

**WASHINGTON STATE
WORKFORCE TRAINING AND EDUCATION COORDINATING BOARD
MEETING NO. 129
SEPTEMBER 25, 2008**

***HIGH SKILLS, HIGH WAGES 2008 - 2018: WASHINGTON'S STRATEGIC PLAN FOR
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT***

This tab contains the final draft of *High Skills, High Wages 2008 - 2018* for the Board's approval.

The final draft has been changed since the July Board meeting to take into account input received at public forums during July and August, and input from various stakeholders via phone, email and letters. We have included a summary of the input at the end of this tab.

In HSHW 2004 and 2006, the Board adopted a list of Strategic Opportunities. While all the objectives and strategies in *High Skills, High Wages* are important, the proposed Strategic Opportunities for HSHW 2008–2018 are intended as guidance for focusing the agenda for the next two to four years:

1. Increase high school graduation rates and ensure youth are prepared for further education and/or work.
2. Expand the availability of career pathways that span secondary and postsecondary education and training.
3. Increase postsecondary education and training capacity to close the gap between the need of employers for skilled workers and the supply of Washington residents prepared to meet that need.
4. Increase financial aid and support services for workforce education students to provide greater access to training and boost retention and completion.
5. Increase adult basic skills and English language instruction that is integrated with occupational skills training to assist illiterate populations, immigrants, low-income workers, and unemployed individuals to improve their employment opportunities.
6. Improve coordination between workforce and economic development in key economic clusters through initiatives such as Industry Skill Panels, and Centers of Excellence.
7. Meet employee education and training needs through customized training, workplace based learning, flexible methods of education delivery, and new ways of funding employee training.
8. Identify barriers ~~for~~ improving and expanding employment, education, and training services ~~and remove those barriers and remove those barriers.~~

More detailed language for the Strategic Opportunities can be found on pages 5-6.

Board Action Requested: Adoption of the recommended motion.

RECOMMENDED MOTION

WHEREAS, State statute RCW 28C.18.060 directs the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board to “Develop and maintain a state comprehensive plan for workforce training and education, including but not limited to, goals, objectives, and priorities for the state training system,” and

WHEREAS, State statute RCW 28C.18.080 directs that the “state comprehensive plan for workforce training and education shall be updated every two years and presented to the Governor and the appropriate legislative policy committees,” and

WHEREAS, The Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board has shared drafts of *High Skills, High Wages 2008 - 2018* with stakeholders throughout the state, including at public forums, and has incorporated stakeholder suggestions into the final draft.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, That the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board adopt *High Skills, High Wages 2008 - 2018: Washington’s Strategic Plan for Workforce Development*.

High Skill, High Wages: 2008 - 2018

Washington's Strategic Plan for Workforce Development

Planning to Create a Highly Skilled Workforce

As tomorrow's workforce will be older and more racially and ethnically diverse and tomorrow's workplace will be even more technology and information driven, we need to upgrade skills of those with low or obsolete skills, and increase the educational attainment level of our residents. Now, more than ever, we must concentrate efforts on developing a highly skilled workforce. "High Skills, High Wages" our state's 10-year strategic plan for workforce development, contained in this report, provides our blueprint.

Leaders from across the state created this plan. Contributors included employers, labor, education, nonprofit and community-based organizations, state, local and tribal government, rural and urban areas, communities of color, and individuals with disabilities. We will achieve our three goals related to Youth, Adults and Industry by implementing 62 strategies, sticking to our vision for 2018, and tracking our progress.

Responding to Economic and Demographic Changes

Our economic and demographic outlook forms the context of our planning. Our economy shows signs of slowing down after a period of growth, with unemployment rates beginning to climb in January 2008. Even in periods of economic downturn our employers report difficulty recruiting skilled workers, particularly those with mid-level education and training. Our 2007 gap analysis estimated that we are only filling 77 percent of the demand for skilled workers. This has serious consequences. Employers report that a lack of skilled workers directly impacts their ability to expand, their profitability, and influences whether they decide to stay in the state. We need to supply the number of newly prepared workers demanded by our employers and especially assist the strategic industry clusters throughout our state.

As Washington's workforce ages and begins to retire, our workforce is growing more slowly than in the past. In-migration from other states and abroad will contribute more than half of our future growth. In this context we need to implement strategies that enhance the skills of low-skilled adults, ensure that more youth graduate from high school and are on track to complete at least one year of postsecondary education, and reduce under-employment. We need to remove barriers in our workforce development system to ensure expanded access and success.¹

Opportunities for Enhancing Education and Training

Past planning efforts have helped us to make great strides in meeting the workforce needs of our economy. Areas of progress include: improved access to career and technical education in high schools, developing the Building Bridges Initiative to reduce K-12 dropouts, providing High Demand funds to expand programs that prepare students for high employer demand occupations, increasing access to postsecondary education through breakthrough programs such as the Opportunity Grants, and expanding apprenticeship options, among many other strategies. In addition, Industry Skills Panels that comprise education providers, employers and related

¹ For more detailed information on our state's demographics and economy please see our detailed papers on the topics at (insert specific web pages).

public and nonprofit entities from a strategic regional industry cluster, are a source of initiatives that have become prominent best practice examples, for both our state and nation.

While we are making progress, we still have a gap between the supply and the demand for a skilled workforce. Moreover, we are concerned about the potential development of an “hourglass economy” and increasing polarization between high and low paying jobs.² Education and training is essential for the growth of middle-wage employment, and for helping individuals to move up career ladders.

Key Issues

In developing our plan we asked our stakeholders to first identify the key issues, and then to help us create a plan for the immediate future through 2018. Key issues for youth relate to the high rate of students dropping out between grades 9 and 12, the high unemployment rate among older youth (approximately 18 to 24 years of age), and youth leaving high school unprepared for further education and/or work.

For adults we are concerned about low skill attainment, with more than 1.6 million Washington adults who have a high school diploma or less as their highest level of educational attainment.³ At the same time the average age for participants in programs serving adults is 29, reflecting a gap in serving young adults. Adults need pathways to self-sufficiency, they need financial support to access education and training options, and education policymakers and providers need to develop more options to bring education to the workplace through distance learning and other methods.

We also need to find ways to better serve adults from specific sub-populations. State and national research demonstrates that individuals from communities of color fare worse in our education system as a whole. Many people with disabilities, who account for 16 percent of the state’s working-age population, would like to work, but labor force participation for this population has declined over time. Veterans returning home often need to transition to the civilian workforce and can experience barriers in transferring their skills. Ex-offenders, particularly women, face reduced employment options. All these groups rely on further training and skill upgrades, as well as various support services, to improve opportunities for employment.

As we develop our economy, employers are calling for skilled workers. To achieve the greatest success, we need to align our workforce and economic development strategies. Limited public investments can achieve great gains if they are strategic. One proven method is supporting state and regional strategic industry clusters, by developing [Industry Skill Panels](#) and establishing Centers of Excellence, among other key initiatives.

What’s In This Plan?

More detailed discussion to further outline the key issues, research, and rationale for the objectives and strategies follows. The plan is organized according to our three goals.

² Paul Sommers, Ph.D, Mark Gardner, Juliet Scarpa, “Skills Required: Preparing Puget Sound for Tomorrow’s Middle-Wage Jobs,” March 3, 2008, page 1.

³ Conversation with David Prince, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges on calculations derived from 2000 Census Data, June 19, 2008.

OUR GOALS

1. **YOUTH:** Ensure all youth receive the education, training, and support they need for success in postsecondary education and/or work.
2. **ADULTS:** Provide Washington adults (including those with barriers to education and employment) with access to lifelong education, training, and employment services.
3. **INDUSTRY:** Meet the workforce needs of industry by preparing students, current workers, and dislocated workers with the skills employers need.

Costs and Progress

This plan contains many strategies that will ensure our workforce system supports Washington as a globally competitive economy. Implementing every strategy to its full extent will cost additional resources over a 10-year time period, and will require that we step up our efforts to share resources, and optimize public and private partnerships. Our implementation plan outlines who is responsible for carrying out each strategy and each year we report on our progress to the Legislature.⁴ We also evaluate every major workforce program, measure progress on our targets, and measure whether we are keeping pace with employers' demands for skilled workers through our gap analysis.⁵ We recognize, however, that state budgets must be lean, and with this in mind we offer some strategic opportunities to focus on in the next two to four years.

Strategic Opportunities for 2008 to 2012

While all the objectives and strategies in this plan need to be carried forward over a 10-year time span, the Workforce Board has identified key strategic opportunities that should be carried forward within the next two to four years.

- Increase high school graduation rates and ensure youth are prepared for further education and/or work by
 - a) Expanding the community partnership model, Building Bridges, that implements effective dropout and retrieval programs;
 - b) Holding schools accountable for engaging and retaining students through graduation;
 - c) Demonstrating the relevance of education, including strong programs of career and technical education;
 - d) Ensuring all youth, their parents and caregivers, their teachers and counselors, and the broader community are aware of the broad range of viable career options;
 - e) Expanding the best practice career and guidance counseling model *Navigation 101* to all middle schools and high schools; and
 - f) Reaching out to business and labor to provide career information, mentors, and work-based learning opportunities and experience.

Formatted: Indent: Left: 0 pt

⁴ See our Implementation Plan at (insert web sites for implementation plan and progress report to the Legislature)

⁵ See our evaluations of workforce programs, our reports on federal targets, and our gap analyses at (insert specific web pages.)

- Expand the availability of career pathways that span secondary and postsecondary education and training. Career pathways offer students career and technical education in a career cluster, incorporate rigorous academic as well as technical content, span secondary and postsecondary education and training, and lead to an industry-recognized credential. Pathways will increase the opportunities for students to enter postsecondary education and training and high skill, high wage careers.
- Increase postsecondary education and training capacity to close the gap between the need of employers for skilled workers and the supply of Washington residents prepared to meet that need. Especially, expand community and technical college, apprenticeship, and private career school programs, and all high employer demand programs of study.
- Increase financial aid and retention support for workforce education students. Research shows that one year of postsecondary education and a credential is the “tipping point” that provides the greatest chance for ~~an~~ individuals to achieve a wage that will support themselves and their families. Financial barriers are the number one reason why state residents do not access postsecondary training. Provide support services, such as child care, to allow those who need it to access training and stay in training until completion.
- Increase adult basic skills and English language instruction that is integrated with occupational skills training to assist illiterate populations, immigrants, low-income workers, and unemployed individuals to improve their employment opportunities. Integrated instruction is more likely to lead to wage gains for participants than basic skill programs that do not include an occupational component.
- Improve coordination between workforce and economic development in strategic industry clusters through initiatives such as Industry Skill Panels, and ~~centers~~ Centers of Excellence. An economic cluster is a sector of the economy in which a region has demonstrated it has a competitive advantage by a high geographic concentration of firms and employment. Clusters provide an organizing principle around which the state and local areas can successfully coordinate workforce and economic development efforts to the advantage of Washington employers and workers.
- Meet employee education and training needs by
 - a) Expanding and improving customized training;
 - b) Developing more workplace based learning and flexible methods of education delivery;
 - c) Developing new ways of funding employee training, such as Lifelong Learning Accounts (~~LiLas~~LiLAs).
- Identify barriers for improving and expanding employment, education and training services and remove those barriers.

