

Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST)

Participant Survey 2026

Participant Survey: Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST)

State statute directs the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (Workforce Board) to survey workforce system participants to evaluate their experiences, outcomes and satisfaction with workforce programs within Washington. By capturing the lived experiences of program participants, the Workforce Board can support data-informed decision-making, improve accountability, and help ensure that Washington's workforce system is equitable, effective, and responsive to both workers and the economy.

I-BEST is a nationally recognized model that uses team-teaching to quickly boost students' literacy while learning job skills or academic subjects. With I-BEST, students work with two teachers in the classroom: one for career content and one for reading, writing, math, or English support. This method lets students earn college credits faster and move directly into careers.

The survey was administered via mail, telephone, and online among a randomly selected sample of I-BEST participants: For I-BEST participants the response rate was a strong 26.3%. See the [methodology report](#) for full details.

Recommendations

Survey responses highlight several ways colleges can better support I-BEST participants.

Strengthen employment-focused services Participants identified opportunities for stronger employment support, including career counseling, information about job openings, and job interview preparation. Expanding or integrating these services into I-BEST programming could help participants connect their training to employment opportunities and navigate the job search process.

Expand financial and basic needs support Financial assistance was the most commonly needed support service. Programs should continue to connect participants with financial assistance and consider strengthening referrals to childcare, transportation, housing, and other supports that can reduce barriers to participation and employment.

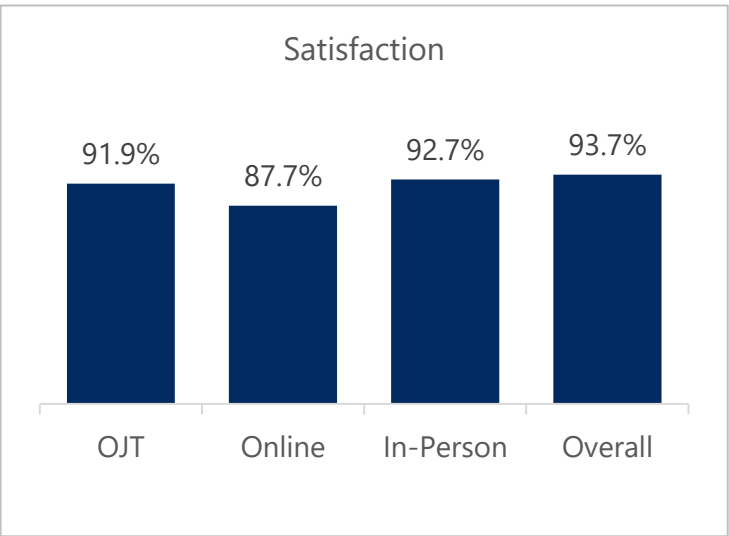
Build opportunities for continued skill development Two-thirds of respondents wanted to further improve their skills. Leadership, communication, and critical-thinking skills were among the most frequently identified areas participants most often identified for improvement.

Survey findings

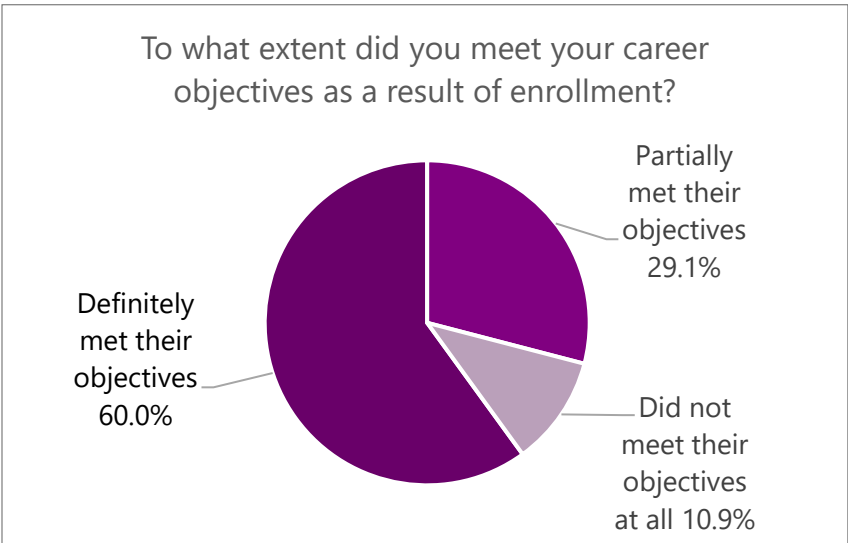
The top two reasons participants enrolled in an I-BEST program were to earn a degree or certificate (89%) or to improve skills for a new job (80%).

