

# SEWEDA

Southeast Washington Economic  
Development Association

## **2021 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Annual Update**

**Serving the  
Asotin, Columbia, Garfield & Whitman  
Counties**

# **2021 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Annual Update**

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## **Southeast Washington Economic Development Association**

### **Mission Statement**

The Mission of the Southeast Washington Economic Development Association is to promote economic vitality by creating and retaining jobs through business, tourism, and community development while preserving the culture and environment of the region.

## **Southeast Washington Economic Development Association**

### **Vision Statement**

Drawing on the rich heritage and natural resources of the region, the Southeast Washington Economic Development Association is committed to enhancing economic vitality and an unparalleled quality of life through partnerships with business, civic interests, and government for the benefit of the residents of Asotin, Columbia, Garfield, and Whitman Counties.

# Table of Contents

- SEWEDA Board of Directors ..... 5**
- Executive Summary ..... 6**
- Adjustment to the Strategy..... 7**
- Economic Development Activities ..... 8**
- Evaluation of Progress ..... 12**
- Schedule of Goals ..... 16**
- Economic Resilience ..... 19**

## SEWEDA Board of Directors

	Name	Position
<b>Asotin County</b>	Brian Shinn	Asotin County Commissioner
	Chad Miltenberger	Walla Walla Community College
	Darrin Eberhardt	Wells Fargo
	Steven Ebert	City of Clarkston
<b>Columbia County</b>	Zac Weatherford	Mayor of Dayton
	Trina Cole	City Administrator
<b>Garfield County</b>	Larry Ledgerwood	Garfield County Commissioner
	Rachel Anderson	Garfield Transit/Area on Aging
	Paul Miller	Mayor of Pomeroy
	Mike Cassetto	City of Pomeroy
<b>Whitman County</b>	Tom Handy	Whitman County Commissioner
	Glenn Johnson	Pullman City Mayor
	Al Sorensen	City of Pullman
<b>Port Ex-Officio</b>	Wanda Keefer	Port of Clarkston
	Larry Scoggins	Port of Garfield
	Karl Webber	Port of Whitman

## SEWEDA Staff

Name	Position
Dovie Willey	Executive Director
Jack Peasley	Managing Director – Garfield County
Suzy McNeilly	Managing Director – Whitman County

## **Executive Summary**

The Southeast Washington Economic Development Association's (SEWEDA) Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Report covers the Southeastern Washington Region for the period from April 1, 2021 to March 31, 2022.

The Economic Development Administration (EDA) designated the SEWEDA Region as an Economic Development District in 1985. The SEWEDA District consists of Asotin, Columbia, Garfield and Whitman Counties. The region includes Pullman within Whitman County, which has been designated as a Micropolitan Statistical Area.

SEWEDA works toward creating an environment that welcomes new businesses, industries, and workforce to the region to promote a vibrant, resilient, and sustainable economy. At the heart of this endeavor is the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS).

This CEDS annual report is the results of utilizing the prior year's CEDS as a basis and then gathering additional input through the communications with both public and private sector representatives throughout the region, and input from a widely distributed survey.

The purpose of the CEDS is to establish a strategically-driven process that will help create jobs, foster more stable and diversified economies, and improve living conditions. The CEDS provides a mechanism for coordinating the efforts of individuals, organizations, local governments, and private industry concerned with economic development. It is only because of our partnerships and collaborations that we can address regional challenges, rebound from disasters and make gains toward economic resilience.

The COVID-19 pandemic impact remains a focus as it has placed hardships on the communities and businesses therein. SEWEDA has remained committed to providing resources and relevant news to best serve the business community and in the economic recovery efforts that follow.

In creating the CEDS, there is a continuing line of communication and outreach that encourages public engagement, participation and commitment. The general public, government decision makers, and business investors are able to use this document as a guide to understanding the regional economy and to improve it.