Youth Goal and Summary of Objectives

Youth Goal: Ensure all youth receive the education, training, and support they need for success in postsecondary education and/or work.

Objective 1 (For discussion see page [8](#)*)

A *K-12 Guidance and Counseling System* provides students and their parents with a curriculum to individually plan their pathways and prepare for future education and/or work after high school.

- No later than 2018, all middle and high schools in the state have in place all five elements of the *K-12 Guidance and Counseling System* that includes community, business and labor collaboration.

Objective 2 (For discussion see pages [9](#)*)

All students leave high school prepared for success in further education and/or work.

- No later than 2018 all high school students across Washington have the option to complete a career and technical education sequence that matches their career interests, articulates with postsecondary education and results in industry certification where applicable.

Objective 3 (For discussion see pages [12](#)*)

All students graduate from high school.

- No later than 2018 every local community in the state will have an effective school/community partnership that provides a comprehensive dropout prevention, intervention and re-engagement system for ALL youth, including those who have dropped out or who are at risk of dropping out.

Objective 4 (For discussion see pages [14](#))

Reduce unemployment rates among older youth, and improve their career prospects.

- No later than 2018, there is a comprehensive state strategy to help unemployed older youth reconnect with work and/or further education opportunities.

Youth Goal: Ensure all youth receive the education, training, and support they need for success in postsecondary education and/or work.

Youth Objective 1: A *K-12 Guidance and Counseling System* provides students and their parents with a curriculum to individually plan their pathways and prepare for future education and/or work after high school.

Formatted: Font: Italic

- No later than 2018, all middle and high schools in the state have implemented all five elements of the *K-12 Guidance and Counseling System* that includes community, business and labor collaboration.

Formatted: Font: Italic

Rationale for Youth Objective 1 and Steps to Get Us There

The Need to Guide Youth

All K-12 students need information and guidance to help them make decisions about their learning and understand how these decisions affect their postsecondary education and career opportunities. If students do not understand the relevance of what they learn, they may be at risk of dropping out.⁶ Students who receive a high school diploma but leave school without a clear direction can experience grave difficulties. These young people often take more time to obtain postsecondary credentials because they have to take remedial college classes, they may drop out of college, they may spend many years in low-paid work, become unemployed for long periods of time, or even engage in criminal activity.

What are our Options for Guiding Youth?

The State Board of Education has been exploring changes for high school graduation requirements that could provide a connection with career guidance. One current policy that could be strengthened is the 13th year plan. This requirement can be most effective if connected with a variety of other activities such as work-based learning, conferences with parents, connections to classroom learning, and mentorships.

Best Practice Guidance Model

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) has been advocating that school districts institute a comprehensive *K-12 Guidance and Counseling System*. The best practice model *Navigation 101*, launched in the Franklin-Pierce School District in the Tacoma area, combines five major elements of personalizing, planning, demonstrating, empowering and evaluating that lead to better student outcomes and success in further education and/or work.

Formatted: Font: Italic

Navigation 101:

- Teaches students the skills they need to chart their own courses through middle school, high school, postsecondary education and adulthood.
- Provides students with an ongoing personal relationship with an adult that lasts throughout their middle and high school experiences.
- Provides a meaningful way to keep parents involved in the decisions their teens are making.

⁶ John M. Bridgeland, John J. DiIulio, Jr., Karen Burke Morison, *The Silent Epidemic: Perspectives of High School Dropouts*, Civic Enterprises in association with Peter D. Hart Research Associates for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, March 2006.

- Requires commitment from the school and faculty to make changes such as adjusting schedules and classes to meet students' goals.

In 2006-2007, OSPI allocated \$6,440,000 appropriated by the Legislature to increase the use of *Navigation 101* in school districts across the state. The *Navigation 101* curriculum is being implemented at 221 schools across 103 school districts, including:

- 100 high schools
- 15 seventh through 12th grade programs
- 18 Alternative Learning Experiences, which can include certain online learning and parent partnership programs
- 77 middle schools
- 11 elementary schools

Schools that implement *Navigation 101* have improved their students' on-time graduation rates by about two percentage points, according to a preliminary evaluation. Other indicators of success show more students taking challenging math and science courses and more parents participating in student-led conferences.⁷

Steps To Get Us There

- Expand implementation of the best practice guidance system, *Navigation 101* across the K-12 system including establishing goals for expansion each year. This would ultimately result in full funding of *Navigation 101* as a basic program of education.
- Integrate the Individual Education Plan with the 13th year plan required for graduation.
- Work with the State Board of Education to create policy links to comprehensive career guidance.
- Support the College Bound Scholarship Program that provides an incentive for low-income students to complete high school.

Youth Objective 2: All students leave high school prepared for success in further education and/or work.

- No later than 2018 all high school students across Washington have the option to complete a career and technical education sequence that matches their career interests, articulates with postsecondary education and results in industry certification where applicable.

Rationale for Youth Objective 2 and Steps to Get Us There

Relevant Learning Through Career and Technical Education

Career and technical education (CTE) plays a vital role in connecting students to the relevance of what they are learning. CTE helps different students in different ways. It prepares students for success in postsecondary education and also provides those who go straight into work after high school with the skills and knowledge that they need to secure better employment and earning outcomes.

⁷ Conversation with Kyra Kester, Social and Economic Science Research Center, Washington State University, March 2008.

Recent Enrollments Decline Despite Lasting Benefits of Taking CTE

Washington State University's graduate follow-up study shows that students who complete CTE sequences continue on to postsecondary education at about the same rate as do other students.⁸ The Workforce Board's evaluations of CTE programs find that students who complete a CTE sequence have better employment and higher earnings than students with similar demographic characteristics who do not complete a CTE sequence.⁹ Despite these successes, student enrollment in CTE has been flat since 2000, the first time there has not been an increase since the data has been tracked.¹⁰ Moreover, 57 school districts in Washington offer no career and technical education courses. Rural and remote districts offer limited choices, if any.

Strengthening CTE

Since many more students could benefit from CTE it is important that we develop policies that strengthen it. We need to enhance capacity for students to take CTE through developing and expanding programs at middle schools, comprehensive high schools, and Skills Centers.

We need to strengthen transitions to postsecondary learning for CTE students by ensuring more students receive academic credit through CTE coursework and by developing stronger articulation and transfer of credits. OSPI and the Workforce Board have developed a toolkit for school districts that serves as a guide for granting academic credit for CTE coursework. OSPI is offering workshops to assist school districts in this process.

In 2008, the Legislature passed comprehensive legislation to strengthen CTE (SB 6337). The bill established state accountability for local CTE programs, including the requirement to meet specific targets for program improvement. It also provided funds for the expansion of CTE programs in high demand fields and the development of model CTE programs of study that will provide a clear pathway to postsecondary educational opportunities. (See Figure 1.) In 2007, the Workforce Board convened a stakeholder work group to develop a five-year plan to implement the reauthorized Carl Perkins Act, a federal program that helps pay for and promote career and technical education in high schools and community colleges. The five-year plan focuses on strengthening career and technical education at the secondary and postsecondary levels with a key emphasis on developing stronger articulation and transfer, so that students have a more seamless transition between high school and college.

Figure 1

2008 state legislation (2SSB6377, consistent with the federal Carl Perkins Act) defines programs of study as those that:

- (a) Incorporate secondary and postsecondary education elements;
- (b) Include coherent and rigorous academic content aligned with state learning standards and relevant career and technical content in a coordinated, non-duplicative progression of courses that are aligned with postsecondary education in a related field;
- (c) Include opportunities for students to earn dual high school and college credit; and
- (d) Lead to an industry-recognized credential or certificate at the postsecondary level, or an associate or baccalaureate degree.

⁸ See the Graduate Follow Up Study at http://www.sesrc.wsu.edu/gfs/GFS_Reports/gfs_reports_page.asp

⁹ Workforce Board, *Workforce Training Results*, 2008.

¹⁰ Office of Financial Management, Washington State, 2007 Data Book, "Enrollment Trends in Workforce Education Programs" <http://www.ofm.wa.gov/databook/education/et26.asp>

Serving Immigrant Students

As Washington state's population becomes more diverse, and more immigrants are projected to settle here, we need to develop better ways of assisting students who have a wide range of academic skill levels and varying degrees of English language proficiency. Integrating English language learning with career and technical education programs is one way of accelerating English acquisition, job skills and academic skills all at once.

Steps To Get Us There

- Increase the number of students who complete a CTE sequence and/or course requirements for admission to a four-year college or university or enrollment in college-level classes at a community or technical college by:
 - Identifying targets for increases.
 - Conducting an ongoing campaign to increase awareness of teachers, counselors, students, parents, and the general public of the opportunities of rigorous CTE programs, using multiple strategies.
 - Establishing criteria for setting academic course equivalencies.
 - Increasing the number of CTE courses that provide credit for math or science.
 - Providing new opportunities for students in rural areas to complete a CTE sequence.
 - Expanding CTE offerings offered via distance learning options.
 - Identifying high employer demand programs and expand these offerings in secondary CTE sequences.
 - Expanding Grades 7-12 CTE sequences for students.
 - Developing model statewide CTE articulation agreements that provide a program of sequenced courses and ensure all students have access to dual enrollment options.
 - Working with the State Board of Education to ensure high school graduation requirements contain a viable option for students to pursue a CTE sequence.
- Expand pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship opportunities for youth.
- Provide opportunities for all youth to connect to the workplace, including mentorships, job shadows, internships and a variety of other strategies including:
 - Building upon the mentorship component of the In-Demand Scholars program.
- Develop and implement best practice models to help basic skills deficient immigrant youth succeed in high school, including:
 - Developing I-BEST programs for use in middle schools and high schools (basic skills and English language programs that are integrated with occupational skills training).
- Assist all students to achieve the rigorous, high standards required for further education and/or work.

Formatted: Font: Not Bold

Youth Objective 3: All students graduate from high school.

