

Washington State Department of Social and Health Services

Transforming  
Lives

## REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

### Resources to Initiate Successful Employment (RISE) Final Report

Chapter 299, Laws of 2018 (Section 207)

June 30, 2019

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Chapter 299, Laws of 2018 (ESSB 6032 Section 207 (14)) requires the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS or the Department) to provide to the Legislature, by June 30, 2019, a final report of its findings of the impact of the Resources to Initiate Successful Employment (RISE) program on increasing employment. This final report covers the entire period of the RISE pilot program grant, March 2016 through December 2018.

### **OVERVIEW**

The Washington State Basic Food Employment and Training (BFET) program, supported by federal match funds, provides job search, job search training, educational services, skills training, and other employment opportunities to Basic Food (also known as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP) recipients who are not receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or state-funded food assistance. Services are provided through community or technical colleges and community-based organizations (CBOs). Washington's BFET program is regarded as the national model for SNAP employment and training (E&T) services to help recipients reach their full potential.

Resources to Initiate Successful Employment (RISE) was a three year, \$22-million-dollar pilot program funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). The grant was awarded to DSHS in March 2015 and ended December 2018. RISE filled the gap currently experienced by BFET participants who face multiple barriers and lack the work experience needed to obtain employment leading to self-sufficiency.

There were fundamental differences in these two employment and training programs. Typically, BFET participants are ready to engage in employment. However RISE participants had to reduce barriers (often times several) before they were ready to engage in employment. Therefore, the primary focus of the RISE pilot was reducing barriers to employment through a standardized approach of Comprehensive Case Management (CCM), Strategies for Success (SFS), and Work-Based Learning (WBL) activities.

CCM included coaching, navigation, and referrals to other services as needed. Participants were contacted weekly by case managers to keep participants engaged.

SFS were instructor-led discussions which included topics such as work-life balance, stress management, problem solving, and critical thinking to assist individuals in dealing with the demands of everyday life. These additional services assisted participants in barrier resolution and gaining the experience needed to become self-sufficient.

WBL activities included unsubsidized and subsidized employment, pre-apprenticeships, work-study, internships, exploration and development of a career pathway, and the integration of vocational skills and employability skills with on-the-job training, community jobs, transitional jobs, and employer engagement.

## **PILOT OUTCOMES**

RISE is part of a national study on the effectiveness of SNAP E&T programs. The USDA FNS contracted with an external research company, Mathematica, to conduct a longitudinal evaluation of each E&T pilot project granted across 10 states. Mathematica's pilot study evaluation will be submitted to Congress as a final report by March 31, 2021. State agencies awarded pilot grants are contractually restricted from reporting specific outcomes of the pilot, including the number of participants who secured employment, until Mathematica's final report is published in 2021<sup>1</sup>.

USDA has submitted annual reports to Congress evaluating the ten SNAP Employment and Training Pilots, including Washington state DSHS RISE program, since Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2015. These reports<sup>2</sup>, including the most recent: "*Third Annual Report to Congress – FY2017*," can be found at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/2014-ET-Pilots>. The following achievements and challenges in *FY2017* were noted for Washington: improved participant recruitment and enrollment, maintained strong partnerships, experienced difficulty keeping participants engaged in the pilot project and staff turnover.

## **PROJECT BACKGROUND**

The Agricultural Act of 2014 (commonly known as the "Farm Bill") authorized \$200 million to fund 10 pilots, testing innovative approaches to:

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<sup>1</sup> USDA FNS Office of Employment and Training Notice to Grantees, July 18, 2016

<sup>2</sup> As of the date this report was written, the annual report for FFY 2018 is not yet published to the USDA 2014 Farm Bill Pilot Projects website (<https://www.fns.usda.gov/2014-ET-Pilots>).

- Increase the number of SNAP (known in Washington as Basic Food) work registrants accessing E&T programs
- Increase the overall earned income of Basic Food recipients
- Reduce Basic Food recipients' reliance on public assistance
- Inform policy makers about the effectiveness of SNAP E&T in determining the future of work programs for upcoming Farm Bill reauthorizations

Washington's RISE pilot was a collaboration between DSHS and external partners (Appendix A), with the focus of enhancing the current BFET program. RISE offered enhanced services using a random assignment methodology, assigning participants to the treatment group (RISE) or the control group (BFET). In the pilot counties: King, Pierce, Spokane and Yakima, RISE participants had an opportunity to receive existing BFET services as well as RISE enhanced services:

