

- Over the past month, PacMtn has remained active across the region and nationally, advocating for our workforce system and advancing key partnerships. In early May, I traveled with our incoming Board Chair Kevin Shutty and our Directors of Sector Strategies, Matt Hanusa and Jeff Bowe, to Washington, D.C. for the National Skills Coalition convening. We joined the broader Washington state delegation to meet with federal legislators, and our group had a one-on-one visit with staff from Representative Emily Randall’s office. The conversations reinforced that WIOA reauthorization still has momentum in this legislative session, and that occupational skill development remains a high priority. Programs that are not demonstrating impact in this area, especially Adult and Youth formula programs, are at risk of reduction. That said, PacMtn’s One Workforce model—centered on occupational investment aligned with priority sectors—is well-positioned under the likely new policy landscape, even though funding levels remain uncertain.
- I also had the opportunity to attend the May meeting of the Pacific County Economic Development Council. The meeting focused on their strategic planning, and it was valuable to hear directly from employers and local leaders. Issues like housing, childcare, Associate Development Organizations (ADO) funding, and the impacts of tariffs continue to be top concerns—many of which mirror those we hear across the region, albeit with local nuance. We identified opportunities to partner around training program development and childcare solutions, especially in coordination with Grays Harbor College.
- Progress continues on the relocation of the Thurston County WorkSource site. After months of evaluation, our team and partners have identified a new location in the Lacey Hub. The site meets the necessary lease and space requirements and is a former state facility, which should smooth the path with DES. It’s also located within walking distance of key services and institutions, including SPSCC, Lacey Maker Space, Saint Martin’s University, and veterans programs. With strong transit and amenity access, the location is a clear improvement. The Letter of Intent is expected to be signed shortly, which will allow us to begin design planning and engage frontline staff. The new site will be branded under “Opportunity Begins Here” and will co-locate key partners such as ESD, DVR, and Labor & Industries.
- I also recently participated in a panel hosted by the Thurston County Climate Action Community on the workforce implications of climate adaptation. I was joined by Rachele Martin from the Central Labor Council and Gene Angel from the Thurston EDC. We discussed the critical need for reskilling as technology and climate priorities shift the demand for labor. Labor partners are expected to play a key role in this transition, and we are exploring how workforce systems can support this evolution through both training and employer engagement.

- PacMtn has also reached a tentative agreement with United Way of Lewis County and Community Youth Services to support the Scholars Haven program at Centralia College. This pilot initiative will provide housing and educational access for five unhoused youth who are working toward high school completion while taking college-level coursework. Though the per-participant cost is high, the program directly aligns with both WIOA and EcSA priorities and early results are very promising. We're proud to be part of a partnership helping to stabilize and elevate young people with few other options.
- On the financial front, we finally received our formal WIOA allocations and confirmation that the Governor has signed the state budget. We also have verbal confirmation that our Congressionally Directed Spending award to support WorkEx, championed by Senator Murray, will be under contract near the start of the new program year. These milestones provide needed certainty for our FY25 budget planning. However, we are not out of the woods yet. Finalizing contracts with ESD for WIOA and EcSA/CRP, and with USDOL for WorkEx, remains a top priority. Securing these agreements is critical to ensuring that funding is formally obligated. Looking ahead, the PY26 federal budget presents major questions. Early indications suggest the Trump Administration may propose significant restructuring of the workforce system—details remain scarce, but we're actively monitoring and staying engaged with our federal partners.
- On a positive note, our collective advocacy had a real impact. EcSA remained funded in the final state budget, and through coordinated efforts we were successful in restoring \$60 million to CRP. These are key programs for our region. *Thank you to all who signed letters, contacted legislators, and joined in meetings—your voices mattered.*
- Lastly, we launched our Family-Friendly Workplaces program at the end of May, with nine participating employers from Grays Harbor and Pacific counties. The program includes three in-person cohort sessions and individual consultations with business experts. It is free to participants and designed to help employers improve workplace supports for employees with families. The sessions continue into June and will wrap up later this summer. This is another example of our commitment to helping businesses and workers succeed—together.

Stories of Hope and Impact

In the windswept harbor of Westport, Washington, Fishing Vessel Crys Dee is more than a commercial fishing boat, it's a legacy. Owned and captained by Sabrina Kramer, a member of the Quinault Indian Nation, the vessel represents decades of dedication to the ocean and a lifeline to her family, crew, and community.

Sabrina began fishing at the age of nine alongside her father, who bought his first vessel and introduced her to the life she now leads. Thirty years ago, with his support, she bought her own boat, and she's been harvesting Dungeness crab ever since.

"My crew is like family. One of them has been with me for 25 years," Sabrina says. "This work supports not only my household but theirs too." As a treaty fisherman, Sabrina works under the Quinault Nation's rights, with the crab season running from November through September. Each year brings fresh challenges, especially when it comes to gear loss. Storms and rough seas routinely claim dozens of her crab pots, each one costing hundreds of dollars to replace.

Thanks to a PacMtn Business Investment Grant, funded by the Washington State Department of Commerce's Community Reinvestment Project, Sabrina is receiving critical support to replenish her supply of pots and gear. With bare pots costing \$270 and fully rigged ones reaching up to \$390, the grant is helping offset the high annual costs of doing business in this demanding industry.

"I'm very grateful to receive this grant," Sabrina shares. "It's helping me pay for crab pots and the gear to rig them up, and that helps me put more money back into the community."

The impact goes far beyond her boat. In a region where economic opportunities are limited, Sabrina's success supports not only her crew but also local families in need. When she has a good season, she gives back, whether it's helping with medical expenses or supporting school sport teams on the reservation.

Professionally and personally, this investment is about more than gear, it's about keeping a legacy alive, providing for others, and continuing a tradition that connects generations.

Her advice to others thinking about starting a business:

"You have to spend money to make money, and you've got to have the passion for the business you want to be in."

For Sabrina Kramer, that passion is the ocean, and she's not just riding the waves. She's lifting others with her.