



WHATCOM COUNTY
**HEALTH AND
COMMUNITY
SERVICES**



UNITED WAY
Whatcom County

2025 Community Impact Grants Common Application

PART A: COVER PAGE

Please fill out this form completely. Note that individual funding agencies have specific grant requirements and will require supplemental materials. Please check the agency website below for details.

To which source are you applying?

- City of Bellingham’s Housing or Human/Social Services NOFA:
<https://cob.org/services/housing/funding-opportunities-2/partnerships-funding>
- United Way of Whatcom County’s Community Impact Fund:
<https://www.unitedwaywhatcom.org/help-for-organizations/>
- Whatcom County Health and Community Services:
<https://www.whatcomcounty.us/Bids.aspx>

Agency Contact Information:

Agency Name: Work Opportunities

DBA (if applicable): N/A

EIN: 91-0754419 UEID (from SAM.gov): CSRFVRUJVVA7

Mailing address: 192 E Bakerview Rd Suite 202 Bellingham WA 98226

Website: www.workopportunities.org

General phone: 425-778-2156

State of Washington Business License Number(s): 319-007-975

Executive Director (or authorized representative):

Name: Carrie Morehouse

Title (if not ED): Executive Director

Email: carrie@workopportunities.org

Phone: 425-778-2156

Application Contact (If different):

Name: Julia Smith

Title: Whatcom County Program Manager

Email: julia@workopportunities.org

Phone: 425-260-5975

Program Information:

Program Name: N/A – General Funding Request

Program Address: 192 E Bakerview Rd Suite 202 Bellingham WA 98225

Are all program services delivered at this address? Yes No



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Funding Request: The award amount is dependent on the funding organization. Please see individual funder’s supplemental materials for more information about the funds available.

How much funding per year are you requesting for this program?

\$ 24,000

Total Annual Project Budget:

\$ 1,456,550

Annual Organizational Budget:

\$ 5,213,136

PART B: AGENCY INFORMATION

Please limit your responses to no more than two pages for questions 1-5.

1. **Agency Mission.** Please paste or copy your agency’s mission statement below.

Mission: Work Opportunities addresses inequities for individuals with disabilities through inclusive employment and community participation.

Vision: We envision a welcoming community where each and every person belongs and is valued for their individual gifts and abilities.

2. **Agency Beneficiaries.** Briefly describe the intent of your agency’s programs and who primarily benefits from them. Please describe your organization’s impact, specifying the number of beneficiaries or clients served per year and their demographics.

We provide employment services for adults with disabilities in Whatcom County. Our services include employment assessments and exploration activities, job placement, and job retention/coaching services. We work with clients from all over Whatcom County with a wide variety of disabilities and support needs.

At the time of this application, we serve 148 clients in Whatcom County. Of those 148, 77 are working in the community and receiving job coaching services, 13 are students within the Community Transitions program receiving job exploration services, 55 are either looking for work or are in other assessment type activities with us, and 3 of our clients are in our Community Inclusion program which helps folks of retirement age stay connected to their community, typically through volunteering. The majority of our clients receive Social Security and are of lower income. In 2024, we served 187 clients in Whatcom County and helped create 32 new jobs that are fully integrated. Our clients are paid by their employers like any other employee. Our goal is to help create a more inclusive Whatcom County.



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The majority of our services are job coaching services. This looks like a Work Opportunities Employment Specialist going on site at the client's job to assist in any way that's needed. This can look like helping advocate for accommodations, creating accommodations to help our client be more independent at work, assisting with transitioning between tasks, thoroughness prompts, assisting with building natural supports with co-workers, etc. All of our services are individualized and our ultimate goal is to help our client be as independent as possible at work.

In 2024, our clients worked 30,743.84 hours and earned \$546,549.90 in wages.

3. **Qualifications and expertise.** Briefly summarize your agency's qualifications and expertise (e.g., years of operation, accreditations, experience of staff members, and number of volunteers). Please mention any recent major organizational changes.

Work Opportunities was founded in 1963 in the basement of a Shakey's Pizza in Edmonds, Washington by a group of parents, all who had children with disabilities. The parents were concerned at the time that their children would graduate high school and have nothing meaningful to do. Work Opportunities came up to Whatcom County in 2007 to fill a need in the community at that time. Since 2007, the program has continued to grow and the need for these services continues to grow as well.

