Agency Recommendation Summary

Washington's employers face a serious skilled IT worker shortage. Many people from disadvantaged and marginalized communities are unable to access these jobs, which offer outstanding wages and career opportunities. Public, private, state, and local collaborators will work together to close race, gender, ability, and other disparities in the IT-related workforce, by reducing digital illiteracy and building accessible on-ramps to the IT career pipeline. Partners will create, expand or scale on-ramps to opportunities, through digital literacy education and credentials, an IT Service Corps, mentorship, and an industry-informed education and career navigation tool, among other activities. Funds will also support worker preparation for thousands of new jobs created from federal IIJA grants.

Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary *Dollars in Thousands*	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2024	2025	2023-25	2026	2027	2025-27
Staffing						
FTEs	0.0	4.0	**2.0**	4.0	4.0	**4.0**
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001 - 1	$0	$7,677	**$7,677**	$10,275	$10,528	**$20,803**
Total Expenditures	**$0**	**$7,677**	**$7,677**	**$10,275**	**$10,528**	**$20,803**

Decision Package Description

Washington's information technology sector offers outstanding career opportunities. This sector continues to expand and demand for information technology jobs and skills in all industries continues to rise. However, too many Washingtonians are being left behind, even as this industry faces a skilled worker shortage. This Decision Package is a broad effort among many partners to close the digital divide. This effort aims to increase digital literacy among disadvantaged and marginalized populations and enhance training and education programs to create clear pathways to good jobs.

This proposal was developed using the tenets of the Collective Impact model, codified through the research of the Stanford Social Innovation Center in 2011(https://ssir.org/articles/entry/collective_impact). There will be references to this model throughout this proposal. The 5 core components of the model include:

1. Agreement upon a common agenda.
2. Develop common goals and a shared measurement system.
3. Engage in mutually reinforcing activities.
4. Maintain open and continuous communication.
5. Formation of a backbone organization, with staff dedicated to coordinating the efforts of group members and ensuring that the activities of participants remain in concert.

In recent years, the importance of information technology (IT) has grown exponentially, becoming an integral part of our daily lives and the global economy. However, there remains a significant digital divide, with marginalized populations and communities facing barriers to accessing the IT career pipeline. This proposal aims to address this issue by fostering collaboration among public, private, state, and local partners to reduce digital illiteracy and create accessible on-ramps to IT and IT-related careers.

The core focus of this proposal begins with the concept of "on-ramps" that addresses hurdles that keep some disadvantaged populations from even considering using technology in daily living, let alone as a career choice. Each activity is designed to address one or more barriers as identified through stakeholder input and literature reviews.

The primary objective of this proposal is to close disparities in the IT-related workforce by:

- Reducing Digital Illiteracy: Implementing digital literacy programs targeted at marginalized populations to ensure they have the foundational skills needed for daily living and IT careers.
- Building Accessible On-Ramps: Enhancing existing education and training infrastructure to create equitable and navigable pathways to in-demand, high-wage IT-based careers.

This initiative is made up of nine core components, briefly described below, that are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. To make it easier for the reader to keep all aspects of the initiative top of mind, we've created a link to a summary document that describes each component and

the Lead Entities responsible. This link is provided in each section of the DP:

https://wtb.wa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Digital-Literacy-DP.pdf

Components of the Digital Literacy/IT Career Equity Collective Impact Initiative

1. Collective Impact "Backbone" Organization:
    - Provide coordination, central communication, performance accountability, and policy development.
    - Administer and oversee fiscal and contract compliance among partners.
    - Lead: Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board.
2. Digital Literacy Curriculum and Credentialing:
    - Develop and implement a statewide digital literacy curriculum.
    - Develop and administer the Workplace Digital Literacy Credential System.
    - Lead: Washington State University Global Campus.
3. IT Occupation and Education Mapping Portal:
    - Design an interactive tool for navigating IT career pathways.
    - Provide recommendations for framework and specifications.
    - Lead: Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board.
4. IT Service Corps:
    - Expand the IT Service Corps program, following the AmeriCorps model.
    - Build upon the IT Service Corps pilot and Digital Navigators program.
    - Lead: Employment Security Department/Washington Service Corps.
5. Reentry and Targeted Communities Support:
    - Continue and expand the successful Workforce Development and Reentry Support Program.
    - Focus on supporting targeted communities.
    - Lead: Equity in Education Coalition.
6. Mentorship Program:
    - Establish the Advance Equity in IT Careers (AEITC) mentorship program.
    - Facilitate momentum towards education and employment opportunities in the IT field.
    - Lead: Mentors in Tech.
7. Public-Private New Program Fund:
    - Rapid access funds for locally responsive training when no nearby programs exist.
    - Lead: Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board
8. Devices for Jobseekers Fund:
    - Fund pool to purchase technology devices to support jobseekers' education and success in livable-wage employment.
    - Lead: Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board.
9. Performance Accountability:
    - Continuously track performance, disaggregated by demographics.

- Ensure positive impact on targeted populations and communities.
- Serve as an evaluative management tool for progress assessment and adjustments.
- Lead: Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board.

This proposal is the culminating work of a multi-stakeholder collective impact initiative, taking important steps to expand access to information technology and related employment for under-represented populations and communities historically left behind in Washington's economy, as well as to improve technology access for those unable to connect to the digital world.

No single organization, however innovative or powerful, can accomplish on its own a task as large as solving digital illiteracy and expanding access to Information Technology (IT)-related careers. Instead, our shared agenda and collective mission is to bring forward policy and program concepts that complement previous and current efforts. Through this proposal, collaborators have agreed to establish and track measurable goals, identify gaps or barriers in the pipeline, develop solutions together, and leverage existing resources to achieve our goals. This is not a request to create a new program, but to strengthen the public talent development pipeline so that all Washingtonians, in every community across the state, can benefit equitably from Washington's tech-driven economy.

This proposal and budget request build on the important work from our state policymakers to expand opportunities, especially in education and training, to help more people enter the IT industry. Despite these efforts, there continue to be large gaps, particularly at the front end, that prevent people from accessing education and training to prepare for IT careers. Outlined below are the expected outcomes of a long-term, multi-pronged strategy to reduce digital and technological illiteracy across the state, and to create an accessible, easily navigable, system of education and work-based pathways to high-wage, high-demand, IT-based careers.

Expected Outcomes

1. Increased Digital Literacy: A significant reduction in digital illiteracy rates among marginalized populations.
2. Diverse IT Workforce: A more diverse and inclusive IT workforce, with increased representation from marginalized communities.
3. Equitable Career Pathways: Clear and equitable pathways to IT careers, reducing disparities in access and opportunity.
4. Economic Impact: A stronger, more competitive workforce that drives economic growth and reduces income disparities.
5. Collaboration Model: A successful model for public-private collaboration to address workforce disparities that can be replicated across regions.

Why Now?

Technology is integral to nearly every aspect of our daily lives, including how we participate in our communities, learn, and work. The pandemic exposed the glaring disparities and significant obstacles that prevent marginalized individuals and communities from accessing the economic opportunities offered by Washington's tech-driven economy. While the state's tech sector has led to substantial income growth, these benefits are not reaching everyone. Recent analysis indicates that the top 10 percent of earners now make 12.6 times what the bottom 10 percent earn, a significant increase from 1990. (Source: Employment Security Department 2022 Annual Labor Market Report).

The pandemic also revealed the challenges faced by community health, behavioral health, housing, and food distribution programs in serving digitally illiterate clients, even when devices were provided for internet access. Without immediate investment, Washington risks repeating the mistakes of the Great Recession, where the state's economic success in aggregate data masked the ongoing exclusion of marginalized populations.

We have mobilized a strong coalition of stakeholders and partners committed to ensuring that all Washingtonians are able to share in the state's economic success. They have committed to digging beneath the aggregate numbers, tracking our collective progress, and using reliable, disaggregated data to enable the group to work together towards this initiative's success.

While developing the state's Workforce Economic Recovery Plan (WERP), we uncovered a widespread digital divide across every region of Washington. This issue isn't unique to our state, as a recent study by Jobs for the Future and the National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education (Digital Resilience in the American Workforce) found:

- 32 million Americans struggle to use a computer.

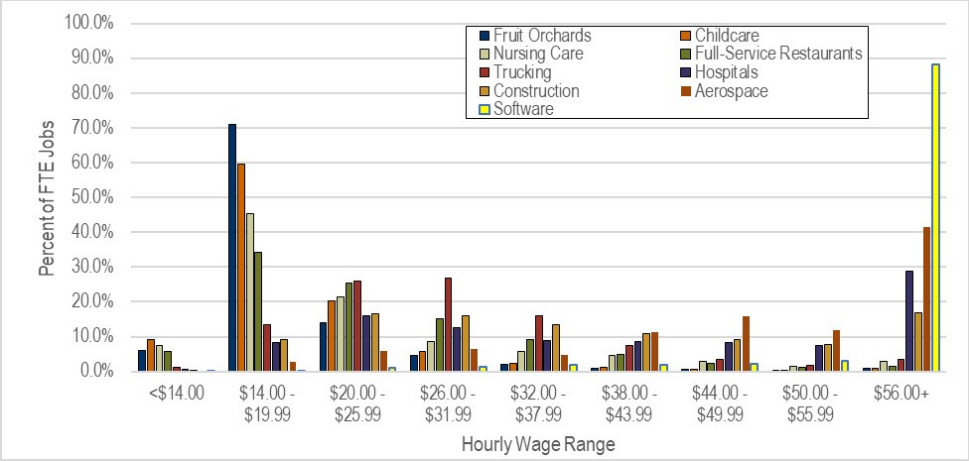
- Half of all Americans say they are not confident in using technology to learn.
- 14 percent do not use any form of technology.

