Washington will add 740K jobs over the next 5 years. High-growth jobs will be higher-skill and higher-paying. We need to ensure our children are prepared to compete for and secure the jobs of the future. We need a strong local education system responsive to needs of current and emerging businesses, and a business community positioned to help connect students to career opportunities. We need to work with education partners to cultivate future leaders in our region’s top and emerging industries: agriculture, medical, tourism/hospitality, construction/trades, and technology.

Guiding Principles

» The Chamber supports legislation and programs that provide career awareness, exploration, and experiences for students through mechanisms that involve business, schools and the community in partnerships.

» The Chamber supports the availability of locally focused, post-secondary education, training for area residents and customized education services for area businesses.

» The Chamber supports programs, processes, activities and facilities that promote a strong local education system which, together with business and community, prepares students for a productive role in the world.

» The Chamber supports cost effective (or economically feasible) improvements and modernization of our school buildings, technology infrastructure, and grounds.

» The Chamber supports creative solutions to improve operational efficiencies of educational organizations.
The impact of wildfires increasingly impacts citizens, outdoor activities and human health. This trend is expected to continue unless action is taken. Over eighty percent of Chelan County is publicly owned, and forests on these lands are unhealthy and susceptible to wildfire. The various government agencies with oversight of these lands have different responsibilities, engagement levels and incentives to find solutions. The level of current activity by these agencies is insufficient to reverse this trend of wildfire devastation. Federal and state decision-making processes, combined with fiscal challenges, are major impediments to action on U.S. Forest Service (USFS) lands. While streamlining of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is underway for restoration projects, actual change requires regional vocal strong support.

Guiding Principles

» The Chamber supports exploring changes to Air Quality regulations at the state level to allow for more prescribed burns for the purpose of improving forest health and decrease the fuel for mega wildfires.

» The Chamber supports partnering with the USFS on community development efforts that will increase the health of our area forests, provide job opportunities, and support stewardship of public lands while allowing for both motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities.

» The Chamber supports development of infrastructure that will allow the forest industry to re-establish in North Central Washington.

» The Chamber supports joint planning and coordination among public and private landowners and managers in Chelan and Douglas Counties.
The need for workforce housing in our region in support of the expanding economy is growing. Regional employers are unable to fill job positions due to the lack of available housing in the community. Additionally, median home prices are outpacing wages making rent and homeownership out of reach for many residents. Our region must increase its housing supply and offerings to keep pace with workforce needs.

Key Findings from Our Valley Our Future Housing Solutions Survey illustrates the risk to employers and the housing struggles facing their employees:

- **Employee Base Relocation Risk:** The survey found 45 percent of the respondents (1,700) saying they had considered relocating within the past year due to high cost of housing combined with severely limited supply.
- **Affordability of Housing:** 46 percent indicated they are spending more than 30 percent of household income on housing (30 percent is deemed “affordable”) and 23 percent are spending more than 40 percent of household income on housing.
- **Rental Affordability:** Among renters, 46 percent reported paying more than they could afford.

**Guiding Principles**

- The Chamber supports the development of middle-market housing as it provides the most significant housing opportunity for the area’s population.
- The Chamber supports innovative housing types that promote density of development in areas where zoning will support this activity.
- The Chamber supports development of uniform regulations across the region for land-use planning and development for the purpose of facilitating cohesive development.
Outdoor activities contribute over $480 million dollars annually to our regional economy. Over eighty percent of Chelan County is publicly owned. The various government agencies with oversight of these lands have different responsibilities, engagement levels and incentives to improve access and management of these natural resources. Federal and state decision-making processes, combined with fiscal challenges, are major impediments to action on U.S. Forest Service (USFS) lands. While streamlining of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is underway for restoration projects, actual change requires strong vocal regional support.

Outdoor recreation in the Wenatchee Valley continues to attract increasing numbers of full-time residents and tourists. Popular activities include hiking, skiing, bicycling, hunting, fishing, and off-highway vehicle use. These pursuits contribute millions to the health of the regional economy. A 2017 study of the outdoor economy in Chelan-Douglas Counties recognized the need for additional investment in the following to achieve Wenatchee Valley’s economic potential: Coordination (e.g. planning and prioritizing recreation projects), infrastructure (e.g. trails and docks), information sources (e.g. signage and mapping), and amenities (lodging, facilities, pedestrian-friendly areas, goods, and services that complete the recreation ‘experience’).

Guiding Principles

- The Chamber supports partnering with the USFS on community development efforts that will increase access to recreation activities for both motorized and non-motorized user groups.

- The Chamber supports development of infrastructure that will allow locals and area tourists to access public lands and prevents over-tourism that is detrimental to our natural assets.

- The Chamber supports public and private initiatives designed to increase the attractiveness of the Wenatchee Valley outdoor experience and strengthen local business and employment that serves the outdoor recreation industry.

- The Chamber supports collaboration among private and public landowners, land managers, and recreational user groups to create a coordinated master plan for recreation that improves access and sustainability of recreational lands.

- The Chamber supports the development of a coordinated educational program for safe recreation in our region.