Because of this growth, we have outgrown our current office space. We recently purchased a space that will allow us to continue to grow and will allow us to serve more clients in Whatcom County. This United Way funding would help our program stabilize in this new space and will help allow for additional staffing which is desperately needed.

Management in Whatcom County includes two staff who have been with the organization for 9 years, both are also WWU Human Services graduates. Our two Team Leads have been with the organization for 12 and 10 years. Other staff come from a variety of professional and educational backgrounds.

4. **Racial Equity and Social Justice.** What steps has your organization taken to address issues of racial equity and social justice within your agency? Which steps are complete, and which are planned or ongoing?

Work Opportunities instituted an internal Equity Committee in 2021 after a year of consultation/training from Kaya Strategik, a racial justice consulting group. The first Equity Committee meeting was held in November 2021. In 2021, the Committee focused on participating in anti-racist training to be able to support the larger organizational staff in their training moving forward. The trainings provided to the Committee included a working session with Raging 2 Equity in September 2021 to gain clarity and finalize our committee's purpose, structure, and responsibilities, define roles and responsibilities, and create our first strategy chart with priority goals for 2021 – 2022. Work Opportunities has now participated in consultation with other racial equity



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organizations including Racing 2 Supported Employment (WISE), DSK- for Multicultural Families. Since 2022, Work Opportunities has provided staff with the following trainings: “What Does it Mean to be Part of an Anti-Racist Organization w/ Racing 2 Equity” (May 2022), “Equity Committee Strategic Session: Mission & Values w/ Racing 2 Equity” (a beginning work session to start evaluating our organization’s core priorities through an anti-racist lens – November 2022), “Race and Social Justice (RSJ) Foundations w/ Dr. Sharon Knight” (June 2023), “Moving Racial Equity Forward at Work Opportunities: Anti-Racist Tools In Employment Advocacy w/ Racing 2 Equity” (September 2023), and “Supporting Transgender, Gender Non-Conforming, and other LGBTQIA+ Support Strategies w/ Work Opportunities Program Management” (September 2024). The committee is currently working with Open Doors for Multicultural Families to create a two-part training for all-staff on best practices supporting individuals with multicultural language needs in March 2025. As part of this process, surveys will be distributed to staff to gauge current understanding of race/social justice concepts as well as glean staff desires for additional equity training. The committee is also sourcing a training as requested by staff to learn about microaggressions. Other committee objectives have included updating our organization’s mission, vision, and values to align with our Equity Committee’s purpose which aims, “... to collaboratively guide Work Opportunities towards safe, responsible, and increasingly accessible services free from discrimination to advance racial equity and social justice as we strive to become an anti-racist organization,”. We have displayed a commitment to equity on our website, including creating a resource that provides multiple publications and various forms of media hosting educational race and social justice content written or created by BIPOC or from points of view of lived experience. The Equity Committee implemented an annual evaluation item for all staff members to begin conversations about employee interaction with anti-racist learning. In January 2024, the committee added, “makes effort to learn and apply socially-just/anti-racist equity concepts” as an item in the “job knowledge” section of our performance evaluations for all staff. Aside from our offered trainings, all-staff are welcome to participate in quarterly “open” Equity Committee meetings to learn more about how the committee operates and how we identify appropriate objectives to work on annually. They’re also able to access the learning resource available on the commitment to equity portion of our website. Ultimately, our organizational goal is to actively participate in understanding, developing, implementing, and assessing anti-racist service delivery standards throughout our practices. We’re embarking on continued learning to understand how best to provide anti-racist knowledge concepts and moving through staff turnover, gauging potential staff interest in anti-racism during the hiring process, gathering training and support to revamp our hiring process to reflect the most equitable hiring practices possible, and ultimately finding ways to best support our BIPOC community, especially those who experience disabilities and are looking for employment.

