Washington Public Ports Association

Kris Johnson

July 22, 2026

Association of Washington Business (AWB)

- Washington’s statewide chamber of commerce and manufacturers association
- Represents employers, industries and communities across all 39 counties
- Brings together employers, local chambers and community leaders to help shape Washington’s future
- Leads long-term statewide initiatives like Washington in the Making 2040

Washington employers say business climate is getting worse

Posted Friday, November 14, 2025 12:39 pm

By The Chronicle staff

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A new survey of Washington employers shows that r
businesses and contributing to a broad decline in con
Association of Washington Business.

Is Washington at a ‘tipping point’ for businesses?

By Jacqueline Allison February 13, 2026

New survey data and real-world stories point to a growing trend: more Washington businesses are looking to leave the state, largely driven by rising taxes.

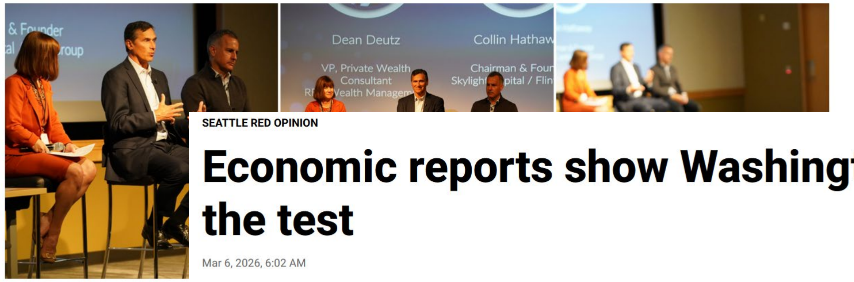
AWB’s winter employer survey found 4 in 10 business leaders are considering moving their personal residence to states such as Arizona, Idaho, Montana or Wyoming.

“Forty-four percent of employers statewide are contemplating moving their residence,” AWB President Kris Johnson said in an interview with KHQ news anchor Sean Owsley this week. “That’s a big number.”

Quiet Quitting Washington: Business leaders warn of tipping point, outline fixes

October 8, 2025
in Events, Thought Leadership

During the “Quiet Quitting: The Silent Exit from Washington,” session of ELC 2025, local leaders discussed rising costs, tax policy, and the growing phenomenon of residents and employers quietly reducing their footprint in the state. The conversation underscored near-term risks to Washington’s competitiveness and urged constructive engagement with lawmakers — an issue with direct implications for Bellevue’s business climate and talent pipeline.



Dean Deutz (RBC Wealth M

SEATTLE RED OPINION

Economic reports show Washington state failing the test

Mar 6, 2026, 6:02 AM

Washington business climate hits record low in 2026. (Photo: Julia Dallas, MyNorthwest)

