

Pierce County Fair

Economic and Community Benefits

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Prepared for:





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that are important to decision makers.*

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Pierce County Fair is a four-day event that draws visitors from throughout the Pacific Northwest. Held in mid-August at Frontier Park in Graham, the Pierce County Fair attracted approximately 20,000 visitors in 2019. The County Fair is an important event fostering community pride, supporting 4-H clubs across Pierce County, showcasing rural life, agriculture and community values.

Fair attendance increased by roughly 5% between 2018 and 2019. Since 2014, attendance has grown at a compound annual growth rate of 2%. The highest attendance in the past twenty years occurred in 1998, when attendance reached a peak of 27,400.

The Pierce County Fair is a showcase event for 4-H clubs across Pierce County, and supports the educational opportunities provided by 4-H to youth throughout the County. Additionally, the stakeholders see the Fair as a valuable cultural event supporting agriculture and presents an opportunity for policies and programs that support Pierce County's agriculture industry.

The Fair earned revenue of nearly \$335,000 in 2019, an increase of 39% over 2018. Revenue from admissions represents 28% of total revenue and has increased by roughly 44% since 2018. The four-day Fair operations support direct employment of 3 full-time equivalents (FTEs) and \$84,300 in wages and benefits, including both Pierce County Fair Associations staff and seasonal employees working at the Fair.

Vendors attend the Pierce County Fair, selling goods and products and sharing information. Nearly 100 vendors attended the Fair in 2019, of which 74% came from Pierce County. Fairgrounds vendors earned net revenue of about \$190,000 (excluding the percentage of revenue paid to the Pierce County Fair Association).

This study revealed that the combined activities at the Fair and the spending by 4-H families prior to the Fair on projects in 2019 supported:

- More than \$3.1 million in business revenue throughout the state economy, of which more than 90% is generated in Pierce County.
- More than 27 full-time equivalent jobs and \$1.3 million in labor income (including benefits).

The total economic contribution represents direct spending by the Pierce County Fair, vendors, visitors and the spending by 4-H families to prepare projects and exhibits prior to the Fair. Additional impacts include spending through business-to-business transactions and household income expenditures.

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INTRODUCTION

Background and Purpose

The Pierce County Fair (PCF) is a cooperative effort of Pierce County and the non-profit Pierce County Fair Association. The Fair provides the communities of Graham, Pierce County and the region with a place for industry innovation, education and cultural activities, community building, and recreation and amusement. The Fair promotes 4-H and Future Farmers of America (FFA) in Pierce County and aims to educate youth in fields of agriculture and home economics.

This report presents an analysis of the economic benefits and contributions of the Pierce County Fair to Pierce County and Washington state. Additionally, this report highlights the broader cultural and social reach of the Pierce County Fair. Agriculture is an important component of the Fair's objectives. In order to uncover opportunities to further leverage the Fair as a resource for the agriculture industry, this report presents findings from interviews with agriculture industry stakeholders in Pierce County.

Methods and Data

This analysis leverages both data and qualitative research to articulate a detailed description of the Pierce County Fair and its local and statewide impacts. Analytics include state and federal data sources, payroll and operations data provided by Pierce County and Pierce County Fair Association staff, stakeholder interviews, and survey data. Economic impacts are computed through use of the Washington State Input-Output Model, with customizations to reflect local economic considerations for sub-state regional impact estimates.

Organization of Report

The remainder of this report is organized as follows:

- **The Pierce County Fair.** A discussion of how the Fair operates, including schedule of events and vendors operating at the Fair.
- **Direct impacts of the Pierce County Fair.** An assessment of the jobs, income, and business revenues generated on Fair grounds, including among vendors, Pierce County Fair operations and visitor spending.
- **Total Economic impacts.** Estimated statewide and regional economic benefits from the Pierce County Fair, including additional jobs, income and revenues supported through business-to-business transactions (indirect) and household income expenditures (induced).

- **Social, educational and cultural impact of the Pierce County Fair.** A discussion of the social, educational and cultural reach and impact of the Pierce County Fair on communities in the state.
- **Agricultural opportunities at the Pierce County Fair.** A summary of opportunities for Pierce County to connect its related agricultural efforts to the Fair.