While access to affordable broadband and devices are often cited as critical barriers, our findings confirm that many marginalized communities, even with broadband and device access, lack effective digital learning opportunities and pathways to tech careers.

Digital illiteracy and discomfort are prevalent, especially among those populations facing generational poverty or residing in under-resourced communities. Exposure to technology and social networks that use IT regularly are critical factors in pursuing tech-based careers. However, such visibility and social capital are absent in many affected communities. Without family and friends in tech jobs, it's challenging to envision success in these careers, explore available opportunities, or seek relevant education and training. As a result, people often opt for familiar occupations with lower wages, while high-paying tech roles remain inaccessible. People choose employment options that they recognize and understand from what they see and learn from other community members. Many of those more recognizable industries are growing but are adding jobs in the sub-$32 dollars per hour ranges, the highest job growth is in jobs paying less than $20 per hour. By contrast, the software industry had an increase of nearly 90 percent in the over $56 per hour range, yet little growth in the lower wage ranges (see below).

Change in Employment by Hourly Wage Ranges for Selected Industries

Washington State, 2021



Source: Washington State Employment Security Department

Washington, home to tech giants like Amazon and Microsoft, is experiencing a surge in demand for information technology (IT) skills across various industries. Tech-based jobs are not only growing beyond our state's current workforce capacity, but virtually every occupation in every sector is seeing a growing reliance on IT functions within their workforce. According to recent projections from the Employment Security Department (ESD), there will be approximately 74,600 openings annually in the top 10 IT fields over the next four years, with this number increasing to about 82,200 from 2025-2030 (see chart below).

Projected Average Annual Job Openings in Washington State

SOC	Occupational title	Avg. Ann.Total Openings 2021-2026	Avg. Ann.Total Openings 2026-2031
15-1211	Computer Systems Analysts	7,727	8,258
15-1212	Information Security Analysts	1,707	2,001
15-1221	Computer and Information Research Scientists	873	972
15-1231	Computer Network Support Specialists	1,552	1,673
15-1232	Computer User Support Specialists	8,589	9,258
15-1241	Computer Network Architects	1,601	1,641
15-1242	Database Administrators	1,280	1,368
15-1244	Network and Computer Systems Administrators	3,906	4,137
15-1251	Computer Programmers	2,198	2,292
15-1252	Software Developers	33,451	37,805
15-1254	Web Developers	5,663	6,548
15-1299	Computer Occupations, All Other	7,065	7,697
15-1200	Computer Occupations	75,612	83,650

Source: Employment Security Department 2022

Much more research is needed to determine the need for IT talent and technology skills for the majority of jobs outside the tech industry. We do know that the U.S. Department of Labor's STEM-identified occupations are projected by Washington's Employment Security Department (ESD) to see a 32 percent increase in employment over 10 years. This compares to 18 percent for all occupations.

Washington's top five fastest growing STEM occupations

Occupational title	Employment 2021	Avg. Ann. Growth	
		2021-2026	2026-2031
Software Developers	95,114	4.13%	2.73%
Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists	28,606	1.78%	2.37%
Web Developers	18,908	2.68%	2.89%
Computer and Information Systems Managers	14,554	5.02%	2.26%
Computer User Support Specialists	19,051	4.63%	1.67%
Computer Systems Analysts	17,000	5.61%	1.63%

Source: Washington Employment Security Department

We've partnered with the state's Department of Commerce to assess the impact of new federal funding, specifically the federal Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program, on job opportunities in Washington. The BEAD Program allocates $42.45 billion to expand high-speed internet access, with Washington receiving $1.23 billion to ensure "Internet for All" in the state. The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) has assessed the impact of BEAD funding on our state's workforce, estimating that approximately 50,000 new workers will need training and deployment to fully leverage the allocated BEAD funding.

NTIA's projections for worker shortages in BEAD implementation are summarized below. A diverse range of jobs will be in high demand, offering salaries well above Washington's median income ($51,895). These roles require at least basic digital literacy, with many calling for significant skill development. The Department of Commerce's State Broadband Office and Office of Digital Equity are key collaborators on this initiative. As BEAD funding details are finalized, partners will work together to address the workforce shortage. While leveraging existing resources in the initial approach, many required training programs are either non-existent or lack sufficient capacity. The Public-Private New Program Fund (described above and in Detailed Assumptions Section) will provide businesses with BEAD contracts swift access to financial support to train and hire new employees.

BEAD demand makes up 3% of Washington's cross-industry deficit

BEAD Occupation Group	BEAD Demand (FTEs)	Cross-Industry Deficit (FTEs)[1]	Deficit / Supply[2]
2026 Totals	(1.4K)	(50.3K)	-9.1%
Laborers and material movers	(355)	(10,482)	-7.1%
Software engineers	(328)	(17,931)	-13.8%
Trucking crew	(229)	(5,729)	-5.1%
Fiber and wireless technicians	(85)	(3,209)	-11.1%
Trenchers	(80)	(4,254)	-13.1%
Equipment operators	(70)	(1,638)	-7.1%
Structural engineers	(56)	(1,227)	-5.6%
Master and stage electricians	(53)	(2,306)	-10.7%
Network architects and coordinators	(42)	(1,332)	-7.9%
RF & field engineers	(34)	(837)	-5.4%
Surveyors and drafters	(17)	(690)	-10.3%
Inspectors (e.g., permit, health & safety)	(16)	(631)	-10.2%

Source: NTIA State Workforce Research Findings: Washington

What is the problem, opportunity, or priority you are addressing with the request?

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the move towards digitization, virtualization, and automation of work affecting current and prospective workers. Access to high-wage, in-demand jobs is now critical for Washington workers seeking economic security post-pandemic.

However, economically vulnerable and marginalized Washingtonians often lack IT knowledge and skills, creating barriers to learning and better job prospects. The pandemic underscored how digital illiteracy impacts daily life, from banking to healthcare access, disproportionately affecting communities of color and those with high poverty rates. Many have been stuck in low-wage, customer-facing jobs with limited mobility due to digital and technological illiteracy.

Adding to these disparities, the occupational landscape is rapidly evolving, with tech skills becoming essential in almost every field. Employers are grappling with decisions about technology adoption and automation, which change skill requirements for workers. Workers need to understand these shifts, identify where to acquire new skills, and relate their existing competencies to new ones. For instance, individuals with foundational IT skills may need cybersecurity certification, but clear pathways are lacking.

To address these challenges, the Workforce Board will lead a comprehensive design study to create an interactive portal for mapping the IT occupational landscape. This portal will provide crucial information to marginalized populations unfamiliar with jobs and education options. It will offer insights into IT jobs, career paths, required skills, and preparation methods. It will also show where education and training programs are available to build required skills and competencies. The portal will show whether education options are short-term, long-term, for college credit or non-credit, and how one credential maps to other credentials to reach higher levels of learning, job responsibility, and earning potential. The portal will be valuable for all Washingtonians as technology reshapes work rapidly, providing clarity for all individuals seeking pathways to

livable-wage employment. The portal will also provide employers a communication channel with educators about how their skill needs are changing, signaling to educators when curriculum modifications should be considered. Because information in the portal will be based on a common language of skills, competencies, and experiences or mastery levels, employers will also be able to see which education and training programs are currently preparing the talent they are seeking.

Lack of useful information on which to base important education and career planning decisions has been identified as a critical barrier for marginalized populations who are often otherwise unfamiliar with the job and education landscape. Access to reliable, actionable information on IT-related jobs and career paths, required skills, and preparation methods is a top initiative priority. Many individuals with limited resources opt for short-term, low-cost training like online or certificate programs to quickly secure employment. Yet, information is unavailable on how these short-term options connect or "stack to" higher- level education, advanced training, or career advancement opportunities.

The IT Occupation and Education Mapping portal will follow the approach of the Workforce Board's career and education planning portal, Career Bridge. Career Bridge provides reliable performance data on all levels and types of Washington education and training programs. This data includes enrollment, completion rates, and employment outcomes, ensuring users have objective and up-to-date information to make informed decisions. The Workforce Board does not accept school-reported performance, often found in media ads, instead matching student record information with employer-reported wage data. The IT Occupation and Education Mapping portal will provide similar objective, timely information to users.

In 2022 and 2023, the Workforce Board submitted decision packages to address digital illiteracy and create entry points to high demand, high-wage tech jobs for marginalized populations and communities. While the proposal wasn't funded, large federal and state investments in bridging the digital divide occurred and made significant headway, especially in making broadband more accessible and increasing postsecondary computer science education seats across the state.