### **Adjustment to the Strategy:**

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic continues to maintain a forceful presence in the community and business environment. SEWEDA and the CEDS Committee have had to operate virtually due to restrictions. With the coming Five Year CEDS Update, SEWEDA will follow guidelines to ensure there will be multiple meetings to efficiently address CEDS topics and will hold in-person meetings with all key stakeholders present.

SEWEDA has continued to offer support remotely and on-site to small businesses with an effort to present hybrid workshop opportunities and assist businesses by offering support through social media promotions. SEWEDA continued to be active in 2021 by supporting businesses through technical and financial assistance. This was made possible by partnering with the Washington Department of Commerce through the Working Washington grants and SEWEDA's own, Elevate Southeast Washington Shop Local Campaign. Such opportunities will again be explored and increased in 2022 as businesses continue to struggle from the impact of the pandemic.

In 2020, the organization had undergone a logo transformation. Steps are being taken to create marketing materials and increase in-person and virtual visits that will further assist businesses, developers, and partners within the Southeast Washington region to know who SEWEDA is, the services offered, the potential that exists within the region and the collaborative opportunities that await. All of this leading to a greater economic impact being made in our region.

As a result of the coronavirus pandemic, the importance of resiliency in a region has become more apparent than ever. In addition, the development of a more diverse economy will result in resiliency and quicker recovery to economic shocks. A diverse economy will create prosperity by creating flexibility and spurring innovation and the reliance on multiple industries rather than a single industry will allow the region to stand a chance against economic downturns.

The tourism and visitor trade industry is a growing and increasingly important factor in the Southeast Washington region. SEWEDA actively supports the various lead organizations throughout the District to develop tourism opportunities to maximize the benefits of this industry. Going forward, SEWEDA will strengthen partnerships with the Chambers and increase collaborations to promote tourism and support the tourism focused industries. Bringing the businesses and tourism representatives together to further increase the community's economic impact will continue into 2022.

The importance of broadband and connectivity remains a key focus as individuals continue working from home, students attend school remotely and businesses depend on the connectivity. SEWEDA is focused on strengthening partnerships with the Ports, becoming a member of the individual Counties' Broadband Action Teams and offering assistance where possible.

### **Economic Development Activities:**

Offering support to small businesses has remained in the forefront of our activities. SEWEDA ADO's assist and sustain businesses everyday with help in financing, startup, record keeping, marketing, and help with expansion and retention issues. To name a few instances, collaborations with Pullman Marketing, Walla Walla Community College and promotions of our partner's programs, has resulted in informative workshops and webinars throughout the year.

With the focus on broadband connectivity becoming more prevalent, SEWEDA has maintained and is looking to expand partnerships with the ports and libraries in the region. The Port of Clarkston, Port of Columbia, Port of Garfield and Port of Whitman have been instrumental in continuing to address the broadband needs in our region.

SEWEDA offered support to the Port of Clarkston which was awarded over \$5 million through a combination of grants and Port dollars, the majority being grant support. The broadband projects provided over 1,800 homes and businesses with installation.

The Port of Columbia was awarded a \$2 million grant from the Community Economic Revitalization Board (CERB) to construction a fiber network in their community. They have remained focused and dedicated on the development of the County and the community members.

The Port of Garfield obtained \$850,000 through a combination of grants, a low-interest loan and Port dollars to provide nearly 700 homes and businesses in Pomeroy with high-speed fiber service.

The Port of Whitman has been the recipient of CERB grants and contributions that have been essential to the completion of its project to enable gig-speed broadband for more than 150 businesses and 1,386 homes in five communities on the Palouse and extend fiber an additional 41 miles to rural areas.

Housing investment is a major driver of economic growth. Research has shown that housing construction is a stimulus to the creation of small businesses. Individuals are more likely to use their homes as places of employment since the start of the pandemic,

and by providing houses, the potential for creating additional work opportunities is expanded. Currently, SEWEDA is increasing involvement in the housing market opportunities that exist within the counties.