- No later than 2018 every community in the state will have an effective school/community partnership that provides a comprehensive dropout prevention, intervention and re-engagement system for ALL youth, including those who have dropped out or who are at risk of dropping out.

Rationale for Youth Objective 3 and Steps to Get Us There

High Dropout Rates

A high school diploma or its equivalent is a vital step to successfully entering postsecondary education and training, and, often a pre-requisite for many types of entry-level work. Even so, only 70 percent of students graduated on time (within four years of starting grade 9) in 2005-2006.¹¹ Even when considering students that graduate after the expected year of graduation, the graduation rate for all students rose to only 75 percent. Graduation rates for students with disabilities and from most racial and ethnic minorities are lower than for the general population. (See Figure 2).

Figure 2.

On-Time Graduation Rates for Class of 2005-2006 ¹²	
All Students	70.4-3%
American Indian or Alaska Native (Non-Hispanic)	48.0%
Asian Pacific Islander	76.5%
Black / African-American	53.6%
White	74.1%
Hispanic (may be of any race)	57.5%
Special education	54.3%
Limited English	55.5%
Low income	58.0%
Female	73.9%
Male	67.1%

Source: Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, www.k12.wa.us/DataAdmin/default.aspx (2001-2002 though 2004-2005) and reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us (2005-2006)

Damaging Effects of Dropping Out

Dropping out of high school has been shown to seriously diminish a person's earning and employment potential. According to a seminal national report on dropping out, *The Silent Epidemic*,¹³ high school dropouts:

- Earn \$9,200 less per year than high school graduates, and about \$1 million less over a lifetime than college graduates on average.
- Are often unable to support themselves.
- Are three times more likely than college graduates to be unemployed.
- Are twice as likely as high school graduates to slip into poverty from one year to the next.

¹¹ Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, www.k12.wa.us/DataAdmin/default.aspx reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us (2005-2006)

¹² Class of 2006 are the most recent on-time graduation rates available from Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction at the time of printing of this report.

¹³ John M. Bridgel-and, John J. Dilulio, Jr., Karen Burke Morison, *The Silent Epidemic: Perspectives of High School Dropouts*, Civic Enterprises in association with Peter D. Hart Research Associates for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, March 2006.

|

DRAFT

Initiatives Focus on Partnerships, Prevention, and Re-Engagement

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction implemented the Building Bridges Prevention and Retrieval Program supported by a \$5 million Legislative appropriation in 2007. In 2007, the Workforce Board recommended and the Governor directed an additional \$550,000 of state's discretionary dollars received from the federal Workforce Investment Act (10 Percent Fund) to support dropout prevention and retrieval.

The strength of this initiative lies in the partnerships between the various entities that serve young people including schools, community-based organizations, Workforce Development Councils, and social service organizations. These efforts need to be expanded to serve more youth: those at risk as well as those who have already dropped out.

We would like to see more students graduate even if it takes additional time. For those students who are not likely to graduate with a high school diploma, we must re-engage them in education and training so they have the skills they need to be "college and work ready." Through the Building Bridges program we can build a system in communities throughout the state that provides support for students at risk of dropping out and those that have dropped out. While we would like to see more students graduate on time, what is most important is that students graduate. Some students need a little more time to prepare and the Building Bridges program is one method of providing students with alternatives for reconnecting students with an educational program and getting their high school diploma.

Steps To Get Us There

- Expand the Building Bridges Grant Program to build more school / community partnerships that support youth at-risk of dropping out and re-engage youth who have dropped out of school.
- Collaborate with education and social service partners to develop state-level performance measures and targets for reducing the dropout rate, increasing the on-time graduation rate and increasing successful re-entry and achievement for students who have dropped out.
- Establish a process for identification, development and replication of best practices statewide.
- Explore changes in educational policy and school funding that will eliminate disincentives and provide incentives to serve at-risk youth.
- Identify and make recommendations to reduce the fiscal, legal and regulatory barriers that prevent coordination of program resources across agencies and community-based organizations to support the development of sustainable dropout prevention, intervention and retrieval partnerships.
- Create stronger program links between Job Corps, and Skills Centers to ensure more Job Corps students receive a high school diploma.
- Identify support services for at-risk youth and their parents, and implement action steps.

Youth Objective 4: Reduce unemployment rates among older youth, and improve their career prospects.

No later than 2018, there is a comprehensive state system to help unemployed older youth reconnect with work and/or further education opportunities.

Rationale for Youth Objective 4 and Steps to Get Us There

Washington Youth Experience High Unemployment Rates

Youth in Washington have significantly higher unemployment rates than the general population.¹⁴ Youth from low-income families and from racial and ethnic minorities are the most likely to be unemployed. This is a cause of great concern because of the long-term impacts on an individual's life:

- Experiencing unemployment early in life is more likely to lead to long-term withdrawal from the labor force.¹⁵
- It is harder to get a job without an established employment history.
- Unemployed youth have fewer opportunities for training that is often obtained on the job.
- There is evidence that not working during secondary school is associated with lower high school graduation rates and with lower employment rates and earning levels after secondary school.¹⁶

In Washington state, the unemployment rate for 20-24 year olds was 10.6 percent in 2006—significantly higher than the 6.4 percent unemployment rate of the general population.¹⁷ In this regard, Washington is like most other states and other OECD nations.¹⁸ ([Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development/developed](#))

One might think that due to economic need, youth from lower income families would be more likely to work than youth from middle or upper income families. But the opposite is true, and is

¹⁴ There is no standard definition of “youth” in research on youth unemployment. Generally the term is used to refer to young people approximately 18 to 24 years of age.

¹⁵ [Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, *OECD Employment Outlook, 1983, Chapter 6, Labour Statistics*, August 2008. See \[www.oecd.org\]\(http://www.oecd.org\)](#)

¹⁶ Sum, Khatiwada, McLaughlin, and Tobar, “The Educational Attainment of the Nation’s Young Black Men and their Recent Labor Market Experiences,” February 2007.

¹⁷ *American Community Survey, 2006*, [//factfinder.census.gov](http://factfinder.census.gov) The unemployment rate may understate the problem since it includes only those actively seeking work, please refer to Clark and Summers, “The Dynamics of Youth Unemployment,” National Bureau of Economic Research, 1982- and the work of Andrew Sum, Director of the Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University.

¹⁸ OECD is the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development that includes developed nations.→

Formatted: Font: Italic

compounded by racial disparities. For example, nationwide “only 19 percent of low income black teens worked during 2007 versus nearly one half of their more affluent white counterparts living in families with incomes above \$60,000.”¹⁹

Why are there so Many Unemployed Youth?

The high rates of job turnover naturally associated with new market entrants could be one factor contributing to high unemployment rates. But the majority of youth job “separations” are involuntary, and natural turnover does not explain why youth unemployment tends to be concentrated among certain groups.²⁰ Another factor could be the lack of desirable job opportunities for youth.²¹ The lack of a well-developed system for transitioning youth from school to work contributes to the high unemployment rate for youth.

How can we Reduce Youth Unemployment?

Public education and labor policies can reduce unemployment rates among youth. The 1990 report of the Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce, *America’s Choice: high skills or low wages!*, helped to create public awareness of the youth unemployment issue and spurred the development of a number of school-to-work initiatives. Since then, policy initiatives have included:

- **Youth apprenticeship** pilots have begun in Washington through the creation of pre-apprenticeship programs in secondary schools. In Washington, the average age of an apprentice is approximately 30. To change this we should look to Germany and other nations with strong apprenticeship systems and relatively low youth unemployment.
- **Career academies** are secondary schools programs that link academic and vocational education to an occupational cluster, such as Aviation High School in Des Moines. Career academies have been found to be associated with higher employment and earnings after secondary school.²²
- **Summer employment programs** of the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) used to provide 600,000 to 700,000 jobs for primarily economically disadvantaged teens during the summer months. JTPA, which preceded the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), and earlier federal employment and training acts included a program that provided summer job opportunities to low-income youth. The program was discontinued under WIA in 1998.
- **Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Youth Program** is based on a holistic youth development theory that emphasizes treating all aspects of the barriers to employment faced by disadvantaged youth. The Workforce Board’s net impact evaluation of the state program, conducted by the Upjohn Institute, found that WIA youth participants had 10 percentage point higher employment and \$1,200 more in annual earnings three years after

¹⁹ Sum, Khatiwada, and McLaughlin, “The Collapse of the National Teen Job Market and the Case for An Immediate Summer and Year Round Youth Jobs Creation Program,” March 2008.

²⁰ Federal Reserve Board of San Francisco Economic Letter, 2005-15; July 15, 2005, *Age and Education Effects on the Unemployment Rate* and OECD Employment Outlook, 1983, Chapter 6.

²¹ Clark and Summers, “The Dynamics of Youth Unemployment,” National Bureau of Economic Research, 1982

²² Kemple, “Career Academies: Impacts on Labor Market Outcomes and Educational Attainment” Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, 2004.

participating in the program than youth from similar backgrounds who did not participate in WIA.²³ National funding for the WIA youth program, however, has decreased from \$1 billion in 2000 to \$940 million in 2007 in nominal dollars.

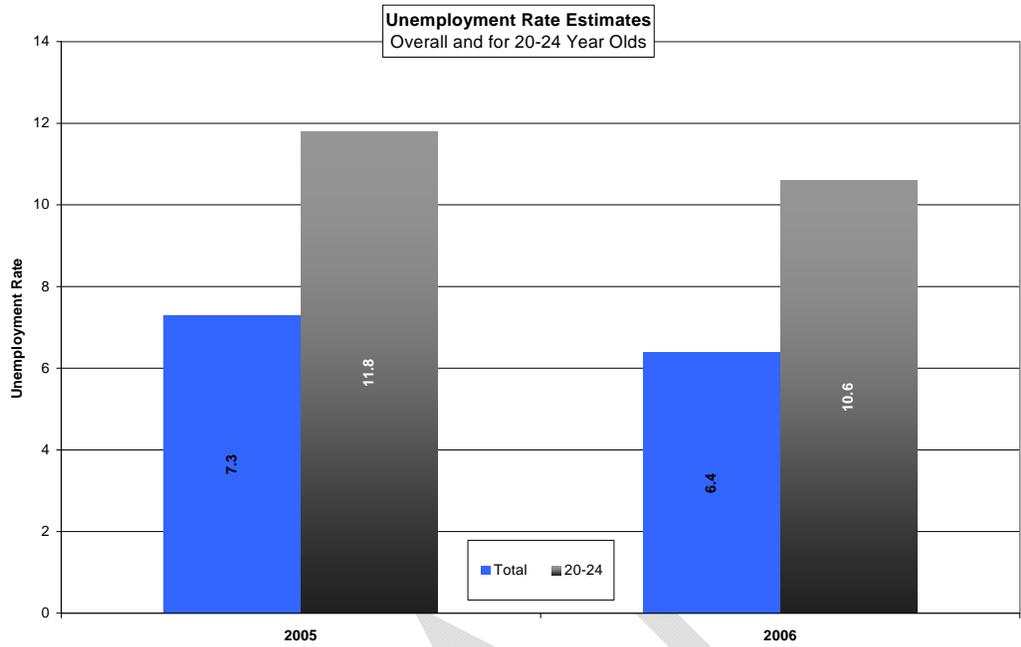
- **Career and Technical Education** is the oldest and largest youth program dating back to the early part of the 20th Century and was formerly known as vocational education. The Workforce Board's net impact evaluation, conducted by the Upjohn Institute, found that completers of career and technical education have a 5 percentage point higher employment rate and \$1,600 more in annual earnings three years after graduation than students from similar backgrounds who did not complete career and technical education. Before 2000, the number of students in secondary CTE in Washington rose steadily, in keeping with student population growth. However, after 2000, student enrollment in CTE has remained flat, and in 2006 student enrollment declined. Therefore, since 2000 the number of students enrolling in CTE has been declining on a per capita basis.²⁴