THE PIERCE COUNTY FAIR

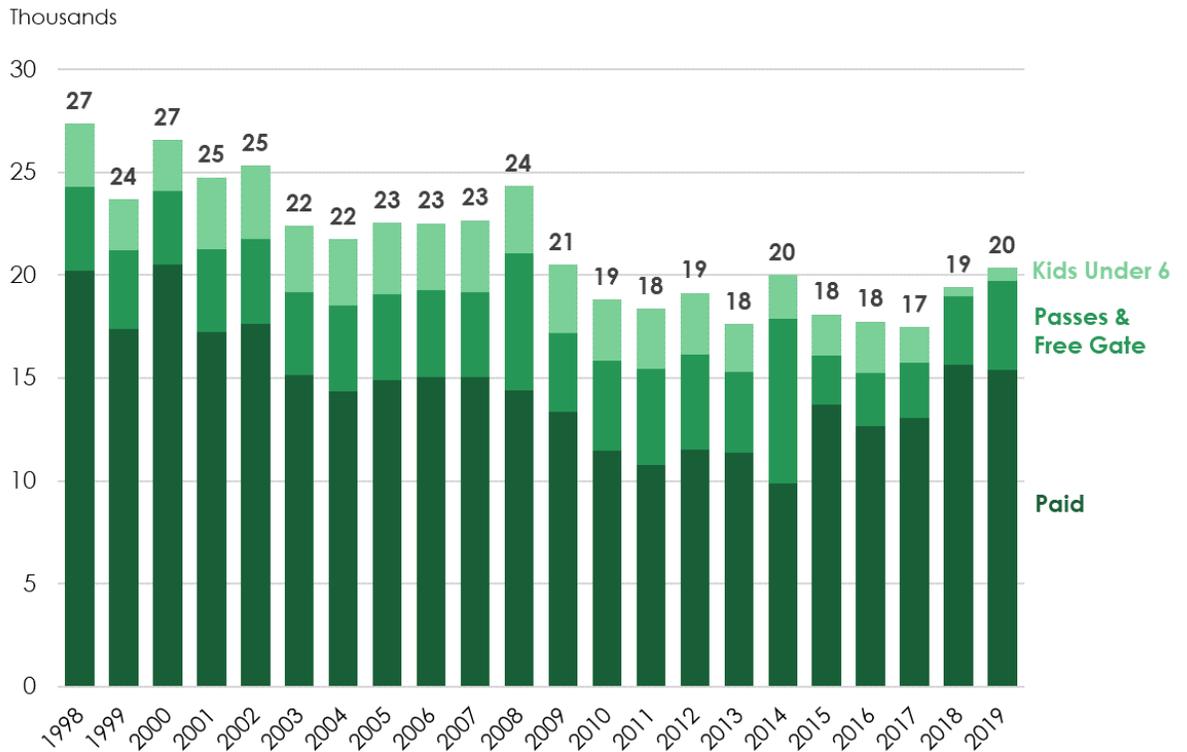
The Pierce County Fair is held on a weekend in mid-August at Frontier Park, a 71 acres complex filled with large wooded and turf areas located in Graham. In 2019, the Pierce County Fair Association held the 72st annual Pierce County Fair showcasing rural life, agriculture and community values.

Fair Attendance

In 2019, just over 20,000 visitors attended the Pierce County Fair, roughly 5% more than in 2018. Of that, approximately 76% represented paid attendance, 21% were passes and free gate and the remainder were kids under six. Attendance at the Fair has decreased since 1998, when 27,400 people visited the Fair, the highest attendance over the past twenty years.

Between 1998 and 2019, paid attendance made up roughly 68% on average of total attendance. During the same time, passes and free gate made up 20% on average and were the highest in 2014 when they represented 40% of the total number of Fair visitors. The number of kids under six attending the Pierce County Fair were 13% of total visitors on average but have decreased to 3% in the past couple of years.

Exhibit 1. Pierce County Fair Attendance, 1998-2019



Sources: Pierce County, 2019; Pierce County Fair Association, 2019; Community Attributes, 2019.

Fair Activities and Events

The Pierce County Fair offers a variety of activities and events ranging from music performances to painting lessons. Popular children activities include the Kid’s Pedal Tractor Pull, a weight loaded tractors race; the Wool Busters, a rodeo experience with miniature bucking chutes; the Poultry Drag Race; and the Big Bubble Show. Many of these activities and entertainment are provided by Pacific Northwest businesses, artists and entertainers.

The Fair also includes an entertaining carnival experience, filled with amusement rides, games and food concessions. In 2019 Rainier Amusements provided the carnival entertainment options enjoyed at the Pierce County Fair, as well as the food concessions and game options. Rainier Amusements is a Pacific Northwest based, family-owned company providing amusement park entertainment for more than 60 years. Regional entertainers provide music, juggling and magic shows on the Fair’s main stage each day.

Beyond the attractions and rides, the Fair also offers a variety of agriculture focused events geared toward children. On the last day of the Fair, 4-H

participants with chickens entered at the Fair can join the National Chicken Racing Association (NCRA) Poultry Drag Race.

Exhibitors and vendors participating in the Fair often choose to camp at the Fair. Camping allows communities, clubs, families and other groups to enjoy a positive community experience throughout the Fair.

SOCIAL, EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL IMPACTS OF THE PIERCE COUNTY FAIR

The Pierce County Fair serves as Pierce County's annual showcase for 4-H projects and provides the broader community an opportunity to share their agricultural products, arts, home crafts and more. The Fair fosters a sense of community pride and provides educational opportunities to visitors and participants.

Pierce County Fair Association staff participate in Fair training conferences and activities throughout the year to ensure that the Pierce County Fair benefits from best practices in Fair operations. Large scale preparation for the Fair begins in early July, when 4-H and other exhibit entries open, barn preparation begins, and animal vet checks are conducted. The Pierce County Fair opens to the public on a Thursday in early August and runs for four days. Each day of the Fair consists of a full schedule of 4-H events, entertainment and activities.

Through the activities and opportunities offered, the Pierce County Fair strives to achieve goals and objectives that strengthen the community, provide education and support a thriving agricultural community and industry in Pierce County.

Goals and objectives of the Pierce County Fair include¹:

- To offer character training through wholesome participation, competition, cooperation and accomplishment.
- To educate youth and adults in better methods.
- To improve the relationships between urban and rural people.
- To provide social contacts.
- To help build community pride.
- To provide wholesome competition of various types.
- To offer recreation and amusement through promotion of carnivals, contests and competition.
- To encourage trade.
- To present the products of the farm, home and family.

¹ <https://www.piercecountyfair.com/p/about/285>

- To provide recognition to 4-H, FFA open show exhibitors and leaders.
- To further education by exhibiting, judging and demonstrating.
- To promote 4-H and FFA in Pierce County.

4-H at the Pierce County Fair

4-H is a significant part of the culture and activities at the Pierce County Fair. According to stakeholders the Pierce County Fair is also an important event for 4-H clubs throughout the County. The Fair presents an opportunity for members to showcase the cultural and economic importance of agriculture in Pierce County. County fairs throughout the country present 4-H members the opportunity to share their projects developed throughout the year. The Pierce County Fair is the showcase event for Pierce County's 4-H clubs.

4-H is a nationwide joint program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, each state's land grant university (Washington State University) and the local county (Pierce County). The program serves youth, ages 5 to 19 in both urban and rural communities across the nation with a focus on hands-on learning.