BY SAM CARDWELL, SPECIAL CONTRIBUTOR
Seattle Red

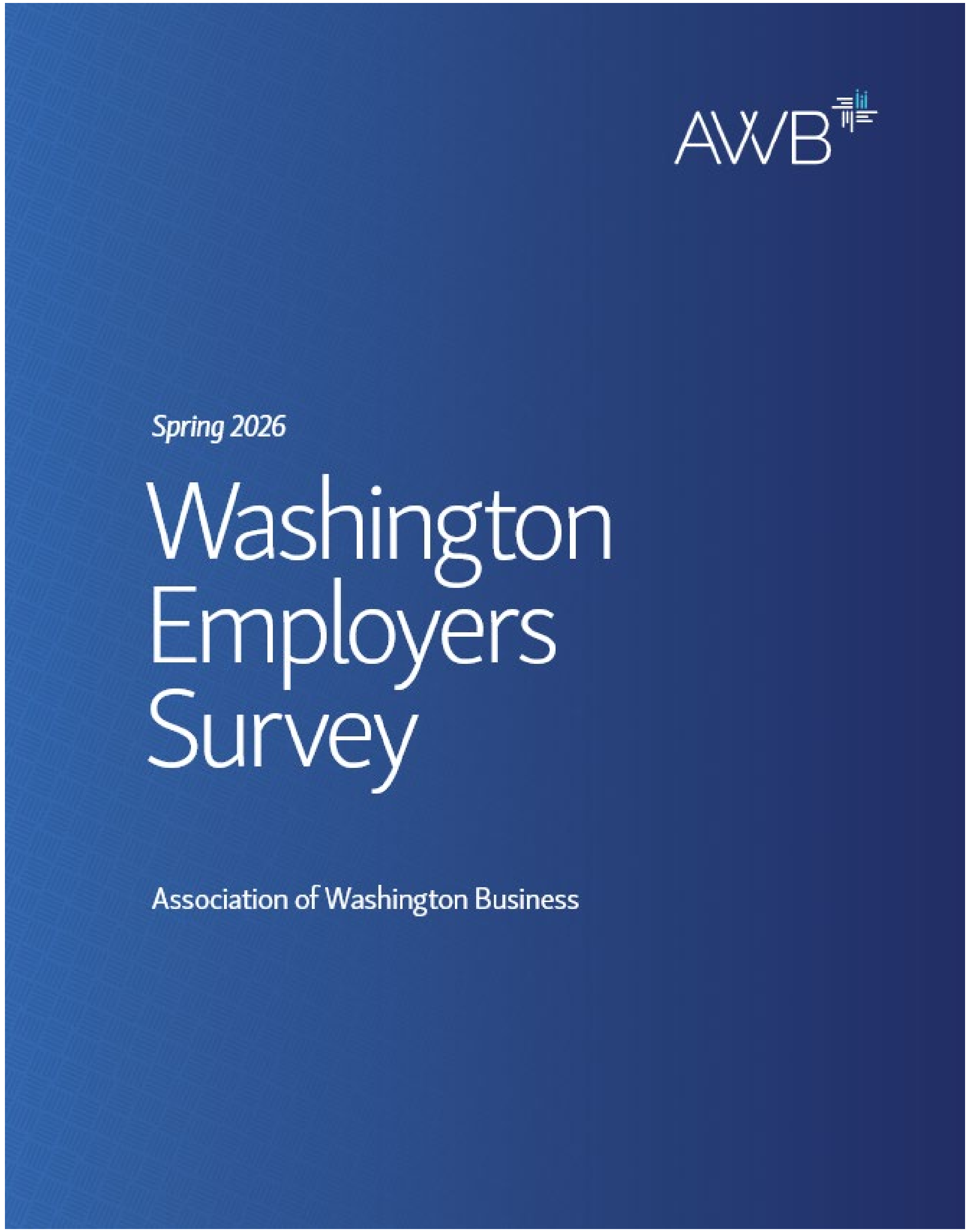
1

Washington state received troubling news from a recently published economic report. The 2026 Competitiveness Redbook, a study conducted by Washington Alliance for a Competitive Economy, found that the state’s business climate is in alarmingly poor shape.

WA MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME [1]	STATE TAX REVENUE [2-3]	STATE SPENDING [4]
+55%	+99%	+114%
2013: $60,106	**2013:** $17.8 Billion	**2013-15:** $33.6 billion
2023: $93,440	**2023:** $35.4 billion	**2023-25:** $72 billion

– Sources

1. https://www.statista.com/statistics/206032/median-household-income-in-washington/
2. https://dor.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2024-06/Table1_2023.pdf
3. https://dor.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2022-03/Table01_5.pdf
4. https://fiscal.wa.gov/Spending/SpendHistFundBienChart



Sobering Survey

- 24% planning to relocate business
- 55% considering moving personal residence
- Top reason – tax burden
- Even higher in Spokane County
  - 31% - relocate business
  - 67% - relocate personal residence

