System Integration

Landscape Analysis: Insights from Frontline Staff Interviews

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Introduction

The analysis provides an initial snapshot of integration practices across Washington's workforce development system.

Qualitative assessment focused on perspectives of frontline workforce staff members.

Highlights themes and innovative practices.

Aims to spark discussion and guide priorities for future, more rigorous research.

Background

- Engaged frontline staff statewide to assess program and agency integration.
- From **September 2024 to November 2024**
  - Focused on identifying promising practices that strengthen program cohesion and improve navigation for staff and job seekers.
    - Promising practices identified during this period were presented in November of 2024.
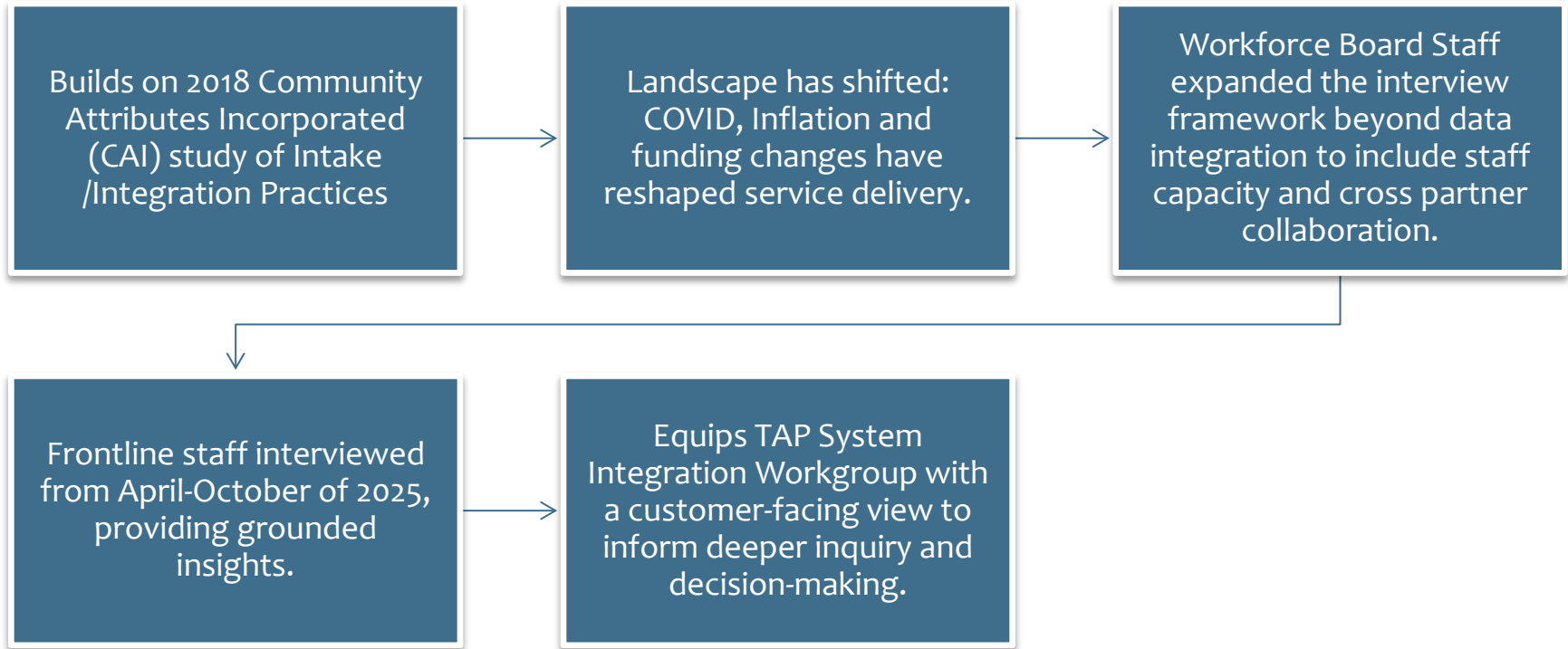
Background

In **March 2025,** the **TAP System Integration Workgroup** directed an added focus on **gap analysis**

Board Staff Developed and used a **structured set of interview questions** to collect data moving forward — the results of which I'll be sharing with you today

Purpose and Context

Builds on 2018 Community Attributes Incorporated (CAI) study of Intake /Integration Practices

→

Landscape has shifted: COVID, Inflation and funding changes have reshaped service delivery.

→

Workforce Board Staff expanded the interview framework beyond data integration to include staff capacity and cross partner collaboration.

Frontline staff interviewed from April-October of 2025, providing grounded insights.

