

# High Skills High Wages

Washington's 10-Year Strategic Plan for Workforce Development



**Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board**

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At the request of the Governor and Legislature, the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board sets forth a 10-year plan spanning key components of our state's current and future workforce.

The plan you hold in your hands is joined by additional online chapters detailing our state's workforce system performance measures, demographics and the larger economy. Read them at: [www.wtb.wa.gov/highskills2012.asp](http://www.wtb.wa.gov/highskills2012.asp)

### Printed plan

- Goal 1 – Multiple Pathways for First Careers (Page 2)
- Goal 2 – Multiple Pathways for Employers and Workers (Page 7)
- Goal 3 – Washington's Workforce Development System (Page 11)

### Online chapters

1. Tomorrow's Economy – An overview of Washington's economy.
2. Tomorrow's Workforce – An overview of Washington's demographic trends.
3. Performance Accountability – Measuring our state's workforce system results.

Thank you for your shared commitment to making Washington's workforce world class.

Sincerely,

Eleni Papadakis

Executive Director

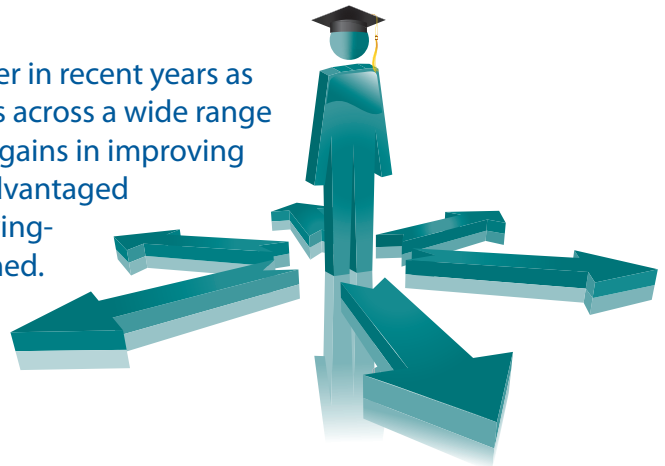
Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board

# Multiple Pathways to High Skills, High Wages

Welcome to *High Skills, High Wages*, Washington's 10-year strategic plan for workforce development.

This blueprint for workforce development offers strategies aimed at helping more Washington residents move ahead into high-skill, high-wage jobs, while also helping employers find the skilled workers they depend on.

This is not a simple endeavor. In fact, it's proven harder in recent years as more jobs call for higher levels of education and skills across a wide range of industries. Moreover, we have not made sufficient gains in improving high school graduation rates, especially among disadvantaged students. The divide between those able to obtain living-wage jobs and those living on the margins has widened. At the same time, Washington businesses have struggled to find workers with the skills needed to fill key openings, hampering their ability to be competitive in an increasingly global economy.



This edition of *High Skills, High Wages* takes a new look at chronic challenges, approaching common issues with a fresh eye. Our commitment remains to all Washington residents, even the most disadvantaged. But this plan addresses challenges and defines solutions in a broader, more cohesive way.

Instead of addressing individual populations, defining their needs, and outlining solutions; this plan looks at the workforce system as a whole, then pulls apart key pieces to focus on in the coming years. We call this a multiple pathways approach. By viewing the workforce system as a series of interconnected pathways, with multiple options for workers and students to advance, we are able to outline strategies to strengthen these pathways so more Washington residents move ahead in their education, work experience, job skills, and lives.

The changes in our economy to being more knowledge based, technology-dependent and global, requires current workers to be able gain new skills and education throughout their careers and young people to better understand how their classroom learning relates to work. For youth particularly, education and work need to be more fully integrated so they can more quickly find their place in the economy and not get stuck and passed by future generations.

This plan envisions employers as a central component of our workforce system. To ensure the system is strongly aligned with their needs, employers need to be active participants in the system's design, delivery, and evaluation of training programs. Running through this plan is the theme of employers as both customers and co-investors in the workforce system.

While our system has made headway over the past 20 years, many Washington residents continue to be left behind. To meet the challenges of the next 10 years, we need the concerted resources of all workforce system partners. The purpose of this plan is to provide direction on how we can do what we do well, more broadly, for the benefit of all.

## Multiple Pathways for First Careers

The first goal is to establish multiple pathways for youth to connect to living-wage careers. The multiple pathways approach expands beyond the traditional education experience to heighten a student's understanding of career opportunities, as well as the student's perception of how classroom learning relates to the world of work.

