

High Skills, High Wages

Annual Progress Report to the
Legislature
July 2009 to June 2010



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Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board
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High Skills, High Wages Strategic Plan Annual Progress Report July 2009-June 2010

To Governor Gregoire and Washington Legislators:

Our state's 10-year workforce development strategy, *High Skills, High Wages 2008-2018* lays out 11 objectives designed to help:

- Young people graduate from high school and pursue further education.
- Adult workers move up the career and wage ladder.
- Employers obtain the skilled workforce they need to prosper.

This report lays out our state's progress in making that comprehensive strategy a reality. For more details on the individual objectives, I recommend reviewing *High Skills, High Wages 2008-2018*.

For information on how well our major workforce programs are doing in producing a skilled and educated workforce, please review our latest Workforce Training Results report due January 2011.

Your time is valuable, so the annual report you hold in your hands is brief, focusing on the most significant developments. However, the work behind High Skills, High Wages is extensive and ongoing. I encourage you to call me with any questions or comments.

Eleni Papadakis
Executive Director

About this Report

This report is organized under the 11 objectives of *High Skills, High Wages 2008–2018* adopted by the 2009 Washington Legislature. These objectives are grouped 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. (Pages 3-6)

Adult Goal: Provide Washington adults (including those with barriers to education and employment) with access to lifelong education, training and employment services. (Pages 6 -11)

Industry Goal: Meet the workforce needs of industry by preparing students, current workers, and dislocated workers with the skills employers need. (Pages 11 - 16)

Washington's Youth

Because of the close ties between the plan's youth objectives and the quality of our K-12 system, the Workforce Board staff works primarily with the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction in pursuing the objectives listed below. Other partners include local school districts, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, State Board of Education, Department of Labor and Industries, regional Workforce Development Councils, the Employment Security Department and community organizations.

Helping Youth Find a Career Path

Research is showing the value of career mentoring to youth as they work their way through high school and beyond. Mentoring and career guidance make it possible for students to connect the textbook environment to the workplace environment and helps them envision where their place will be.

"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."
Youth Objective 1

Focusing on High School Career Guidance

Washington continues its commitment to fund Navigation 101, a comprehensive career and college readiness guidance system that engages sixth grade through high school students and their parents in planning a personalized and relevant education. Over a third of high school students in the state are receiving the Navigation 101 curriculum. Many are students who have not had the benefit of adult guidance to help them plan their high school coursework or necessary next educational steps after they receive their diploma. In 2009, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction awarded Navigation 101 grants totaling \$3.2 million to 134 schools in 69 districts. An additional 19 schools are receiving \$600,000 per year through College Spark Washington. Since Navigation 101 started in 2006, Washington has awarded grants to 353 schools in 152 districts.

Building Career Plans into Graduation Requirements

The State Board of Education is considering proposed rules for the High School and Beyond Plan graduation requirement that incorporate key components of a comprehensive guidance curriculum. These components, in rule, will ensure more rigor in this graduation requirement, reinforcing to students the benefits and need for planning and preparing for their careers.

Preparing Students for the New Economy

Washington has charted a course of improving the quality of Career and

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

Youth Objective 2

Technical Education, focusing it more on high-demand occupations and ensuring that all students have hands-on, relevant learning experiences that provide them insight into their future as working adults.

Focusing on High-Demand Occupations

Students throughout Washington are preparing for high-demand occupations by completing targeted coursework in Career and Technical Education (CTE) classes. CTE provides career-focused education in a variety of areas, helping students stay engaged in school, and preparing them for their next educational steps. Grants ranging between \$10,000 and \$40,000 were awarded to middle schools, high schools, and Skills Centers to develop or upgrade high-demand CTE programs. These fields included: health care, green and sustainable design (construction, manufacturing, power and energy), and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM). There’s no available data at this time as to how many students are served by these grants.

Students Connect Early to Science and Math

Approximately 21,000 middle school students are able to attend classes in science, technology, engineering, or mathematics with an integrated curriculum of academic content and a Career and Technical Education exploratory component as a result of an investment in these programs starting in 2009. By building an early interest in these fields, middle school programs (over 300 courses created) help feed students into high school high-demand and technical programs.

