

**WASHINGTON STATE
WORKFORCE TRAINING AND EDUCATION COORDINATING BOARD
MEETING NO. 158
NOVEMBER 17, 2011**

**UPDATING “HIGH SKILLS, HIGH WAGES: WASHINGTON’S STRATEGIC PLAN
FOR WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT”**

As amended in 2009, the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board’s statute states:

“The board shall develop a state comprehensive plan for workforce training and education for a ten-year time period. The board shall submit the ten-year state comprehensive plan to the governor and the appropriate legislative policy committees. Every four years by December 1st, beginning December 1, 2012, the board shall submit an update of the ten-year state comprehensive plan for workforce training and education to the governor and the appropriate legislative policy committees. Following public hearings, the legislature shall, by concurrent resolution, approve or recommend changes to the initial plan and the updates. The plan shall then become the state's workforce training policy unless legislation is enacted to alter the policies set forth in the plan.”
(RCW 28C.18.080)

Thus, the Workforce Board must update *High Skills, High Wages 2008-2018, Washington’s Strategic Plan for Workforce Development* in 2012 and submit the updated Plan to the governor and Legislature by December 1, 2012.

At the November meeting, the Board will discuss the process the Board wants to use to update the Plan, and in general terms, what the Board would like the Plan to look like, such as what chapters, subjects, and format.

To assist the Board, this tab presents background information on state and federal requirements for the Plan, the composition of past Plans, and the process used in the past to update the Plan. The tab also provides examples of policy questions that the Board may want the Plan to address.

No action is required at the November meeting. The Board should act by the January 2012 meeting in order for there to be sufficient time to complete the update by December 1, 2012.

Board Action Required: None. For discussion.

State and Federal Requirements

State statute (RCW 28C.18.080) provides the following requirements for the content of the state Plan:

“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 ...”

“The comprehensive plan shall include workforce training role and mission statements for the workforce development programs of operating agencies represented on the board and sufficient specificity regarding expected actions by the operating agencies to allow them to carry out actions consistent with the comprehensive plan.”

“The comprehensive plan shall include recommendations to the Legislature and the Governor on the modification, consolidation, initiation, or elimination of workforce training and education programs in the state.”

“The comprehensive plan shall identify the strategic industry clusters targeted by the workforce development system.” (2009 amendment)

For the development of the Plan, the state statute stipulates that the Board must use economic, labor market, and population information from the Office of Financial Management and the Employment Security Department. The statute also directs the Board to use the results of outcome, net-impact, and cost-benefit evaluations; surveys of employers; and surveys of program participants. Other sections of the statute task the Board with conducting such research.

By Executive Order 99-02, Governor Locke directed that the plan should include:

- Assessments of our state’s employment opportunities and skills needs, the present and future workforce, and the current workforce development system.
- Goals and strategies for improving the workforce development system.
- A description of the performance management system for workforce development.
- Goals, objectives and strategies to address three challenges:
 1. Closing the gap between the need of employers for skilled workers and the supply of Washington residents prepared to meet that need.
 2. Enabling workers to make smooth transitions so they may fully benefit from the new, changing economy.
 3. Assisting disadvantaged youth, persons with disabilities, new labor market entrants, recent immigrants, and low-wage workers in moving up the job ladder during their lifetimes by developing a wage progression strategy for low-income workers.

In addition, the Executive Order directs the Board to “Work in partnership with local workforce development councils to develop the state unified plan. Local workforce development councils shall provide input to the Workforce Board in developing the state unified plan, which will thereby articulate their local strategies and needs.”

By “unified” plan, the Executive Order references, “a state unified plan as described under P.L. 105-220,” the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). In order to fulfill this directive, the Board has designed *High Skills, High Wages* to meet the strategic planning requirements of WIA for a state

workforce investment plan. The more operational requirements set forth by WIA are included in the WIA Operations Plan, which is developed in coordination with the Employment Security Department. Together *High Skills, High Wages* and the WIA Operations Plan meet the federal requirements for a state unified plan.

The WIA requirements for the plan include the following strategic elements that are parallel to those contained in the Executive Order:

- A description of the skills and economic development needs of the state.
- The type and availability of workforce investment activities in the state.
- A description of the state performance accountability system.