Steps To Get Us There

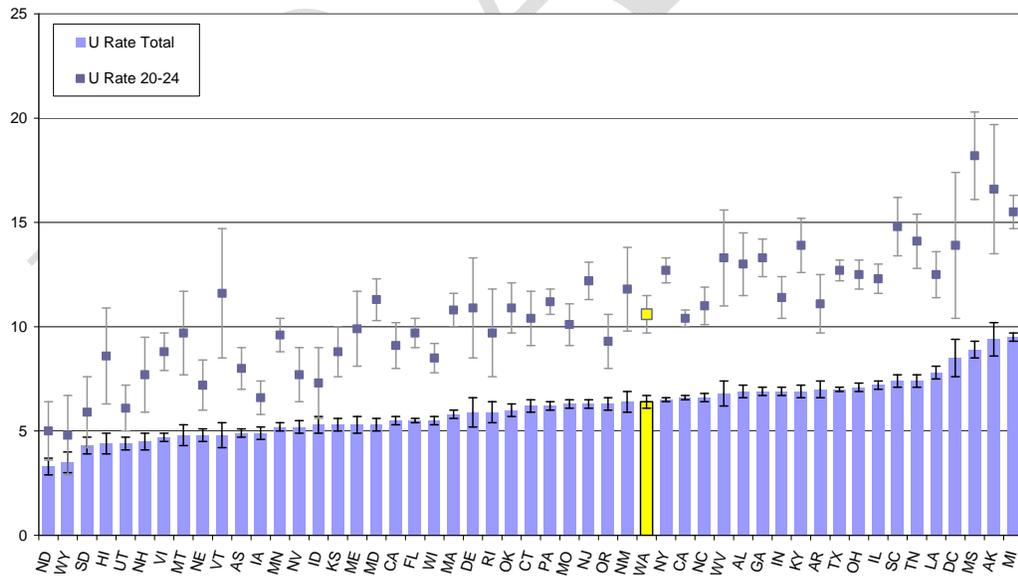
- Create summer youth employment programs.
- Connect unemployed youth to expert "navigators" who can guide them to postsecondary resources and work experience opportunities.
- Seek a WIA I-B Youth waiver or WIA Adult 18-24 waiver for the maximum age eligibility and supplement these resources with state funds.
- Develop I-BEST opportunities specifically for older youth.
- Ensure the Building Bridges Grant programs includes a strong component for re-engaging youth 21 years of age and under to reconnect with education to obtain a high school diploma.
- Connect disadvantaged youth to AmeriCorps and Service Corps opportunities.

²³ "Workforce Training Results: 2006."

²⁴ Washington State Office of Financial Management, *2007 Data Book*, "Enrollment Trends in Workforce Education Programs" <http://www.ofm.wa.gov/databook/education/et26.asp>



2006 ACS Unemployment Rate Estimates



Adult Goal and Summary of Objectives

Formatted: Centered

Adult Goal: Provide Washington adults (including those with barriers to education and employment) with access to lifelong education, training, and employment services.

Objective 1 (See discussion on page ~~s-19~~)

Increase the number of adults who have at least one year of postsecondary training.

No later than 2018:

- More adults attain at least one year of postsecondary training and a credential.
- Washington state covers the tuition costs for the 13th year for workforce education students.
- More individuals receive the support services they need to enter and complete postsecondary training.
- (Insert Student Achievement target if appropriate.) More students achieve critical milestones at community and technical college programs as evidenced by the Student Achievement Initiative.

Objective 2 (See discussion on pages ~~23~~)

Postsecondary education and training provides effective opportunities for going in and out of training over the course of life-long learning.

No later than 2018:

- The majority of working adults engage in training each year, including workplace-based learning.

Objective 3 (See discussion on page ~~s-27~~)

Adults with barriers to employment and training enter education and career pathways that lead to self-sufficiency.

No later than 2018:

- (Target to be determined) More adults with barriers to employment and training become employed in middle and higher wage jobs.
- The majority of Adult Basic Education programs at community and technical colleges are integrated with occupational skills training.

Objective 4 (See discussion on page ~~33~~)

The WorkSource system provides integrated and effective customer service without barriers associated with separate, individual programs.

No later than 2018:

- WorkSource is a functionally integrated service delivery system that measurably improves the employability of its customers.

Adult Objective 1: Increase the number of adults who have at least one year of postsecondary training.

No later than 2018:

- ~~(Target to be determined)~~ More adults attain at least one year of postsecondary training and a credential.
- Washington state covers the tuition costs for the 13th year for workforce education students.
- ~~(Target to be determined)~~ More individuals receive the support services they need to enter and complete postsecondary training.
- ~~(Insert Student Achievement target if appropriate.)~~ More students achieve critical milestones at community and technical college programs as evidenced by the Student Achievement Initiative.

Rationale for Adult Objective 1 and Steps to Get Us There

More Adults Need Postsecondary Education and Training

“For more than 40 years, the conventional wisdom has been that the best antipoverty strategy is to help the unemployed get jobs. And while work is a precondition to escaping poverty, getting a job is not the problem that it once was for most segments of the population, as the unemployment rate has remained historically low for a decade—between 4 percent and 6 percent. Rather, the key problems facing most poor people today are that they are working in jobs that don’t pay enough and that they are not advancing up the career ladder.”²⁵

The 2005 “Tipping Point” study found that people who complete at least one year of postsecondary education and obtain a certificate or credential have a much better chance of supporting themselves and their families compared to those that do not have this level of education.²⁶ And yet, about 1.6 million adults in Washington have a high school diploma or less as their highest level of educational attainment, and many of these adults have low literacy levels. These individuals have limited career opportunities. At the same time, our statewide employer surveys show that employers have difficulty recruiting enough qualified applicants, particularly those with mid-level education and training credentials.

²⁵ Betsy L. Tessler and David Seith, “From Getting By to Getting Ahead: Navigating Career Advancement for Low-Wage Workers,” October 2007, page xi.

²⁶ David Prince, “Building Pathways to Success for Low-Skill Adult Students: Lessons for Community College Policy and Practice from a Longitudinal Student Tracking Study (*The “Tipping Point” Research*)” Research Report No. 06-2 Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, April 2005.

Increasing Education Attainment has Multiple Benefits

Increased levels of educational attainment lead to increased earnings over a lifetime and increased tax revenues.²⁷ Workforce Board evaluations of workforce education programs consistently show that students participating in these programs earn more during their lifetimes than individuals from similar backgrounds who do not participate in these programs. Our evaluations also show that the higher taxes generated by those who receive further education and job training outweigh the cost of these programs. Thus, taxpayers receive a significant return on investment.

At the same time, individuals with the lowest educational levels have trouble getting a job and keeping them, let alone moving up the career ladder. There are other serious consequences related to health, inequality and crime. Adult literacy surveys show that adults with the lowest levels of literacy “work fewer hours, earn lower wages, and are more likely to live in poverty than adults having higher literacy levels.”²⁸ Education and health are linked. Studies show that educational background and opportunity is a “social determinant of health.”²⁹ Since students who do not fare well in our education system are over-represented among racial and ethnic minorities, these racial and ethnic minorities are also at greater risk of poor health outcomes.

Those in our state’s prison system tend to have much lower levels of education than the general population. Some 83 percent of women and 71 percent of men that enter Department of Corrections’ prisons have less than a ninth grade level education.³⁰ We need to ensure more low-skilled adults attain higher levels of education for their benefit and the well-being and safety of our society.

Serving Older, Career-Focused Students

Many Washington adults realize they need to return to school to increase their earning capacity and better support themselves and their families. The image of college campuses filled with students fresh out of high school does not compare with reality at most of our state’s campuses. In 2005, 32 percent of students enrolled in Washington’s four-year public universities and colleges were 25 or older; with older students comprising 42 percent of the student body at independent four-year institutions, and 52 percent at community and technical colleges.³¹

In 2006–2007 there were more than 450,000 students enrolled at community and technical colleges. Of that number, over 45 percent were enrolled in workforce education to gain skills to land a job or upgrade skills to keep their current one.³²

²⁷ Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, “Education Pays,” April 15, 2008
<http://www.bls.gov/emp/emptab7.htm>

²⁸ Debra B. Bragg, Christine Bremer, Marisa Castellano, Catherine Kirby, Ann Mavis, Donna Schaad, Judith Sunderman, “A Cross-Case Analysis of Career pathway Programs that Link Low-skilled Adults to Family-Sustaining Wage Careers,” National Research Center for Career and Technical Education, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, May 9, 2007.

²⁹ Dr. Maxine Hayes, M.P.H., PowerPoint presentation “Every Student Successful Summit: Exploring Policies to Examine Health Disparities and the Academic Achievement Gap,” May 18, 2007, found at:
<http://www.sboh.wa.gov/ESS/index.htm>

³⁰ Department of Corrections, GMAP Presentation, November 1, 2006.

³¹ HECB, *Key Facts About Higher Education in Washington*, February 2007.

³² SBCTC, *Annual Report on Enrollment and Student Demographics for 2006-2007*.

Formatted: Font: Italic

Formatted: Font: Italic

The term "**nontraditional student**" is not a precise one, although age and part-time status (which often go together) are common defining characteristics. Students may be considered non-traditional for a variety of reasons, and may possess one of the following characteristics:

- Delays enrollment (does not enter postsecondary education in the same calendar year that he or she finished high school).
- Attends part-time for at least part of the academic year.
- Works full-time (35 hours or more per week) while enrolled.
- Is considered financially independent for purposes of determining eligibility for financial aid.
- Has dependents other than a spouse (usually children, but sometimes others).
- Is a single parent (either not married or married but separated and has dependents).
- Does not have a high school diploma (completed high school with a GED or other high school completion certificate or did not finish high school).

