

## TAP TRANSITION CHAPTER—DRAFT

The Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board has approved a new strategic plan for workforce development, *Talent and Prosperity for All*, that envisions a seamless, efficient workforce system that delivers the right blend of services to propel workers and business to greater prosperity.

Washington's workforce system is highly regarded at the national level. Fittingly, many of the concepts included in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) were inspired by activities in Washington. But the bar has been raised and for good reason. WIOA creates an environment where partnership and collaboration are rewarded rather than penalized; where services are combined instead of compartmentalized to better help customers.

The *Talent and Prosperity for All* plan creates the expectation that Washington's core workforce programs and partners can be more effective and generate better results, both for business and those seeking work. The plan was created through extensive participation among dozens of stakeholders at more than 50 meetings, creating buy-in and a collaborative spirit that will help the system truly move forward.

Now it's time to take the necessary steps to turn that vision into reality. *Talent and Prosperity for All* outlines our workforce development system goals and the strategies workforce system partners will commit to in two distinct sections of the plan:

- A **strategic component** that sets out the goals and strategies of *Talent and Prosperity for All* in a narrative, accessible format for practitioners, stakeholders, jobseekers, and businesses; and
- An **operational component** that contains many program-specific commitments and legal compliance details. While the operational component folds in the plan's strategic narrative, it's organized differently to satisfy federal plan submission guidelines.

What follows are the priorities, the goals, and the many near-term tasks and projects intended to fulfill the promise of this plan. There is a lot of work to be done. There will be a period of adjustment as program managers redirect resources, learn from their experiences and make adaptations based on results and customer needs. However, there is consensus among the many partners that this new more coordinated workforce system ultimately will produce results far greater than the sum of its individual programs.

The *Talent and Prosperity for All* plan emphasizes the following priorities:

- Improve the customer experience through alignment and coordination of services.
- Build full partnerships with businesses through effective engagement strategies.
- Ensure equitable, universal access to workforce system services through technology and other methods.
- Evaluate how well the customer is served by measuring the multiple programs that serve them, rather than solely by individual program.

The goals for each of these priorities and the steps needed to reach them are explained below.

### **Improved Customer Experience**

Washingtonians access the workforce system in many ways. By improving customer experience, it ensures that regardless of how someone enters the system, that worker or business will receive the full benefit of our state’s comprehensive workforce system. WIOA helps this happen by eliminating the need for customers to follow the traditional “sequence of services” that required people to move through the system, step by step, rather than directly into the services they need. This frees up workforce system programs and partners to think in terms of enrolling clients in a wider range of services, either consecutively or concurrently. To facilitate this more open environment, workforce system professionals are identifying how to create a team of navigators who can assist businesses and jobseekers in accessing the right mix of services.

WIOA also emphasizes the end results—employment, earnings, and customer satisfaction—over program completion. This allows the system to focus on sustaining relationships with customers, both businesses and jobseekers, after training and hiring have been completed. Work-based learning and career pathways foster this type of ongoing relationship by actively engaging customers in perfecting and customizing workforce solutions that go beyond immediate employment, helping build career pathways and a productive workforce.

What follows are specific goals within this priority.

#### ***Develop an intake process that eliminates redundant assessments and streamlines customer experience.***

WorkSource career centers sit at the heart of Washington’s workforce system. WorkSource is where core programs are expected to take steps to collocate, share costs, and provide cross training opportunities to frontline staff. While it will take time to complete and perfect, the melding of staff and resources should streamline the intake process for customers and help ensure the right set of services are delivered when they are needed.

Programs and partners are already working to reduce overlapping assessments administered to customers. For instance, the state-approved Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment aligns with the state’s community and technical college system. This allows customers to complete only one assessment before they begin basic skills training.

The workforce system’s initial efforts will concentrate on more strategies to facilitate streamlined intake processes, such as encouraging basic information and data-sharing across system partners on customer status and program participation on a near “real time” basis.

***Increase the number of designated navigators available within the WorkSource system.***

The goal is “no wrong door” for system customers. Whether entering the system because of a lay-off or difficulty finding a living-wage job, each customer should have someone who knows how to successfully chart a course to the right set of support, training, and education services. The same principle of “no wrong door” applies to a business customer. As part of participating in the WorkSource system, core programs are reviewing how they can devote staff and resources toward a shared team of customer navigators cross-trained to understand the full range of Washington’s workforce system resources.