The Washington Department of Commerce's Broadband Office has played a pivotal role in administering state and federal funds dedicated to bridge the digital divide. Initially focused on broadband distribution, it now addresses the additional barriers posed by digital illiteracy. An Office of Digital Equity was established to create programs and strategies for marginalized people to leverage the internet for work, education and daily life needs like healthcare, social services, and banking. Federal funds supported the successful Digital Navigator Program, with navigators stationed in libraries, community organizations, WorkSource Centers, and other locations statewide. Although Commerce requested state funds to continue the program (federal funds ended June 30, 2023) they received only a quarter of the requested amount.

A similar concept to the Digital Navigator program is the IT Service Corps, a key piece of this decision package. It is modeled after and operated by the Washington Service Corps, a program of the Employment Security Department (ESD) with funds from the federal AmeriCorps program. The IT Service Corps offers individuals from disadvantaged communities real-world, IT-relevant work experience and enables them to bring IT support back to their communities. Employers have identified "real-world IT-relevant experience" as a crucial criterion for hiring and promotion. While not approved for state funding last year, the Washington Service Corps successfully piloted this model using ongoing federal AmeriCorps funds. The achievements of both the IT Service Corps pilot and the Digital Navigator program have encouraged collaborators to expand this model in this revised decision package, now including a new component: mentorship.

Disadvantaged populations often face barriers due to limited awareness of technology-related industries and a lack of social connections. Even when they participate in computer and IT training programs, performance data reveals lower employment and earnings outcomes for underserved populations, particularly communities of color, veterans, those with a disability, LGTBQ+, and those from impoverished or rural areas. Women in these programs also encounter significant disparities in hiring and promotion. This underscores the challenges individuals face in taking the first step towards an IT career and the additional barriers they encounter when seeking career advancement in the industry.

Mentorship from industry professionals can effectively reduce disparity gaps. This proposal extends the successful Mentors in Tech (MinT) program, which aids Washington community and technical college students enrolled in four-year applied bachelor's computer science programs, helping them navigate and launch their careers through structured industry mentoring. This proposal aims to scale up the community and technical college program, extending it to the IT Service Corps participants and students in the Computer Science Associate of Arts program. MinT primarily focuses on students from populations that commonly encounter barriers in the IT field. (see list below).

MinT BAS Program Student Demographics

- 57% Students of color
- 41% First generation college students
- 28% Female

- 26% First generation immigrant
- 20% Have struggled with poverty (35% on Pell grants)
- 15% Parents
- Cohort average age range from 26 to 29

Washington requires a comprehensive, customizable, and regionally adaptable digital literacy curriculum to meet diverse participant needs. Currently, digital literacy programs are available throughout the state, including online options. However, a review by collaborators found that most lack cultural and language diversity, accessibility for individuals with varying abilities, and preparation for the workforce or further education leading to tech careers.

The Washington curriculum will address these shortcomings and employ a badging system to credential learners at each level. Employers will contribute to the top tier of the program, leading to the Washington Workplace Digital Literacy Credential. Each badge will communicate the digital skills and competencies achieved by students, helping them understand their progress in acquiring essential IT skills. This credentialing system aims to inspire and motivate students to pursue further IT and computer skills demanded by employers.

Collaborators intend to enhance existing resources to create an accessible digital literacy program and credentialing system for students, employers, and the education community. Washington State University (WSU) Global Campus is leading this initiative, working alongside many partners to develop this crucial component. WSU will not only offer their state-of-the-art IT Infrastructure and online badging/credential system, but will leverage other WSU resources and strategies to reach underserved communities, such as the planned expansion of "destination" video classrooms and other synchronous and asynchronous knowledge-transfer locations in rural and underserved communities, managed by WSU Extension across the state. This work will also be informed by the current Remote Worker Certificate offered by WSU Extension in collaboration with WSU. https://extension.wsu.edu/remoteworkcertificate/

More aspects of this "digital skills-driven" omnibus proposal can be found in later sections of the decision package. A full list of components of the initiative is also available at https://wtb.wa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Digital-Literacy-DP.pdf

What is your proposal?

This omnibus proposal will connect Washington's economically marginalized populations and communities to the state's tech-driven economy—supporting the Workforce Board's "Shared Prosperity" collective impact agenda.

With a shared commitment to equity and the goal of reducing economic disparities across Washington, the Workforce Board and a diverse coalition of public and private partners have crafted a comprehensive package to address pervasive service gaps. The team has also identified existing resources and leverage points to build upon. We are seeking new funds to specifically address critical gaps in the pipeline.

Within the collective impact model, this proposal prioritizes strategies and activities that accelerate the eradication of digital illiteracy, create on-ramps to and enhance existing education and training resources, ensure equitable access to high-wage, high-demand IT-related careers, and sustain long-term economic success for both workers and employers. This approach hinges on partners working together and excelling in specific activities that complement each other—referred to as mutually reinforcing activities.

The proposed activities will involve lead and partner organizations in developing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating program innovations aimed at closing disparity gaps in IT-based occupations and the talent development pipeline across Washington's key economic sectors. This proposal encompasses various program components and activities that, when combined, will reshape the state's pathways to IT careers, enhancing access, navigability, and lifelong economic success, particularly for historically marginalized populations and communities.

Each component also has a responsible Lead Entity and several partners, and their activity builds on and leverages the expertise and resources of the lead and partner organizations. Funds are requested to fill the gap between existing resources and the true cost of each component. Following is a summary of the full proposal (further detail about each components is described later in the proposal, in the section "Assumptions and Calculations"):

Objective: Reduce digital illiteracy and improve pathways to IT-based employment for marginalized populations and communities. This will be achieved through the following projects:

- **Collective Impact "Backbone" Organization and Performance Tracking:** coordination, fiscal and contract administration, central

communications, policy development, and performance accountability. Work with partners to establish common goals and continuously track performance, disaggregated by demographic categories, to ensure positive outcomes for targeted populations and communities. Use this data for ongoing evaluation and adjustments as needed.

- **Multi-Tier Digital Literacy Curriculum**: Develop and distribute a comprehensive digital literacy curriculum addressing daily life, education, and workplace skills. This will be accessible online and through physical materials, with digital and physical credentials awarded to tier completers.
- **Workplace Digital Literacy Credential (WDLC):** Create an employer-endorsed WDLC with associated curriculum and resources, customizable for specific industries and occupations. Ideally, employers will use the credential as a hiring and promotion criterion.
- **Interactive Navigational Portal:** Develop specifications for an interactive portal outlining the skills needed for high-demand, IT-based jobs in Washington, along with relevant education and training pathways. Recommendations will be provided for portal administration and regular updates.
- **IT Service Corps:** Sustain the IT Service Corps within the Washington Service Corps to provide, real-world work experience and digital literacy support to underserved communities through AmeriCorps member positions.
- **Workforce Development and Reentry Support Program:** Continue the Workforce Development and Reentry Support Program, part of the Equity in Education Coalition's four-pronged approach to help formerly incarcerated individuals secure well-paid, tech-related job opportunities.
- **Advance Equity in IT Careers (AEITC) Mentorship Program**: Expand Mentors in Tech (MinT) successful model with marginalized applied baccalaureate computer science students to IT Service Corps members and AA computer science students at the community and technical colleges.
- **Flexible Fund Pool:** Establish a fund to support responsive public-private partnerships in areas lacking necessary training programs.
- **Technology Device Fund:** Create a fund to support the purchase of technology devices for jobseekers to aid in their education and transition to the workforce.

In the section entitled, "Assumptions and Calculations: Detailed Assumptions and Calculations: Detailed Assumptions by Lead Entity and Program Component," you will find a full description of each proposal component, broken out by the responsible Lead Entity. A summary of leads and responsibilities are found at https://wtb.wa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Digital-Literacy-DP.pdf

What are you purchasing and how does it solve the problem?

Staff and Contractor/IAA Resources

This proposal seeks funding primarily to support staff and contractor resources essential for both the development and ongoing implementation of the program components described above. The majority of Workforce Board contractor funds are requested to facilitate the creation of specifications for the IT Occupational Navigational Portal during the initial two years. Building this portal based on specifications developed will be contingent upon securing future funding. The Workforce Board will also issue contracts to subject matter experts needed to inform various project components, including assessments and evaluations.

Additionally, through an Interagency Agreement (IAA) with ESD, we will capitalize on AmeriCorps funds administered by the Washington Service Corps and build on the WSC pilot of the IT Service Corps and the Digital Navigator grants from Commerce. Another IAA will be made with WSU Global Campus to lead the development of the multi-tier digital literacy curriculum and credentialing system, including working with employers to create the Washington Workplace Digital Literacy Certificate. This is described further below.

An IAA with the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) will leverage expertise from the Centers of Excellence and will support the prototyping of career and educational pathways to inform the development of the navigational portal, and to support development of the multi-tier digital literacy curriculum and credentials.

The Workforce Board will also issue contracts to non-state entities leading efforts to implement components of this initiative, such as Mentors in Tech and Equity in Education Coalition, as well as to subject matter experts and service providers needed to inform various project components, including assessments and evaluations. Design and development of specifications and policies for an Occupation and Education navigational portal will be a major contracted project.

Two flexible fund pools will enable us to bridge urgent gaps in hiring from marginalized populations and communities. One fund pool will provide immediate access to essential technological devices for jobseekers needing such devices for training and employment success (1,000 devices per year, average cost per jobseeker is estimated at $500). A second fund pool will be allocated to support agile, responsive public-private talent development initiatives to address local needs swiftly and efficiently.