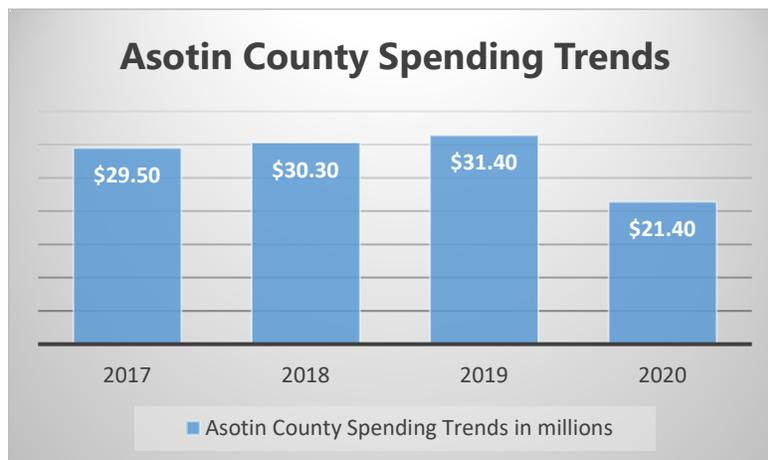
Asotin County has approved housing projects to meet the growing need for homes. Thus far, more than 50 rentals have been completed and all rented. In addition, the rehabilitation of homes has remained an ongoing focus for the benefit of the community.

Columbia County has remained focused on its housing needs regarding renovations and new home construction. New housing is assumed to be needed in large part to the unavailability of certain housing types and the possibility of new industry.

Garfield County and SEWEDA's Garfield County Director has concentrated on a \$1.1-million-dollar water system upgrade that will provide the City of Pomeroy with a reliable water supply covering more than one mile of Main Street and the Depot addition. Achieving this upgrade will not only assist in the construction of homes but also the creation and location of businesses.

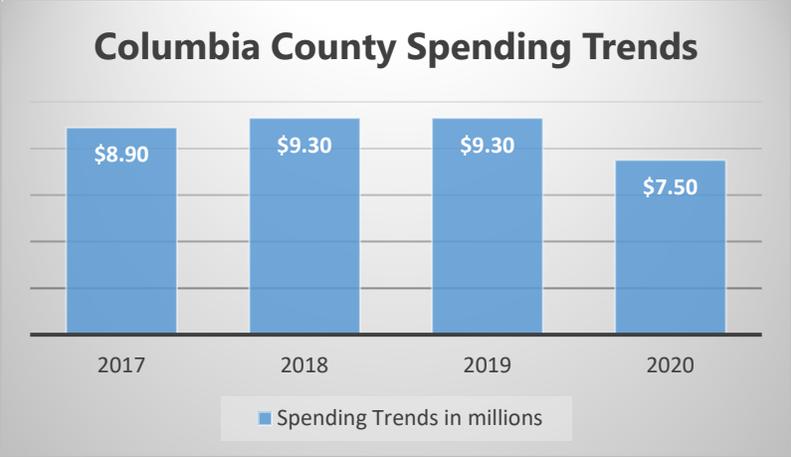
Whitman County continues to make strides to address residential and student housing needs. Each city and town has developed and implemented plans for new construction and renovations of housing.

In Asotin County, Visit Lewis Clark Valley Tourism has worked tirelessly to promote tourism within Asotin County and the surrounding area. In 2020, the pandemic caused a loss of \$10.2 million dollars in visitor spending and a 31.7% loss in revenue. In 2021, the County was able to see an increase of 87% in revenue.



