS / IT and Advanced Manufacturing help align curricula with post-secondary requirements and employer expectations.

**3.12:** NWESD's STEM initiatives (in partnership with CCNW) explicitly aim to build student capacity in STEM fields.

**3.12:** Coupeville Middle School 8th Grade Future Forward Class: On March 27, 2025, CCNW coordinated an industry guest speaker from Aspen Power Catamarans to talk about maritime careers and internships at Coupeville Middle School.



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## **CEDS Related Activities + Projects in July 2024 to December 2025**

### **Goal 2: Support existing local businesses and community assets, increase diversification, and promote Island County as an attractive business environment.**

**2.3:** Worked with local employers to identify skill gaps in their current workforce and connect them with upskilling opportunities - often leveraging WIOA or state funds to offset training costs. Companies can upskill their current employees to assist with opening up new lines of business, creating promotion opportunities for their current workforce, and/or averting potential layoffs through IWT.

**2.3:** Actively used OJT contracts to support employers hiring new permanent workers, covering a portion of wages while individuals learn on the job. Training opportunities last six months or less and can be for workers who are at the beginning of their career or workers who have some experience in an occupation but lack the operational requirements of a particular employer to succeed as a new employee.

**2.3:** Through coordination with K-12, Skagit Valley College, and NAS Whidbey, NWC supported programs that expose youth and young adults to in-demand careers, especially in healthcare, trades, and maritime-related fields.

### **Goal 3: Align quality education and skills training programs with employer needs and create living wage job opportunities in Island County.**

**3.1.1:** Collaborated with WorkSource Whidbey to offer Priority of Service for veterans, including career navigation, job placement, and training support. Along with WorkSource partners including Veteran Employment and Training Services, NWC conducts targeted job fairs and employer of the day events to assist veterans re-entering the civilian workforce.

**3.1.1:** Through partnerships with NAS Whidbey transition programs, veterans are connected to civilian career pathways early in their separation process.

**3.1.2:** Military spouses benefited from NWC's portable skill-building programs and individualized career services available through WorkSource.

**3.1.2:** NWC supported partner programs like Hiring Our Heroes and helps promote local employers offering remote or flexible work for military families.

**3.1.2:** Military spouses are offered priority of service and support services like childcare, transportation, and relocation assistance.

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## **CEDS Related Activities + Projects in July 2024 to December 2025**

### **Goal 3: Align quality education and skills training programs with employer needs and create living wage job opportunities in Island County.**

**3.1.3:** Supported efforts to translate military experience into recognized civilian credentials (e.g., CDL, IT certifications, aircraft maintenance, maritime trades, etc.).

**3.1.3:** The Council advocated for and connects service members with SkillBridge programs, DOL-recognized apprenticeships, and credentialing support.

**3.1.4:** Through WIOA Youth programming, NWC provided paid work experience (WEX), job readiness training, micro-credentialing, essential skills training and career exploration for in-school and out-of-school youth.

**3.1.4:** Supported summer youth employment efforts and hosts annual youth hiring events and career fairs in collaboration with Island County schools and partners.

**3.1.4:** NWC's job readiness and essential skills training help youth to develop the foundational, occupational and employability skills needed to access long-term, living wage career pathways.

**3.1.5:** Promoted Registered Apprenticeships, pre-apprenticeship programs, and on-the-job work-based learning as career pathways - especially in construction, healthcare, and advanced manufacturing.

**3.1.5:** Partnered with programs like ANEW, AJAC, and SVC to help individuals connect to these opportunities and earn industry recognized credentials.

**3.1.6:** Worked with employers and economic development partners to promote flexible employment options for older adults, including phased retirement, mentoring, and volunteer-to-work pathways.

**3.1.6:** Opportunities are also shared via AJC platforms and local partner agencies serving seniors and encore workers.

**3.1.6:** Offered career counseling and skills assessments that help older workers find encore careers and coordinate with programs like SCSEP to provide paid training for older adults needing updated workplace skills.



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## **CEDS Related Activities + Projects in July 2024 to December 2025**

### **Goal 3: Align quality education and skills training programs with employer needs and create living wage job opportunities in Island County.**

**3.1.7:** Participated in reentry efforts including Pathway Home grants and supports individuals with barriers to employment through transitional jobs, supportive services, and access to expungement clinics.

**3.1.7:** Promoted employer education on second chance hiring and offers incentives for hiring justice-involved individuals.

**3.1.7:** Can provide supportive services to address reentry barriers (transportation, documentation, work clothes, tools).

**3.3.1:** Utilized labor market intelligence (e.g., Lightcast data) to guide career counseling and prioritize training for high-demand, living-wage sectors in the region. Examples include targeted efforts in healthcare, skilled trades, and advanced manufacturing - all of which offer sustainable wages and career progression.

**3.3.1:** Through career counseling, NWC offered skills assessments that help individuals understand the skills they currently have and those they may need gain.