Satisfaction

I-BEST respondents reported high levels of satisfaction across most aspects of their program. Satisfaction was highest with the program overall, with 94% of participants reporting that they were somewhat or very satisfied. This was followed closely by in-person instruction (93%) and on-the-job training (92%). Participants were marginally less satisfied with online instruction, although a strong 88% still reported being somewhat or very satisfied.



Career objectives



I-BEST participants were asked to what extent they met their career objectives as a result of enrolling in the program. Sixty percent of respondents reported that they definitely met their career objectives, while 29% reported partially meeting their objectives. The remaining 11% reported that they did not meet their career objectives at all.

Sixty percent of respondents said their participation in the program led them to consider job opportunities that they weren't prepared for or wouldn't have considered before.

Services needed, received, and unmet needs¹

	Services Needed			Total Unmet Need ¹
	Of entire population	Of those who needed services	Of those who received services	Of entire population
		Received Services	Needs Met	
Career or job counseling	42.7%	66.7%	94.1%	15.0%
Assistance with resume writing	41.3%	68.3%	94.0%	13.4%
Learning how to search for a job	32.0%	61.3%	93.2%	13.1%
Job interviewing techniques	39.2%	61.5%	96.4%	14.1%
Information on job openings	44.1%	68.5%	93.4%	15.2%
Appropriate work attire and work-related tools	36.7%	69.3%	91.0%	12.5%
Childcare assistance	19.1%	52.3%	90.3%	8.8%
Transportation assistance	22.1%	63.5%	86.4%	9.2%
Housing assistance	20.2%	61.2%	85.0%	9.5%
Financial assistance	57.4%	84.1%	88.4%	13.5%
Information about government assistance	31.1%	54.7%	92.4%	13.6%
Disability services	15.8%	60.0%	94.3%	6.3%

Services needed

The services that were needed most by I-BEST participants were:

- 57% needed financial assistance
- 44% needed information on job openings
- 43% needed career or job counseling

¹ To determine unmet need participants were asked if they needed a service, if they received that service, and if that service met their needs. Unmet need is calculated as those who needed the service and did not receive it added to those who did receive the service, and it did not meet their needs; and is represented as a portion of the entire population.

Services received

The percentage of I-BEST participants who received needed support services varied by service. Among participants who needed a service: Participants were least likely to receive childcare assistance and most likely to receive financial assistance.

Services met needs

Among I-BEST participants who received services, more than 80% reported that those services met their needs. The highest level of reported need fulfillment was for job interviewing techniques, with 96% of participants who received the service reporting that it met their needs.

Unmet needs

The top unmet needs² for I-BEST participants were mostly related to employment:

- Career or job counseling - 15%
- Information on job openings - 15%
- Job interviewing techniques – 14%

Another area with a relatively high level of unmet need was government assistance, with 14% of participants reporting that their needs in this area were not met.

On-the-job training

Fifty-five percent of I-BEST participants' programs included training on the job, such as an internship, work-based learning, or clinical experience.

Skills

I-BEST students most often received training in:

- Communications - 69% received training
 - 95% said the training improved their communication skills some or a lot.
- Teamwork skills – 68% received training
 - 93% said the training improved their teamwork skills some or a lot.
- Critical thinking or problem solving - 66% received training
 - 96% said the training improved their problem solving some or a lot.

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A smaller percentage of respondents received training in:

- The operation of machinery or equipment– 43% received training
 - 90% said the training improved their equipment skills some or a lot.
- English as a second language – 33% received training
 - 92% said the training improved their English skills some or a lot.

Improving skills

Sixty-six percent of respondents would like to further improve their skills. The skills respondents most want to improve are leadership or management (81%), communication (80%), and critical thinking or problem-solving skills (73%).