Setting the Bar for Relevant Learning Experiences

The State Board of Education has proposed new College and Career Ready graduation standards which require all students to take three credits in a career concentration. If adopted, this requirement will mean more students will be participating in Career and Technical Education courses, which (as shown above), will focus more on high-demand fields.

Students Train for Skilled Trades

Funding continued for Running Start for the Trades grants in 2009-2010. The high school program provides specific training for occupations in the trades such as carpentry, welding and masonry by pairing classroom learning with extensive work-based learning opportunities, including hands-on activities, field trips to training centers, and job shadow opportunities. Programs in seven Skills Centers and seven school

districts received funding in 2009-2010. While participants gain valuable work experience and skills, the economic downturn and its effect on the construction industry has seriously dimmed their prospects for apprenticeship opportunities. This may change as the economy picks up but demand will be uncertain until the high number of unemployed in the building trades have returned to work or changed careers.

Internships Lead to High Demand Work Experiences

Low-income high school students are connecting to high-demand occupations in targeted industries through internships and job shadowing provided by Opportunity Internship program grants. Eight regional Workforce Development Councils have used these grants to help employers develop internships and pre-apprenticeships. Program completers who enroll in a qualifying college education program or apprenticeship within one year of high school graduation become eligible for the State Need Grant program, which helps the state's lowest-income undergraduate students pursue degrees, hone skills or retrain for new careers. In addition, students who complete their post-high school program are guaranteed job interviews by participating employers. In this first year of operation, 238 students have been awarded internships or pre-apprenticeships and 181 have completed at least a 90-hour work experience. By January 2011, the eight programs are projected to generate a total of 600 participating students.

Pioneering Dropout Reduction Strategies

With more than one in four Washington high school students failing to graduate on time, a "silent epidemic" threatens their earning power and the state's economy.

"All students graduate from high school."
Youth Objective 3

Fortunately, the passage of comprehensive legislation in 2010 has set in motion collaborative processes necessary for turning best practices into a statewide system. Since 2007, Washington has invested in the Building Bridges Grant Program, which has worked to identify students at risk of dropping out and provide timely intervention and support. Now, with the 2010 legislation, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, and agencies serving vulnerable youth, along with local school and community partnerships, are primed to develop a comprehensive dropout prevention, intervention and reengagement system. In addition, state legislation will make Basic Education dollars more readily available for programs that reengage youth 16 years and older who are not returning to a traditional high school.

The Value of Work Experience to Youth

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

Youth Objective 4

Youth particularly struggle for work opportunities during tough economic times. However, the 2009 Summer Youth Employment Program created over 5,600 summer jobs for low-income youths and young adults at more than 1,500 work sites using American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding. For the first time in over 10 years, a summer youth program gave young people experiences ranging from work in construction and manufacturing to stream cleanups to assisting disabled citizens. Students learned work readiness skills while on the job. The state’s Employment Security Department allocated nearly \$20 million in federal funds to local Workforce Development Councils to operate the summer jobs program. Participants were placed in work-based training, which included work experience, internships, and on-the-job training. Participants were also provided training and education, including summer school enrichment and online credit retrieval classes. Some 92 percent of participating youth completed their work experience with 78 percent attaining a significant level of work readiness that will help them find a job, and keep it. Although youth advocates urged funding in the summer of 2010, no federal funding was provided.

Washington’s Adult Workers

Essential to the success of the High Skills, High Wages Strategic Plan is its progress in extending the reach of workforce development resources to all adults—from low-wage workers to the long-term unemployed to those who have recently lost their jobs. Key partners in pursuing these strategies include the state’s 12 regional Workforce Development Councils, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, Employment Security Department, Joint Apprenticeship Training Councils, labor and business organizations.

Greater Access to High Demand Training

Confronted with high unemployment and record demand for training, the Governor and Legislature created an efficient way to temporarily expand capacity to put more unemployed adults into classrooms to train for high demand jobs. Drawing upon a \$7 million state appropriation, the Employment Security Department awarded regional Workforce

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

Adult Objective 1

Development Councils financial incentives to contract for classes that were available to large groups of students. This was a departure from the traditional model, where students receive individual vouchers and pick classes on their own. As of June 30, 2010, this approach has created over 100 additional classes populated by an additional 1,500 students—with more class-size cohorts expected through the rest of the year. Both state and federal dollars were used to fund these additional classes, along with financial aid for eligible participants. Governor Gregoire has added another \$5.5 million in discretionary federal funding to be used in a similar training incentive initiative. To date, this additional funding has supported 14 class-size cohorts of students and the regional Workforce Development Councils have until June 30, 2011, to use the remainder of these additional incentive funds.