The mission of 4-H is to²:

- Provide formal and non-formal experiential learning
- Develop skills that benefit youth throughout life
- Foster leadership and volunteerism in youth and adults
- Build internal and external partnerships for programming and funding
- Strengthen families and communities
- Employ research-based knowledge and the land grant university system
- Embrace and expand traditions of the 4-H Youth Development program”

Every 4-H member selects a project to develop throughout the year. Projects fall within four topic areas: STEM including plant and animal sciences, engineering, technology and environmental science; citizenship, which covers topics such as communication, leadership and business skills; creative arts which includes a variety of creative topics like photography and sewing; and healthy living which covers projects related to how to be healthier. 4-H encourages members to select projects that fit within their life, including their family and community.

After a year of project development, including detailed record keeping, 4-H members can share their project with the community at the Pierce County Fair. The Pierce County Fair also serves as an opportunity to practice their

² <https://extension.wsu.edu/4h/>

presentation for the larger Washington State Fair, which brings together 4-H members from across the state. Animal projects are the most popular projects shared at the Fair, including horses, dogs, poultry, rabbits and cats. Non-animal projects include posters, photography, home arts and judging.

Each project has different requirements. 4-H and Washington State University provide educational resources and curriculum to ensure that members learn valuable skills from each project. A photography project for example teaches members camera skills, including photography compositions, lighting and camera operation. Food science projects involve the chemistry behind food, recipe creation and more. Members engaging in an animal project learn how to raise the animal and are responsible for the care and health of their animal. Members also learn how to present both visually and orally what they have learned from their projects.

Pierce County's 4-H program had nearly 10,100 total youth participants in the 2018-2019 year. Members participate in community clubs, short-term programs, day camping programs, school enrichment programs and after-school programs. Among Pierce County's membership 48% were in 2nd through 5th grade and nearly 80% reside in cities with population of 50,000 or more and their suburbs. Youth in military families represent 6% of total membership, including youth from military families and participation in JBLM STEM Clubs and Day Camps. Pierce County's 4-H programs are supported by more than 640 volunteers, including more than 480 adult volunteers and more than 160 youth volunteers.

Benefits of 4-H Program

Research has found that youth participating in 4-H has positive outcomes on community contribution, civic participation and STEM participation compared to their peers. 4-H members in grades 7-12 are nearly four times more likely to make contributions to their community. Members in grades 8-12 are two times more likely to be civically active. Member youth in grades 10-12 are nearly two times more likely to participate in Science, Engineering and Computer Technology programs outside of school and girls participating in 4-H are two times more likely to participate in science programs while girls grade 12 are nearly three times more likely to participate in science programs compared to their peers.³

4-H members are each part of a local 4-H club. Adult volunteers run each club, with support and materials provided by WSU Extension and the statewide 4-H program. Club leaders not only organize the club, but support

³ The Positive Development of Youth: Comprehensive Findings from the 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development, Richer M. Lerner and Jacqueline V. Lerner, Tufts University.

members with their annual projects and are responsible for leading youth development activities. 4-H focuses on hands-on learning and teaches communication, business, social and community skills.

The following are 4-H benefits and activities according 4-H, and which surfaced through interviews with stakeholders:

- Public presentations give 4-H members an opportunity to share what they have learned with others while learning communication skills.
- Record keeping on project activities throughout the year helps members evaluate their project and learn business skills.
- Recreation promotes social activities and enjoyment among members.
- Community service projects give 4-H clubs to work together on projects that improve their community. These projects often focus on conservation, safety, health and more.
- County contests and Fairs provide members an opportunity to showcase their projects in judged contests. These contests provide members with feedback on how to improve their projects while also instilling a sense of accomplishment. The Pierce County Fair is the showcase event for all Pierce County 4-H clubs.
- Camps and conferences provide additional social and community experiences for 4-H members. There are a variety of day and overnight camps for members and there are also scholarship opportunities to increase accessibility for all members.

Fair Exhibits

The Pierce County Fair is the opportunity for members of 4-H clubs across Pierce County to share their project for the year. The Fair also offers opportunities for youth and adults that do not participate in 4-H to share their arts, home crafts and skills. Entries that are not 4-H are called Open Class.

Nearly 4,200 exhibits were showcased at the Pierce County Fair in 2019, an increase of nearly 11% from 2018. 4-H exhibits represent 72% of the total in 2019.

Exhibit 2. Pierce County Fair Exhibits, 2017-2019

	2017	2018	2019
Animals and Shooting Sports	2,094	2,097	2,036
4-H Still Life	853	711	994
Open Class Still Life	1,397	964	1,150
Total	4,344	3,772	4,180

Source: Pierce County Fair Association, 2019.

Exhibits are entered into competitions for specific departments and classes based on the animal or item. Each exhibit is then judged for the opportunity to earn points, which are added together at the end of the Fair for premium, or prize money. The Pierce County Fair judges all exhibits, both 4-H and Open Class eligible for points based on the Danish System, where each exhibit is judged based on its own merits. Under the Danish System every exhibit has the opportunity to win the maximum number of points. At the end of the Fair the points are added together, and the premiums are distributed to each exhibitor.

In 2019, the Pierce County Fair distributed more than \$18,000 to more than 550 exhibitors across Pierce County.

Animals and shooting sports represent nearly 50% of all exhibits in 2019. Horse exhibits are the most popular at the Pierce County Fair, comprising 36% of all animal exhibits. Dogs, poultry, rabbits and cats are also popular animal exhibits at the Pierce County Fair.

