



Workforce Train & Educ Coord Board  
 2025-27 Regular Budget Session  
 Maintenance Level - CS - Contracts Support

### Agency Recommendation Summary

The Workforce Board requests ongoing funding to hire a Contracts Specialist 3 (1.0 FTE). In FY 2024, the Workforce Board executed 26 contracts with a total value of more than \$30 million without dedicated contracts staff. We request ongoing funding for contracts staff to carry out procurement and contracting activities so project/policy staff will not be taken away from their primary job duties to complete these activities. This will allow the agency to carry out legislative mandates to contract and procure goods/services efficiently and to comply with state procurement requirements.

### Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
<b>Staffing</b>						
FTEs	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
<b>Operating Expenditures</b>						
Fund 001 - 1	\$176	\$167	\$343	\$167	\$167	\$334
Total Expenditures	\$176	\$167	\$343	\$167	\$167	\$334

### Decision Package Description

The Workforce Board does not have staff dedicated to procuring goods and services or managing and monitoring contracts. The Workforce Board is regularly directed by the Legislature to procure goods and services for various budget provisos and legislation and must execute contracts to carry out essential agency activities. This procurement and contracting work includes:

- Conducting competitive solicitations,
- Negotiating interagency agreements,
- Procuring goods and services using direct buy contracts and statewide contracts,
- Awarding grants,
- Overseeing data sharing agreements and other non-monetary agreements,
- Monitoring and managing contracts and agreements once executed, and
- Coaching staff subject matter experts on the administrative aspects of developing statements of work, performance accountability frameworks, and project management and oversight.

In FY 2024, the Workforce Board executed 26 contracts with a combined value of more than \$30 million. While these contracting efforts have been largely successful, the Workforce Board's contracting processes, which are spread out among multiple staff, have been inefficient and challenging from a compliance perspective. The Workforce Board is concerned that this is opening the state to risk and has the potential for adverse results on not only the agency's contracting efforts, but on ongoing program, policy, and research functions.

As the Workforce Board does not have a dedicated contracts specialist on staff, program/policy/research staff must step away from their primary work activities to procure goods and services and execute contracts. This has led to inefficiencies in both program activities and the contracting process. Competitive solicitations can take months for inexperienced staff to complete, which is problematic when allocated funds have an expiration date. Due to lack of program/policy/research staff capacity to work on procurement, delays have occurred in developing competitive solicitation documents. Contracts have been executed up to 13 months after time-limited biennial funds were made available by the Legislature. These delays in executing contracts and awarding funds mean that contractors have less time to complete their deliverables, and the agency is concerned the quality of these deliverables will suffer.

Additionally, lack of dedicated staff with contracts expertise increases risk to the Workforce Board and to the state. While all staff with contracting roles have completed required training, this does not allow for the breadth of understanding needed for navigating complex, unique situations and contracting requests. Without dedicated contracts staff, the existing Workforce Board staff managing contracts do have the capacity nor background to keep up with changes in state contracting rules. For example, having a strong knowledge of the Supplier Diversity Policy is essential for state agencies to use approved, legally compliant strategies to procure goods and services and contract with small, diverse, and veteran-owned businesses. This is a complex, nuanced process. Should any state agency not follow the Supplier Diversity Policy, they risk awarding funds inequitably or violating state and federal civil rights laws while attempting to support businesses that have historically faced barriers to being awarded state funds. Rules like the Supplier Diversity Policy have also increased the number of steps that agencies must take to comply with state policies. Existing Workforce Board staff cannot complete the detailed and time-consuming contracting steps without their primary job duties suffering.

As a small agency, Workforce Board staff do their best to correctly follow state contracting processes, including completing all required contract

management training. However, the volume and complexity of work associated with contracting means that staff may make errors. Any error in the contracting process, no matter how small, brings a risk of liability to the state, including challenges to competitive solicitation processes and awards. A challenge to a competitive solicitation can lead to months-long delays in awarding funds at best and court litigation at worst.

### **Proposal**

To address this need for support, the Workforce Board is requesting ongoing funding to hire a Contracts Specialist 3 (1.0 FTE) to work exclusively on agency procurement and contracting activities. Hiring a Contracts Specialist 3 (Contracts Specialist) would have internal benefits for the Workforce Board and the state and external benefits for Washington businesses and residents.