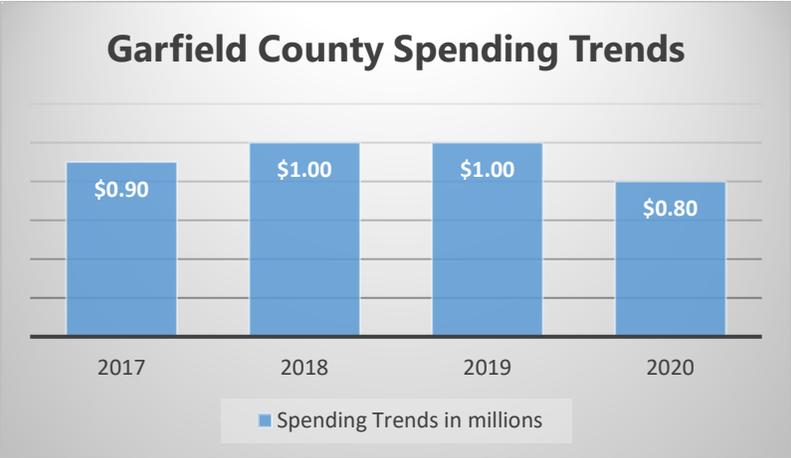
Resource: DiPaola, K. (2021, May 2). The Economic Impact of Tourism in Washington. Tourism Economics.

Columbia County, and the partnerships established, worked together to promote the many historical sites and the recreational opportunities that thrive there. As many areas, the County also experienced a 19.2% loss in revenue in 2020. Prior to that, the County was experiencing an increase in revenue and visitors each year that passed. The expectation remains for this increase to be seen once again in the 2021 revenue.



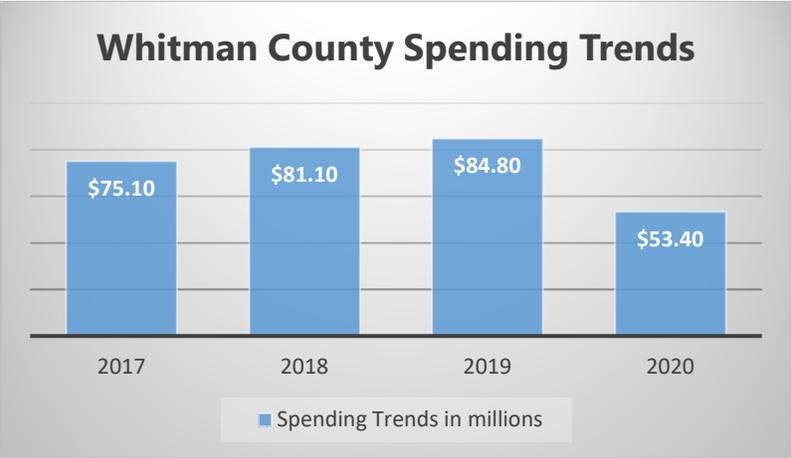
Resource: DiPaola, K. (2021, May 2). The Economic Impact of Tourism in Washington. Tourism Economics.

Garfield County's tourism is largely promoted by their Chamber of Commerce. The County experienced a 24.4% loss in revenue in 2020. The renewed focus on the recreational economy brought an almost 15% increase to one of the businesses last year.



Resource: DiPaola, K. (2021, May 2). The Economic Impact of Tourism in Washington. Tourism Economics.

Whitman County supports the local tourism and recreation industries by promoting the natural, historic, recreational, and cultural amenities that Whitman County and the Palouse region has to offer. 2020 brought a 37.0% loss in revenue. Even so, there was a steady increase in revenue prior and it is expected to resume in the coming year.



Resource: DiPaola, K. (2021, May 2). The Economic Impact of Tourism in Washington. Tourism Economics.

As mentioned, SEWEDA has expanded usage of social media and video conferences to continue reaching out to the business community. The changes in methods used to reach the business community have led to a partnership with Pullman Marketing in hosting webinars to assist businesses in navigating the pandemic. According to Pullman Marketing, these webinars had many attendees at the start of the pandemic and have now transitioned onto YouTube to allow viewing at individuals' convenience. This has proven to be even more popular as businesses are looking for information at their leisure.