→

Equips TAP System Integration Workgroup with a customer-facing view to inform deeper inquiry and decision-making.

Staff Representation

135 interviews conducted across 87 meetings between April-October of 2025

25 group interviews (in-person and virtual)

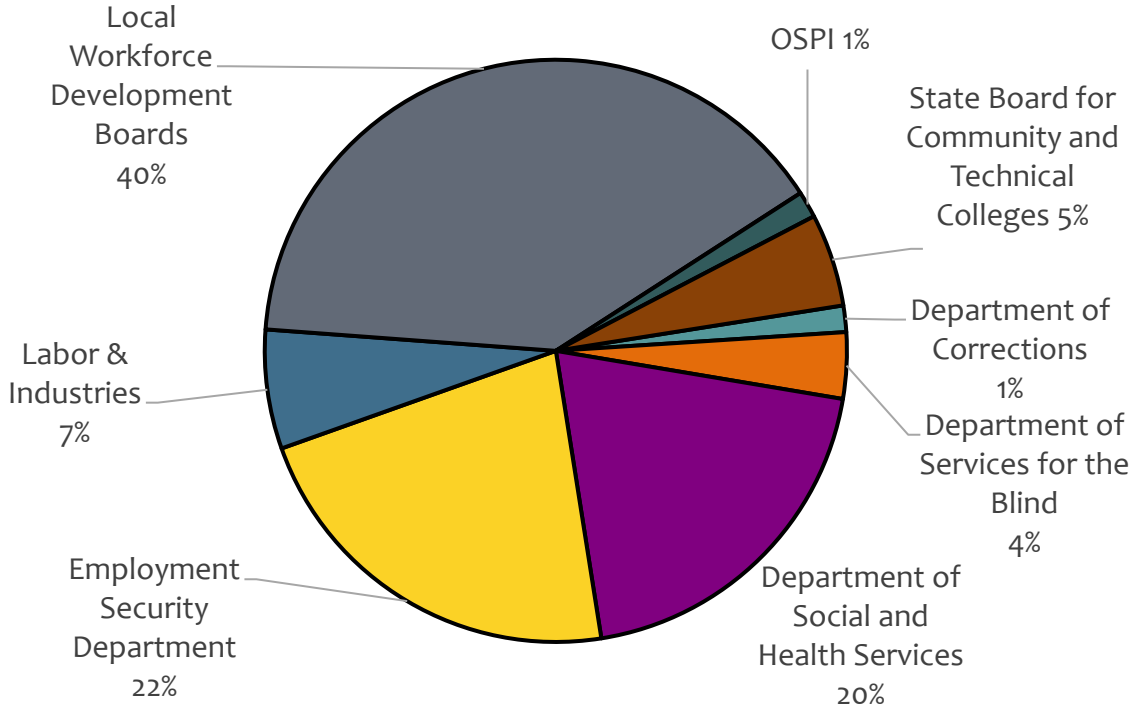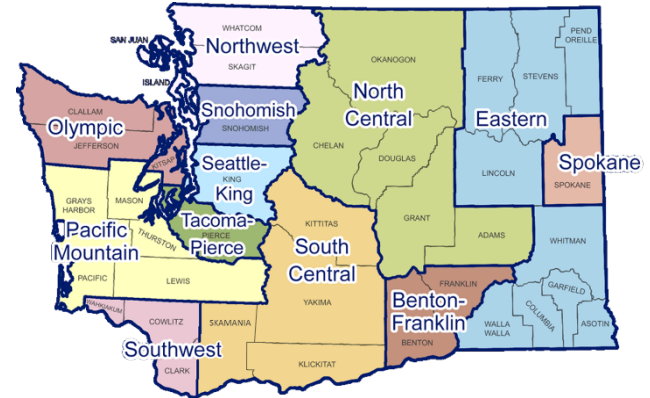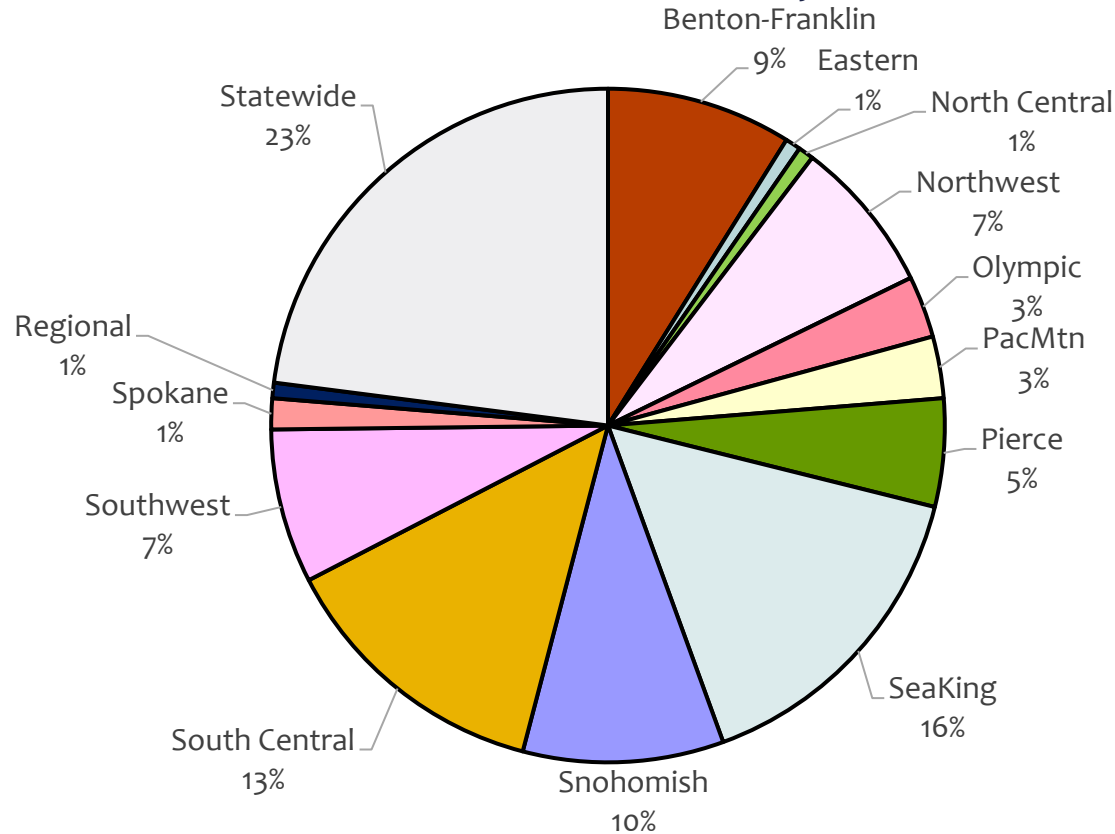Interviewees often served multiple functions across programs

