

High Skills, High Wages 2008 - 2018

Annual Progress Report to the Legislature
July 2010 through June 2011



December 2011

Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board
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HIGH SKILLS, HIGH WAGES 2008-2018

Washington's Strategic Plan for Workforce Development



Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board

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High Skills, High Wages 2008- 2018

Washington's Strategic Plan for Workforce Development

Annual Report for July 1, 2010 to June 30, 2011

Published as the economy was just beginning to feel the effects of the Great Recession, *High Skills, High Wages 2008 – 2018* has laid out strategies that are making a difference in improving:

1. The education and career success of youth.
2. The employability of Washington workers, particularly those who are unemployed or face barriers.
3. The ability of employers to find suitable workers.

Many of these strategies involve policy changes that take an investment of time and money to deliver results—a challenge in tough budget times. In the fall of 2010, the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (Workforce Board) launched an initiative focused on getting unemployed workers back into jobs while providing employers with the encouragement they need to hire again. The “Retooling Washington’s Workforce” initiative drew upon many of the strategies in *High Skills, High Wages* that have matured to the point of producing results, as well as additional tactics designed to make a difference within 12 to 18 months.

This year’s annual report reiterates the plan’s Objectives and Long Term Goals that go out to 2018. While some of these goals may need to be reevaluated given changes in our economy and the state budget, they remind us of the value of having a portfolio of strategies that can provide returns both in the short term as well as the long term.

As the Workforce Board prepares to embark on a statewide stakeholder process to update *High Skills, High Wages 2008–2018* in the coming year, it’s timely to consider these different types of investments and strategies and the goals and objectives that inspire them. We encourage you to ask questions of what this report contains, challenge us on how our state can do better and partner with us in making Washington a state of “High Skills and High Wages.”

High Skills High Wages 2008–2018 was approved by the 2009 Washington State Legislature. The plan’s 11 objectives are organized under the following goals:

Youth Goal: Ensure all youth receive the education, training, and support they need for success in postsecondary education and/or work.

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

Industry Goal: Meet the workforce needs of industry by preparing students, current workers, and dislocated workers with the skills employers need.

This report covers activities during the recent fiscal year (July 1, 2010 to June 30, 2011).

Retooling Washington's Workforce

(In this report, there are a number of references to the Retooling Initiative. Here is a little background.)

The economy in Washington as with most other areas of the country has continued to struggle since the Great Recession. Hitting a peak of 10 percent, the unemployment rate has yet to drop below 9 percent and over 320,000 residents are still looking, but have not found, work. Meanwhile, some of the businesses that are recovering and beginning to hire complain that they cannot find workers with the right set of skills.

In the summer of 2010, the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (Workforce Board), and its many partners, launched a multi-faceted initiative (Retooling Washington's Workforce) designed to improve the job prospects of Washington's unemployed while ensuring our state's businesses have the talent they need to grow and prosper.

Specifically, the Retooling Washington's Workforce initiative set out to enhance the workforce system's ability to:

1. Find and assist those employers who are hiring (or would hire) if they could find the right people.
2. Deliver a quality pool of workers capable of meeting employers' needs.
3. To the greatest extent possible, draw from the ranks of the unemployed, particularly long-term employed, when filling these new job openings.

The goal was to affect measurable results within 12 to 18 months. By June 30, 2011, the initiative had launched a number of strategies and was just beginning to show results. For more information on this initiative, see: www.wtb.wa.gov/retoolingwashington.asp

Annual Report on Youth

High Skills, High Wages identifies four objectives in achieving the youth goal of ensuring “all youth receive the education, training, and support they need for success in postsecondary education and/or work.”

High Skills, High Wages Youth Objective 1

A K-12 Guidance and Counseling System provides students and their parents with a curriculum to individually plan their pathways and prepare for future education and/or work after high school.