### **Benefits for the Workforce Board and the state**

A dedicated Contracts Specialist would support more efficient internal processes as well as free up program/policy/research staff to focus on their core portfolios. Hiring at the Contracts Specialist 3 level would ensure sufficient knowledge and experience in state contracting to carry out all elements of the Workforce Board's contracting activities with little-to-no additional training. A Contracts Specialist would help the agency become more efficient because they would be well experienced with procurement best practices, less likely to make errors, and better able to evaluate potential contractors for their skills and abilities than existing, less experienced Workforce Board staff. As a result, the Workforce Board would be more effective in its ability to award contracts to businesses that would provide the best value to the state. This Contracts Specialist would be responsible for monitoring state procurement policies and completing new activities required by those policies, which would also reduce risk for the agency.

The Legislature, recognizing the burden of contracting for small agencies, provided funds to the Department of Enterprise Services to establish the Small Agency Support Team (SAS). The Workforce Board frequently uses contracts and procurement support services from SAS. SAS is helpful in providing guidance on conducting competitive solicitations and answering general questions from staff. However, given the increasing volume and complexity of agency contracts, the Workforce Board's needs have expanded beyond the scope of services that SAS can provide. As an example, the Workforce Board frequently enters into non-monetary contracts, such as memorandums of understanding and data sharing agreements (DSAs) with other state entities. SAS is unable to assist with or advise on these types of contracts. The Workforce Board executed six DSAs in the last year and, in the next year, anticipates entering into at least 11 DSAs with state partners, three DSAs with non-state partners, and one memorandum of understanding. A Contracts Specialist would be able to assist Workforce Board staff with negotiating, executing, and managing these non-monetary agreements, providing support and resources that the agency is unable to access elsewhere.

Additionally, the Contracts Specialist would serve as the Workforce Board's liaison with SAS when the agency is seeking guidance. This will add to the efficiency of contracting efforts as the Workforce Board will have a designated point of contact for communications with SAS as opposed to having multiple individual program/policy/research staff separately contacting SAS for each procurement.

Finally, because the Workforce Board frequently executes contracts for specialized services, the agency has a need for increased outreach to potential vendors. Unfortunately, these outreach activities fall outside the scope of SAS services. In the past, the Workforce Board has conducted competitive solicitations with assistance from SAS, but the solicitations received no bidders. It was only after extensive research and outreach that the Workforce Board was able to find a vendor qualified to provide the complex services outlined in the solicitation in one legislative proviso for contracted services. Existing Workforce Board staff do not have the capacity to conduct this extensive outreach for every contract, but a Contracts Specialist would be able to cultivate relationships with service providers on behalf of the agency, ensuring that vendors can meet the Workforce Board's complex needs while also diversifying the agency's vendor base.

### **Benefits for Washington businesses and residents**

Businesses and organizations will benefit from streamlined contracting processes as they would face fewer delays and complications while negotiating with the state. Additionally, as Workforce Board contractors often provide services directly to Washington residents, the public at large reaps greater benefits when contracts are executed without errors or delays.

Hiring a dedicated Contracts Specialist would allow the Workforce Board to increase outreach activities to potential contractors, including small, diverse, and veteran-owned businesses. Outreach—a key activity highlighted in the Supplier Diversity Policy—is an important step in increasing diversity in state contracts. The Workforce Board is aware that small, diverse, and veteran-owned businesses often do not have the capacity to research and bid on state contracting opportunities. By conducting outreach including researching potential vendors, keeping up with industry trends, and attending in-person events, a dedicated Contracts Specialist would be able to promote equity and help remove barriers faced by businesses that have historically not been awarded state funds.

In summary, having a dedicated Contracts Specialist at the Workforce Board would make internal processes more efficient, help mitigate risks to the state, and provide cascading benefits to Washingtonians. Ultimately, these benefits illustrate that hiring a Contracts Specialist would be an effective use of state funds.

## Assumptions and Calculations

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

This is a new funding request. The Workforce Board has no dedicated contracts staff—current staff are pressed to manage contracts within their current job duties.

### ***Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:***

The Workforce Board is requesting ongoing funding for a full-time 1.0 FTE Contracts Specialist 3. See Workforce Assumptions, below, for more details.

### ***Workforce Assumptions:***

#### **Workforce Board staff**

**Contracts Specialist 3, 1.0 FTE, ongoing**, the lead staff member at the Workforce Board for procurement and contracting activities, including competitive solicitations, interagency agreements, direct buy contracts, statewide contract agreements, grants, data sharing agreements and other non-monetary contracts, and all other purchases of goods and services. Serves as the agency subject matter expert on contract negotiation, administration, modification, dispute resolution, and termination as well as on all relevant state policies and procedures. Represents the Workforce Board in meetings with current contractors and while conducting outreach to potential vendors. Works closely with the Chief Financial and Operating Officer and Workforce Board financial staff. Budget request also includes \$9,000 for startup costs and \$4,000 for annual work-associated travel.

