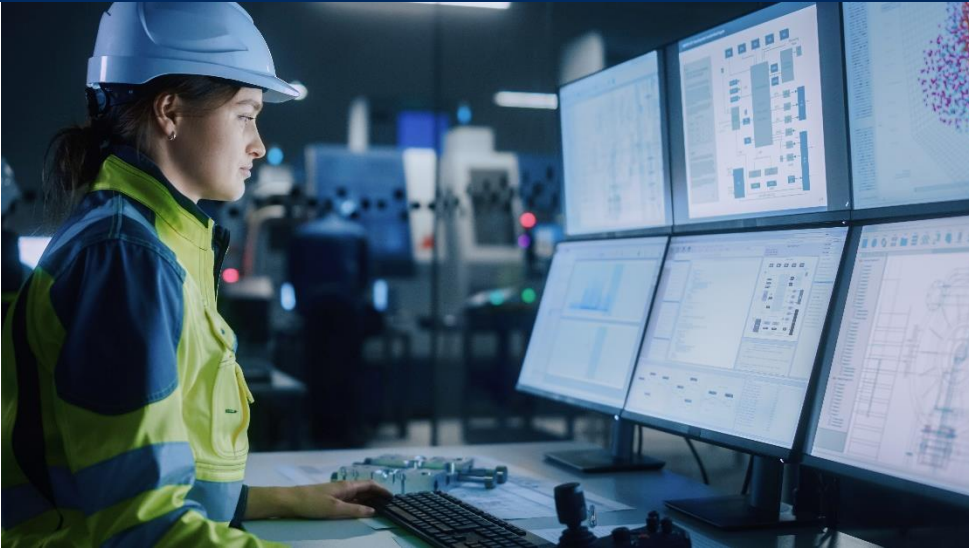


# Workforce Digital Pathways Initiative



Policy guardrails and intentional investments can ensure a strong ecosystem with long-term systemic outcomes for impacted communities, and statewide economic prosperity.

The Workforce Board's initiative solutions seek to fill the gaps for populations that are challenged in accessing, or fully benefiting from, our robust infrastructure of education and training. New on-ramps, bridges, and program enhancements can be customized to meet specific needs.

**Washington's tech-driven economy is thriving, but key communities and populations are being left behind.**

## Identifying and Addressing Needs

- In 2020, the Workforce Board identified a statewide digital divide while developing the Workforce Economic Recovery Plan.
- Hosted listening sessions and formed a collective impact group to pinpoint gaps in programs and services in the existing digital literacy and IT career pathway landscape.
- Barriers include not just broadband and device access but also limited digital learning opportunities and limited real-world work experience using technology in marginalized and under-resourced communities.
- Existing programs and funding for broadband and digital skills leave parts of the population underserved.
- Proposed workforce-centered solutions complement federal and state efforts, addressing gaps and building on existing resources.

## Initiative Components

- Washington State Digital Literacy Curriculum and Credential (Multi-Tiered Digital Literacy Program)\*
- Rapid Response Skills Gap Programs (flexible fund pool)
- Work-Based Training and Supports
  - Advance Equity in IT Careers (AEITC)
  - IT Service Corps
- Career Readiness Resources
  - Reentry Support Program\*
  - Devices for Job Seekers and Career Advancement
  - Occupation and Education Mapping Tool\*
- Administration and Partner Coordination
  - Performance Dashboard
  - Industry Advisory Council\*
  - Contracts and Interagency Agreements, Compliance and Oversight\*

\* = Funded with 1-time state budget investment through June 30, 2025.

## Project Costs

\$27.156M over the FY26-27 biennium. Ongoing costs of approximately \$20.5M in FY28+.

## Creating Opportunities for All

Programs and services are focused on 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. A more diverse tech workforce is essential, and this initiative can play a key role in achieving that goal.

