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Washington's Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board is an active and effective partnership of labor, business, and government leaders guiding the best workforce development system in the world.

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# High Skills, High Wages 2004: Washington's Strategic Plan for Workforce Development

An action agenda to position Washington State to prosper in the global economy. Each goal, objective, and strategy is important; of special significance are these strategic opportunities:

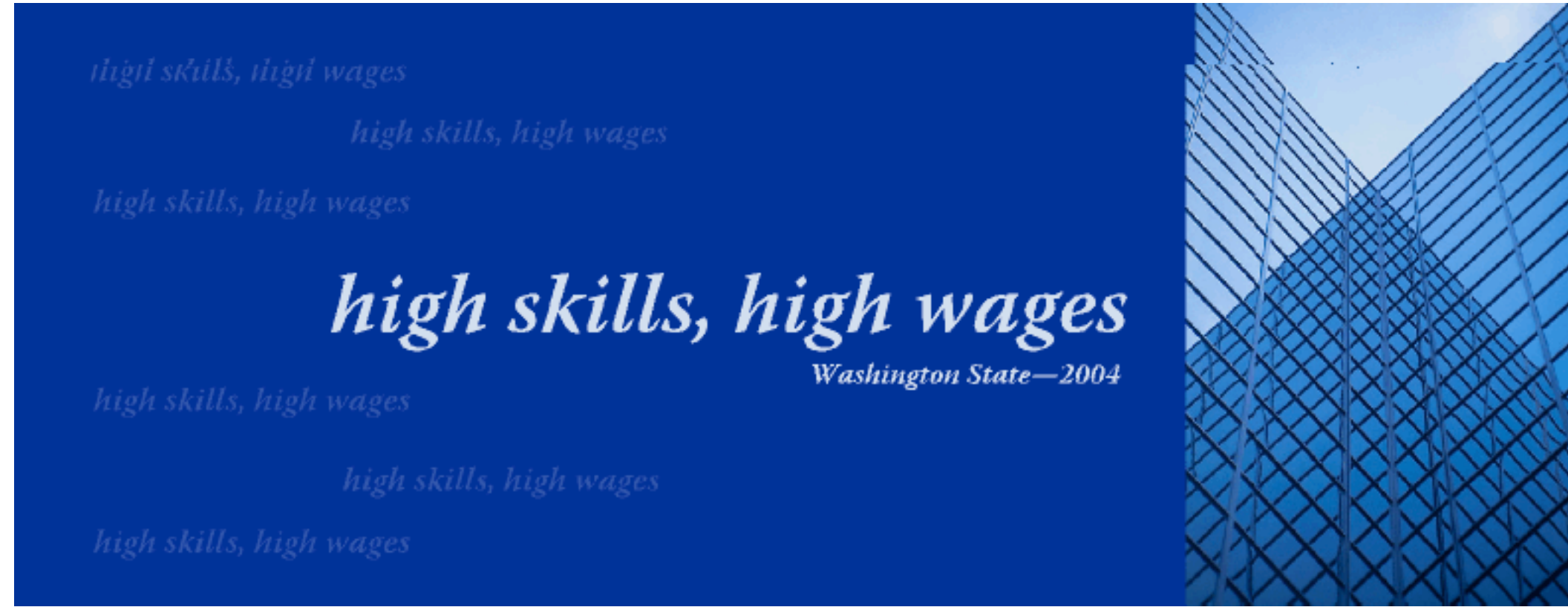
- Increasing postsecondary education and training capacity: More employers have difficulty finding workers with training at the sub-baccalaureate level (community and technical colleges, private career schools, and apprenticeship programs) than any other educational level. In order to increase the number of young people entering these programs we must also enhance capacity in secondary career and technical education.
- Reducing dropouts and integrating career guidance into school curricula: About one third of Washington ninth graders do not graduate with their class. We must build on the success of effective dropout prevention and retrieval programs and help students and their families plan for the future beyond high school.
- Expanding and sustaining skills panels: Industry skill panels comprised of employers, educators, and labor in key clusters, such as health care, identify skill shortages and how to meet those needs. We must expand these partnerships to more industries and more areas of the state.
- Increasing training linked to retention support for low-income individuals: We must provide training opportunities and support services such as child care and counseling that enable low-income individuals to advance and meet employers' needs for skilled workers.
- Increasing basic skills and English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) instruction that is integrated with occupational skills training: Adult basic skills and ESL instruction are much more likely to lead to wage gains for participants when the instruction is combined with occupational skills training. We must provide more such instruction to a growing population of adults with limited English proficiency.
- Expanding customized training for incumbent workers: There is an increasing need to train and retrain incumbent workers to keep pace with technological advances. While the state funds some customized training, Washington lags far behind other states.

The stakes are high—the potential rewards even higher. To take advantage of these strategic opportunities we will need an unprecedented degree of collaboration among public and private entities.

*The Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board does not discriminate or deny services on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, or disability.*

*This publication is available in alternative format upon request.*

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# High Skills, High Wages 2004: Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

## GOAL 1

*To close the gap between the need of employers for skilled workers and the supply of Washington residents prepared to meet that need.*

### Objective

Create public-private partnerships to enable individuals to move up job and career ladders throughout their lives.

#### Strategies

- Create and enhance industry skill panels, especially in high-demand economic clusters such as health care and information technology.
- Provide high-quality labor market information that enables programs to respond to changes in the labor market and informs students and customers about current career opportunities, especially in high-demand clusters such as health care and information technology.
- Develop competency-based education and training programs, and modular curricula and assessments linked to industry skill standards.