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) almost 75 percent of U.S. undergraduates are in some way "nontraditional."³³

Even though our education system serves many older and returning students, our colleges and universities have not fully adjusted to meet their needs. Many older students hold down full-time jobs, for example, and need to be able to take all of their classes in the evening or on the weekends. Others have children or other dependents such as aged parents, or family members with a disability and need assistance with child care, or dependent care. Older students often can only afford to go to school part-time as they continue to work to support themselves and their families. However, federal financial aid programs can be limited to full-time students. Of those adults who do find a way to advance their education, their successful transition to employment might be hindered by insufficient information about job openings for graduates.³⁴

If we are to increase the number of people who reach the "Tipping Point" and transition successfully to work and better-paying careers, then we must concentrate efforts in these key areas:

- Communicate the long-term benefits of postsecondary education and training
- Provide financial aid and support services that overcome barriers to access and retention
- Develop a variety of educational delivery modes, such as expanding distance (or e-learning) and workplace learning options
- Expand apprenticeship programs so more students can "earn while they learn"
- Expand program capacity to meet the increased demand
- Work with targeted populations to overcome specific barriers to accessing and completing education and training
- Develop mechanisms to ensure the success of adults in completing their education and transitioning to work, or to better work

Student Achievement Initiative

The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) has begun a major effort to measure and reward community and technical colleges for student success, the Student Achievement Initiative. The Student Achievement Initiative will measure incremental gains and progress that focus on student achievement. The measures will quantify each college's annual

³³ National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, "Special Analysis 2002: Nontraditional Undergraduates."

<http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/2002/analyses/nontraditional/sa01.asp>

³⁴ Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board, *Workforce Training Results*, 2006.

improvement and help each college to develop and share with other colleges the practices and strategies that are most effective in advancing student achievement.

The Student Achievement Initiative examines six “momentum” points that represent critical steps in student success. Two of the points directly measure first year college-level progress. They are gained for earning the first 15 and the first 30 college-level credits. Another point is earned for the first five college-level credits in a math class that meets the requirement for computation (applied degree) or quantitative reasoning (transfer degree). These points presume levels of college readiness. Since not all students are college-ready, two momentum points are measured for advancing through Adult Basic Education and English as a Second Language and completing pre-college English and math to become college-ready.

Start-up funds will be allocated to the colleges in the first year and incentive funding will be awarded after 2008-2009. SBCTC will conduct an evaluation of the whole program to test its success.

Financial Issues Pose the Greatest Barriers to Access and Completion

A 2006 Workforce Board study found the greatest barrier to access and completion for students in workforce education programs is financial—whether it’s paying for tuition, fees and books, or other necessary services such as childcare and transportation. The study also found that when we total the various federal and state financial aid programs, there is still a significant amount of unmet student need. In 2006 unmet need for students in workforce education programs totaled \$97 million. Even when we account for the \$23 million in financial aid provided through the new Opportunity Grant program (below), we still fall far short of meeting students’ financial needs.

Washington has a unique Opportunity Grant program that provides low-income students an opportunity to enter high employer demand programs of study and prepare for high-wage jobs. The program provides financial aid for tuition and support services in emergency circumstances. This program serves a large number of racial and ethnic minorities and students with disabilities. This is not surprising as these populations are over-represented among low-income students. Early results are favorable, showing increased student retention.

Following favorable results of a pilot program, the Legislature provided funds to expand eligibility of the State Need Grant to students who attend less than half time. Many working adults and those with dependents can often only participate in postsecondary education on a part-time basis. The expansion of aid is crucial to these students. The 2007 Legislature capped funding at \$1 million.

Financial issues include the costs of paying tuition and a whole range of other costs that include living expenses, childcare, transportation and books. For example, the high price of college text books can be a roadblock. A 2005 study by the Government Accountability Office found that textbook prices over the past two decades grew about twice the rate of inflation, a rate similar to tuition increases. According to the report, in the 2003-2004 academic year, students at public colleges and universities spent an average of \$898—about a quarter of their tuition and fees—on books and supplies. At two-year public colleges, students spent \$886, about 72 percent of their tuition and fees.

Workforce Board evaluations of Adult Basic Education show that employment and earnings outcomes on average do not improve unless basic education is combined with occupational skills training. All community and technical colleges have started delivering I-BEST that combines basic skills with occupational skills, and there are very promising results. However, there are still many Adult Basic Education courses that provide few links and no integration with occupations skills training.

Washington's Career Bridge

The Workforce Board has created *Washington Career Bridge* (www.CareerBridge.wa.gov), an online information source ~~that~~ allows Washington residents to view careers and employment demand by region, learn how much they'll earn, and find education programs needed for a new career. Plus, they're able to discover performance results for each program—from graduation rates to job placement to pay.

Career Bridge provides information on most workforce training programs in Washington, including programs at community and technical colleges, private career colleges, apprenticeship programs, and many four-year colleges and university programs as well. Information includes cost, length of program, student characteristics, and employment and earnings results. It also provides occupational information, and links to a variety of other information sources related to education and employment such as financial aid and employment projections.

Washington Career Bridge is one part of a communication strategy to inform adults in Washington of the benefits of further education. In addition to web resources, stakeholders should band together to form a comprehensive communication campaign.

Steps To Get Us There

- Provide more financial aid and support services to enable students to enroll in and complete at least one year of postsecondary training and receive a credential, including:
 - Expand the Opportunity Grant program and include support services.
 - Provide the first five credits of postsecondary training free for workforce students who earn less than the median family income.
- Establish more industry-based credentials in occupational and general workplace skills demanded by employers for students that complete one-year of training and develop more one-year certificated programs.
- Provide more workforce education students with access to work-based learning and career and labor market information.
- Create easy to navigate postsecondary education and training and career websites, including financial aid and support services.
- Conduct an ongoing marketing campaign to inform the general public about the employment and earnings benefits of postsecondary training, especially in high employer demand programs of study.

Adult Objective 2: Postsecondary education and training provides effective opportunities for going in and out of training over the course of life-long learning.

No later than 2018:

- The majority of working adults are engaged in training each year, including in workplace-based learning.

Rationale for Adult Objective 2 and Steps to Get Us There

Formatted: Font: Not Bold

Expanding Options for Lifelong Learning

We need to develop a variety of options that make it easier to participate in postsecondary education and training programs. These options include distance learning and workplace-based learning. We also need to create incentives for adults to enter an educational program and for employers to support their employees along their lifelong learning path.

The Workforce Board's statewide employer survey indicates that 60 percent of employers in Washington provide at least four hours of education and training to one or more employees. While many employers provide training to some employees, they often concentrate on employees in higher positions, and training does not usually lead to a formal credential. A FutureWorks report outlines three facts related to adult education:³⁵

- The number of working adults pursuing any type of training or education already outnumbers traditional students 6 to 1. (U.S.)
- Much adult education and training is focused on non-degree continuing education or occupational training that does not result in formal credentials.
- In the current employment market, recognized employment credentials are key.

The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) specializes in promoting and developing strategies that enhance education and training options for adult learners. CAEL notes that adult learners have unique requirements, including a need for "institutional flexibility in curricular and support services, academic and motivational advising supportive of their life and career goals, and recognition of experience and work-based learning already obtained."³⁶

Lifelong Learning Accounts

CAEL selected Washington state to pilot a new system for funding education and training for working adults. Washington State Lifelong Learning Accounts (LiLAs) provide a unique opportunity for employers and employees to work together to finance career-related education and training. LiLAs are employee-owned, employer-matched savings accounts. This type of co-investment makes education more affordable for both parties. The concept is similar to 401(k) retirement accounts in that the employer matches the employee's contributions. However, LiLA funds are used for education and training.

³⁵ Brian Bosworth and Sylvia Choitz, "Held Back: How Student Aid Programs Fail Working Adults," FutureWorks, Belmont Massachusetts, April 2002.

³⁶ "Serving Adult Learners in Higher Education: Principles of Effectiveness," Council on Adult and Experiential Learning, 2000.

The Workforce Board is leading the pilot with state and local partners. This is a wonderful recruitment tool for employers, with potential to support the development of a skilled workforce. The program could be strengthened if proposals in Congress to provide a tax credit to participating employers are successful.

Creating Links Between Basic Education and Job Preparation

Washington state's community and technical colleges have been part of a national initiative sponsored by the Ford Foundation, *Bridges to Opportunity*. The initiative tests the theory that although community colleges are well-situated to serve low-income students, they could serve them even better with improved links between remedial courses and college-level ~~for~~ job preparatory programs.³⁷

Community and technical colleges offer both remediation and job preparation, and these two types of programs are what many low-income adults need. However, often there is a disconnect between the two areas. Washington's innovative I-BEST program is one way that these two worlds within community and technical colleges have forged connections. At public forums around the state, college educators reported there was a need to create better links for adults to move from Adult Basic Education to college-level classes and job preparation. In addition to financial aid links, education policymakers and providers should seek ways to create coherent pathways that link basic education, through career preparation, and beyond to baccalaureate degrees.

Two-year Paths to Baccalaureate Degrees

Washington's transfer and articulation system compares favorably to most other states. More than 40 percent of students earning bachelor's degrees from four-year public baccalaureate institutions in Washington transferred from a community or technical college.³⁸ However, there is room to improve efficiency by increasing statewide transfer agreements and the number of transferrable credits. Students also need assistance in charting an academic path that ensures they earn credits that tie directly to four-year colleges and universities.

Applied Baccalaureate Degrees

Many students and their employers say they need access to further specialization or management skills provided through a four-year degree. Although students who earn an academic associate's degree can transfer their credits relatively easily toward ~~a~~ bachelor's degrees, those who earn technical degrees face more limited options in advancing their educations to the next level. Most state universities and colleges won't accept technical credits and apply them toward a four-year degree. Fortunately, this is changing. Central Washington University, Eastern Washington University, and The Evergreen State College, along with some independent four-year schools, accept technical credits in some programs and provide limited baccalaureate options.

This lack of access to a four-year degree needs to be addressed at other public universities. In response, the state legislature has funded seven pilots—all of them at community and technical colleges—to create baccalaureate degree options for students with technical degrees. Those under pilot are:

³⁷ Gary Bouldard, "Bridges Initiative Fuses Adult Education, Training," Community College research Center Article, March 28, 2008, see <http://www.communitycollegetimes.com/article.cfm?TopicId=6&ArticleId=864>

³⁸ State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, Role of Transfer in the Bachelor's Degree at Washington Public Baccalaureate Institutions, June 2003.

