



Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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\$1.6M UPSKILL-BACKFILL INITIATIVE TO HELP HUNDREDS OF WORKERS MOVE AHEAD

New initiative to skill up workers in multiple sectors, will open up jobs across the state

OLYMPIA—The Workforce Training & Education Coordinating Board has awarded \$1.6 million in competitive grants to seven different projects designed to “upskill” entry- and mid-level employees through additional education and training that moves them ahead in their careers, while “backfilling” their open positions with new workers.

An estimated 550 workers will be provided additional training to advance their careers, with another 300 new hires backfilling projected openings. It includes a Pierce County project focused on upskilling journey-level construction workers to foremen and backfill them with entry-level workers. The Pierce County project is expected to engage two businesses, train 20 existing workers for foremen responsibilities, and hire 40 new jobseekers, with 25 coming from populations with barriers.

Read about the Pierce County project at: http://www.wtb.wa.gov/TAPAccelerator_phase1.asp

The Upskill Backfill Initiative is one of several partnerships between the state’s Workforce Board and the Governor’s Office aimed at advancing the state’s workforce plan “Talent and Prosperity for All,” or TAP. Earlier this year, Gov. Inslee invested \$3 million in federal workforce funding to accelerate implementation of the TAP plan, with a little over half of that going toward Upskill Backfill projects.

The seven projects join public and private resources to focus on a wide range of industries and occupations, including: Healthcare, Building Engineers in the Construction Industry, Construction and Highway Workers, Manufacturing, and Aerospace. Each project is headed up by a regional Workforce Development Council in conjunction with area businesses within a particular sector. This public-private partnership brings businesses to the table to help shape the training their workers receive, while also co-investing their own resources into targeted training programs. The goal is to move more Washington workers into needed, higher skilled positions, with a focus on populations facing barriers to employment.

"These grants will help workers fulfill their potential by helping them get to the next level," Gov. Jay Inslee said. "This promising practice will help us create a stronger, more competitive workforce."

In addition to the state’s \$1.6 million investment in these projects, nearly \$1.6 million in additional funding was leveraged through matching grants and business investment, for a total of \$3.1 million in targeted job training.

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Project Focus – Construction Heavy/Highway

WorkForce Central (Pierce County)

There is a significant need for foremen in this industry and demand is expected to grow. This project will upskill journey-level construction workers to foremen and backfill them with entry-level workers. The project is designed to: engage two businesses; train 20 existing workers for foreman responsibilities; hire 40 new jobseekers, with 25 coming from populations facing barriers. The new jobseekers will obtain one or more of the following: a high school credential, transition to postsecondary education, or an industry-recognized postsecondary certificate.

Partners: Tucci & Sons, Lakeside Industries, Construction Center of Excellence, AGC Education Foundation, and International Union of Operating Engineers (IUOE). **Grant Amount:** \$250,000 (with \$149,000 leveraged totaling \$399,000)

The Workforce Board is a state agency that monitors and evaluates the state's key workforce programs and also provides leadership on policies that help all Washington residents get the education and training they need to obtain living-wage jobs.

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