



Strengthening the **health-serving**
WORKFORCE

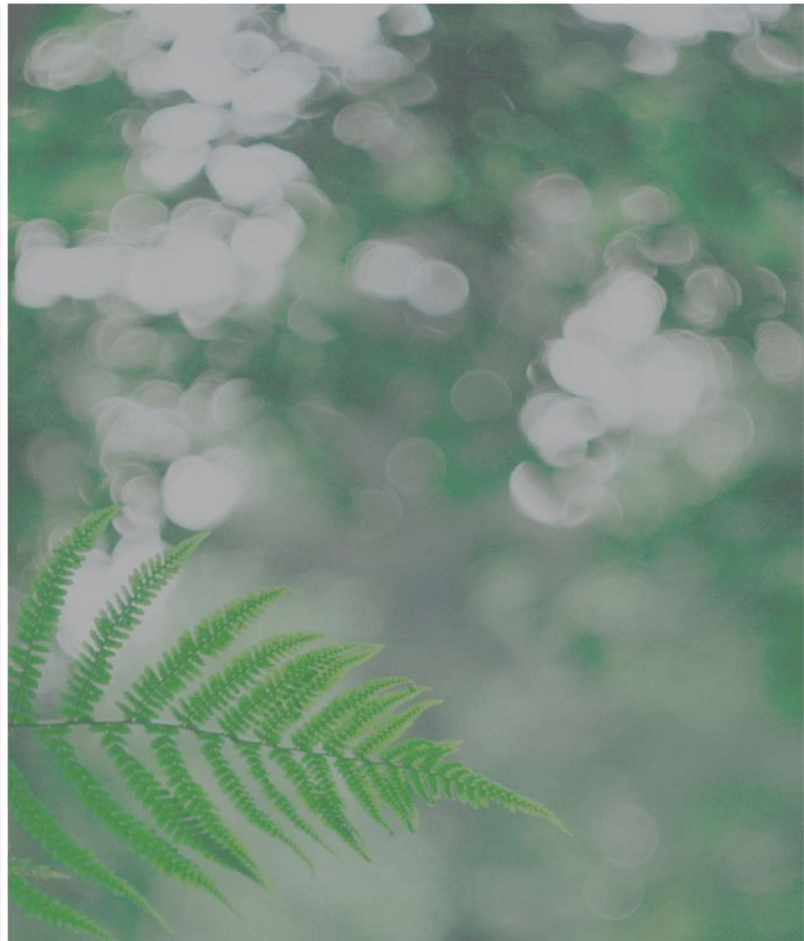
A look at the health-serving
workforce across the
Olympic region

*Recruitment
Engagement
Development
Retention*

Olympic 
COMMUNITY of HEALTH

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Thank you to all who shared experiences, successes, recommendations, and insights on this important topic. This report would not be possible without partner input.

Executive Summary

Why Olympic Community of Health?

Olympic Community of Health (OCH) is committed to supporting the health-serving workforce across the Olympic region, which spans Clallam, Jefferson, and Kitsap Counties, and includes the seven sovereign nations of the Hoh, Jamestown S’Klallam, Lower Elwha Klallam, Makah, Port Gamble S’Klallam, Quileute, and Suquamish Tribes. OCH serves as an advocate by bringing together partners in creative ways to strengthen the way the Olympic region cares for local communities. The best approach to fostering health is to look to the community—elevating voices of those most affected and working together to foster a region of healthy people, thriving communities. Strengthening the ones who provide services and care is an essential part of fostering individual and population health (OCH’s commitments can be found on page 20).



The health-serving workforce includes anyone working to improve the health of the community.



Primary care providers • Behavioral health providers • Hospitals • Tribes • Dental providers • Community-based organizations • First Responders • Social service agencies • and more!

Why this report?

During COVID-19, OCH heard from a lot of diverse health partners about the challenges around retaining and sustaining a talented workforce. Through this report, OCH sought to learn how those in the health field are innovating to recruit, engage, develop, and retain employees. A strong workforce is key to the mission of OCH and that of local partners.

This report is a step towards better understanding the strengths and opportunities of the health-serving workforce across Clallam, Jefferson, and Kitsap Counties, and the sovereign Tribal nations within the Olympic region. Everyone has a role to play in this important work. Through regional reporting and conversations with a diverse group of local partners, OCH has elevated community recommendations in this report. Recommendations include (full list can be found on page 18):

- **Partner and collaborate with local educational institutions**
- **Implement creative strategies to show team appreciation**
- **Advocate for increased Medicaid reimbursement rates**
- **Collaborate with other agencies to creatively fill workforce gaps (shared staffing models, contract with partners, etc.)**
- **Creatively work with local partners to identify and help secure affordable housing for staff**

The Olympic region is truly stronger together. OCH hopes this report serves as a useful tool and resource for partners in collaboratively addressing and supporting the health-serving workforce.

Background

The health-serving workforce includes anyone working to improve the health of the community. Health systems are most effective when supported by a thriving workforce.

Partnerships among a variety of groups and communities are a key component to fostering a healthier, more equitable three-county region.



This report is directly informed by the work of OCH’s partners in behavioral health, primary care, hospitals, dental health, public health, community-based, and Tribal settings. As such, there is room for everyone in this important work. OCH aims to support a strong and healthy workforce, which ultimately produces a ripple effect that positively impacts individual and population health.

But first, before diving into the challenges and opportunities, take a moment to explore an overview of the Olympic region, its unique communities, and the socioeconomic factors that contribute to a sustainable workforce.



See appendix A for a discussion guide that can be used to help digest the information within this report and apply key takeaways to your workplace.

Strengthening the health-serving workforce
Discussion guide

Which challenge(s) resonate the most with your organization or Tribe in regards to each workforce element?

| Recruitment | Engagement | Development | Retention |
|--|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Competitive salaries and benefits | <input type="checkbox"/> Capacity to collaborate | <input type="checkbox"/> Advancement opportunities | <input type="checkbox"/> Compensation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hiring | <input type="checkbox"/> Managing burnout | <input type="checkbox"/> Time management | <input type="checkbox"/> Work-life balance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Qualified candidates | <input type="checkbox"/> Flexibility | <input type="checkbox"/> Budget | <input type="checkbox"/> Culture |