- Bellevue Community College – Bachelor of Applied Science in Radiation and Imaging Sciences
- Columbia Basin College – Bachelor of Applied Science in Applied Management
- Lake Washington Technical College – Bachelor of Technology in Applied Design
- Peninsula College – Bachelor of Applied Science in Applied Management
- Olympic College – Bachelor of Science in Nursing
- Seattle Central Community College – Bachelor of Applied Science in Applied Behavioral Science
- South Seattle Community College – Bachelor of Applied Science in Hospitality Management

These pilots provide a good start in the short-term. In the future, Washington will need to expand these options even further.

Granting Credit for Prior Learning

In addition to developing applied baccalaureate degrees, Washington’s four-year institutions should consider expanding the type and quantity of credits they grant for prior learning. The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges proposes expanding prior learning credits to include general education courses and major courses of study up to 22 credits within a 90-credit degree.

Developing Web-Based Advising

The Higher Education Coordinating Board is developing a web-based advising system to help transfer students avoid taking unnecessary classes and stay on track toward a two-year associate’s degree that leads them to their next educational step. The *Academic Guidance Planning System* helps students plan their degrees and coursework, and incorporates placement scores, degree audit results, course scheduling information and more.

Other Transfer and Efficiency Issues

There are a variety of ways to enhance a student’s postsecondary education experience. Issues that need further exploration include:

- Developing curriculum that is “modularized” with multiple entry and exit points, and includes a career preparation component.
- Developing core curriculum and foundation courses that serve more than one career preparation program at more than one school. Already, Direct Transfer Agreements help students transfer to four-year schools and earn baccalaureate degrees. This concept could be expanded for shorter courses.
- Transferring credits between two-year public and two-year private schools.
- Applying credits from apprenticeship programs toward associate and baccalaureate degrees.
- Applying credits earned by high school students in career and technical education course toward postsecondary degrees.
- Granting more credits for prior learning.

Steps To Get Us There

- Identify and implement best practice models for working adults to gain further education and training at the workplace, including online learning.

- Develop public/private financial aid support to assist working adults in gaining further education and training credentials including:
 - Lifelong Learning Accounts (LiLAs).
 - Increasing the number of part-time, working students who can receive the state-need grant.
- Develop better links between Adult Basic Education, English-as-a-Second Language, job preparation, and college-level courses.
- Develop more four-year degree options for students who complete technical associate degrees.
- Develop more statewide direct transfer agreements and articulation agreements between two-year and four-year schools, and between private schools and public schools.
- Grant more credits at postsecondary institutions for prior learning, including credits for major programs of study.

Adult Objective 3: Adults with barriers to employment and training enter education and career pathways that lead to self-sufficiency.

No later than 2018:

- (Target to be determined) More adults with barriers to employment and training become employed in middle and higher wage jobs.
- The majority of Adult Basic Education programs at community and technical colleges are integrated with occupational skills training.

Rationale for Adult Objective 3 and Steps to Get Us There

Formatted: Font: Not Bold

Overcoming Barriers to Education and Employment for Target Populations

Our workforce development system needs to serve all adults, including adults with barriers to further education and employment. Communities of color, people with disabilities, veterans, older workers, women, and former inmates are over-represented among low-income populations and those with low educational attainment. We need to customize our programs to provide the best possible service to every person to help tap the talents of our entire workforce.

Recognizing and Developing Skills for Refugees and Immigrants

A study by the Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County on career advancement for refugees and immigrants found that both language proficiency and an employee's drive and attitude are essential for job retention and promotion.³⁹ Employers also reported other factors for success, such as an employee's sense of security, job skills, and family support system. Within the education and training system, integrating English as a Second Language ([ESL](#)) with occupational skills training, is one key strategy to overcome language deficiencies of many refugees and recent immigrants. Workforce

³⁹ Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County by contract with the Athena Institute and the Refugee Resettlement Office, Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County Research Project: Employer Strategies for Retaining and Promoting Refugees and Immigrants," January 2004.

programs need to improve soft skill development and forge stronger ties with community-based organizations that can help provide or develop access to support services.

Highline Community College in partnership with BuRSST for Prosperity is developing the Gateway Center. This is a program to help immigrants with prior medical training become recertified to fill high-demand nursing and healthcare jobs in our state. The center will provide short-term professional and ESL classes, career coaching, and assistance with recertification process. These efforts need to be expanded to help refugees and immigrants create living-wage careers.

Retaining Older Adults

The state's percentage of adults age 55 and over is expected to increase from 16 percent in 2005 to 22 percent of the labor force in 2030. While many older workers may retire, others will stay in the labor force a few more years. Some of these workers will need minor upgrading of skills while others will require substantial retraining to meet changing job requirements. Either way, as the labor force ages, employers and state and local agencies will need to work together to entice older workers to stay, and develop strategies for skill upgrades.

In some Washington state industries, it's already difficult to recruit younger workers, who often lack both experience and credentials. Companies also are looking to save on training costs and turnover, and benefit from a senior employee's experience.

Here are some examples of Washington companies with programs to retain older workers:⁴⁰

- Weyerhaeuser: Delayed retirement program where employees may work part-time while still accumulating a pension and enjoying company-paid health insurance.
- Group Health: Nurses who are five years from retirement have opportunities to mentor and teach, as well as do part-time work after retirement.
- Boeing: Offers job-sharing, telecommuting and contract work.

The 2008 report of the Taskforce on the Aging of the American Workforce at the U.S. Department of Labor outlines strategies in seven key areas that could form the basis for state and local initiatives to retain older workers:⁴¹

- Legal and regulatory issues (such as pension plans, Social Security benefits, tax policy with respect to retirement savings, and unemployment programs).
- Expanding knowledge of older workers.
- Outreach and education efforts.
- Facilitating self-employment for older workers.
- Flexible work arrangements and customized employment for older workers.
- Tools and technical assistance to support older worker employment.
- Retirement and financial literacy education.

Arkansas, Arizona, Florida, and Oregon are tapping their increasingly mature workforce. *The Arizona Mature Workforce Initiative*,⁴² with the motto, "Experience is Our Business!" has

⁴⁰ Seattle Times article by Marsha King, "Companies Find Ways of Retaining Expertise of Older Workers," April 9, 2008.

⁴¹ U. S. Department of Labor, "Report of the Taskforce on Aging of the American Workforce," February 2008 found at: http://www.doleta.gov/reports/FINAL_Taskforce_Report_2-11-08.pdf

⁴² See the Mature Workers Initiative web site: <http://www.azmatureworkers.com/>

connected over 500 older workers to employers, and has laid the groundwork for much greater impact, with job fairs, a job bank, a workforce transition center at a local community college and a program that certifies “mature worker friendly” employers.

Three of Washington’s community and technical colleges can provide us with a launching point for a state initiative to serve older adults. Clark College, Clover Park Technical College, and Spokane Community College were among 15 colleges nationally that received a “Plus 50 Initiative” grant from the American Association of Community Colleges and the Atlantic Philanthropies. The purpose of the grants is to create or expand programs to serve individuals who are 50 and over. They aim to engage this population in learning, training/re-training programs, and/or volunteer, civic, service activities.

While our workforce development system does not have a specific state program that targets workers who are 50 and over, many of the programs serve this population. It will require workforce development, education and training, and social services partners, and partners at the state and local levels to work together to create connections with mature workers, and develop strategies to serve them.

Smoothing Transitions for Veterans

As U.S. soldiers and sailors return from Iraq and Afghanistan and other military operations, there is an increasing need for workforce development services aimed at veterans. We have programs that provide ~~services~~ ~~services for~~ veterans but we need to increase connections between workforce development partners and these programs to serve more vets, and serve them better.

We have some initiatives that work well. A two-day Transition Assistance Program workshop is held at all Washington’s military installations, allowing active duty exiting service members to connect with benefits and services such as Unemployment Insurance, WorkSource services and other workforce development, ~~and~~ education, and training programs. Redeploying National Guard members attend transition briefings to obtain information on employment and training opportunities. For example, programs such as *Helmets-to-Hardhats* move veterans into approved apprenticeship programs. In 2006, state legislation (HB 2754) created the Veterans Innovation Program, which provides emergency funds for veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan by helping to fill financial gaps between programs.

In order to improve our services to veterans we need to connect various federal and state programs, and programs across different systems. Vets need to transfer their skills to the civilian workforce, and we need to help them by creating better connections between military education and the general education and training system. We also need to partner with other agencies serving vets, to provide a seamless system and promote the best education and earnings outcomes for those ~~that~~ who have served our country.

Reducing Barriers to Employment for People with Disabilities

People with disabilities account for 16 percent of the state’s working-age population—or nearly one in five Washington workers. Many would like to work, but labor force participation for this population has declined over time. The Department of Social and Health Services, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) made great strides in 2007 by eliminating the waiting list of

customers. DVR's five-year plan details strategies for serving customers with disabilities. Some strategies are:

- Reaching out to more people with disabilities, not just the hardest to serve.
- Reassessing when, where, and how they serve customers.
- Creating more consistency in services.
- Enhancing partnerships with other state, local and private organizations that deliver services to individuals with disabilities.⁴³

Improving Education and Employment for Communities of Color

Between 2000 and 2030, all non-white groups are expected to grow faster than whites.⁴⁴ With Washington's population becoming increasingly racially and ethnically diverse we need to pay particular attention to educational levels of future workers from all ethnic and racial backgrounds. Those from non-white racial backgrounds and Hispanics tend to have lower educational levels than non-Hispanic whites. In 2006, while 92 percent of the non-Hispanic whites 25 years or older had completed high school or its equivalency, only 56 percent of Hispanics and 78 percent of persons from non-white racial backgrounds had done so.⁴⁵

Lower levels of education and skills in addition to racial and ethnic discrimination, have negatively affected the labor market experiences of large percentages of individuals from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds. They tend to earn less and are underrepresented in high level positions. These education and employment trends are likely to continue unless we instigate new policies that address issues of access, discrimination, and success in workforce programs.

Another key issue for Asian Americans is the disaggregation of data for the "Asian and Pacific Islander" classification. This is necessary to interpret data accurately and develop policy solutions. As with all categories of race and ethnicity, there is great diversity in the Asian and Pacific Islander communities. While the "Asian" group does well in education outcomes according to national and state data, anecdotal information from immigrants of specific Asian countries often tell a different story. National and state policymakers should explore different types of data collection to better serve the needs of the Asian and Pacific Islander communities.