Table 1. Regulatory Restrictions by State

RANK	STATE	2023 TOTAL REG RESTRICTIONS
1st	California	420,434
2nd	New York	300,095
3rd	New Jersey	296,926
4th	Illinois	282,040
5th	Texas	274,469
6th	Ohio	246,033
7th	Oregon	223,579
8th	Washington	201,634
9th	Massachusetts	182,758
10th	Louisiana	180,858

Source: [1]

Regulatory Impact Summary

Every **10% increase** in the burden of federal regulations in the state of Washington is associated with the following **unintended consequences** [10, 11]:

-0.5% *Annual Decrease of Number of Firms*

-0.6% *Annual Decrease of Employment*

-825 *Annual Reduction in Number of Small Businesses*

-33 *Annual Reduction in Number of Large Firms*

+2.5% *Increase in State's Poverty Rate*

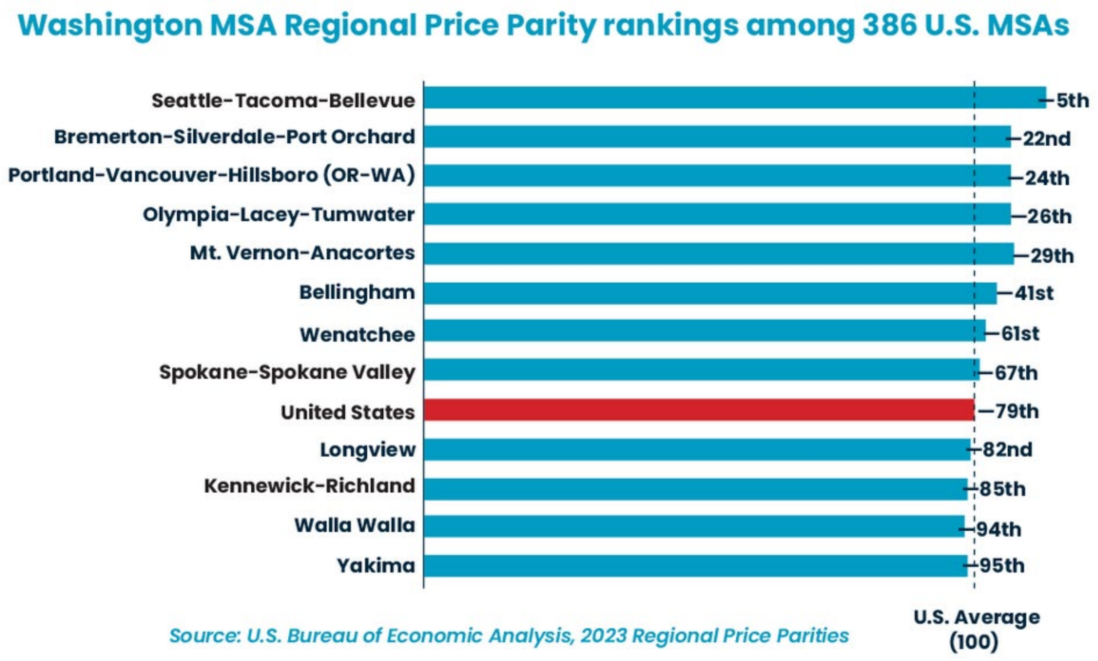
+1% *Increase in Consumer Prices*

+2.08% *Higher Inflation for the Wealthiest*

+2.46% *Higher Inflation for the Poorest*

Cost of Regulation

- AWB commissioned study
- #8 most regulated state in the U.S.
- 202K state regulatory restrictions
- 1.3M total restrictions including federal



Affordability Crisis

- Washington Roundtable study on affordability
- WA is 5th most expensive place in the nation
- Cost of living has increased faster than any other state in the nation
- Statewide challenge