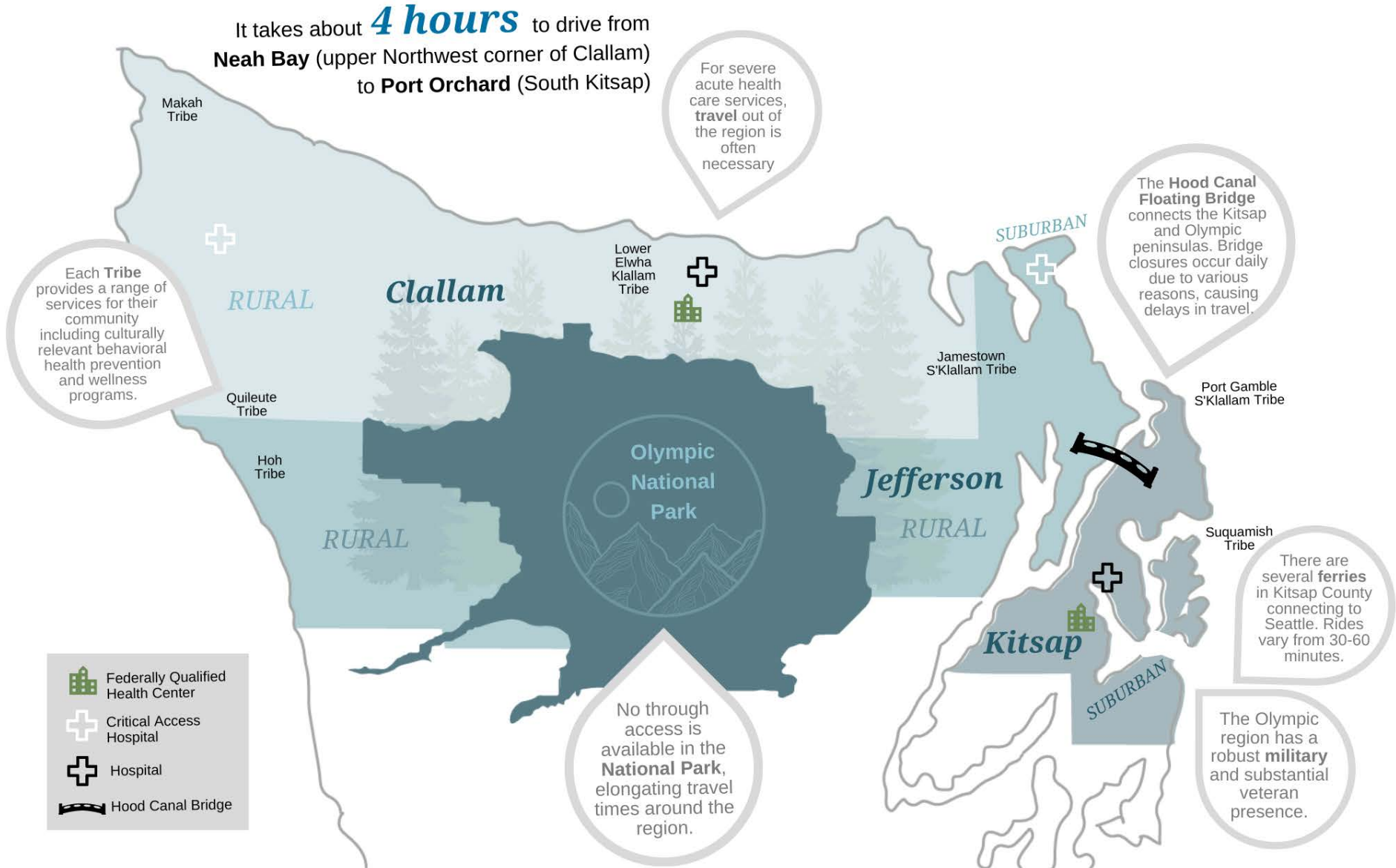
Based off the challenges selected above, note any successes from the report that may be good solutions for your organization or Tribe. See appendix ___ on page ___ for full list of partner successes.

What are some low-cost ways you can enhance the ways your organization addresses the challenge(s) that resonate most?

What additional supports do you need in order to implement ideas listed above?

Overview of the Olympic region

The Olympic region spans Clallam, Jefferson, and Kitsap Counties, and includes the seven sovereign nations of the Hoh, Jamestown S’Klallam, Lower Elwha Klallam, Makah, Port Gamble S’Klallam, Quileute, and Suquamish Tribes. The unique communities and diverse geographic landscapes across the region all impact the services available and the way individuals and families seek care. Below is a bird’s eye view of the makeup of the Olympic and Kitsap Peninsulas and some key notes to help understand *what makes the Olympic region*.



Demographics

The Olympic region has a significantly older population when compared to the state average.ⁱ ⁱⁱ This impacts the region-wide pool of working adults that make up the workforce as well as the demand for senior services. Additionally, most of the region's population is whiteⁱⁱⁱ, and the primary language is English^{iv}, which leads to a low degree of racial diversity within the workforce. The average household is just over 2 individuals^v and has a median income of \$60,000^{vi}. For every \$1 earned by a household in the Olympic region, a household in King County earns \$1.50.^{vii} When we look at childcare, only 1 in 5 families in Jefferson and Kitsap have their childcare needs met.^{viii} Although Clallam's rate is double that of Jefferson and Kitsap, childcare persists as a regional challenge.

Education

While the majority of adults in the region have a high school diploma, less than half of those individuals continue to complete a bachelor's degree or higher.^x Within the Olympic region, there are limited higher education options. Olympic College and Peninsula College are the two community colleges present. Several State universities have partnerships with these community colleges and other community-based organizations to provide select programs within the region. Many employers with open positions that require higher education end up recruiting from out of the region.

Transportation

Public transportation is severely limited throughout most of the Olympic Peninsula and many locations are only accessible by private vehicle. The Olympic Peninsula is home to the beautiful Olympic National Park. No through access is available in the National Park, elongating travel times. Access from the Olympic Peninsula to Kitsap County is commonly made via the Hood Canal Bridge, which closes daily for various reasons. The average household across the three counties owns two vehicles.^{xi}

Housing

There is an affordable housing shortfall and a small percentage of vacant homes in the Olympic region^{xii}. Without quality and affordable housing options within a reasonable commute, the workforce is not supported in a way that allows them to effectively meet the health needs of the region. Looking at fair market value for rentals, each county in the region rates as "very high" compared to the national average and more expensive than most of the state of Washington.^{xiii}

AGE 1 in 3 are over 65 years old



4 out of 5 are white

19 out of 20 speak solely English at home



Average household size

2.3 people

Median household income **\$60,000**



Average monthly mortgage is

>30% of income^{ix}



1 in 5 families in Jefferson and Kitsap have their childcare needs met



9 out of 10

have a high school diploma

3 out of 10

have a bachelor's degree or higher



9 out of 10 adults are employed



Average household has

2 cars

Cost of living by county^{xiv}



<
lower than
average

State
average

>
higher than
average

Introduction to this work

A thriving health-serving workforce requires attention to recruitment, engagement, development, and retention of staff.