***Increase the number of participants, including those with barriers, who have defined career pathways and have gained portable skills, received industry recognized credentials, and/or earned college credits.***

Simply by stating this goal in terms of talent acquisition and career objectives, this plan demonstrates the focus on results over traditional program success. An exciting aspect of WIOA is the new flexibility our system has to weave resources of multiple programs toward a common goal, eliminating the constraining sequence of service requirements under the previous act. For example, this plan identifies additional ways for clients to connect to postsecondary career pathways. Clients of TANF/WorkFirst and Basic Education for Adults, even those without a high school diploma, may have the opportunity to connect to state financial aid that underwrites the necessary college-level credits that would then qualify them for federal financial aid. This type of “braiding” of resources leverages several state and federal programs in a way that looks beyond the individual program.

**Business Partnership and Engagement**

*Talent and Prosperity for All* relies on proven innovations such as sector partnerships, work-based learning and incumbent worker training to achieve the greater business engagement called for by WIOA.

Below are several of the goals for business partnership and engagement.

***Identify meaningful metrics to establish a baseline and increase the number of businesses utilizing the workforce system.***

***Identify meaningful metrics to establish a baseline and increase the number of businesses reporting satisfaction with the services they receive via the workforce system by 5 percent each year.***

***Train at least 30 percent of the workforce system’s staff on the implementation of sector partnerships.***

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Consistent with WIOA, this plan places the local Workforce Development Councils in the center of organizing business engagement efforts with other workforce system partners. Central to achieving improved results is a single point of contact for business. Core programs and partners are identifying their ability to staff business navigators and working out how this team of professionals will coordinate their efforts and share information.

Another key element to improving business satisfaction is the soon-to-launch WorkSource website (WorkSourceWa.com) which will offer new services for jobseekers and businesses, including free job postings and applicant matching.

***Train at least 30 percent of the workforce system's staff on the implementation of sector partnerships and have at least one new sector partnership in development in each workforce region.***

Sector strategies are regional partnerships of employers within one industry that bring together government, education, training, economic development, labor and community organizations to focus on the workforce and other needs of that industry. While Washington was an early pioneer in sector strategy initiatives, the challenge has been to transition these start-up initiatives into more sustainable long-term partnerships capable of addressing ongoing and emerging industry-wide needs. To facilitate this transition, the *Talent and Prosperity for All* plan presents a Sector Partnership Framework that identifies a common set of principles, definitions, processes and criteria for establishing and maintaining these partnerships.

***Increase resources for work-based learning opportunities, including on-the-job training, apprenticeship, internships, work experience and especially, incumbent worker training.***

WIOA emphasizes work-based learning by setting funding mandates to increase work experiences for youth (20 percent of youth funds must be spent on work-based learning). WIOA also ensures that apprenticeship programs are engaged at the local Workforce Development Council level in developing customized solutions for businesses. One key to increasing these opportunities is building trust and support from the business community. The many different options of work-based learning and the labels that apply can be confusing, creating the impression that the system is fragmented. This plan calls for creating a common brand and a clear, plain-language menu of service options.

### **Technology and Universal Access**

This plan, reinforced by WIOA, is building new energy and enthusiasm across Washington's workforce system to remove system barriers that have unfortunately prevented too many Washingtonians from connecting with a career pathway and a living-wage job. The plan takes an expansive look at the many barriers that people face to training and employment, and identifies ways everyone can benefit from engaging this vast pool of underused talent and creativity.