Status: Washington has continued its investment in **Navigation 101**—a school-wide career guidance program that engages students in their education and career planning and encourages mentorship and parent participation. For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2011, state funding allowed for the rollout of the program to 134 schools. Since 2007, 827 grants have been provided to 351 schools in 149 districts statewide. Sixty-two percent of the schools have continued with the program after funding ran out. By focusing students’ attention on college and career readiness, Navigation 101 is helping students better understand what they want to do with their lives after high school and what they need to do to get there. One measure of success is that the program’s student-led conferences in first-year schools have boosted parent turnout from 48 percent in 70 percent by the second year.

Long Term Goal: *No later than 2018 all middle and high schools in the state have in place all five elements of the K-12 Guidance and Counseling System that includes community, business and labor collaboration.*

The State Board of Education developed a proposed definition for the High School and Beyond Plan graduation requirement that incorporates the key elements of a career guidance curriculum (consistent with Navigation 101). The definition is not yet in rule however because there are insufficient funds to support the guidance activities required under the proposed rule.

High Skills, High Wages Youth Objective 2

All students leave high school prepared for success in further education and/or work.

Status: A Harvard Graduate School of Education report released in February of 2011 reinforced the *High Skills, High Wages* strategy by arguing for multiple pathways to success with increased work-based learning for students, such as greater engagement of

employers in our schools, more Career and Technical Education, and more career guidance (see Objective 1). Key developments in Washington include:

1. Over 61,000 high school students concentrated in a **Career & Technical Education** (CTE) career cluster in 2009-2010 while an additional 240,000 participated in at least one CTE course. This is a reduction in concentrators of almost 15 percent from 2008-2009.
2. Three schools were designated to serve as models for interdisciplinary project learning that connects to businesses outside the classroom and the community.
3. State workgroups are in the process of aligning secondary and postsecondary programs so that high students can earn credit toward an industry-recognized credential or certificate or an academic degree. These statewide **Programs of Study** are in Aerospace/Manufacturing, Information Technology, Healthcare and Agriculture.
4. Despite federal cuts to the state program, the Workforce Board has been working with the state's community and technical colleges to preserve dual credit status for the many high school CTE courses that currently count toward college credit.
5. The **Opportunity Internship** program provides incentives for local partnerships to build educational and employment pipelines for low-income high school students in high demand occupations in targeted industries. In 2010-2011, 294 disadvantaged youth completed an internship through this program.

Long Term Goal: *No later than 2018 all high school students across Washington have the option to complete a career and technical education sequence that matches their career interests, articulates with postsecondary education and results in industry certification where applicable.*

Developing statewide Programs of Study (currently happening in four fields) and funding them will be essential to ensuring every student has access to career pathways. In addition, Washington needs to foster an education system that recognizes, supports and respects multiple pathways. Key to this are graduation requirements that recognize and accommodate a career-focused high school education. Of concern is the decline in the number of students concentrating in CTE.

High Skills, High Wages Youth Objective 3

All students graduate from high school.

Status: For the 2009-2010 year (the most recent reporting year), Washington's on-time graduation rate was 76.5 percent and its extended graduation rate is 82.6 percent. The extended rate includes students who take more than four years to earn their diploma. These numbers are up from previous years.

Big gains were made by several school districts with historically low graduation rates. These districts received a **Building Bridges** (BB) grant to help them effectively target and intervene on behalf of students at risk of dropping out. In Shelton, the on-time graduation rate rose during the three years of the grant from less than 60 percent of students in 2006-2007 to 76.5 percent in 2009-2010. Similar gains were made in Pasco and Granite Falls, whose districts also participated in this grant program over the past three school years.

Building Bridges grant recipients were required to implement a dropout prevention, intervention and reengagement system. Critical elements of the system included using data to identify students at risk of dropping out, providing timely academic and non-academic interventions, assigning educational advocates for targeted students, and enrolling students in career and technical education or alternative educational programming. The evaluation of the BB grant program determined that grant recipients were able to make a significant impact despite the small investment by the state (just over \$400 per year for each student served).