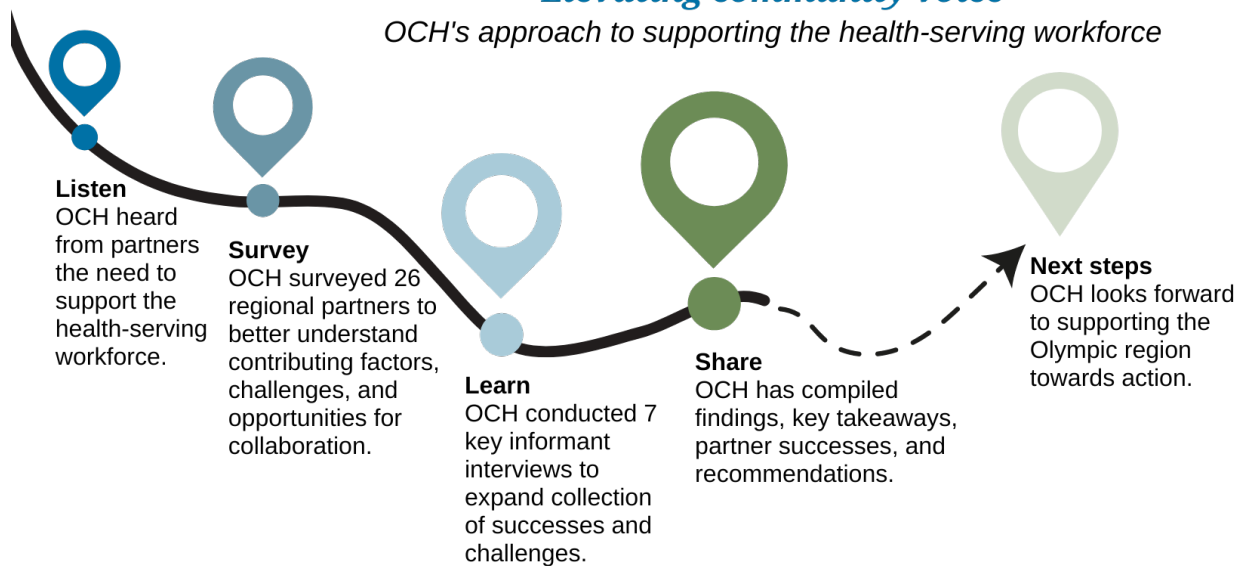
- Recruitment refers to the hiring of new people.
- Engagement refers to whether employees care about their work and feel that their efforts make a difference.
- Development refers to opportunities for growth.
- Retention refers to ensuring existing employees remain happy.



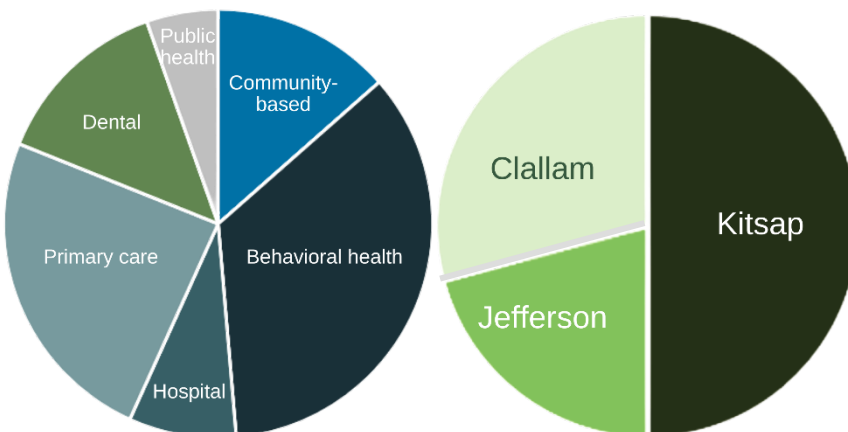
OCH explored current challenges, successes, and opportunities that resonate with local partners related to the four workforce elements. These findings can be used to inform future collaboration and problem-solving to better support the health-serving workforce. OCH centers regional voices in order to create spaces for collaboration and community-informed solutions.

Elevating community voice

OCH's approach to supporting the health-serving workforce



Survey participants by:
partner type & county

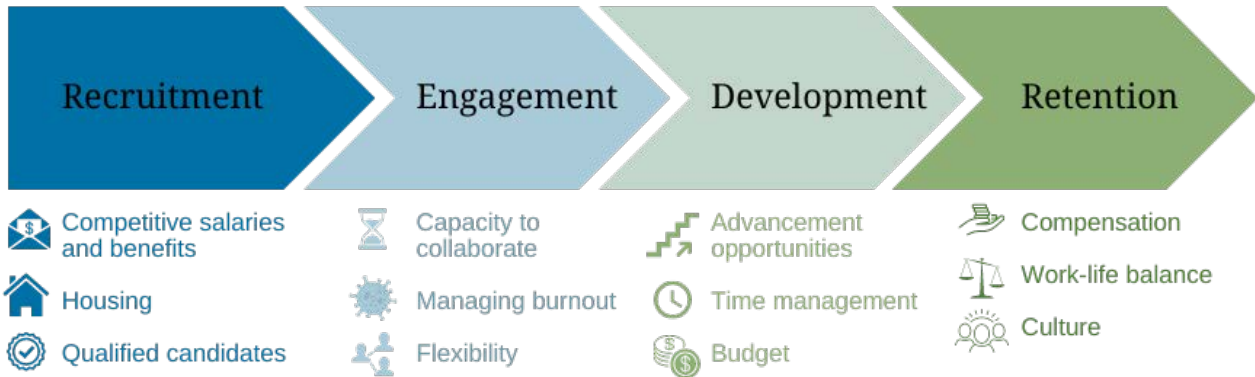


Survey participants represent a wide variety of fields invested in supporting community health. Additionally, partners from all three counties in the Olympic region shared their voice. OCH recognizes that this is not a comprehensive report, but rather serves as a jumping off point.

26 survey responses
7 key informant interviews

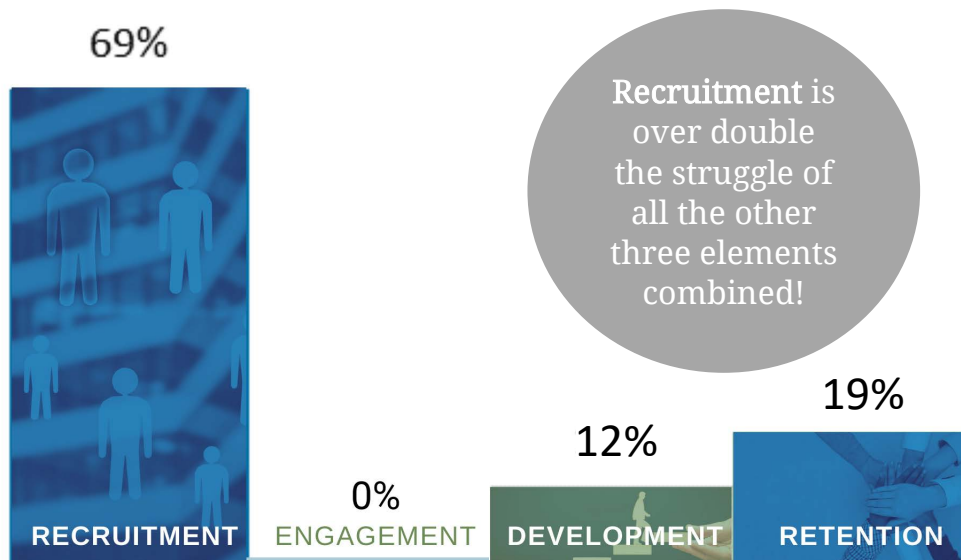
Key themes and takeaways

For each element of the workforce cycle (recruitment, engagement, development, and retention), three key themes arose as contributing factors from OCH survey results and key informant interviews.



