

# High Skills High Wages

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## Annual Progress Report

A summary of progress on Washington's workforce development strategic plan



***December 2013***

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**Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board**

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## 2013 Annual Report on Washington's Workforce Development Strategic Plan

The Workforce Board adopted its new strategic plan for workforce development in 2012. The board recognized that some of the plan's goals were not immediately attainable. These "stretch goals" were important to both the Board and its stakeholders, as they laid out a longer-term vision for the state's workforce system. The goals are lofty, and were not intended to be immediately achievable. Because our planning horizon is 10 years, the Workforce Board established goals and objectives that reach into the next decade.

Because this is our first annual progress report to the Legislature for the new strategies outlined in [High Skills, High Wages](#), concrete progress toward the goals is not uniform. In some cases, Washington is well on its way, and in other cases, we have only taken the first tentative steps, with positive results expected in the future.

This report is intentionally brief and functions best as an electronic document where the hyperlinks allow the reader to drill down into a particular topic as needed. Our hope is this report will encourage discussion on how Washington can move forward more rapidly in achieving the vision outlined by our state strategic plan.

Please contact me if you would like additional information, or would like to discuss any of the topics in this report in greater detail.

Thank you.

Eleni Papadakis  
Executive Director

# Progress Report on *High Skills, High Wages*

## Multiple Pathways for First Careers — *Goal 1*

The multiple pathway 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 the availability and quality of career and education guidance for students in middle school, high school, and postsecondary institutions.

- **Comprehensive Career Guidance & Counseling** — The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and the Workforce Board encourage comprehensive career guidance and counseling to help students make informed choices about their education and career paths. The earlier this guidance is provided, the more opportunities students have to chart meaningful education and career pathways. OSPI recently launched “Career Guidance Washington,” for counselors and teachers. It includes lessons and activities, professional development and technical support.

**Supporting K-12 career education, exploration, and planning** — OSPI presented the Legislature in 2012 with a final [Career and Technical Education Strategic Plan](#) that included a number of recommendations to expand career education, exploration, and planning in Washington. These recommendations are part of legislative proposals, program pilots, and workforce initiatives. The plan was developed by the Workforce Board, OSPI, Workforce Development Councils, school directors, educators, and others.

- **CareerBridge.Wa.Gov** — Washington’s popular career guidance [website](#) provides teachers, students and parents with free career planning tools and information on nearly 6,000 education programs. The site underwent a redesign in 2012. Site improvements and increased outreach efforts helped boost unique site visitors by 45 percent (roughly 13,000 per month) and helped fuel a 95 percent increase in page views (roughly 280,000 per month) over the same period in 2012.<sup>1</sup> In the spring of 2013, a health care career ladder was added to the site, along with health care videos.

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<sup>1</sup> Google Analytics.

- **Career Education Opportunities Task Force** — The Career Education Opportunities Task Force is a legislative task force created in the state’s [operating budget](#) that:
  - Analyzes career- and college-ready graduation requirements.
  - Explores how to expand comprehensive career guidance and counseling.
  - Helps students and parents connect multiple pathways to education and training.
  - Develops strategies for enhancing work- integrated learning opportunities.
  - Creates strategies for appropriate oversight of career and technical education.

Task force members include two members from each caucus in each Legislative chamber and is co-chaired by [Sen. Ann Rivers](#) (18<sup>th</sup> District-R) and [Rep. Monica Stonier](#) (17<sup>th</sup> District- D). The task force also includes the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Workforce Board, the State Board of Education, the Washington Student Achievement Council, the Washington Association of Career and Technical Education, and one Governor appointee. A preliminary report was due in December of 2013 with a final report due in September of 2014.

- **Enhance career guidance for students**--The Workforce Development Council Seattle-King County’s Clinton Global Initiative Schools-to-Careers Plus program brings career awareness to local public schools. Currently, the WDC is working with 10 school districts. To date, approximately 1,500 youth have identified post-high school education and training, and explored careers. Web-based career and planning tools are made available to all 19 school districts in King County through the WDC.