SEWEDA has continued to be a part of the Northwest Intermountain Dream It Do It Council. The Council takes a role in forging strong and vital partnerships between business, the workforce, and the workforce development community. Leading to an entrepreneurial, market-driven, accountable and exceptional workforce investment system. The Dream It. Do It. Youth Conference attracts many High School sophomore and junior students and counselors and promotes the region's opportunities in manufacturing, health care, skilled trades, technology, construction, transportation, and tourism industries. The conference is to be held in May at Lewis-Clark State College with anticipation of over 500 students in attendance. SEWEDA has taken the initiative to increase Washington state industry representation.

An active Economic Forum Group and Garfield County SEWEDA forum, facilitated by the Garfield County ADO and Pomeroy Chamber of Commerce has resumed meeting to address the economic needs in Pomeroy and the County regarding business recruitment, entrepreneurship, housing shortage, infrastructure, and community development projects. The Garfield County ADO works closely with the Port of Garfield, City of Pomeroy, and the county with development of specific needs.

SEWEDA sponsors the Clarkston High School DECA Entrepreneur Conference during Global Entrepreneurship Week. This past year, SEWEDA was again able to sponsor the competition among the DECA students and support their ingenuity.



SEWEDA has been appointed the Administrator for the Federal Emergency Management Agency: Emergency Food and Shelter Program for Nez Perce and Asotin Counties. The program was created by Congress by allocating federal funds for the provision of food and shelter.

### **Evaluation of Progress on Action Plan & Goals:**

It is not expected that economic development practitioners will pursue all the ideas captured in this CEDS. Instead, economic development practitioners and their partners should work together during annual convening's organized by SEWEDA to identify which approaches they want to pursue based on the assets and strengths they are able to contribute.

Through the planning process, SEWEDA identified a need to restructure and implement increased in-person meetings of the CEDS Committee. This change will be apparent in the upcoming five-year CEDS update.

The former goals and action plans taken to address those goals are described in the following:

**Goal 1:** *Improve existing infrastructure and develop new infrastructure, including broadband.*

The provision of basic infrastructure is important to the growth of an area's economy. This includes ensuring that adequate services, utilities, land, and facilities are available. Working to maintain and increase those services is necessary to create a vibrant economy.

Expansion and support of broadband infrastructure assets through identification of gaps in service and needs is crucial to growth in our regional economy and is critical to the economic recovery and resiliency of the region which will allow us to provide opportunities for our historically disadvantaged region.

**Action Plan 1.1:** *Increase the number of homes with broadband installation.*

Many households and businesses must utilize unreliable internet solutions due to the lack of adequate service in these rural areas. This presents considerable barriers educational learning environments, e-commerce development in the region and remote working opportunities for many of our residents.

**Action Plan 1.2:** *Housing units produced*

Housing investment is a major driver of economic growth. Research has shown that housing construction is a stimulus to the creation of small businesses. Individuals are more likely to use their homes as places of employment since the start of the pandemic, and by providing houses, the potential for creating additional work opportunities is expanded.

**Goal 2:** *Promote and develop tourism and recreational oriented industries.*

The tourism and visitor trade industry is a growing and increasingly important factor in the Southeast Washington region. The rural nature of the region, its proximity to the Walla Walla wine country and Hells Canyon, its natural attributes, the presence of major cultural amenities, and a number of nearby universities make this an obvious economic engine for the region. SEWEDA actively supports the various lead organizations throughout the District to develop tourism opportunities through partnerships to maximize the benefits of this industry.

**Action Plan 2.1:** *Trends in Occupancy Tax Revenues*

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic the region had a unique opportunity to expand the regional tourism industry cluster. Due to the boom in the outdoor recreation economy, the region was poised to grow the sector exponentially. As planning efforts were beginning to expand, the pandemic hit and plans for economic growth had to shift to plans for economic recovery.