### Objective 1: Improve availability and quality of career and education guidance for students in middle school, high school and postsecondary institutions.

#### Enhance career guidance for students.

Begin career guidance at an earlier age, involve parents and guardians, and value all career paths. Implement comprehensive guidance programs such as Navigation 101 at all Washington high schools and middle schools. Like the Navigation 101 program, bring career guidance into the classroom to enhance student engagement and make guidance more accessible.

Prepare faculty to perform this role through professional development. Provide students and their families with extensive information about career pathways, and education and career opportunities, including opportunities that require a bachelor's degree and opportunities that call for a shorter-term investment in education and training. Make information about apprenticeships and entrepreneurship part of that guidance. Provide students at colleges, universities and other postsecondary institutions with greater access to guidance information. **(Strategy A)**

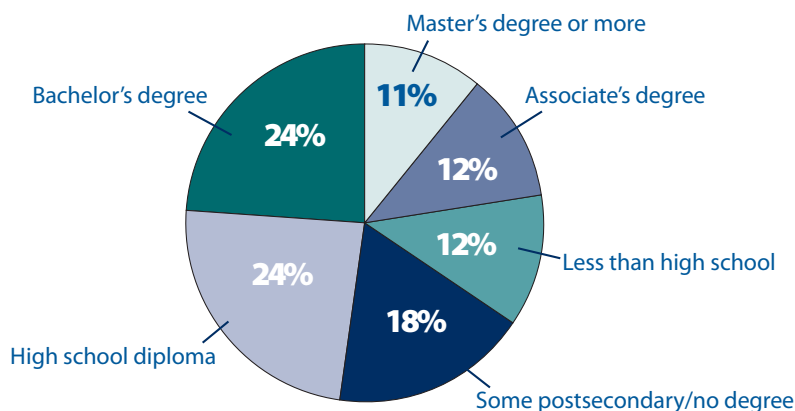
*Plan for the Future*

#### Partner with employers to help students explore careers and workplaces.

Increase the engagement of private sector partners at schools and colleges. Include businesses, unions, community-based organizations, and public sector employers in the effort to inform students about career opportunities. Bring partners into the classroom and provide students with the opportunity to explore workplaces. Leverage private and public resources at schools. **(Strategy B)**



#### Percent of jobs nationwide by education requirement in 2020



Source: Georgetown University Report , Five Ways That Pay Along the Way to the B.A., 2012

## Objective 2: Identify, assess, and certify skills for successful careers.

### Increase workplace and life skills development for students.

In addition to academic skills and skills for specific careers, ensure students develop workplace and life skills. Workplace skills (also known as soft skills, work readiness, and employability skills) include such things as problem solving, positive work habits, team work, and many other skills. Employers report critical deficits in the workplace skills of new employees and job applicants. Life skills include the skills required to manage lives and careers; for example, financial literacy and safe and healthy living. **(Strategy A)**

*Work Ready*

### Increase the use of industry-based skill standards, assessments, & credentials.

Bring the education system together with industry to identify skill standards and assessments, both general workplace standards and those specific to particular industries. Enable students to obtain industry-recognized credentials. Emphasize transferable skills that are useful across many occupations, and that “stack” towards career and educational progress from high school through post-high school education and training. Whenever possible, select standards that enhance hiring and promotion within a targeted industry cluster. Have faculty consult regularly with industry representatives so standards remain relevant. **(Strategy B)**

## Objective 3: Expand Programs of Study that bring together a sequence of career-focused courses that start in high school and extend through college.

### Expand the use of Programs of Study.

Programs of Study provide a sequential, accessible road map of courses required for a career pathway, including multiple points for students to stop out to work and reenter without losing momentum, and to take branches leading to more specific careers. Programs of Study will be a regular way that education is organized. **(Strategy A)**

*Clear Pathways*

### Improve the transfer of credits earned in a student’s Program of Study.

Offer high school students the chance to earn credits for both high school and college through Programs of Study. Create an easy transfer of these “dual credits” among colleges and universities. Improve articulation among the state’s two-year colleges, and between two-year and four-year institutions so that credits earned in one institution are applicable at another. Open source curriculum and common course numbering could help more students earn credits that transfer easily among different institutions. **(Strategy B)**



**Objective 4: Increase work-integrated learning.****Increase the number and types of workplace experiences available to students and out-of-school youth.**