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

- **Common Core State Standards and Smarter Balanced Assessments** — [Common Core State Standards](#) will be implemented in the 2014-15 school year statewide. Students will be assessed using the [Smarter Balanced Assessment](#). Both Common Core standards and the Smarter Balanced Assessment are part of standards-based education reform. Proponents say the standards, adopted by 45 states, provide clearer benchmarks of what American students need to know. In general, the standards allow teachers to focus on fewer topics in greater detail and have students apply knowledge to real-world problems. The Workforce Board generally supports these standards, but also notes areas where they should be augmented. In particular, Washington students need s to practice applying what they learn, develop work readiness skills, explore careers, and tie what they learn to the job market.
- **Core Plus Aerospace and Manufacturing Curriculum** — Core Plus manufacturing curriculum was adopted by the state’s Skills Centers after working with the Boeing Aerospace Academic Alignment team. Competencies are based on entry-level

employment knowledge, skills and abilities needed by aerospace assemblers. These programs offer universal manufacturing skills training (the Core), and additional training in specific manufacturing and industrial skills to meet local employer needs (the Plus portion of the curriculum). Both have been developed in conjunction with local industry partners. Certificates define knowledge, skills and abilities students have attained. Online curriculum provides a shared format between high school and community college programs where direct articulation is easily defined and the competencies and training program are standardized. Student records and attainment follow the student throughout their training. Some 33 schools across Washington have “self-identified” as willing to offer Core Plus manufacturing curriculum to their students. Four of these are middle schools, 11 are Skills Centers, and the rest are comprehensive high schools. Core Plus manufacturing curriculum is often combined with welding, machining, composites, electronics, quality assurance, hydraulic systems, manufacturing tooling, workforce readiness skill development, Project Lead the Way, First Robotics and other STEM-based initiatives.

- **Career Readiness Certifications** — The Center of Excellence for Aerospace and Advanced Manufacturing worked with the Governor, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Department of Commerce, and three Workforce Development Councils on an application for Washington to become a WorkReady Community. Washington’s application was accepted. The next step is working to certify counties to be work ready. Some 17 states now report active participation in the ACT Work Ready Communities initiative.<sup>2</sup> This effort required the development of a state strategic plan that includes working with industry on recognizing the National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC), which tests applicants on their knowledge of workplace skills – specifically, applied mathematics, locating information, and reading for information. The Workforce Board funded a Snohomish County pilot program in 2012, enabling 250 high school students to take the NCRC. One district has since purchased tests for its graduating seniors. Students take the NCRC as part of their senior seminar. [Report](#)
- **Microsoft IT Academy** — Microsoft IT Academy provides training and certification in a number of Microsoft products, including Word, Excel, Access, Project, as well as advanced topics, including programming, Web development, and database development. OSPI has also partnered with CCI Learning Solutions to provide free certification testing for students, teachers and staff at each high school. When first introduced in the 2010-2011 school year, 400 IT Academy certifications were awarded. During the 2012–2013 school year, 12,311 certifications were awarded. To date, during the 2013-2014 school year, 7,000 certifications have been earned.

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<sup>2</sup> ACT, Inc. <http://workreadycommunities.org/> Accessed 12/21/13.

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

- Most of Washington’s public high schools have agreements with the state’s two-year colleges that align high school and college coursework to form official Programs of Study. Most of these agreements are between individual schools. However, an effort to develop statewide Programs of Study in four areas has met with some success:
  - The Aerospace/Manufacturing Program of Study has developed into a common Core Plus curriculum (described in the previous section, under Objective 2). All participating schools offer the common manufacturing curriculum, while the “Plus” portion matches the needs of regional business and industry. The Plus includes courses in welding, machining, composites, electronics, and quality assurance. Workforce readiness skill development is also included, preparing students for entry into the workplace.
  - The Information Technology Program of Study was designed to move students from two-year colleges into four-year Computer Science degree programs.
  - In the Agriculture Program of Study, three common skills and knowledge assessments have been developed for statewide use in the Animal Science, Plant Science, and Power Structural and Technical Systems courses. Each of these pathway assessments includes online and hands-on portions.
  - The Allied Health Program of Study hasn’t moved statewide but has met with some regional success. In the southwest Washington region, Clark College recognizes a common core of 16 high school course credits that articulate, or tie directly, to 14 of the college’s Allied Health certificate and degree programs.
- **Aligning Applied Baccalaureate Programs with High Schools and Middle Schools** — The Legislature passed [Senate Bill 5624](#) in the 2013 session, which required the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) to create at least two applied baccalaureate programs in STEM fields that intersect with high school and middle school coursework. The Legislature appropriated \$500,000 for this task. Through a competitive bidding process, SBCTC was able to award the funds to five community and technical colleges, including Bellevue College (Molecular Bioscience program) and Cascadia Community College (Technology in Sustainable Practices).