***Action Plan 2.2: Number of new recreation oriented businesses***

In light of the continued effects of the pandemic, the focus has remained on sustaining the businesses that are already established. The ability to work remote and the appeal to begin a business out of the home, is likely to generate an increased interest in those wishing to start their own business.

***Goal 3: To increase the availability, skill level, and productivity of the District's workforce.***

A critical component to the District's economic growth and well-being is its workforce. The companies in the region need qualified and available workers in order to realize their potential. Education tends to raise productivity and creativity as well as stimulate entrepreneurship and technological breakthroughs. All of these factors lead to greater output and economic growth. Accomplishing this requires a partnership between education and training institutions and workforce agencies.

***Action Plan 3.1: Student enrollments***

Walla Walla Community College (WWCC) in Clarkston experienced a significant decline in enrollment in the fall of 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic restrictions and protocols drastically affected the growth of the campus. However, fall of 2021 brought an enrollment rebound in the workforce programs, Business and Allied Health. The Welding and Industrial Mechanics programs enrollment continue to fluctuate quarter to quarter by 60% to 50%, respectively. This is due in large part to the low employment and the pandemic.

Lewis-Clark State College (LCSC) in Lewiston experienced a slight decline in enrollment in the fall of 2020 of approximately 2.8% overall. Fall of 2021 saw a rebound as enrollment increased approximately 3.21%. The most significant decline was in the Career and Technical Education fields which took a sharp decline and are continuing to do so. This is in line with the national trend, which is a staggering 15% decline in overall programming. The Academic programs, Nursing, Accounting, Social Work, and Legal studies continue to increase modestly each year, while Teacher Education continues to

maintain a flat enrollment. Welding, Diesel technology, and paralegal studies have held full programming during the pandemic.

Washington State University (WSU) in Pullman experienced a slight decline in enrollment in 2021 due in large part to the pandemic restrictions. Strides taken toward online accommodations and safety protocols helped slow the decline in enrollment and generate interest for new students.

***Action Plan 3.2: Changes in course offerings***

Walla Walla Community College's Health program continues to run at full capacity. In March 2019, an Associate of Applied Science Agriculture Business was added to meet the growing demand in the region. Last year, a Bachelor of Applied Science in Business & Management and a Bachelor of Applied Science in Agriculture was added. In addition, an Aluminum Welding Program was established as a stand-alone program.

Lewis-Clark State College's Career and Technical Education programs have taken a sharp decline over the last two years in many areas, excluding Welding, Diesel technology, and paralegal studies, which have held full programming though the pandemic. High wages and many job opportunities have taken many of the individuals who were considering a skill-based education but opted to go right to the workforce instead.

***Action Plan 3.3 Number of jobs created in the target industry sectors***

From 2015 to 2020, jobs increased by 10.0% in Asotin County, WA. This change outpaced the national growth rate of 0.0% by 10.0%. Jobs grew by 677 over the last 5 years and are projected to grow by 851 over the next 5 years. During the second quarter of 2021 in Asotin County, there were 321 net jobs created. The top growing industries in Asotin County include Health Care, Construction/Manufacturing and Retail.

From 2015 to 2020, jobs increased by 9.8% in Columbia County, WA from 1,484 to 1,629. Jobs grew by 145 over the last 5 years and are projected to grow by 262 over the next 5 years. This change outpaced the national growth rate of 0.0% by 9.8%. During the second quarter of 2021 in Columbia County, there were 104 net jobs created. The top growing industries in Columbia County were Government, Construction, and Agriculture/Forestry/Fishing/Hunting.

From 2015 to 2020, jobs increased by 6.0% in Garfield County, WA from 870 to 922. This change outpaced the national growth rate of 0.0% by 6.0%. Jobs grew by 52 over the last 5 years and are projected to grow by 32 over the next 5 years. During the second

quarter of 2021 in Garfield County, there were 62 net jobs created. The top three industries were Education, Hospitals, and Accommodation/Food Services.

