

Workforce Supply & Match

KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Size of valley workforce; top job occupations
- Unemployment rate by age
- Annual wage per employee by peer county/resort
- % households housing cost burdened (owners/renters)
- Workforce commuter costs bus vs drive alone
- Employer purchased bus passes (by type and season)

Desired Outcome: A sufficient supply of well-qualified workers is available to Aspen businesses. Local schools and colleges, locally-held training programs, and other professional development venues compliment Aspen's resort economy and provide the opportunities needed for potential, existing, and returning employees to hone their skills and knowledge. Employer support of training opportunities is strong, and wages are competitive with other resorts on a total-cost-of-living basis, leading to high retention rates in key job classes. Workers who must live down-valley have the ability to commute to Aspen jobs via excellent transportation options and reasonable commute costs and times.

A qualified and capable workforce is the backbone of a sustainable economy. The connection between workforce supply and match is key especially in a tourist based economy.



Figure 1. Ski Instructor with Guests ¹

For businesses, capable workers are a *necessity*, not an *amenity*. The workforce is central to business attraction, retention, and stability to and in a place.

A trained and qualified workforce is also important for its customers. In a world class resort town like Aspen, patrons expect high standards and service levels. To achieve an optimal workforce, competence and capabilities must match those demanded in the marketplace. This means matching the workforce to positions generated by Aspen's tourist based economy.

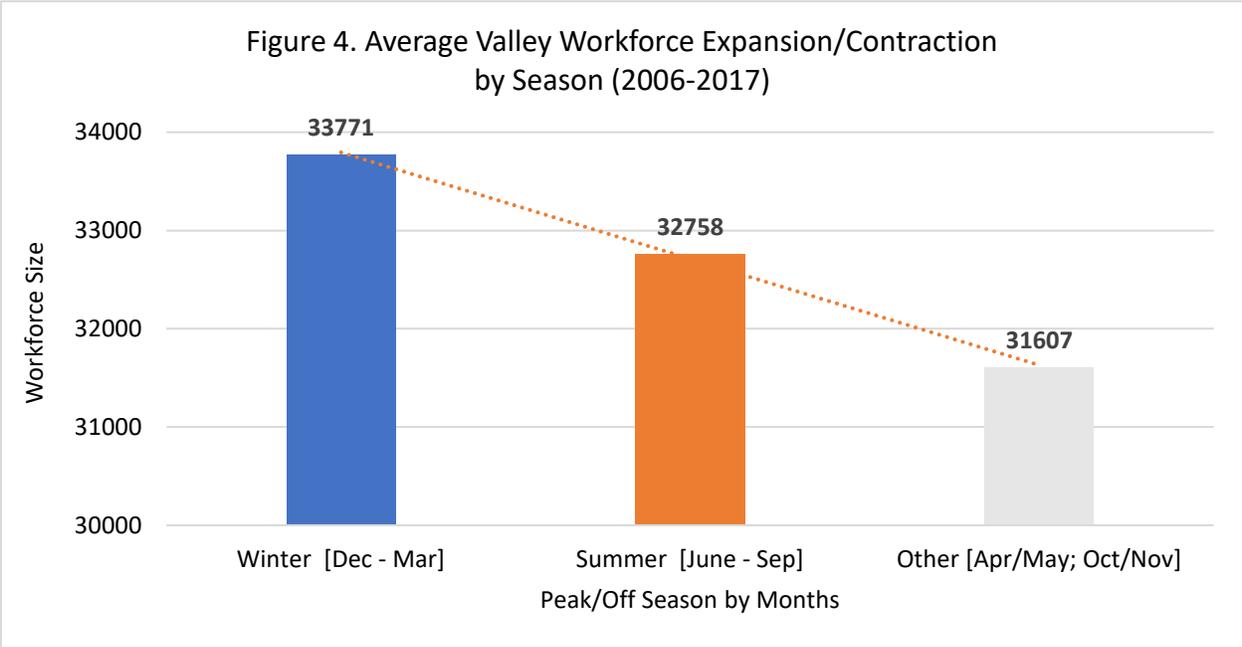
In the winter season, this calls for a workforce specialized in the ski and snow sports industry. Aspen Skiing Company (ASC) is one of the largest employers in the area with both full time and seasonal employees.

In summer, Aspen requires a workforce that services world renowned cultural and special events. This includes the *Food & Wine Festival*, *Ideas Festival*, *Music Festival*, among others.

Throughout the year, the economy needs an adaptive workforce to service the local community. This includes hospitals, schools, government and public services, grocery and retail stores, restaurants, among others. For Aspen, getting workforce size and match right especially given seasonality presents both challenges and opportunities.

¹ Photo: Courtesy Kolacek, Zbynek.