Statewide Curriculum and Credential System

WSU Global Campus has generously offered their technological infrastructure for distributed learning, without which this proposal would come with a significantly higher price tag. Requested funds will support WSU to lead the development and ongoing implementation of the multi-tiered digital literacy education and certification system, including the employer-endorsed Workplace Digital Literacy Certificate (WDLC). This comprehensive digital literacy learning system fills one of the most critical gaps identified by the collaborative in helping marginalized individuals and communities access technology for community living, education, and employment—the missing "on-ramp."

WSU Global Campus will also leverage and partner with other WSU efforts to reach rural and underserved communities, such as the Remote Worker Certificate training program (https://extension.wsu.edu/remoteworkcertificate/) and the expansion of "destination" video classrooms to support synchronous and asynchronous learning. These are led by WSU Extension, which has a presence in every county of the state.

In collaboration with state and local partners, we aim to provide digital literacy resources to 6,000 learners in the first two years, with a conservative annual growth target of 5,000 new learners. Many existing learners are expected to advance to higher levels within the system. By Year 3, we will have fully available the WDLC and relevant learning materials, with a goal of 5,000 individuals achieving this digital literacy credential. Our data collection system will also be operational, allowing us to monitor employment and earnings outcomes associated with completion of these learning tiers and WDLC attainment. Additionally, we will collaborate with community partners to establish metrics for tracking the impact on daily living improvements related to technology, such as accessing banking, healthcare, and housing services.

Occupational and Educational Mapping

The collaborative identified a pressing need for comprehensive, current, and reliable information concerning the skills and competencies demanded in various industry sectors and occupations sought by employers. This is crucial for individuals, including students, jobseekers, and current workers, making career decisions. Employers also require a mapping tool aligning their skill needs with available education and training programs. The Workforce Board, with support from public and private partners, will lead the development of the specifications for an interactive and easily updatable Occupational & Educational Mapping portal. Future funding will be required to build, operate, and maintain the portal.

Ensuring the portal's currency is paramount, especially enabling employers to input and update industry- and occupation-specific data on required skills, competencies, experiences, and mastery levels. This information is vital to both jobseekers and educators adapting their curricula to evolving workforce needs. And to employers seeking talent from available education and training programs. Currently, there's no portal offering timely information on occupational or skill changes across all sectors. The Workforce Board will collaborate with industry associations, professional organizations, worker groups, higher education, and more to establish recommendations for regular portal updates. Existing systems and external expertise will be explored, with an early focus on the Centers of Excellence and the Sentinel Network models.

We'll tap the expertise of SBCTC and its Centers of Excellence (COE) model, leveraging strong employer partnerships and industry-specific knowledge. The Center of Excellence for Information and Computing Technology and the Center of Excellence for Cybersecurity will provide early support.

Additionally, we'll harness the Health Workforce Sentinel Network (Sentinel Network, https://wa.sentinelnetwork.org/), a proven communication channel for emerging health workforce issues. Co-operated by the University of Washington, Center for Health Workforce Studies and the Health Workforce Council of the Workforce Board, the Sentinel Network tracks changes affecting the healthcare workforce. It engages industry "sentinels" from healthcare employers statewide to report on workforce-related changes via short, periodic surveys, facilitating collaboration between the healthcare sector, policymakers, workforce planners, and educators to address evolving demand for healthcare workers and identify new skills and roles required by employers. This model will be explored for expansion into other sectors.

The Workforce Board will work with these and other partners to create a framework and specifications for the IT Occupation and Education Mapping Portal as an online, mobile-friendly tool that is easily accessed by industry partners and education providers for regular updating, and

easily navigated by students and jobseekers using the information to make education and career planning decisions. Recommendations will also be developed for the on-going administration and oversight of the portal once it is developed with future funding. Administration recommendations will include a governance structure and cost-effective mechanisms for regular updating of Portal data.

IT Service Corps

The IT Service Corps addresses the need for real-world IT experience among low-income individuals who lack access to such opportunities. It also provides IT help desk support and digital learning to under-resourced communities unable to access services online. We've incorporated an evaluation process to assess effectiveness and scalability. For this proposal, we maintain a pilot enrollment of 25 participants in subsequent years after Year 1 and allocate ongoing staffing and support for new cohorts (25 each). Expansion requests may be submitted later, and we're collaborating with the National Service Office and congressional representatives, such as Rep. Kilmer and Rep. Fitzpatrick, who co-sponsored a bill to support this model nationally. Washington's investment could prompt policy reform within federal agencies with the authority to implement administrative and budget changes to scale this model.

Workforce Development Reentry Support Program

The Workforce Development Reentry Support Program eliminates obstacles to economic success and reduces recidivism rates for individuals re-entering society after incarceration in Washington's corrections system. Exiting this system comes with numerous challenges, including finding housing and employment, avoiding re-offending, and often being ineligible for public health benefits. This program not only bridges the digital divide but also expands the workforce pipeline.

Formerly incarcerated participants are considered paid staff of the Equity in Education Coalition while attending classes that enhance digital navigation, literacy, technology skills, and broadband infrastructure proficiency, along with fostering social and workplace interpersonal skills. Launched as a pilot program in January 2023, it's funded by a combination of 60% state funds and 40% philanthropic contributions. To date, the program has served 73 individuals to completion and has enrolled an additional 213 individuals who are within six months of release from Washington's corrections system. EEC-WA also maintains a waiting list of 421 people seeking career assistance post-incarceration. All 73 initial completers identified as BIPOC and were below the federal poverty line.

While the pilot project has a short history, law enforcement from different municipalities as well as parole officers and community field officers have requested that this program be expanded and, in some cases, be an alternate option to incarceration. Many believe this helps end the school-to-prison pipeline for some younger adults.

Advance Equity in IT Careers Mentorship

The Advance Equity in IT Careers mentorship program offers industry mentorship, tech career guidance, and professional coaching to facilitate participants' entry into the tech sector and launch their tech careers. This program is modeled after the successful approach pioneered by Mentors in Tech (MinT). MinT's work with community and technical college students has demonstrated impressive outcomes, with three-quarters of participants securing tech jobs upon completing their applied bachelor's degree computer science program at local colleges in their third and fourth years.

More details on what is being purchased are provided in “Assumptions and Calculations.”

What alternatives did you explore and why was this option chosen?

Over the past four and a half years, the Workforce Board and its partners have explored various education options to combat digital illiteracy among disadvantaged populations in Washington. However, each option had limitations that hindered statewide expansion. Smaller privately funded digital literacy programs lacked evaluation and data collection. Public libraries and others offered online digital literacy programs, but they weren't employment-focused, lacked support for limited- or non-English speakers, and didn't provide follow-up data for evaluation. A workplace digital literacy curriculum or credential used by local employers was also absent.

Faculty from Basic Education for Adults (BeDA), teaching basic skills in the state's community and technical college system, libraries, and community-based organizations, have agreed to contribute their expertise to develop the multi-tier curriculum and credentials. They have also volunteered as pilot sites for the digital literacy program's rollout and evaluation, leveraging existing resources whenever possible. Washington State University is requesting resources to support subject matter experts and pilot efforts in targeted communities where other resources are insufficient.

The IT Service Corps was developed specifically to meet the needs identified for the populations targeted by this initiative, and to respond to employers' perspective that real-world IT work experience was essential to be hired and promoted within the tech industry. The IT Service Corps is an innovative twist on the long-standing AmeriCorps model. We put an inquiry out through the national AmeriCorps network and found that some states did have programs to send volunteers with IT expertise to serve in community-based organizations, but none were recruiting low-income individuals and providing IT training to fill those IT support roles in under-resourced organizations or communities. We have met with representatives from the national Service Corps Office who hope Washington's program will serve as a learning laboratory for scale-up nationally. Washington's U.S. Representative Derek Kilmer and Rep. Kilpatrick, from Pennsylvania co-sponsored a bipartisan bill to support administrative changes to the AmeriCorps program that would be needed to implement this model. They too hope to have data from Washington's implementation to fuel the national efforts.

Our partners recognize the significant scale of the digital divide among disadvantaged populations in Washington. We remain committed to leveraging existing resources, and seek additional funding only for unmet needs.

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion, Reduction, Elimination or Alteration of a current program or service:

Summary of initiative components can be found here: https://wtb.wa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Digital-Literacy-DP.pdf

WSU Global Campus will oversee the development and ongoing implementation of digital literacy training and the Workplace Digital Literacy Certificate (WDLC) components. They will utilize their IT infrastructure and use new funds to bring on faculty, staff, and stakeholders to assist in curriculum and credential development. Funds are allocated for subject matter experts not covered by other resources. Project management staff and technical support will be hired, with additional support brought on in Year 2. No changes are expected for existing programs or services. The objective is for community-based organizations, WorkSource centers, community and technical colleges, and tribal organizations to deliver the developed curriculum once it's ready.

Work carried out by partners leading other components of this initiative are not anticipated to alter current programs or services.

Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:

Year 1 focuses on core program development, including convening partners and curriculum planning. For instance, the "Reduce Digital Illiteracy/Establish Workplace Digital Literacy Credential" component requires collaboration among industry, education, and distribution partners to outline competencies and curriculum. Funds are allocated for online learning system specifications. WSU Global Campus, leading this component, has an existing IT infrastructure. A project administrator, subject matters expertise, and technical support is included in the Year 1 budget. In Year 2, additional staffing and per-user fees will be added as the program rolls out, and will be ongoing costs.

A similar approach applies to the "Occupational & Educational Mapping" component led by the Workforce Board, involving stakeholder engagement and feasibility studies in Year 1. Year 1 deliverables include a feasibility study and pathway mapping, with Year 2 focusing on buildout and proof of concept initiatives if funds are secured based on Year 1 results. Building the portal will be dependent on future funding.

The IT Service Corps continues from a small 2023 pilot, with an anticipated scale-up over the next two years. The Year 1 program will undergo evaluation to inform potential program expansion. For this proposal, the enrollment level remains at 25 in subsequent years to assess ongoing staffing and support needs. While there may be future requests for scaling, collaboration with the National Service Office, Congressional delegates, and others is underway to explore potential future funding opportunities.

The Workforce Development Reentry Support Program, administered by the Equity in Education Coalition will serve additional cohorts in year 1. In subsequent years, EEC-WA will continue building out the program across the state with their 100+ member community-based organizations.

The Advance Equity in IT Careers mentorship program, operated by MinT, will require staff time for development and startup costs which are

frontloaded in year 1, and in year 2 shift to operational costs.

Costs are expected to be relatively static plus inflation year over year in the coordination role and the administration of the two new fund pools. The "Technology Access Fund" is proposed at $500,000 annually, calculated at roughly $500 per person for 1,000 jobseekers. The "New Program Fund Pool" will address immediate job needs and resource gaps, such as those identified through the BEAD plan or occupational/educational mapping. In Year 1, we propose $2.5 million, with subsequent years at $5 million each. The first quarter of Year 1 will focus on establishing fund parameters and distribution with program partners. We will also identify education and training partners that have the capacity and flexibility to develop and implement as-needed training across the state. Funds for new program development will be allocated in Year 1, quarters 3 and 4, and potentially late in the second quarter.

Detailed Assumptions by Lead Entity and Program Component

1. Initiative Coordination, Progress Tracking & Reporting, Policy Development, Administration of New Fund Pools and design study for an Occupational and Education Mapping tool (see #3 below for details of SBCTC role)

Lead Entity: Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board

(Contact: Eleni Papadakis, eleni.papadakis@wtb.wa.gov)

We've adopted Stanford University's Collective Impact model to drive large-scale, high-impact systemic change that capitalizes on existing resources. This model necessitates a dedicated "backbone organization" to coordinate participating entities, maintain alignment with common goals, foster transparent communication and performance accountability, and ensure activities are mutually reinforcing. The backbone organization also gathers and reports progress data to partners and the public, and provides data analysis to collaborators for joint management and decision-making regarding continuous improvement and mid-course corrections.

The Workforce Board serves as the backbone organization, having utilized existing staff to develop this proposal over 40 months. Implementation requires a full-time project director (WMS2) and project manager (MA5) for partner coordination and community outreach. A part-time Fiscal Analyst 4 will oversee inter-agency agreements and contracts with lead partners. Fiscal administration will be managed by the Workforce Board. A 0.5 FTE researcher (MA5) will work with partners to establish and maintain the performance accountability system and a public-facing dashboard. Administrative support will be provided by an AA4.

The Workforce Board will also issue contracts to non-state entities leading efforts to implement components of this initiative, such as Mentors in Tech and Equity in Education Coalition, as well as to subject matter experts and technical service providers needed to inform various project components, including assessments and evaluations.

The Workforce Board will oversee two new fund pools:

- Technology Access Devices for Jobseekers: This fund will procure devices, such as laptops, for jobseekers to facilitate job training and employment access. This responds to the need of low-income jobseekers for devices to access online training in preparation for livable wage jobs, and to secure and be successful in those jobs. This will also provide opportunity for marginalized populations to access livable-wage remote or hybrid employment options, rather than low-wage, low-barrier jobs that are solely in-person customer-interactive. Distribution of devices will be managed by local workforce development councils (WDCs), with initiative staff overseeing program rules, guidelines, and effectiveness monitoring. The proposal seeks $500,000 annually, calculated based on $500 per person for 1,000 jobseekers. Costs may vary depending on need.
- Public-Private New Program Funds: These funds are allocated when critical skills gaps are identified, often through regional partners, BEAD plan implementation, or the Workforce Board's mapping process working with hiring employers. This fund addresses critical gaps in the state's education and training investment framework, such as the recent need in trucking and warehousing businesses in Douglas and Grant Counties for workers skilled in installation and maintenance of digital sensors and controllers.

A staff-supported, public-private steering committee will be established to review gap analyses, issue requests for applications to fill gaps, and review submitted applications to inform the funding distribution process. The application process will be designed for rapid response. The funds will also be used to help scale up the availability of education and training programs when warranted through faculty professional development and by making non-proprietary curricular materials available for replication. As stated previously, we expect to spend $2.5 million in the first year on projects that fill immediate IT-related labor shortages in underserved regions of the state. The proposal requests that $5 million be made

available annually in subsequent years.

Workforce Board Project Costs

(Not Including Major Partner Budgets below)

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Salaries	$ 361,000	$ 361,000	$ 361,000	$ 361,000
Benefits	$ 129,000	$ 129,000	$ 129,000	$ 129,000
Goods and Services	$ 73,000	$ 73,000	$ 73,000	$ 73,000
Staff Travel	$ 30,000	$ 42,000	$ 42,000	$ 42,000
Contracts (not listed below)	$ 150,000	$ 150,000	$ 150,000	$ 150,000
Other One-time Staff Cost (Capital)	$ 45,000	$ 18,000	$ -	$ -
Indirect Cost	$ 37,000	$ 37,000	$ 37,000	$ 37,000
SubTotal WTB Cost	$ 825,000	$ 796,000	$ 793,000	$ 793,000
Portal Development	$ 250,000	$ 250,000		
Tech Access	$ 500,000	$ 500,000	$ 500,000	$ 500,000
Public/Private New Program Pool	$ 2,500,000	$ 5,000,000	$ 5,000,000	$ 5,000,000
Subtotal WTB Projects	$ 3,250,000	$ 5,750,000	$ 5,500,000	$ 5,500,000
Total WTB non-Partner Request	$ 4,075,000	$ 6,546,000	$ 6,293,000	$ 6,293,000

2. Reduce Digital Illiteracy/ Establish Workplace Digital Literacy Credential

Lead Entity: WSU Global Campus

(Contacts: David Cillay, dcillay@wsu.edu and Kelly Newell, knewell@wsu.edu)

WSU Global Campus will spearhead two core components of this initiative: reducing digital illiteracy through a statewide curriculum and establishing a recognized workplace digital literacy credential.

WSU, as the state's Land-Grant institution with a widespread presence, boasts a deep history of digital literacy work. WSU Global Campus, with its extensive reach and online infrastructure, ensures access to quality educational programs across the state. WSU, in collaboration with internal WSU partners such as WSU Extension, the Workforce Board and SBCTC, can convene diverse stakeholders in digital literacy, from industry to higher education, and bridge the digital divide through initiatives like the "Drive-Fi" program, “destination” video classrooms, and the Remote Worker Certification program.

Leveraging existing infrastructure, including certificates and micro-credentials, WSU will develop identified credentials. While some external contracts support WSU's IT infrastructure, no major technology or software purchases are required. WSU is well-equipped to support partners through training and access to the necessary hardware and software infrastructure for digital literacy education programs, both online and on-site.

Year 1 centers on convening stakeholders from various sectors, including business, education, and community organizations. A review of existing digital literacy curricula will serve as a baseline, leading to the creation of a draft common curriculum and Workplace Digital Literacy Credential (WDLC) informed by employer stakeholder input. While a solid draft curriculum may emerge by the third quarter, the rollout is realistically planned for Year 2, aiming to serve 6,000 learners. Continuous evaluation and updates will be part of ongoing work.

In Year 1, we request funds to support 2.83 FTEs, including a Project Manager, Education Manager, instructional design assistant, and administrative assistant. Additional funds will facilitate stakeholder engagement and equipment purchase for accessibility in underserved

communities.

Subsequent years will require scaling up access to the Learning Management System (LMS), online certification system, tech support, and registration software. These needs and associated costs will be determined during Year 1 development, with plans for a request ahead of the 2025 legislative session.