Staff Representation

Distribution of Interview by Agency

- Local Workforce Development Boards 40%
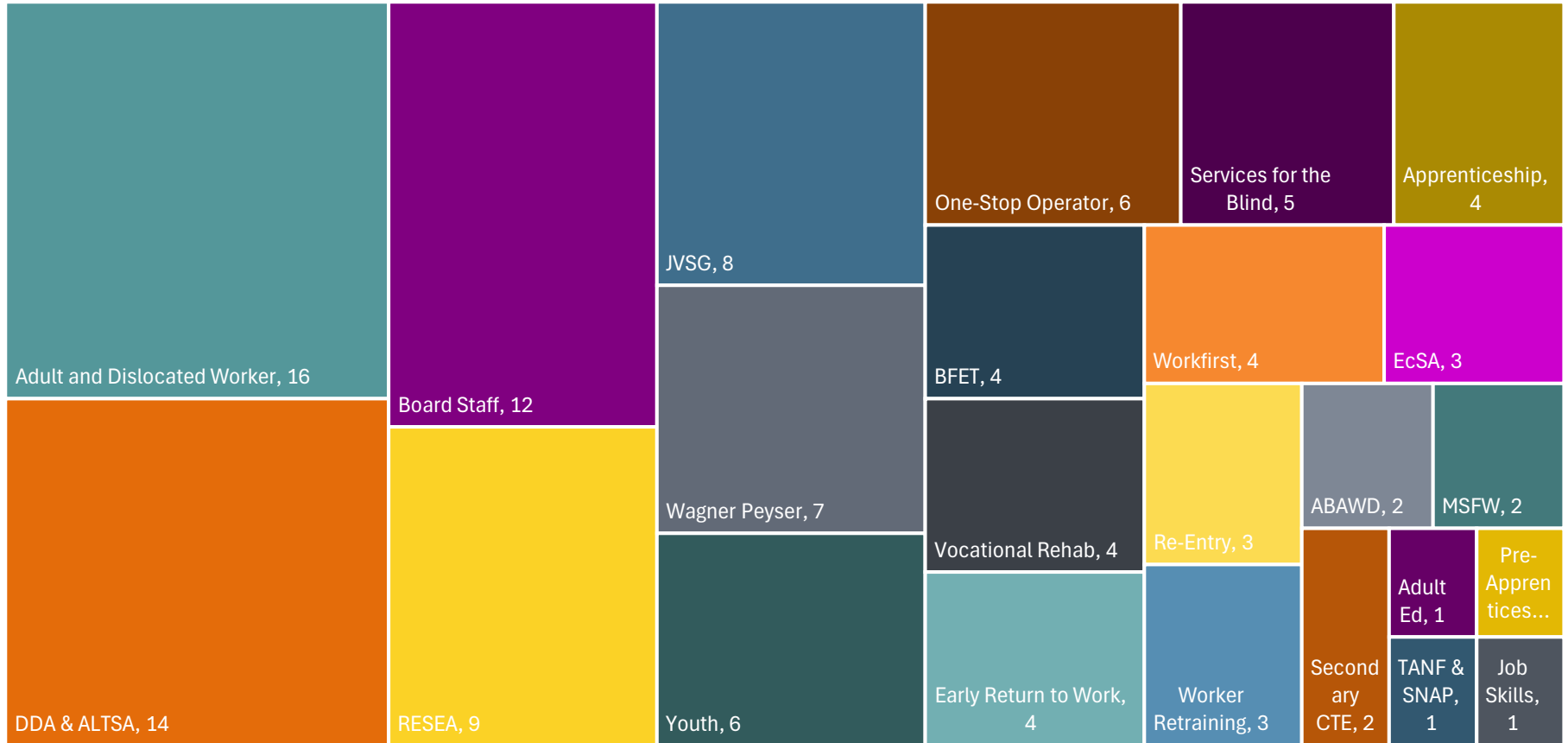- OSPI 1%
- State Board for Community and Technical Colleges 5%
- Department of Corrections 1%
- Department of Services for the Blind 4%
- Department of Social and Health Services 20%
- Employment Security Department 22%
- Labor & Industries 7%