In addition to the year-round workforce, seasonal businesses in Aspen rely heavily on filling temporary vacancies. This includes hotels and restaurants, sports and recreational activities, cultural events, property management and maintenance, among other occupations. The seasonal nature of these businesses and industries means that they potentially face shortages of local workers during their peak work periods. By filling temporary jobs, temporary workers not only keep these businesses open, they contribute to the creation of additional, year-round jobs for local workers. The relative expansionary and contractionary nature of the economy and workforce is represented in Figure 4 below.



As depicted above, the contraction of the workforce is approximately 6% between winter and off-season months. And approximately 4% between summer and off season months. This represents a reduction of 2,164 and 1,151 members of the workforce, respectively.

Competition for a qualified workforce magnifies the importance of quality of life factors. Talented and skilled people gravitate to places where they can attain a certain standard of living and enjoy a certain lifestyle. This influences the workforce supply and match equation and, ultimately, the composition (and quality) of the workforce.

Sustainable economies create conditions for secure employment and competitive pay. This supports a virtuous cycle where people can afford to buy goods and services. This, in turn, supports local businesses and the local economy. Workforce development also involves issues such as affordable housing, transportation, education, among other considerations.²

² Photos: Babbie, Sheila.



These necessities and amenities factor in to a stable and sustainable workforce, viable employment market. More broadly, it contributes to economic development (productive capacity) aimed at improving the economic and social well-being of people and communities.

Further below are some quick facts excerpted from *Sperling's Best Places* on certain basic living costs. Since 1985, Sperling's performs studies and provides comparative place information on cost of living, schools, crime, housing prices, transportation, and more.³ Sperling's cost of living indices is based on a US average of 100. An amount below 100 means Aspen, Colorado is cheaper than the US average. A cost of living index above 100 means Aspen, Colorado is more expensive.⁴

Compared to the rest of the country, Aspen's cost of living is 132.50% higher than the U.S. average. Figure 6 summarizes cost of living factors in Aspen against the national average. Note: Those figures (cells) highlighted in blue are above the national average.

Figure 6.⁵

COST OF LIVING	Aspen, Colorado	United States
Overall	233	100
Grocery	98.8	100
Health	104	100
Housing	516	100
Utilities	94	100
Transportation	97	100
Miscellaneous	101	100

The cost of living indicators further emphasizes the need to not only have the right size and capabilities in the workforce but also the right accommodations (wages/benefits, housing, transport, healthcare, etc.) to support it. Workforce development involves the coordination of public and private-sector policies and programs. These provide individuals with the opportunity for a sustainable livelihood. And help organizations achieve goals that are consistent with the Aspen societal and economic context.

The key performance measures that offer a good indication of workforce supply and match its sustainability include:

³ *Sperling's Best Places*. Web. June 2016. <http://www.bestplaces.net/docs/about.aspx>.

⁴ *Sperling's Best Places*. Web. June 2016. <http://www.bestplaces.net/city/colorado/aspen>.

⁵ *Ibid.*

- *Size of valley workforce / top job occupations*
- *Unemployment rate by age*
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The metrics listed above are presented in the respective “Sustainability Measures” section of this report.

Current & Proposed Actions

For the Aspen community, successful workforce supply and match and development requires strategies that cut across many areas. This includes workforce development, education, job training, housing, transportation, health and human services, among others.

Below is a summary of programs and initiatives that support *Workforce Supply & Match* outcomes and associated key performance measures. Note the web links highlighted for each organization for more detailed information.

Workforce Development

Current Actions

In 2017, Aspen Chamber Resort Association (ACRA) established an Employee Sustainability Committee. The objective of this committee is to:

“Become a valuable partner and resource for the business community to maintain a qualified and sustainable workforce.”

As excerpted from ACRA’s 2017 Strategic Plan the following goals and strategies were established for the Committee:

A. Goal: Develop Employee Sustainability Committee to identify specific issues that are impacting the success and operation of valley-wide businesses.

Strategies:

- (1) Survey the entire membership, representing the employer and the employee with questions specific to employee sustainability.
- (2) Constitute a committee that represents the interest of the valley wide labor force.
- (3) Review City of Aspen Economic Sustainability Report and results from membership survey to identify challenges that directly impact the workforce.
- (4) Identify objectives and strategies based on information from the Economic Sustainability Report and membership survey.

B. Goal: Regionalization- work with valley-wide stakeholders on issues that directly impact businesses and employee’s.

Strategies:

- (1) Submit benchmarks and strategies to the City of Aspen to create standards for workforce development.

The [Colorado Mountain College's](#) targeted programs support workforce development in the region. Certificate programs are designed to build knowledge and skills for a tourist based economy. This includes Hospitality & Resort, Culinary Arts, Outdoor Studies, Ski & Snowboard Industry, English Language, among others.