In addition to big picture themes, it is also important to note that **recruitment** was ranked the most difficult to address. In contrast, 0% of survey participants listed **engagement** as a top struggle, suggesting engagement may be the easiest workforce element to address.

What workforce element is your organization or Tribe most struggling to find solutions to address?

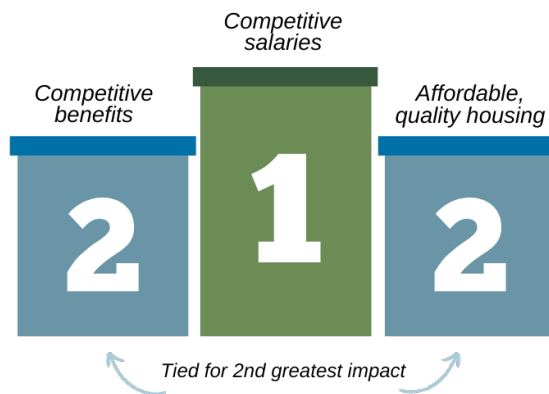


It is evident, throughout the various background activities, that **there are many solutions in the region that could be implemented accessibly among all partner types**, despite geography, organization size, or available resources. Partners expressed the powerful impact of employee appreciation, opportunities for growth, and work-life balance. These three factors, along with many others that are mentioned throughout this report, can be catered to the unique interests and needs of the health-serving workforce at both a team and individual level. OCH encourages creative and collaborative approaches to lifting and strengthening the health-serving workforce in efficient and effective ways. Throughout the next few sections of this report, OCH will explore challenges and successes affiliated with each workforce element to hopefully inspire creative solutions.

Recruitment

Recruitment refers to the hiring of new employees. Recruitment was identified as the most challenging element of the workforce process. Common challenges included offering competitive salaries and benefits, limited availability of affordable housing, and reaching qualified candidates to fill specific gaps. Partners across the Olympic region are implementing creative solutions to address recruitment barriers.

Greatest *impact* on recruitment



Common challenges



Competitive salaries and benefits



Housing



Qualified candidates

Partner solutions

Creative benefit packages

Temporary housing support

Residency and practicum programs

Student loan repayment program

Focus on growth within the agency

Competitive salaries and benefits

Competitive salaries and benefits play a huge role in recruiting a strong health-serving workforce. Nine out of 10 partners listed this as the factor with the greatest impact on recruitment. This poses a significant challenge for the Olympic region, as it is difficult to compete with urban neighbors in Seattle and across the nation, especially considering the rising cost of living^{xiv} in all three Olympic counties.

Partners that provide health services for clients enrolled in Medicaid heavily depend on fixed reimbursement rates to establish employee salaries. The smaller, more rural nature of the communities many partners serve leads to significantly lower reimbursement funds when compared with more urban areas.

Competitive salaries and benefits, though the biggest impact on recruitment, are an opportunity for success sharing and collaboration. Less than half of OCH's partners report successes in "competitive salaries" and/or "competitive benefits".

One partner shared, "Reimbursement rates are not keeping up with the cost of care, even for Federally Qualified Health Centers where reimbursement is generally higher."

Success:

Improved benefits, Peninsula Behavioral Health

Peninsula Behavioral Health has worked hard to creatively provide and improve employee benefit packages, as salaries are more difficult to adjust due to reimbursement rates. They recently started providing flexible health benefit funds that can be used by employees to support their own unique health needs outside of supports that use health savings funds. This benefit has been utilized to purchase new hiking shoes, pedicures, kayaks, gym memberships, and more. This is an equitable approach that allows employees to pick the activity that would support their individual health, instead of applying the same perk to everyone regardless of how it resonates. They shared that this benefit provides, **“...the flexibility to use it as they see fit. With COVID-19 we increased the amount because we knew people needed more support.”**

Housing

Over half of OCH’s partners reported that “affordable and quality housing leads” have great impact on recruitment. Housing is particularly critical among partners in Clallam and Jefferson counties as a large proportion of vacant homes are used for seasonal or recreational use.^{xv} Often times a candidate will be an excellent fit for the job, but is unable to secure affordable, quality housing within the initial few weeks of the job. Without secure housing, candidates cannot sustainably commit to positions. One partner describes, **“We would like to offer more money to our staff and allow part time positions, but limited housing prevents that.”**

When looking at the impact of housing on recruitment through the lens of partner type, all regional hospitals identified this as the biggest challenge, compared to just over half of primary care providers.



Success:

Temporary housing support for new hires, Jamestown Family Health Clinic

Due to the challenge in finding housing, Jamestown Family Health Clinic offers temporary housing support on a case-by-case basis for new recruits moving from out of the region. Historically, Jamestown has provided up to three months of housing financial support for new hires, to provide them with a buffer to find adequate housing in their first few weeks on the job. Jamestown Family Health Clinic also owns a couple of rental homes to support new hires who are moving to the region and struggling to find housing. These approaches help recruit and maintain quality workforce, as they reduce the risk of someone signing on and then having to withdraw due to inability to find housing.

Qualified workforce

Recruiting strong, qualified candidates is a challenge in the Olympic region since the only higher education options within the region are community colleges and university extension programs. This lack of universities within the region leads to a lack of local candidates to fill health-serving workforce positions that require specific education requirements. See **appendix B** for ideas on how to spruce up job descriptions and articulate the value of working in rural health settings.

When asked about the top 3 significant challenges or barriers to recruitment, “Availability of a qualified workforce” was one of the top themes that came up. Competition for qualified workers is a key component of this challenge, as partners may be competing against each other, in addition to competing with bigger organizations outside of the region.

Certain gaps are tougher to fill, making the competition to hire that much stronger. Dental assistants, medical assistants, and therapists were the most notable gaps among our partners.

Rural communities experience additional challenges to recruit qualified workforce. One partner on the West End of Clallam County described this challenge, “due to the remoteness of our location sometimes the closest specialist is 4 hours away.”

Successes:

Partner with local community college, North Olympic Healthcare Network

North Olympic Healthcare Network has found success with recruitment of Medical Assistants (MAs) through an ongoing training relationship with a local community college. This relationship was cultivated over years and provides an opportunity to let MA students train and get to know their clinic, staff, and mission. They find the work environment attractive and having mutual familiarity facilitates recruitment in a competitive environment.