Exhibit 3. Pierce County Fair 4-H Animal and Shooting Sport Exhibits, 2017-2019

	2017	2018	2019
Horse	744	808	729
Dogs	414	346	357
All Poultry	234	208	236
Rabbits	207	154	178
Cats	144	130	122
Goats - Dairy	75	100	85
Goats - Pack	69	83	73
Shooting	46	73	62
Beef	75	57	56
Cavies	25	42	50
Goats - Fleece		19	26
Sheep	12	16	23
Llamas	16	20	21
Swine	20	32	9
Goats - Meat	10	6	6
Dairy Cattle	3	3	3
Total	2,094	2,097	2,036

Source: Pierce County Fair Association, 2019.

4-H still life are also common Fair exhibits. In 2019, 4-H members shared more than 250 educational posters at the Fair. Home Arts represented 15% of all 4-H still life exhibits, including baking, canning and cooking. Judging is also a popular still life exhibit at the Pierce County Fair, where youth judge items or animals as a judge would. Arts exhibits include painting, drawing

and crafts. Bowls are a speed quiz for youth related to their project, most common in the animal departments. Cloverbuds exhibits are for 4-H youth under eight years. Action exhibits are demonstrations and public presentation are educational speeches.

Participation in different types of exhibits and projects changes yearly. According to WSU Extension, 4-H relies on volunteers who lead and support different types of projects. Some project areas require more staff support than is currently available. Photography and arts projects have seen increases in recent years as education and publicity have helped members understand the variety of projects that can be shared at the Fair. WSU Extension also indicated that photography has been emphasized in recent years and the number of photos that can be registered by each member has increased.

Exhibit 4. Pierce County Fair 4-H Still Life Exhibits, 2017-2019

	2017	2018	2019
Posters	287	249	251
Photography	143	102	228
Home Arts	77	59	151
Judging	147	127	126
Arts	49	42	80
Bowls	56	59	50
Cloverbuds		31	47
Action	20	24	22
Public Presentation	28	18	22
Garden	46	0	17
Total	853	711	994

Source: Pierce County Fair Association, 2019.

Open class is open to both youth and adults, allowing individuals throughout the community that are not 4-H members to showcase their work. Divisions in open class exhibits range from sewing, to photography, flowers and food preservation.

Open class exhibits increased by 19% between 2018 and 2019. Adult floral exhibits are the most popular, representing nearly 30% of all open class exhibits. Home arts, youth arts, adult photography and adult arts are also common exhibits at the Fair. Youth photography and arts have increased the most between 2018 and 2019. The other youth organizations division allows youth participating in other youth organizations such as Boy or Girl Scouts to share their activities for the year at the Fair.

Exhibit 5. Pierce County Fair Open Class Exhibits, 2017-2019

	2017	2018	2019
Floral - Adult	498	305	336
Home Arts	369	261	243
Arts - Youth	149	86	166
Photo - Adult	118	83	128
Arts - Adult	100	82	119
Photo - Youth	45	42	90
Floral - Youth	99	88	46
Other Youth Org's	19	17	22
Total	1,397	964	1,150

Source: Pierce County Fair Association, 2019.

DIRECT IMPACTS OF THE PIERCE COUNTY FAIR

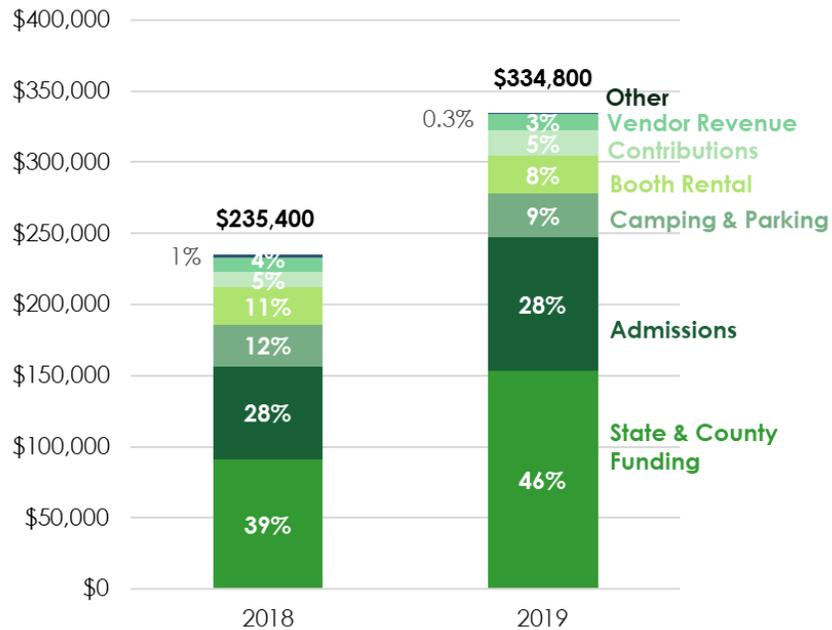
The Pierce County Fair generates direct economic impacts from several distinct sources:

- Operating revenues and resulting expenditures of the organization's operations from organizing the Fair.
- Activities of vendors at the Pierce County Fair.
- Spending by visitors traveling from outside Pierce County outside the fair gates. Visitors traveling to the Fair spend money in the area on lodging, transportation, food and drinks, shopping and other recreational activities.
- Spending by 4-H program exhibitors on project development throughout the year.

Pierce County Fair Operations

The PCF Association operates and manages the fair with revenues and funding from the State Fair Fund, fair operations, and County contributed funds. The Pierce County Fair had roughly \$335,000 in revenue and other sources of funding in 2019. State and county funding are the largest source of Fair funds at more than \$153,000, or 46% of total revenue and funding. Admissions represent 28% of total revenue and funding in 2019 and include proceeds from Fair ticket sales, special events and carnival admission and concessions. The remainder is made up of nearly \$30,600 from camping and parking, \$26,600 from booth rentals, \$18,000 in contributions, \$11,400 in vendor revenue and \$1,000 in other revenue such as merchandise sales.