Proposed Actions

The Aspen Chamber Resort Association (ACRA) proposes the following actions for its workplan in support of the metrics and outcomes:

- Perform a more detailed analysis of the valley workforce size and composition.
- Track the Aspen unemployment rate along with the job open. This data could be compared to the same measures in Basalt, Carbondale, and Glenwood. When viewed with wages (benefits) and residence, this could inform whether Aspen's jobs are competitive.
- Continue to encourage the modernization of APCHA with a budget approval for the database which will lead to more efficiencies.
- Support the business community voice in terms of workforce issues and representation at City Council.

Workforce Housing

The [Aspen Pitkin County Housing Authority \(APCHA\)](#) provides affordable workforce housing to full-time or seasonal employees who seek housing in proximity to the community where they choose to live and work. With almost 3,000 deed restricted homes under its oversight, APCHA is the largest workforce housing program relative to population in North America, if not the world. To protect the integrity and sustainability of workforce housing now and for the future, APCHA has begun the process of modernizing and streamlining operations and policies.

Current Actions

- APCHA has partnered with Real America to develop a 56-unit Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) project called Roaring Fork Apartments in the Town of Basalt (Pitkin County). The opening of this complex is scheduled for June 2018.
- The City of Aspen has negotiated a Developer's Agreement to form a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) with Aspen Housing Partners (AHP) for development of approximately 46 affordable rental housing units in three locations: 802 West Main Street, 517 Park Circle, and 488 Castle Creek Road. The anticipated ground-breaking is scheduled for the fall of 2018.
- APCHA and the City of Aspen's Community Development Department are working together to improve public transparency and remove competitive market barriers associated with the Certificates of Affordable Housing Credits (Housing Credits) market.
- The APCHA Interim Database (IDB) was completed in early 2018 and will serve as a bridge to the permanent Housing Information Management System (HIMS).
- Phase I of the HIMS project kicked off in April 2018 including road mapping and scoping for the RFP.
- APCHA completed a new customer-friendly website in 2017 and continues to update it with new features and functionality to better serve the public.
- APCHA will be implementing the new Income Qualification Standards tied to U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) within Pitkin County.

- APCHA will be adopting an Affordability Standard to improve system-wide equity and tracking of affordability for households within the program.
- APCHA continues to work with down valley and regional partners on ways to enhance workforce housing opportunities. APCHA is contributing funds to a regional housing assessment without making a commitment to future participation in a regional housing authority.
- APCHA is in the process of recruiting a Housing Administrator to oversee programmatic and operational compliance functions of APCHA.
- APCHA is in the process of completing the capital reserve/deferred maintenance assessment, education, and assistance project.

Proposed Actions

APCHA proposes the following actions for its workplan, in support of the outcomes and measures:

- Continue adopting key reform recommendations from the 2016 Policy Study of the Affordable Workforce Housing Guidelines.
- Continue to refine and implement a Housing Efficiency Reform Strategy (HERS) that will build a continuous improvement culture and identify practical ways to put Lean Six Sigma principles and methods to use.
- APCHA board is proposing to create a schedule of fines and sanctions to increase transparency and enforcement, and to support the goal of 100% compliance in the program. Relating to this, APCHA is proposing to hire a third-party hearing officer to hear Notice of Violation appeals, special review cases (i.e. variances from the strict application of the Employee Housing Guidelines) and any grievances requests.

Public Transportation

Current Actions

- [Roaring Fork Transportation Authority \(RFTA\)](#) provides a variety of regional public transit options for locals and visitors from Aspen to Rifle.
- RFTA system-wide ridership reached an all-time high of 5.5 million rides in 2017.
- The [VelociRFTA Bus Rapid Transit \(BRT\)](#) service is the first rural BRT system in the nation and transports SH 82 commuters from Aspen to Glenwood Springs.
- Priority bus lanes in the City of Aspen and along SH 82 from Buttermilk to Maroon Creek Road promote faster high occupancy travel.
- The [City of Aspen Transportation department](#) contracts with RFTA to offer [eight free shuttle routes](#) throughout town for easier transit to local destinations.
- In 2016, the Burlingame bus route frequency was increased as part of a pilot program to encourage more bus use on this route. This service improvement is temporary.
- Free parking permits are available for commuters who carpool into town.

Some of the other transportation initiatives include:

- Transportation Options Program (TOP)
- Grant Opportunities
- [Carpool program](#)
- [Commuter Connect](#)
- [Car to Go](#)

- [We-Cycle bike share program](#)
- [Downtownner](#)
- Hopkins one-way bike lane project
- Pedestrian mall improvements
- Electric bus Pilot Program (pending grant/funding)

Proposed Actions

RFTA proposes to continue the following actions for its workplan in support of the metrics and outcomes:

- Transportation Demand Management
- Improve integration with the public transit system and first-last mile connectivity with other forms of transportation (e.g. We-Cycle)
- Optimized bus route frequency and headways

Pitkin County proposes the following actions for its workplan in support of the metrics and outcomes:

- Seeks to expand Park & Ride