In addition, in order to have a more coordinated and unified approach to planning, the Workforce Board, which also prepares the state plan required by the federal Perkins Act, uses *High Skills, High Wages* to fulfill the state strategic planning requirements under Perkins.

Past and Current Plan Content

In fulfillment of the above requirements, *High Skills, High Wages* has consisted of five chapters addressing:

1. The state's economy and need for skilled workers
2. The demographics of the workforce
3. The state workforce development system of programs and activities
4. The performance accountability system for workforce development; and
5. Goals, objectives, and strategies.

The editions of *High Skills, High Wages* have varied as to which of these chapters are printed, and which appear only online. The editions have also varied as to whether the individual chapters are updated since the previous edition. Sometimes, for example, the third chapter describing the system has not been updated since there was little that had changed. Sometimes, the performance accountability chapter has not been updated because the Board anticipated near-term WIA reauthorization and changes in federal performance measures.

The current edition of *High Skills, High Wages* consists of the following major features:

- The printed version contains three chapters on: the economy, the workforce, and a chapter with goals, objectives, and strategies (or steps). The online version contains these chapters plus a chapter on the performance accountability system.
- The objectives and strategies are grouped under three goals addressing youth, adults, and industry. These goals are up to the Board, and over the years, *High Skills, High Wages*, has identified a variety of goals and grouped the objectives and strategies according to the different goals.
- For each strategy, *High Skills, High Wages*, identifies the responsible agencies and others for carrying out the strategy. This had been done, in part, to fulfill the legislative requirement that the Plan contain sufficient specificity to enable agencies to carry out actions consistent with the Plan.
- The current and recent editions have contained a relatively short list of "Strategic Opportunities" that highlight the Board's priorities for immediate action.

Process for Developing *High Skills, High Wages*

In order to develop the goals, objectives, and strategies for the current and recent editions of *High Skills, High Wages*, the Board formed workgroups, one for each goal area expected to be in the plan; e.g., youth, adults, and industry. Each workgroup was chaired by Board members and a wide variety of stakeholders were invited to participate, including legislators. In order to partner with the Workforce Development Councils (WDCs), the WDCs were recruited to participate in each workgroup, and a first step for each group was to comb through all the local plans of the WDCs for ideas for objectives and strategies.

Through a series of meetings, the groups developed draft proposals to the Board for objectives and strategies for the Plan. These drafts, were then reviewed by the Board's Inter-agency Committee prior to being sent to the Board for the members to review. After the Board has reviewed and modified the drafts, the Board widely distributed the drafts electronically to thousands of individuals for their review and comment. The Board also conducted public forums around the state in order to obtain input in person. Extensive efforts were made to ensure good turnouts of interested and diverse stakeholders. Based on this combination of face-to-face and electronic input over the course of typically about six months, and deliberations at several Board meetings, the Board then adopted the final Plan for publication and distribution.

Questions for the Board's Consideration

At the November meeting, the Board will have time to discuss a number of questions regarding the 2012 update to *High Skills, High Wages*. These questions include:

- What process does the Board want to use to develop the 2012 Plan Does the Board want to use the basic process used in the past? What modifications would the Board like? Are there new electronic tools that the Board is interested in using as part of the process?
- What, if any, modification does the Board want to the five chapter format of the Plan? Does the Board want each chapter to be updated?
- Does the Board want to continue to provide a short list of "Strategic Opportunities" as a way to focus the plan?
- What goals does the Board want the 2012 Plan to address?

As stated above, the current goals around youth, adults, and industry are subject to change by the Board. The Board may want to consider a different structure that spans across these groups. One way of approaching this is by considering the big picture questions that the Board wants the Plan to address. The following questions are posed just as examples for the Board's consideration:

- How should we prepare the next generation of workers to meet employer needs for a skilled workforce?
- How do we provide a system of lifelong learning that enables individuals to work and train throughout their adult lives?
- What must the workforce development system do differently in order to respond to the changing demographics of the workforce?
- As the Legislature wrote into statute, what are the Board's recommendations for "modification, consolidation, initiation, or elimination of workforce training and education programs in the state?"
- How do we make the system truly focused on employers as a dual customer of the system?

- What more can be done to align workforce and economic development?

Again, these are just examples. By discussing and identifying the questions the Board wants the Plan to address, it may help the Board to begin developing the goals for the next Plan, and help design an appropriate process for updating the Plan.