### ***Historical Funding:***

Not applicable.

## Strategic and Performance Outcomes

### ***Strategic Framework:***

The Workforce Board conducts activities and executes contracts related to all of the Governor's Results Washington goal areas. Hiring a Contracts Specialist supports the Workforce Board's contributions toward these five goal areas, but adding this capacity to the agency most closely aligns with Goal 5: Efficient, Effective, and Accountable Government. Having an experienced and dedicated Contracts Specialist at the Workforce Board will increase agency efficiency by allowing program/policy/research staff to dedicate their limited time to their core work activities. This may also improve employee-reported job satisfaction as Workforce Board employees would not have absorb complex contracting work and take time away from their primary job activities.

More efficient and effective contracting processes would also support the Workforce Board's strategic plan, Talent and Prosperity for All (TAP). This request aligns with all aspects of this strategic plan as all contracts ultimately support the mission of TAP to champion strategies and align organizations and stakeholders statewide to enable the future of work, ensuring a successful business climate and livable-wage jobs for all.

### ***Performance Outcomes:***

A Contracts Specialist would have the needed experience and knowledge to improve the efficiency of Workforce Board processes, leading to more effective contracting and providing better results for the people of Washington. Having a Contracts Specialist on staff would allow the Workforce Board to ensure all state contracting priorities and requirements are closely followed.

## Equity Impacts

### **Community Outreach and Engagement:**

The Workforce Board conducts outreach to potential contractors as required by state procurement policies. However, a Contracts Specialist would allow the Workforce Board to vastly expand the agency's community outreach and engagement efforts to cultivate diverse, qualified bidders for future contracts.

### **Disproportional Impact Considerations:**

The Workforce Board does not expect any negative disproportional impact from this request. Businesses that have historically faced barriers to contracting with the state would benefit from the services a Contracts Specialist would be able to provide, including increased outreach and technical assistance.

### **Target Communities and Populations:**

According to the [State of Washington Disparity Study 2019](#), "minorities and White women do not enjoy equal access to all aspects of State contracting opportunities. While some firms owned by ethnic and racial minorities and White women have successfully obtained State work, barriers remain for most Disadvantaged, Minority- and Women-Owned Business Enterprises to fair and open markets." The Workforce Board currently applies Washington procurement priorities and preferences to competitive solicitations by awarding points to bidders that qualify as Washington Small Businesses, [Certified Veteran-Owned Businesses](#), and Firms without Mandatory Individual Arbitration for Employees ([Executive Order 18-03](#)). However, there are many other activities the Workforce Board would like to implement to promote equity in contracting. A Contracts Specialist would increase the Workforce Board's capacity to conduct outreach, provide technical assistance, and accelerate the use of other [tools for equity in public spending](#).

### **Community Inputs and Incorporation:**

One way the Workforce Board has identified the need for a Contracts Specialist is through conversations with existing contractors and past bidders on competitive solicitations. One common theme that has emerged from these conversations is that the length of time it takes to execute contracts with the agency poses challenges to the contractors' work. These businesses, including Washington Small Businesses and Minority- and Women-Owned Enterprises, would benefit from the addition of a dedicated Contracts Specialist to Workforce Board staff, as this addition would make agency contracting processes more efficient.

## Other Collateral Connections

### **HEAL Act Agencies Supplemental Questions**

Not applicable.

### **Puget Sound Recovery:**

Not applicable.

### **State Workforce Impacts:**

Not applicable.

### **Intergovernmental:**

Not applicable.

### **Stakeholder Impacts:**

Not applicable.

### **State Facilities Impacts:**

Not applicable.

### **Changes from Current Law:**

Not applicable.

### **Legal or Administrative Mandates:**

Not applicable.

### **Governor's Salmon Strategy:**

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 <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Obj. A	\$87	\$87	\$174	\$87	\$87	\$174
Obj. B	\$32	\$32	\$64	\$32	\$32	\$64
Obj. E	\$35	\$35	\$70	\$35	\$35	\$70
Obj. G	\$4	\$4	\$8	\$4	\$4	\$8
Obj. J	\$9	\$0	\$9	\$0	\$0	\$0
Obj. T	\$9	\$9	\$18	\$9	\$9	\$18

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