5. **Agency Funding.** List your organization’s most significant funding sources from greatest to least (including the United Way, Whatcom County Health and Community Services and City of Bellingham); dollar amounts are not necessary. Significant funding sources can be defined as sources that make up more than 15% of your program budget. If you have many funding sources, you may



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list them by category (i.e., federal, state, foundations, individual donors). Please mention any anticipated or recent changes in your future funding or financial position.

state, foundations, individual donors). recent changes in your future funding or

DDA program services make up 71.1% of our revenues which includes long term coaching support for our clients with the highest support needs. State DVR services make up 14.57% (shorter term funding for clients who are more independent), fundraising-revenue received from private donors, employer matching, etc, makes up 6.7%, the other 7.63% comes from tenants, and small services provided (production, bookkeeping).

PART C: PROGRAM INFORMATION

Please limit your responses to no more than two pages for questions 6-8.

6. **Program Summary.** Briefly summarize the program and its core activities in one or two sentences.

At Work Opportunities in Whatcom County, we provide employment supports for adults with disabilities. This includes discovery activities to help clients come up with a job goal as well as job development services and job coaching services once they're in a paid job.

7. **Program Purpose.** Identify the community need(s) that the program addresses. What are the measurable outcomes that will result from the services provided?

People with disabilities see a much higher rate of poverty versus folks who don't experience a disability. Because of our services, our clients are able to get support with requesting accommodations at work and in the interview process which can help our folks get hired/retained in their positions. Helping clients find jobs in our community also helps encourage inclusion both within the workplace itself and for patrons of the businesses that our clients work at. This helps Whatcom County as a whole be a more inviting and desirable place to live for our clients.

As mentioned, we helped 32 clients find new positions in 2024 and supported many more with retaining the jobs that they already have through job coaching services.

8. **Program Status.** How long has this program been in operation in Whatcom County? Since your last application, have you made any changes in how you offer services? If this is a new program, how far along is your agency in the planning process? What resources has your organization already invested?

Work Opportunities has been a nonprofit since 1963 and we've been serving Whatcom County since 2007. We also serve north King, Snohomish, and Skagit counties. There have been no major changes since our last application through it should be mentioned that state funding for some of our clients is looking more unstable in 2025. Further, a recent rate study for our services revealed that the current rate that we receive does not cover the actual cost of our services. Because of this, additional funding is necessary for the continuation of our program. This funding would be used for general program



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operating costs and would be helping
 currently have a waitlist of 35 folks looking
 be huge in our ability to take on more clients and increase our presence in Whatcom County.

further staffing of our program. We
 for job support. Additional staffing would



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UNITED WAY FOCUS AREAS

1. To support financial stability in Whatcom County, we have identified three funding priorities below, basic needs, economic mobility, and breaking the cycle of poverty. Choose **one** category below that best aligns with your agency/program:

Basic Needs

- Food security
- Stable, attainable, affordable housing
- Health and mental health care access

Economic Mobility

- Financial literacy and training
- Vocational readiness training and support
- Adult education programs

Breaking the Cycle of Poverty

- Affordable child care and early learning programs
- Academic programs to increase student attendance and achievement
- Parenting support
- Addiction treatment and recovery
- Abuse prevention

2. Please describe how your program/agency services align with the category you selected above.

Work Opportunities supports adults with disabilities in finding and maintaining work. We've been in Whatcom County since 2007 and have been a nonprofit since 1963, also serving King, Snohomish, and Skagit counties. Since coming up to Whatcom County, we've helped hundreds of clients with varying disabilities find integrated employment in our community. Our clients are paid by their employer just like their co-workers. These jobs help create a more inclusive Whatcom County and we've seen some incredible results from the hard work of our Employment Specialists.

In addition to helping folks find jobs, we also provide job readiness services for individuals who either need a little help figuring out what a good job goal would be for them or who are first time job seekers. We do this through facilitating assessments in our community to determine work speed, preferences, ability to accept feedback, potential accommodation needs, etc. These



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assessments help us determine a job goal that will result in long-term, sustainable employment for our clients.

Once our client is in their new job, we provide on-site support for them in whatever ways they need. Our services are completely individualized and our goal is to help our clients be as independent as possible in their jobs. We do this through creating and requesting accommodations, supporting clients with self-advocacy to their employer, etc. These ongoing supports at work help our clients to remain stable in their positions which allows for continued economic success.

3. Please provide two or three key outcomes you measure that indicate progress toward your mission. List the number of clients being served, what you track, and the most recent results.

