



Skagit County Economic Recovery Plan

July 2022



UPDATED PROPOSALS

This document contains updated proposals and budgets for EDASC's Skagit County Economic Recovery Plan, originally published in December 2021. Recommendations have been coordinated with Skagit County Administrative Services to ensure programmatic investments are eligible for funding under the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).

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TALENT RETENTION

Mental Health Services

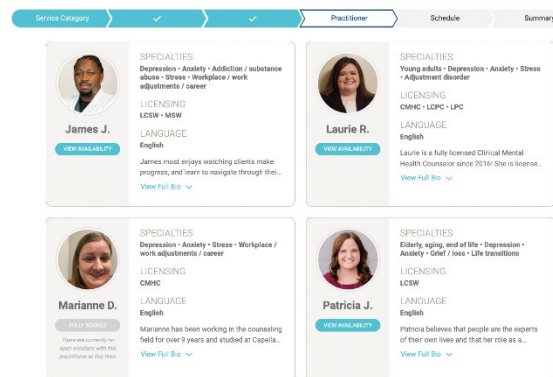
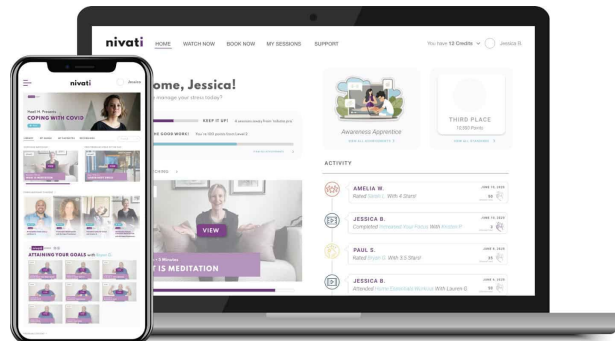
To assist employers with increasing productivity and to address barriers to employee retention, EDASC proposes deploying the mental health and wellbeing app Nivati for small businesses in Skagit County to provide mental health services for a total of up to 500 employees.

Background and Impact: Studies by the Center for Disease Control and Deloitte Insights show a positive return on investment in funding workplace mental health programs. Costs of poor mental health are attributed to decreased productivity, absenteeism, and increased long- and short-term disability claims. Even when mental health is included in insurance options, barriers to access include difficulty finding providers, transportation and the inability to meet copays.

EDASC was referred to Nivati by a local insurance broker as a more impactful option over an EAP – which is often used primarily for crisis management situations -- to provide holistic mental health and wellbeing services to a substantial number of Skagit County small businesses. The Nivati platform uses a phone or computer app to provide virtual mental health counseling services, removing transportation and other barriers associated with in-person sessions. The app also includes a suite of regularly updated mental health

resources including virtual fitness and yoga programs, nutrition coaching, sleep music, financial literacy, massage instruction and more. The app includes an analytics dashboard for employers to track use.

The platform has served 1.2 million employees. The company’s analytics claim reduced missed workdays by 60%. Also, 85% of employees exhibit improved work performance, 60% reported more motivation, and 75% of reported feeling better after attending therapy.



LICENSED AND CERTIFIED

COUNSELING

- Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC)
- Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW)
- Licensed Master Social Worker (LMSW)
- Certified Social Worker (CSW)
- Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist (LMFT)
- Clinical Mental Health Counselor (CMHC)

LIFE COACHING

- Certified Life Coach

NUTRITION

- Registered Dietician
- ACE Certified Health Coach
- NASM Certified Nutrition Coach

FITNESS

- Personal Training Certified NASM
- Personal Training Certified ACE
- Personal Training Certified ISSA

MASSAGE

- Licensed Massage Therapist

MEDITATION

- Certified Meditation Instructor

YOGA

- 200+ Hour Yoga Instructor Certification

With small businesses often lacking the resources to provide mental health benefits to employees, EDASC will target very small businesses for this program at 15 or fewer employees. Below are the licensing and certification requirements for Nivati live virtual sessions and videos on demand.

Locally, there was need expressed by Skagit County businesses for job retention programs, such as mental health benefits, during the initial survey sent to about 1,800 businesses last year as part of developing the draft Skagit County Economic Recovery Plan. A recent survey of those same businesses indicated a strong desire for this pilot program provided at no cost, with 79 percent of respondents indicated they would be likely or very likely to adopt this program. If provided at a discounted rate, 28 percent of respondents said they were likely or very likely to adopt the program, with 43 being neutral.

Implementation: EDASC will onboard companies for the first two months and run the program as a pilot for one year.

Budget:

Totals	Description
\$ 20,278	Service Cost
\$ 500	Advertising / promotion placements
\$ 7,200	Establish program, one-time expense
\$ 6,000	Recruit businesses
\$ 2,880	Program maintenance & capacity
\$ 480	Performance monitoring and reporting
\$ 1,887	Program resource allocation
\$ 39,225	

Evaluation:

- Businesses served
- Hours of counseling utilized
- Business survey responses

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Skagit Job Board Expansion

EDASC proposes opening its Skagit Job Board to all businesses in the county, raising its maximum number of businesses from 100 to 900.

Background and Impact: The Skagit Job Board, which went live in June 2021, has been available exclusively as a no-cost perk to EDASC Investors (members). The Job Board has been constantly at capacity with 100 employers and about 1,500 job listings and is EDASC’s most popular perk due to the nationwide labor shortage.

Expanding this service countywide increases visibility for job openings for Skagit County employers and provides a go-to source for available jobs in Skagit County. Those looking to move here will also see ample opportunities for themselves and spouses.

Implementation: Implementation includes approximately one month of adding new businesses to the job board, and ongoing maintenance to add and remove businesses, and add and remove manually posted jobs.