Civilian Labor Force Participation Rate

61% ↓

Trend Reflects
One Year Prior

VIEW DETAIL →

Current Available Data Through December 2025
Vitals Updated March 2026

Net Jobs Created

0.2% ↓

Trend Reflects
Same Quarter, Previous Year

VIEW DETAIL →

Current Available Data Through December 2025
Vitals Updated June 2026

Median Household Income

$99.4K

Trend Reflects
One Year Prior

VIEW DETAIL →

Current Available Data Through December 2024
Vitals Updated February 2026

Unemployment Rate

5.5% ↑

Trend Reflects
Same Quarter, Previous Year

VIEW DETAIL →

Current Available Data Through March 2026
Vitals Updated July 2026

Per Capita Personal income

$85.2K ↑

Trend Reflects
One Year Prior

VIEW DETAIL →

Current Available Data Through December 2024
Vitals Updated June 2026

Assessed Value of Taxable Property

2.2% ↓

Trend Reflects
One Year Prior

VIEW DETAIL →

Current Available Data Through December 2024
Vitals Updated September 2025

Renters Spending 50% or More of Income

22.7%

Trend Reflects
One Year Prior

VIEW DETAIL →

Current Available Data Through December 2024
Vitals Updated February 2026

New Business Applications

28.6% ↑

Trend Reflects
One Year Prior

VIEW DETAIL →

Current Available Data Through December 2025
Vitals Updated June 2026

Ports

$193.5 ↑

Trend Reflects
One Year Prior

VIEW DETAIL →

Current Available Data Through December 2024
Vitals Updated August 2025

Where are we now?

During 2024 in **Washington State**, port district spending:

- Per capita was $193.49, changing by:
  - $12.13 from $181.06 during 2023.
  - $60.39 from $133.10 during 2019.
- In 2023, per $1,000 TPI was $2.28, changing by:
  - $0.38 from $1.89 during 2022.
  - $0.09 from $2.19 during 2018.

PORT DISTRICT SPENDING

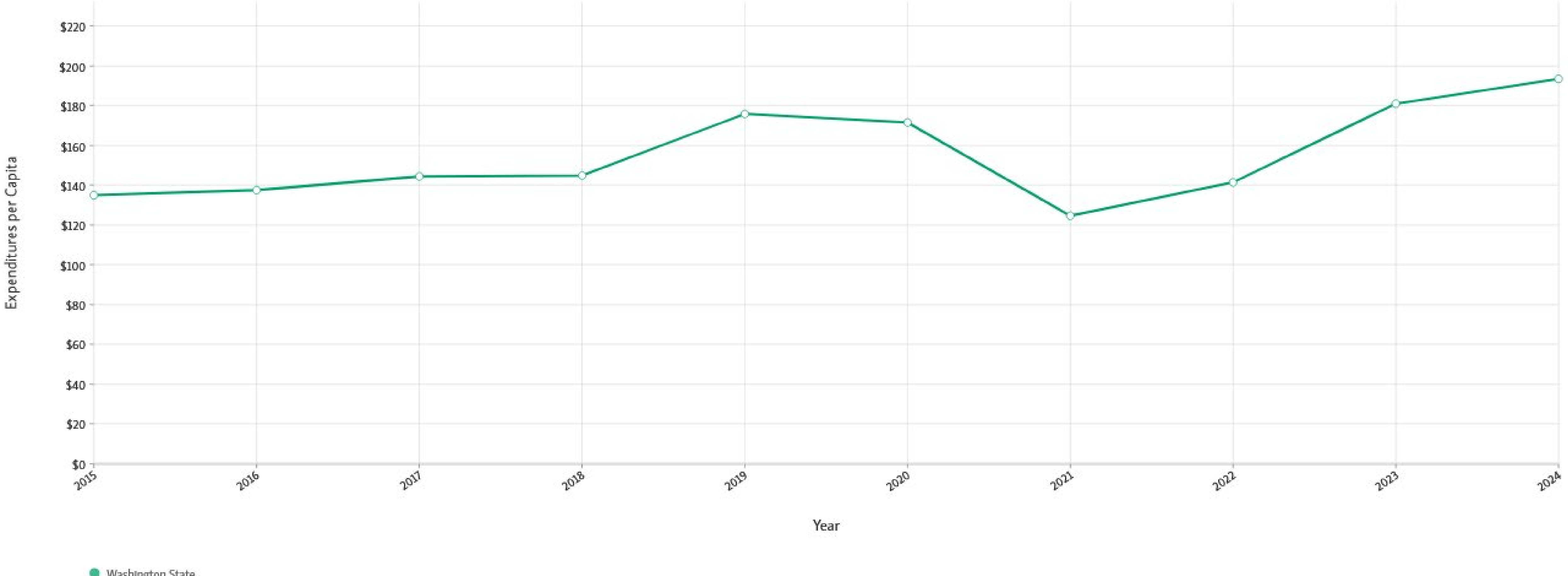
Measuring progress toward the future we want