Long Term Goal: *No later than 2018 every local community in the state will have an effective school/community partnership that provides a comprehensive dropout prevention, intervention and re-engagement system for ALL youth, including those who have dropped out or who are at risk of dropping out.*

Reduced funding has resulted in grants going to just three school-community partnerships for the 2010-2011 school year. Fifteen other school-community partnerships have been funded since 2007-2008. Specific recommendations are now available on how to build a statewide dropout prevention, intervention, and reengagement system. When funding is available, there is a plan of action for state and regional entities to move forward in supporting system development.

High Skills, High Wages Youth Objective 4

Reduce unemployment rates among older youth, and improve their career prospects.

Status: In January 2011, the Workforce Board released its biennial report on youth unemployment (*Wanted: Work Experience for Young Adults*). Since then, while employment prospects for young adults have not improved, there has been a growing awareness of the problem and the need for work opportunities. There are several small scale programs at the local level that offer work experience. In one case, SODO Inc., the program is linked to an effort to create career pathways into manufacturing. However, there are no state scale programs.

Long Term Goal: *No later than 2018 there is a comprehensive state strategy to help unemployed older youth reconnect with work and/or further education opportunities.*

Legislation adopted in 2010 (HB1418) allows more basic education dollars to be used for reengaging students who have dropped out of high school or are far behind in accumulating credits to graduate. The intent of the legislation is to “provide a framework to support a statewide dropout reengagement system for older youth.” The ability to use basic education funding to reengage 16 to 21 year olds will make it more likely that schools, community organizations and employers can partner to provide the necessary support, education and work experience that will generate more economically connected young adults.

Annual Report on the Adult Workforce Plan

High Skills, High Wages identifies four objectives in achieving the plan’s adult goal of providing “Washington adults (including those with barriers to education and employment) with access to lifelong education, training, and employment services.”

High Skills, High Wages Adult Objective 1

Increase the number of adults who have at least one year of postsecondary training.

Status: The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges has instituted a performance-based funding system (**Student Achievement Initiative**) where colleges receive funding based on the achievement of their students as measured by students reaching key points in their academic career. Categories of achievement include: first year retention, college level math completion, and attainment of degrees, certificates and apprenticeship training. Measured from the 2006-2007 academic year, colleges increased student achievement by the end of academic year 2008-2009 by 19 percent, with gains in all categories. Total achievement increased again in the following year by 12 percent.

Long Term Goal: No later than 2018:

- *More adults attain at least one year of postsecondary training and a credential.*
- *Washington 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.*

Budget woes make it difficult to increase capacity, scholarships or support services at this time. However, long-term strategies that create multiple pathways between secondary and postsecondary programs should increase the number of adults who are capable of attaining credentials. Initiatives that allow for more dual secondary/postsecondary credits, credit for prior learning and online courses can improve the efficiency of our postsecondary system, making it more accessible and affordable for adults to earn credentials and degrees.

High Skills, High Wages Adult Objective 2

Postsecondary education and training provides effective opportunities for going in and out of training over the course of life-long learning.

Status: A key part of this strategy is making education more accessible through methods other than the traditional classroom teaching on campuses. The state's 34 community and technical colleges have deployed common eLearning tools throughout the system:

- 21 colleges use ANGEL, an online course management system.
- 26 colleges partner with WSU in the NW eTutoring Consortium.
- All colleges participate in an online reference librarian consortium.
- All colleges use Blackboard Collaborate, an online conferencing system.
- 33 colleges use Quality Matters, an instructional design tool for online courses.
- 33 colleges use Tegrity, a lecture capture system.

In 2010-2011, 31,395 FTES, one-fifth of all enrollments, were served through eLearning. In addition, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges has negotiated transfer agreements and tuition discounts for community and technical college students, faculty and staff enrolling in the online **Western Governors University-Washington**.

Meanwhile, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges has been developing its **Open Course Library** (launched in October 2011). This project delivers education materials online for 42 of the state's highest-enrolled courses, making it easy and free for students to access.

The Employment Security Department contracted with Microsoft to provide no cost, statewide **e-learning** service through the state's WorkSource system. The Redmond software giant offered 1,000 online courses to increase computer skills with six learning plans that include certification options. As of June 30, 2011, more than 10,000 Washington residents had started one or more courses. Of that number, 3,750 completed 75 percent or more (of over 12,000 courses). A little more than 2,700 customers reached the finish line on their coursework.