Digital Literacy Curriculum and Credential

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Coordination and Development Salaries	188,500.00	197,925.00	207,822.00	218,213.00
Travel	36,000.00	18,000.00	9,000.00	9,000.00
Instructional Design & Tech Design	59,000.00	61,950.00	65,048.00	68,300.00
Meeting Expenses	24,000.00	12,000.00	8,000.00	4,000.00
SME Payments	37,000.00	37,000.00	37,000.00	37,000.00
Extension Collaboration	35,000.00	35,000.00	35,000.00	35,000.00
Sites (Rentals and Tech)	24,000.00	24,000.00	24,000.00	24,000.00
Partners Travel Incentives and Tech	36,000.00	36,000.00	36,000.00	36,000.00
Course Video and Audio Accessibility	$10,000	$10,000	$10,000	$10,000
Admin Time (Director)	7,250.00	7,613.00	7,993.13	8,393.00
Per Person LMS, Tech Support & Registration Fees ($22 per person)	22,000.00	110,000.00	220,000.00	110,000.00
Badging Infrastructure (creation YR1, $5 per person)	16,000.00	25,000.00	50,000.00	25,000.00
Technology Hosting and Setup (Registration & LMS)	24,000.00	40,000.00	40,000.00	40,000.00
Fiscal Year Total	**$518,750.00**	**$614,488.00**	**$749,863.00**	**$624,905.00**
`	1K participants	5K participants	10K participants	5K participants
*Cumulative totals will be higher than the total of new participants each year (21,000 over first 2 biennium) because the curriculum and certification system will be multi-tiered. We expect that many learners will participate in at least 2 and possibly more tiers.				

3. Occupational & Educational Mapping

Lead Entity: Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board

(Contacts: Eleni Papadakis, Eleni.Papadakis@wtb.wa.gov)

The Workforce Board leads a comprehensive design study/proof of concept for mapping the IT occupational and educational landscape. An IT

business analyst consultant will be selected via competitive procurement to perform much of this work over 2 years at a cost of $ 250,000 per year. Many partners will also be engaged for this effort, and direct support will be provided by SBCTC and up to four Centers of Excellence (COEs), including Information and Computing Technology and Cybersecurity.

COEs provide valuable services, research, and programs, serving colleges, industry, and K-12 systems. They serve as information hubs, offering best practices, research, and professional development in current and emerging fields. Their expertise connects with other Centers of Excellence and industry partners. To support SBCTC and the COEs, we request funding for 2.0 program FTEs shared among COEs, and 0.25 for SBCTC administrative functions. The cost of an IAA with SBCTC is provided below.

Two in-house resources of the Workforce Board will also be explored and leveraged to inform development of the portal: Washington's Health Workforce Sentinel Network and the Career Bridge portal. Career Bridge is an interactive career and education planning tool that contains data on over 6,500 Washington education programs, offering program details, performance results, financial aid information, and a career quiz. The Industry Sentinel Network (ISN) is an ongoing channel of workforce-related information focused on emerging healthcare workforce needs. The ISN, via regular "sentinel" surveys, identifies emerging skills and roles required by employers. It could potentially expand to other industries, such as IT.

Project managers will collaborate with stakeholders to develop specifications for an easily updatable, online, mobile-friendly location to house the occupational and educational mapping tool. This tool will be designed for easy access and navigation by industry partners, education providers, students, and jobseekers.

Occupational and Educational Mapping—SBCTC IAA

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
SBCTC- COE cost	$371,500	$382,645	$394,124	$405,948

*Does not include cost of the Portal Development contract, nor the cost of Workforce Board staff participation convening and advancing this project, including through procuring and managing contractors. Cost of Portal Development and total Workforce Board staff costs across all activities appear in the table #1 above.

4. IT Service Corps Lead Entity: Washington Service Corps/Employment Security Department

(Contact: Ashley Palmer, apalmer@esd.wa.gov)

Washington Service Corps, part of ESD, is Washington's largest AmeriCorps intermediary, with over 40 years of experience deploying members to address community needs in areas like economic opportunity, education, and health.

IT Service Corps (ITSC) members will continue bridging the digital divide by offering IT literacy education, help desk support for nonprofits, and telehealth assistance in low-income communities. They will be trained to provide IT literacy education to economically vulnerable individuals. They may also provide "help desk" support for non-profit organizations and telehealth access support for patients of community health centers. They'll spend up to 20% of their service in education programs, receive scholarships for continuing education, and transition to employment, following the standard WSC model.

AmeriCorps funds will cover about 25% of new ITSC cohorts, while additional funds are requested for living allowances, IT devices, internet access, and staff supervision. WSC seeks to hire 2 FTEs to support and oversee program implementation, research needs, educate partners, recruit members, and provide technical assistance for ITSC sites and members.

IT Service Corps

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Staffing	$ 113,004	$ 113,004	$ 191,004	$ 191,004
Benefits	$ 39,551	$ 39,551	$ 66,851	$ 66,851
Goods and Services	$ 30,300	$ 30,300	$ 45,280	$ 45,280
Staff Travel / Training	$ 5,010	$ 5,010	$ 8,518	$ 8,518
Additional Misc. Cost	$ 6,000	$ 6,000	$ 7,000	$ 7,000
Member Living Allowance	$ 935,000	$ 935,000	$ 935,000	$ 935,000
Member Health Care	$ 101,437	$ 101,437	$ 101,438	$ 101,438
Member Training/ Equipment	$ 74,200	$ 74,200	$ 80,260	$ 80,260
Other Member Cost	$ 12,794	$ 12,794	$ 13,228	$ 13,228
Indirect Cost	$ 31,551	$ 31,552	$ 53,328	$ 53,329
Total Expenditures	$ 1,226,605	$ 1,226,606	$ 1,379,665	$ 1,379,666
Other Funding	$ -365,250	$ -365,250	$ -365,250	$ -365,250
Total Request	$ 861,355	$ 861,356	$ 1,014,415	$ 1,014,416

5. Workforce Development and Reentry Support Program Lead Entity: Equity in Education Coalition

(Contact: Sharonne Navas, sharonne@eec-wa.org)

The Equity in Education Coalition offers a four-pronged workforce development approach with career training options:

1. Community Broadband and Infrastructure Technician and HelpDesk Technician tracks provide year-round training, including soft skills, interview preparation, and direct business connections.
2. The program adopts the Digital Navigator model from the National Digital Inclusion Alliance to support cohort members in overcoming digital barriers. Digital Navigators, located at the same site as cohort members, offer one-on-one assistance with internet access, devices, and digital skills.
3. Community Broadband (CBAP) Capstone Build collaborates with various partners to provide low to no-cost broadband access to low-income communities in Washington State. This initiative addresses various issues, such as helping seniors register for low-income internet programs, refurbishing computers, and offering technology support for schools' learning management systems.
4. Equity in Education Coalition's TechConnect (Digital Navigator and Technology Assistance Call Center) focuses on multilingual digital literacy development for families and children in King County and WA state. TechConnect provides tech support in 21 languages and serves as a paid full-time internship location for Helpdesk Technician cohort members after their initial training.Top of Form

Each cohort, comprising 15-20 individuals primarily from underrepresented communities, including formerly incarcerated individuals, undergoes four months of continuous soft and technical skills training, with monthly skills assessments. A living allowance is provided for each participant, reflected in the budget below as $80,000 per cohort.

Workforce Development and Reentry Support Program

Equity in Education Staff and Administration		**Year 1 Budgeted**	**Year 2 Budgeted**	**Year 3 Budgeted**	**Year 4 Budgeted**
	Staffing	$350,000.00	$350,000.00	$500,000.00	$500,000.00
	Culturally Literate Digital Navigator Services Staffing	$100,000.00	$100,000.00	$100,000.00	$100,000.00
	Culturally Literate Workforce Development Services Staffing	$100,000.00	$100,000.00	$100,000.00	$100,000.00
	Culturally Literate Systems and Social Navigation Services Staffing	$100,000.00	$100,000.00	$100,000.00	$100,000.00
	Culturally Literate Financial Services and Literacy Staffing	$100,000.00	$100,000.00	$100,000.00	$100,000.00
	Cohort 1 Living Allowance	$80,000.00	$80,000.00	$90,000.00	$90,000.00
	Cohort 2 Living Allowance	$80,000.00	$80,000.00	$90,000.00	$90,000.00
	Cohort 3 Living Allowance	$80,000.00	$80,000.00	$90,000.00	$90,000.00
	Cohort 4 Living Allowance	$80,000.00	$80,000.00	$90,000.00	$90,000.00
	Cohort 5 Living Allowance	$80,000.00	$80,000.00	$90,000.00	$90,000.00
	Cohort 6 Living Allowance	$80,000.00	$80,000.00	$90,000.00	$90,000.00
	Equipment	$40,000.00	$40,000.00	$40,000.00	$40,000.00
	Subscriptions	$10,000.00	$10,000.00	$10,000.00	$10,000.00
	Data Connection and Monthly Cost	$40,000.00	$40,000.00	$40,000.00	$40,000.00
	Miscellenous Program Costs	$50,000.00	$50,000.00	$50,000.00	$50,000.00
	TOTAL:	**$1,370,000.00**	**$1,370,000.00**	**$1,580,000.00**	**$1,580,000.00**

6. Advance Equity in IT Careers Mentorship Lead Entity: Mentors in Tech (MinT)

(Contact: Kevin Wang, Kevin@MentorsInTech.com)

MinT is a program that helps overlooked tech students at smaller, less well known, accessible and affordable Community and Technical Colleges (CTC) navigate and launch their careers through:

- Structured yearlong mentorship with industry mentors.

- Integrated hands-on paid industry capstone projects.

- Tailored talent service connecting employers to students.

MinT has an established a track record of serving 450 Software Development bachelor of science (BAS) students across multiple WA State CTCs with diverse backgrounds and lived experiences. MinT also recruited, interviewed, trained, and supported over 300 experienced tech industry mentors to mentor the BAS students. MinT was recognized by the Community College Baccalaureate Association as a Promising Practices to Advance Quality, Equality, and Success and featured by Microsoft Alumni News and the Clayton Christensen Institute.

