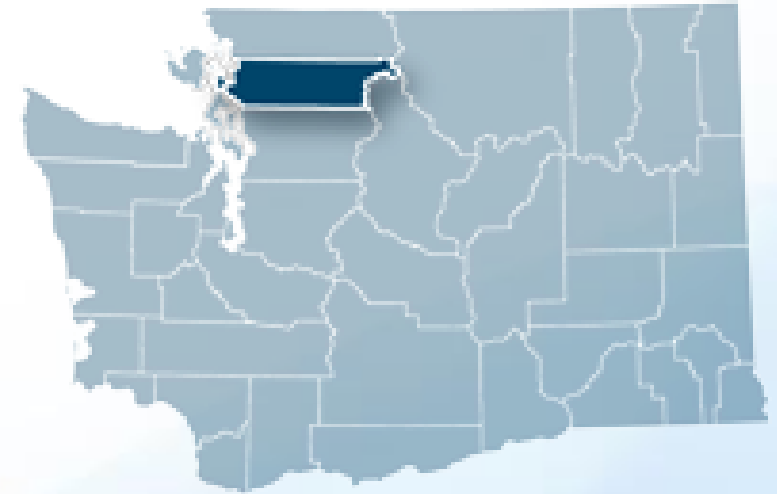




Latino BRE Program in Skagit County
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About Skagit County

- Land area 1,731 sq.mi., population 130,000, one county away from Canadian border. From San Juan Islands to North Cascades mountains. Popular outdoor recreation and tourist area (normally)
- History of agriculture, fishing, forestry, now only 5% of GDP
- Main source of employment and GDP: Manufacturing (maritime, aerospace, food production) >30% GDP
- Over 50% of non-farm employment is service-based



Skagit County demographics

- Skagit County (pop. 130,000) has a large Latinx population: nearly 20% overall and over 30% in Mount Vernon (over 50% of school age population)
 - Language and cultural barriers can be stumbling blocks for starting a successful business (including Mixtec and Triqui indigenous peoples from Mexico whose native language may not be Spanish)
 - Nearly 3% Asian/Pacific, 3% American/Alaskan native
 - 15% of homes speak a language other than English
 - Agricultural workers need year-round means of earning a living

About EDASC

- Serves as the economic development organization for the entire county, including two ports, four cities and four towns, 7 school districts, and the private sector including nonprofit organizations – approximately 275 public and private sector investors.



Mission: EDASC carries out business attraction, retention and expansion, and collaborative engagement to achieve a prosperous, sustainable and equitable community while maintaining Skagit County's natural beauty and quality of life.

www.skagit.org

Latino Business Retention & Expansion

- Begun in 2004, this program features
 - One-on-one no-cost business counseling (similar to or partnered with SBDC)
 - Broad-based support to address hurdles not only in language but also financial literacy, technology adoption, dealing with lenders and government
 - Pays close attention to cultural norms including relationship building
 - Must be liked, respected, trusted, valued as a person before “getting down to business”
 - Many obstacles exist because these clients are not traditionally trained or expected to own/run a business
 - Importance of building generational wealth



EDASC in 2019 helped Lili Mendez (center) start a new cleaning business.

Program accomplishments

- No-cost counseling to support hundreds of clients since 2004
- Secured over \$3 million in loans for local businesses
- Formed partnerships with local organizations including Northwest Agriculture Businesses Center, Skagit Valley College, and the Latino Leadership Initiative
- Many businesses in services sector: construction, landscaping, residential/commercial cleaning, salons, child care, restaurants and food trucks



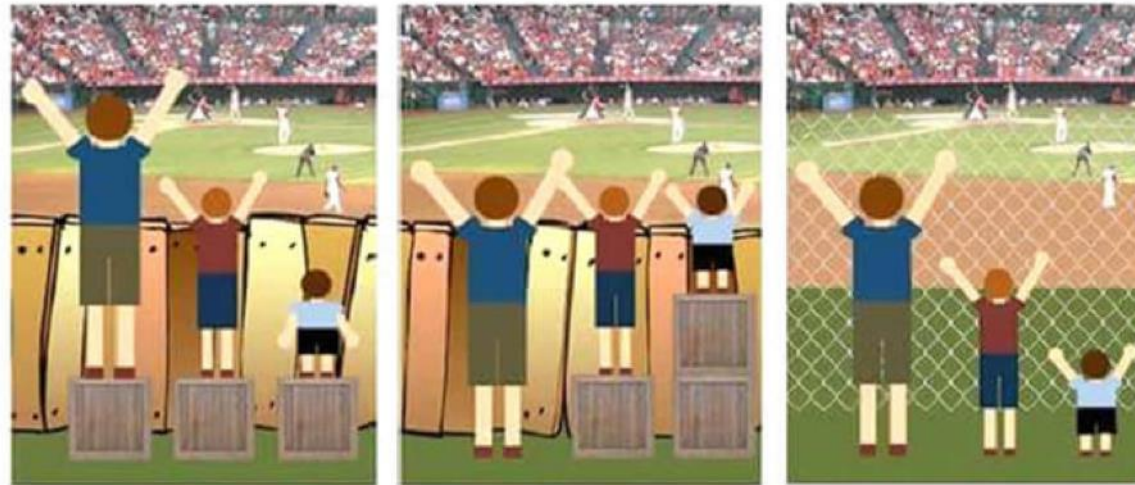
Viridiana Delgado's restaurant is thriving thanks to the support she received from EDASC's LBRE Program.