These economic indicators provide the most current data available related to Washington in the Making 2040 goals and strategies.

COMPARE TO REGION:

Select a Region

Expenditures per Capita Washington State



Seattle Times column calls for plan to grow state's economy

WA has a jobs crisis. Why won't our leaders say it?

By Alex Fryer
Seattle Times Opinion columnist

In all the hue and cry over taxes in Olympia this year, there was one seemingly overlooked fact.

State lawmakers plugged a budget hole by tapping about $880 million from the state's rainy day fund, officially known as the Budget Stabilization Account. By law, they were able to access this only-in-emergencies money with a simple majority vote because the state's employment growth was forecast at less than 1%.

In other words, we're in for some stormy weather, employment-wise.

You'd never have guessed the job situation was that dire, given all the talk around taxes and spending over the last few months. Most of it centered on how rich people and big businesses would react if and when the tax man cometh for more and more.

The job market sucking wind? Didn't seem to be much of a priority.

That ought to change.

How about someone in political leadership stepping up to the microphone and saying simply:

"We want businesses to come here. We

KEVIN CLARK / THE SEATTLE TIMES

Amazon buildings in South Lake Union in Seattle in January. Amazon, Expedia Group, Meta and Microsoft all reported layoffs, albeit a small fraction of their overall employment, writes the columnist.

Remember talk of "green shoots," President Barack Obama's garden-inspired phrase to

job sites.

Locally, the arts community is also taking it

In his State of the State speech in January, the governor noted that Washington is the ninth largest economy in the nation. It dominates the space industry and has a triple A bond rating, among other positives.

What's more, Ferguson noted, Washington had the largest increase in requests to form new businesses in the country. The state's business applications grew 16.2% while nationwide, they dropped by nearly 5%.

"The state of our state remains strong," he pronounced.

But as reported by the Puget Sound Business Journal, many of these new businesses were started by out-of-work techies who had been laid off. There's a term for these folks: "necessity entrepreneurs."

Late last year, the Association of Washington Business released an employers survey that asked: Does your business plan to expand in Washington in the next year or two? Eighty-six percent answered "No."

Will corporations and wealthy people head for the exits now that the state might have an income tax? I have no idea.

Should an "open for business" attitude include rolling out the red carpet for data centers and other ventures that have serious environmental and other concerns? That ought to be scrutinized, for sure.

But I do know that Seattle and the rest of the state have benefited from many things that are

Job picture needs attention: In a new opinion piece, Seattle Times columnist Alex Fryer urges lawmakers to focus on job growth, following a legislative session that was largely centered on passing new taxes and spending.

So, What Do We Do?

- We need a growth plan
- Employers need to get off the sidelines
- Washington in the Making 2040

Washington in the Making 2040

What is Washington in the Making 2040?

The Association of Washington Business and the Washington Roundtable have built a vision for the future of our economy informed by Washingtonians. This vision focuses on shared values and aspirations for our economic future. The 2040 plan outlines proactive goals and strategies to get there.