**3.3.2:** Helped coordinate career exploration events, classroom presentations, and tours to increase awareness of the trades among youth and adults.

**3.3.2:** WorkSource Whidbey and SVC partner to offer short-term certificates, employer panels, and info sessions to promote alternative pathways beyond traditional four-year degrees.



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## **CEDS Related Activities + Projects in July 2024 to December 2025**

### **Goal 1: Improve and develop resilient critical infrastructure.**

**1.2:** Offered 5G WiFi hotspots, ChromeBooks, and laptops, all of which can be requested and borrowed, just like books and DVD's. The laptops contain a suite of Microsoft office products; both the Chromebooks and laptops automatically come with a hotspot. While the equipment was purchased through Snohomish County Broadband Grant, it has improved resources in both counties.

**1.2:** Public WiFi and public computers were available at all locations.

**1.3:** Listed a collection of Social Services Resources on their website, which includes housing, food bank, and shelter resources as well as a link to informational hubs for other service providers, like Washington State 211.

**1.3:** Camano Island Library has had a long-standing partnership with Camano Preparedness Group to regularly host emergency readiness training and information events.

**1.5:** Multiple Island county libraries hosted Island Transit storytimes at their locations to promote and get families familiar with bus services. Coupeville library partnered with Transit Trekker Car-Free travel program to present a program on using public transit, as well as hosting an introduction to bicycle repair program.

**1.5:** Multiple libraries hosted public meetings for Island Transit hour changes, collaborated as spaces to offer and gather transit public survey inputs, as well as serving as locations for Island Transit employee recruitment events.

**1.10:** Sno-Isle's Housing Assistance Resources page provides an easily accessible public list of local and state organizations that offer assistance with shelter, rental help, emergency housing, etc.

**1.11:** Langley library has offered a STARS training session and Sno-Isle Libraries offered a variety of online STARS courses, the annual training program mandated by Washington state for childcare providers.

**1.8:** Camano Island Library has a long-standing partnership with WSU Extension for their presentation on composting, recycling, and self-sufficiency programs.

### **Goal 2: Support existing local businesses and community assets, increase diversification, and promote Island County as an attractive business environment.**

**Goal 2.3:** The CLI library is a member of the Clinton Chamber of Commerce.



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## **CEDS Related Activities + Projects in July 2024 to December 2025**

### **Goal 2: Support existing local businesses and community assets, increase diversification, and promote Island County as an attractive business environment.**

**2.3:** Sno-Isle Libraries Assistant Director of Community Libraries for the library's West District, Michelle Callihan, is on the EDC Board.

**2.3:** Freeland library hosts access to the Candid Foundation Directory grants database, which contains information about grants available to nonprofits as well as information for individuals seeking funding, scholarships, or fellowships.

**2.3:** Island County public library locations offer one-on-one business help through scheduled Book-a-Librarian sessions to help guide community members in locating relevant resources through a variety of free online Business and Finance databases.

**2.3+2.8:** Island County libraries collaborated with Island Transit to present an island-wide Scavenger Hunt, encouraging both residents and visitors to explore Whidbey Island educational attractions and natural resources.

**2.8:** Island County libraries regularly post and share info about Whidbey Island and Camano Island recreational destinations, as well as offering free chamber maps and tourism info from several different sources. Staff are versed in sharing local tourism opportunities with residents and visitors.

**Goal 2.8:** So-Isle Libraries offers borrowable "Check Out Washington" Discover Passes, which may be used to access Washington State Parks, Washington State Department of Natural Resources, and Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife lands.

### **Goal 3: Align quality education and skills training programs with employer needs and create living wage job opportunities in Island County.**

**3.2:** Island libraries offer volunteer opportunities for community members.

**3.2:** Sno-Isle provides jobs for people on both islands. Freeland and Oak Harbor libraries also provides opportunities for Supported Page positions.

**3.3:** All Island County library locations provide story times to foster early literacy and reading skills, which can correlate directly to school success. Special pages specifically curated for each grade level help parents and guardians find age-appropriate early literacy materials. All Island county public library staff also take turns providing online storytimes to virtually deliver early literacy opportunities for customers who may not be able to travel to the library.



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## **CEDS Related Activities + Projects in July 2024 to December 2025**

### **Goal 3: Align quality education and skills training programs with employer needs and create living wage job opportunities in Island County.**

**3.3:** Sno-Isle’s Library on Wheels department connects with childcares, providing site visits and delivery service, as well as scheduling regular bookmobile stops to provide library resources and services to residents/families who may face barriers traveling to specific locations.

**3.3:** Since 2013, Sno-Isle Libraries has partnered with school across the service district with a Third Graders Read Together program; third grade is considered a point where youth shift from “learning to read” to “reading to learn.”

**3.3.5:** Island County libraries routinely offer STEM/STEAM programs for children to help promote science, technology, math, and engineering concepts.

**3.3:** Camano Island Library offers regular homeschool meetups, where staff can share the wide range of homework resources for all ages non-traditional students.

