

## Future of Work Task Force

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### Policy Areas to Explore in 2019

- 1. Washington's current workforce needs to be retrained, reskilled, and upskilled to keep pace with changes in technology and business practices that are creating ongoing disruptions across a wide range of industries and sectors.**

Key issues to be addressed through policy recommendations:

- What mix of public policies and incentives, as well as changes to corporate cultures, can increase training for incumbent workers across occupations in Washington?
- What policies can be developed or improved to help avert lay-offs or accelerate re-employment?
- Registered apprenticeship programs and other "earn and learn" models are proven to provide a positive return on employer, worker, and taxpayer investments. Can we develop internal apprenticeship programs for incumbent workers or other models that are workplace-based, and sustain earnings during training periods?
- What policies can be developed or improved to help traditionally underserved and underemployed populations (such as low-wage workers, formerly incarcerated persons, people of color, people with disabilities, immigrants and refugees, older workers) benefit equitably from incumbent worker training?
- What kind of physical, educational or social infrastructure needs to be in place to support incumbent worker training and upskilling?

- 2. Gains in business productivity, although slowing over the past decade, continue to outpace wages.**

Key issues to be addressed through policy recommendations:

- What policies can help ensure income gains from increased productivity are shared?
- What policy levers can incentivize businesses to invest in greater productivity rather than relying solely on cost-cutting to achieve business goals?
- What policies or incentives can be developed to promote employee ownership, employee stock ownership plans (ESOPs) or other "co-investment opportunities" for workers/employees?

- 3. Many jobs considered “high demand” pay low wages and offer limited on-the-job training, minimal advancement opportunities, inconsistent and unpredictable schedules, and few benefits. A robust future of work strategy must address the fact that many of the fastest growing jobs do not provide a living wage, or opportunities for career advancement, spurring further income inequality for a growing number of workers.**

Key issues to be addressed through policy recommendations:

- What mix of public policies, programs, and investments can improve job quality for frontline workers throughout Washington’s economy, especially in low-wage sectors?
- What policy levers can spur wage growth in high demand, yet low-paying jobs?
- How can these jobs become ladders to better career opportunities?
- What strategies can help ensure a path to living-wage employment for every worker?
- What enabling framework can promote the creation of “high quality” jobs?
- Is the physical and social infrastructure adequate to serve people in low-wage sectors?

- 4. Many businesses outside of the state’s major urban areas do not have access to research, engineering, fabrication, testing and modeling, or the capital needed to invent or adopt new technologies, to remain competitive.**

Key issues to be addressed through policy recommendations:

- What strategies need to be expanded or developed to support businesses and their workers in the invention and adoption of new technologies?
- What policies or incentives can be developed or improved that would better enable businesses to invest in innovation and increased productivity, while retaining their workforce and creating high-quality jobs?
- Collaborative Applied Research (CAR) supports business innovation and competitiveness, while connecting faculty, students and workers to emerging technologies through higher education-business partnership and collaboration. How could this model, widely used in other countries and in a few other states, be replicated in Washington?
- What can we learn from existing U.S. programs, such as the Manufacturing Extension Partnership, about successful strategies that enable employers to invest in modernizing their workplace in specific industries, while also focusing on skills upgrading and job quality?

- 5. Partnerships between businesses, workers, and the public sector can lead to advancements in workforce development, and also spur the adoption of new technology within a community, or industry sector. Washington has invested in numerous pilots and demonstrations where such partnerships have proven successful, but not sustainable.**

Key issues to be addressed through policy recommendations:

- How might we learn from WA’s historical investments, and from other states and countries to establish “best practice” guidelines for effective partnerships, and a policy mechanism that ensures this strategy is utilized across the state, with appropriate performance accountability?

- What “best practices” from existing public-private partnerships can be replicated or created across the state that benefits workers and businesses in every region?
- In the context of accelerated technology change, what are additional elements that could be incorporated into the traditional workforce development partnership model -- such as structures for worker engagement in decision-making around technology adoption and implementation?
- Collaborative Applied Research (CAR) supports business innovation and competitiveness, while connecting faculty, students and workers to emerging technologies through higher education-business partnership and collaboration. This model is widely used in other countries and in a few other states, and might be replicated in Washington.

**6. Rural economies face different economic and workforce development challenges than urban areas.**

Key issues to be addressed through policy recommendations:

- What policies and programs exist, or could be improved, to help rural regions prosper?
- What policies and programs exist, or could be improved, to support more effective training, development and retention of a skilled workforce and generate attractive jobs?
- Can population-based funding formulas geared toward urban areas be adjusted to accommodate rural regions?

**7. Public infrastructure, including broadband internet access, is necessary for businesses to remain competitive and to create more quality job opportunities. It’s also needed to provide access to educational opportunities for learners of all ages. However, it’s unevenly distributed across the state.**

Key issues to be addressed through policy recommendations:

- What policies and programs exist, or could be improved, to bring universal access to needed business and education infrastructure to every region of Washington?
- What incentives or policy levers would create enough demand for providers to build this infrastructure in rural or hard to serve areas?

**8. More information is needed to more accurately and efficiently match jobseekers with employers, and jobs, across the state. Jobseekers often do not know which skills are needed for particular jobs and lack a clear pathway to obtain these skills.**

Key issues to be addressed through policy recommendations:

- How can the state identify and work with existing data collection and data analysis systems to create a more effective worker classification system and allow for greater cross-department sharing and utilization of data?
- What currently unavailable information and relevant metrics can be identified and utilized to augment knowledge of workforce supply and demand?

- What information about jobs, occupations, skills, competencies, credentials or other resources would be valuable and more easily accessible to workers seeking new positions or new skills?
- How can the state develop a “dashboard” to effectively and easily convey information to both job seekers and employers related to matching skill sets with employers’ demand statewide?
- How can the state develop and maintain a continuously updated database inventory of current and future trends and factors projected to drive transformation of industries and work over the next 25 years?
- How can the state create linkages between this information and the business and education networks?
- How can the state create a dashboard to track the state’s success addressing future of work issues, including analysis of which data sets are readily available?

**9. The rise of non-traditional employment, including a growing number of people who earn a living through independent contracting and the gig economy, means many workers lack a steady paycheck, or key employer-provided benefits, such as health insurance or paid sick or parental leave.**

Key issues to be addressed through policy recommendations:

- What is the size and demographic profile of this workforce?
- How can we better measure and define this workforce, including its many subcategories such as “gig” workers, subcontractors, part-time employees, on-demand workers, temporary workers, agency workers?
- What policies can be developed or improved that would provide non-traditional workers with better economic security (predictable, living-wage income levels), including benefits and services afforded to many traditional workers?
- What can be done to clarify and enforce classification of work type, and the benefits and rights workers may be entitled to?
- Can current service structures, such as WorkSource career centers, be modified to serve the on-demand workforce, with an eye toward higher earnings and benefit levels?
- Are there policy levers that might encourage businesses to modify on-demand hiring practices that provide greater economic stability for contingent workers?

**10. Periods of self-employment and business ownership are becoming more prevalent for many workers, sometimes by choice, sometimes not. Washington is among the easiest places to open a business, but has a higher than national average failure rate of business start-ups.**

Key issues to be addressed through policy recommendations:

- What policies can be developed or improved to help entrepreneurs and self-employed individuals succeed, and, in some cases, create new jobs?
- Are there sufficient resources to help interested Washingtonians make the transition from traditional wage earners to self-starting entrepreneurs?