Exhibit 6. Pierce County Fair Revenue and Funding, 2018-2019



Sources: Pierce County Fair Association, 2019; Community Attributes, 2019.

Total Fair revenue and funding has increased by 42% between 2018 and 2019, mainly due to a rise in admissions revenue, contributions and state and county funding. The share of state and county funding as a percentage of total revenue and funding has increased from 39% in 2018 to 46% in 2019. Although as a percentage of total revenue admissions have remained at 28%, the revenue from admissions has increased from \$65,000 in 2018 to \$94,000 in 2019, or by roughly 44%.

In 2019, Pierce County Fair received nearly \$16,000 in sponsorship contributions, representing 5% of total revenue and 87% of all contributions, an increase of approximately \$5,000 over 2018. Sponsorships support a variety of activities at the Fair, ensure that the Fair can be an affordable attraction for the community and showcase community commitment. The Pierce County Fair has nearly 40 sponsors, ranging from banks to agricultural, farming, and retail business and community organizations.

In 2019, Pierce County Fair employed roughly 53 people, a wide majority of which are seasonal employees during Fair operations. Together, Pierce County Fair personnel worked more than 5,200 hours, the equivalent of 3 FTEs (Full-time equivalent). Fair employees received roughly \$84,300 in wages and benefits in 2019.

Exhibit 7. Pierce County Fair Employment, 2019

Employment Type	Hours	FTE
Salaried	2,292	1
Manager	1,032	0.5
Accountant	960	0.5
Sponsorship	300	0.1
Seasonal	2,967	1
Total	5,259	3

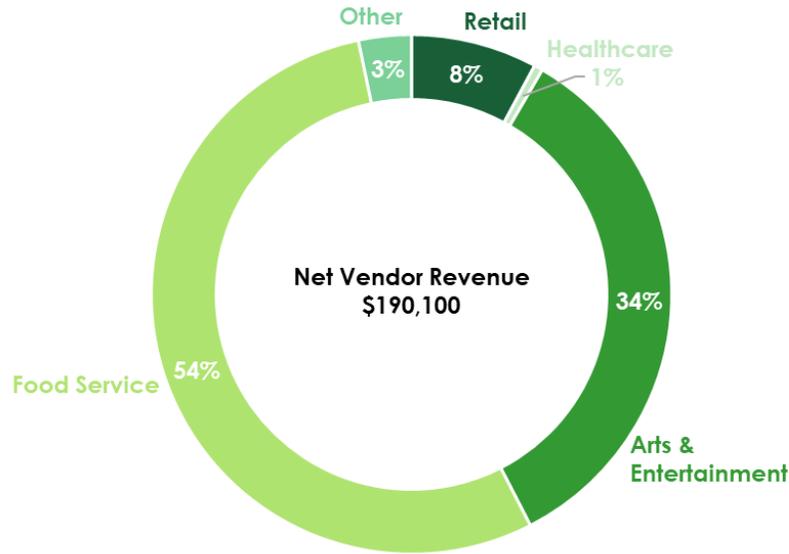
Sources: *Pierce County Fair Association, 2019; Community Attributes, 2019.*

Vendors

Fairgrounds vendors earned over \$190,000 in net revenue (excluding the Pierce County Fair Association share of vendor revenue) from selling their goods and products at the Fair in 2019. Food and beverage sales made up more than half of the total net vendor revenue (54%). The second highest category of vendor revenue was arts and entertainment, consisting mostly of revenue from amusement park entertainment. Other vendors at the Fair include retailers selling a variety of products from homemade soaps and custom jewelry to kitchen tools and hot tubs.

There were around 100 vendors at the Pierce County Fair in 2019, mainly from Pierce County. Approximately 13% of vendors who sell concessions at the Fair travelled to the Fair from King County and the rest traveled from Clark, Snohomish and Thurston Counties and out of state.

Exhibit 8. Pierce County Net Vendor Revenue by Sector, 2019



Sources: Pierce County, 2019; Community Attributes, 2019.

Exhibit 9. Pierce County Fair Vendors by County, 2019

County	# Vendors	Net Revenue
Pierce County	73	\$149,000
King County	13	\$26,200
Clark County	1	\$4,400
Snohomish County	1	\$3,900
Thurston County	4	\$3,900
Outside Washington	6	\$2,800
Total	98	\$190,100

