



# MARKET RESEARCH AND FEASIBILITY STUDY

## FINAL REPORT

Submitted to King County Council on behalf of  
King County Search & Rescue Association

March 31, 2024

Produced Westby Associates, Inc.



# FEASIBILITY STUDY REPORT

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## A. STUDY PARTICIPANT SUMMARY/ROSTER

### SUMMARY AS OF MARCH 31, 2024

NUMBER OF INTERVIEWS SCHEDULED:	32
NUMBER OF INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED:	32
NUMBER OF POTENTIAL GIFTS IDENTIFIED:	21
PHASE I: LAND PURCHASE, PLANNING AND DESIGN	\$3,500,000
PHASE II: CONSTRUCTION	\$9,500,000
PROJECT FUNDRAISING GOAL:	\$13,000,000
*FEASIBILITY GOAL:	\$10,400,000
RANGE OF QUANTIFIED PRIVATE SUPPORT:	\$215,200 - \$1,290,200
RANGE OF QUALIFIED FOUNDATION SUPPORT:	\$0 - \$325,000
RANGE OF POLITICAL SUPPORT:	\$200,000 - \$1,905,000
TOTAL RANGE OF QUANTIFIED AND QUALIFIED SUPPORT:	\$415,200 - \$3,520,200
**NASCENT POTENTIAL:	\$50,000 - \$100,000

### PROJECT FUNDING SECURED:

STATE OF WASHINGTON MEMBER REQUEST FY2023	\$103,000
KING COUNTY	\$1,000,000
PRIVATE PHILANTHROPY	\$200,000
KCSARA RESERVES	\$71,000
<b>TOTAL FUNDS SECURED AS OF 3/31/24</b>	<b>\$1,374,000</b>

### PROJECT FUNDING PLANNED:

FEDERAL FUNDING FY2025 – SUBMITTED	\$800,000
STATE OF WASHINGTON MEMBER REQUEST FY2025 – PLANNED	\$3,250,000
FEASIBILITY TO BE CLOSED THROUGH ADVANCED GIFTS - PROJECTED	\$1,290,200
FOUNDATION FUNDING – PLANNED	\$1,500,000
FEDERAL FUNDING FY2026 - PLANNED	\$3,250,000
PRIVATE PHILANTHROPY – PLANNED	\$1,200,000
CITY OF SNOQUALMIE – PLANNED	\$250,000
COMMUNITY CAMPAIGN – PLANNED	\$86,000
<b>TOTAL PROJECT FUNDING PLAN:</b>	<b>\$11,626,000</b>
<b>TOTAL PROJECT FUNDING SECURED AND PLANNED</b>	<b>\$13,000,000</b>

\*Feasibility is based on 80% of total campaign goal. This is a best practice standard that assumes the 20% gap will be closed through a conventional capital campaign.

\*\*Out of the 32 interviews we have conducted, there is one prospective donor who did not indicate a range of support who has deep capacity and interest should the project be well developed.