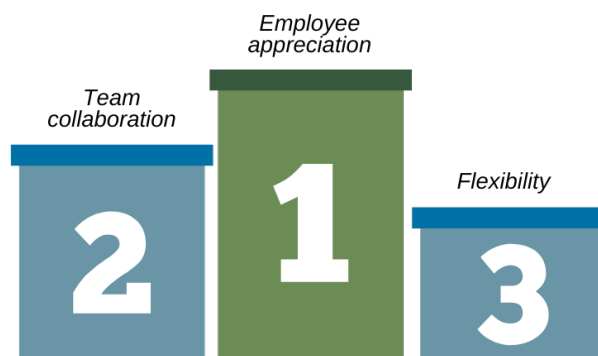
Nursing residency, Jefferson Healthcare

To address the challenge of recruiting nurses, Jefferson Healthcare developed and implemented a nursing residency program for their Acute Care Unit, Intensive Care Unit, Emergency Department, Home Health, and Family Birth areas. They were extraordinarily successful in recruiting and hired nine new nurses through this approach. They were intentional about creating new marketing strategies and ran a very specific campaign over the course of a few months, went to job fairs, and connected with schools.




Engagement

Engagement refers to whether employees care about their work and feel that their efforts make a difference. Engagement is a key component of supporting the health-serving workforce, as high engagement leads to strong development and ultimately increased retention. Common barriers to engagement include limited time and resources, staff burnout, and lack of flexibility. OCH is inspired by the creative approaches across the region to foster engagement, especially during a pandemic.

Greatest *impact* on engagement



Common challenges

-  Capacity to collaborate
-  Managing burnout
-  Flexibility

Partner solutions

- Grow individual specialties
- Set individual goals
- Regular staff training
- Staff appreciation parties
- Department competitions

Capacity to collaborate

Over half of OCH partners identified “devoted staff time for team collaboration and team building” as having great impact on engagement. The impact of opportunities for collaboration and team building was particularly strong among partners in Kitsap County, as well as partners working in behavioral health and/or primary care fields.

One of the largest barriers to team collaboration is lack of capacity. This challenge has only been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, as staff shortages and increase in demand have led to limited time and resources.

Though carving out time for collaboration is often a challenge, it is an area that over half of OCH partners have identified successes within.

Successes:

Employee-informed solutions, Kitsap Children’s Clinic

To better understand staff capacity, Kitsap Children’s Clinic conducted an internal survey. They heard from over half the staff and received many great suggestions for reasonable improvements that could be made to improve workload. They embraced staff’s input and implemented those changes which increased employee satisfaction.



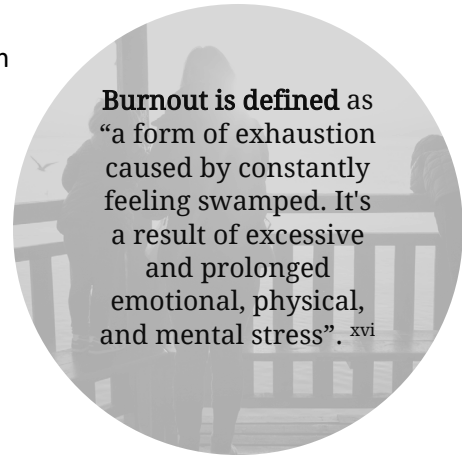
Monthly dedicated time for engagement, Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribe

Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribe has addressed the issue of busy schedules and lack of engagement by setting aside one day each month for staff training and collaboration. This time is regular and set on the calendar so that team engagement is prioritized. This approach has been received well and is appreciated by staff.

Managing burnout

Partners across the region, regardless of field of work or organization size has identified the presence of burnout as a challenge to engagement.

Burnout has increased significantly due to COVID-19, as major changes in both work and home environments add stress to an individual. One partner shared, **“Because of the pandemic, we are super short staffed which is causing everyone to burn out. Everyone is at the end of their collective ropes and simply don't have the energy to engage.”**



Successes:

Personalized specialties, First Step Family Support Center

One way that First Step Family Support Center works to build engagement and combat burnout is to allow staffers to pursue personal passion areas as their "specialty". They do this by giving staff additional training and space to grow personally and professionally around a topic that engages them. This approach centers individual interests and keeps workloads balanced in a way that resonates with unique passions.

Positivity Patrol, Peninsula Behavioral Health

The nature of behavioral health workloads are often quite heavy and emotionally taxing. Peninsula Behavioral Health has implemented a unique strategy to combat burnout, especially during COVID-19 by launching their Positivity Patrol. This group plans, coordinates, and hosts events throughout the year that bring staff together, outside of normal work meetings and tasks, to inspire positivity and camaraderie. Previously, the group has organized mingle events at a staff member’s goat farm, group ice skating, and spin the wheel prize opportunities.



Peninsula Behavioral Health’s Positivity Patrol organized a goat hangout with a staff member’s farm.

Flexibility

Flexibility in the work environment promotes equitable opportunities for employment and ultimately creates a sense of belonging and balance across employees. However, not all workplaces are conducive to flexible environments. Therefore, finding ways to incorporate flexibility into schedules that have little wiggle room is often a challenge.

Factors such as in-person necessity, access to high-speed broadband at home, and access to transportation often serve as barriers to flexible work options. Additionally, COVID-19 has created many challenges and opportunities for flexibility in the workplace. The pandemic prompted the quick transition of many workplaces to virtual work environments. Employers were then faced with the new challenge of cultivating team unity and collaboration across flexible work styles and environments as working remote became the new norm.

Though a challenge, the impact of flexibility on employee engagement is strong. This was affirmed through OCH's partner survey where over half of the survey respondents, consider flexible work schedules and opportunities for employee appreciation to be key factors that contribute to engagement.

“The most creative ideas that we have come up with have been from team members who want to serve their clients.”

- First Step Family Support Center

Successes:

Fostering connection via staff shout outs,

YMCA of Pierce and Kitsap Counties

The YMCA of Pierce and Kitsap Counties has been fostering a sense of purpose and connection among staff members by highlighting staff successes in regular staff newsletters. This approach allows them to give staff "shout outs" that help build awareness across staff about what various teams and individuals are working on. Additionally, they invite people to share their story about "why the Y" to lift and inspire their teams. This is a digital approach to building team unity and celebration during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Catering to younger workforce needs,

Olympic Community Action Programs

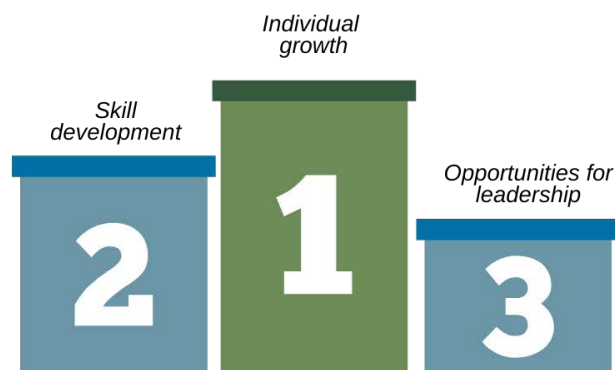
Olympic Community Action Programs offers a hybrid work model, allowing for both remote and in-person schedules. To set remote staff up for success, they purchased office supplies needed to work from home comfortably. Additionally, they provide laundry services onsite, which have been utilized and embraced by their younger workforce, allowing them to do laundry while working instead of spending their weekend at a laundromat.