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WIOA mandates that our system provides accessible facilities and programs for all customers, and impresses on the system a duty to improve outcomes and service to many communities traditionally facing these system barriers to success:

<b><i>Populations with Barriers under WIOA</i></b>	
<i>Displaced Homemakers</i>	<i>Youth in/Formerly in Foster Care</i>
<i>Low-Income Individuals</i>	<i>English Language Learners</i>
<i>Indians, Alaska Natives, Hawaiians</i>	<i>Migrant/Seasonal Farmworkers</i>
<i>Individuals with Disabilities</i>	<i>Individuals within Two Years of Exhausted TANF Eligibility</i>
<i>Older Individuals</i>	<i>Single Parents/Pregnant Women</i>
<i>Ex-Offenders</i>	<i>Long-Term Unemployed</i>
<i>Homeless Individuals</i>	<i>Veterans</i>
<i>“Other Groups”</i>	

In addition, there is a need to bridge the divide between urban and rural communities, ensuring that location is not a barrier to consistent, quality workforce services. This plan identifies the means to broaden the application of proven best practices so that all parts of Washington benefit from consistently high quality service.

***Implement secure, wireless Internet access in public areas of all comprehensive WorkSource centers in Washington by 2020.***

This year, Washington will launch its new online, job-matching service (WorkSourceWa.com) which offers a richer and deeper pool of possible matches than previously available. This more robust service will be available to anyone with Internet access, making it that much more important that the state’s comprehensive WorkSource centers provide full public Internet access. In addition, this plan identifies a growing partnership with public libraries, where their Internet connections extend the reach of the WorkSource system.

***Establish a state-level advisory committee on accessibility and barrier solutions and ensure the designation of local advisory committees during the first two years of the plan. By the fourth year of the plan, ensure the state-level advisory committee has received annual progress reports on One-Stop centers’ accessibility at the local level.***

This plan formalizes state- and local-level advisory committees on accessibility. Local groups of workforce professionals are already elevating the conversation on how to identify and use the strengths of these populations in our workforce. These local efforts are reinforced and given additional heft by a state-level committee designed to support, broaden, and sustain practices that fulfill the promise of “talent and prosperity for all.” The seriousness of this plan’s universal goal is reinforced by setting deadlines and documenting this grassroots approach to addressing barriers.

***Identify and encourage local pilot programs that use technology to facilitate and improve integrated service delivery for customers, including programs designed to improve access to this system.***

While not the only answer to universal access, technology offers many opportunities to extend the reach of our education and training system. Nowhere is this more obvious than with Washington’s application of open education resources, online courses, and e-Learning strategies. These tools offer the opportunity to “flip” the classroom, providing lectures and academic instruction online while reserving classroom time and personal instruction for more specific, student-focused instruction. No longer is education limited to those who live close to a college or university campus.

### **Performance Accountability**

Even as a national leader in tracking workforce system performance, Washington has a difficult task ahead as the state updates its performance accountability system to meet the requirements of WIOA and the higher expectations of Washington workforce system stakeholders.

During the initial planning period, the Workforce Board and participating agencies evaluated how the final federal measures and exit policies compared to existing State Core measures and policies, and considered methods to modify, or combine, these two systems in keeping with the goal to accurately measure the collective success of all WIOA partners in serving targeted populations. This assessment also included non-core programs to which the State Core measures currently apply.

To support the increased use of cross-agency data to report both participation and outcomes, existing data-sharing agreements among agencies will have to be reviewed, revised and expanded, and new data agreements and transfers developed. This work will begin with the core programs and expand outward to include Combined Plan partners and other partners. A second wave of modifications to data agreements and flows will be necessary in the second year when the Skills Gain and Employer Service measures are developed.

This work will be in addition to implementing the federal WIOA measures in quarterly reporting for core programs, and developing reports that combine participant records and outcomes across at least the core programs. The existing satisfaction surveys developed under the Workforce Investment Act will continue until the new WIOA employer service measures are finalized.

The existing Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) system for determining eligibility of vocational training programs will be modified to incorporate the new features and/or measures identified in WIOA. Modifications needed to create a WIOA version of the existing CareerBridge website and implement other additional features identified in WIOA will be planned in detail, and a cost

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estimate developed. A plan for phased expansion of the ETPL to additional types of training providers will be developed in the first year, and the highest priority expansion group(s) added to the system in the second year.

### **Professional Development**

To fulfill the promise of “no wrong door,” the staff at each door, regardless of what program or agency, needs to have the know-how to deliver the full range of the workforce system to that customer.

### **Summary**

The next year is critical as the workforce system continues in the spirit of this plan, working together, overcoming adversity, brainstorming solutions and forging successful alliances.