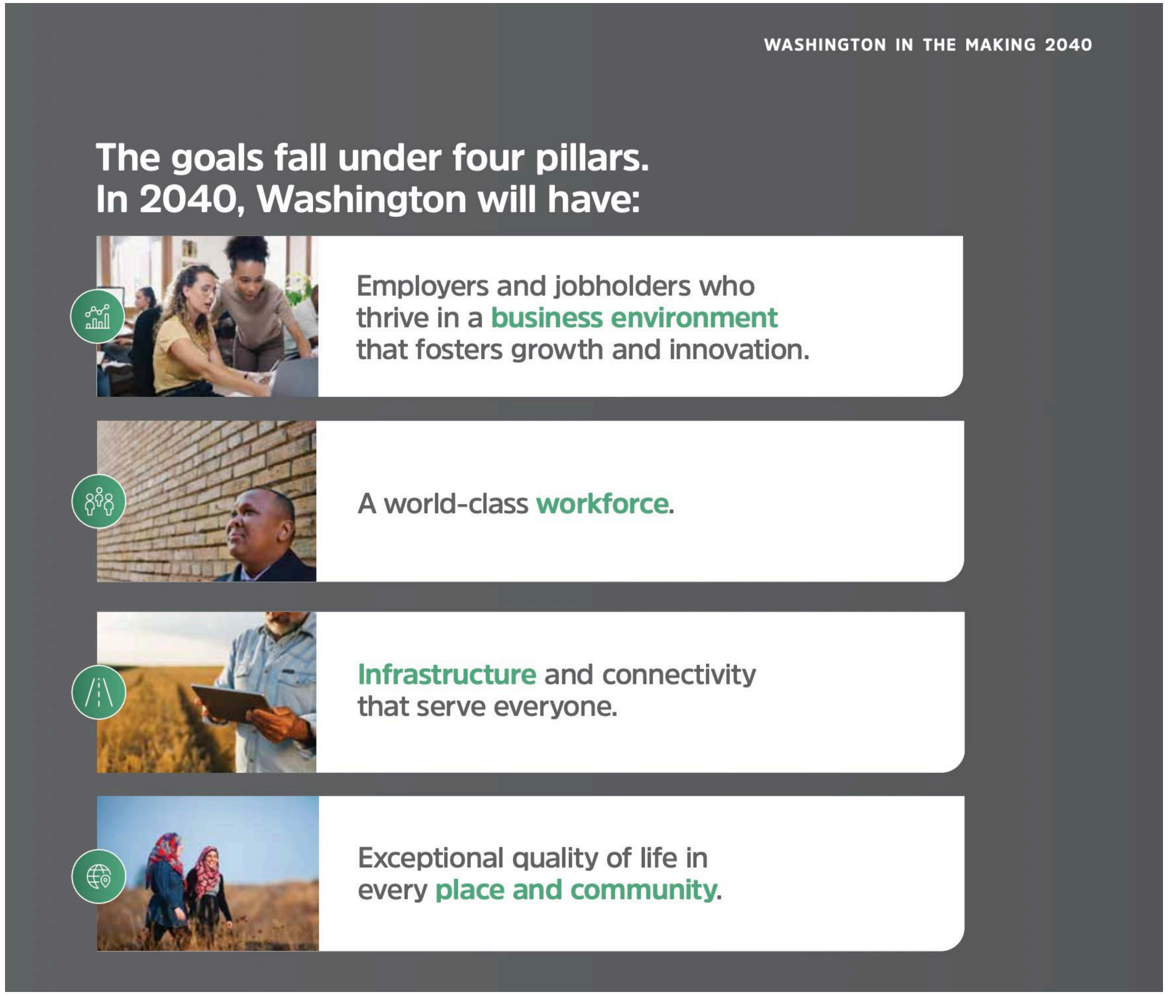
Engagement Research

- We engaged with business and community leaders across Washington to build a bold economic plan that will carry the state into the future.
- Over 4,200 Washington residents contributed their insights and input