Issues for Ex-Offenders

According to the Department of Corrections, about 8,500 offenders return to the community from Washington prisons each year after completing their sentences. A study of the Washington State Institute of Public Policy estimates that more than half of these offenders will commit a new felony within 13 years. Not only does this cost us our safety, it also imposes huge financial costs. In fiscal year 2007, the average annual cost of incarcerating a Washington inmate stood at over \$31,000, according to the Department of Corrections. More than 18,600 prisoners are

⁴³ Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, "A Strategic Plan for 2009-2013" see <http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/pdf/hrsa/dvr/DVR%20Strategic%20Plan%202009-13.pdf>

⁴⁴ OFM reported on five major race groups: White only, Black only, American Indian/Alaskan Native only, Asian/Pacific Islander only, and Two or More (i.e., multi-racial). Unless otherwise indicated people from the different racial groups can be either from Hispanic or non-Hispanic origin. Further, people of Hispanic origin can be of any race.

⁴⁵ American Community Survey for 2006, Table S0201 Selected Population Profile.

housed in Washington state prisons, work release facilities and out-of-state prison beds. Many more are behind bars in county and city jails.

Studies show that ex-offenders who are employed are much less likely to re-offend and return to prison or jail. Yet it is often difficult for them to get a job. An MDRC report highlights some of the major issues:⁴⁶

- Employers are reluctant to hire someone with a prison record.
- Former prisoners often have low levels of educational attainment.
- Former prisoners often have a limited work history.
- Former prisoners often have competing demands from drug treatment programs and curfews or other restrictions on mobility.

Ex-offenders are also limited in the jobs that are open to them. For example, those with prison records are prohibited from working in much of the health care industry, where there are ample jobs and career opportunities.

Recognizing the need to increase efforts to help former prisoners successfully re-enter the community, the 2007 Legislature passed ESSB 6157. In addition to requesting the Department of Corrections to create a long-term plan, the bill provided for four pilot programs to be administered by the Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development, and issued funds to counties with the purpose of identifying offenders' needs, and connecting [them](#) with needed resources and services that support successful transition to the community.

The grant programs are to include programs with proven success. Education and training plays a large role. Career and technical education, basic education and correctional industries programs lead to reduced recidivism rates of 9 percent, 7.5 percent and 5.9 percent respectively, and have proven cost benefits to both the individual and the community.⁴⁷

The Employment Security Department (ESD) supports the offender reentry initiative through partnership with the Department of Corrections and community service providers across the state. ESD's Offender Employment Services (OES) delivers reentry and pre-employment skills training in 14 correctional institutions and five Community Justice Centers. A model reentry program is being piloted at Stafford Creek Correction Center that provides a community resource database, teaches computerized job search skill, and encourages offenders to participate in their own release planning. OES also provides training to WorkSource and WorkSource partners to help staff work more effectively with those who have prior convictions.

It will be essential to continue cross agency work to best meet the workforce needs of ex-offenders and their communities.

Using an Online Cost of Living Calculator to Promote Self-Sufficiency

A new online resource is providing a way to help low-income customers in the WorkSource system help themselves. The Washington State Self-Sufficiency calculator links Washingtonians

⁴⁶ Dan Bloom , Cindy Redcross , Janine Zweig (Urban Institute), Gilda Azurdia, "Transitional Jobs for Ex-Prisoners: Early Impacts from a Random Assignment Evaluation of the Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO) Prisoner Reentry Program, MDRC, November 2007.

⁴⁷ Steve Aos, "Evidence-Based Public Policy Options to Reduce Future Prison Construction, Criminal Justice Costs, and Crime Rates, October 2006, page 9.

with valuable information regarding work support services, including child care assistance, housing subsidies, and food stamps. Launched in October 2007, the Washington State Self Sufficiency Calculator builds on a previous calculator developed by the Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County. A \$100,000 grant from the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation, and contributions from a partnership of Workforce Development Councils statewide and the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges provided funds to develop the site. We need to promote wider use of the calculator among job-seekers and case managers to test different strategies for achieving financial, career, and education goals. See:

<http://www.thecalculator.org/>.

Formatted: No underline

Formatted: Font: (Default) Times New Roman, 12 pt

By working to improve outcomes for low-income populations, we will likely also be improving outcomes for targeted populations. This is because the targeted groups are over-represented in our low-income population.

Working Together to Serve Target Populations

Many of the programs in the workforce development system serve customers and students from target populations. For example workforce education students at the community and technical colleges are more diverse than the general population.⁴⁸ Many of the customers and students from target populations share one factor in common: low incomes. When we serve low-income populations, policy and frontline staff need to be mindful of the services they are providing, and how they are provided. As we work to serve all adults and adults with barriers to further education and employment we need strategies that are both broad and also target specific need.

Steps To Get Us There

- Expand the use of the self-sufficiency calculator to all workforce development councils, and provide training for frontline staff.
- Expand the number of Adult Basic Education programs that integrate occupational skills training through the I-BEST model.
- Expand use of the Food Stamps Education and Training program for customers with the greatest barriers to employment.
- Enhance professional development and provide credentials for career coaching, mentoring, and instruction in life skills and employability skills for WorkSource staff, training institutions, community-based organizations, employers, and others.
- Enhance employment and training options for targeted populations (people of color, people with disabilities and women), ex-offenders, and veterans.
- ~~Ensure that workforce development services are fully accessible for all adults with disabilities.~~
- Improve workforce development services for individuals with disabilities by:
 - Reaching out to more people with disabilities, and utilizing community-based organizations to assist with this.
 - Reassessing the business needs of employers and services to customers with disabilities.
 - Building stronger linkages between workforce development services and programs that provide the essential support services needed by many individuals with disabilities to participate in the workforce.

⁴⁸ Workforce Training Results 2008, May Board Meeting, PowerPoint presentation, Slide 5.

- Enhancing partnerships with other state, local, and private organizations that deliver services to individuals with disabilities.
- Develop a system to provide post-employment services to adults to improve work retention and career advancement.
- Develop a state strategy to serve the “50 Plus” workforce including flexible work schedules, customized training to upgrade skills, and strategies to enable industry to take advantage of the skills and knowledge of retired workers.

DRAFT

Adult Objective 4: The WorkSource system provides integrated and effective customer service without barriers associated with separate, individual programs.

No later than 2018:

- WorkSource is a functionally integrated service delivery system that measurably improves the employability of customers.

Rationale for Adult Objective 4 and Steps to Get Us There

Working Together to Serve Students and Job Seekers

The Workforce Board adopted the Washington Workforce Compact in Bremerton on September 26, 2007. The *Compact* is candid about the challenges of working together to remove barriers:

Sometimes, the barriers that stand in the way of our customers achieving their goals are of our own making. Not that they are intentional. But sometimes, individual program objectives bump up against the policies or practices of another program in a way that is less than optimal for our customers. For example, the administrative rules of one program may make sense in the context of that program, but when put together with the administrative rules of another program, customers may be faced with conflicting sets of procedures.

The partners to this *Compact* commit to a collective effort to identify and remove government or other barriers that stand in the way of serving our customers. Such barriers may include, but are not limited to policies, practices, regulations, or performance measures. What appear as barriers may exist for a good reason. This must be considered. But we commit to identifying and removing those barriers that don't make sense from the perspective of the goals we are trying to achieve for our customers.

Through interviews and surveys the Workforce Board has begun collecting information from state and local agencies, and their customers, to identify barriers and develop solutions to eliminate them. The initial barriers to be addressed are:

1. The Need for Streamlined "Co-Enrollment" Processes
2. The Need for Staff Cross-Training
3. The Value of Co-locating Staff Among Workforce Partners
4. The Need for Consistency in Performance Measures

Steps To Get Us There

- Identify barriers to integrated customer service and implement solutions.
- Increase integration of WorkSource partner programs through methods such as co-enrollments and co-locations among WorkSource partner programs.
- Increase the use of consistent performance measures among WorkSource partner programs.
- Improve the integration of assessments, counseling, employment services, and training in the WorkSource system.

- Improve linkages with community-based organizations, especially those that serve target populations, ex-offenders, and veterans.
- Identify opportunities for partnership that will provide resources to serve more customers in the workforce development system.

DRAFT

Industry Goal and Summary of Objectives

Formatted: Font: 12 pt

Industry Goal: Meet the workforce needs of industry by preparing students, current workers, and dislocated workers with the skills employers need.

Objective 1 (See discussion on page 36)

The workforce development system supplies the number of newly prepared workers needed to meet current and emerging employer needs.

No later than 2018:

- Raise mid-level degrees and certificates to 36,200 annually, an increase of 9,400 degrees and certificates annually.

Objective 2 (See discussion on page 37)

The workforce development system strengthens Washington's economy, focusing on strategic industry clusters as a central organizing principle.

No later than 2018:

- Washington's workforce and economic development programs have established track records of effective service to the strategic industry clusters in Washington.
- Washington's workforce development system prepares the number of workers needed to fill job openings in strategic industry clusters.

Objective 3 (See discussion on page 40)

Current and dislocated workers, and job seekers receive education and training that builds competitive skills and businesses.

No later than 2018:

- A majority of mid- and lower-wage employees receive training from either their employers or the workforce development system.
- Dislocated worker programs are easy to navigate and enable good wage replacement results.

Rationale for Industry Objective 1 and Steps to Get Us There

Objective 1

The workforce development system supplies the number of newly prepared workers to meet current and emerging employer needs.

- No later than 2018, raise mid-level degrees and certificates to 36,200 annually, an increase of 9,400 degrees and certificates annually.

Formatted: Font: Not Bold

Increasing Capacity in Mid-Level Training is a Must

“We must be second to no other nation in educational attainment and in discovery and innovation, or economic security and the quality of life in our communities will deteriorate.”⁴⁹

White Paper for Presidential Candidates, State Higher Education Executive Officers 2008

Meeting the workforce needs of industry will require a significant expansion in the numbers of individuals who receive mid-level education and training, at least one year and up to but less than four years of postsecondary training. Consistent with previous surveys, the Workforce Board 2007 statewide survey of employers in Washington report that more employers have difficulty in recruiting people with mid-level training, specifically those with vocational certificates and degrees than any other type of education. (See Figure 3.) Our gap analysis estimates that we are meeting only 77 percent of employer demand for workers with mid-level training. To meet our workforce need we must increase capacity in mid-level programs, inform potential students, youth and adults of benefits of such training, and encourage more employers to offer education and training to advance their employees.

