

10-YEAR PLAN FOR REDUCING POVERTY & INEQUALITY IN WASHINGTON STATE

Executive Summary | January 2020

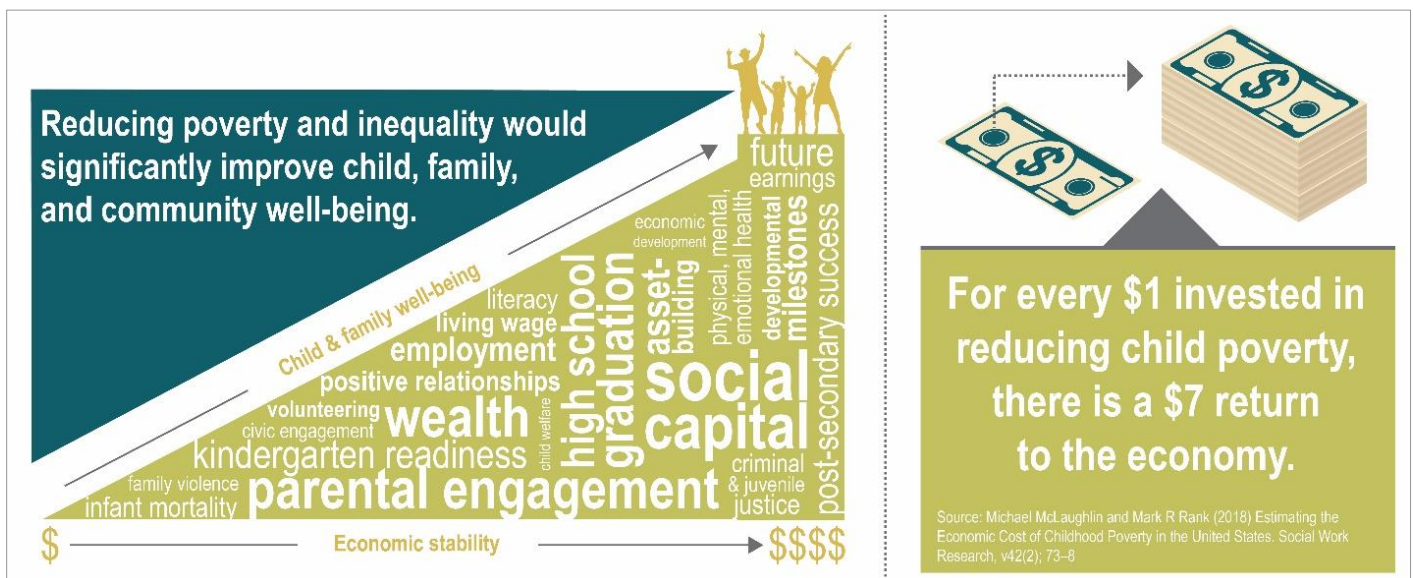
REDUCING POVERTY AND INEQUALITY IN WASHINGTON STATE

Children, adults, families, and communities are more likely to thrive when their foundational needs are met. Trusting relationships with parents, friends, and neighbors. A safe, affordable home. Abundant and nutritious food. And the building blocks we all need to succeed – a high quality education from cradle to career, a job that pays a living wage, and healthy communities to support how we live, love, work, and play. This is the foundation of opportunity all Washingtonians need to thrive.

People experiencing poverty are less likely than their peers to have a strong foundation from which to build for the future. Today, 1.8 million Washingtonians – over 500,000 of them children – live in a household that struggles to make ends meet. That's enough people to fill 25 stadiums the size of CenturyLink Field.¹

The research is crystal clear – there is a causal relationship between poverty and its negative effects on child, adult, family, and community well-being. Nearly every goal Washington state wishes to make progress on – including kindergarten readiness, high school graduation, an educated workforce, healthy families, less crime, and strong communities – would significantly improve if poverty and inequality were reduced. Investing in the social and economic well-being of Washingtonians is not just the right thing to do, it also saves money – for every \$1 invested in reducing child poverty, there is a \$7 return to the economy due to increased earnings when children become adults and savings from reduced state spending on homelessness, health, and crime.

Washington state will not reach its full potential until its residents can. Reducing poverty and inequality is an essential investment in the collective well-being of our communities and economy.



¹ DSHS|ESA analysis of 2017 American Community Survey data

A 10-YEAR PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

Governor Inslee's Poverty Reduction Workgroup (PRWG) aims for a future in which *a*ll Washingtonians live with the dignity of having their foundational needs met and access to the building blocks of opportunity essential for reaching their full potential in life so future generations can reach theirs.

The *10-Year Plan for the Future* is the culmination of two years' work with a diverse group of state agencies, legislators, racial and ethnic commissions, community-based organizations, advocates, employers, and philanthropy that met monthly to develop strategies and recommendations that, if implemented, will meaningfully and measurably reduce poverty and inequality in our state. The strategies and recommendations are grounded in existing data and evidence, and strongly influenced by the expertise of a 22-member Steering Committee made up of people experiencing poverty. PRWG also utilized a racial equity consultant and toolkit to specifically address the undue burden of poverty among Indigenous, Black, and Brown Washingtonians, and includes recommendations specific to other groups most affected, including women, children, seniors, single parents, rural communities, LGBTQ, people with disabilities, and immigrants and refugees.

PRWG identified the following eight strategies, with 56 specific recommendations that – if implemented – will reduce poverty and inequality in Washington state, and ensure social and economic opportunity be passed on from this generation to the next...and the next...and the next.

Strategies & Recommendations

STRATEGY #1: Understand structural racism and historical trauma, and take action to undo their harmful effects in state policy and programs. [2 Recommendations]	STRATEGY #5: Address the urgent needs of people experiencing homelessness, violence, mental illness, and/or addiction. [7 Recommendations]
STRATEGY #2: Make equal space in decision-making for people and communities most affected by poverty and inequality. [3 Recommendations]	STRATEGY #6: Build an integrated human service continuum of care that addresses the holistic needs of children, adults, and families. [6 Recommendations]
STRATEGY #3: Target equitable education, income growth, and wealth-building opportunities for people with low incomes. [16 Recommendations]	STRATEGY #7: Decriminalize poverty and reduce reliance on the child welfare, juvenile justice, and criminal justice systems. [10 Recommendations]
STRATEGY #4: Strengthen health supports across the life span to promote the intergenerational well-being of families. [6 Recommendations]	STRATEGY #8: Ensure a just transition to the future of work. [6 Recommendations]