Workers Connect to Higher Wage Jobs

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

Adult Objective 2

The unemployed are not the only ones who can benefit from targeted training and education programs. Incumbent workers need to be able to enter and exit the education system so that they can keep their skills fresh, their career moving forward and their income growing. Adult worker strategies that break down the barriers between education and the workplace and foster a culture of lifelong learning can help Washington’s workforce and economy stay competitive.

Upskill, Backfill - Career Growth Creates Job Openings

Faced with a persistent shortage of skilled workers, the health care field is on the cutting edge in moving frontline workers into high skill, high wage jobs. Washington is embarking on a three-year project to train 550 low-wage health care workers, helping move them into higher-paying, in-demand health care professions with established career pathways. The Health Career Pathways Project, funded by a U.S. Department of Labor grant administered by the Workforce Board, will also open 350 entry-level health care positions that become available when current workers move into vacant Certified Nursing Assistant and Medical Assistant positions. This initiative is creating career paths that move qualified workers all the way to Registered Nurse, a high paying, in-demand occupation with the highest vacancy rate in the state. The project also will establish a career pathway from long-term care, where workers provide basic assistance in places such as nursing homes, into an acute care, hospital setting. Previously, long-term care workers had few ways to transition into high-demand occupations at hospitals and

medical clinics. In addition, Washington has continued its commitment to the Hospital Employee Education and Training (HEET) program, piloting in six areas of the state. Funded by the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges grants, HEET allows low-skilled hospital workers, regardless of their position, to gain further education and new skills while becoming certified in nursing and other high-demand health care fields. Last year, the pilots served the equivalent of 90 full time students which translates into between 250 and 300 participants.

Distance Learning Laboratories Slated for 2011

Encouraged by legislation in 2008 and targeted for future funding by a U.S. Department of Labor grant, the state's Digital Workplace Learning Initiative is taking shape. The initiative's broad-based partnership has developed criteria for requesting proposals that will road test various distance-learning models. These "learning laboratories" should be up and running by early 2011. By bringing certificate- and credit-based education to the workplace, this initiative will help low-income, low-skilled workers improve their earning capability, without the time and expense of pursuing education after work hours.

Retooling Workers for Green Energy Jobs

Washington workers are retooling for a greener economy thanks to a State Energy Sector Partnership grant administered by the Workforce Board. Five community colleges, under contract with Workforce Development Councils in King, Snohomish and Spokane counties, are training over 600 people to fill jobs such as energy efficiency technicians and residential energy auditors. The nearly \$6 million grant, funded through the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, is also underwriting craft-specific training on green techniques and products to over 4,800 journey level workers and fourth- and fifth-year apprentices in the building and construction trades. Courses include reflective and vegetative roofing, external insulation finish systems, autoclaved and aerated airspace cavity walls, building automated systems and solar photovoltaics. By the end of 2012, some 4,770 grant participants are expected to have landed green energy jobs.

Employers, Employees Finance Education with LiLA

Despite the recession, six southwest Washington employers are investing in their employees' education through the Lifelong Learning Account (LiLA) program. The pilot project includes Pacific, Grays Harbor, Lewis, Mason and Thurston counties. LiLAs are educational savings accounts where employees make regular contributions matched by their employer, similar to a 401(k). Currently, these jointly financed education savings accounts have made it possible for 26 workers to pay for tuition

and books for classes such as Business Law 201, Basic Math 095, Speech 110, computer programming, and prerequisites for registered nursing. The Workforce Board and a multi-stakeholder partnership are monitoring the pilot and establishing plans for Phase II implementation which will expand the pilot to an additional region of Washington.

Targeting Barriers to Self-Sufficiency

Education and training holds the potential for self sufficiency only if participants, and the programs that serve them, are capable of overcoming barriers to learning.

While the economy has delayed the impact of an aging workforce,

demographic trends clearly indicate retiring workers will be replaced by a population where an increasing number struggle with differences in language, culture, education levels, and physical abilities.

