

Introduction to High Skills, High Wages

In our pursuit of making Washington state a great place to learn, work and live, we track the many programs and activities that fall under the umbrella of “workforce development” that are vital to our workforce, and our economy.

Our job at the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board is to help you better understand the interplay of these programs and activities. We plan, monitor and evaluate these activities, while advocating for those exceptional policies that will benefit our workforce and meet the needs of Washington’s business and industry.

High Skills, High Wages 2008-2018 provides a detailed plan for Washington’s workforce, from preparing workers with the education and training needed to land family-wage jobs to supplying industry with a skilled, flexible workforce to move Washington’s economy ahead.

We plan along a 10-year horizon, to give us time to make our vision of a stronger economy a reality. To get there, we coordinate and implement key strategies to boost the state’s workforce system, which spans seven state agencies, 18 programs and nearly \$900 million in state and federal funds.

This plan offers a clear and comprehensive look at our state’s workforce challenges, and opportunities, with a focus on three key groups: youth, adults, and industry. All play a vital role in our economy. Each merits greater attention, especially during an economic downturn.

Here's a brief look at some of the immediate Strategic Opportunities in this plan:

1. Increase high school graduation rates with programs such as *Navigation 101* that provide students with supportive career guidance and planning.
2. Expand career and technical education programs that give students a real-world context for what they learn.
3. Increase the skilled workers Washington businesses need by boosting capacity at community and technical colleges, private career schools, and apprenticeship programs.
4. Expand financial aid to help more low-income Washingtonians reach a "13th year" of education that leads to living wage jobs.
5. Boost the employability of workers through programs that roll basic skills, English language instruction and job skills into one complete package.
6. Focus on industry clusters that drive regional economies so that Washington communities build on their strengths and grow even stronger.
7. Expand workplace based learning, online courses and other flexible education options to help workers move ahead and expand their careers.
8. Continue to identify and remove barriers to employment, education and training so that workers have a clear path to reach their career goals.

To make the most of these strategic opportunities, we need to work even harder to ensure our workforce development system functions as a highly effective, collaborative team. *High Skills, High Wages 2008-2018* provides well-defined goals, and a roadmap to reach them.

Whether it's a struggling student on the brink of dropping out, a laid off worker searching for a job, or a low-income family barely making ends meet, these are among the many Washingtonians we hope to help. In the end, a better educated, better trained, better paid workforce helps us all.

We look forward to working with you to build a world class Washington workforce that gives our residents, our businesses, and our state, an economic edge.

Sincerely,

Eleni Papadakis
Executive Director
Workforce Board

David Harrison
Chair
Workforce Board

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