- CCM focused on reducing barriers to employment
- Enhanced life skills training through SFS
- WBL opportunities

## **THE RISE PARTICIPANT**

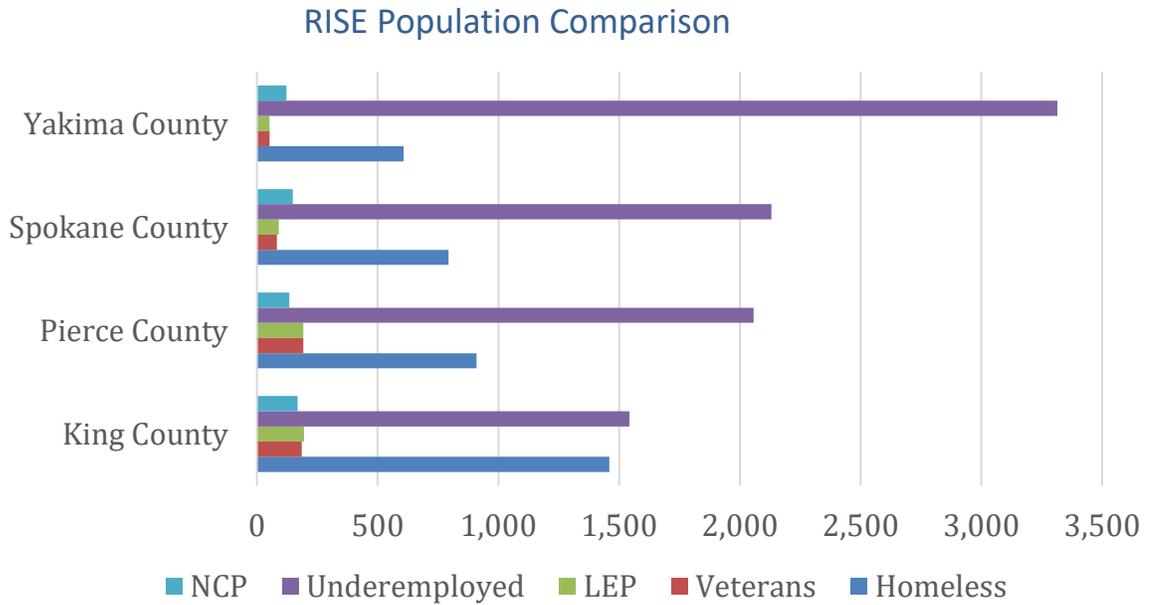
The targeted population for RISE was work registrants who were (Appendix B):

- Homeless;
- Limited English Proficient (LEP);
- Long-term unemployed (12 months or longer);
- Non-custodial parents (NCP) owing child-support arrears; and
- Veterans

Work registrants are individuals who receive Basic Food and are:

- Age sixteen through fifty-nine with dependents;
- Age sixteen or seventeen, not attending secondary school and not the head-of-household
- Age fifty through fifty-nine with no dependents; or
- Age eighteen through forty-nine, able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWD)

The following chart<sup>3</sup> reflects a comparison of enrolled participants during the entirety of the RISE project by target population.



The RISE project reached its enrollment goal in March 2018. During the enrollment period, February 1, 2016 through March 31, 2018, a total of 2,548 SNAP recipients enrolled into the treatment group (RISE) and a total of 2,544 SNAP recipients enrolled into the control group (BFET). The total enrollment for the RISE project was 5,092 participants<sup>4</sup>.

**Barrier Reduction**

A person was eligible for RISE if they lived in one of the pilot counties and were identified with a critical and/or general barriers. Eligible participants reported barriers during initial intake, which had to include at least one “critical barrier,” or three or more “general barriers,” as defined in the chart below:

<sup>3</sup> Source: ESA-EMAPS Report #4659 using the ACES Data Warehouse as of the February 2019 load. The number of individuals are greater than the total number of individuals enrolled in RISE as it represents participants who disengaged and reengaged in the RISE project

<sup>4</sup> Source: Mathematica Performance Measures

Critical Barriers	General Barriers
Chemical Dependency	Special Needs Children
Child Welfare Involvement	No High School Diploma/High School Equivalency
Criminal Records Affecting Employment	Housing
Domestic Violence	Learning Disability
Mental Health Illness	Limited English Proficiency
Physical Health Illness	Shallow or Non-Existent Employment History
	Child Support Obligations
	Employment Verification Requirements
	Resource Deficiency
	Skills Deficiency
	Veterans Discharge Status

The average RISE participant was between the ages of 31 and 50 and had three or more barriers to employment. Case managers worked with participants on barrier reduction through continued communication and mentoring while facilitating increased access to resources and participant reimbursement supports.

