

# **HIGHS SKILLS, HIGH WAGES 2012-2022**

## **DRAFT GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES**

### **Goal I**

#### **Washington's Multiple Pathways for Initial Careers Provide Many Paths to Economic Self-Sufficiency and Career Satisfaction**

**Objective 1: Improve the availability and quality of career and education guidance for students in the secondary and postsecondary systems.**

#### **Strategies:**

- a. Enhance career guidance for students.

Begin career guidance at an earlier age, involve parents and guardians, and value all career paths. Implement comprehensive guidance programs (comprised of the five critical elements) such as Navigation 101 at all Washington high schools and middle schools. Like the Navigation 101 program, bring career guidance into the classroom, which both enhances student engagement and makes guidance more accessible. Prepare faculty to perform this role through professional development. Provide students and families with access to extensive information about career pathways and education and career opportunities, including opportunities that require a bachelor's degree and opportunities that do not. Make entrepreneurship information part of guidance. Provide students at postsecondary institutions with greater access to guidance information.

- b. Engage the private sector in providing career guidance.

Increase the engagement of private sector partners at schools and colleges. Include businesses, unions, community-based organizations, and public sector employers as part of this engagement, in counseling students about career opportunities. Bring partners into the classroom and provide students with the opportunity to explore workplaces. Leverage private and other public resources at schools.

**Objective 2: Identify, assess, and certify skills for successful careers.**

#### **Strategies:**

- a. Increase workplace and life skills development for students.

In addition to academic skills and skills for specific careers, ensure students develop workplace and life skills. Workplace skills (also known as soft skills, work readiness, and employability skills) include such things as problem solving, positive work habits, team work, and many other skills. Employers report critical deficits in the workplace skills of

new employees and job applicants. Life skills include the skills required to manage lives and careers; for example, financial literacy and living healthfully.

- b. Increase utilization of industry-based skill standards, assessments, and credentials.

Bring the education system together with industry to identify skill standards and assessments, and enable students to obtain industry recognized credentials. Ensure standards range from general workplace standards to standards for specific occupational clusters. Emphasize transferable skills that are useful across many occupations, and that “stack” towards career and educational progress. Whenever possible, select standards for their relevance to hiring and promotional practices within the targeted industry cluster. Ensure continued relevance of standards by having faculty consult regularly with industry members.

**Objective 3: Expand Programs of Study that map course sequences in career clusters through the secondary and postsecondary education systems.**

**Strategies:**

- a. Expand the use of Programs of Study.

Programs of Study (POS) provide a sequential road map of the courses required for a career pathway; including multiple points for students to stop out to work and re-enter without losing momentum, and to take branches leading to various more specific careers. POS will be a regular way that education is organized.

- b. Improve the articulation and transfer of credits earned in a student’s Program of Study.

Provide opportunities for high school students to earn credits for both high school and college through POS. Create an easy transfer of dual credits among postsecondary institutions. Improve articulation between two-year colleges, and between two-year and four-year institutions. Open source curriculum and common course numbering could assist in the transfer of credits for students.

**Objective 4: Increase work-integrated learning.**

**Strategies:**

- a. Increase the number and types of workplace experiences available to students and out-of-school youth.

Create more opportunities for students and out-of-school youth to have work experiences. Experiences may include, among other things, paid or unpaid internships, workplace mentorships, pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships, cooperative education, and work study. Align the work experiences with the student’s Program of Study, and include transferable academic credit whenever possible.

- b. Engage the private sector to integrate more work experiences into the classroom.

Bring partners into the classroom and students into the workplace. Experiences such as project-based learning, classroom visits by business people, contextualized learning, and applied learning through internships and cooperative education bring relevance to material learned in the classroom, and provides important information to help guide career and educational decision-making.

**Objective 5: Improve student access and retention.**

**Strategies:**

- a. Expand high school dropout prevention and retrieval programs.

Prevent students from dropping out of high school and retrieve those students who have dropped out by expanding state programs. This includes programs that leverage the resources of secondary schools, social service agencies, Workforce Development Councils, community-based-organizations, and other partners.