Advance Equity in IT Careers (AEITC) includes industry mentorship, navigation of the tech career landscape, and professional business coaching which are all critical and necessary parts of helping AEITC participants get their "foot in the door" in tech and begin their tech career journey.

MinT will leverage learnings and experiences working with 4-year CTC BAS students to develop a sustainable and scalable program that is tailored for AEITC participants, their backgrounds, lived experiences, and goals. This development process will be similar to one used by MinT to build the program for BAS students.

The following is a list of proposed program elements to support the participants. These elements have been adapted from the MinT program for BAS students and will be refreshed annually as we learn more about our program participants and their needs while matching it to potential employers.

The participant facing part of the program will run from October to June every year. Participants are expected to participate in it for two years. One set of participants are the IT Service Corps members, in their first year when serving and through their second year when they have graduated from the IT Service Corps and are searching for tech opportunities. For another set of participants, those in a Computer Science or related Associate of Arts degree program, they would begin the mentorship program in their first year of taking AA program courses. MinT is fortunate to have strong partnerships with the community and technical college system to ensure that students with disabilities can also access the program.

Program Components include; Small Group Mentoring, Professional Business Coaching, Monthly Workshops, Corp Member Reflection, Hackathon, Student Voices and Ethnographic Research, Professional Online Forums, Program Development and Management, Research, Collaboration, Consult, and Learn, Program Planning, Development, and First Year Pilot Implementation, Program Topics, Curriculum and Industry Partnerships and Development, Technical Platform Development and Maintenance and Program Evaluation with Lead Entities.

Estimated Costs

The goal is to have 25 participants in year 1 pilot and up to 40 in subsequent years. From year 2 onwards, there will be 2 cohorts running concurrently due to the two-year nature of the program. Development and startup costs are frontloaded in year 1 and in year 2 on shift to operational costs. Year 4 and steady state is planned for 80 participants in 2 cohorts of 40 each.

Advance Equity in IT Careers Mentorship

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Participants	25	65	80	80
Total Cost	480,000	499,250	497,000	497,000

Workforce Assumptions:

See Assumptions for full breakdown of staffing needs for each component.

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic Framework:

This proposal relates to the Governor's Results Washington goal areas and statewide priorities in several ways. By striving to provide all Washingtonians with the opportunity to not only become digitally literate but to consider a career in IT we are linking to Goal 1, World-Class Education. By aligning our collective impact work with Goal 2, Prosperous Economy, we are supporting efforts to foster an innovative economy where businesses, workers and communities thrive.

This proposal also supports the Workforce Board's strategic plan in various capacities. The guiding principles of the 2024-2028 statewide workforce plan includes closing economic disparities for marginalized populations which is at the core of this proposal. Another guiding principle is focusing on comprehensive support for individuals with barriers to employment. This proposal connects with that principle as we plan to frame our efforts around connecting individuals that are historically left behind to not only digital literacy where that is needed, but also by connecting those individuals with the resources and tools they need to potentially secure a career in a high-demand, high-wage industry.

Being the backbone organization behind the collective impact initiative for the work this proposal outlines also links to our agency's vision and mission:

Vision: Every Washington community is thriving, inclusive, and economically resilient.

Mission: Champion strategies and align organizations and stakeholders statewide to enable the future of work, which ensures a successful business climate and livable wage jobs for all.

Performance Outcomes:

The Workforce Board and its partners will be able to track the progress of this collective impact initiative on a dashboard over time and calculate its impact on employers, jobseekers, and incumbent workers. Data for the dashboard will be populated through a combination of lead agency reports, administrative data sets, and periodic employer and participant surveys. Two important dashboard metrics that will be populated will be the numbers of people who achieve the Workplace Digital Literacy Certification, and the numbers of those individuals who go on to either further education or employment at a family-sustaining wage. The data will be disaggregated by demographic population and regions.

Year 1: Year 1 activities are largely developmental, towards building the foundational elements of a sustainable system. However, pilot activities will generate some enrollment numbers. By the end of Year 1, we expect the following outcomes:

1. Digital Literacy Curriculum—will require input from multiple industry, education, and community stakeholders, piloting with learner cohorts (approximately 1,000 learners), and overall evaluation underway.
2. Workplace Digital Literacy Credential Development—Development will be underway, with surveys out to a wide range of business, labor, and education and training organizations.
3. Interactive Tool containing IT-based Occupational Pathways and available education and training—Development of model (2-year project) using common skill and competency taxonomy across industry and occupational sectors; one or more occupations mapped as prototypes; specifications established for IT, governance, and administrative infrastructure to support an easily accessible, easily updatable web-based tool.
4. IT Service Corps—Continuation of program, now out of its pilot phase, serving in low-income communities, supervised by 12 to 25 host sites. Evaluation completed.
5. Establish the Advance Equity in IT Careers Mentorship program with a first-year cohort of 25 students.
6. Workforce Development and Reentry Support Program will serve additional cohorts of 15-20 individuals each, all from under-represented communities with a leading target of formerly incarcerated individuals.
7. Tech Access Fund—1,000 jobseekers will have received digital devices enabling them to access training to prepare for work and/or to access and retain a job opportunity at a livable wage.
8. Public-Private New Program Fund—Criteria and rules established for distribution of funds; at least six new rapid response programs funded.

The first year is a largely a developmental year. Subsequent year performance targets will be set based upon stakeholdering and building upon the first year. Estimations per component for year 2 are:

Implementation of the Digital Literacy Program will be deployed in earnest in Year 2. Learning distribution partners will be enlisted to support

cohorts of learners across a range of communities, including, but not limited to, tribal, rural, court or corrections-involved, immigrant and refugee, unemployed or under-employed jobseekers/workers, BIPOC, and under-resourced communities. The Basic Education for Adults Division of SBCTC which has a tremendous reach into these communities, and also offers natural next steps along learning pathways, will be actively engaged in this effort along with WSU Global. There will be a period of intensive evaluation of the curriculum, materials, and online access before wide-scale marketing ensues. The Workplace Digital Literacy Certification program should be up and running by end of Year 2 or early in Year 3 and will use a similarly intensive evaluation strategy to ensure access and effectiveness for the targeted communities, and suitability for hiring employers. By the end of the first 2 years, we are conservatively estimating that 6,000 individuals will have completed at least one tier of the Digital Literacy program, and that we will have reached another 10,000 individuals in Year 3. Of those first 16,000, we expect to have at least 10,000 achieve an employer-endorsed Workplace Digital Literacy Certificate.

In years 2 and 3 we expect to see continued growth and increased participation within the IT Service Corps, Advance Equity in IT Careers mentorship program as well as the Workforce Development Reentry Support Program.

By the end of year 3, assuming funds are made available, the educational and occupational mapping tool will have been digitized and will be accessible by employers, education and training providers, students, and jobseekers using a common taxonomy of skills and competencies. Structured relationships will have been negotiated with industry and business associations to periodically review and update the skill and competency information for occupations within their sectors. The tool will be accessible, mobile-friendly, and easily navigable by students, workers, and jobseekers. A process will also have been established to determine where there are gaps in the education and training pipeline, which will inform the distribution of funds from the Public-Private New Program Fund Pool.

Public-Private New Program Fund Pool—Funds will be used to fill critical skills gaps at the local level, in partnership between employers and local workforce development and education organizations. As new programs are created, curriculum will be made available to support similar skills gaps in other regions of the state. When warranted, industry and curriculum experts will be supported to provide faculty professional development on the subject matter. Resources are meant to be responsive to the major investments of federal funds, such as the BEAD program of the IIJA, as well as to the mapping process, supporting specific employment gaps identified.

Equity Impacts

Community outreach and engagement:

This proposal aims to close economic disparity gaps by building accessible “on-ramps” and navigable education and training pathways, including earn and learn pathways to in-demand, well-paying, IT-based careers. This proposal was most recently updated, and support re-energized, during the Board’s 2023 strategic planning retreat (64 stakeholder attendees). The proposal was originally developed over several years, with input from numerous organizations and communities across the state. Conversations about these issues began through the Board’s investigation into economic disparities after the Great Recession, and during the Workforce Board’s rural community forums during the fall of 2019. Exploration continued and expanded over the course of the pandemic and beyond as the need for digital literacy became even more apparent, not just for livable wage employment but also to meet daily living needs. See the “Why Now?” section above for deeper information and data on the findings that has kept this coalition together and moving forward.

The reality of the early impact of the pandemic on rural, BIPOC, and economically disadvantaged communities inspired the Board and its partners to explore the digital divide more deeply, to understand the lived experiences of those most affected, and to design programs and services that would fill the explicit gaps and eliminate hurdles that keep people from engaging meaningfully in the digital environment. This proposal is designed by those stakeholders and community voices engaged since that time, coupled with research on the issues and best or promising practices. We are confident that we can reach marginalized people of our state because of the points of access into disadvantaged communities that already exist within our collective impact initiative, such as local Workforce Development Councils, WorkSource Centers, public libraries, Digital Navigator grant recipients: Equity in Education Coalition, Community Health Network of Washington and Nisqually Indian Tribe, and many more.