## Objective 4: Increased work-integrated learning.

- **The Alliance for Student Success in Education and Training (ASSET) Model** — First conceived in 2011 at a Workforce Board summer retreat, the ASSET model has evolved to inform a U.S. Department of Labor Grant application, [2013 Governor's request legislation](#), and serves as a foundation proposal promoted both in and outside of Washington. The ASSET model, in part shaped by the Workforce Board's experience with managing and implementing the [Opportunity Internship Program](#), advances work-integrated learning by providing a platform that connects students with employers. This connection is intended to create more in-class employer visits, out-of-class student site visits, internships, apprenticeships, and other work-integrated learning opportunities. The ASSET model also includes the creation of technical support materials for educators and employers. However, the most recent operating budget eliminated nearly \$500,000 in state funding for the Opportunity Internship Program. This program provided, through five regional partnerships, nearly 500 high school-age interns with work experience. The Workforce Board will pursue other models for connecting students to work-integrated learning opportunities. Even so, the ASSET model continues to be a Workforce Board priority.
- **Career Readiness Pilots** — Building off the success of the Opportunity Internship Program administered by the Workforce Board, the Employment Security Department (ESD) collaborated with OSPI, local school districts and several Workforce Development Councils to create an initiative that connects high schools with local businesses. Like the Opportunity Internship Program, which connected over 600 youth to employers in five regions of the state, Career Readiness for a Working Washington will match students with mentorships, internships or other work-based learning activities at local businesses in five Washington communities: Renton, Spokane, Vancouver, Wenatchee and Yelm. The initiative aims to help students identify a specific career goal and a career pathway. Through the five sites, about 900 students will be matched with mentors from the local business community; 150 will perform on-site internships; 850 will be engaged in other work-based learning activities. In addition, 35 teachers will participate in externships at local businesses and incorporate that experience into their curriculum. The initiative is funded with \$100,000 from ESD (Workforce Investment Act funds) and \$150,000 from OSPI (Perkins funds).
- **Spokane Area Workforce Development Council** — In 2009, the Spokane Area Workforce Development Council created the [Next Generation Zone](#), as a one-stop career and education center for youth. Since then, the center has provided services to over 10,000 youth, connecting young people to over 1,200 work-based learning

experiences. Funding sources include the Workforce Investment Act, Opportunity Internship Project, Gates Foundation, Mentoring Children of Promise, and others. To further leverage funding, the Spokane Area Workforce Development Council signed a new lease to keep the Next Generation Zone at its current location, and partner with Job Corps to reduce rent and increase foot traffic. Job Corps moved into the Next Generation Zone in December 2013, and the partnership is expected to bring in over 450 new youth to the center each year.

- **Opportunity Partnerships** — [This program](#) provides mentorship and career guidance to disadvantaged community college students who receive [Opportunity Grants](#) that help them pay for up to 45 credits of school. In the 2013 program year, 104 students participated under the mentorship of 41 business hosts in four different Workforce Development Council areas. The students received supervised program guidance in 12 different industry sectors, including: welding, manufacturing, agriculture & food processing, medical offices, hospitality, human services, business - professional services, culinary & restaurant management, communications, automotive, higher education, and transportation.
- **Increase the number and types of workplace experiences available to students and out-of-school youth** — The Workforce Development Council Seattle-King County's Youth at Work summer 2013 initiative engaged business and government leadership to provide more summer internships for youth. The campaign provided 518 internships to youth and provided services to over 210 businesses, community-based organizations, schools and government departments. The WDC funded a full-time business services representative focusing on youth internships and jobs for the next year. The youth representative joins with the WDC's existing business services team, leveraging current employer contacts and identifying new employers interested in supporting youth employment, both in the summer and year round.
- **21st Century Skills and CTE Frameworks** — The CTE frameworks were designed to guide curriculum planning, instruction and assessment. Key components of the framework are leadership, employability, technology competence, and other career-ready skills that students need as they prepare for careers. They are embedded not only in the performance assessments, where students demonstrate the standards, but also within leadership projects and activities students conduct inside and outside the classroom.