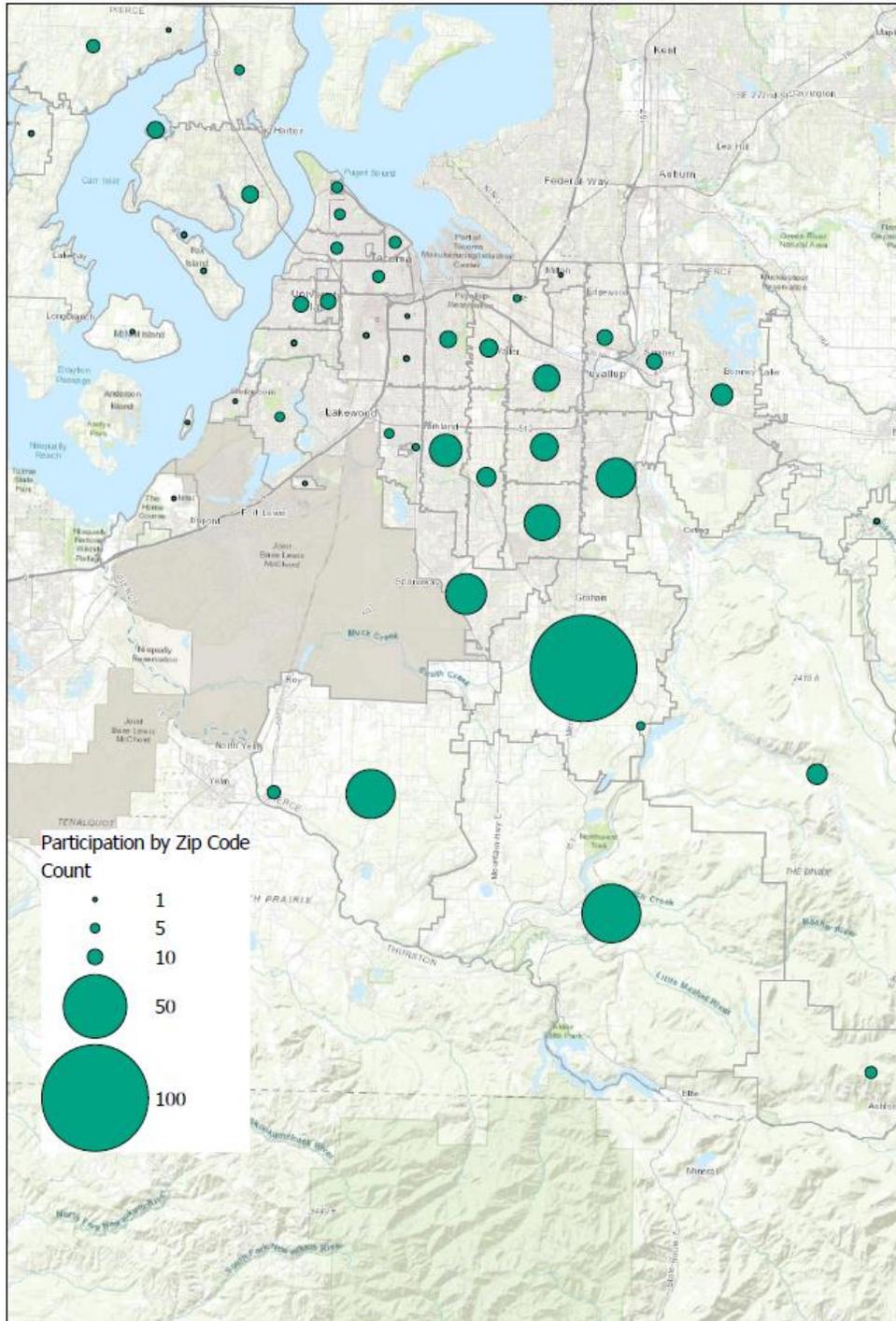
Sources: Pierce County Fair Association, 2019; Community Attributes, 2019.

Exhibitors

Exhibitors are an important cultural and educational component of the Fair. Members of 4-H and the broader community are invited to showcase their projects at the Fair. Exhibitors place their projects in the Fair to compete for points. Points are combined at the end of the Fair for prize money or premiums. In 2019, the Pierce County Fair sent out more than 550 premium checks to individuals that earned points through their Fair entries. In total premiums totaled more than \$18,000. The majority (94%) of premiums were sent to individuals in Pierce County, but entries from both Thurston and King Counties also received awards.

The most premiums went to Tacoma, followed by Graham, Puyallup, Eatonville and Roy, Washington. Entrants from these communities received more than \$1,000. Individual premiums received ranged between nearly \$240 to just \$1.00. Premiums on average were nearly \$33.

Exhibit 10. Pierce County Fair Exhibitors by Location, 2019



Sources: Pierce County Fair Association, 2019; Community Attributes, 2019.

Visitor Spending

Visitors to the Pierce County Fair come from across Pierce County and Washington. While most visitors (more than 90% on average) come from Pierce County, surveys conducted in 2016, 2017 and 2018 by the Pierce County Fair Association indicate that visitors also come from King County, Thurston County and Kitsap County, among many others.

Among survey respondents, 59% indicated that they were not first-time visitors to the Pierce County Fair. Additionally, 86% of survey respondents indicated that they had visited the Washington State Fair in the past five years.

Spending by visitors to the Pierce County Fair before or after their visit generates retail and other consumer sales, including food services and transportation. Spending by these visitors generates economic impacts and helps to support the county's economy in a variety of industries. Visitor spending does not describe spending in Pierce County due to the Fair, but rather spending by all visitors who attended the Fair. Visitor spending outside the Fair cannot be directly attributed to the Fair as some or all this spending may have happened even if the Fair was not held. Similarly, the money spent by Pierce County residents on Fair grounds would likely be spent elsewhere in the county economy if the Fair was not held.

Based on research by Dean Runyan Associates on travel impacts in Pierce County, the average day trip visitor to the Pierce County Fair spends an estimated \$41 per day. Overnight visitors that also have an entry in the Fair spend approximately \$244 outside of the Fair during their stay, based on research by WSU Extension. Many overnight visitors camp at the Fairgrounds, which is captured in the Pierce County Fair revenue impacts.

In 2019, the more than 20,000 visitors to the Pierce County Fair spent an estimated \$907,000 outside of the Fair in Pierce County. This includes spending on accommodation, restaurants, retail and transportation. Visitor spending directly supports an estimated 9 FTEs and more than \$420,000 in wages and benefits.

Exhibit 11. Estimated Visitor Spending by Category, 2019

	Spending
Retail Purchases & Transportation Costs	\$377,200
Food & Beverage	\$339,500
Lodging	\$176,700
Entertainment	\$13,200
Total	\$906,600

Sources: Pierce County Fair Association, 2019; Dean Runyan Washington State Travel Impacts & Visitor Volume, 2000-2017p; Washington State University Extension, 2019; Community Attributes, 2019.