The Retooling initiative, along with available federal funding, has put increased attention on the role of **On-the-Job Training** opportunities in helping encourage employers to hire unemployed workers by covering employers' training costs. As of June of 2011, 268 Washington workers had OJTs. That number will likely triple by the end of 2011 as more employers sign on to offer OJT. This renewed emphasis on OJTs has helped identify an innovation that combines academic credit with OJT experiences. Lower Columbia College, through the Individualized Certificate Program, offers students the opportunity to pursue a custom-designed worksite-based learning program not available through current

academic or apprenticeship programs. The Workforce Board is hoping to expand the application of these individualized programs to other community colleges in the coming year and to combine the training program with OJTs.

Getting academic credit and licensing recognition for **prior learning experiences** can help foster a culture of lifelong learning. The Legislature has passed several bills directed at state agencies and organizations to develop policies that make it easier for adults to establish credit for prior learning. These directives affect:

- Universities and colleges by calling on the creation of policies for awarding and transferring academic credit.
- Department Health and associated Boards and Commissions by requiring recognition of prior learning that relates to health care profession licensure.
- Department of Licensing and its associated Boards and Commissions by requiring recognition of prior learning that relates to business and professional occupation licensure.

Long Term Goal: *No later than 2018, the majority of working adults engage in training each year, including workplace-based learning.*

The *High Skills, High Wages* strategies seek to blur the lines between the workplace and education and training and the barriers between Washington workers and lifelong education. A culture of lifelong learning fosters wage progression for working adults, and encourages economic growth.

High Skills, High Wages Adult Objective 3

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

Status: Washington's community and technical colleges have pioneered an award-winning program that allows students to gain literacy at the same time they gain occupational skills. The Integrated Basic Education Skills Training (I-BEST) program has adult literacy and vocational instructors working together to jointly design and deliver college-level instruction. Starting with five colleges in 2004, I-BEST is now available in all 34 community and technical colleges in Washington and is emulated by colleges in other parts of the country. In 2010-2011, 157 I-BEST programs served over 3,300 students—1,286 students completed an I-BEST program. New programs are developed in high demand fields with close ties to employers. These programs, linked to high employer demand fields, have excellent success rates. A Big Bend Community College program was recently recognized with a Governor's Best Practices Award in Workforce and Economic

Development by helping to provide more truck drivers to eastern Washington agribusinesses.

The Retooling Washington's Workforce Initiative targeted a barrier that has increased greatly since the recession: long-term unemployment. By June 30, 2011, Washington had more than 60,000 jobless workers who had exhausted their **Unemployment Insurance benefits**. Many of these workers are finding that their length of unemployment is a deterrent to their being hired, since some employers fear they may lack quality, up-to-date skills. The initiative focused on sharing information about the long-term unemployed to employers and service providers. Also, WorkSource offices offered specialized services to keep this population engaged and working on re-entering the workforce. Additionally, WorkSource frontline employees were trained in motivational interviewing techniques that have helped them engage clients in pursuing the services they need to find a job. These include job-search preparation, job and training referrals, connection to other employment and training resources, and information about other community resources.

Washington's **Opportunity Partnership** program provides mentorship to encourage academic success for low-income students at the community and technical college level. Four programs operated in Washington. In the fiscal year ending June 30, 2011, 228 students worked with mentors from high job demand fields.

Long Term Goal: 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.*

Cuts in tuition assistance and higher tuition are working against the strategy of reducing barriers to employment and training. At the same time, the Great Recession is creating the additional barrier of long-term unemployment. This year, the Workforce Board focused on remedies that attempted to get more unemployed back to work with the hope that in doing so, fewer families would slip into poverty and encounter barriers for another generation.

High Skills, High Wages Adult Objective 4

The WorkSource system provides integrated and effective customer service without barriers associated with separate, individual programs.