Distribution of Interviews by Area

Staff Representation

Distribution by Program

Adult and Dislocated Worker, 16
DDA & ALTSA, 14
Board Staff, 12
RESEA, 9
JVSG, 8
Wagner Peyser, 7
Youth, 6
One-Stop Operator, 6
Services for the Blind, 5
Apprenticeship, 4
BFET, 4
Workfirst, 4
EcSA, 3
Vocational Rehab, 4
Re-Entry, 3
ABAWD, 2
MSFW, 2
Early Return to Work, 4
Worker Retraining, 3
Secondary CTE, 2
Adult Ed, 1
Pre-Apprentices...
TANF & SNAP, 1
Job Skills, 1

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Observations

(Questions or Comments before we move on?)

Observations

Data, Intake, and Referrals Remain the Most Significant Barriers

Impact of Caseloads and Turnover

Culture, Relationships, and Structures as Drivers of Integration

Data, Intake, and Referrals - Most Significant Barriers

Fragmented, siloed systems slow service delivery.

Intake & eligibility often duplicated; customers retell their story multiple times.

Case management systems do not connect.

Referrals rely on informal tools (phone, email, excel, sharepoint, trello, etc.).

Shared, integrated database seen as transformative for accuracy, efficiency, and continuity.

Turnover and Caseloads

Large caseloads, turnover, and funding shifts reduce capacity for coordination and integration.

Service quality declines when staff are overextended; participants receive less support.

Turnover disrupts informal referral pathways and forces case redistribution.

Onboarding new hires strains already limited resources; institutional knowledge is lost.

Culture, Relationships, and Structures as Drivers of Integration

Trust and relationships are the foundation of effective integration.

Strong relationships (co-location, warm handoffs, regular meetings) enable smooth referrals, co-enrollments, and team culture.

Distrust and weak relationships block integration, regardless of tools or policies.

Leadership strategies (shared duties, seating arrangements, team-building) can rebuild trust and collaboration.

Innovative Practices for Further Study

(Questions or Comments before we move on?)

Innovative Practices for Further Study

Warm Handoffs and Universal Referral Systems

Intentional Onboarding and Training

Team Building and Culture

Innovative Practices for Further Study

Warm Handoffs

Top-cited recommendation from staff as the most effective referral practice statewide.

Builds trust: preserves customer rapport & strengthens collaboration.