Reimagining the program

- To focus on a wider disenfranchised group
 - All immigrants: New American Businesses
 - Other underserved populations
 - ❖ Native-owned businesses (tribal members)
 - ❖ Racial/ethnic minority entrepreneurs
 - ❖ Extremely rural businesses
 - ❖ Differently abled entrepreneurs
 - ❖ LGBTQ Business owners
 - ❖ Women entrepreneurs
 - ❖ Veteran-owned businesses
 - ❖ Formerly incarcerated
 - ❖ Businesses owners lacking educational and generational family assets (e.g., first generation high school graduates)

Theme: more inclusive to provide equity-based assistance to those not traditionally advantaged in starting and operating a business

Building up, removing barriers

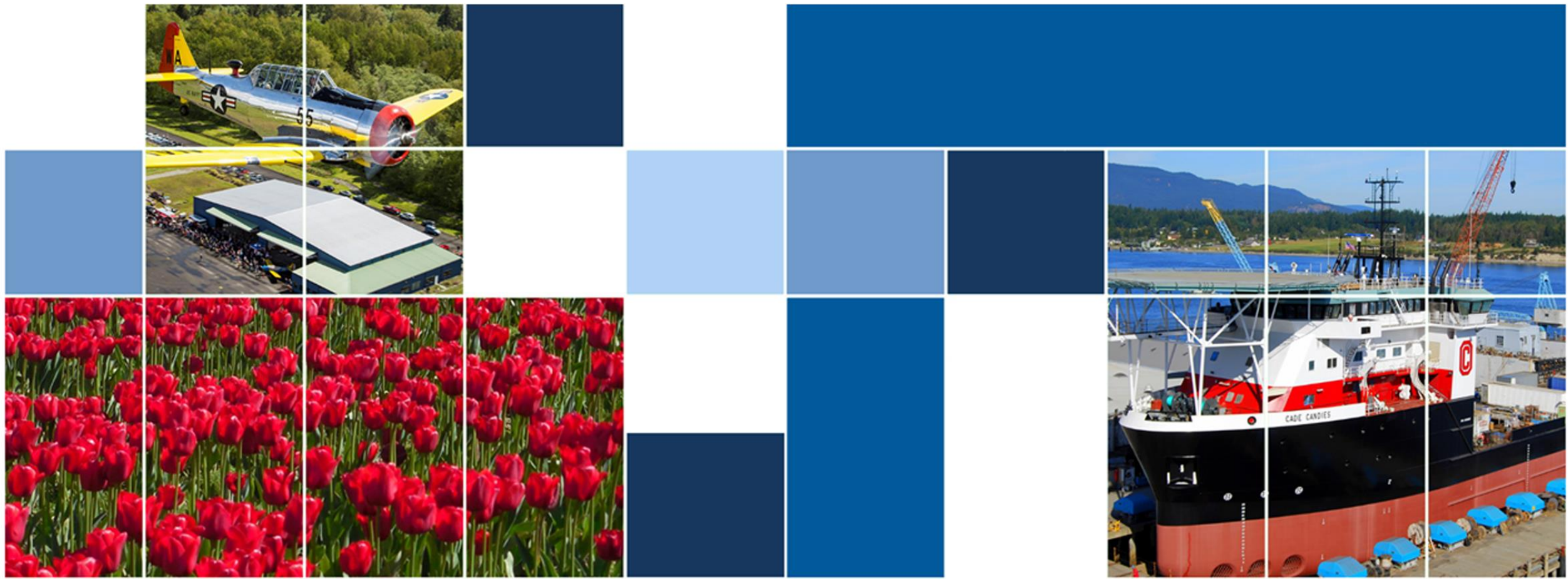


Reimagining the program

To determine services needed, Skagit County granted EDASC funds to research and implement a new program:

- Assemble stakeholders group
- What kind of support is needed and most helpful?
 - Surveying the communities to find gaps, needs, best delivery methods
 - Doing the research
 - Examining best practices nationwide
- Draft a plan to circulate to stakeholders*
- Hold a Town Hall meeting, supplement with individual interviews
- Revise plan accordingly
- Finalize and assemble
- Roll-out

***Include those wanting to hire, serve or do business with these communities**



Thank you!

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