Create more opportunities for students and out-of-school youth to have work experiences. Experiences may include, among other things, paid and unpaid internships, workplace mentorships, pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships, cooperative education, summer employment, and work study. Align work experiences with the student's Program of Study, and build in transferable, academic credits whenever possible. **(Strategy A)**

*Link Learning  
to Work*

**Bring more work experiences into the classroom by engaging employers and workers.**

Bring employers into the classroom and students into the workplace. Make what's learned in the classroom more relevant to students by including project-based learning, classroom visits by business and public and not-for profit employers, contextualized learning, and applied learning through internships and cooperative education. This can help students make experience-based career and education choices. **(Strategy B)**



**Learn more about the value of work experience for youth.**  
[www.wtb.wa.gov/OpportunityInternship.asp](http://www.wtb.wa.gov/OpportunityInternship.asp)

## Objective 5: Improve student access and retention.

### Expand high school dropout prevention and retrieval programs.

Prevent students from dropping out of high school and retrieve those students who have dropped out by expanding state programs. This includes programs that leverage the resources of middle and high schools, social service agencies, Workforce Development Councils, community-based organizations, and other partners. **(Strategy A)**

*Completion  
Matters*

### Increase non-traditional opportunities to obtain postsecondary certificates and degrees.

Expand methods of reducing the time to postsecondary credentials including competency based learning programs and credit for prior learning. Make more “upside-down” degree programs available—programs that first provide vocational technical training so that students who leave college after a year or two have marketable skills, followed by general education leading to a bachelor’s degree. Grow the number of Applied Bachelor’s Degree programs at community and technical colleges. Develop more “earn and learn” models, such as those that integrate apprenticeship training and college degrees and certificates. **(Strategy B)**

### Provide wrap-around and new models of support and employment services including special services for diverse populations with multiple barriers to education and training.

Enhance support services for diverse populations with multiple barriers to education and training, including those with disabilities. The services include traditional support services, but also rethinking how to serve people with barriers by creating new partnerships with employers, and with social service agencies and community-based organizations—better leveraging resources. **(Strategy C)**



One in four 9th graders do not complete high school on time.  
Washington’s graduation rate ranks 32nd among the states.

**Objective 6: Job search and placement for people into first careers.**

**Help students locate and land jobs.**

Strengthen partnerships between the education and WorkSource systems to share job-finding information and resources. Increase the use of the successful navigator model that provides brokers to help students understand the world of work and connect with employers. Help students identify their knowledge, skills and abilities and package themselves to meet the needs of the job. Teach students job search skills such as how to sift through job listings, write a resume, fill out a job application, and impress in an interview. Teach students networking skills. Bring together schools and colleges with business and labor organizations so students have easier access to potential jobs. **(Strategy A)**

*Transition to Employment*



In 2012, 17 percent of Washingtonians 16-24 years of age were unemployed and looking for work.



## Multiple Pathways for Employers and Workers

*The second goal is to develop multiple pathways that increase employer engagement in education and workforce training, and better connect workers with high-wage careers and life-long learning.*

### Objective 1: Increase employer engagement with the workforce development system.

#### Improve outreach to employers.

Improve communication with employers using materials designed and written with a business audience in mind, including the use of virtual, web-based communication. Materials must identify products and services that benefit employers, including small businesses.

Coordinate outreach among public agencies, and cross-train staff so they are familiar with the full range of business services available. Partner with private sector organizations, and employer groups. Utilize existing resources for outreach such as Industry Skill Panels, Centers of Excellence, Associate Development Organizations, (including Economic Development Councils), local governments, community-based organizations, and business groups such as Chambers of Commerce and industry associations. **(Strategy A)**

*Employer  
Engagement*

#### Engage employers in identifying skill standards and develop training programs that meet their standards.

Involve employers in identifying skill standards and industry-based certifications of workers who meet the standards. Also involve employers in helping to develop and keep training programs current so that the programs prepare workers to meet the standards. **(Strategy B)**

#### Increase industry involvement in work-integrated learning.

Develop more opportunities for students and job-seekers to learn in workplaces and provide classroom experiences connected to the world of work. Examples include on-the-job training, apprenticeships, cooperative education, and internships. Tie work-integrated learning to students' Program of Study, where possible. **(Strategy C)**