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

Adult Objective 3

I-BEST: Effective Model Continues To Spread

A nationally recognized instructional model, the Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) continues to expand its reach into the state’s 34 community and technical colleges with 150 programs. Pioneered in Washington, I-BEST integrates basic skills with job skills, helping a growing number of low-skilled workers gain college-level credentials. In the last two academic years, the number of students benefitting from I-BEST has grown by over 50 percent annually. This summer, the I-BEST model was applied to redesigning developmental education curriculum through a two-year pilot at 10 colleges.

Grant Helps Low-Income Students Go to College

Each year, over 5,200 low-income adults receive training for high-wage, high-demand careers at the state’s 34 community and technical colleges through the Opportunity Grant program. The grant pays for up to 45 credits, or one year of college, and helps cover the cost of books and other supplies. The median household income for participating independent students (living on their own) was just over \$13,800. Over 60 percent of the students are parents and 45 percent of the participants are students of color. More than four out of five students continue their education through the full school year. Participating students must study for an in-demand occupation or career at state community and technical colleges. A portion of Opportunity Grant funds are also available for students at private career schools and colleges. An important element of the program is the funding of “wrap around” services that help increase student retention and completion. While

Washington has increased its financial commitment to the program in previous years, demand continues to outstrip funds.

Employers Mentor Students

Research shows that students have greater success if they are guided by a caring mentor. The Opportunity Partnership Program, created by legislation in 2007, develops industry mentors for income-eligible students to help them complete their programs of study and transition to the workforce successfully. The Opportunity Partnership is open to students who receive Opportunity Grants (see previous entry). To date, four regional partnership projects have been launched by community colleges, local employers and regional Workforce Development Councils. Funded by the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges and administered by the Workforce Board, the initiative has provided mentorships to 89 low-income first-year community college students. All these students currently are continuing with their education.

Improving Integration and Service Quality

The Workforce System brings together a wide mix of programs and

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

Adult Objective 4

funding sources to address the issues of unemployment, underemployment and industry skill needs. No one should be expected to navigate this system in a piecemeal way. Instead, the system should operate as a seamless, integrated service provider.

Opportunity Center: Employment, Training in One Place

Located at North Seattle Community College, the Opportunity Center for Employment and Education is delivering on the promise of a one-stop center by integrating services across a range of agencies and programs that provide access to employment, counseling and social services as well as education, training, financial aid and counseling services. The Center started in 2009 by co-locating WorkSource, the state’s one-stop career center, on the college campus. The Center will reach full integration with the completion of a dedicated new facility in 2011. As part of the integration, Center stakeholders are working out protocols and policies for service delivery and operations, consistent cross-training and establishing a common information technology framework and database. In designating the center, legislation (HB 2684 passed in 2010) calls on the Opportunity Center to serve as a statewide model.

Training Academy reaches more WorkSource employees

Over 1,000 frontline employment counselors from WorkSource centers across the state received training during the previous fiscal year at the Employment and Career Development Division Training Academy in Lacey. The academy, which opened its doors in June 2009, is overseen by the state's Employment Security Department and features classes on employment counseling, business services, customer flow and more. Classes are open to all WorkSource partners, including Workforce Development Council employees. Some training academy participants are new to WorkSource, while others are seasoned job counselors refreshing their skills and learning about new programs. While many sessions are held at the Training Academy, increasingly classes are being held in the field to reach more WorkSource employees. There are also plans to expand e-learning offerings. See www.wa.gov/esd/training/default.htm.

WorkSource Focuses on Common Customer

The state's Employment Security Department is working with the 12 regional Workforce Development Councils to better integrate services customers receive at WorkSource, Washington's one-stop career centers. Currently, more than 1,000 Employment Security Department staff and hundreds of partner staff provide services to employers and more than 400,000 job seekers annually at more than 80 WorkSource centers and affiliate sites across the state. This renewed focus on service delivery is intended to help customers receive effective, consistent and efficient assistance in a more comprehensive way. Different funding sources, eligibility requirements and program missions can make this difficult to achieve. In 2007, Washington's Workforce Compact laid out the roles and responsibilities of each of the major workforce system partners. Since then, WorkSource partners have strived to improve customer flow and integrate service functions throughout the state's many WorkSource Centers and affiliate sites. Seven system policies went into effect on July 1, 2010, joining two policies that were implemented the previous year. These policies are intended to help Workforce Development Councils and their partners meet each customer's needs, regardless of program or funding source.