Status: The Retooling Washington's Workforce initiative set out to bring about changes within 12 to 18 months by encouraging the workforce system to operate across program and agency lines. For example, the state's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) at the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) is launching a one-year pilot project to contract with ESD to provide up to 180 DVR customers with OJT job placements. ESD will be placing DVR clients into OJTs at 14 sites around the state to test a collaborative service delivery model that is aimed at creating more OJT opportunities by braiding DVR and ESD resources. Additionally, ESD and DSHS/DVR continue to partner to improve the referral process, including designing and implementing an online referral tool to more easily and rapidly refer job seekers with disabilities who require DVR services.

Another example of working across traditional lines has been the Retooling initiative's efforts to **coordinate business outreach**. On July 1, 2010, a new WorkSource Service Delivery System Policy clarified roles, and called for more joint outreach planning and information sharing among WorkSource partners. As these policies took effect, the Retooling Washington's Workforce initiative encouraged WorkSource teams to broaden their outreach partnerships to include Economic Development Councils, community-based organizations, municipalities and Chambers of Commerce.

There are increasing examples of the workforce system acting in a seamless manner in meeting employer needs, enlisting partners as needed. In Whatcom County, an aerospace employer was concerned it would not meet demand for recent export orders. A community partnership, led by the area Workforce Development Council, pulled together to ensure that most of the new jobs were filled from those who were unemployed or laid off from other jobs. This project recently won the Governor's Best Practices Award for Workforce and Economic Development.

Long Term Goal: No later than 2018:

- *WorkSource is a functionally integrated service delivery system that measurably improves the employability of its customers.*

The one-stop WorkSource approach seeks to strip away organizational walls, making it possible for job seekers and employers to access services as needed. The Retooling Washington's Workforce initiative has helped highlight the good work that has been done to make for a more seamless system.

Annual Report on the Industry Plan

High Skills, High Wages identifies three objectives in achieving the Industry Goal of meeting “the workforce needs of industry by preparing students, current workers, and dislocated workers with the skills employers need.”

High Skills, High Wages Industry Objective 1

The workforce development system supplies the number of newly prepared workers needed to meet current and emerging employer needs.

Status: While the recession has created a surplus of newly prepared workers, if the current supply is not increased, the Workforce Board projects a shortage, or gap, of about 10 percent in 2015. That gap reflects the number of new mid-level trained workers in relation to projected new openings that require education and training that falls between one-year and four years of post-high school education and training. This information is available at: www.wtb.wa.gov/skillgap.asp

Every year, the Workforce Board helps to identify high demand occupational fields where there is a significant gap projected between new supply and demand. This information is available at: www.wtb.wa.gov/HighDemandFields.asp. Until the recession and the state’s budget woes, Washington funded the creation and expansion of education and training programs in fields that were in high demand by employers. As a result, in the last decade, the state’s community and technical colleges have more than doubled the number of Allied Health graduates. While this special funding has ended for now, Washington continues to emphasize high-employer demand programs of study through its Worker Retraining, Opportunity Internship and Opportunity Partnership programs.

Long Term Goal: No later than 2018:

- *Raise mid-level degrees and certificates to 36,200 annually, an increase of 9,400 degrees and certificates annually.*

The Great Recession has temporarily depressed demand for skilled workers, but by 2014 we expect demand to rebound to previous levels.

High Skills, High Wages Industry Objective 2

The workforce development system strengthens Washington’s economy, focusing on strategic industry clusters as a central organizing principle.

Status: Cluster strategy is an economic strategy that focuses on concentrations of interconnected businesses and industries within regions. By focusing on these clusters or webs of economic activity, workforce and economic development resources can be coordinated strategically. But to be successful, state agencies and local entities need to

be in agreement over the industry clusters that should be targeted. By June 30, 2011, the Workforce Board was close to reaching agreement with the 12 regional Workforce Development Councils on lists of strategic industry clusters. (You can view the approved list at www.wtb.wa.gov/ClusterRankingsAllRegions.asp)In addition, the Department of Commerce and the Workforce Board have placed staff on each other's grant review committees, helping to coordinate workforce and economic development resources.