#### Increase employer investment in workforce training.

Employer investments in workforce training include, but are not limited to, employer matches to public sector or employee investments, providing faculty and equipment as well as space for on-site training programs, offering employees time to advance their skills as part of their workday, paying for off-site training opportunities, and making their worksites available for career exploration and work-based learning opportunities. **(Strategy D)**

**Objective 2 : Promote economic development by connecting workforce development with job creation and growth.**

**Provide and market business services to employers.**

Provide and market business services to existing employers and those looking to locate into the region. Business services include customized training for specific employers or groups of employers including incumbent worker training; recruitment and assessment of job applicants, and job match and placement services; early intervention services to prevent layoffs or closures; including the Shared Work Program, and employment retention services, such as connecting employees with social services to address personal and family issues that affect job performance. The public sector and the businesses that provide these services should collaborate as partners to serve customers. **(Strategy A)**

*Stimulate Job Creation*

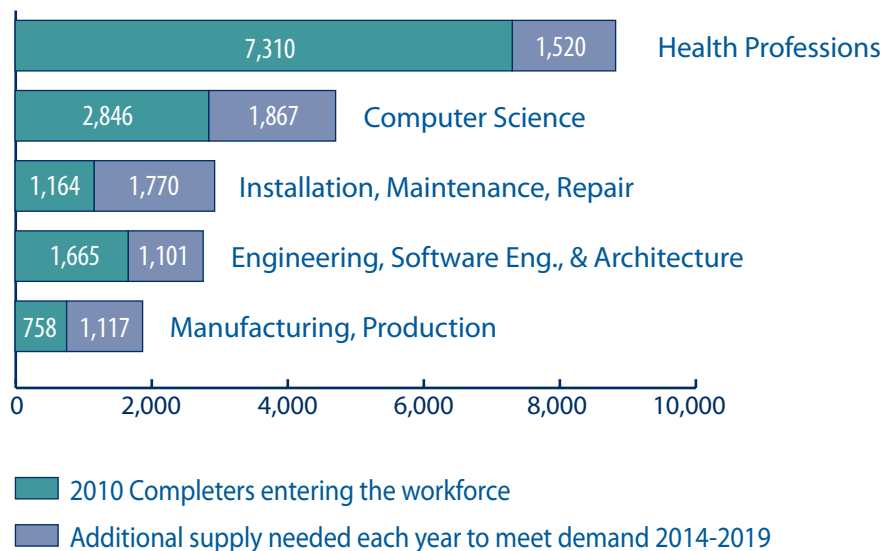
**Invest in strategic economic opportunities.**

Develop funding mechanisms to adequately resource and sustain high-demand occupational training. Continue to improve the quality of labor market information to identify high demand occupations and Programs of Study, and to identify local strategic economic clusters. Continue to develop and maintain special initiatives to address critical state and local economic opportunities (such as aerospace). **(Strategy B)**

**Encourage and support entrepreneurship.**

Offer entrepreneurial training and mentorship programs. **(Strategy C)**

**High Employer Demand Occupations  
2010 Supply compared to 2014-2019 Demand**



### Objective 3: Expand and support learning opportunities for workers at all stages of their education or career paths.

#### Offer greater career and education guidance for adults.

Provide navigators to help adults identify and access education and training programs, pay for school, and connect with other support services. Make consumer information on training programs widely available. **(Strategy A)**

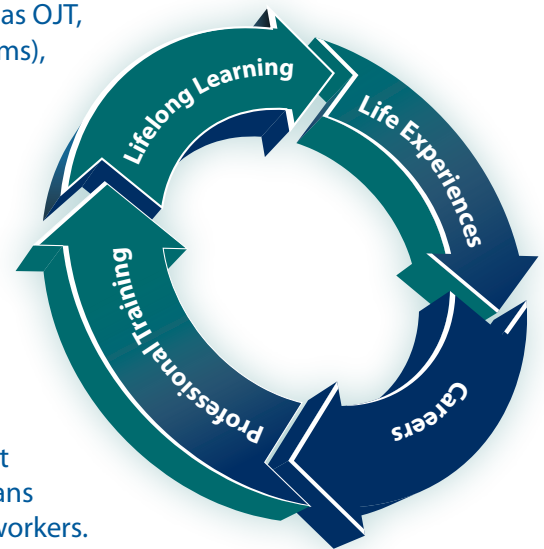
*Lifelong Learning*

#### Increase the accessibility of training programs for adult workers and reduce the time it takes to complete training.