From 2015 to 2020, jobs declined by 2.1% in Whitman County, WA from 22,099 to 21,642. This change fell short of the national growth rate of 0.0% by 2.1%. Jobs decreased by 456 over the last 5 years but are projected to grow by 343 over the next 5 Years. During the second quarter of 2021 in Whitman County, there were 855 net jobs created. The top three industries were Government, Health Care and Manufacturing.

**Goal 4:** *Encourage the growth of existing businesses and industries while improving and diversifying the economic well-being of the region.*

The basis of most economic development efforts center around business startup, expansion, retention, and recruitment. These remain an important part of our efforts to grow quality jobs, investment in the District, and tax base. A comprehensive approach will be utilized to reach the goal of increased economic vitality for the region.

**Action Plan 4.1:** *New businesses formed and net growth in businesses per year*

The pandemic has hindered the startup environment but has allowed the sustainability for many established businesses through financial and technical assistance, including on-site and remote workshops. Each County, Economic Development and Business Service organizations focused on marketing the business attributes of the region. Though 2021 did not see many new businesses formed, 2022 already has at least 3 new businesses underway.

**Action Plan 4.2:** *Asotin, Columbia, Garfield and Whitman County business referrals to business service partners such as SBDC, SBA certified lenders*

Some established businesses and startups have been referred to other business service partners in order to strengthen partnerships and make known the resources available to businesses in the Southeast Washington region. A greater effort will be made in the coming year.

#### **Schedule of Goals for the Next Year:**

The following goals will remain the same with the addition of developing a resiliency plan for the region.

Goals:

1. Improve Existing Infrastructure and Develop New Infrastructure
2. Promote & Develop Tourism and Recreational Oriented Industries
3. Increase the Availability, Skill Level, & Productivity of the District's Workforce
4. Encourage the Growth & Diversification of Businesses & Industries
5. Develop & Maintain Regional Resiliency

The reference number of the action plans for the coming year correspond with the goals listed above.

**Action Plan 1.1:** The Port of Clarkston Port has been working on the Economic Development Association design/engineering and permitting project and are requesting \$470,400 from the Economic Development Association, with a match amount of \$117,600.

**Action Plan 1.1:** The Port of Columbia will continue to seek funding for broadband installation and will see the completion of the Dayton Broadband Fiber-to-the-Home Project.

**Action Plan 1.1:** One of the top goals of the Port of Garfield remains the upgrading and development of fiber installation through funding assistance and established partnerships.

**Action Plan 1.1:** The Port of Whitman has received a \$1 million grant from the Washington State Broadband Office to provide broadband access to approximately 143 homes and businesses. The Port will continue to move forward on broadband projects for homes and businesses across the County.

**Action Plan 1.1:** SEWEDA has been in discussion with the Port of Whitman and the establishment of a Broadband Action Team. SEWEDA will increase involvement in the Broadband Action Teams within all the Counties.

**Action Plan 1.2:** Asotin County will see previously approved housing development projects continue into the year.

**Action Plan 1.2:** Garfield County will continue to seek funding to assist with the water system upgrade to support the growth of housing and businesses.

**Action Plan 1.2:** SEWEDA will seek out updates and partnership opportunities from Columbia County.

**Action Plan 1.2:** Whitman County will continue to seek funding and partnerships as they address the needs for student and residential housing.

**Action Plan 2.1:** Each County, Chambers, Ports and Tourism organizations will continue to promote the unique attributes that make up the Southeast Washington Region. This will be seen through promotions and partnerships. The Port of Clarkston and Visit Lewis Clark Valley Tourism seek to develop the cruise boat industry in Asotin County. The City of Pullman has taken the initiative focus on a strategic tourism plan. The pandemic has brought a renewed interest in the recreational industry and this region has an abundance of activities.