Prior employment

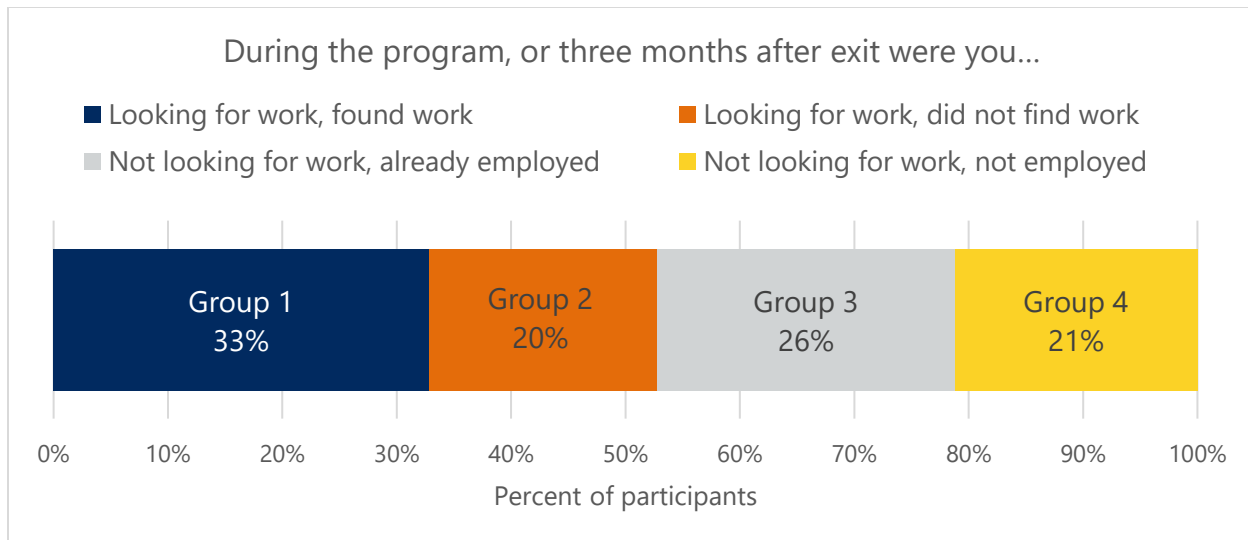
Thirty-six percent of I-BEST respondents did any work in the three months prior to enrolling in their I-BEST program. Of those who were employed in the three months prior to enrolling in their I-BEST program, 30% reported that the training program was very related to that job, 15% said it was somewhat related, 15% said it was a little related, and 40% said it was not related.

Of those who did any work in the three months prior to enrolling in a program:

- 86% of participants said it was their primary source of income
- 60% had employer-provided healthcare
- 9% were members of a union
- 11% said it was with a temporary employment agency
- 13% were self employed

Employment post-training

I-BEST respondents were asked a series of questions to determine their post-training employment. These questions allowed participants to be grouped into four categories based on their job search activities during the program or within three months after exiting.



Participants fell into four employment groups based on whether they looked for work during their program or within three months after exiting.

- **33% looked for and found work (Group 1)**
 - 81% were somewhat or very satisfied with the job
 - 91% were somewhat or very satisfied with their job responsibilities.
 - 74% were somewhat or very satisfied with their salary
 - 52% said their training or work experience was essential to getting hired
 - 59% said their job was extremely related to their program.
- **20% looked for work, but did not find work (Group 2)**
 - 52% said there were few jobs in their geographic area.
 - 54% said they were missing skills for available jobs.
- **26% were already employed and not looking for work. (Group 3)**
- **21% were not looking for work and not employed. (Group 4)**
 - 67% were in school or in a training program.
 - 47% were caring for children

Conclusion

The Participant Survey indicates that I-BEST programs help participants achieve their career goals while providing training and support that they value. High satisfaction levels, strong progress toward career objectives, and positive employment outcomes suggest that the programs support participants' education and career development. At the same time, unmet needs related to employment services and participant's continued interest in skill development point to opportunities to strengthen support for I-BEST participants as they transition into and advance in the workforce.