## Objective 5: Improve student access and retention.

- **Graduation Rates and Measurement Change** — Washington updated the [method by which the state calculates](#) on-time and extended graduation rates. This move aligns with a national standard in graduation rate calculation. Currently, the statewide four-year and five-year graduation rates are [77 percent and 79 percent](#) respectively.<sup>3</sup> By better measuring the graduation rate, the state gains a clearer picture of how many youth are dropping out and can create effective strategies to keep them in school.
- **Jobs for Washington’s Graduates** — As the Washington chapter for Jobs for America’s Graduates, [Jobs for Washington’s Graduates](#) is capitalizing on a dropout prevention and work readiness initiative producing noteworthy results for some of Washington’s most at-risk students. Jobs for Washington’s Graduates provides extensive support services, career guidance and mentoring, exposure to area employers and career opportunities. It also encourages students to make personal and tangible connections between their success in high school and the world of work. Some 41 JWG sites have been established at high schools and Skills Centers throughout the state. Supported by state, local, and private investments, these sites are having real impacts on student success. For the 2011-2012 school year, the graduation rate for JWG students was 85 percent, with 14 JWG sites reporting a 100 percent graduation rate.<sup>4</sup> Currently, the statewide four-year and five-year graduation rates are 77 percent and 79 percent respectively.
- **Building Bridges** — The Building Bridges grant program helps school-community partnerships prevent students from dropping out of high school, intervening before they do, and reengaging students who have left school. The Building Bridges workgroup reviews and awards state grant dollars to create dropout prevention programs, along with sharing best practices. This workgroup evolved to become Graduation A Team Effort ([GATE](#)). Committee members from several state agencies share ideas about reducing the dropout rate. A third party evaluation shows the program has had a statistically significant impact in reducing dropout risk. The most at-risk students were identified and the program showed significant gains in credits earned and social adjustment. In 2007, the program received \$2.5 million for operation and start-up grants, awarding 15 grants to 36 school districts to address dropouts. The 2013–2015 state operating budget funded the grant program with \$337,000, a near 87 percent reduction from initial grant program funding. This money funded three grants that supported eight school districts and benefitted 649 students.

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<sup>3</sup> Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. *Graduation and Dropout Statistics Annual Report 2011–12*.

<sup>4</sup> Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction Jobs for Washington Graduates Program Staff

- **Family and Youth Peer Support Training** — The Department of Social and Health Services Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery contracts with Youth 'N Action, a statewide youth advocacy program affiliated with the University of Washington's Division of Public Behavioral Health and Justice Policy, to work with youth with mental health challenges to develop leadership skills. Youth 'N Action also engages youth in a new Certified Family and Youth Peer Support training, which helps youth develop job skills to work with other youth at community mental health agencies and other youth serving agencies.

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

- **Employment Partnership to Help Students with Developmental Disabilities Succeed** — The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) Developmental Disabilities Administration's (DDA) goal is to provide young adults with developmental disabilities the opportunity to earn a living wage at an age and rate typical of their non-disabled peers. Each year in Washington, just over 700 DDA eligible young adults exit school at age 21. Most enter the job market and find it challenging to obtain a job. The Employment Partnership works to establish connections between DDA, counties, school districts, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), the Workforce Board, and other state and local offices. The goal is to ensure students with developmental disabilities leave high school with a job, or a stable plan to fulfill their individual employment goals. A post-school plan and employment goal are required outcomes of the transition program. Schools must also measure and report on the effectiveness of the employment goals by identifying whether a student is working or in an education or training program a year after exiting school.
- **Department of Services for the Blind Vocational Rehabilitation Program** — Department of Services for the Blind's (DSB) efforts in 2013 included 66 new employment outcomes and 53 job retentions. Approximately 71 percent of blind or low vision customers who listed public assistance as their primary income were able to leave public assistance due to DSB's efforts to assist them in obtaining jobs and higher wages. The number of new-job employment outcomes remained stable from the previous year. After completing the vocational rehabilitation program, average earnings for DSB customers increased from \$13.05 to \$19.89 per hour. For all DSB employment outcomes in federal fiscal year 2013, there was an average 52.4 percent change in earnings from time of application to program exit.

- **Northwest Workforce Council Targeted Workshops** — The Northwest Workforce Council provides a series of workshops and training opportunities for young adults and students, teachers and counselors at local high school career centers, classrooms and career fairs, and at the three regional WorkSource career centers. Topics include how to create resumes, cover letters and applications, along with practicing interview skills and mock interviews. Students and school personnel are introduced to WorkSource one-stop career center resources, web links, and career assessment tools. These activities help students identify their talents, interests and abilities, and package themselves to land a job. In the most recent program year, the Northwest Workforce Council held over 84 workshops and served over 870 students and young adults.
- **High Demand Grants** — The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction allocates High Demand Grants to middle schools, high schools and Skills Centers to develop or upgrade high-demand Career and Technical Education programs that help move students into growing career fields. Grants are funded on a one-time basis. They may be used to purchase or improve curriculum, create pre-apprenticeship programs and upgrade technology and equipment to meet industry standards. Since these grants started in 2008, \$8.17 million has supported 658 districts, schools, or Skills Centers in developing and supporting high-demand Career and Technical Education programs, as well as First Robotics Programs across the state. The allocation has been reduced from \$2.75 million in fiscal year 2009 to \$1.08 million in fiscal year 2013.