In-person preferred; joint calls/emails seen as less effective but still useful.
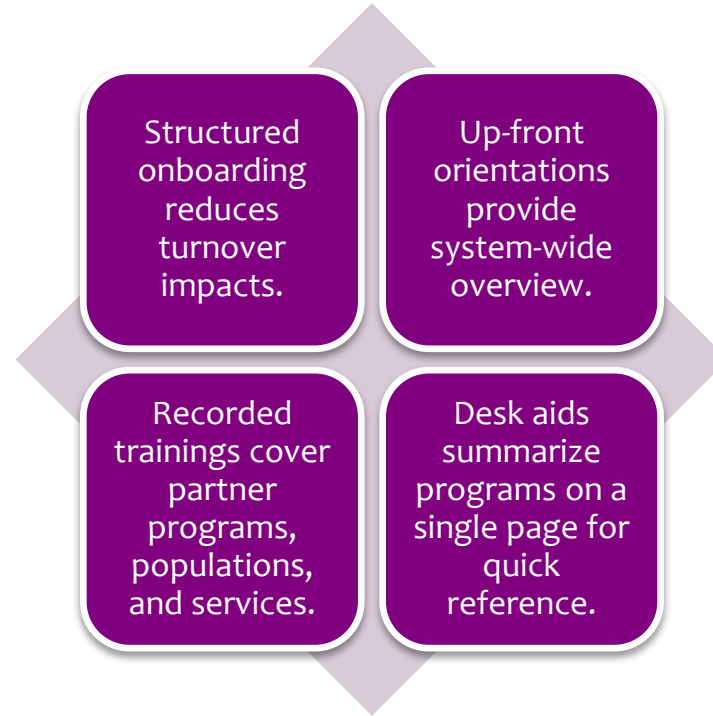
Referral Systems

- **Link Project** – South Central (customer self-navigation tool)
- **Cognito Forms** – NW & Olympic (Title I referrals)
- **JotForm** – Spokane (Title I referrals)
- **211 CRS** (Common Referral System) – Pierce County (all partners, launched 2018–2019)

Intentional Onboarding and Training

Structured onboarding reduces turnover impacts.

Up-front orientations provide system-wide overview.

Recorded trainings cover partner programs, populations, and services.

Desk aids summarize programs on a single page for quick reference.

Innovative Practices for Further Study

South Central

Weekly WorkSource-Wide meetings;

Monthly OSO-led Leadership sessions;

Quarterly Partner Rep Meetings

(coordination & planning)

Northwest

Quarterly Partner Management Team (PMT) Meetings

(Job Corps, Colleges, DVR, ESD, DSHS, L&I, LWDB; facilitated by OSO; coordination & planning)

Benton-Franklin

OSO Consortium

(Title I, Title II, ESD, DVR, OIC; continuous improvement focus.)

Southwest

"Fab Five"

(ESD, Title I contractors, Board Staff; coordination & planning.)

Pierce

Center Design Team

(ESD, Title I, L&I, DVR, Business Services frontline staff; continuous improvement focus.)

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Innovative Practices for Further Study

Team Building and Culture

- Integration success depends on both technical alignment ***and*** strong culture.
- Trust, collaboration, and shared purpose are essential.
- Example: **South Central**
  - Weekly "Fun Fridays" combines check-ins with fun team-building activities.
    - Builds bonds and reduces siloed behaviors.
    - Creates strong sense of belonging among staff.
    - Culture investment reported as a reason for significantly lower turnover.

Potential Next Steps

(Questions or Comments before we move on?)

Link Practices to Outcomes

Analyze performance data to confirm correlations with the practices from this landscape analysis

Test Impact of Referral Tools

- For example, for the 211 Referral System:
  - Use descriptive statistics to examine how tools correlate with performance outcomes.
    - ➢ Look at performance trends in Pierce County WorkSource Center.
    - ➢ Look at Pierce County WorkSource Center outcomes before and after the tool was instituted.
    - ➢ Compare outcomes of Pierce county to similar WorkSource centers that do not use the same tools.

Test Impact of Integration Strategies

- For example, South Central's Integration Practices:
  - Use descriptive statistics to examine how tools correlate with performance outcomes.
    - ➢ Look at performance trends at the Yakima WorkSource Center.
    - ➢ Look at the Yakima WorkSource Center outcomes before and after the integration strategies were instituted.
    - ➢ Compare outcomes of Yakima to similar WorkSource centers that do not use the same tools.

Customer Satisfaction Surveys

- Leverage Participant Surveys
  - Correlate survey results to each region.
  - See if Satisfaction results correlate with the innovative practices identified in this analysis.

Turnover and Performance

- Coordinate with partners to collect turnover data across programs and regions.
  - ➤ Analyze correlations with federal performance outcomes.
  - ➤ Start by partnering with WIOA Titles I-IV to analyze turnover related to federal performance outcomes.

Advisory and Coordination Groups

- Continuous feedback from state and local partners is vital.
  - Coordination with these groups will allow us to have an ongoing pulse on the state of system integration from both a data platform and a service delivery perspective.
  - Consider including senior leadership in these advisory groups to better understand projects in the making that frontline staff may not be aware of.

QUESTIONS? FEEDBACK?

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