



Hot workforce topics for a cold economy

High employer demand fields

Even with fewer job openings and more workers eager to fill them, an estimated 28,000 Washington employers had difficulty finding the right person for at least some job openings last year, based on the Workforce Board's 2010 Employer Survey. As education resources tighten, postsecondary programs must continue to focus on high employer demand fields—that is, fields of study where employer demand for people with a certain type of education exceeds the supply of graduates coming out of community and technical colleges, state universities, colleges and apprenticeships.

Retooling Washington's Workforce

The state's workforce system partners came together in a series of intense meetings during Fall 2010 to identify ways to make a prompt difference (within 12 months) in the economic well-being of employers and unemployed workers. Driven by the immediacy of over 300,000 unemployed Washington workers and a slow recovery, hundreds of local and state workforce professionals and businesses participated in this fast-track process. Three projects emerged:

- 1) Coordinated outreach to Unemployment Insurance (UI) exhaustees** — Communicate information and streamline employment and training assistance to those whose UI benefits are ending, a population that continues to grow.
- 2) On-the-Job and Direct Connect Training** — This statewide effort aims to improve and expand On-the-Job Training (OJT) and Direct Connect Training options that increase business output and job creation through subsidized training.
- 3) Coordinated employer outreach with improved job referral/skills matching** — This project seeks to help Washington's employers get the skilled workers they need, while getting more idled workers employed by coordinating business outreach and job referrals among multiple government programs.

Industry Skill Panels

An Industry Skill Panel is a public-private partnership consisting of business, labor and education, all working together to help build the skills of workers needed by the targeted industry cluster. These panels make it possible for businesses in the same cluster to set aside their competitive differences and address many of their common workforce needs—from addressing common skill gaps to creating training programs that resolve them. There are successful Skill Panels throughout the state.

Customized Training

Employers report that state-assistance with job training, including grants and tax credits, is very attractive to them when considering whether to move to Washington or expand here. However, Washington ranks near the bottom of states in the amount of public support provided for customized job training for current employees.

Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board
Legislative reports and materials available at:
<http://www.wtb.wa.gov/legislativepapers.asp>

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