## Multiple Pathways for Employers and Workers — Goal 2

The multiple pathway strategy for employers and workers involves increasing employer engagement in education and workforce training, and connecting workers with high-wage careers and lifelong learning.

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

- **Industry Partnerships with Higher Education** — Career-focused Professional-Technical programs at community and technical colleges build in ongoing guidance and support from business, industry, and labor through program Advisory Committees. These groups help programs maintain broad representation, keep current with industry knowledge, respond to innovation, and coordinate regional education efforts. Some examples of this industry/education partnership include: Grays Harbor College and Pasha Automotive Services for auto body repair and

painting, North Seattle Community College and Rolex for parts, equipment and student scholarships, Walla Walla Community College and the John Deere Company for management, marketing, sales and service technician personnel, and Clark College with SEH America for mechatronics technology.

- **Life-Long Learning Accounts (LiLAs)** — U.S. Rep. Derek Kilmer (D-6<sup>th</sup> District), who sponsored [LiLA legislation](#) at the state level during his time in the state Senate, introduced the [Skills Investment Act](#) as his first piece of legislation in Congress in spring of 2013. This legislation would provide federal resources and tax exemptions to employers who offer lifelong learning accounts to their employees.
- **Workplace Digital Learning** — Working adults increasingly rely on technology to advance their education, with their employer’s support. [Two recently completed pilots](#), funded by a Congressional appropriation and managed by the Workforce Board, offer lessons on how to successfully deploy technology to help workers gain needed skills. Clark College, in partnership with PeaceHealth Southwest, brought postsecondary classes to some of the health care provider’s lowest skilled, lowest paid workers with the ultimate goal of improving their skills so they could enter higher-demand, better paid health care professions. Skagit Valley College and Whatcom Community College forged another pilot that delivered early childhood education to childcare workers. Both of these pilots leveraged eLearning tools.
- **Critical Skills Gap Forums** — Critical Skills Gap Forums were hosted in the spring of 2013 at community and technical college [Centers of Excellence](#), in partnership with the [Association of Washington Business](#) (AWB). The forums were held to obtain job growth projections and employee skills gaps information from industry leaders in key sectors. The information is helping colleges plan curriculum changes within specific professional and technical programs to better prepare students for employment. AWB produced a report that summarizes the 10 forums and updates information on challenges employers are facing to fill critical positions within their companies. [Report](#)
- **Maritime Sector Panel** —The Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County convened a maritime sector panel in February 2013. The employer-led panel provided an assessment of workforce needs and provided technical assistance and labor market information. Based on the panel’s work, the WDC developed three training programs. Training is delivered by Seattle Community College District instructors at Vigor Industrial shipyard (Maritime Welding) and North Seattle Community College (Maritime HVAC). Maritime Manufacturing is being developed for delivery at South

Seattle Community College's Georgetown Campus in February 2014. The Vigor Industries Harbor Island Training Center was developed in concert with the Seattle Community College District and Vigor. Vigor contributed land and a building along with staff expertise so the training experience mirrored the shipyard's work environment. The WDC funded the facility's first training cohort. The panel identified a need for Maritime Business Services staff to help veterans and transitioning active duty military become aware of employment opportunities in the sector. The WDC contracted for a business services position to work directly with maritime employers to identify workforce needs and candidates from the state's WorkSource system.