Two specific examples of novel program components developed based on research and community input in this proposal are the Tech Access Fund for Jobseekers and the IT Service Corps.

While federal, state, and philanthropic funds have been provided to educational institutions and social and health service providers to purchase laptops and other devices for their clientele, jobseekers were not considered a priority for such funding. Low-income jobseekers often enroll in short-term training programs that don’t qualify for equipment support. If a jobseeker is interested in employment opportunities that allow for or even require remote work, they may be overlooked if they do not have suitable computer equipment. Through this initiative, jobseekers will have

access to a fund pool to support the purchase of computer and other technology equipment needed to prepare for and succeed in training and employment. We expect to support 1,000 jobseekers per year with an annual funding level of $500,000 (anticipating cost per jobseeker will average $500).

The IT Service Corps concept came about as we learned how important real-world IT experience is to technology-based employers. There are programs that prepare economically disadvantaged individuals for entry into the IT field, many with good job placement results for their participants. However, once on the job, graduates of these programs who have not had any other experiences using IT in real-world settings or to solve real-world problems are the least likely to be promoted to higher job levels. We learned from employers that they tend to promote staff who are exceedingly nimble with technology. As one employer told us, their tech-savvy employees "grew up with technology in the home, their parents used technology every day, and they could probably use a computer before they knew how to talk."

During the pandemic, we heard from community health, community behavioral health, housing, and food distribution programs how difficult it had become to meet the needs of their isolated, digitally illiterate customers, even when they were able to provide them devices for internet access to services. They were seeking support to bring IT "helpers" into their communities to work directly with these customers to access and benefit from required services. The Washington Service Corps already places Corps members into under-resourced communities in a variety of capacities but doesn't train individuals in technology skills. The IT Service Corps concept was designed with a dual purpose, to help low-income individuals who are not tech-literate to learn basic IT knowledge, skills and abilities and apply that learning while they support the people in their communities who need support to use technology to meet daily needs. The 22/23 IT Service Corps pilot program that ended in August 2023 had a total of eight member positions across eight WorkSource centers throughout the state. Performance reports indicated that the IT Service Corps members were making big differences in communities, helping individuals who struggle with technology complete job applications, communicate via e-mail, and connect with social and health services. They also provided formal and informal digital literacy training and classes, all helping community members to navigate pathways leading to computer skill development and job opportunities.

Collaborators on this proposal have made a commitment to transparent performance accountability, through which collective goals and metrics will be established, and progress will be tracked continually. Whenever possible, data will be demographically disaggregated by, at minimum, race, age, gender, and geography. We'll also aim to find data on ability and veteran status, and for those who are justice-involved or in the foster care system. This proposal is built as a collective impact initiative with numerous partners from across the state. These partners, representing many of the communities we aim to impact, have been important to the development of the proposal, but will also be critical to the initiative's implementation success. We are fortunate to have as a core partner the Equity in Education Coalition (EEC-WA), a membership organization of over 100 CBOs, tribal organizations and other grass-roots organizations from across the state, with programs and members in every county of the state. In the first two years, in partnership with community-based organizations, libraries, local workforce boards, community and technical colleges, school districts, Tribal organizations, and others, we expect to teach 6,000 digitally marginalized individuals the digital literacy skills needed to enhance daily life, to engage in education and training to prepare for career opportunities, and to enter livable wage employment. In subsequent years, collaborative partners will help us reach up to 5,000 new individuals each year, while continuing to serve enrolled participants as they continue into higher tiers of digital literacy learning, including attaining the employer-endorsed Workplace Digital Literacy Credential. It should also be noted that WSU Global Access Center staff are on hand to ensure that the digital credentialing is accessible to all targeted audiences. Ultimately, we will track how participants progress in the economy through administrative employment and earnings data.

Disproportional Impact Considerations:

To the best of our ability and knowledge, there are no communities that are excluded or disproportionately impacted by this proposal. This proposal creates the on-ramps and bridges to services and high-demand, livable-wage IT-based employment that has eluded so many of our marginalized Washingtonians for far too long.

Target Populations or Communities:

We will be directing services to populations and communities that have not benefitted from Washington's technology-driven economy. This investment comes at a critical time as Washington moves to end economic and other inequities across the state. The pandemic exacerbated the already great digital divide in Washington—even though this divide was largely invisible. Aggregated economic data leading up to the pandemic told us that the state and its people were benefiting from the state's technology boom. Washington has been among the top five GDP growth states since the Great Recession and has seen an average wage increase from 2011 to 2022 of 67.2 percent. Even in 2020, with the highest unemployment rates in history (since the current data series started in 1976), average annual income increased by 9 percent from the year before to $79,800. Two years later, in 2022, the income was 9.4 percent higher at $84,010. The IT industry drove much of this growth. This sector alone saw an annual rise in average income in 2020 of 15.4 percent, and another 6.9 percent bump in 2021. But even as IT wages continue to rise, there are too few qualified Washingtonians to fill the growing number of jobs, and those that do are primarily male and white. As mentioned

earlier, IT job growth is projected to accelerate further over the next eight years according to ESD's labor market economists; this collaborative proposal aims to make the IT workforce as diverse as our state's population.

The populations of focus are:

Individuals from BIPOC Communities

Immigrants and refugees

Displaced Homemakers

Low Income Individuals

Native Americans, Alaska Natives, and Hawaiians

Individuals with Disabilities

Older Individuals

Justice-involved Individuals

Homeless Individuals

Youth in, or formerly in, Foster Care

English Language Learners

Migrant/Seasonal Farmworkers

Individuals within Two Years of Exhausted TANF Eligibility

Single Parents/Pregnant Individuals

Long Term Unemployed

LGBTQIA+ Individuals

Veterans

The Workforce Board will serve as the hub for data collection and performance accountability and transparency. We'll use the University of Washington's Self-Sufficiency Calculator to determine what "livable wage level" means for each participant and track whether our efforts are moving participants towards their career and economic goals. A data dashboard will show the collective's impact over time disaggregated by region, community, race, gender, age, and other demographic characteristics. Because the state's Employment Security Department will now be able to collect actual job titles for employed individuals via quarterly Employer Unemployment Insurance reports, we will be able to track progressive employment impact over time for many individuals (though not for self-employed). We will also work with community partners to create measures of improved impact on daily living, such as the number of unbanked individuals who open bank accounts or numbers of homebound individuals who utilize telehealth services.

In a collective impact initiative, all partners commit to the success of all targeted participants, regardless of which door they enter through. Collective impact partners will periodically review data to determine if we are making the intended level of impact and truly improving economic equity for marginalized populations. The group will work together to understand what is working and what is not and to make mid-course adjustments in a "plan-check-do-act-check again" structure.

Because of the interconnected nature of the collective impact group, we will be able to serve common customers across programs and agencies to ensure we are reaching individuals in need of these pathway support services. One example of this is with the connection to ESD with the IT Service Corps program as well as WorkSource and Dislocated Worker Programs. Individuals that for the first time in their lives suddenly find themselves out of work and without the digital literacy skills needed to seek a new job that requires digital literacy skills will be able to benefit from these interconnected services. They can complete the digital literacy curriculum, earn a credential, use the occupational and educational mapping tool to explore their next step career possibilities, and receive support with their job search all in one place. Another example is with the

community college system and Mentors in Tech. It can be difficult to land that first IT job after completing a degree at a local community college. With the addition of the Advance Equity in IT Careers mentorship program, overlooked and underserved students will be able to better navigate and launch their careers.

The Washington State Broadband Office released their draft Digital Equity Plan recently. In the plan they acknowledge that there are many highly engaged communities, leaders, and partner organizations who have invested in offering digital inclusion activities and advancing digital equity policies to help their communities access, afford, and adopt internet services and information technology. The primary goals of the Digital Equity Plan are stated as; eliminate barriers to access and affordability, empower residents with the digital skills they need to thrive, and to ensure sustainability of digital equity programs. The new ongoing funds that are being requested in this proposal amplify these goals, leveraging existing resources and mobilizing a multitude of public, private, state, and local partners in a multi-stakeholder collective impact initiative.

Other Collateral Connections

Puget Sound Recovery:

Not applicable.

State Workforce Impacts:

Not applicable.

Intergovernmental:

Not applicable.

Stakeholder Response:

See above descriptions.

State Facilities Impacts:

Not applicable.

Changes from Current Law:

Not applicable.

Legal or Administrative Mandates:

Not applicable.

HEAL Act Agencies Supplemental Questions

Not applicable.

IT Addendum

Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?

No

Objects of Expenditure

Objects of Expenditure *Dollars in Thousands*	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2024	2025	2023-25	2026	2027	2025-27
Obj. A	$0	$361	**$361**	$361	$361	**$722**
Obj. B	$0	$129	**$129**	$129	$129	**$258**
Obj. C	$0	$5,250	**$5,250**	$7,770	$7,727	**$15,497**
Obj. E	$0	$73	**$73**	$73	$73	**$146**
Obj. G	$0	$30	**$30**	$46	$42	**$88**
Obj. J	$0	$45	**$45**	$0	$0	**$0**
Obj. N	$0	$1,752	**$1,752**	$1,859	$2,159	**$4,018**
Obj. T	$0	$37	**$37**	$37	$37	**$74**

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