## PROJECT TRAINING AND SUPPORT

In collaboration with providers, DSHS facilitated two comprehensive case management trainings to increase success in working with high-barrier participants: *Neuroscience, Epigenetics, ACEs and Resilience (NEAR) Science* and *Mental/Behavior Health and Domestic Violence*.

**Neuroscience, Epigenetics, ACEs and Resilience (NEAR) Science:** A three-day case management training was conducted in May 2017, focusing on NEAR Science, developing better understanding of the brain and behaviors of individuals. Kody Russell, MSW, Kitsap Strong Project Director and Michael O’Neil, Healthy Communities Lead, Cowlitz County Health & Human Services conducted the training. Louisa Erickson, DSHS Workforce Innovations and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Program Administrator, conducted a NEAR Science Skills-Building session on:

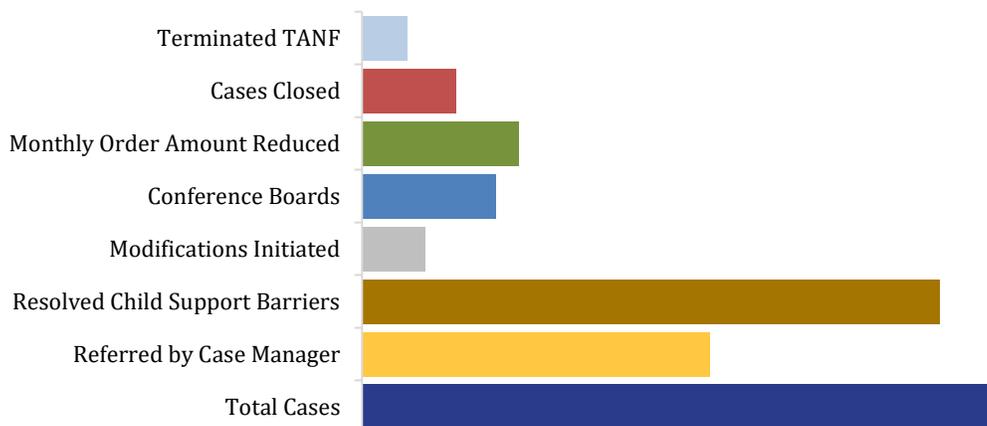
- Capacity Building Across Multiple Domains
- Executive Functioning Skills
- Practical Application for Case Management

**Mental/Behavioral Health and Domestic Violence:** A second case management training was conducted in August 2017, focused on impacts of mental health and domestic violence on an individual's ability to reduce barriers and successfully engage in activities. Tony O'Leary LMHC, Office Chief of DSHS Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery and Kelli Robinson MBA, Executive Director of Our Sisters House conducted the training.

## **DIVISION OF CHILD SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS**

Non-custodial parents (NCP) enrolled in RISE could voluntarily work with the Division of Child Support (DCS) Alternative Solutions (AS) program to address ongoing child support challenges. During the period of January 1, 2016 through December 31, 2018, non-custodial parents participating in RISE received assistance from AS in resolving child support barriers.

### **Alternative Solutions Caseload**



Participants volunteering to work with AS received the following benefits:

- **Modifications to child support orders:** A modification is the legal process by which an Order of Support (Administrative Order or Superior Court Order) is adjusted to reflect the current finances of both parents.
- **Agreed Settlement to child support orders:** An administrative order reflects the agreement of the NCP, the custodial parent, or all parties to the proceeding to permanently reduce a child support order. An agreed settlement does not require the approval of an administrative law judge. AS generated several Agreed Settlements

resulting in reduced payment plans (monthly payment less than court ordered amount).

- **Established affordable payment plans for child support:** Monthly order amounts were reduced to establish affordable payment plans. The average monthly order amount was reduced by more than \$200.00. The total child support arrears payments were reduced for those participating with AS. This amount is in addition to pending conference board's currently in progress
  
- **Driver's license suspension/reinstatement:** Several License Suspension Cancellation Notices were generated to NCP's during the period of January 1, 2016 through December 31, 2018.
  - Note - The generation of a 9-853 by DCS does not guarantee license reinstatement. DCS will release the hold DCS specifically has put on a NCP's license allowing the NCP to have their license reinstated. The NCP must visit the Department of Licensing (DOL) and pay the necessary fees for reinstatement. In many instances, the NCP's driver's license is suspended by other agencies for outstanding debts. Alternative solutions will locate the information regarding the other agency and refer the NCP to relicensing programs to make payment plan arrangements with the courts.
  
