

Adult Goal and Objectives

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

Objective 1

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.
- More students achieve critical milestones at community and technical college programs as evidenced by the Student Achievement Initiative.

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 engage in training each year, including workplace-based learning.

Objective 3

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

No later than 2018:

- 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

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.

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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.”¹⁰⁰

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.¹⁰¹ 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.

Increasing Education Attainment has Multiple Benefits

Increased levels of educational attainment lead to increased earnings over a lifetime and increased tax revenues.¹⁰² 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 jobs 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

¹⁰⁰ Betsy L. Tessler and David Seith, “From Getting By to Getting Ahead: Navigating Career Advancement for Low-Wage Workers,” October 2007, page xi.

¹⁰¹ 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.

¹⁰² Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, “Education Pays,” April 15, 2008 <http://www.bls.gov/emp/emptab7.htm>

literacy levels.¹⁰³ Education and health are also linked. Studies show that educational background and opportunity is a “social determinant of health.”¹⁰⁴ 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.

The fact is that one out of four working families with children—a total of 42 million people—are low-income. These families pay a higher percentage of their income for housing than those earning more, are far less likely to have health insurance, and often lack the education and skills required to succeed in today's skills-driven economy.¹⁰⁵

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.¹⁰⁶ 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.¹⁰⁷

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.¹⁰⁸

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.”¹⁰⁹

103 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.

104 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>

105 Brandon Roberts and Deborah Povich, *Still Working Hard, Still Falling Short: New Findings on the Challenges Confronting American's Working Families*, The Working Poor Families Project funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation and John Stuart Moss Foundation, see report at www.workingpoorfamilies.org

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

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

108 SBCTC, Annual Report on Enrollment and Student Demographics for 2006–2007.

109 National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, “Special Analysis 2002: Nontraditional Undergraduates.”

Even though our education system serves many older and returning students, our colleges and universities have not fully adjusted to meet their needs. For example, many older students hold down full-time jobs and need 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.¹¹⁰

If we are to increase the number of people who reach the “Tipping Point” and transition successfully to work and better-paying careers, 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 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 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.

¹¹⁰ Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board, Workforce Training Results, 2006.

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 the chance 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 costs include everything from tuition to 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 (Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training). I-BEST combines basic skills with occupational skills and has already shown promising results. However, there are still many Adult Basic Education courses that provide few links and no integration with occupations skills training.

"I wanted to go back to school for my daughter who is four years old, to be a good example for her and to get a better job to better support my family. For the last nine years I have worked two jobs in restaurants to support my family and my parents' family. Without the Opportunity Grant I could not afford to send my daughter to childcare and go back to school. This has given me the opportunity to educate myself so I can get a better job."

Jesus Jasso, Automotive Student at Shoreline Community College¹¹¹

¹¹¹ Testimony provided in support for SB5410 (Opportunity Grants) Senate Higher Education Committee, February 21, 2008.

Integrated English as a Second Language and Apprenticeship Program

Roofers Local 153, Clover Park Technical College and Pierce College worked together to address the needs of non-English speaking workers who were unable to complete apprenticeship instruction. By putting the technical and ESL instructors both in the classroom and on the roof during 14-week instruction periods, the project offered apprentices the opportunity to gain specific work and language skills simultaneously. Workers who began in this integrated adult basic skills and occupational skills program increased their earnings from \$15 per hour to \$25 per hour as journey-level roofers. This program won a Governor's Workforce Best Practice Award in 2008 and the roofing model is being expanded to other locations across Washington.

Washington's Career Bridge

The Workforce Board has created an online information source, Career Bridge (www.CareerBridge.wa.gov), that allows Washington residents to view careers and employment demand by region of the state, 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.wa.gov 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. Information includes cost, length of program, student characteristics, and employment and earnings results. Career Bridge.wa.gov 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.

This new website is one part of a communication strategy to help explain the benefits of further education to Washington residents and help them be better consumers when choosing their next career step.