Development

Development refers to opportunities for growth. Development is essential to strengthening employee longevity and improving the services provided. Employees find purpose and drive when provided with opportunities to grow in professional skills and continue to contribute to the work at hand in creative and meaningful ways.

Greatest *impact* on development



Common challenges

- Advancement opportunities
- Time management
- Budget

Partner solutions

- Leadership and mentorship opportunities
- Pathways for internships to lead to full-time positions
- Personalized development goals
- Budget for professional development
- Internal growth program

Advancement opportunities

One of the strongest factors that was overwhelmingly noted by partners to contribute to workforce development is “opportunities for individual growth”, followed by “continued skill development” and “leadership opportunities”.

There are very few large organizations within the Olympic region, so relatively small organizational structures do not allow for many advancement opportunities. Limited resources and staff capacity pose barriers to investing in the growth and development of the workforce. Advancing within smaller organizations takes patience and mentorship within, which is difficult but possible, as shown in examples by Kitsap Recovery Center and West Sound Treatment Center.

Kitsap Recovery Center

We have had multiple interns take lesser positions and wait for opportunities within the agency because they believe in what we do. I currently have 2 prior interns working as counselors now.

West Sound Treatment Center

One of our clinical supervisors started with this company as a new clinician straight out of school. I have had the privilege of training her as a clinician and then training her to be a Clinical Supervisor.

Successes:

Grow Your Own Program, Forks Community Hospital

Forks Community Hospital addresses this challenge through their Grow Your Own program, an employee-centered and community-driven approach to building workforce capacity and skillsets. Through this approach, Forks creates pathways and opportunities for internal staff to grow in their career to higher paying positions. There are three initiatives under Forks' Grow Your Own Program:

- the medical assistant apprenticeship which has graduated 1 individual, with 3 more currently enrolled and 3 more internal candidates to begin soon,
- the emergency medical technician (EMT) which just graduated an additional 9 EMTs,
- and certified nursing assistant course.



“ It allowed me to further my education, take care of patients across the continuum and become a better well-rounded nurse, [...] **it allowed me to stay in my community.**
-Heidi Anderson
CEO, Forks Community Hospital

Employee Evaluation Process: Individual goal setting, North Olympic Healthcare Network

North Olympic Healthcare Network revised their Employee Evaluation Process to include individual goal setting that aligns with the organization's mission and/or strategic plan. They implemented a new Human Resources Information System to facilitate the development and tracking of progress towards goals. Additionally, North Olympic Healthcare Network also established an Employee Educational Assistance program that pays for tuition and expenses for employees participating in career advancement educational activities. This approach opens doors for employees who may not have the means to pursue additional education opportunities on their own.

Time management

With workforce shortages and higher scheduling demands, there is never enough time in the day to do the work that needs doing. Finding additional time for development opportunities can feel impossible. However, development opportunities can offer us creative and effective solutions to better handle everyday work. Spending time on upstream solutions, i.e., focus on preventative, big picture solutions, can be beneficial to downstream problems.

Successes:

Sharing development takeaways, Olympic Medical Center

Olympic Medical Center has a LEAD Academy that provides training to team leaders within the organization. After the trainings, key takeaways and useful tools are shared back with the full team, ultimately maximizing staff time, yet still providing resources to promote development.

Client-less worktime, Peninsula Community Health Services

Every other Wednesday morning, Peninsula Community Health Services shuts down client facing operations, to provide staff the opportunity to work behind the scenes.



Budgeting

Professional development opportunities often come at a cost, whether in funding a training, webinar, or course, or in the salary increases requested by employees who have grown. Over 90% of partners identify that prioritizing funds for development is an important consideration, despite limited budgets.

Successes:

Utilize grant funds for internal development, *ANSWERS Counseling*

Due to contractual requirements ANSWERS Counseling was able to offer a leadership opportunity within their "Universal Nursing" pilot grant/program. Staff utilize this opportunity to further their individual development which then strengthens their programs as a whole.

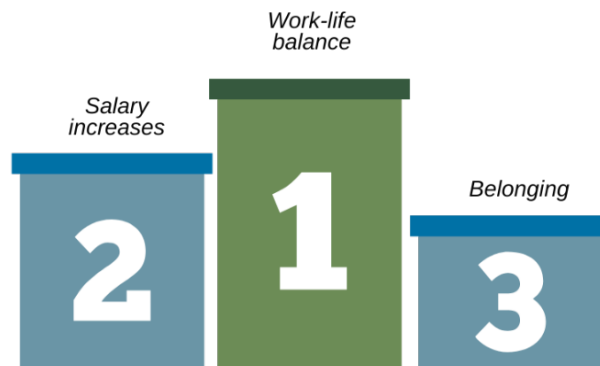
Organizational restructuring, *Olympic Area Agency on Aging*

Olympic Area Agency on Aging recently took time to restructure their staffing plan. They made changes to positions and departments in a way that allows staff to have more career opportunities for advancement. This approach utilizes resources in a way that is more efficient and employee-centered, prioritizing internal growth and development. Due to these changes, there has been great excitement among staff with newly created roles.




Retention

Retention refers to ensuring existing employees remain happy. Employers with high retention rates have found work-life balance, increased compensation, and fostering a culture of belonging to have the greatest contribution to keeping employees happy and engaged. These factors are often a challenge to address, but through creative approaches, partners across the region are helping employees feel satisfied in the long-run.

Greatest *impact* on retention



Common challenges

-  Compensation
-  Work-life balance
-  Culture

Partner solutions

- | | | | | |
|------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Foster team atmosphere | Welcoming work environment | Stay-on bonuses | Prioritize work-life balance | Flexible work schedules |
|------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|

Compensation

3 out of 4 partners noted frequent salary increases having a great impact on workforce retention. As employees gain greater experience and more responsibility within their roles, they often look to salary increases and career growth that better reflects their abilities and contributions. Unfortunately, many partners view salary increases as a significant challenge.

Success:

Addressing entry-level turnover rates, Peninsula Community Health Services
Entry-level positions in healthcare settings make little more than food services or customer service level positions and this can be a contributing factor to high turnover rates in these positions. Peninsula Community Health Services (PCHS) is creatively addressing their high entry-level turnover rates by offering career programs, such as apprenticeships, and leadership and supervisory trainings. This provides an opportunity to motivate development and retention, while also allowing progression toward middle management for Medical, Dental Assistants, and others.