4-H Project Development

Each year 4-H members and their families prepare projects they exhibit at the Fair. These projects can be a significant investment in both time and money for families. In 2019 WSU Extension conducted a survey among families exhibiting at the Pierce County. This survey explored the types of exhibits as well as spending prior to the Fair on the development of projects. The survey found that horse projects required greater investment than other types of projects. On average families with a horse project spent nearly \$4,400 prior to the Fair. Families with other types of projects, including both animals and still life spent on average more than \$650 prior to the Fair.

In total, the WSU Extension survey and analysis found that 4-H families showcasing their exhibits at the Fair spent roughly \$350,000. This spending supports jobs and wages throughout Pierce County. The direct impacts of 4-H families exhibiting at the Fair prior to the Fair support an estimated 3 FTEs in the Pierce County economy and more than \$120,000 in wages and benefits.

TOTAL ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF THE PIERCE COUNTY FAIR

Economic impacts of the Pierce County Fair include the contributions to the Washington state and Pierce County economy from Fair operations, vendors, visitors and the spending of 4-H members on their projects prior to the Fair. The total economic impact of the Pierce County Fair represents the sum of the following types of income:

- **Direct Impacts** are the economic benefits resulting from Pierce County Fair Association spending and operations in Pierce County, vendor and exhibitor activity at the Fair, the spending of visitors who attend the Fair and spending of 4-H exhibitors to develop their projects throughout the year.
- **Indirect Impacts** capture the economic benefits in the Pierce County Fair Association's supply chain as a result of procurement of goods and services for organizing the Fair and the supply chain benefits of vendors, visitors and 4-H exhibitors.
- **Induced Impacts** are generated by employees of the Pierce County Fair or businesses in the supply chain spending their earnings, for example, on household goods and services.

The tables below summarize the total economic impacts in terms of jobs, total compensation and business revenue to Washington state and Pierce County by impact category and in total. Aggregate economic impact for Washington state totaled more than \$3.1 million in business revenues in 2019, of which 91% occurred in Pierce County. Statewide, the Pierce County Fair supported 27 jobs and more than \$1.3 million in labor income (including benefits) in Washington state.

Exhibit 12. Total Economic Impacts of the Pierce County Fair, Pierce County, 2019

	Jobs	Total Compensation	Business Revenue
Fair Operations	4	\$208,600	\$646,900
Vendors	3	\$110,800	\$288,900
Visitor Spending	14	\$690,100	\$1,441,500
4-H Project Development	4	\$198,900	\$466,300
Total	26	\$1,208,400	\$2,843,600

Sources: Pierce County Fair Association, 2019; Washington State Office of Financial Management, 2019; Washington State Employment Security Department, 2019; US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019; Community Attributes, 2019.

Exhibit 13. Total Economic Impacts of the Pierce County Fair, Washington State, 2019

	Jobs	Total Compensation	Business Revenue
Fair Operations	5	\$224,900	\$691,400
Vendors	3	\$150,500	\$394,000
Visitor Spending	15	\$728,100	\$1,563,900
4-H Project Development	5	\$207,400	\$489,700
Total	27	\$1,310,900	\$3,139,000

Sources: Pierce County Fair Association, 2019; Washington State Office of Financial Management, 2019; Washington State Employment Security Department, 2019; US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019; Community Attributes, 2019

The economic impacts of the Pierce County Fair support the generation of state taxes. Vendors and businesses that interact directly with visitors and 4-H members generate taxes directly. The indirect and induced activities from expenditures associated with the Pierce County Fair produce additional taxable revenue. Tax impacts include statewide business and occupation taxes, state sales and use taxes and various other state taxes.

The direct, indirect and induced economic activities related to the Pierce County Fair generate nearly \$68,000 in state sales, business and occupation and other taxes. Roughly \$42,000 or 62% is generated by Fair visitor spending within the community.

Exhibit 14. Total Fiscal Impacts of the Pierce County Fair, Pierce County, 2019

	Total Fiscal Impact
Fair Operations	\$5,700
Vendors	\$8,000
Visitor Spending	\$40,700
4-H Project Development	\$8,500
Total	\$62,900

Sources: Pierce County Fair Association, 2019; Washington State Office of Financial Management, 2019; Washington State Employment Security Department, 2019; US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019; Community Attributes, 2019.

Exhibit 15. Total Fiscal Impacts of the Pierce County Fair, Washington State, 2019

	Total Fiscal Impact
Fair Operations	\$6,300
Vendors	\$10,700
Visitor Spending	\$42,000
4-H Project Development	\$8,800
Total	\$67,800

Sources: Pierce County Fair Association, 2019; Washington State Office of Financial Management, 2019; Washington State Employment Security Department, 2019; US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019; Community Attributes, 2019.

AGRICULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES AT THE PIERCE COUNTY FAIR

Overview of Agriculture in Pierce County

Pierce County has an agricultural sector that makes important contributions to the state and local economy. The county had 1,607 farms in 2017, an increase of nine farms since the last agricultural census in 2012. Most of these are small farms with less than 50 acres and 95 of them are family-run. These farms produce a wide variety of products, from vegetables and livestock to aquaculture and flowers. There are 11 farmers markets and 13 farms in the County where customers can buy agricultural goods directly from the people who produce them.

Pierce County is one of the top ten producers in Washington in nursery and greenhouse products, Christmas trees, and aquaculture, among other products.⁴ In 2012, Pierce County was the second largest producer of eggs, tulips and daffodils in the state. In addition, Pierce County was the second

⁴ USDA NASS. 2017.

largest producer of rhubarb nationwide. That year, the County was responsible for \$91 million worth of agricultural commodities.⁵

Pierce County has historically had a variety of programs and policies to support agriculture throughout the county. Farmers can access information and resources to support their business through Pierce County, and Pierce County connects customers with local farmers and farmers markets with the Puget Sound Fresh app. The County also preserves ecologically sensitive lands including agricultural land, streamlines permitting and agriculture policy, and promotes Pierce County agriculture. The Farm Forum provides workshops to farmers on topics such as online marketing, food hubs, irrigation wells and water rights. Similarly, the Washington State University Extension in Pierce County give access to educational support and research useful to farmers.