Figure 3

Number and Percent of Employers with Difficulty Hiring Qualified Workers, Results by Education Level

Education Levels	Estimated Number of Employers With Difficulty Hiring	Percent of Employers With Difficulty Hiring
		2007
Neither a high school diploma or GED	15,000	8%
High school diploma or GED	25,600	13%
Some college course work	43,400	22%
Vocational certificate	36,000	18%
Vocational associate degree	27,700	14%
Academic associate degree	19,900	10%
Baccalaureate degree	24,900	13%
Masters degree	15,000	8%
Doctoral or professional degree	10,700	6%

The Washington State Apprenticeship and Training Council and its administrative arm at the Department of Labor and Industries support registered apprenticeship training around the state. Although most of the current apprenticeship programs in the state are in the construction trades,

⁴⁹ *White Paper for Presidential Candidates, State Higher Education Executive Officers 2008*

Formatted: Left, Indent: Left: 0 pt

Formatted: Font: Italic

the apprenticeship training model has been successfully used in several other industry sectors and it could be a useful model of training for a wide variety of occupations.

The 2008 Legislature provided funds to expand apprenticeship training programs across the state. This is critical for meeting employers' needs for skilled workers. Apprenticeships also suit many adult workers who would not enter a traditional education environment because of various reasons that could include: financial barriers such as the need to keep working to support dependents, and/or former negative experiences with traditional education systems.

Steps To Get Us There

- Increase annual capacity in mid-level education and training programs (greater than one year but less than four years) by 9,400 degrees and certificates.
- Expand apprenticeship training opportunities and recruitment of employers who hire apprentices for traditional and non-traditional programs.

Industry Objective 2: The workforce development system strengthens Washington's economy, focusing on strategic industry clusters as a central organizing principle.

No later than 2018:

- Washington's workforce and economic development programs have established track records of effective service to the state's strategic industry clusters.
- Washington's workforce development system prepares the number of workers needed to fill job openings in strategic industry clusters.

Rationale for Industry Objective 2 and Steps to Get Us There

Coordinating Workforce and Economic Development

In addition to expanding mid-level training capacity, Governor Gregoire's action plan to grow Washington's jobs and economy, outlined in the *The Next Washington*, called for improved partnerships [in among](#) workforce and economic development at the state and regional levels. Working to strengthen industry clusters throughout Washington is one strategy that holds vast promise for strengthening our economy and offering our residents excellent job opportunities.

What is an Industry Cluster?

An industry cluster is the term for "a geographic concentration of interdependent competitive firms that do business with each other, including firms that sell inside and outside of the geographic region as well as support firms that supply new materials, components, and business services, and other institutions including government and education." It includes upstream suppliers of inputs—such as firms that supply materials and equipment, and downstream customers, including other firms. It also includes related entities that shape the environment within which the industry operates—such as government regulatory bodies. The key characteristic is inter-relatedness."⁵⁰

⁵⁰ In 2007, the Governor's Policy Office convened a work group that developed definitions for the terms "cluster," "sector," and related terms. This definition and discussion relies on the work of Michael E. Porter. E.g.; see, *Clusters and Competition: New Agendas for Companies, Governments, and Institutions*, Chapter 7 of *On Competition*, Michael E. Porter, Harvard Business School Press, Cambridge, MA, 1998.

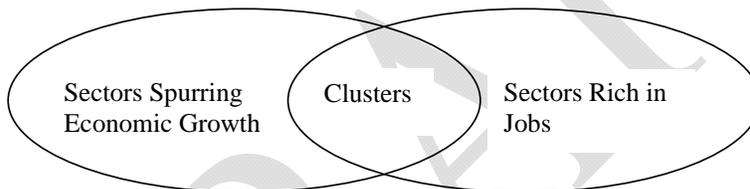
|

DRAFT

Local, state, and national economies are characterized by prominent pockets of unusual economic success—entertainment in Los Angeles, shoes in Northern Italy, pharmaceuticals in Philadelphia. We have many such examples in Washington—wine in Walla Walla, software east of Lake Washington, aerospace in Snohomish and King counties. Much of the world’s economic success is situated in such localized concentrations of economic star power.

Although we live in an increasingly global economy, location still matters. Different locations have different advantages and disadvantages for particular industries. Locations vary in factor inputs such as natural resources, human capital, and physical infrastructure, supporting institutions such as education and research institutions, and access to suppliers and to markets. Over time, economic concentrations emerge where these factors are particularly favorable for a given industry. Sometimes too, chance plays a role, such as the birthplace of a single visionary entrepreneur.⁵¹

We should focus on clusters because that is where economic growth is most likely to occur and where innovation is most likely to begin. Focusing on clusters also makes special sense for coordinating workforce and economic development, since clusters are sectors of the economy where workforce and economic development overlap.



Government can assist clusters by helping to provide factors of production and alleviating bottlenecks, such as skill shortages, that impede cluster growth. Government can provide public goods, such as education, roads, and water and sewer systems, that are of value to many firms because their benefits are not limited to the particular firms or individuals that directly pay for the good or service. By focusing on providing public goods for clusters, rather than on resources for individual firms, government can avoid entering into unfair competition. Government can instead assist all firms that face similar needs.

In targeting clusters, there is no need for government to guess at which industry sector will emerge to be the next big thing. Cluster strategy directs government to target industry sectors that the private market has already identified as competitive for that geographic location. This is not to say that a focus on emerging industries or innovation has no place in cluster strategy; far from it. It suggests that a place to focus is on emerging industries and innovations that are interconnected with a cluster’s core industry. An example is building university research capacity in automotive technology in a geographic area with an existing automobile manufacturing cluster. Governments and others would be wise, however, to exercise caution before expending resources to build a cluster where one does not exist, potentially competing with other geographic areas where the market has already demonstrated a competitive advantage.

⁵¹ For further discussion see paper by Bryan Wilson, “Skills for the Next Washington” White Paper, Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board, 2008.

Coordinating Workforce and Economic Development Around Clusters in Washington

While some of the ways that government can assist industry clusters exist in Washington, others are missing. Also missing is an agreed upon framework that puts the pieces into place in a coherent manner. For state and local government to effectively coordinate workforce and economic development around clusters in Washington, certain steps should take place:

1. Clusters should be identified.
2. Cluster partners should be brought together.
3. Programs and resources should be available to assist clusters.
4. State and regional workforce and economic plans should lay out how government will support clusters.
5. State and local government should implement programs and direct resource to assist cluster in a coordinated and strategic manner.

Other Cluster Initiatives

The community and technical colleges have established Centers of Excellence in 12 Washington clusters. These centers are sources of expertise on how colleges can assist in closing skill gaps in their regional clusters and in the core industry sectors throughout the state. The designated colleges develop expertise, curriculum, faculty, and partnerships related to a particular industry cluster. The critical feature is that the centers really know and understands ~~its~~ industry cluster and ~~is~~ ~~are~~ lasting resources for the cluster. Working closely with ~~its~~ related Skill Panel, the centers provides technical assistance to colleges around the state so that their services are fashioned to meet industry needs.

Formatted: Font: Not Bold

The community and technical colleges and the four-year institutions receive “high demand funds” from the Legislature to increase student enrollments in fields where employer demand exceeds the number of students coming out of in-state colleges and universities. The institutions can use these funds to address the skill gaps in clusters. High employer demand programs of study are not always the same as clusters, though they often support clusters.

The community and technical colleges also receive Workforce Development Funds. These are fairly flexible funds used to start up, expand, or update workforce education programs. These funds can also be directed toward programs in industry clusters.

Steps To Get Us There

- Establish Industry Skill Panels that provide information on skill needs in strategic industry clusters in all workforce development areas.
- Establish Centers of Excellence that provide best practice support to education providers for all strategic industry clusters in the state.
- Expand High Employer Demand programs of study at all levels of postsecondary education and target under-represented labor pools to facilitate their entry to high demand occupations.
- Prepare more individuals to work in industry clusters that provide middle-wage and high-wage job opportunities.
- Coordinate workforce development and economic development planning efforts at the state level, including an emphasis on industry clusters.
- Provide the best possible services to support strategic industry clusters by:

- Identifying and removing barriers to serving industry clusters.
- Identifying and implementing best practices in industry cluster development. Identifying and implementing best practices in unified business services at WorkSource Centers.
- Providing incentives to regions and local areas to convene and support industry clusters through programs and resources.
- Establish a state initiative modeled after the WIRED grant program.
- Convene an annual conference for workforce and economic development.

Industry Objective 3: Current and dislocated workers, and job seekers receive education and training that builds competitive skills and businesses.

No later than 2018:

- A majority of mid- and lower-wage employees receive training from either their employers or the workforce development system.
- Dislocated worker programs are easy to navigate and provide good wage replacement.

Rationale for Industry Objective 3 and Steps to Get Us There

Customized Training

In 2007, 60 percent of employers in Washington reported providing or paying for four or more hours of classroom training for their employees. Research indicates that this type of training is usually concentrated on higher level workers and in certain industries. This type of training usually does not lead to a credential. We need to communicate a message to employers and employees across Washington. It pays to engage in further education and training, and where possible we want to see employees raise their level of education at least to one year of postsecondary education and a credential.

While employers report that state supported customized training is very attractive to them when considering to set up in the state, and support expansion, Washington ranks near the bottom when we compare the amount of public support that states provide for customized job training for current employees. While we are near the bottom we have increased support for customized training in recent years, though we are not close to meeting demand. The state programs include the Customized Training Program and the Job Skills Program. Customized training can also be funded through the federal Workforce Investment Act. We need to review our suite of customized programs, assess the needs and incentives, and expand and improve our services to employers and workers through customized job training.

Formatted: Underline

Joint Labor-Management Training Partnerships

Joint labor-management training partnerships aim to meet the skill gap needs of both employers and the workforce. They are primarily funded through employer contributions so their funding is dependable. One example is the SEIU NW Healthcare Training Alliance which is an alliance of the SEIU Healthcare NW training Partnership. (providing training for long-term care workers) beginning in 2010 and SEIU Healthcare 1199NW Multi-employer Training Trust, which will (provide training and upgrade-upgrading programs for incumbent hospital workers beginning in 2009.)

Steps To Get Us There

- Increase the level of public and private support for customized training for current workers including joint labor-management training partnerships, recruit more workers and employers to participate, and improve program design to best suit their needs. (Also see strategies in the Adult section of this plan.)
- Increase the number of working adults gaining further education and training at the workplace through distance learning and other methods including the integration of Adult Basic English / English language and occupational skills. (Also see strategies in the Adult section of this plan.)
- Expand the availability of Lifelong Learning Accounts to fund worker training.
- Align eligibility criteria for dislocated worker programs. (Also see strategies in the Adult section of this plan.)
- Establish a toolbox of work-ready assessments and promote their use in a variety of settings.

DRAFT