Name	Organization	Mtg Date	Mtg Sched	Mtg Held	Support Indicated
<b>Political Scheduled</b>					
<b>Federal</b>					
Rep. Kim Schrier	US Representative	12/5/23	x	x	x
Senator Maria Cantwell (LA's Astor Tellman, Patrick Eckroth & Ben Castagnetti)	US Senator	12/6/23	x	x	x
Maria Cantwell – (Naseem Mehyar, Law Enforcement & First Responders)	US Senator	1/29/24	x	x	x
Patty Murray (LA Megan Utemei)	US Senator	1/29/24	x	x	x
Rep. Kim Schrier (Chief of Staff Louise O'Rourke & LA Kate Rohr, Appropriations Oversight)	US Representative	2/1/24	x	x	x
Patty Murray (LA Megan Utemei)	US Senator	2/6/24	x	x	
<b>State</b>					
Senator Mark Mullet	State Senator	2/14/23	x	x	x
Rep. Lisa Callan	State Representative	1/30/24	x	x	
Rep. Mary Dye (LA Mary Wysocki)	State Senator	2/5/24	x	x	
Senator Mark Mullet (LA Connor Prieve)	State Senator	2/5/24	x	x	
Rep. Bill Ramos	State Representative	2/20/24	x	x	
<b>Municipal</b>					
Katherine Ross	Mayor	2/5/24	x	x	x
<b>Government</b>					
Amy Allbritton, State Search & Rescue Program Manager	Emergency Management Division	1/31/24	x	x	
<b>Individuals Scheduled</b>					
Craig McKibben		12/8/23	x	x	x
Sally Jewel		1/3/24	x	x	
Kathy Moffett-McDonald	Washington State Ski & Snowboard Museum	1/3/24	x	x	x
Dennis Brislawn	SAR 4x4	1/3/24	x	x	
Martin Volken	ProGuiding Service	1/3/24	x	x	x
Trevor Kostanich	ProGuiding Service	1/3/24	x	x	x
Chris Martin	SPART	1/22/24	x	x	x
Michael Woodsum	KCSARA Advisory Board	1/25/24	x	x	x
Jaime Martin	Snoqualmie Tribe	1/29/24	x	x	x
Doug McCall	Mountain Rescue Association	1/30/24	x	x	x
Josh Gerstman	Highline College President	1/30/24	x	x	x
Chris Brenes	Winfield Equity	2/2/24	x	x	x
Michelle Connor	Forterra	2/5/24	x	x	
Maggie Walker		2/5/24	x	x	x
Doug Schindler		2/6/24	x	x	
Erik Olsen	SPART - Ski Patrol	2/6/24	x	x	x
Jo Anne Hume	KCSARA Dev. Director	2/7/24	x	x	x
Andy Collins	Seattle Fire	2/9/24	x	x	

## B. FINDINGS

### Overview

As of March 31, 2024, Westby Associates, Inc. (WAI) has completed the feasibility study on behalf of King County Search and Rescue Association (KCSARA), having scheduled and conducted 32 interviews (107%). We have achieved feasibility for the first phase of the capital campaign; \$3.5M. We have a 66% gift identification rate, with 21 potential gifts identified. This shows adequate support for the first phase of the KCSARA capital campaign. The total potential quantified gift range identified is \$415,200 - \$3,520,200 which represents 101% of the high end of the fundraising goal for phase I.

The following percentages represent responses to questions from the study interviews:

Opinion Leaders	
100%	Community awareness of King County Search & Rescue Association (KCSARA)
9.40	Weighted average importance that KCSARA creates a sustainable model where they can manage and maintain operations and growth.
8.94	Weighted average support for KCSARA to pursue an \$13M capital campaign to purchase land and build a headquarters.
8.79	Weighted average importance that KCSARA addresses their infrastructure by creating a universal headquarters for all member units.
8.71	Weighted average importance that KCSARA increases their capacity to meet the growing need for search and rescue.

### Analysis of Opinion Leaders Findings:

- Any average above 50% is considered a favorable indicator for feasibility.
- So far in the study, 100% of interviewees were aware of KCSARA prior to the meeting.
- The importance that KCSARA creates a sustainable model where they can manage and maintain operations and growth carries a weighted average of 9.4 out of 10. Those interviewed believe it is very important that KCSARA should create a model that is sustainable for years to come.
- Support for a \$13M capital campaign to build a Search and Rescue Headquarters carries a weighted average of 8.94 out of 10. The community sees viability in a potential campaign to build a search and rescue headquarters; however, the project scope would need to be scaled appropriately based on further due diligence and data.
- The importance that KCSARA addresses their infrastructure carries a weighted average of 8.79 out of 10. The community agrees the current facility is insufficient; however, the data needs to inform project scope.
- The importance that KCSARA increases their capacity to meet the growing need for search and rescue carries a weighted average of 8.71 out of 10. The community agrees that to fulfill KCSARA's mission

services, they have to address capacity, especially as outdoor recreation continues to grow with the increased population in the Pacific Northwest.

## ISSUES

Issues are welcome in establishing feasibility for strategic visions and objectives. To the extent that they are deemed to be reliable and representative of broad community opinion, issues provide a solid platform for relationship building in the community. Relationship building is critical to community development and fundraising – tactical and strategic. At its highest level, fund development creates partners and investors in an organization’s future. Partnership presupposes relationship and requires a certain level of transparency. Fund development is the creation of shareholders. Shareholders demand a more intimate knowledge than the public.