- **Conference Boards:** Conference boards (CB) are a method used by DCS for resolving complaints regarding DCS cases and for granting exceptional or extraordinary relief from debt. DCS schedules an informal meeting to determine facts and attempt to resolve grievances when an individual disagrees with DCS actions. Streamlined access to the CB process addresses hardship and potential state debt write-off. A total of \$496,402.97 in state debt was written off because of the Conference Board process.

## **BUDGET**

The RISE Pilot was 100 percent federally funded by USDA FNS. Washington received \$22 million dollars to fund the pilot. The initial grant application projected costs per participant at \$3,111. Upon review of FFY16 expenses, a grant amendment was approved by FNS, increasing the average cost per participant to \$5,500.

Specific line-item expenditures included:

**Salaries and Benefits** - Monetary and non-monetary value provided as payment for working for RISE providers.

**Goods and Services** – Goods refer to items that were tangible; services were activities provided by others.

**Travel** - The RISE project had a yearly conference and a statewide quarterly meeting. Each provider had a travel budget covering travel and per diem to ensure their team members were able to attend these mandatory events.

**Indirect costs** - Costs that were not directly accountable to the cost of the project and may have been fixed or variable.

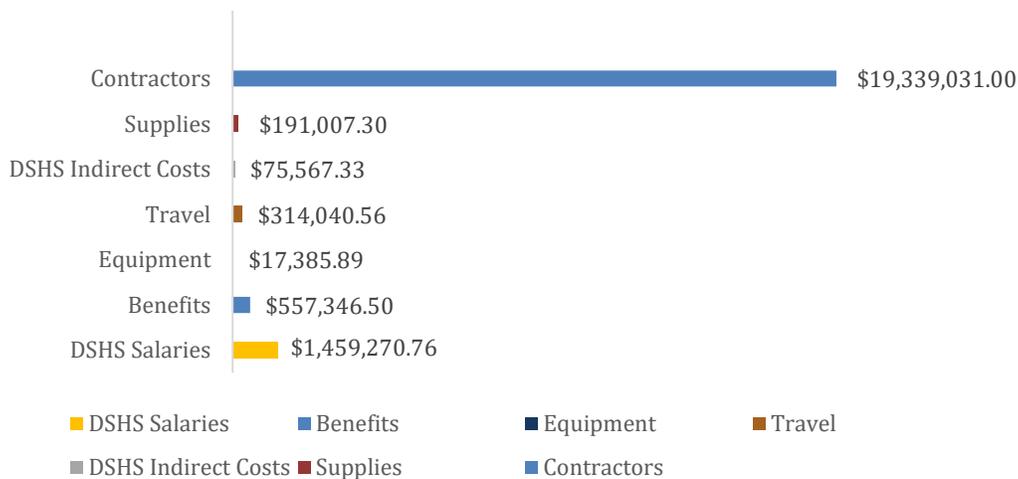
**WBL** - WBL employer salaries were monetary payments to reimburse providers for wages paid to participants of subsidized or partially-subsidized employment opportunities.

**Client Services** - Costs related to serving the participants. Examples of these costs include printing, marketing, supplies, etc.

## DSHS OPERATING COSTS

The total implementation and operating costs totaled \$21,953,649. The table below represents the specific costs of implementing and operating the RISE pilot project during the three-year period.

