



Workforce Training and
Education Coordinating Board

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Contact: Marina Parr, (360) 586-8679
mparr@wtb.wa.gov

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Public offered opportunity to weigh in on statewide workforce plan *Plan emphasizes training for lucrative but overlooked “middle-skills” jobs*

Olympia, Wash. --- A blueprint for bolstering the state’s workforce through education, training and a focus on high-paying family-wage jobs that often go unfilled is the subject of a public forum in Seattle. This forum will also have live videoconferencing connections in Tacoma and Mount Vernon. It’s one of several forums being held around the state.

The public is encouraged to add their comments to the plan that will set the direction for workforce development in Washington state through 2018. Employers are especially encouraged to attend to speak about their workforce needs. Live videoconferencing expands this meeting’s reach, with the public able to see, hear and participate remotely.

The meeting runs from 12:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m., on Aug. 26, at these locations.

Seattle—South Seattle Community College, Tech Center, Room TEC 129, 6000 16th Ave S.W., Seattle, WA 98106.

Tacoma—Tacoma Community College, Room 222 Building 28, 6501 S 19th St., Tacoma, WA 98466.

Mount Vernon—Skagit Valley College, Norwood Cole Library Building, MV Studio A, Room #S161, 2405 East College Way, Mount Vernon, WA 98273.

The *High Skills, High Wages* plan is updated every two years by the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (Workforce Board) and incorporates detailed data on how well Washington’s workforce is faring, along with strategies to improve job skills, reduce barriers to education and training, and better meet the needs of employers and industry.

In particular, the plan emphasizes opportunities for workers to advance their education one to two years beyond high school to take advantage of in-demand jobs in such fields as health care, information technology, transportation, public safety, construction, maintenance and repair.

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“We want a system that makes it possible for every person to advance their career and standard of living. Job opportunities abound in Washington in fields that do not necessarily require a four-year degree but do require some education beyond high school,” said Eleni Papadakis, executive director of the Workforce Board. “More than half of Washington jobs are middle-skill jobs, and the demand for skilled workers is only going to grow. With input from constituents from across the state, *High Skills, High Wages* creates a plan to make education and training opportunities more accessible and affordable, for working adults and young people alike.”

Previous editions of the plan have helped spur the creation of a number of successful programs, including the Opportunity Grant program, which provides 45 credits or one year of free tuition, \$1,000 for books and supplies, and support services for low-income individuals who are studying for in-demand occupations at the state’s 34 community and technical colleges.

Past plans also have been instrumental in creating more career guidance for high school students, developing strategies to prevent students from dropping out of middle and high school and in bringing together business, education and community resources to ensure employers have the skilled workers they need to flourish.

View the latest draft of *High Skills, High Wages* at:
<http://www.wtb.wa.gov/Documents/HSHWDraftJuly2008.pdf>

Unable to attend the meeting?

Submit comments to Workforce Board policy analyst Madeleine Thompson at
mthompson@wtb.wa.gov.

The Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board is a partnership of labor, business and government, dedicated to helping Washington state residents obtain and succeed in family-wage jobs, while meeting employers' needs for skilled workers. As a state agency, the Workforce Board oversees a workforce development system that includes 18 education and training programs receiving almost \$1 billion annually in state and federal funds.

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