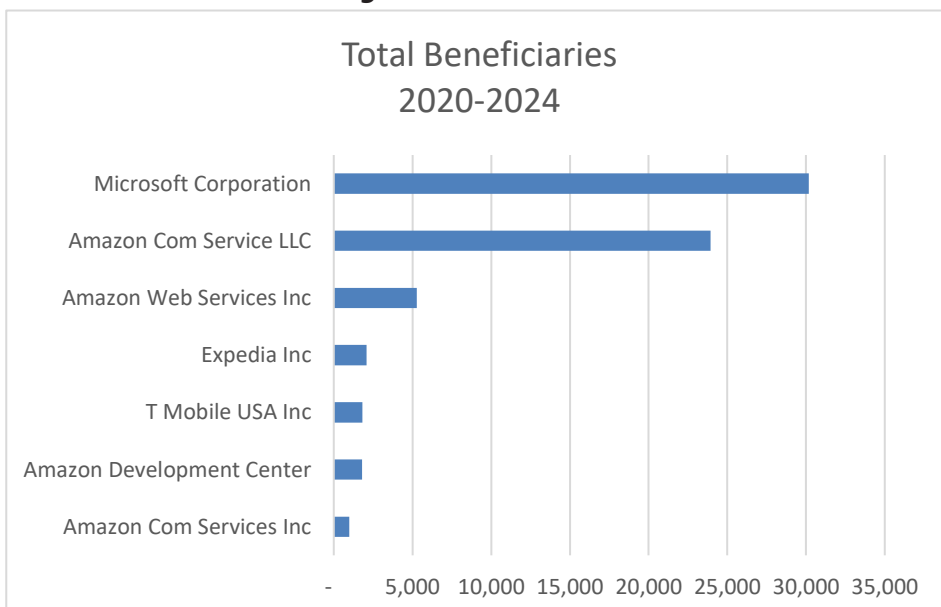
### Diversity in Tech Jobs in the USA

Ethnicity	U.S. population	U.S. tech industry proportion
White	60%	68%
Black	13%	7%
Asian	6%	14%
Hispanic/Latinx	18%	8%
Other	2%	1%
Mixed race	3%	1%

ComputerWorld, July 16, 2020. Sources US Bureau 2019 estimates, and US Equal Economic Opportunity Commission’s Diversity in Tech Report.

Across the United States minorities represent **32%** of the tech industry workforce. Many are recruited via H-1B visas. Washington States’s tech industry employed 36,000 foreign H-1B workers in 2019 alone, most earning over \$100,000 annually.

### H1B Beneficiaries in Washington State



Source: <https://www.uscis.gov/tools/reports-and-studies/h-1b-employer-data-hub>

## Impact Highlights

- **Innovative Career and Education Readiness:** A first in the country, employer-informed digital literacy credential platform.
- **Equitable Career Pathways:** Clear and equitable pathways to current and future IT-enabled careers.
- **Economic Competitiveness:** A digitally literate, inclusive, more competitive modern workforce.
- **Optimization of Historical State & Federal Investments:** Alignment of our education and workforce development to effectively implement and take advantage of the federal Infrastructure Law, CHIPS and Science Act, and Inflation Reduction Act, much of which requires a tech-ready workforce.

## Performance Outcomes

Expected outcomes of this long-term, multi-pronged strategy to increase digital and technology literacy across the state, and to create an accessible, easily navigable, system of education and work-based pathways to high-wage, high-demand, tech-enabled careers:

1. Increased Digital Literacy
2. Diverse tech-enabled workforce
3. Equitable Career Pathways
4. Economic Impact
5. Collaboration Model

## Washington Working Together for Equity and Success

This project brings together a wide range of public and private partners and leverages significant resources and proven experience to build a sustainable model and achieve tremendous impact.

Four lead agencies:

- Washington’s Workforce Board—Performance accountability and policy development, partnership communications, grant and funding administration, overall collective impact coordination.
- Washington State University Global Campus—Work with stakeholders to develop and implement the multi-tiered Digital Literacy program and Workplace Digital Literacy Credential system.
- Employment Security Department/Washington Service Corps—Create the IT Service Corps.
- State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC), with support from the IT Center of Excellence—Design study and prototyping of an interactive portal of IT occupational pathways and relevant, available education and training resources.

## Good Jobs and Broadband Service Alignment

To address economic disparities and ensure equitable participation in Washington’s technology-driven economy, we can draw lessons from history. Just as electrification, transportation infrastructure, and postal services once required pioneers to demonstrate their value and the need for greater scale, modern digital infrastructure demands similar advocacy and investment.

There are strong correlations between areas served by reliable infrastructure including broadband and in-demand, quality jobs paying livable wages.

### Washingtonians 18-65 Employed in the Civilian Workforce

Geographic Location	Above \$80k	Below \$80k
<b>Outside Seattle Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA)</b>	<b>24.08%</b>	<b>75.92%</b>
High-Tech Industry	52.29%	47.71%
Not High-Tech Industry	22.35%	77.65%
<b>SEA-TAC-BEL MSA</b>	<b>39.86%</b>	<b>60.14%</b>
High-Tech Industry	75.46%	24.54%
Not High-Tech Industry	31.16%	68.84%

Geographic Location	Above \$80k	Below \$80k
<b>Outside Seattle MSA</b>	<b>24.08%</b>	<b>75.92%</b>
Computer Occupation	57.38%	42.62%
Not Computer Occupation	23.18%	76.82%
<b>SEA-TAC-BEL MSA</b>	<b>39.86%</b>	<b>60.14%</b>
Computer Occupation	81.68%	18.32%
Not Computer Occupation	35.84%	64.16%

Source: American Community Survey 5-year, 2018-2022

Areas inside of the Seattle Metropolitan Statistical Area which includes King, Pierce, and Snohomish Counties, account for the vast majority of jobs at a livable wage (defined at \$80k+ a year salary), many of which are jobs within the high-tech industry. Yet disparity gaps continue to exist. The Workforce Digital Pathways Initiative works to bridge these gaps.