Issues that arise from this study affirm that we are capturing reasonably candid responses, which are our best opportunities to create trust and support in the community. These issues have been prioritized through a weighted analysis based on two factors: A) Their impact on potential support, and B) the number of times they occur. Here are the top four issues from this study to date:

1. **Sustainability.** KCSARA is a 100% volunteer organization. It must be sustainable because if they aren’t doing this, who is? *“Because this is a volunteer organization, it concerns me that we cannot sustain this organization without community support.”*
2. **Proforma Budget.** Important to provide a proforma budget to determine revenue model and operating expenses. *“We can’t have increased capacity without having it be sustainable.”*
3. **Case for support.** More data is required to solidify the case for support. *“I haven’t seen the numbers to know that growth is happening and whether this type of investment is required.”*
4. **Campaign size.** It’s evident a home base is crucial and the current facility is insufficient; however, what is the realistic scope for the project? *“This is an ambitious goal for an all-volunteer organization. Leveraging support is the key to a successful campaign.”*

### **Analysis of Issue Findings:**

- All of the issues:
  - fall into the category of “buyers’ questions” – reflecting genuine interest in the project.
  - are logical ones that WAI and KSCARA in fact both anticipated and welcome.
  - represent ways to strengthen the case for support.
  - are understandable and must be addressed for the organization to succeed.

## ACCOLADES

In response to feasibility questions presented in the study to the community, the following are potential rallying points for a campaign:

- King County Search and Rescue Association:
  - Is highly regarded in terms of its mission and vision, as well as its past performance and leadership.
  - supports nine search and rescue teams providing coordinated efforts to save lives and reunite families.
  - has a strong volunteer base.
  - guided by a strong advisory board who is committed to the organization and the campaign.

### Analysis of Accolades Findings:

- The campaign comes from strong strategic planning led by the KSCARA Board
- Prospective donors perceive the campaign to be critical to achieving the board’s vision.
- The community sees this project as critical to providing safety for outdoor enthusiasts.

## CHALLENGES

FEMA will require due diligence to inform the scope of the project and the level of funding to be requested in the FY2026 funding cycle.

## C. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

1. Strategic planning has been completed and the information has been presented in the addendum of this report; see addendum 4 on page 8.
2. Land feasibility and weighted analysis have been completed providing the necessary criteria to inform land purchase options. The land feasibility report will be submitted to King County by 5/8/24.

## D. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Continue to conduct interviews beyond the 32 already completed.
2. Due to the intricacies and level of funding required, we are recommending phasing the project.
3. Work with the KSCARA Board and Staff to develop responses to the issues from the study as indicated.
4. Work with FEMA to determine the scope of a future federal request for the construction of the headquarters.
5. An extended contract has been initiated and a new scope of work has been agreed upon to include:
  - extended interviews with “second circle” of prospects beyond current prospects
  - cultivation and solicitation of advance gifts (pledges)
  - capital campaign design and direction
  - research and prioritize grant requests and timelines
  - support of the federal request with meetings in Washington DC
  - support a future state request with meetings in Olympia
  - preparation for campaign launch in the fall of 2025.

## E. ADDENDUM

### 1. POLITICAL SUMMARY

Our best practices in conducting feasibility for a Capital project typically includes up to 25% of outreach interviews to various elected representatives at all levels of government to include City, County, State and Federal. These interviews test the potential of bringing Capital dollars into a major building project. Political meetings scheduled so far include:

- Congresswoman Kim Schrier, Washington’s 8<sup>th</sup> District
- Astor Tellman, Patrick Eckroth & Ben Castagnetti, Legislative Aides to Senator Maria Cantwell

- Naseem Mehyar, Legislative Aide for Law Enforcement and First Responders
- Megan Utemei, Legislative Aide for Senator Patty Murray
- Loise O'Rourke, Chief of Staff for Congresswoman Kim Schrier
- Washington State Senator Mark Mullet, 5<sup>th</sup> Legislative District
- Washington State Representative Lisa Callan, 5<sup>th</sup> Legislative District
- Washington State Representative Bill Ramos, 5<sup>th</sup> Legislative District
- Washington State Representative Mary Dye, 9<sup>th</sup> Legislative District
- Connor Prieve, Legislative Aide for Senator Mark Mullet

### **Federal Appropriation Request**

A Federal Appropriations request was submitted in March 2024. \$800k is being requested for planning and design for the KCSARA headquarters.