Increase the use of credit for prior learning, competency-based programs, stackable and portable credentials, direct connect training (such as OJT, incumbent worker training, and Individualized Certificate Programs), and online and hybrid learning programs. Offer training at times and locations that reach underemployed, often low-wage workers, juggling work and families. Expand co-investment models such as Lifelong Learning Accounts (LiLAs), where employers and employees contribute to an account that pays for employee education expenses. **(Strategy B)**

#### Improve training for adult workers with barriers to advancement.

Increase use of programs such as I-BEST that integrate basic or developmental education with job skills training. Provide support services that fit the needs of diverse populations including veterans returning to the civilian labor force and long-term unemployed workers. Offer bridge programs for adults with barriers to postsecondary education. Increase partnerships with community-based organizations and state Department of Social and Health Services programs that focus on vulnerable populations to provide needed supports for adult workers with barriers. **(Strategy C)**



**Objective 4: Improve job search and placement services for unemployed and underemployed workers.**

**Improve the quality and speed of job matching and referrals between job seekers and employers with job openings.**

Improve the technology used to make job matches and the job referral process so that the skill sets that job applicants have match the skill sets that employers want. Help job seekers and employers recognize transferable skills and where the skills can be applied in the workforce. Help veterans cross-match their transferable skills gained in the armed forces to civilian employment opportunities. **(Strategy A)**

*Jobless Back to Work*

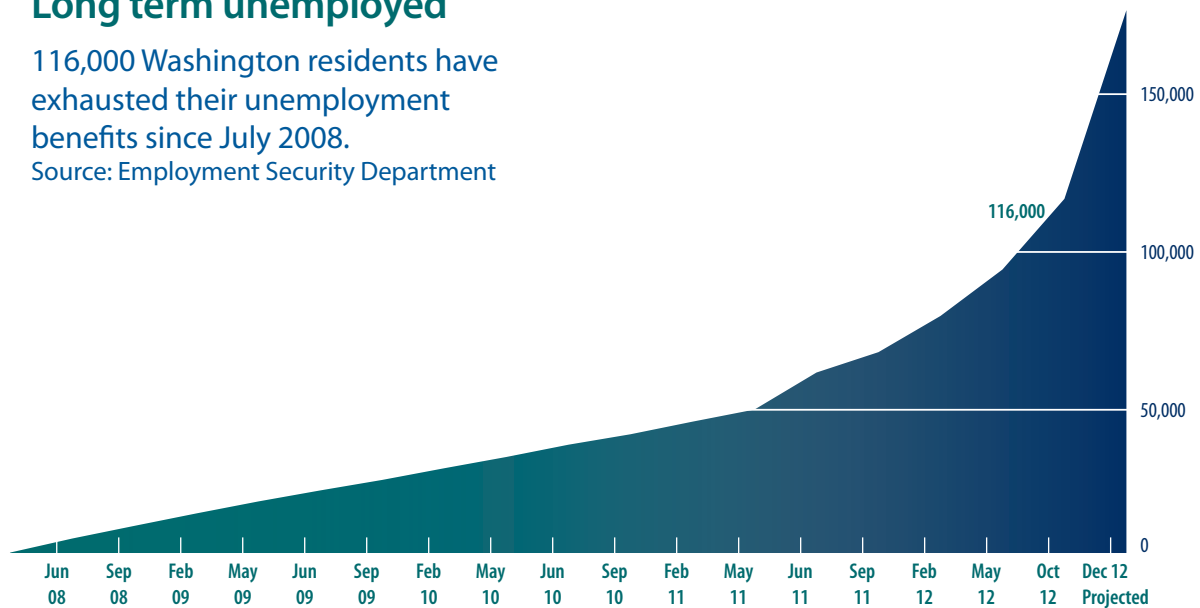
**Make job search and placement assistance more widely known and available.**

Improve access and marketing for job search and placement assistance to students, workers, and employers. **(Strategy B)**

**Long term unemployed**

116,000 Washington residents have exhausted their unemployment benefits since July 2008.

Source: Employment Security Department



Projected number is based on the scheduled expiration of the Emergency Unemployment Compensation program at the end of 2012. Number will likely change if the program is extended.