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

- **Maritime Industries Training Program** — The Legislature appropriated \$510,000 over the 2014-15 fiscal years for the implementation of a maritime industries training program at South Seattle Community College.
- **Closing the Mid-Level Supply/Demand Gap** — The Workforce Board monitors the annual supply of newly prepared mid-level workers each year and compares that supply to future projected demand for mid-level workers. (Mid-level occupations are defined as those that require more than a year of post-high school training or education but less than a bachelor's degree.) The most recent Skill Gap report released in April 2013 shows a reduction in the mid-level skill gap. [Latest Skill Gap Analysis](#)
- **Increasing the Supply of Healthcare Personnel** — Over 18,000 students completed education and training in a healthcare profession in 2012. The Healthcare Personnel Shortage Task Force has updated its completion and skill gap numbers for this year. [Report](#) The Task Force met in late October 2013 and set draft recommendations to address the health care personnel shortage for the annual report to the Legislature. The report and recommendations were completed in December.
- **Increasing the Supply of Aerospace Workers** — The 2013-15 biennial budget included several line items to increase the supply of aerospace workers.
  - \$600,000 to be shared by four Skills Centers for aerospace training start-up, equipment, and curriculum. The Skills Centers are required to expand manufacturing certificate and course offerings, provide high schools with access to a technology library, and provide space for local high school teachers to engage in professional development on aerospace curriculum instruction.

- \$300,000 for start-up grants for six high schools to implement an aerospace assembler program, with a requirement that the program is offered by the spring semester of the 2013-14 school year.
- \$200,000 for the Aerospace Center of Excellence to increase statewide communications and outreach between industry, business, and education stakeholders, and create a central location for prospective students and job seekers in search of aerospace training and employment information.
- The Legislature convened a special legislative session in November 2013 and passed legislation that funded an additional 1,000 full-time equivalents (FTEs) in aerospace education and training. The special session also provided \$500,000 to the State Board for Community & Technical Colleges to develop a composite wing training program for current aerospace workers at the [Washington Aerospace Training and Research \(WATR\) Center](#).
- **Invest in Green Industry Workers** — The Legislature created a cross-agency team in 2009 to create and provide training for green economy jobs by 2020. The team secured over \$27 million in federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act grants. While in operation (December 2009 to July 2013), Recovery Act green jobs training grants served more than 12,000 Washingtonians.
  - 4,400 Washingtonians have retained employment or found new employment from green jobs training funded by competitive Recovery Act grants. [Report](#).
- **High Employer Demand Programs of Study** —The 2013 Legislature earmarked funds for college and university enrollments in computer science and engineering.

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

- **The [Student Achievement Initiative](#)** — The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges' Student Achievement Initiative provides financial incentives to colleges for helping students achieve measurable milestones, including passing pre-college writing or math, and obtaining 15, then 30 college-level credits on their way to completing degrees, certificates, and apprenticeship training. By focusing on particular milestones and helping students achieve them, this helps more students reconnect with the education system no matter their age and background, and make real progress on their education goals. The number of degrees and certificates completed at community and technical colleges between 2007 and 2012 has risen by

46 percent.<sup>5</sup> Starting in 2013-14, the Student Achievement Initiative began providing additional incentives to community and technical colleges for students learning basic math and English skills who reach academic milestones. The program also provides incentives for students who complete 45 credits (one year) of instruction. This is a key milestone or “tipping point” for degree/certificate completion.

- **The [Opportunity Grant Program](#)** provides financial aid and support services to low-income workforce education students studying high-wage, high-demand career pathways. The grants pay for up to 45 credits at community and technical colleges, along with books and supplies. In 2011-12, there were [5,169 students, or 3,649 FTEs](#).<sup>6</sup>
- **I-BEST** — Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) programs are targeted to in-demand employment opportunities, and include programs such as health care, automotive and transportation, aeronautics and manufacturing, trades, and early childhood education. All 34 of the state’s community and technical colleges offer at least one I-BEST program. I-BEST pairs two instructors in the classroom—one to teach professional and technical content and the other to teach basic skills in reading, math, writing, or English language—so students can move through school and into jobs faster. In the 2011-12 academic year, the nationally recognized [I-BEST program](#) served 3,275 students in over 170 approved programs. Also, 54,611 students enrolled in basic skills education at community and technical colleges in 2011-12.<sup>7</sup>
- **[eLearning/Online Learning opportunities](#)** — eLearning consists of online-only education as well as hybrid courses that incorporate in-person, classroom instruction. In the 2011-12 academic year, 20 percent of all FTEs at community and technical colleges, or 38,992 FTEs, were from eLearning courses. The number of students enrolled in online instruction and other eLearning options continues to grow. FTEs in eLearning increased 72 percent over the past five years.<sup>8</sup>
- **[Open Course Library](#)** — Online materials, including textbooks, have been developed for 82 of the state’s highest enrolled courses. These resources are available under an open license for use by the state’s 34 public community and technical colleges, four-year colleges and universities, and anyone else worldwide. Students in these courses pay no more than \$30 per textbook, and many of the resources are offered at no cost to the student. This program has saved Washington students over \$5 million in textbook costs as of the summer of 2013.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> SBCTC Data Warehouse