- The Chamber supports the development of outdoor recreational events that highlight the regions natural assets and provide value to the greater community.
Wenatchee area employers are increasingly burdened by new and often confusing regulatory requirements governing workforce, environment, health and safety. Often, Wenatchee area employer concerns are not considered as regulations are developed by state agencies. Additionally, Wenatchee area employers often are not aware of potential changes or additions to regulations.

Poorly designed regulations that are not communicated well affect employers across the region negatively by straining the relationship between employers and employees; Local and Regional Impacts:

- Relationship between employers and employees;
- Time “away” from core functions to address confusing or conflicting regulatory demands;
- Increased conflict and litigation and cost of doing business.

Guiding Principles

» The Chamber supports activities that strengthen the information “pipeline” to Olympia from rural areas.

» The Chamber supports building and maintaining strong relationships with regulatory agencies (local, state and federal); Listen first, consider options, then advocate.
Tourism generates over $400 million dollars a year in economic impact to our Valley and provides over 5,000 jobs in our county. Since 2013, the Chamber has been charged with elevating our Valley’s tourism brand and the overall visitor experience. During this time, the Chamber emphasized the creation of an inclusive approach to tourism industry development by focusing on brand redevelopment, regional partnerships, toolkit development, public relations, local education/outreach, and crisis communication. Success has come from the support of many partners including government agencies, tourism industry leaders, business leader, neighbor communities and private citizens. With their knowledge, guidance, and investment the Chamber has been able to increase hotel occupancy year over year, average daily rate year over year, and revenue per room rate year over year; and, perhaps more importantly, elevate the perception of the industry’s value to our local, regional, and state economy.

Guiding Principles

» The Chamber supports uniting tourism leaders and the community around strategies that address the changing climate of regional tourism.

» The Chamber supports a holistic lodging portfolio for travelers that effectively addresses the opportunities and challenges that come from emerging accommodation options (e.g. additional hotels, VRBOs, and Airbnb).

» The Chamber supports activities that elevate shoulder season activities, respond to traveler trends, and properly prepare for the evolving use of technology in travel.

» The Chamber supports meaningful growth in the tourism industry that complements the quality of life in our Valley and earns our community the reputation of being a respected, sought after, and influential tourism partner.

» The Chamber supports a values-based tourism approach that stewards the physical and natural assets of the region for generations to come.
The Wenatchee Valley sits at the confluence of the Columbia and Wenatchee River valleys. This creates a transportation choke point for traffic and freight running both north and south and east-west through North Central Washington. The Wenatchee Valley is the junction of major highway systems including U.S.2 (running east-west through the State), U.S. 97 (running north-south through the state) and SR 28 (connects to I-90). The Wenatchee Valley is also host to a BNSF switchyard and crew change depot that connects BNSF’s Columbia River Subdivision (Spokane-Wenatchee) with BNSF’s Scenic Subdivision (Seattle-Wenatchee); and also connects BNSF’s lines to Cascade & Columbia River Railroad (Wenatchee to Oroville). These road and rail transportation lanes run directly through the business core of Wenatchee/East Wenatchee; and thus, have significant impact upon people and businesses.

The Wenatchee Valley’s unique topography and road/rail/bridge infrastructure is already causing mobility congestion which is expected to increase in the future absent new transportation infrastructure projects. These projects will be initiated and funded with public funds, primarily by the State of Washington. The Chamber is interested in making sure that the projects chosen are optimal for the long-term economic health of the Valley and are funded equitably and appropriately.

Guiding Principles

» The Chamber supports transportation infrastructure projects in the Wenatchee Valley that improve movement of people and freight in a safe, efficient and equitable manner.

» The Chamber will not lend its support to any project prior to fully vetting the project. The Chamber’s vetting of a project does not obligate it to lend its support.

» The Chamber will support transportation funding mechanisms that are broadly applied to all users and not specific user groups.

» The Chamber supports transportation funding mechanisms being fully dedicated (100%) to transportation needs and include language that prevents transportation dollars being diverted to other uses.

» The Chamber supports performance and accountability systems for transportation infrastructure plans to measure progress and results.
A thriving business community requires a robust and well-equipped workforce. There are employment opportunities going unfilled in the Wenatchee Valley because job seekers lack the skills and qualifications necessary for employment. Large and small employers struggle to find qualified workers that possess the needed work ethic and soft skills. The need to provide learning opportunities which instills this work ethic and soft skills is growing and is essential for students, young adults and adult workers. The soft skills needed include communication and interpersonal skills, emotional intelligence, leadership, teamwork, conflict resolution, time and stress management, business etiquette, customer service, and negotiation skills. The development of these skills is critical to having a strong, vibrant workforce.

Guiding Principles

» The Chamber supports legislation and programs that provide career awareness, exploration, and experiences for students through partnerships with business, schools and community. As such, the Chamber will take an active role in championing discussion regarding resources and legislation supportive of workforce development.

» The Chamber supports programs, processes, activities and facilities that promote a strong local workforce, which together with business and community, prepares young adults and adult workers for a productive role in the world.

» The Chamber supports career training for a constantly evolving workforce, with needs driven by the business community. Responsiveness includes strong support for community involvement and resources for technical training.

» The Chamber supports creative solutions to upskilling workers, to include mentorship, professional development, apprenticeships and internships.