Steps To Get Us There

1. 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:
 - a. Expand the Opportunity Grant program and include support services.
 - b. Provide the first five credits of postsecondary training free for workforce students who earn less than the median family income. Leads: SBCTC working with Workforce Board with other partners. Requires support of the Governor and Legislature and General Fund – State appropriations.
2. 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. Leads: SBCTC working with Workforce Board, business and labor organizations, and other partners.
3. Provide more workforce education students with access to work-based learning and career and labor market information. Leads: SBCTC, Workforce Board, business and labor organizations, joint labor-management training partnerships, with other partners. Requires support of the Governor and Legislature and General Fund – State appropriations.
4. Create easy to navigate postsecondary education and training and career websites, including financial aid and support services. Leads: Workforce Board (Career Bridge Website), SBCTC, HECB (Academic GPS) with other partners.
5. 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. Leads: Workforce Board, OSPI, SBCTC, ESD, Department of Labor and Industries – Apprenticeship Training Council, HECB, private career schools, business and labor organizations, WDCs, with other partners.

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 engage in training each year, including in workplace-based learning.

Expanding Options for Lifelong Learning

We need to make it easier to participate in postsecondary education and training programs. Options include distance learning and workplace-based learning. We also need incentives for adults to enter educational programs and for employers to support their employees along their lifelong learning paths.

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:¹¹²

- 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.
- 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."¹¹³

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 rather than savings.

The Workforce Board is leading the pilot with state and local partners. This is a positive 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.

¹¹² Brian Bosworth and Sylvia Choitz, "Held Back: How Student Aid Programs Fail Working Adults," FutureWorks, Belmont Massachusetts, April 2002.

¹¹³ "Serving Adult Learners in Higher Education: Principles of Effectiveness," Council on Adult and Experiential Learning, 2000.

Creating Links Between Basic Education and Job Preparation

Washington state's 34 community and technical colleges have been part of a national initiative sponsored by the Ford Foundation's 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 or job preparatory programs.¹¹⁴

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, career preparation and baccalaureate degrees.

"The I-BEST revolution has initiated enormous transitions across our district and very successfully put low-skilled adults on paths to high demand jobs like never before. I-BEST is truly taking students from where they are to where they want to be."

John Kerr, Director for Integrated Basic Skills, Pierce College

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.¹¹⁵ However, there is room to improve efficiency by increasing statewide transfer agreements and the number of transferable 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 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 four-year degrees. 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.

114 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>

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

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:

- 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.

Web-based Advising for Potential Transfer Students

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 "modularized" curriculum with multiple entry and exit points, and including 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

1. Identify and implement best practice models for working adults to gain further education and training at the workplace, including online learning. Leads: Governor and Legislature. Workforce Board working with SBCTC, business and labor organizations, joint labor-management training partnerships with other partners.
2. Develop public/private financial aid support to assist working adults to gain further education and training credentials including:
 - a. Lifelong Learning Accounts (LiLAs). Leads: Workforce Board, Association of Washington Business, business and labor organizations, HECB, and other partners.
 - b. Increasing the number of part-time, working students who can receive the state-need grant. Leads: HECB, business and labor organizations and other partners.
3. Develop better links between Adult Basic Education, English-as-a-Second Language, job preparation and college-level courses. Lead: SBCTC with other partners.
4. Develop more four-year degree options for students who complete technical associate degrees. Leads: SBCTC, HECB, Joint Access Oversight Group, Workforce Board, business and labor organizations, with other partners.
5. Develop more statewide direct transfer agreements and articulation agreements between two-year and four-year schools, and between private schools and public schools. Leads: SBCTC, HECB, Joint Access Oversight Group, Workforce Board, business and labor organizations, with other partners.
6. Grant more credits at postsecondary institutions for prior learning, including credits for major programs of study. Leads: Governor and Legislature, SBCTC, HECB, Joint Access Oversight Group, Workforce Board, with other partners.

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

No later than 2018:

- 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.