**3.3:** Multiple Whidbey Island libraries offered in-person Job and Life Skills programs and Training programs to help increase customers’ economic resiliency.

**3.3:** One of the keystone principles of public libraries is to create opportunities for lifelong learning and. Sno-Isle Libraries offers digital literacy and technical training for adults through the following databases:

- Northstar Digital Literacy, which teaches necessary digital skills
- LinkedIn Learning, which offers thousands of online courses teaching in-demand skills from real-world industry experts
- Microsoft Learn, where cardholders can find hands on training to earn industry-endorsed certifications

**3.3:** Sno-Isle Libraries provides access to the BrainFuse Adult Learning Center database, which offers academic coaching, a practice test center, and live tutoring help, and Peterson’s Test and Career Prep, offering standardized test preparation, job search, and career tools. Like all library resources, all the online learning databases are accessible with a library card, which is free.

### **Goal 4: Sustainably manage the natural beauty and resources of Island County.**

**4.2:** Multiple Whidbey Island library locations partnered with the Island County DEM to provide a series on emergency preparedness that specifically educated on sea level rise and similar subjects over the course of several weeks. Camano Island Library partnered with Camano Preparedness Group to about protecting your home from fire.



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## **CEDS Related Activities + Projects in July 2024 to December 2025**

### **Goal 4: Sustainably manage the natural beauty and resources of Island County.**

**4.2+4.4:** Both Camano and Whidbey Island Libraries host educational programs presented by Sound Water Stewards, a volunteer-run Island County organization that educates the public about maintaining a healthy, sustainable Puget Sound environment. Clinton Library's summer story times in Castle Park highlight this vital resource in South Whidbey.

**4.8:** The Sno-Isle website maintains pages dedicated to a collection of readiness resources: [Extreme Weather Services](#) (both cold and hot weather extremes), [Wildfire Preparedness Resources](#), [Emergency Preparedness Resources](#), [Natural Disaster Preparedness Resources](#), and [Flooding Resources](#).

**4.8:** All Whidbey Island libraries and the Camano Island Library service as daytime warming and cooling centers during open hours.

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### **CEDS Related Activities + Projects in July 2024 to December 2025**

**Goal 3: Align quality education and skills training programs with employer needs and create living wage job opportunities in Island County.**

**3.2:** The College recently increased the size of the Nursing program at its Whidbey Island Campus and received approval for its new Bachelor of Science in Nursing program, a major milestone that will allow students within the district to pursue a four-year nursing degree close to home. This becomes the institution's seventh bachelor's degree, with plans to develop four to five additional applied bachelor's programs over the next five years, each aligned with documented workforce needs within the district.

**3.2.4:** SVC also continues to strengthen career exploration pipelines for high school students. Each year the College hosts a large Try-a-Trade event, drawing nearly 200 high school students to campus. The event offers hands-on exposure to multiple trade programs, helping students better understand both the training environment and the professions they may ultimately enter.



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### **CEDS Related Activities + Projects in July 2024 to December 2025**

**Goal 3: Align quality education and skills training programs with employer needs and create living wage job opportunities in Island County.**

**3.3.5:** Took strides to actively expand access to STEAM programming by offering free outdoor education at Land Trust protected lands, including transportation stipends when needed. This has involved all Whidbey Island School Districts, with Stanwood-Camano District coming soon. Over the past year we have brought over 1,200 school kids to Land Trust properties.

**Goal 4: Sustainably manage the natural beauty and resources of Island County.**

**4.5:** Protected additional riparian headwaters and streams to support restoration and salmon recovery efforts.

**4.6:** Protected additional forest land at Holmes Harbor Community Forest near Freeland, and Lagoon Point Community Forest in Greenbank including the two visitor access/trailhead locations for Lagoon Point.

**4.6:** Made huge strides in our preparations for opening Keystone Preserve to the public, including access to 2/3 mile of beach on Admiralty Bay.

# Acknowledgements & Thank you!

The EDC for Island County increases its resiliency by having strong linkages and partnerships between the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. The Island County CEDS 2024-2028 provides the framework that guides this work.

The CEDS Progress Report would not be possible without the support and collaboration of many other jurisdictions, agencies, and organizations, including but not limited to Island County, the Town of Coupeville, the Cities of Langlely and Oak Harbor, the Port of Coupeville, and the Port of South Whidbey.

We thank our all of our partners for their many contributions to the Island County CEDS in 2024-2025. Many partners are nonprofits ((501 (c)(6) or 501 (c)(3)). We therefore also thank the public and other nonprofit funders for their ongoing support in achieving the Island County CEDS Goals!

By joining EDC, you are investing in the EDC and Island County's Economic Development. Economic development is the intentional practice of improving a community's economic well-being and quality of life. It includes a broad-range of activities to attract, create, and retain jobs, and to foster a resilient, pro-growth tax base and an inclusive economy.



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