- b. Increase non-traditional opportunities to obtain postsecondary certificates and degrees.

Expand methods of reducing the time to postsecondary credentials including competency based learning programs and credit for prior learning. Make more “upside-down” degree programs available—programs that first provide vocational-technical training so that students who leave college after a year or two have marketable skills, followed by general education leading to a bachelor’s degree. Grow the number of Applied Bachelor’s Degree programs at community and technical colleges. Develop more “earn and learn” models, such as those that integrate apprenticeship training and college degrees and certificates.

- c. Provide wrap-around and new models of support and employment services including special services for diverse populations with multiple barriers to education and training.

Enhance support services for diverse populations with multiple barriers to education and employment. The services include traditional support services, but also rethinking how we serve people with barriers by creating new partnerships with employers, and with social service agencies and community-based organizations—better leveraging resources.

**Objective 6: Job search and placement for people into initial careers.**

**Strategies:**

- a. Assist students to locate and obtain jobs.

Strengthen partnerships between the education and WorkSource systems to share job-finding information and resources. Increase the use of the successful navigator model that provides brokers to assist students in understanding and connecting with employers. Assist students in learning to identify their knowledge, skills and abilities and how to package themselves to meet the needs of the job. Teach students the skills needed to acquire employment such as how to search for a job, create a resume, fill out a job application, and impress in an interview. Encourage students to learn networking skills. Bring together schools and colleges with business and labor organizations to assist students in searching for a job.

**Goal II**

**Washington's Multiple Pathways Provide Many Opportunities for Employers and Workers to Engage in and Benefit from the Workforce Development System**

**Objective 1: Increase employer engagement with the workforce development system.**

**Strategies:**

- a. Improve outreach to employers.

Improve communication with employers using materials that are designed and written in a manner understandable and accessible to the business community, including the use of virtual communication. The materials must identify products and services that are of high value to employers, including small businesses. Coordinate outreach among public agencies, and cross-train staff to be familiar with the full range of services available. Partner with private sector organizations, and employer consortia. Utilize existing resources for outreach such as Industry Skill Panels, Centers of Excellence, and business organizations such as Chambers of Commerce and industry associations.

- b. Engage employers in identifying skill standards and the development of training programs that meet the standards.

Involve employers in identifying skill standards and industry-based certifications of workers who meet the standards. Also involve employers in helping to develop and keep training programs current so that the programs prepare workers to meet the standards.

- c. Increase industry involvement in work-integrated learning.

Develop more opportunities for students and job-seekers to learn at workplaces and to provide classroom experiences connected to the world of work. Examples include on-the-job training, apprenticeships, cooperative education, and paid internships. Tie work-integrated learning to students' Program of Study, where possible.

- d. Increase employer investment in workforce training.

Employer investments in workforce training include, but are not limited to employer matches to public sector or employee investments, and providing faculty or equipment for training programs.

**Objective 2: Promote economic development by connecting workforce development with job creation and growth.**

**Strategies:**

- a. Provide and market business services to employers.

Market services to existing employers and those looking to locate into the region. Business services include customized training for specific employers or groups of employers; recruitment and assessment of job applicants, and job match and placement services; early intervention services to prevent layoffs or closures; and employment retention services for employees such as efforts to connect employees with social services to address personal and family issues that can affect continued employment.

- b. Target investments for strategic economic opportunities.

Develop funding mechanisms to adequately resource and sustain high demand occupational training. Continue to improve the quality of labor market information in order to identify high demand occupations and Programs of Study, and to identify strategic economic clusters. Continue to develop and maintain special initiatives to address critical economic opportunities (e.g., aerospace workforce).

- c. Encourage and support entrepreneurship.

Offer entrepreneurial training and mentorship programs.

**Objective 3: Expand and support learning opportunities for workers at all stages of their education or career paths.**

**Strategies:**

- a. Offer greater career and education guidance for adults.

Provide navigators to assist adults in identifying and accessing education and training opportunities and financial aid and other support services. Widely disseminate consumer information on training programs.

- b. Increase the accessibility of training programs for adult workers and reduce the time it takes to complete training.