Pierce County also has a Transfer of Development Rights/Purchase of Development Rights program. This program seeks to shift new developments away from ecologically sensitive lands by allowing property owners to transfer the development rights for a parcel of land to a different parcel.⁶

County organizations also support agriculture by directing state resources towards Pierce County food producers, such as Wilcox Family Farms. In 2017, the Economic Development Board for Tacoma-Pierce County helped allocate funds to Wilcox Farms from the Governor's Strategic Reserve Fund to train workers in food safety and efficient production practices.⁷

Agriculture Opportunities at the Fair

The Pierce County Fair is a resource for the agriculture industry in Pierce County and is an important part of the County's 4-H program. According to interviews with Pierce County, the Washington State Fair and WSU Extension staff and farmers the Fair is a marketing tool for agriculture, showcases skills and crafts for new and existing residents, is part of the local culture and promotes a sense of community. Interviews also highlighted the relationship between the Fair, 4-H and the agriculture industry. The Fair is key to supporting 4-H and 4-H is a valuable resource for agriculture by providing education for youth. Participation in 4-H also provides an opportunity for youth to add value to the agriculture industry by teaching and showcasing best practices.

⁵ Pierce County. 2012.

https://www.co.pierce.wa.us/DocumentCenter/View/38460/PierceCounty_Farming_Banner?bidId=

⁶ Pierce County. <https://www.co.pierce.wa.us/3268/TDRPDR>

⁷ EDB Tacoma-Pierce County. 2017. <https://www.edbtacomapierce.org/wilcox-family-farms-taps-work-start-grant/>

Pierce County is currently reviewing its programs and policies related to agriculture support and is assessing opportunities for the future as of December 2019. Interviews indicated that the agriculture industry in Pierce County is encountering increasing challenges but remains an important and diverse industry within the County. This review of agricultural programs presents an opportunity to support agriculture in new ways by increasing the connection between County programs and the Fair.

Stakeholders also mentioned that the agriculture industry in Pierce County is changing and evolving. In order to remain relevant, county fairs need to follow along and find innovative ways to incentivize visitors to come back every year. For example, 4-H and FFA have been offering more programs focused on STEM and robotics. Similarly, the Fair could offer more exhibits and displays that highlight technological advances in agriculture.

Stakeholder feedback highlights opportunities for Pierce County to connect with the Pierce County Fair to support the agriculture industry. Beyond just the Fair, stakeholders mentioned opportunities to leverage the fairgrounds for year-round community events and expanded 4-H events. Stakeholders also noted that while the Washington State Fair is very different from the Pierce County Fair and they present different opportunities, the location and timing of the Washington State Fair can create some competition for the Pierce County Fair.

One stakeholder suggested that Pierce County could work with the Farm Bureau and commercial farmers in Pierce County to help build and strengthen connections and market local agriculture products to Fair visitors. The Fair also presents an opportunity to create a space to highlight local farmers and community supported agriculture (CSA). A venue at the Pierce County Fair could help farmers connect to customers they otherwise wouldn't reach.

One interviewee suggested the Fair can help support niche agriculture in Pierce County. For example, in northern California, niche agriculture has found its place in wine country. Farmers are growing specialty crops on small lots of land and making a living by supplying high-end restaurants. Similarly, the Fair and Pierce County can identify niche farmers and make it practical and affordable for them to participate in the Fair and promote their business and products.

Beyond presenting an opportunity for increased marketing, the Fair also presents an opportunity to showcase local products through vendors and concessions. One opportunity suggested could be to connect local producers with Fair vendors. Local producers need new markets that have enough purchasing power to support the industry and the Fair is a large event with a goals and objectives to support local programs and products

Interviewees also suggested that the Fairgrounds, with increased buildings and space, could support more exhibits that showcase local agriculture. Limited exhibit space can be a barrier for the Fair in supporting all the 4-H and Open Class exhibits in the county. Additionally, interviewees also suggested that more building space could be advantageous for supporting year-round 4-H events in Pierce County.

While the Fair is an important educational resource through its 4-H programs, one stakeholder indicated that the Fair could consider investing more in edutainment and programs that educate visitors on the food chain or the various aspects of farming life. Several fairs in Canada including in Toronto and the Calgary Stampede were offered as examples of best practice, providing agriculture education in innovative ways.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The Pierce County Fair is a four-day event that draws visitors from throughout the Pacific Northwest. Held every August in Graham, the Pierce County Fair attracted roughly 20,000 visitors in 2019. The County Fair fosters community pride, supports 4-H clubs across Pierce County, and showcases rural life, agriculture and community values.

The Fair earned revenue of nearly \$335,000 in 2019. Fair operations support direct employment of three full-time equivalents and \$84,300 in wages and benefits, including both Pierce County Fair Associations and seasonal employees working at the Fair. Nearly 100 vendors attended the Fair in 2019, of which 74% came from Pierce county. Fairgrounds vendors earned net revenue of more than \$190,000 (excluding the percentage of revenue paid to the Pierce County Fair Association).

Overall, the Pierce County Fair and its combined activities supported more than \$3.1 million in business revenue throughout the state, more than 27 full-time equivalent jobs and \$1.3 million in labor income (including benefits). Total economic contribution represents direct spending as well as spending through business-to-business transactions and household income expenditures.

The Pierce County Fair is a showcase event for 4-H clubs across Pierce County, and supports the valuable educational opportunities provided by 4-H to youth throughout the County. Additionally, the stakeholders see the Fair as a valuable cultural event supporting agriculture and presents an opportunity for policies and programs that support Pierce County's agriculture industry.