

Workforce Board 2025 Agency Requests

Policy

Career Bridge

Washington's public-facing, career and education planning portal, Career Bridge, has been undergoing modernization with legislative investment. Procurement delays pushed some updates past the project deadline. Funds are needed now to finish Phase 1, ensuring data moves through data loaders and APIs, not manual updates. More site improvements will enhance how information is consumed and improve the user interface. Enhanced, ongoing maintenance and further upgrades require two current project positions (2 FTEs) be made permanent. Workforce Board requests \$3.05M (biennium) + \$339K ongoing.

"No Wrong Door" Integrated Data Sharing

A lack of data sharing across the workforce system creates challenges for Washington job seekers and employers. This has resulted in negative experiences and disengagement for job seekers, impacting training and employment outcomes. The Workforce Board and its partners seek to address these long-standing challenges through a "no wrong door" approach. Shared information across the full lifecycle of service delivery will help job seekers find meaningful work, connect employers with skilled workers, and strengthen economic stability. Workforce Board requests 4.75 FTE and \$5.9M (biennium).

Workforce Digital Pathways

Marginalized communities face barriers to accessing quality jobs in the digital economy due to a lack of internet access, devices, skills, and support. Continuing the 2024 state budget investment, public, private, state, and local partners will work together to narrow this digital divide through enhanced career pathways leading to good jobs. This includes digital literacy education and credentials and rapid response skills programs to support training for new jobs created from federal infrastructure investment grants. Workforce Board requests \$27.1M (biennium), across five activity areas with other agencies, entities.

WAVE Funding

The Washington Award for Vocational Excellence (WAVE) celebrates top CTE students at Washington high schools and community and technical colleges. The scholarship pays for up to two years of tuition for up to 147 awardees each year—three from each Legislative District. This scholarship has been underfunded since its 2022 relaunch. Workforce Board requests an additional \$2.39M per year to fully fund the scholarship.

Maintenance

Health Workforce Planning

Healthcare and behavioral health workforce policy efforts have significantly expanded, as funding has decreased with the expiration of a budget proviso. More funds are needed to staff the Health Workforce Council, support related behavioral health projects, and maintain the Health Workforce Sentinel Network. Workforce Board requests an additional 1.65 FTE (total of 2.5 FTE for Council work) and increased funds for the Sentinel Network to support healthcare and behavioral health workforce research. Workforce Board requests \$345K ongoing.

Reasonable Accommodation

The Workforce Board requests a fund for Reasonable Accommodation. Right now, requests must be put through the legislative budget process, with a lag time for staff members seeking accommodation for essential work. Requests \$25K per year ongoing.

WAVE Scholarship Administration

The Washington Award for Vocational Excellence (WAVE) is a merit scholarship awarded to top career and technical education students. WAVE was suspended during the Great Recession and relaunched in 2022. Building back to precession programming has been staff intensive, with expenses rising beyond the funds provided. More investment is needed for outreach, applicant support, recruiting and training reviewers, along with processing a growing number of WAVE applications. Workforce Board requests .75 FTE, \$165K to improve access and provide timely award decisions.

Contracts Support

The Workforce Board requests ongoing funding to hire a Contracts Specialist (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 funding for contracts staff to carry out procurement and contracting activities, and comply with state requirements. \$176K ongoing.

Federal Perkins CTE Match Funds

The Workforce Board requests a maintenance budget adjustment to comply with federal/state mandates to administer the federal Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education program. Insufficient state administrative funding prevents the program from meeting the required dollar-for-dollar match, to fully utilize federal grant funds. With state-specific CTE funding to match federal outlays, the state can ensure Washington doesn't forfeit any unspent funds. Funding request is \$484K ongoing.

Long-Term Care Initiative

Staffing challenges at long-term care facilities are expected to worsen as Washington's population ages. The LTC Workforce Initiative has spent the last two years focused on policy development, research, and the launch of a pilot LPN registered apprenticeship. Funding is needed to continue the project beyond 2025, including support for prerequisite courses for potential LPN apprentices. Funding request is \$1.9M (biennium).