Budget:

Totals	Description
\$ 10,040	Service Cost
\$ 4,800	Recruit businesses, start-up
\$ 1,000	Advertising / promotion placements
\$ 6,240	Data quality and subscriber maintenance
\$ 1,440	Performance monitoring and reporting
\$ 1,887	Program resource allocation
\$ 25,407	

Evaluation:

- Businesses served
- Jobs added and removed
- website traffic analytics



In-Person Job Fairs

To address the workforce shortage, EDASC proposes hosting three in-person job fairs connecting employers and job seekers with a particular focus on high-demand areas such as manufacturing and construction.



Background and Impact: EDASC in 2021 began hosting virtual job fairs in partnership with WorkSource, connecting employers and job seekers during the pandemic when in-person events were not possible. Through four events, about 750 job seekers attended to interact with nearly 200 employers. With in-person gatherings now possible, EDASC and WorkSource propose hosting three in-person job fairs in Skagit County from Aug. 30, 2022, through Q2 2023. EDASC found during the virtual events that those in the highest demand industries like manufacturing and construction were having more difficulties connecting with employees virtually. Feedback suggested that job seekers in these industries were less likely to attend virtual events.

Implementation: EDASC and WorkSource will collaborate to secure 50 businesses for each event through targeted outreach campaigns. The event will be marketed to job seekers via WorkSource, social media ads, and through traditional media such as local newspapers. The event days will be run by EDASC and WorkSource staff.

Budget:

Totals	Description
\$ 3,000	Facility Rental (1 in-kind)
\$ 3,000	Catering (\$5pp @ 200 svgs)
\$ 1,500	Advertising / promotion placements
\$ 2,880	Staff: Day of Events
\$ 17,280	Event planning and recruitment
\$ 2,880	Event assessment and reporting
\$ 1,887	Program resource allocation
\$ 32,427	

Evaluation:

- Job seeker and employer attendance
- Jobs filled
- Interviews

Career Connect Skagit Summit

To help retain and increase talent in our region, EDASC proposes hosting a pair of in-person Career Connect Skagit Summit events in Q3 2022 and Q3 2023 designed to connect industry and education to develop talent pipelines and ensure learning opportunities meet the needs of employers.

Background and Impact: EDASC in collaboration with Skagit STEM and the Northwest Educational Service District in 2021 hosted the Career Connect Skagit Summit, a virtual workshop showcasing the local organizations and programs that help nurture, engage, and inspire K-12 through college-age youth. About 40 businesses attended the event the 1½-hour event via Zoom.



EDASC’s top initiative has been to help businesses address workforce issues. Most recently in 2022, EDASC has supported the development of multiple apprenticeship, internship, and job placement programs through its work with local educational institutions, most prominently the Northwest Career and Technical Academy. The strongest barrier to the development of these programs continues to be the lack of awareness from business owners about the existence of these types of institutions and the overall lack of connection with education. EDASC proposes hosting the Career Connect Skagit Summits -- in-person this time instead of virtual – to continue fostering new connections and new workforce pipeline opportunities.

Implementation: The Career Connect Skagit Summits will be held at the Northwest Career and Technical Academy, which has event space for as many as 400 attendees. The event will feature panels from local education leaders, EDASC colleagues from the Department of Commerce, business leaders who have developed their own workforce pipeline with EDASC’s support, and more. Partners will include the Northwest Educational Service District 189, the Northwest Career and Technical Academy, Skagit Valley College, local school districts, business leaders, and the Department of Labor and Industries.

Budget:

Totals	Description
\$ -	Facility Rental (in-kind)
\$ 2,000	Catering (\$5pp @ 200 svgs)
\$ 1,920	Staff: Day of Events
\$ 11,520	Event planning and recruitment
\$ 3,840	Community outreach
\$ 1,920	Event assessment and reporting
\$ 1,887	Program resource allocation
\$ 23,087	

Evaluation:

- Attendance
- Workforce development programs fostered
- Business knowledge gained based on pre- and post- surveys

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Oregon RAIN

EDASC proposes partnering with the nonprofit Oregon RAIN for a two-year commitment to accelerate and foster the growth of an entrepreneurial ecosystem that is inclusive, sustainable and creates new businesses, jobs, and sources of capital.

Background and Impact: The State Department of Commerce and the Washington Economic Development Association in 2021 introduced EDASC to Oregon RAIN, a team of entrepreneurial ecosystem-builders, that takes a system-level view of the entrepreneurship and innovation assets in a community and region, connects entrepreneurs and innovators to key resources, and works with partners to fill gaps to elevate the entire ecosystem and enable a culture of possibilities.

Oregon RAIN accelerates and expands the following areas it serves:

- New business starts
- Growth of existing businesses
- Engagement by underserved populations
- Job creation & retention
- Mentor engagement
- Capital activation
- Partnerships in the ecosystem
- Policymaker engagement
- Media coverage about the ecosystem

Its programs have been successful throughout Oregon, with every community providing positive feedback while continuing to fund their programs after the first two years. Since 2014, it has worked in 30 cities in Oregon with populations ranging from 265 to 175,000.

Implementation: The program is turnkey in that Oregon RAIN has only to be given the greenlight and funding to begin operating.

Budget:

Totals	Description
\$ 168,000	Full-time staff person
\$ 57,600	Community activation
\$ 5,000	Technology
\$ 80,000	RAIN toolkit + support team
\$ 310,600	

Evaluation: RAIN will track and report on various metrics such as jobs, new businesses, industries, capital, education needs, etc., to show how the program progresses. They will produce annual impact reports and provide regular report-outs.