### Objective

Increase the number of young people who understand and act on career opportunities available through career and technical education and training programs, including youth from target populations.

#### Strategies

- Develop individual career plans that are integrated with a range of school programs to ensure all youth are aware of the link between learning

and employment and their career options, including high-wage, high-demand occupations and nontraditional occupations.

- Expand partnerships with industries to market their career opportunities to youth and their parents.
- Increase mentor and work-based learning opportunities for all students, and integrate these opportunities with students' individual career plans.

### Objective

Increase the capacity of high schools, community and technical colleges, and apprenticeship programs to provide high-quality workforce education and training programs.

#### Strategies

- Develop new programs and increase student enrollments in workforce training, especially in high-demand industry clusters such as health care and information technology.
- Partner with industries to provide facilities, faculty, and equipment in high-wage, high-demand fields.
- Improve efficiency of student transitions by granting credit for prior learning, developing further statewide agreements for transfer and articulation, and increasing the availability of applied degrees.

- Expand apprenticeship training in emerging fields, and expand preparation programs for apprenticeship in high-demand clusters, including construction.
- Enhance “employability skills” training in workforce development programs.
- Increase the number of individuals prepared to teach students for high-wage, high-demand fields.
- Highlight and replicate best practices from around the state and nation in career and technical education.

### Objective

Increase education and training for older workers and retired individuals who want to return to work.

#### Strategy

- Improve access to opportunities in education and specialized training for seniors and retired individuals who want to return to work.

## GOAL 2

*To enable workers to make smooth transitions so they, and their employers, may fully benefit from the new, changing economy by putting in place a coherent strategy for dislocated and incumbent worker training.*

### Objective

Increase economic competitiveness, and prevent dislocation by expanding customized incumbent worker training.

#### Strategy

- Increase publicly supported, customized incumbent worker training, and provide incentives to both employers and employees for this type of training.

### Objective

Enhance business expansion and retention strategies.

#### Strategy

- Market expansion and retention services to at-risk businesses and their workers.

### Objective:

Return unemployed workers to suitable work in as short a time as possible.

#### Strategy

- Continue to develop dislocated worker services that are coherent, flexible, and accessible, and continue best practices such as rapid response labor-management committees.
- Provide retraining in high-demand fields.

## GOAL 3

*To assist disadvantaged youth, persons with disabilities, new labor market entrants, recent immigrants, and other low-wage workers to move up the job ladder during their lifetimes by developing a wage progression strategy for low-income workers. Specific progress will be made in improving operating agencies and reducing the earnings gap facing people of color, people with disabilities, and women.*

### Objective

Reduce dropouts and increase high school graduation.

#### Strategies

- Ensure all youth achieve the necessary core skills as established by industries in their chosen career pathway, including the achievement of the high school diploma or entrance into a postsecondary education or training program.
- Develop local community-school partnerships that plan and implement dropout prevention and retrieval initiatives for at-risk youth, including effective after school hours and summer programs.

### Objective

Assist unemployed individuals to gain and retain employment, and assist low-income individuals to achieve wage progression.

#### Strategies

- Continue to develop more effective employment services and strengthen postemployment services to help individuals obtain and retain jobs that lead to wage progression.
- Expand programs with demonstrated success in enabling low-income individuals to achieve wage progression, such as customized training, apprenticeship preparation and apprenticeship programs, and other training opportunities.

- Expand access to support services, such as child care, especially for target populations.
- Provide training programs at times and locations accessible to working people, and provide support services to assist in overcoming barriers to training.
- Increase basic skills and ESL instruction that is integrated with occupational skills training.
- Create and offer financial incentives to employers and low-income workers to increase training.
- Provide financial assistance that enables working adults and ESL, Adult Basic Skills students to take advantage of education and training opportunities.

### Objective

Remove barriers for populations with unique obstacles to employment, and increase the number of employers who hire individuals with disabilities, women, and people of color in high-wage, high-demand occupations.

#### Strategies

- Implement the Ticket to Work Program.
- Educate employers, especially employers from high-wage, high-demand industries, about the benefits of hiring individuals from target populations.
- Continue developing accountability and program improvement mechanisms for increasing employment and earnings for target populations.

## GOAL 4

*To integrate workforce development programs to improve customer service.*

### Objective

Improve WorkSource services to business customers.

#### Strategy

- Respond to the needs of business customers and implement coordinated strategies among WorkSource partners.

### Objective

Make workforce development services from multiple providers a straightforward and effective experience for job seekers and youth.

#### Strategies

- Improve customer service by collecting and using customer feedback, providing electronic services, and sharing information on customer service best practices.
- Include all WorkSource partners in customer service training, including training in serving target populations.
- Enhance the statewide information system (SKIES) for case management that is shared by WorkSource partners.
- Maintain and continue to develop systems to track and report core WorkSource services.
- Improve communication and collaboration among workforce development youth partners.
- Find financial resources to sustain the WorkSource delivery system infrastructure.

### Objective

Provide services that meet the unique needs of individuals from target populations, and reach out to these populations to increase their use of WorkSource services.

#### Strategies

- Provide individuals with disabilities with equal opportunities to benefit from WorkSource services.
- Continue outreach and capacity building activities with partners, including tribes and community-based organizations to ensure involvement of targeted populations within the WorkSource system.
- Encourage diversity among the membership of local WDCs and WorkSource staff to reflect the diversity of our communities.

### Objective

Maintain a performance accountability system for workforce development that is integrated across programs.

#### Strategy

- Lead the national Integrated Performance Information Project.