**Action Plan 2.2:** The Counties seek to encourage and identify creative, compatible and beneficial use of resource lands. Such uses may include tourism, boating, hunting/fishing, and recreation. Collaborations between economic development and business service organizations will contribute to the increase in tourism and recreational oriented industries.

**Action Plan 3.2:** WWCC continues to make great strides in meeting the workforce needs of our region. In fall 2022, there will be an enhanced welding curriculum instructional and aluminum to include a fabrication emphasis. This is in direct correlation to industry demands and will produce skilled workers ready to enter the workforce. Pursuit of a high demand grant will allow expansion for energy systems to include electrical, mechanical pathways in fall 2023.

**Action Plan 3.2:** LCSC is in tune with workforce needs within the region. They have expanded their industry partnership with Schweitzer Engineering in Engineering technology, as there is significant growth in this area, which is now including a pathway in GIS. Most recently, LCSC has been approved to offer multiple Cyber degrees, ranging from Certificates, AAS, and BS pathways. They also have been approved to offer Hospitality degrees with industry pathways and internship partnership sites allowing students to work for credit and address the highly impacted shortage of hospitality workers. This degree option will also include a Casino Floor Management pathway in the future. The LCSC Workforce training arm continues to offer multiple opportunities for short-term training with high demand in Fire, EMT, CNA, and beginning business courses.

**Action Plan 3.2:** Washington State University focuses on maintaining an in-person learning environment in the coming school year. Connecting education to industry needs should be a focus as the shortage in Health Care and Manufacturing remains.

**Action Plan 3.3:** The pandemic has greatly affected the industries in the Southeast Washington region. Health Care, education, retail and manufacturing industries are in need of workers and will be the driving force in 2022. Two industries in need, that all Counties share, include Health Care and Manufacturing. These will be the top focus and the partnerships established between Industries and Higher Education will be crucial.

**Action Plan 4.1:** The start of 2022 has already shown an increase in businesses within Garfield and Whitman Counties. Promotion efforts of the Southeast Washington region will continue with an increased focus on recruitment.

**Action Plan 4.2:** Collaborations between business service partners and SBA certified lenders will continue into 2022 and be tracked. Access to resources through the SEWEDA website will be increased.

**Action Plan 5.1:** With stakeholders, a regional resiliency plan will be established to address industry diversification, enhance informational networks, and pre-disaster planning for response and recovery. This will include a continuing advocacy for our underserved rural areas.

### **Economic Resilience:**

The challenges the past two years has presented an opportunity for SEWEDA to better address the need for improved economic resilience. Resiliency depends on the capacity to recover quickly, withstand and avoid a shock altogether. The Southeast Washington region has the capability of anticipating and evaluating risk and having a responsive action in place. Economic resiliency will be interjected throughout the goals in the coming year.

Our region's businesses are the beating heart of our economy. In order to thrive, the region must support and retain existing businesses while also cultivating new businesses that will help diversify our economy and generate job growth. Industry diversification will assist in spreading risk and lessen the impact of one sector's decline on the overall economy. Furthermore, a workforce with a wide variety of skills that are transferrable across industries can adapt to industry shifts as well.

COVID-19 identified an increased effort needed on infrastructure development. Broadband projects will remain a focus as the Southeast Washington region continues to move forward in achieving connectivity and meet the need for work and school attended remotely. Additionally, the need for homes has become an even greater focus

as our rural communities strive to meet the demand for those looking to locate away from urban developments.

Rural communities have been under resourced and require additional attention and resources to ensure the opportunity gap does not further widen as a result of natural and human created incidents. Ensuring equitable access to basic services for residents and businesses in rural areas is a critical strategic opportunity.

Extending across all these resilience considerations is the need and opportunity to establish and enhance information networks. These initiatives exemplify the role that regional cooperation and information sharing can play in seeking innovative solutions adapted to local community needs and priorities.



# SEWEDA

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Development Association

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