Work-life balance

Beyond compensation, even more partners reported work-life balance as having an even greater impact on workforce retention. 100% of respondents that represent primary care settings and hospitals settings rated work-life balance as essential to retention. Community-based organizations and social services also consider work-life balance important but less overwhelmingly so, which may be because community-based work environments often allow for greater flexibility and less client interactions compared to physical health settings.

Successes:

Flexible work environments, Answers Counseling

To better understand provider interests, satisfaction, and passions, ANSWERS Counseling conducted an internal survey. The survey showed that the most common gratitudes expressed were work life balance, flexibility (schedules, workload, diverse program choices, location options), and the opportunity to work in community of choice. ANSWERS builds in flexibility into provider experience to promote balance and sustainable routines.

Alternative schedules, Jamestown Family Health Clinic

Jamestown Family Health Clinic offers providers the opportunity to have flexible schedules. This allows them to accommodate changing family schedules, particularly around school schedules. They do this by offering later start times and earlier end times. This approach allows employees to engage in a work schedule that not only supports their financial and professional goals, but also aligns with family demands.

Culture

Research suggests that feelings of belonging at work and attachment to place are particularly important in rural areas. In the Olympic region, over half of the survey respondents agree with the importance of belonging and the impact it has on retention. This is of particular concern in Clallam and Kitsap counties.

Success:

Building trust with administration, Bogachiel and Clallam Bay Clinics
Bogachiel and Clallam Bay Clinics helps minimize burnout by fostering a sense of trust through their administration department's open-door policy. This approach allows employees to feel welcomed to discuss problems and concerns as they arise.

“Our success is due to a workplace culture that is **fun, inclusive, flexible, and offers advancement opportunities** as able.”

- OCH partner

Recommendations

Regional partners have identified opportunities and focused efforts to prioritize in order to support the health-serving workforce. **Themes of collaboration, advocacy, and team culture arose as opportunities for high impact.** Below are recommendations that reflect partner perspectives. There is room for everyone in this work; OCH encourages all partner types to join in this effort to strengthen the many workforces that are essential to providing and sustaining individual and population health.

Collaborate

Create partnerships with local educational institutions

- Creatively connect with local educational institutions to establish scholarship programs and development opportunities for current employees.
- Create internal internships and apprenticeship programs in-house in partnership with schools to provide college credit and certification opportunities.
- Go directly to local schools to advertise the many career options in the health-serving workforce across the region. Increasing visibility and interest at a younger age may help foster the next generation of the health-serving workforce.

Housing resources

- Collaborate with local housing services and resources to identify and help secure affordable housing for new and existing employees.
- Partner with others to co-create a list of resources that offer housing suggestions and supports for new folks moving to the area.

Shared staffing models

- Establish cross-agency promotional opportunities to keep advancement within the community. This approach can be mutually beneficial for agencies and employees.



Advocate

Affordable and accessible housing solutions

- Encourage collaboration among elected officials regarding new housing starts.
- Elevate the demand for increased affordable housing, especially housing for 1-2 people.

Competitive salaries

- Advocate for increased reimbursement rates. This is essential considering the steep inflation trends across all three-counties.
- Encourage county-wide pay increases.

Foster team culture

Work life balance

- Promote flexible work cultures, such as offering flexible work schedules, opportunities to work remotely, etc. to promote work life balance.

Intentionality

- Take the time to understand and acknowledge what motivates your team and be intentional about the culture you are looking to foster. A good team culture means something different to everyone. Some employees may be very mission-driven in their work, some may value their colleagues and a friendly environment, and others may seek peer recognition and/or career development opportunities. See **appendix C** for creative ideas to uplift the workforce.

To the right is a visual that shows the responses to the question, **“what external support does your organization or Tribe need?”**

Partners across the region expressed greatest need for support related to:

1. housing,
2. partnerships with schools,
3. collaboration opportunities,
4. and trainings.

OCH recommends that the region works to address these needs in order to maximize the impact of workforce solutions.



OCH Solutions

Olympic Community of Health serves as a supportive backbone that creates opportunities for collaboration across Clallam, Jefferson, and Kitsap Counties, and seven Tribal Nations. Below are the commitments that OCH makes to continue to support the health-serving workforce in the Olympic region.

Create opportunities for collaboration

OCH hosts several Action Collaboratives that focus on addressing various health topics on a regional level. Partners from many fields regularly engage in these meetings. OCH works to establish a collaborative culture with opportunities to connect, collaborate, and build relationships at these events. Each Action Collaborative is working towards short- and long-term goals and as it aligns with the individual groups' goals and metrics, OCH will weave in the topic of workforce.

Elevate regional challenges and opportunities to local elected officials

OCH has established connections with local elected officials over the past few years. OCH commits to elevating key takeaways from this report in a way that invites regional and statewide elected officials to engage with and support the Olympic region.

Create and gather supportive resources

OCH will keep partner recommendations and asks on their radar as creating resources, events, and trainings for the upcoming year. Additionally, OCH will share out external resources that may be of interest to partners seeking workforce supports via OCH's weekly newsletter. [Join OCH's distribution list here](#) (or visit olympicch.org) to have resources sent directly to your inbox every Tuesday.

Share innovative successes

OCH encourages cross-partner collaboration by finding platforms and avenues to elevate creative projects. By sharing success stories, partners can glean ideas, kindle inspiration, and connect with one another to strengthen their own projects. OCH will continue to highlight success stories via [partner blogs](#), opportunities for sharing at events, dynamic videos, and more! Do you have a project you would like to share with the OCH network? Email OCH@olympicch.org.

Do you have a project you would like to share with the OCH network?

Email OCH@olympicch.org

*Stronger Together:
Foster a region of
healthy people,
thriving communities*

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Appendix A:

Strengthening the health-serving workforce

Discussion guide

Which challenge(s) resonate the most with your organization or Tribe in regards to each workforce element?

| Recruitment | Engagement | Development | Retention |
|---|---|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Competitive salaries and benefits | <input type="radio"/> Capacity to collaborate | <input type="radio"/> Advancement opportunities | <input type="radio"/> Compensation |
| <input type="radio"/> Housing | <input type="radio"/> Managing burnout | <input type="radio"/> Time management | <input type="radio"/> Work-life balance |
| <input type="radio"/> Qualified candidates | <input type="radio"/> Flexibility | <input type="radio"/> Budget | <input type="radio"/> Culture |

Based off the challenges selected above, note any successes from the report that may be good solutions for your organization or Tribe.

What are some low-cost ways you can enhance the ways your organization addresses the challenge(s) that resonate most?

What additional supports do you need in order to implement ideas listed above?

Appendix B:

Job description guide

This job description guide offers language, framing ideas, and tips to help make job openings stand out to potential candidates. All language in this guide is open source and available to borrow.