Mike Westby, President & CEO of Westby Associates, visited Washington DC from December 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> and held meetings with Senator Maria Cantwell's office and met individually with Congresswoman Kim Schrier to discuss and elevate a Federal Appropriation request.

A second trip to Washington DC was taken on March 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> to include Mike Westby, Jennifer Brenes, and Executive Director, Carrie Lee Gagnon, to further support the \$800k federal request.

### **State of Washington Member Request**

Washington State Senator Mark Mullet supported a successful request in the amount of \$103,000 to research potential site locations. A second Washington State Member Request is planned for FY2025.

## 2. FOUNDATION SUMMARY

Qualified foundation prospects have a history of giving to projects like KCSARA.

### **QUALIFIED – (\$0 - \$325,000)**

#### **1. MJ Murdock Charitable Trust**

- Qualified up to \$250,000
- Focus Areas include Human Services
- Murdock is interested in partnering with organizations who improve the overall quality of life for all.
- Has a history of supporting member unit King County ESR for equipment
- Must have 40% committed before applying (capital)
- Deadline: rolling
- 2 Step application process – if full proposal is invited, 6-9 months to decision

#### **2. Norcliffe Foundation**

- Qualified up to \$15,000
- Support program areas: human services, healthcare, civic and community projects, education, and arts and culture.
- Puget Sound region focus
- Deadline: rolling

#### **3. Puget Sound Energy Foundation**

- Qualified up to \$10,000



- The Foundation is dedicated to keeping communities safe, supported and thriving so that every person can reach their fullest potential.
- Previous funder for KCSARA
- Deadline: May 15

#### 4. Sunderland Foundation

- Qualified up to \$50,000
- Grants help build the places where families in distress find help and healing, where young minds grow and thrive, and where communities come together for celebration and inspiration.
- Focus on brick & mortar projects
- Giving area includes Puget Sound region
- Deadlines: rolling

#### 5. Seattle Foundation

- The KCSARA project does not qualify for recent open grant programs; however the foundation manages a wide variety of funds for private philanthropists, some of whom could be interested in supporting the project. Connection with the philanthropic advisors could open these doors.

### 3. SAMPLE QUOTES

#### Thoughts on KCSARA's Mission

"This is essential. It's a basic service that every community should provide."

"I am an outdoor enthusiast and I assume they will be there if I ever need them."

"You cannot have a flourishing outdoor industry without a capable rescue."

#### Thoughts on KCSARA's Vision

"KCSARA is the only group positioned to take on this responsibility."

"There are more people who have moved here that are more urban and cosmopolitan, not particularly savvy to the outdoors."

"Because the units are located in different areas with different modes of action and training, this is a fitting vision."

#### Opinions on Capital Campaign Size

"What would the new building change?"

"I would support funding this through a tax, if necessary."

"I think the campaign would be well received if the community knew that this is an organization run by volunteers."

"I'm supportive, but a little price shocked."

#### Opinions on KCSARA's Community Education and Awareness

"Most people don't understand all that KCSARA does."

"I would put money into outreach and education. The community doesn't know what KCSARA does."

**Opinions on KCSARA Creating a Sustainable Model**

“They are a volunteer organization who are called on frequently. If not them, who?”

“How can we sustain a volunteer organization without community support?”

“This is the next logical stage in their evolution. They need to level up just to meet the demand. It’s where the road leads.”

“I don’t want to have to explain why this beautiful building is going to create a strain on ongoing resources.”

**Opinions on KCSARA Addressing Capacity**

“Capacity lies more with the units and KCSARA is there to coordinate.”

“If you don’t grow capacity, you don’t meet the growing need.”

**4. STRATEGIC PLANNING SUMMARY**