Washington's Employers and Industry

The central goal for the Workforce Board's Industry strategy is to ensure that no jobs go unfilled and that Washington employers have the talent they need to prosper. The key elements of this strategy are: 1) Targeting skill gaps in high-demand fields; 2) Marshalling resources to work with

employers in key industries; and 3) Retooling our workforce for current jobs and future openings. Key partners in pursuing the following strategies include: the Department of Commerce, Associate Development Organizations (including Economic Development Councils), Workforce Development Councils, Employment Security Department, community colleges, labor and industry associations.

Closing the Gap between Talent and Demand

As the economy continued to falter through 2009 and 2010, employers did not struggle as much to hire qualified employees as they had in the past. Even still, according to a Workforce Board survey of employers taken in the summer of 2010, one out of six employers had difficulty finding

qualified employees, underscoring a persistent skill gap. Almost 40 percent of those employers, or roughly 11,000 firms statewide, were unable to fill at least one opening. Furthermore, the Workforce Board's latest forecast is that demand for mid-level workers will exceed supply in 2013 by 8 percent.

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

Industry Objective 1

Task Force Tackles Chronic Health Care Worker Shortage

Even before the passage of the national Affordable Care Act in 2010, Washington, along with most other states, was experiencing shortages in selected health care occupations. With the passage of the health care act, an additional 400,000 to 500,000 Washington residents will have health coverage and will be seeking access to medical services. The Health Care Personnel Shortage Task Force has made significant progress in addressing these shortages since the Workforce Board convened this group of health care, education and workforce professionals in 2003. One success is the number of nursing graduates. Completions in Associate Degree Nurse and Bachelor of Science in Nursing programs have increased by more than 50 percent since 2003. There were 2,700 completions in 2008. But even this success is dwarfed by the sheer number of nurses needed to keep up with a growing, and graying, Washington population. The Task Force's 2009 report showed nursing to have the highest vacancy rate of any health care profession, at just under 2,300 vacancies. A Workforce Board Supply/Demand Gap Analysis shows an ongoing gap of around 1,060 nurses each year between 2012 and 2017. Other challenges abound. The Task Force has called attention to serious shortages of physicians, pharmacists, occupational therapists, medical and clinical lab technicians and mental health counselors, among others. Even so, strategies pursued by the

Task Force to increase the number of health care students--and build capacity in key programs--are paying off. For example, enrollment in physical therapy assistant programs has risen by 107 percent between 2004-2005 and 2008-2009. Enrollment in medical laboratory technician programs has risen by over 20 percent during the same period.

The Task Force's latest report outlines several strategies to continue this momentum, including recruiting more workers from different ethnic backgrounds to high-demand health care occupations and providing them with the financial support and flexibility they need to gain further education as they hold down jobs and juggle other responsibilities. New reports authored by Workforce Board staff promise to move these strategies along in the Governor's Health Care Cabinet and a Joint Legislative Committee. However, success of these strategies will depend on the ability to find resources to support them.

Green Jobs Offer New Opportunities

Not all future workforce needs can be identified by looking at skill gaps in existing occupations. Growing environmental protection expectations, and innovations in power generation and efficiencies, are creating sweeping changes across a range of industries and occupations. This paradigm shift is often referred to as the "green economy." In its first year of activity, the Evergreen Jobs Leadership Team, a body of business, labor, education and government representatives charged with coordinating workforce and economic development for a green economy and reporting performance results to the Governor and Legislature, has:

- Helped define green jobs.
- Coordinated state efforts to apply for Recovery Act funds for job creation and job training.
- Tracked the progress of these grant programs as they are implemented throughout the state.

The state received over \$27 million in U.S. Department of Labor and U.S. Department of Energy Recovery Act competitive grants, which will provide green jobs training for nearly 9,000 Washington residents. The state also received \$10.4 million for weatherization-related activities. To date, these funds have weatherized over 5,000 low-income households and have created or retained nearly 200 full time jobs. The State Energy Program has invested nearly \$60 million in federal funds, plus additional leveraged funds, to accelerate green job creation and retention.

