



**Community Workforce Agreement and WSDOT for All
November 2025**

Per Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5161, Section 218 (2), WSDOT is to submit an annual report to the legislature on our implementation of the Community Workforce Agreements and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Programs. Historically, WSDOT has worked to promote equal opportunity in its programs and work toward a transportation system that works for all Washingtonians. This included implementing our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan. WSDOT is continuing its efforts to improve access for all under its “WSDOT for All” focus area.

Much of the discussion we have had about treating everyone fairly, not leaving anyone out of opportunities or consideration and listening to everyone's shared experiences has been framed as diversity, equity and inclusion. These terms are rooted in WSDOT’s commitment to equal and fair opportunity. However, we’ve learned that those terms – to include accessibility and belonging - can mean different things to different people.

We aim to be consistent and intentional in serving people in Washington, paying attention to everyone’s individual needs, so that all feel included, supported, valued and safe. The state Office of Equity is leading the way with Washington for All. With the related WSDOT for All initiative, our agency will create targeted strategies to help people and communities in Washington reach shared goals.

The more complex the language, the more it can confuse anyone trying to understand a topic. If the language is not clear, it can be misunderstood. To rectify this, WSDOT will use clear language to describe goals and values. Along those lines, in an effort to support the Washington State Office of Equity and state leadership at an enterprise level, WSDOT will align with the Office of Equity’s *Washington for All* effort and adopt the phrase “WSDOT for All.” The intent of “WSDOT for All” is to ensure everyone is included, belongs and has the tools to succeed. We aim to be consistent and intentional in serving people in Washington, paying attention to everyone’s individual needs, so that all feel included, supported, valued and safe. The state Office of Equity is leading the way with Washington for All. With the related *WSDOT for All* initiative, our agency will create targeted strategies to help people and communities in Washington reach shared goals.

Justification and Exploration

Our State Office of Equity is leading the way with Washington for All. In an effort to support and be aligned with leadership at an enterprise level, WSDOT will adopt the Targeted Universalism approach as well as a name that fits under the well-crafted umbrella built by the State Office of Equity. Thus, our initiative will be called WSDOT for All.

The rule of thumb can be: If you have to explain a word, acronym, or initiative, it needs to be in plain language.

For example, equity is often confused with equality, but the words are not interchangeable. Equity is about fairness and equality is about being equal in status, rights and opportunities. Ultimately, the goal is to plain talk our values so that we limit misunderstandings and mischaracterizations of the words we use.

The WSDOT for All plan

WSDOT's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion plan was a living document and consisted of seven primary focus areas outlined below. As of October 2025, the focus of the WSDOT for All plan is as follows:

Workforce: The primary objective of this focus area is improving employee experience and engagement, with an emphasis on ensuring all employees, contractors and consultants feel a strong sense of belonging at WSDOT.

Communication for All: The primary objective of this focus area is to develop transparent and consistent communication across all levels. It includes initiatives such as Digital Accessibility and establishing a Plain Language Policy.

Community Support & Integration: The primary objective of this focus area is to ensure that WSDOT programs, services and activities create equitable opportunities for all individuals to be heard, actively participate and meaningfully contribute.

WSDOT's DEI plan focus area endpoints

Internal Workforce: This focus area continued developing a WSDOT DEI policy to be added to the Human Resources (HR) Desk Manual. The effort was led by HR subject matter experts, who drafted a Respectful Workplace Policy and conducted a thorough stakeholder review process. This process included input from all statewide Diversity Advisory Groups (DAGs), the Communications Office, the Office of Equity and Civil Rights (OECR), the Office of the Attorney General, and other identified stakeholders. The Respectful Workplace Policy was finalized in December 2024.

Learn and Grow: This focus area created WSDOT's Culture of Belonging program to foster a Pro-Equity and Anti-Racist (PEAR) workplace. This sprint¹ was led by the Culture of Belonging Manager, who created the framework based on the Culture of Inclusion Road trip program in WSDOT's Olympic Region. The Culture of Belonging training remains available in the Learning Center. The Community of Practice allowed WSDOT employees to learn and practice the Culture of Belonging tools for WSDOT to become a PEAR workplace and agency. As of February 2025, the Culture of Belonging initiative was suspended, and the Culture of Belonging manager role was eliminated due to budget constraints.