At Work Opportunities, we track many different indicators to determine our success. A few that we focus on include number of jobs developed in the year, total wages our clients earned in the year, and number of assessments/job readiness contracts that were completed with clients.

In 2024, we served 187 clients. At the end of 2024, we were serving 148 clients, 55% of them were working in integrated jobs in our community and were receiving ongoing job coaching supports from our staff. We developed 32 new jobs (an increase from 30 the year prior). Of those 32 new jobs, 81% are still active today. Our clients earned \$546,549.90 in wages and worked 30,743.84 hours. We completed 51 assessments with clients in 2024 to help them gauge job readiness and to help them come up with a sustainable job goal.

With additional funding, we would be able to increase the amount of staff that we have. We currently have a waitlist of over 35 individuals who would like services but we currently have full caseloads. There's certainly a need for this service in Whatcom County and we would love to be able to build capacity to help even more individuals.

4. How does United Way's investment help meet the funding needs of the organization or program? Please give specific examples of how United Way funds are/will be utilized. United Way's investment is a significant help in covering the gap between what the state reimburses us for supported employment services and what it actually costs to provide them. Currently, the state pays about \$20 less per hour than what it actually costs to provide these services.

This funding helps us:

- Keep services running smoothly – It ensures our employment specialists can keep providing job coaching, job development, and long-term support without interruption.
- Train and grow our team – So our staff can be even better equipped to help people succeed in the workforce.



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- Expand and improve programs – Allowing us to build relationships with more businesses, create customized job opportunities, and find new ways to support both employees and employers.
- Cover essential costs – Like technology and transportation support that aren't fully reimbursed by the state.

With United Way's support, we can continue helping people with disabilities find and keep meaningful jobs, making sure they have the opportunity to be independent and fully included in their communities.

5. Briefly describe how your agency/program will utilize community partnerships or coordinate with other agencies (UW partner agencies, other community non-profits, government agencies, local companies, schools, etc.) to advance your work/mission. Work Opportunities collaborates heavily with the Max Higbee Center and the Arc of Whatcom County. We've helped train Max Higbee Center on a new program that they are taking on. Many of our clients access services from these organizations as well as ours. We've also worked with the Opportunity Council to help some of our folks connect with housing resources. We're committed to this county and to helping be a part of this strong nonprofit network.
6. United Way focuses on ALICE households in Whatcom County. ALICE refers to households that earn more than the Federal Poverty Level but not enough to afford the basic cost of living in our community.
 - a. What percentage of your program recipients are below the ALICE threshold based on the survival budget for Whatcom County? Nearly all of our clients are on Medicaid and fall below the ALICE threshold – likely 95%
 - b. What percentage of your program recipients are ALICE (above FPL but below the ALICE threshold)? Roughly 4%
 - c. Do you collect client data by zip code? No – currently by county

Visit the [United for ALICE](#) website for the most recent (2024 report) Whatcom County data to determine the survival budget guidelines for ALICE households.

7. Please share an example of a client who was helped by your services.
**Note: if you receive a 2025 Community Impact Grant, this story may be shared on your behalf by United Way for the purpose of our community fundraising. Names and details may be altered for privacy.*

We began working with our client Ben back in 2015. He was a student at the time with the Community Transitions program within the Bellingham School District. This program is for 18-21 year olds who accessed Special Education while they were in school. It aims



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to help these students gain life and vocational skills so that they have an easier transition into adulthood. As a result of our services, we found Ben a job at Trader Joes as front end support (gathering carts, facing items, store cleaning, etc.). Since that time, Ben has been able to take on additional tasks and hours at Trader Joes. He's an incredibly well established staff and has been able to build a network of friends at work. Work Opportunities supports him for a portion of all of his shifts to help remind him about spatial awareness and navigating the busy store and parking lot but Ben works the majority of his shifts independently at this point. As a result of our supports and Ben's ongoing success at work, he was recently able to move out into his own apartment and even adopted his very own cat. Ben often has co-workers come over to watch sports together and he's been thrilled to build this kind of independence in his adulthood. Ben is a joy to work with and Work Opportunities will be there as a support for him for as long as he needs it.

Application Checklist:

The United Way Addendum and all materials listed below must be submitted by **5pm on Thursday, March 6, 2025.**

Please submit all materials by email to hello@unitedwaywhatcom.org