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. By customizing our programs and providing the best possible service to every person, we can 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.¹¹⁶ 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 a key strategy to overcome language deficiencies of many refugees and recent immigrants. Workforce 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 program helps immigrants with prior medical training become recertified for 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 Workers

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. While some of these workers will need minor upgrading of skills, others will require substantial retraining to meet changing job requirements. Either way, employers and state and local agencies will need to work together to entice older workers to stay in the workforce and to upgrade their skills.

¹¹⁶ 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.

Here are some examples of Washington companies with programs to retain older workers:¹¹⁷

- 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:¹¹⁸

- 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 workforces. The Arizona Mature Workforce Initiative,¹¹⁹ with the motto, "Experience is Our Business!" has 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 offer a launching point for a state initiative to serve older adults. Clark College, Clover Park Technical College, and the Institute for Extended Learning at the Community Colleges of 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. These grants 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 workforce development programs serve this population. System partners at the state and local levels need to work together to create connections with mature workers and develop strategies to serve them.

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

118 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

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

Smoothing Transitions for Veterans

As U.S. military personnel return from Iraq and Afghanistan and other military operations, we will need to improve workforce development services aimed at veterans. Washington state citizens have always answered the call to serve our state and nation as soldiers, sailors, airmen, marine, and coast guardsmen in times of peace and war. With 672,000 veterans in the state, Washington is home to one of the largest populations of veterans in the country. Our veterans offer the civilian workplace a high level of skill, training, and experience. The majority of veterans establish career pathways and successfully transition into civilian employment, but many face challenges in advancing their career due to underemployment and low education. In addition, some exit the military facing physical and mental health disabilities that often go undiagnosed or are disclosed later in life.

Federal and state programs assist in transferring military skills to the civilian workplace. Initiatives in our state include a two-day Transition Assistance Program (TAP) workshop held at Washington's military installations. TAP allows service members transitioning to civilian life the opportunity to learn about benefits and services that include unemployment insurance, WorkSource services and other workforce development programs with education and training assistance. In addition, 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.

Recently, both Congress and the state Legislature passed legislation supporting exiting service members. In 2008, Congress passed the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act which increased the Montgomery GI Bill benefits for post-9/11 veterans. In 2006, Washington state passed legislation that created the Veterans Innovation Program. This program provides emergency funds for veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. Funds may be used to meet financial needs ranging from utility bills to assisting with college tuition.

These programs can help struggling veterans attain high-wage jobs. Unfortunately, many cannot participate because they are the financial providers for their family. As a result, many will choose underemployment rather than further develop their skills. They find themselves five, 10, or 20 years later challenged as a job seeker who is under-educated and under-skilled. For many pre-9/11 GI Bill veterans, their benefits offer less financial support and more strict time usage requirements that often expire.

To improve veterans services we must:

- Develop programs that provide skill development opportunities designed to generate long-term, high wage employment and provide opportunities for those veterans whose GI Bill support has expired.
- Align general education and training with military experience.
- Centralize and streamline pathways to apprenticeships.
- Include training and education opportunities for spouses and dependents.

Our vision for the future must include helping veterans obtain education and training for successful civilian careers. This includes assuring that Montgomery GI Bill benefits are used before they expire and providing other opportunities for education and training for those whose benefits expired.

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 want 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 its 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 customers are served.
- Creating more consistency in services.
- Enhancing partnerships with other state, local and private organizations that deliver services to individuals with disabilities.¹²⁰

Improving Education and Employment for Communities of Color

Between 2000 and 2030, all non-white groups are expected to grow faster than whites.¹²¹ 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.¹²²

Lower levels of education and skills combined with 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.

A 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.

In the coming years, Washington will face an increasing shortage of skilled workers. In the past, people with disabilities have been underutilized human resources, and have been underrepresented in the workforce at large. Part of the solution to future labor shortages should come from preparing people with disabilities for success in the workplace.

Workforce Board, Focus Papers (www.wtb.wa.gov)

120 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>

121 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.