Diversity Advisory Groups: This focus area aimed to establish consistent roles, structures, and expectations for the eight regional and divisional WSDOT DAGs. Currently, each DAG operates with a high level of autonomy in how it functions as an employee advisory group, resulting in varied approaches across regions. While this flexibility allows each group to address local needs, it also creates

¹ A sprint is a short, time-boxed period when a small, dedicated team works to complete a set amount of work.

inconsistencies in how DEI initiatives are supported and advanced. At present, there is no formal framework or standardization in place to help DAG leadership and members align their efforts to statewide DEI goals. The sprint focused on providing standardization guidance on the requirements for consistent processes related to governance, membership, budgeting, communications, etc., is currently under review for 2025.

Data-informed Decisions: This focus area worked on understanding data bias and mitigating such bias in the work performed at WSDOT. The focus was understanding diversity, equity, and inclusion research related to data justice and reporting the findings to OECR. The findings focused on AI and the impacts on marginalized groups related to data sources used for generative AI artifacts.

Community Engagement: This focus area continued to coordinate and communicate new community engagement best practices. The focus area created community engagement best practices for WSDOT employees.

Environmental Justice – Healthy Environment for All (HEAL) Act: The Healthy Environment for All (HEAL) Act ([Chap. 70A.02 RCW](#)) requires covered agencies to address the disproportionate exposure of communities of color, along with low-income communities, to environmental hazards in Washington neighborhoods. Under the HEAL Act, all covered agencies, including WSDOT, have new and additional state-level compliance responsibilities toward environmental justice. The most up-to-date information on the HEAL Act and Environmental Justice can be found on [WSDOT's Environmental Justice webpage](#).

External Workforce & Contracting: See the [2024 PASS & OJTSS Annual Report \(PDF\)](#).

Community Workforce Agreements Background

With historic levels of investment in transportation infrastructure at the state and federal levels and the current and future workforce and supplier demand exceeding available capacity, WSDOT is prioritizing regional efforts to expand labor capacity in the trades. WSDOT is also committed to ensuring significant transportation project investments support statewide equity goals and work as an agency to continue improving the experience small and disadvantaged businesses have contracting with WSDOT.

One tool that can support developing a pipeline of qualified local workers is a Community Workforce Agreement (CWA). A CWA is a Project Labor Agreement designed to benefit under-represented and under-served communities' access to capital construction investments made in their communities. These benefits include access for local workers to participate in projects, opportunities for available local contractors to engage in construction opportunities, and the expansion of qualified local workers contributing to regional economies.

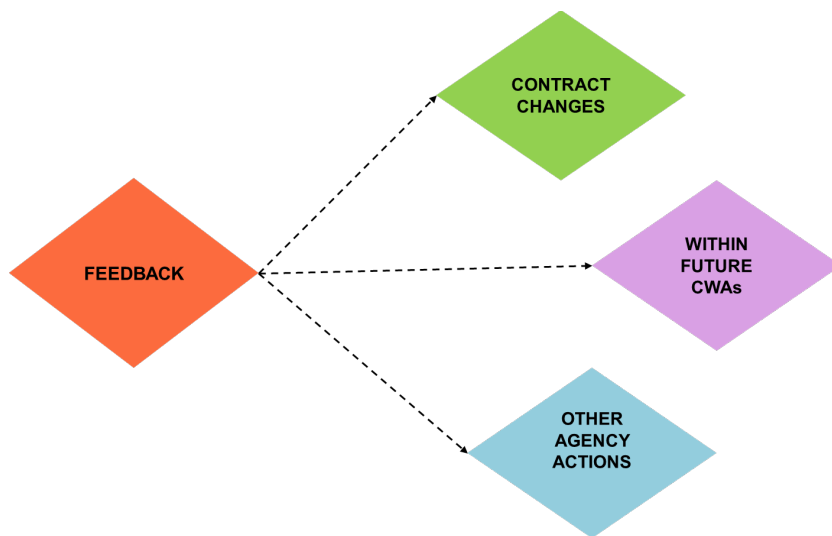
In Spring 2019, WSDOT included its first pilot CWA as part of the construction contract for the SR 520 Montlake Project. WSDOT identified the SR 520 Portage Bay Bridge & Roanoke Lid Project as the next WSDOT contract to include a CWA, subject to negotiations with the Seattle/King County Building and Construction

Trades Council and the Northwest Carpenters.

