

**WASHINGTON STATE
WORKFORCE TRAINING AND EDUCATION COORDINATING BOARD
MEETING NO. 162
MAY 3, 2012**

LEGISLATIVE AGENDA: EXPLORING IDEAS FOR 2013

Even though the 2012 Special Session of the legislature ended just recently, it is not too soon to begin discussing ideas for the Board's 2013 Legislative agenda. This is particularly the case for ideas that might turn into agency request legislation. Agency request legislation must be submitted to the Office of Financial Management in September. The Board must approve a "decision package" for each agency request bill at the September 27 meeting. A decision package includes a bill draft, a fiscal note, stakeholder positions, and a narrative explaining the bill and the rationale for it. In order to have this in good order by September, work should begin soon.

This tab outlines five ideas for possible agency request legislation for 2013. At the meeting, the Board will discuss these ideas, and any others that members suggest, and guide staff as to which ideas the Board is interested in exploring for possible agency request legislation. This guidance would not constitute a decision on requesting bills. It would only continue the process of exploring ideas for possible request legislation.

Board Action Requested: None. For discussion purposes only.

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Multiple Pathways

Background: In 2011 the Board established a committee on the problem of youth unemployment. The Board decided to pursue a two prong approach—policy and programmatic. The programmatic approach led to the application for a Department of Labor Workforce Innovation Fund Grant focused on workplace-integrated learning. The policy approach led to work with the Harvard Graduate School of Education’s Pathways to Prosperity Project, and the introduction of the Career Pathways Act, prime sponsored by Representative Tim Probst. The Career Pathways Act passed the House but failed to pass the Ways and Means Committee in the Senate.

Idea to Explore: The Workforce Board could explore requesting a bill that would advance the concept of multiple pathways for education and training. The bill could be similar to the Career Pathways Act considered by the 2012 Legislature, or could vary from that bill in significant ways. The bill could be co-requested by other agencies in addition to the Workforce Board. The bill could be written so as to have either minor or major fiscal impacts.

Industry-Based Certifications

Background: In December 2011, the Workforce Board issued its final report to the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM)/Manufacturers Institute on “The Status of Manufacturing Skill Certification in Washington.”

According to the report, “A general consensus has been reached among the partners, the Governor’s Office and the Department of Commerce that Washington needs a statewide credentialing system that affords portability and communication among educators, students and employers. The partners agree that middle-skill jobs should be the focus of such a credentialing system, and also that certifications should be on a pathway from K-12 to baccalaureate and beyond. Certifications then would serve as momentum points along a career continuum; transferable, stackable credentials would align with a structured program of study, college credits and degrees ... While no statewide agreement currently exists to build a NAM-Endorsed Certification System, there is a commitment to explore and evaluate the system and determine whether the anticipated benefits manifest.”

Idea to Explore: The Workforce Board could explore the level of interest and value of legislation that would advance a system of industry-based certifications. This could be limited to manufacturing or could include other industry sectors. The legislation could be co-requested by other agencies in addition to the Workforce Board. The bill could be written so as to have either minor or major fiscal impacts.

Private Vocational Schools Act Reforms

Background: According to Washington Private Vocational Schools Act, if a licensed school closes, the school must either complete students' training or reimburse the students for any training paid for, but not received. If the school cannot or will not reimburse students, the students may be eligible for assistance. The Workforce Board administers the Tuition Recovery Trust Fund to help students who paid for training they did not receive. The money in the Fund comes from fees paid by licensed schools. Students are eligible for a refund of tuition paid in advance for training they did not receive. The Workforce Board also attempts to identify other institutions that will accept the students, recognize their prior learning and complete the students' training. The Tuition Recovery Trust Fund cannot reimburse students for the portion of tuition for the time they were enrolled at the school before it closed. If students are unable to continue their training at another institution and must begin over, they in effect lose the value of the tuition they already invested at the closed school.

Idea to Explore: The Workforce Board could explore legislation that would increase the options for using the Tuition Recovery Trust Fund to reimburse students for the value of tuition lost when a school closes.

Background: An increasing amount of instruction by private vocational schools is conducted online. Some schools offer online instruction only. Some schools headquartered outside of Washington have only an online presence within the state. With the growth of online instruction, legislators have expressed concern that there may be inadequate safeguards in place to protect consumers.

Idea to Explore: The Workforce Board could explore legislation to increase safeguards for Washington consumers of online instruction by private vocational schools.

Student Achievement Council

Background: The 2012 Legislature passed HB 2483 creating the Student Achievement Council to replace the Higher Education Coordinating Board on July 1, 2012. A central purpose of the Council is to identify goals for increasing educational attainment in Washington, and to establish a two-year strategic action plan and a 10-year road map for all of postsecondary education.

While the final legislation does not include the Workforce Board among the entities represented on the Council, it notes the importance of workforce training and directs the Council to set goals for "Washington's workforce needs for certificates and degrees in particular fields of study." Among the topics that the Council must address are college and career preparedness, transitions between secondary and postsecondary education, dual high school-college programs, minimum admission requirements to four-year institutions, and transitions to careers. In several sections the legislation directs the Council to collaborate with the Workforce Board, among other entities. In addition, the Council may establish ad hoc advisory committees for the purpose of obtaining input from stakeholders and experts.

Idea to Explore: The Workforce Board could explore whether additional legislation could improve coordination between the Workforce Board and the new Student Achievement Council.

High Skills, High Wages: 2012

Background: Under state statutes, “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.”

Expected Agency Request: The Workforce Board must request a concurrent resolution for the adoption of the update to the state comprehensive plan for workforce training and education. In the past, concurrent resolutions have not been subject to the same requirements as are bills for September submittal to the Office of Financial Management in order to be approved.