## Washington's Workforce Development System is a Model of Accountability and Efficient Co-Investment

*The third goal is to improve the efficiency, transparency, and performance of Washington's workforce system and to ensure that all aspects and components of the system work together effectively to meet the needs of both job-seekers and employers.*

### **Objective 1: Strengthen performance accountability across all workforce development partners, by focusing on employment and earnings outcomes.**

#### **The Workforce Board will lead a full scale review in collaboration with all workforce partners to reconsider core measures for Washington's workforce system.**

To fulfill its statutory assignment to develop common measures for the workforce development system, the Workforce Board developed the Washington Workforce Core Measures. These measures indicate skill attainment, employment, earnings, customer satisfaction, and return on investment and have been in place since 1996. Based on this work, the U.S. Department of Labor asked the Workforce Board to lead the states in developing a new generation performance management system. This process resulted in the creation of the Integrated Performance Information (IPI) measures. The IPI measures later became the basis of similar performance measures endorsed by the National Governors Association—measures that are now being considered by Congress for codification as part of WIA reauthorization. The Workforce Board will lead a broad, collaborative process to reconsider the state's core measures in light of new federal measures and the *High Skills, High Wages* strategic plan. **(Strategy A)**

*Performance  
Accountability*

#### **Reduce administrative burdens and improve performance outcomes through a focus on outcome rather than input measures.**

The requirement to measure inputs is often a tool to ensure that services are delivered in the same way, and at an adequate quality level regardless of geographic location or service provider. Yet, the workforce development system relies on local governance to ensure that services are designed to meet the specific needs of each region's employers and job-seekers. Focus performance measurements on outcomes rather than processes. **(Strategy B)**

#### **Develop a unified plan for multiple federal workforce development programs.**

In 2012, the Department of Labor issued planning instructions that allow states to write a "Unified Plan." The unified plan option offers state partner agencies the ability to submit a single five-year plan covering up to 13 federal programs administered by five federal agencies. In Washington, these 13 programs are administered through nine state agencies and agency divisions. Washington will work toward uniting workforce programs by developing a unified plan with common goals, and performance measures. **(Strategy C)**

**Objective 2: Establish cost-effective co-investment models, across government funding streams and across the tri-partite spectrum (employer, worker, and government).**

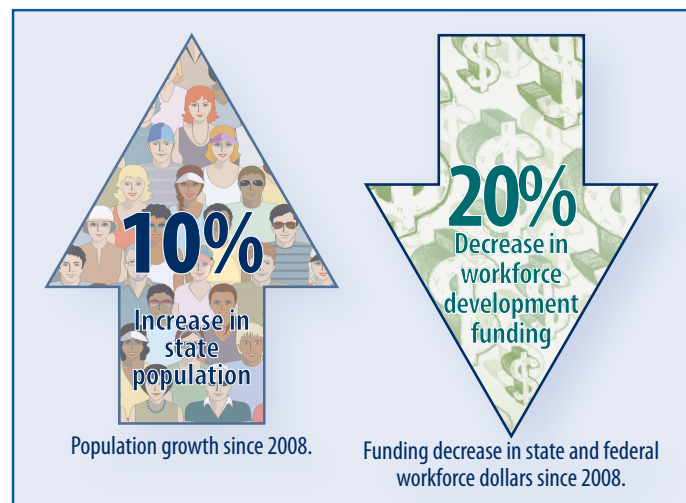
**Reduce barriers to sharing or splitting funding across funding streams.**

At the service level, it is often difficult for staff working directly with customers to alter how funds are used or how services are provided. Creative frontline staff work in the best interest of the customer to leverage the resources of other organizations. Make routine practices that leverage resources across agencies and enhance customer performance outcomes. Data sharing and customer tracking is easier and more effective through use of technology. **(Strategy A)**

*Co-ownership/  
True Partnership*

**Establish cost-sharing practices and policies that stretch public dollars to serve the largest number of participants and attain the highest performance outcome levels.**

While there have been numerous attempts and pilots, Washington needs a common practice framework, across all operating agencies, that brings private resources into the system. This calls for a co-investment framework where customer partners provide input into service design, monitor service quality, and have access to objective information about the return on their investment. **(Strategy B)**



**Statewide Programs -Taxpayer return per \$1 of public investment**

Apprenticeship	\$23 to 1
Community & Technical Colleges - Professional/Technical Education	\$3 to 1
Community & Technical Colleges - Worker Retraining	\$2 to 1
K-12 Career & Technical Education	\$9 to 1
Dislocated Worker Program	\$2 to 1

Note: Return on investments data part of Workforce Board's Workforce Training Results Report - 2011.





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