



## Commerce WorkFirst (WF)

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Since the implementation of WorkFirst in 1997, the state has provided services to help participants search for jobs and enter the labor market. Most have been successful; however, some populations need additional assistance to secure permanent employment. The Community Jobs program was started in June 1997 to help fill this need. In 1998, Community Jobs became available in every county in Washington. Commerce's Workfirst program has expanded over time and currently offers four WorkFirst job training programs; Community Jobs, Job Connection, Career Development, and Community Works (*described below*).

The Washington State Department of Social and Health Services contracts with Commerce to provide job training opportunities to families receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Commerce administers the program statewide by working with 21 local Community Based Organizations (CBOs). The CBOs provide support services, determine participant eligibility, provide wages for subsidized work programs, and monitor participant's participation. CBOs partner with local non-profits, governments, and/or public entities that act as job training placement sites for the participants. CBOs track the success of the participant throughout their job training experience.

### Program Descriptions:

- *Community Jobs* provides comprehensive, paid work experience plus skill building opportunities for hard to employ TANF recipients. Participants gain valuable work experience, self-confidence, marketable skills, and an avenue to permanent unsubsidized employment. Commerce's local CBOs place participants in temporary, 20-hour-per-week paid positions with local nonprofit organizations and public agencies to gain work experience and job skills. In addition, participants enroll in at least 10 hours of additional activities to help increase their future employability including education, job readiness training, life skills training, or community service. Participants remain in the program up to six months—long enough to gain both substantial work experience and tools for dealing with life situations beyond crisis management. Enrollments in FY14 (July 2013-June 2014) were 2,116.
- *Job Connection* provides participants an opportunity to build references, develop networking connections, and demonstrate their work skills by performing jobs within their chosen field of employment. In Job Connection, Commerce's local CBOs place participants in paid positions for up to three months with local nonprofit, tribal, or government agencies. Employment is then paired with targeted job hunting activities and mentoring opportunities. The goal is to secure unsubsidized employment. In *Career Jump*, a subset of the Job Connection program, participants gain paid work experience while "on the job" with either a nonprofit or for-profit employer who has agreed to place them on their payroll at the end of the training period. Enrollments in FY14 (July 2013-June 2014) were 1,575.
- *Career Development* provides up to 12 months of unpaid work experience to complement a participant's educational pathway. Commerce's local CBOs help place participants in unpaid positions that reinforce specific skills, training, knowledge, and experience necessary to obtain employment in the participant's chosen career field. The Career Development Program was created to provide students a means to obtain experience in their field while they are completing their education. Enrollments in FY14 (July 2013-June 2014) were 517.
- *Community Works* program provides up to 12 months of unpaid work experience to TANF participants who are transitioning between activities, needing a beginning level of activity, or are needing additional support for re-training to be competitive in the labor market. Commerce's local CBOs place participants in unpaid positions with local nonprofit organizations and public agencies to gain work experience and job skills. Enrollments in FY14 (July 2013-June 2014) were 792.