

# Workforce Planning Regions – Q/A Info Sheet

The identification of workforce regions is a requirement under the new Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Regions are intended to better align local workforce development programs with the requirements of regional economies. Washington is in the process of identifying workforce planning regions in compliance with the Act. The Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board has released a proposed regional map for feedback.

## **Q. What opportunities do Workforce Planning Regions support?**

**A.** Workforce Planning Regions are an attempt to better identify and address skills needs by asking local organizations within a regional economy to work together to identify and fill skill gaps, help people better connect to jobs, and progress along career pathways.

## **Q. Are regions new?**

**A.** Yes and no. The requirement to identify workforce regions is new. The state must do this in order to receive its federal workforce funding. However, regional workforce collaborations have existed for many years throughout the state.

## **Q. Are regions an attempt to eliminate or combine existing local workforce areas?**

**A.** No. Local Workforce Areas are the building blocks of regions. These areas were identified under previous legislation (the Workforce Investment Act of 1998). Regions do not change the boundaries of these areas, nor change the authority of the Local Workforce Development Councils that oversee and coordinate services in these areas. Regions may consist of a single local area, several local areas within a regional economy, or across state borders.

## **Q. What makes regions under WIOA different?**

**A.** WIOA formalizes the requirement for local areas within regional economies to plan together and coordinate services and strategies. Workforce regions are intended to build on regional economic development efforts. Regions recognize that the capacity for workforce development is a critical factor in supporting economic development.

## **Q. How will regions be identified?**

**A.** WIOA identifies several objective factors to consider in the formation of regions: labor sheds consisting of population centers and commute patterns, economic development districts, the concentration of key industries, and geographic boundaries that would divide a regional economy. The recommendation illustrated by the map below was developed using objective data by the state's Workforce Board and the Employment Security Department based on WIOA requirements. Regions will not be finalized until after the completion of a public input process.

## **Q. What happens if the state fails to identify regions?**

**A.** The identification of regions is a requirement of the Act. States must identify workforce regions in order to receive federal WIOA funding, starting in July 2016.



## Next steps

The map (below) illustrates a proposal for workforce regions. This map is being distributed for a 30-day public comment period. Upon the completion of the comment period, the Workforce Board on October 21<sup>st</sup> will consider feedback and recommend workforce planning regions to Governor Inslee. Governor Inslee will have 15 days to consider the recommendation before it becomes final. Once the recommendation is finalized, guidance will be issued to local Workforce Development Councils (<http://www.wa.gov/esd/wdc.htm>) to comply with the regional planning requirements as identified under WIOA.

## Suggested Workforce Planning Regions