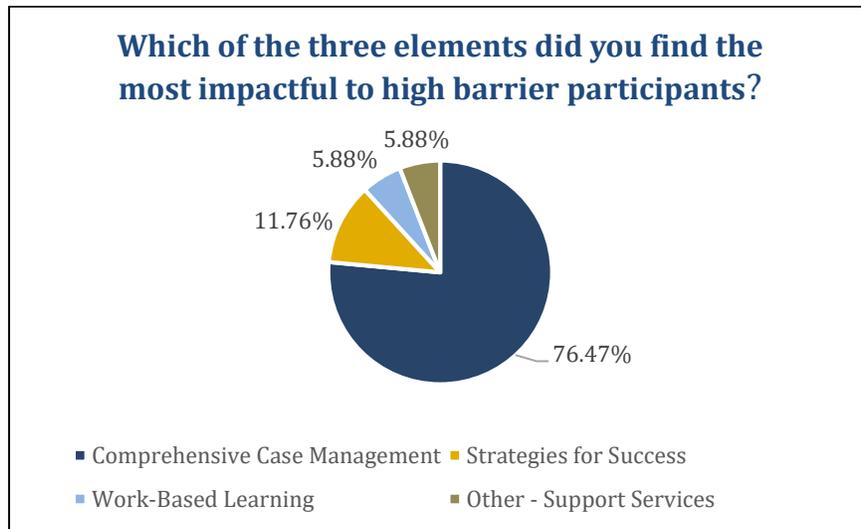
### Implementation and Operation Costs



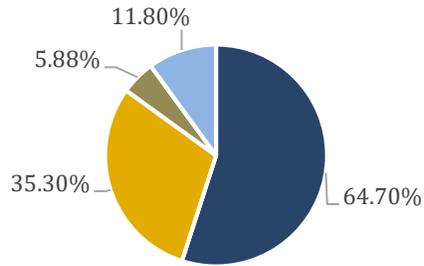
Salaries and Benefits reflect monetary and non-monetary value paid to DSHS employees working for the RISE pilot project. DSHS indirect costs were the common costs that all state agencies share. Travel costs covered travel and per diem for DSHS employees to travel to mandatory team meetings, provider quarterly meetings, and yearly conferences. The equipment charges represent laptops purchased for RISE staff. Supplies included: 1) printing; 2) data; 3) office supplies; 4) telecommunications; 5) trainings/meeting rooms; and 6) staff training.

## SURVEY RESULTS

To gain partner perspective and feedback on the outcomes of the RISE pilot, DSHS conducted a survey consisting of 12 questions seeking feedback on the effectiveness of the pilot. The survey data analysis below does not represent 100 percent of the response, but rather highlights questions that provided both statistical and practical significance. It is our intent to use these results for improvement to the state's current BFET program as well as any future pilots.

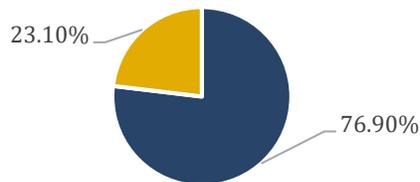


**What aspects of the pilot will you use in your organization after the pilot ends?**



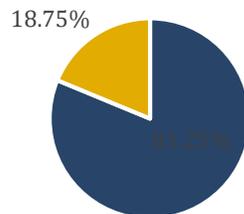
- Comprehensive Case Management
- Strategies for Success
- Flexibility
- Work-Based Learning