Economic Strength through Strategic Clusters

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

Industry Objective 2

The state’s workforce strategy on industry clusters focuses on the intersection between workforce and economic development. By building partnerships around these clusters, Washington is nurturing industries that prosper from a talented, well-paid workforce. Key to this success is a

culture of cooperation between economic development and workforce development.

Engaging Employers, Educators and Community

Since 2000, Washington has been a leader in bringing together businesses, labor, community leaders and educators in regions across the state to address common skill gaps. By sitting across the table from one another in Industry Skill Panels, participants are able to drill down to what industry requires from workers, and how to equip local residents with these specific skills to land living-wage jobs at area companies. In many cases, Skill Panel members recommend and help design courses at community and technical colleges that provide industry-specific training and credentials. In 2009, the Governor committed a portion of her discretionary federal Workforce Investment Act dollars to developing the next generation of Industry Skill Panels. The Strategic High Skills High Wages Fund advances the initial Skill Panel design by bringing together workforce development and economic development, so that workers’ needs and business needs are effectively addressed. To help ensure this happens, the fund requires active participation, and partnership, by a regional Workforce Development Council and its corresponding Economic Development Council. These new initiatives focus on a recognized regional industry cluster, a critical and typically growing segment of a local economy. These initiatives are: the Manufacturing Skills Initiative in Eastern Washington; the Washington Intracoastal Marine and Manufacturing Industry Alliance; the Maritime Transportation and the Interactive Media clusters in Seattle-King County; and a Renewable Energy Planning Initiative in South Central Washington. As of June 30, 2010, these projects have leveraged the initial \$750,000 investment into an additional \$544,000 that has gone mostly toward incumbent worker training. While these projects are just beginning to provide results, the two most mature initiatives have resulted in 524 workers enrolled in new industry recognized courses, 227 college level credits earned and 44 new employees hired.

Committing to Coordinated Regional Planning

Legislation adopted in 2009 (HB1323) requires regional Workforce Development Councils and Associate Development Organizations (including Economic Development Councils) to clearly articulate in their strategic plans “the connection between workforce and economic development efforts in the local area including the area industry clusters and the strategic clusters the community is targeting for growth.” Examples of where this coordination is making a difference in Washington will be featured in a progress report on this legislation to be issued by the end of the year.

Spotlight on Cooperation

For the fifth year running, the Department of Commerce and Workforce Board teamed up on a Workforce and Economic Development Conference--the only conference in the country that brings together workforce and economic development professionals. During the conference, the Governor’s Best Practices Awards were bestowed on projects that combined workforce and economic development. While the conference will not occur in 2010, the Best Practices Awards continues to recognize the best programs that feature workforce and economic development cooperation. This year’s awards recognized the Walla Walla Community College Water & Environmental Center and the King County Jobs Initiative.

Worker Retraining Program Delivers Results

As the number of jobless workers in Washington rose in 2009, the state ramped up its investment in the Worker Retraining Program. This program has notched positive results in helping people retrain for a new career after losing their jobs and being unable to find work in their current field. Colleges must focus their Worker Retraining programs on high employer demand professional-technical education and training, and must align their programs with the training needs of industries in the regions they serve. Over 11,000 full time equivalent students were enrolled in the program Fall 2009, marking a 60 percent increase from the year before. That number is expected to hit 15,000 by Fall 2010. The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, which manages the program, says its most recent program results show that displaced workers from high wage jobs are able to retain 89 percent of their income after completing

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

Industry Objective 3

the program while participating low-wage workers realize a 117 percent increase from their previous wage.

What to Expect for Next Year

Tight budgets and a slow recovery will continue to challenge Washington's employers and workers, both employed and unemployed. Questions loom. How do we ensure we have the talent we need for the future, when there are few jobs for trained workers now? How do we get youth engaged in work opportunities when jobs are scarce? And, for those existing jobs left unfilled because of a lack of qualified applicants, how do we quickly and effectively skill up our workforce to take advantage of these opportunities?

Perhaps the most pressing concern can be boiled down to this pair of intertwined questions: How do we help the unemployed retool for jobs now and in the future and help employers find the skilled workforce they need to prosper and generate more jobs?

The Workforce Board's partnership of business, labor and government has been working closely with stakeholders on how our workforce system can better work together to Retool Washington's Workforce. This initiative is intended to generate measures that can be implemented quickly and show results within the next 12 to 18 months.