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

Issues for Ex-offenders

According to the Department of Corrections, about 8,500 offenders return to their communities 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, imposing 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 housed in Washington state prisons, work release facilities and out-of-state prisons. 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 they often cannot find jobs. A report from the MDRC, a nonprofit, nonpartisan social policy research organization, highlights some of the major issues.¹²³

- 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 (drug treatment programs, 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 will 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.¹²⁴

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 preemployment 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 skills, 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.

¹²³ 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.

¹²⁴ Steve Aos, "Evidence-Based Public Policy Options to Reduce Future Prison Construction, Criminal Justice Costs, and Crime Rates, October 2006, page 9.

This inter-agency work should continue to best meet the workforce needs of ex-offenders and their communities.

Online Cost-of-living Calculator Promotes Self-Sufficiency

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

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.¹²⁵ Because targeted groups are overrepresented in our low-income population, we will likely improve outcomes for targeted populations when we improve outcomes for low-income populations. 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

1. Expand the use of the self-sufficiency calculator to all Workforce Development Councils, and provide training for frontline staff. Leads: WDCs, ESD, with other partners.
2. Expand the number of Adult Basic Education programs that integrate occupational skills training through the I-BEST model. Leads: SBCTC with other partners.
3. Expand use of the Food Stamps Education and Training program for customers with the greatest barriers to employment. Leads: SBCTC with other partners.
4. 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. Leads: ESD, WDCs, working with SBCTC, business and labor organizations, with other partners.
5. Enhance employment and training options for targeted populations (people of color, people with disabilities and women), ex-offenders, and veterans. Leads: ESD, WDC working with SBCTC, business and labor organizations, with other partners.
6. Improve workforce development services for individuals with disabilities by:
 - a. Reaching out to more people with disabilities, and using community-based organizations to assist with this.

¹²⁵ Workforce Training Results 2008, May Board Meeting, PowerPoint presentation, Slide 5.

- b. Reassessing the business needs of employers and services to customers with disabilities.
 - c. 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.
 - d. Enhancing partnerships with state, local, and private organizations that deliver services to individuals with disabilities. Leads: ESD, WDCs, DSHS – DVR, with other partners.
7. Develop a system to provide post-employment services to adults to improve work retention and career advancement. Leads: ESD, WDCs, business and labor organizations, with other partners.
8. 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. Leads: Workforce Board working with Governor’s Council on Aging, SBCTC and community and technical college pilot sites, with other partners.

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.

Working Together to Serve Students and Job Seekers

In 2007, the Workforce Board adopted the Washington Workforce Compact. The Compact is candid about the challenges of working together to remove barriers:

The barriers that stand in the way of our customers achieving their goals are often of our own making. Not that they are intentional. But sometimes, individual program objectives bump up against the policies or practices of other programs in ways that are 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 policies, practices, regulations, or performance measures. What appear as barriers may exist for good reasons. The partners commit to identifying and removing those barriers that don't make sense from the perspectives 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:

- The need for streamlined "co-enrollment" processes.
- The need for staff cross-training.
- The value of co-locating staff among workforce partners.
- The need for consistency in performance measures.

Steps To Get Us There

1. Identify barriers to integrated customer service and implement solutions. Leads: All organizations represented on the Workforce Board with other partners.
2. Increase integration of WorkSource partner programs through methods such as co-enrollments and co-locations among WorkSource partner programs. Leads: ESD, WDCs, with other partners.
3. Increase the use of consistent performance measures among WorkSource partner programs. Leads: ESD, Workforce Board, with other partners.
4. Improve the integration of assessments, counseling, employment services, and training in the WorkSource system. Leads: ESD, WDCs working with SBCTC, private career schools with other partners.

5. Improve linkages with community-based organizations, especially those that serve target populations, ex-offenders, and veterans. Leads: ESD, WDCs, Workforce Board with other partners.
6. Identify opportunities for partnership that will provide resources to serve more customers in the workforce development system. Leads: All organizations represented on the Workforce Board.