Engagement process overview

In 2022 and the first part of 2023, WSDOT engaged interested parties to collect feedback about CWAs both from its first pilot on the SR 520 Montlake Project and other regional agency CWAs. Outreach focused on the under-represented and under-served business community, prime and subcontractors, pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship organizations, and workers. Key activities included hosting listening sessions, participating in meetings and briefings, online surveys, and hosting meetings with interested parties to share a summary of feedback and discuss how the feedback informed next steps for the agency.

WSDOT committed to working to address the feedback in multiple ways moving forward. These included as part of negotiating upcoming and future CWAs, potential changes to construction contracts, and other actions to address ways small and disadvantaged businesses experience WSDOT contracting, including on contracts with a CWA.



2025 Status Update:

SR 520 Montlake Project (first pilot CWA): The Montlake Project reached substantial completion in May 2025, delivering major multimodal improvements, including the new transit center on the Montlake Lid and the bicycle and pedestrian land bridge, which opened with a community celebration in December 2024. While Graham, the design-builder, continues to address punch-list items and landscaping, all major project elements are open to the public.

CWA outcomes and workforce highlights:

- Under the CWA, the Montlake Project achieved 15.7% apprenticeship utilization (vs. 20% contract goal) and delivered strong equity outcomes with 34.5% Minority, Small, Veteran, and Women’s Business Enterprise participation (MSVWBE) and 7.7% Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) participation.
- Program-wide, the SR 520 corridor exceeded the statewide apprenticeship goal, achieving 18.6% utilization compared to the 15% baseline across federally funded projects.

These results highlight how the CWA framework strengthened workforce development, increased access for small and underrepresented businesses, and improved coordination among labor partners and contractors – demonstrating the model’s effectiveness on a complex, multimodal project.

Portage Bay Bridge and Roanoke Lid Project (second pilot CWA): Now in its first full year of construction, the Portage Bay Project completed its initial season of in-water impact piledriving in spring 2025. Crews installed more than 300 piles and nearly finished building the north and south temporary work trestles. Season two of piledriving began this fall, alongside preparations for the first of three major traffic shifts needed to construct the new westbound bridge.

CWA implementation and early workforce highlights:

- Intelligent Partnerships (IP) was hired as the third-party CWA administrator, building on their successful role on the Montlake Project. IP works with WSDOT, Skanska and labor representatives through the Project Administrative Committee (PAC). The PAC meets monthly to review hiring and apprenticeship progress and discuss ongoing implementation of CWA pilot programs.
- The Portage Bay Project remains in a design-heavy stage of early construction, slowing the pace of workforce ramp-up to date.
- Even so, the CWA framework has already proven valuable in resolving jurisdictional disputes and supporting coordination across multiple trades, helping establish a strong foundation for when construction fully ramps up (expected in spring 2026).
- Early participation data reflects the design-focused nature of this phase, with 9.2% apprenticeship utilization (vs. 15% goal), 4.6% MSVWBE, and 0.4% DBE participation to date.

Building on lessons learned from the Montlake Project and direct feedback from workers, contractors, and labor representatives, WSDOT also introduced new pilot programs under the Portage Bay Project CWA, including:

- **Childcare Reimbursement Pilot Program:** A first-of-its-kind initiative approved in September 2025 for apprentices on the project. Applications are now open, and eligible applicants can receive reimbursement retroactively from their start dates. To date, 18 apprentices have been identified as eligible for the childcare program and are being connected with information and support to begin receiving benefits. Data collection on reimbursement use is underway.
- **Dual Benefit Reimbursement Pilot Program:** Now open, this program addresses

challenges related to overlapping or dual benefits for nonunionized small business workers on the Project, helping workers navigate eligibility and maintain coverage. Three contractors have already inquired and qualified to participate in the Dual Benefit Reimbursement program, with outreach ongoing to increase awareness among subcontractors and small business workers.

- Accelerated Partial Payment Pilot Program: This program allows smaller businesses to submit partial payment requests outside of the prime contractor's payment process and schedule. The framework and systems for this process are now fully established with participating firms invited to submit initial partial payment requests beginning in late 2025.

Please feel free to reach out to Earl Key, Senior Director of Transportation Equity, at Earl.Key@wsdot.wa.gov with questions regarding this report.