The Vision & Plan

Washington in the Making 2040

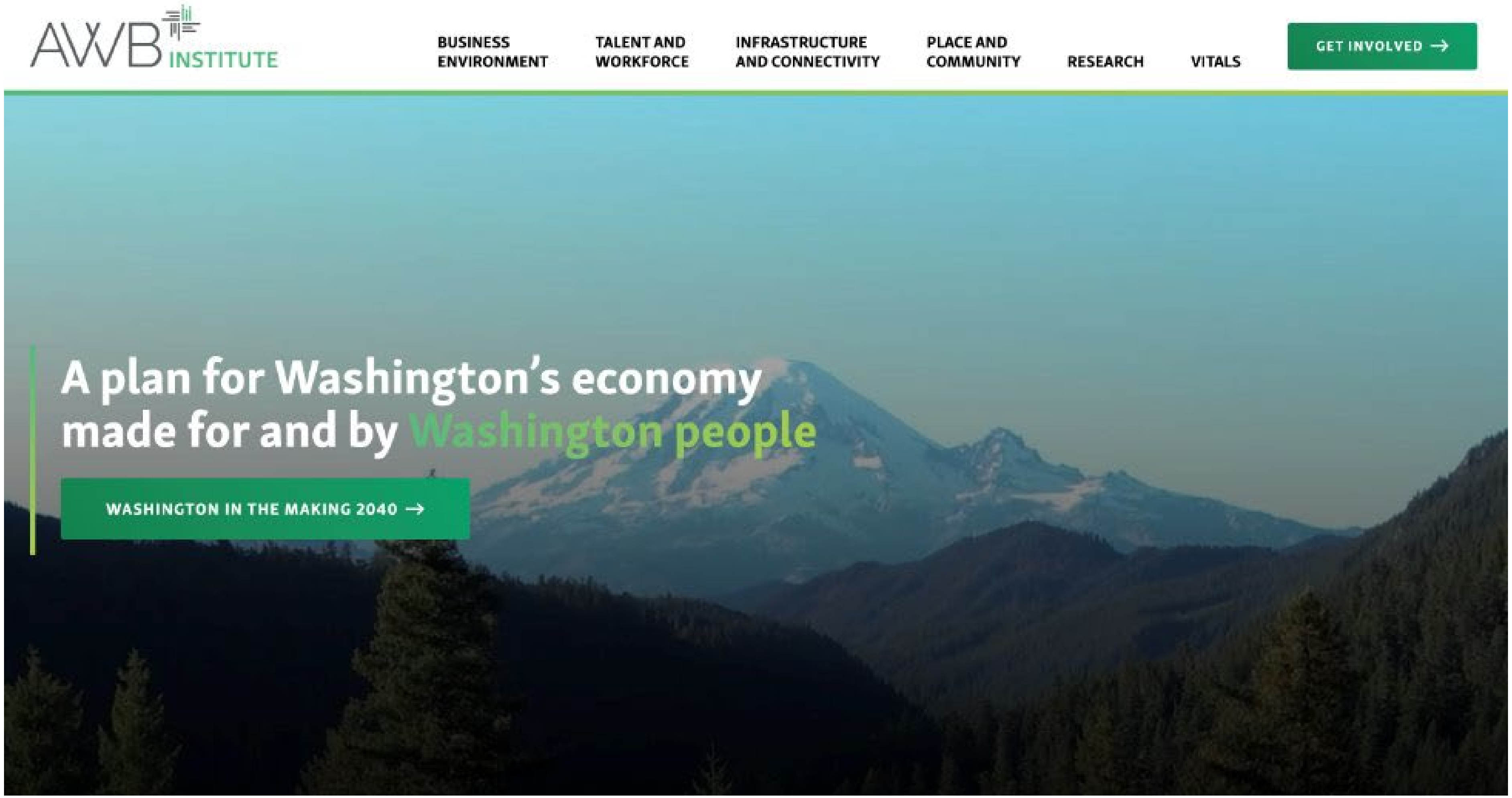
- An employer-led economic vision, informed by the people of our state that will serve us well and will have lasting power.
- A vision that inspires hope and opportunity across regions.
- A plan we can work towards strategically and measure progress over time.
- Unifying employers, political and community leaders across the state on shared commitments that will endure beyond political terms and individual leaders.