Language that highlights the value of Working/living in the Olympic region

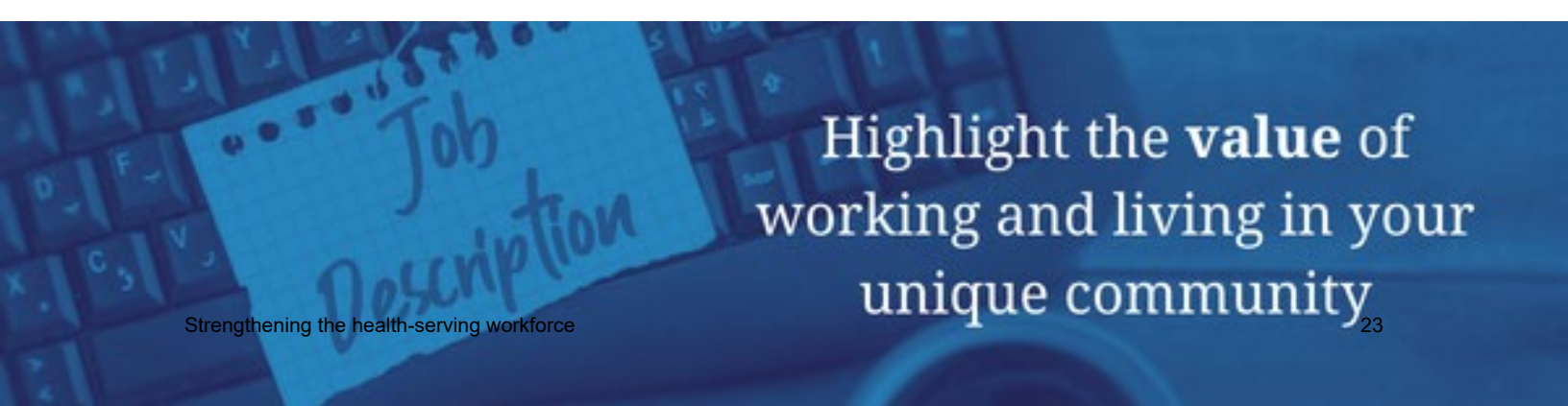
- *With Olympic National Park just in the backyard, it is super easy to recharge in nature. There is a wealth of opportunities for outdoor adventures like hiking, kayaking, camping, bicycling, and more. Explore the coastline, rainforest, Olympic Mountain range, hot springs, and more!*
- *Living in the Olympic region provides opportunities to explore, recharge, and de-stress in the outdoors. This exciting yet restful landscape serves as a valuable support to many in finding sustainable routines that prioritize work-life balance, especially for those working in health-related fields.*
- *Life on the Olympic/Kitsap peninsula presents a more relaxed pace of life than our urban neighborhoods across the Puget Sound.*
- *Commutes are more enjoyable with gorgeous views of the Olympic mountains and minimal traffic.*
- *Proximity to ferry terminals allows for easy ferry rides to Seattle (and/or Victoria, BC).*

Working/living in a rural community

- *By working to improve the health of a rural community, you will be a part of implementing meaningful health solutions on a local level.*
- *Working in health care in a rural community means you can quickly grow a broad scope of experience.*
- *Rural health jobs allow you to feel connected to the community you live and work in.*

Working for a small organization

- *Working for a small organization provides opportunity for your voice to be heard and skills to be appreciated in a meaningful way.*
- *Smaller work teams allow for ample professional development and opportunities to explore different skills.*
- *Small work environments often allow you to have autonomy over projects with less hoops to jump through.*



Highlight the **value** of
working and living in your
unique community

Appendix B:

Job description guide (continued)

Tips for creating accessible and appealing job descriptions

| Avoid | Try |
|--|---|
| Strict education requirements | Reframe to allow for equivalent relevant experience. With every new requirement, you eliminate one more reason qualified, underrepresented talent would self-select out. Maybe even switch from a requirements list to a results list, describing the ideal outcomes that the candidate should be able to accomplish. |
| Complicated application templates | Simple questions that don't just repeat the information on a resume. If possible, skip application templates and just have candidates submit a resume, cover letter, and any necessary work samples (portfolio, writing sample, etc.). |
| Unnecessary required years of experience | Only include years of experience that are essential (example: "10 years of social media experience" excludes many candidates who would provide excellent social media skills, especially considering the constant evolution of technology). Prioritize types of experience you are looking for (example: "must be comfortable using Microsoft Excel"). |
| Rushed start dates | Allow flexibility in start dates, especially if someone is moving for the position. Housing can be challenging to secure in the Olympic region. |
| Skimming over benefits and perks. | Show off the exciting benefits, incentives, and perks of working at your organization. Highlight the ways flexibility, work-life balance, and camaraderie are built into the workplace. |
| Excluding language | Ask candidates to share their pronouns in resume or cover letter. Incorporate gender-inclusive language when describing roles and characteristics (firefighter vs fireman). |
| Personal bias | Watch a video to learn more about personal bias and/or read an article that explains simple ways to avoid bias when creating job descriptions, interviewing, and onboarding. |

Appendix C:

Creative strategies for uplifting your workforce

Cultivating a culture of caring can be the most important thing you do to support your staff. While some may or may not choose to participate in any of the below activities, providing opportunities will promote a space of caring, support and encouragement.

- Tote a wagon through the office and pass out healthy treats
- Host a lunch party with food from your team's favorite local restaurant
- Raffle off a fun gift bag with goodies from local small businesses
- Make team t-shirts with an inspirational quote your team can rally around, “we’re all in this together!”
- Schedule virtual coffee breaks for informal catch up time with staff working remotely
- Organize a well-being challenge and send daily prompts via email
- Turn up the music for a 5-minute dance party
- Pick an employee of the week and do a fun, short write up about why they are appreciated. Share with rest of your organization.
- Host a silly awards banquet (virtually if you have lots of staff) and pass out funny certificates (e.g. “The first, and we hope, only COVID awards”)
- Give your staff access to something like Headspace, a mindfulness and mediation app, that makes it easy for people to get a few minutes of mediation in a day. A free option is [insighttimer.com](https://www.insighttimer.com)
- Provide daily briefing or updates to your staff on new COVID-19 information and resources
- Host optional town halls, or Q&A sessions that allow your staff to ask questions. You can do this virtually if it’s not safe to do so in-person
- Ask staff to pair up and encourage the use of the “buddy” support system. Encourage pairs to schedule regular time to check in and participate in short self-care activities.
- Set up a system where staff can send each other e-gratitude cards
- Purchase side-walk chalk and/or window paint and encourage staff to write messages of hope and gratitude
- Post throughout the office space and frequently share Employee Assistance Program materials and other supports available
- Engage staff in random acts of kindness
- Encourage giving virtual high-fives for staff to celebrate successes, both large and small
- Organize fresh fruit bowls at the workplace
- Encourage walk and talk meetings
- Launch fun virtual photo sharing (e.g. everyone bring their baby picture and all try to guess who is who)
- Encourage mask breaks as needed throughout the day
- Provide time and space to discuss and problem solve safety concerns
- Talk to your staff about how they would like to be supported



Check out more resources, partner success stories, and opportunities at olympicch.org



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