LOCAL LEADERSHIP, STATEWIDE IMPACT: COMMUNITY REINVESTMENT IN ACTION

Led by Washington's Local Workforce Development Boards

Across Washington, communities are seeing the results of a different approach to economic recovery, one that is locally led, workforce-connected, and rooted in long-term opportunity.

Over the past year and a half, the Community Reinvestment Program (CRP) initiatives implemented through Washington's Local Workforce Development Boards (Local Board) have helped small businesses grow, supported workers in reaching self-sufficiency, and enabled families to achieve milestones like homeownership that once felt out of reach. As the program enters a new biennium, early results show strong momentum continuing despite tighter funding conditions.

This article highlights the impact of CRP initiatives delivered specifically through the local workforce system and the Economic Security for All (EcSA) program, illustrating how locally designed strategies are translating state investment into real community outcomes.

Turning State Investment into Local Results

From the beginning, CRP was designed to be implemented locally, allowing workforce boards to respond to the unique needs of their regions. Over the first year and a half of implementation, that approach paid off.

Local workforce boards engaged with more than 9,600 businesses statewide, many of which had never previously accessed workforce or economic development resources. More than 3,100 of those businesses were Black, Latine, or Tribal-owned, reflecting CRP's focus on communities historically marginalized and most negatively impacted by the war on drugs.

Through Local Board-administered grants, equipment purchases, and wage reimbursements, 747 businesses received direct CRP investment, with 84% owned or operated by priority populations. In total, $5.6 million flowed directly into local businesses, helping owners stabilize operations, expand services, and create or retain jobs.

For many small employers, these investments marked a turning point, from managing day-to-day survival to planning for growth.

When Business Support Leads to Hiring

One of the defining strengths of CRP implementation through Local Boards is the way business investment is paired with hiring

and training support, facilitated by CRP-funded Business Navigators.

As an example, in North Central Washington, the Local Board aligned CRP business grants with workforce pipelines. Businesses receiving support to purchase equipment or expand capacity were simultaneously connected to job candidates, training programs, and work-based learning opportunities. This ensured that business growth translated directly into new employment opportunities for local jobseekers.

In South Central Washington, the Local Board prioritized culturally responsive engagement, hosting Spanish-language business roundtables and deploying trusted navigators to build relationships with Latine-owned businesses. In addition to connection-building, employers received hands-on technical assistance in core business operations, including support with job application development, applicant screening and hiring practices, and basic social media management. These efforts helped employers who had never engaged with the workforce system to access capital, recruitment assistance, and hiring support, strengthening both businesses and the local labor market.

Across regions, this combination of capital and workforce alignment has proven critical: businesses grow, and workers gain access to real jobs with career pathways.

Supporting Workers Through Career Transitions

CRP has also played a key role in supporting individuals as they move toward self-sufficiency.

Through Career Accelerator Incentives, delivered by Local Boards, EcSA participants received financial support tied to progress on individualized career plans. Over the first year and a half, more than 3,300 individuals received incentive payments, helping them stay enrolled in training, manage household costs, and persist through career transitions.

More than half of participants identified as Black, Latine, or Tribal, and roughly 30% combined incentives with occupational skills training, accelerating their path into higher-wage employment.

For many participants, these incentives provided breathing room at a critical moment, allowing them to complete credentials and step into more stable careers.

Advancing Long-Term Financial Security Through Matched Savings

Perhaps the most powerful outcomes of Local Board-led CRP implementation have come through Matched Investment Savings Accounts (MISA), a tool designed to support long-term financial stability, not just short-term relief.

By the end of the first year:

- 370 participants were enrolled in MISA programs, 75% of whom identified as Black, Latine, and/or Tribal
- $5.5 million in combined participant savings and state match had been accumulated
- Assets purchased included vehicles, post-secondary education, business start-ups, debt reduction, and homes

For participants pursuing homeownership, matched savings combined with financial coaching and workforce support made a decisive difference. In multiple regions, MISA funds strengthened down payments enough to make offers competitive in challenging housing markets. Participants described the experience as life-changing, bringing stability, security, and a foundation for their families' futures.

These outcomes highlight the power of pairing workforce services with asset-building strategies to create lasting economic mobility.

Early Successes in the New Program Year

As CRP entered a new program year in July 2025, Local Boards moved quickly to sustain progress.

All 12 Local Board CRP contracts were executed, performance targets finalized, and local policies updated to reflect learnings from the last year and changes at the state level. In just the first quarter:

- 783 businesses were engaged
- 93 assets were purchased by MISA participants
- 38 participants entered employment at or above self-sufficiency

Even with reduced overall CRP funding, Local Boards demonstrated adaptability, recalibrating strategies while maintaining momentum on the ground.

Why the Local Workforce System Matters

The results of the past year underscore why CRP implementation through Local Workforce Development Boards matters:

- Business investment is tied directly to hiring and training
- Workers receive coordinated support, not fragmented services
- Asset-building complements employment, creating long-term stability
- Communities most impacted by historic disinvestment remain centered

This is not just about dollars spent. It's about systems working together, where workforce development, small business growth, and economic mobility reinforce one another.

Looking Ahead

With strong foundations in place and early results already visible in the new program year, Local Workforce Development Boards are well positioned to continue delivering meaningful CRP outcomes. As business grants and incentives continue, and new MISA participants enroll, Local Board-led CRP initiatives will remain a critical driver of inclusive growth across Washington.