Increase the use of credit for prior learning, competency-based programs, stackable and portable credentials, direct connect training (e.g., OJT and Individualized Certificate Programs), and online and hybrid learning programs. Offer training at times and locations designed to reach underemployed workers. Expand financial assistance co-investment models such as Lifelong Learning Accounts (LiLAs).

- c. Improve training for adult workers with barriers to advancement.

Increase use of programs such as I-BEST that integrate basic or developmental education with skills training. Provide support services that fit the needs of diverse populations including veterans returning to the civilian labor force and long-term unemployed workers. Offer bridge programs for adults with barriers to postsecondary education. Increase partnerships with community based organizations and the Department of Social and Health Services programs that focus their services on vulnerable populations to provide needed supports for adult workers with barriers.

**Objective 4: Improve job search and placement services for unemployed and underemployed workers.**

**Strategies:**

- a. Improve the quality of job matching and referrals between job seekers and employers with job openings.

Improve the technology used to make job matches and the job referral process so that the skill sets that job applicants have match the skill sets that employers want. Assist job seekers and employers to recognize transferable skills and where the skills can be applied in the workforce. Assist veterans to cross-match their transferable skills gained in the armed forces to civilian employment opportunities.

- b. Make job search and placement assistance more widely available.

Improve access and marketing for job search and placement assistance to students, workers, and employers.

### **Goal III**

## **Washington's Workforce Development System is a Model of Accountability and Co-Investment.**

**Objective 1: Strengthen performance accountability across all workforce development partners, by focusing on employment and earnings outcomes.**

### **Strategies:**

- a. The Workforce Board will lead a full scale review in collaboration with all workforce partners to reconsider core measures for the Washington workforce system.

To fulfill its statutory assignment to develop common measures for the workforce development system, the Workforce Board developed the Washington Workforce Core Measures—measures of skill attainment, employment, earnings, customer satisfaction, and return on investment—that have been in place since 1996. Based on this work, the U.S. Department of Labor asked the Board to lead the states in developing a new generation performance management system. This process resulted in the creation of the Integrated Performance Information (IPI) measures. The IPI measures later became the basis of similar performance measures endorsed by the National Governors Association—measures that are now being considered by Congress for codification as part of WIA reauthorization. The Workforce Board will lead a broad, collaborative process to reconsider our state core measures in light of new federal measures and the High Skills, High Wages 2012 strategic plan.

- b. Reduce administrative burdens and improve performance outcomes through a focus on outcome rather than input measures.

The requirement to measure inputs is often a tool to ensure that services are delivered in the same way, and at an adequate quality level regardless of geographic location or service provider. Yet, the workforce development system relies on local governance to ensure that services are designed to meet the specific needs of each region's employers and job-seekers. Focus performance measurements on outcomes rather than inputs.

- c. Develop a unified plan for multiple federal workforce development programs.

In 2012, the Department of Labor issued planning instructions that allow states to write a "Unified Plan." The unified plan option offers state partner agencies the ability

to submit a single five-year plan covering up to 13 federal programs administered by five federal agencies. In Washington, these 13 programs are administered through nine state agencies and agency divisions. Washington will work toward uniting workforce programs by developing a unified plan with common goals, and performance measures.

**Objective 2: Establish cost-effective co-investment models, across government funding streams and across the tri-partite spectrum (employer, worker, and government).**

**Strategies:**

- a. Reduce barriers to sharing or splitting funding across funding streams.

At the service level, it is often difficult for staff working directly with customers to alter how funds are used or how services are provided. Creative front line staff work in the best interest of the customer to leverage the resources of other organizations. Normalize practices that leverage resources across agencies and enhance customer performance outcomes. Data sharing and customer tracking is easier and more effective through use of technology.

- b. Establish cost-sharing practices and policies that stretch public dollars to serve the largest number of participants to the highest performance outcome levels.

While there have been numerous attempts and pilots, Washington needs a common practice framework across all operating agencies that brings private resources into the system. Customer-partners provide input into service design, evaluation of service quality, and access to objective information about the return on their investment through a co-investment framework.