

CEO REPORT: JANUARY 2026

LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY: WASHINGTON WORKFORCE HILL CLIMB

On January 27, PacMtn hosted the annual Washington Workforce Hill Climb in partnership with the Washington Workforce Association and the Association of Washington Business. Ten PacMtn representatives took part, including board members, staff, and three employers. More than 70 workforce and business leaders from across the state met with legislators during the event. Our group urged lawmakers to maintain and expand EcSA and CRP investments to strengthen regional talent pipelines and employer engagement. Details on legislative priorities and materials are available on the WWA advocacy page at <https://washingtonworkforce.org/advocacy>.

What's at stake: partner voices elevating EcSA and CRP impact

This quarter highlights the impact of PacMtn's collaboration-first approach—and what is at stake. Ahead of the legislative hill climb, PacMtn asked regional partners to support advocacy for Economic Security for All and the Community Reinvestment Program by sharing direct experience and impact. The response reflected the strength of our relationships: three employers and one tribal partner stepped forward.

Tribal partner perspective

Evelyne Kalama, TERO Manager for the Quinault Indian Nation, testified on the impact of CRP. She shared how CRP-supported programming created access to paid work experience and skill development for youth in her community. Her testimony connected state investment to clear outcomes for tribal families and reinforced the value of programs designed by tribal partners.

Employer perspective

Employers who joined the hill climb shared first-hand experience. PacMtn support helped them connect to skilled workers and stabilize operations. Their stories focused on results—faster hiring, better job fit, and improved retention. For small employers, this matters, and their voices rarely shape policy conversations dominated by larger firms.

How this connects to PacMtn's sector strategies

These outcomes connect directly to PacMtn's sector strategies, launched two years ago. Sector strategies changed how the system engages employers by shifting from transactions to long-term relationships built around skill needs and career pathways. That shift created space for small businesses and tribal enterprises to participate as full partners.

Why the timing matters

At a moment when the Governor has called for spending reductions, he has also committed to increasing EcSA by an additional \$1 million statewide. The Legislature has proposed an increase to CRP that would more than double available resources.

The message we shared

The message PacMtn and our partners shared was clear: these investments move people toward self-sufficiency, reduce reliance on public assistance, lower long-term pressure on social programs, increase earned income, and expand the tax base.

Sector strategies and tribal engagement show how targeted investment delivers returns. When policy aligns with lived experience, outcomes improve for workers, employers, and communities across the region.

BUSINESS SUPPORTS: BUSINESS INVESTMENT GRANTS (BIG) NOW OPEN

Pacific Mountain Workforce Development Council opened a new round of Business Investment Grants, or BIG, to support small businesses across the region. This program is funded by the Washington State Department of Commerce and prioritizes BIPOC owned businesses. First round applications are due in mid February. This year, 75,000 dollars is available, with typical awards ranging from 4,000 to 6,000 dollars. Funds support practical business needs such as licensing, employee training, equipment purchases, and marketing. Employers interested in applying or learning more about eligibility and uses can visit <https://opportunitybeginshere.org/employer/business-grants/>.

FEDERAL ENGAGEMENT: WASHINGTON, DC CONVENINGS AND DELEGATION MEETINGS

CEO William Westmoreland represented Pacific Mountain Workforce Development Council in Washington, DC during the last week of January and first week of February. He attended the United States Conference of Mayors Winter Meeting and the National Skills Coalition national conference. Both events focused on federal workforce policy, including WIOA reauthorization and short-term Pell expansion. These convenings created opportunities to meet with members of Washington's congressional delegation and discuss how proposed changes affect local workforce systems and employers. In partnership with the Washington Workforce Association, PacMtn also joined a delegation to meet with key appropriations leaders and White House policy staff to share local data and outcomes. These discussions helped reinforce the return on investment of WIOA and positioned our region to help shape future workforce legislation.

PATHWAYS TO EMPLOYMENT: SUMMER TRANSITION PROGRAM

Pacific Mountain Workforce Development Council staff engaged key partners, board members, and consortium members to design a Summer Transition Program for CTE and CTC students who are ready to move into employment. The program targets training pathways aligned with PacMtn sector strategies and supports students in completing their programs, earning credentials, accessing career services, and connecting to work based learning and paid work experience. Eligible participants are age 18 and older who finish their programs between April and September 2026. A total of 250,000 dollars is available. The RFP is expected to release in the second week of February, with awards anticipated in early April. More information is available at <https://pacmtn.org/investments/service-provider-opportunities/>.

UPCOMING PROCUREMENT

PacMtn is preparing to release a full-scale RFP for the next Title I B Adult and Dislocated Worker service provider, along with EcSA and CRP funding. We are targeting release of the RFP no later than the end of March 2026. While final allocations are not yet known, we estimate total contract values of about 1,800,000 dollars for Program Year 2026. Additional funding opportunities are expected to emerge throughout the year as we continue to pursue new grant resources. More details will be shared as funding levels and timelines become clearer.

STAFF RECOGNITION: CELEBRATING JEANNIE HOUSE'S RETIREMENT

Jeannie House retired at the end of January 2026 after 26 years in the local workforce system. Pacific Mountain Workforce Development Council hosted a farewell gathering on January 27 to celebrate her service. Colleagues, partners, and friends shared their appreciation, and Jeannie expressed sincere gratitude for the sendoff. Jeannie made a lasting impact on the communities we serve. She reflected PacMtn values in her daily work and stayed focused on results for both employers and jobseekers. She removed barriers to employment, supported unhoused individuals on a path to stability, and helped small food producers recruit and retain talent. Her work spanned nearly every part of the workforce system, and she consistently delivered strong outcomes. We wish her the best in retirement.