Vision & Goals

- A vibrant Washington State that offers opportunity for every Washingtonian and prosperity in every region.
- Progress measured by 36 economic vitals (WA2040.org)

WA2040.org


AWB INSTITUTE
BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT
TALENT AND WORKFORCE
INFRASTRUCTURE AND CONNECTIVITY
PLACE AND COMMUNITY
RESEARCH
VITALS
GET INVOLVED →
A plan for Washington's economy made for and by Washington people
WASHINGTON IN THE MAKING 2040 →

Solution Summits

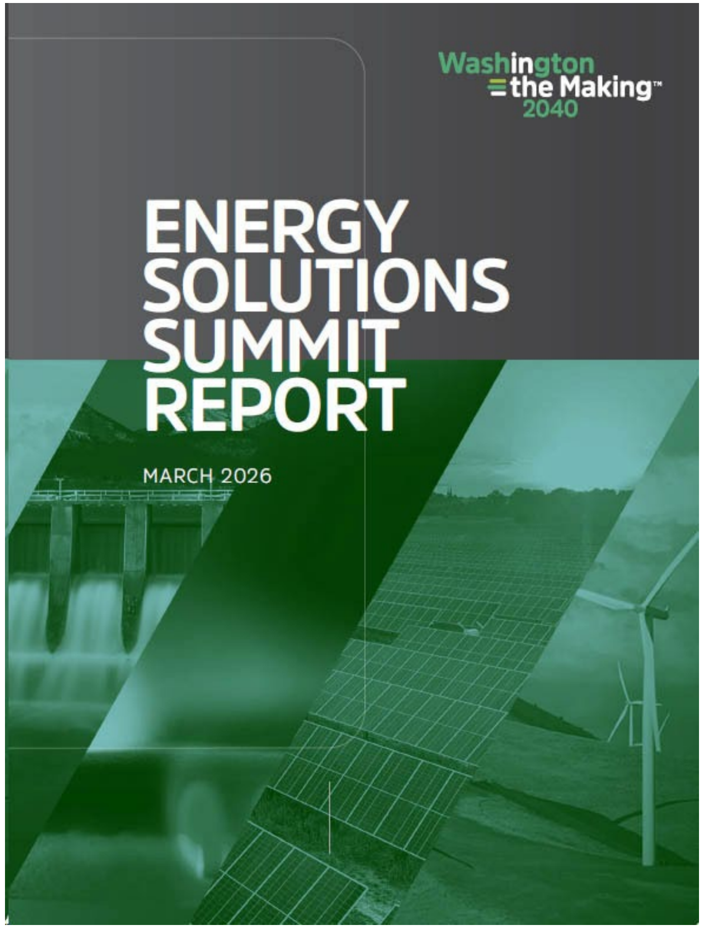
Inaugural Solution Summit

Details

- October 30 at (SeaTac) Hilton
- Attendance: 192 (event sold out)

Highlights

- Governor Ferguson opened the day
- Utility CEO panel and Agency Leader panel
- Student fellowship program (14 students attended from UW, WSU and Gonzaga)
- Afternoon discussion groups focused on energy demand solutions



Key Solutions Identified

- Protect and preserve renewable hydropower
- Invest Climate Commitment Act proceeds into clean energy development, siting and transmission
- Improve the state’s permitting system to speed up critical infrastructure projects
- Build new energy infrastructure faster to meet growing demand

Economic Future Solutions Summit

- Last week at SeaTac
- Create a shared understanding of the challenges facing Washington
- Drive dialogue about solutions that could support our business environment goals
- Produce a Washington growth agenda with concrete ideas

Governor's Economic Development Council

- Executive Order establishes new council to craft statewide economic strategy
- 26-member council
- First such body in two decades

Thank you, Washington Employers

ThankYouWAbusiness.org

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