In January 2011, Commerce's Cluster Grants went to support efforts in the following industries and areas: 1) Clean Energy in Spokane, 2) Global Health Technologies in Seattle, 3) Wine Making in Walla Walla, 4) Sustainable Energy in Clallam County and 5) Manufacturing and Marine Transportation in Northwest Washington. Meanwhile, the Workforce Board continued to work with industry skill panels formed around advanced manufacturing, maritime, interactive media and renewable energy.

At the state level, the Workforce Board and Commerce have collaborated on the Evergreen Jobs Initiative—a comprehensive green economy jobs growth effort mandated by legislation (RCW 43.330.370). This interagency team that includes private sector specialists has been effective in securing Washington federal Recovery Act funds dedicated to nurturing green jobs. The result has been over \$100 million in federal investment in the green economy and new and retained employment for almost 2,000 workers. The Evergreen Jobs Leadership Team continues to meet regularly and report progress: www.wtb.wa.gov/EvergreenJobsTeam.asp

Long Term Goal: No later than 2018:

- *Washington's workforce and economic development programs have established track records of effective service to the strategic industry clusters in Washington.*
- *Washington's workforce development system prepares the number of workers needed to fill job openings in strategic industry clusters.*

With consensus developing over strategic industry clusters and a track record of bringing together workforce and economic development teams and resources to aid these clusters, Washington is poised to make the most out of its regional economic success stories. See Report on House Bill 1323 at: www.wtb.wa.gov/StrategicClusterPolicy.asp

High Skills, High Wages Industry Objective 3

Current and dislocated workers, and job seekers receive education and training that builds competitive skills and businesses.

Status: The **Worker Retraining Program**, administered by the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, has served nearly 116,000 unemployed and dislocated workers in Washington since its inception in the mid-1990s. Because of the Great Recession and because the program has been effective in getting laid off workers retrained and back into high demand jobs, Washington has increased its investment in the Worker Retraining program in recent years. In 2010-2011, 19,562 students were served by the Worker Retraining Program (13,403 FTEs). Dislocated workers and long-term unemployed people have priority access to the program's training and support services. The Workforce Board's latest performance results for Worker Retraining indicate that participants in the program earned on average \$2,750 more per year than a similarly configured non-participating control group and were more likely to be employed (employment rates for participants were 7.5 percentage points higher than nonparticipants).

Passed by the Washington State Legislature and signed into law by the Governor on May 19, 2009, **Senate Bill 5809** provided ESD with \$7 million in state funds. The funds were used to incent Workforce Development Councils to expand occupational training capacity for WIA-eligible dislocated workers and low-income adults in high-demand programs of study at public community and technical colleges. As of June 30, 2011, the Workforce Development Councils had spent all of the funding, providing group training to nearly 2,600 displaced workers and low-income adults. They also provided wrap around services to help students succeed in their training.

Long Term Goal: No later than 2018:

- *A majority of mid- and lower-wage employees receive training from either their employers or the workforce development system.*
- *Dislocated worker programs are easy to navigate and enable good wage replacement results.*

Despite the economic downturn, more than three out of four employers continued to provide job-specific training to their employees. In its 2010 Employer Survey, the Workforce Board found that 58 percent of Washington employers either provided or paid for at least four hours of job-specific training for at least some of their workforce during 2009-2010. Roughly 44 percent of employers surveyed provided tuition reimbursement for their employees. Survey: www.wtb.wa.gov/EmployerSurvey.asp

Dislocated workers continue to meet with positive results when they participate in the state's Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Dislocated Worker and Worker Retraining programs. According to the Workforce Board's most recent performance results, 77 percent of all participants in the WIA program and 69 percent of all Worker Retraining participants were in reported employment in the Northwest within six to nine months of leaving the WIA program. When compared to a control group of similarly situated workers who did not participate in the program, participants in these two programs were more likely to be employed and to earn more on average than nonparticipants. See the latest Workforce Training Results: www.wtb.wa.gov/WorkforceTrainingResults.asp.



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