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.sbctc.ctc.edu/college/studentsvcs/opportunity\\_grant2011-12\\_compiled.pdf](http://www.sbctc.ctc.edu/college/studentsvcs/opportunity_grant2011-12_compiled.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> SBCTC Data Warehouse.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

- [Credit for Prior Learning](#) — Washington’s colleges and universities are redesigning how to assess and grant credit for prior learning. Such credits are meant to encourage working adults to re-enter the education system and complete certificate and degree programs, by awarding college credits for work and life experience. Colleges and universities (including community and technical colleges, four year public and private, and private career schools) are required under [House Bill 1795](#) (2011) to have a process for assessing prior learning and granting course credit. Currently, this process includes standardized tests, course challenge examinations, portfolio assessment and crosswalks between work-based learning and college courses. Colleges and universities are required to report their data to help track the number of students who receive credits for prior work and life experience. The information was to be included in a Prior Learning Assessment Workgroup Report in December 2013.
- [Worker Retraining Program](#) — The Worker Retraining program serves the unemployed or those facing imminent layoffs. Community and technical colleges provide training in basic skills and literacy, professional-technical education, and related or supplemental instruction for apprentices. Qualified students may receive financial assistance to help with tuition, as well child care and transportation costs. Based on input from local business and labor groups, the funds are also used to update equipment, revise curriculum and develop work experience opportunities. Private career schools and colleges provide tuition support to a small number of worker retraining students as well. The number of participants in the Worker Retraining Program, administered by the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, increased from 10,529 in 2007 to 19,562 in 2011, but dropped to 16,601 in 2012.<sup>10</sup> Enrollments in worker retraining and education programs generally increase or decrease in relation to changes in the economy.

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

- **WorkSource System Policies** — The Employment Security Department (ESD) has continued its effort to improve coordination in providing job search and placement by working closely with area Workforce Development Councils (WDCs) and partners to meet each customer's needs, regardless of program or funding source.

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

- **ESD Training Academy** — The Training Academy provides classes on employment counseling, business services, customer flow and more, for WorkSource and partner staff. During this year, ESD launched a major organizational restructuring which resulted in consolidation of the ESD Training Academy and Technical Assistance units. The newly formed Technical Assistance & Training unit will continue to provide staff training across the system as well as individualized technical assistance to local areas on program implementation issues.
- **Long-term Unemployed** — As the recession deepened, ESD and the WDCs took measures to monitor and focus attention on the needs of long-term unemployed. In one local example, the WDC of Seattle-King County (SKC) and ESD partnered to implement a new "Back2Work Now" program at WorkSource Centers in King County. This successful pilot project featured an intensive job-club structure, a LinkedIn group, and more than 30 engaged employers who offered mock interviews and advice, as well as jobs. Of the 197 job seekers who participated in "Back2Work Now", 118, or 60% exited services with employment, with an average hourly wage of \$24.06. The WDC has maintained many elements of the program throughout the WorkSource system in King County, including: job clubs, social networking job search workshops and employer engagement. As continued focus is placed on serving long-term unemployed job seekers, plans are being developed to further expand these components of the "Back2Work Now" program.

## Washington's Workforce Development System is a Model of Accountability and Efficient Co-Investment — Goal 3

This goal is to improve the efficiency, transparency, and performance of Washington's workforce system and ensure all aspects and components of the system work together effectively to meet the needs of both jobseekers and employers.

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

- **Workforce Training Results 2013** — The Workforce Board's annual performance accountability report ([Workforce Training Results](#)) identifies major workforce development programs and their impact on employment and earnings.
  - The Workforce Board developed Washington's 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 for similar performance measures endorsed by the National Governors Association—measures that are now being considered by Congress as part of the Workforce Investment Act reauthorization. In 2013, the Workforce Board led 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 and decided to make no changes to the state core measures at this time.
- **Establishing Statewide Indicators of Educational Health** — [Senate Bill 5491](#) (2013) established six statewide indicators of educational system health to provide a high-level dashboard of education performance. The indicators measured a number of achievement points throughout the entire K-12 spectrum and beyond. Indicators include kindergarten readiness, fourth grade reading, eighth grade math, high school completion, postsecondary remedial course taking, and employment and postsecondary engagement rates after high school completion. This measure increased emphasis on employment outcomes by making it an ongoing part of a state level dashboard of educational system performance.