**Do you believe the fundamentals of the RISE pilot project aligns with the 2 Generational approach?**



- Yes
- No

**If your organization had the opportunity to participate in another pilot similar to RISE, would you participate?**

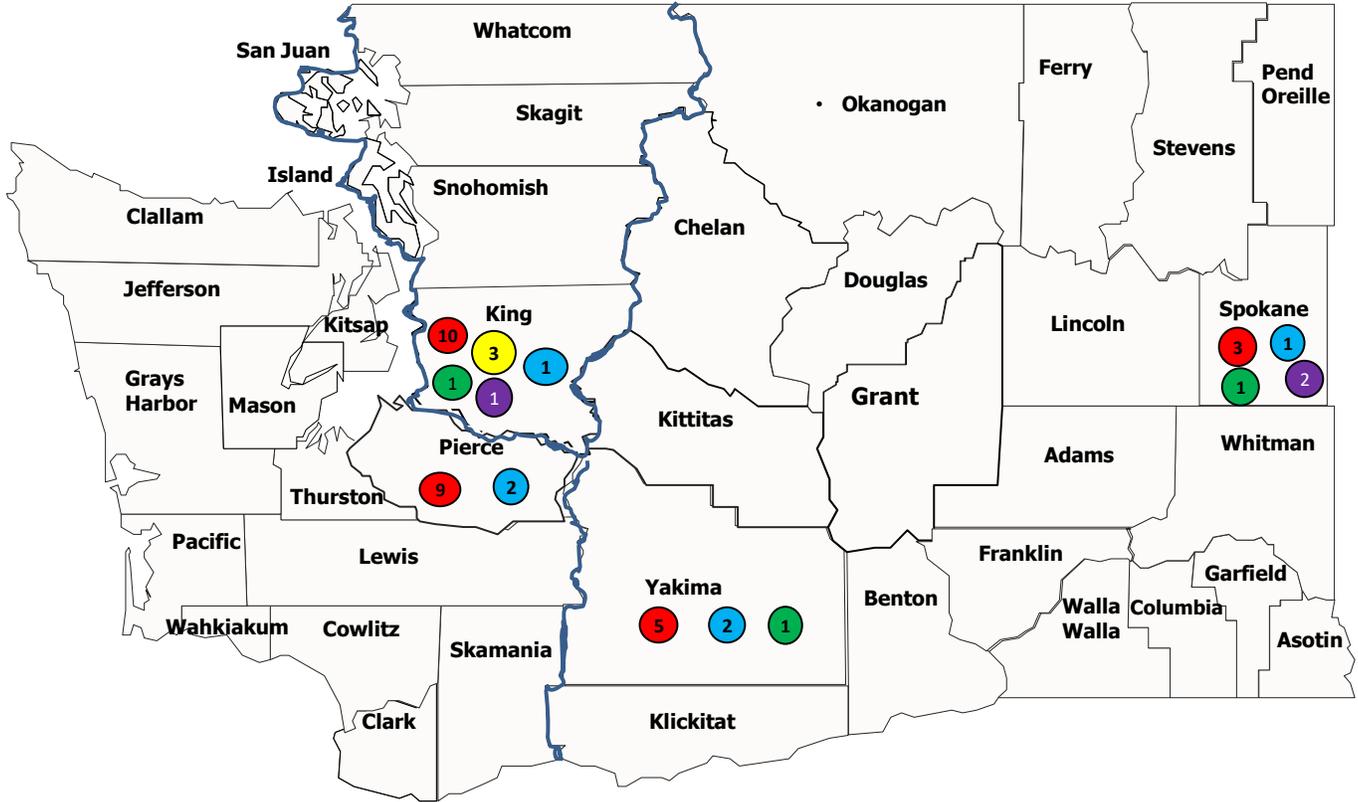


- Yes
- No

# APPENDIX A

## RISE Pilot County Service Map

### Resources to Initiate Successful Employment (RISE) in Washington



Community Based Org	Workforce Development Council	Colleges	ESD SFS	CBO SFS
27	3	3	6	3

## Providers by County

### **KING COUNTY**

Adonai Counseling and Employment Inc.  
Apprenticeship & Non-Traditional Employment for Women (ANEW)  
Career Path Services (CPS)  
Fare Start  
Highline College  
Multi-Service Center (MSC)  
Neighborhood House  
North Seattle College  
Partner in Employment (PIE)  
Puget Sound Training Center (PSTC)  
Seattle Goodwill Industries (SGI)  
South Seattle College  
TRAC Associates  
YWCA

### **PIERCE COUNTY**

Adonai Counseling and Employment, Inc.  
Career Path Services (CPS)  
Metropolitan Development Council (MDC)  
Pierce County Human Services  
Sound Outreach  
TRAC Associates  
Tacoma Community House (TCH)  
Washington Hospitality Association

### **SPOKANE COUNTY**

Career Path Services (CPS)  
Fulcrum Institute Dispute Resolution Clinic (DRC)  
World Relief (WR)

### **YAKIMA COUNTY**

Entrust Community Services  
Fulcrum Institute Dispute Resolution Clinic  
People for People  
Rod's House  
Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinic

**APPENDIX B**  
**RISE Participant Demographics<sup>5</sup>**

	<b># of Clients</b>	<b>% of Total</b>
<b>Total</b>	2,688	100.0%
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	1,170	43.5%
Male	1,518	56.5%
<b>Age Category</b>		
Under 18 Years Old	5	0.2%
18 - 30 Years Old	841	31.3%
31 - 50 Years Old	1,384	51.5%
51+ Years Old	458	17.0%
<b>Target Population</b>		
Homeless	1,117	41.6%
At Home or Other Living Arrangement	1,571	58.4%
Limited English Proficiency (LEP)	215	8.0%
Long-term Unemployed	1,698	63.2%
Non-Custodial Parent Owing Arrears	544	20.2
Veterans	82	31.1%
<b>Work Registrant Status</b>		
Yes	2,635	98.0%
No	53	2.0%
<b>ABAWD</b>		
Yes	1,743	64.8%
No	945	35.2%

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<sup>5</sup> Source: ESA-EMAPS Report #4693 using the ACES Data Warehouse as of the April 2019 load