The bill charges the State Board of Education, with assistance from the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Workforce Board, the Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee, and the Student Achievement Council, with establishing realistic but challenging performance goals for the six established indicators. The State Board of Education has solicited input from the targeted stakeholders and has sought broad input on proposed performance goals. A final report outlining baseline values and initial goals from the State Board of Education was due in December 2013.

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

- **Training Programs Customized for Employers** — The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges’ [Job Skills](#) and [Customized Training](#) programs offer targeted, industry-specific training to businesses through individual community and technical

colleges. Businesses apply for grants and loans through both programs to train their workers on a range of options, including industry-specific job skills, leadership, workplace skills, and, in some cases, basic education and English language skills. The Legislature passed House Bill 1247 in the 2013 legislative session, which exempted businesses with an annual gross income of \$500,000 or less from being required to provide a dollar-for-dollar match to participate in the Job Skills Program. Small businesses were historically underrepresented in the program, and this has addressed a major barrier to their participation. For federal fiscal Year 2013, the Job Skills Program funded 27 training projects for 45 companies, and the Customized Training Program funded 11 projects for 11 companies.<sup>11</sup> However, the 2013-15 state budget cut \$2 million from the Customized Training Program.

- **North Seattle Community College Opportunity Center for Employment and Education** — The [Opportunity Center for Employment and Education \(OCE&E\)](#), housed at North Seattle Community College, opened in 2011. The OCE&E provides integrated educational, vocational, employment and support services through a partnership of multiple community-based agencies, the community college, Department of Social and Health Services, and the Employment Security Department/WorkSource. Together, these organizations work to provide employment and educational services and public assistance benefits to the unemployed and the underemployed, as well as students and their families. Housing approximately 120 professionals, the OCE&E coordinates services to meet current and future workforce needs, and shape the delivery of these services to help customers achieve self-sufficiency. The 2013 state budget included \$362,000 for fiscal years 2014 and 2015 for OCE&E's employment and education Internet technology integration project.
- **Disadvantaged Populations Workgroup** — While gathering stakeholder input for the 2012 update of [High Skills High Wages](#), Washington's strategic plan for workforce development, the Workforce Board received consistent feedback that the state needs to reevaluate how it provides services to our most disadvantaged populations. Guided by a vision that everyone who wants to play an active role in our economy should have a route to get there through critical support services, targeted training and education programs, and a clear pathway to long-term success, Workforce Board staff convened the Disadvantaged Populations Workgroup, which includes representation from multiple agencies and organizations that serve disadvantaged populations. This work group has set out to define what can be done to better serve those who face persistent barriers to employment. The response and willingness to partner was

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<sup>11</sup> SBCTC Data Warehouse.

positive, with stakeholders across all sectors of the economy willing to work together in new ways. The workgroup has developed a customer-focused service delivery model that seeks to guide individuals through the complex services and programs available to them. It also allows them to remain connected after they enter the workforce, ensuring that both the individual and employer receive continued support to establish lasting success.

- **Basic Food Employment and Training Program (BFET)**— The BFET program provides federal reimbursement to the state for employment and training services to food stamp recipients not enrolled in the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program. BFET provides employability assessments and other services to eligible participants that include assessment, case management, job readiness training, basic skills/ESL training, vocational training, job search assistance, job placement, and support services. Since 2005, the program has served over 40,000 students at all 34 state community and technical colleges. The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) leverages local, private, and state education funds to draw 50 percent federal matching funds through USDA Food and Nutrition Services. In federal fiscal year 2013, DSHS provided employment and training services to over 25,000 participants, with many receiving multiple services.

This nationally-recognized program has had a positive impact in Washington:

- Vocational training: nearly two-thirds of BFET participants received vocational education and training for in-demand careers since the program began.
- Better wages and employment: BFET participants receiving vocational training have high wage outcomes: up to \$11.50 per hour; and two years after exiting the program, participants' overall employment rate is about 68 percent.
- College credit: participants earn college credits and have apprenticeship opportunities that help prepare them for a competitive job market. Nearly 1,000 BFET participants obtained a college certificate, degree or completed apprenticeship training in the 2011-12 academic year.
- Statewide partnerships: Washington's BFET program is comprised of multiple agencies and organizations to help citizens succeed. In addition to the community and technical college system, more than 20 community-based organizations (CBOs) provide critical skills training opportunities and support services to those in need.

*Workforce Training & Education Coordinating Board staff prepared this report.*