

Private Vocational Schools

Participant Survey 2026

Participant Survey: Private Vocational Schools

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.

Private career or vocational colleges and schools provide training for students intending to complete vocational certificates or degrees. The schools are licensed by the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board or, if they grant a degree, by the Washington Student Achievement Council.

The survey was administered via mail, telephone, and online among a randomly selected sample of Private Vocational School participants: For Private Vocational School participants the response rate was a solid 16.2%. See the [methodology report](#) for full details.

Recommendations

Survey responses highlight a couple ways Private Vocational Schools can better support students.

Strengthen employment support services Information on job openings was the most frequently needed service and 20% of participants looked for work but did not find employment post-training. Schools should expand connections to employment support services including career or job counseling, assistance with resume writing, job search and interviewing techniques, and information on job openings.

Increase financial assistance and reduce program cost barriers Financial assistance had the highest unmet need (16%) and was also one of the most commonly needed services. Participants were not as satisfied with cost as they were with other aspects of the program. Schools should provide clearer information about grants, scholarships, tuition assistance, and other financial resources.

Increase access to work-based learning Just 40% of participants reported that their program included on-the-job training, such as internships, clinical experiences, or work-based learning. Schools should expand internships, apprenticeships, clinical placements, and employer-

sponsored training to give students practical experience and strengthen their transition into employment.

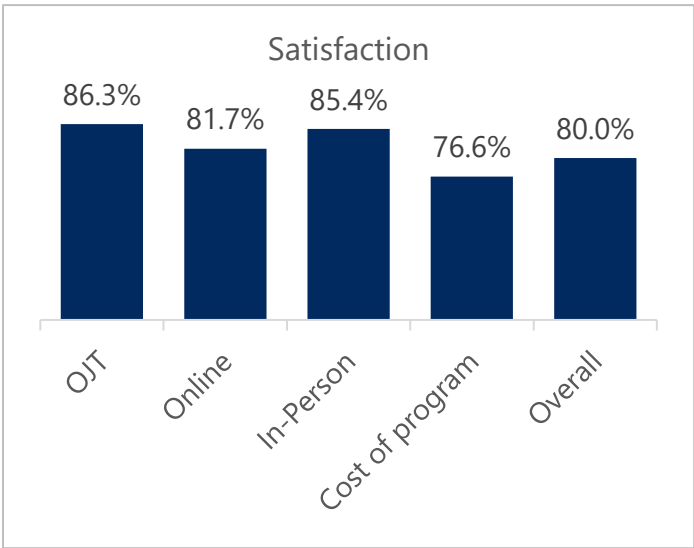
Survey findings

Why enroll

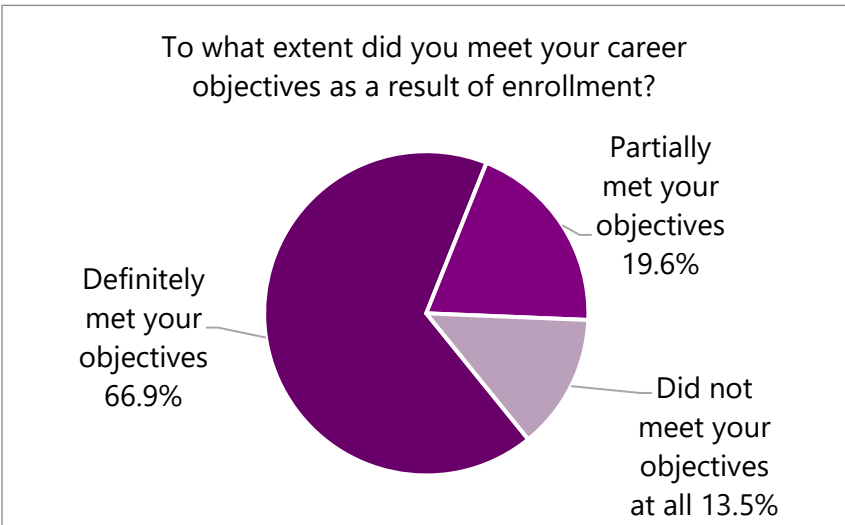
Some 86% of Private Vocational School respondents enrolled to improve skills for a new job, 76% enrolled for personal enjoyment, 67% to earn a degree or certificate, and 30% to improve skills for a job they already had.

Satisfaction

Private Vocational School respondents reported satisfaction across nearly every aspect of their program. A good percentage of Private Vocational School participants were satisfied with their program’s on-the-job training (OJT) (86% somewhat or very satisfied of those whose program included OJT) and the in-person instruction (85%) They were less satisfied with the online instruction portion of their program (82%), the program overall (80%), and the cost of the program (77%).



Career objectives



Participants were asked, “To what extent did you meet your career objectives as a result of enrollment?” Sixty-seven percent of respondents said that they definitely met their objectives, 20% partially met their objectives, and 14% did not meet their objectives at all.

Fifty-seven 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	17.2%	73.1%	88.6%	6%
Assistance with resume writing	20.8%	65.6%	85.3%	9%
Learning how to search for a job	19.4%	53.3%	86.4%	11%
Job interviewing techniques	23.9%	62.2%	88.1%	11%
Information on job openings	32.1%	72.0%	89.9%	12%
Appropriate work attire and work-related tools	23.4%	71.4%	93.8%	7%
Childcare assistance	6.3%	50.0%	87.5%	4%
Transportation assistance	8.1%	46.2%	83.3%	5%
Housing assistance	9.4%	26.7%	66.7%	8%
Financial assistance	23.8%	52.8%	65.5%	16%
Information about government assistance	17.0%	50.0%	83.3%	10%
Disability services	4.4%	16.7%	80.0%	3%

Services needed

The services that were needed most by Private Vocational School participants were:

- Information on job openings – 32%
- Financial assistance – 24%
- Job interviewing techniques – 24%

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

There was a range of services received by Private Vocational School participants who needed support services. The largest gaps were in the following areas:

- Housing assistance: 27% of Private Vocational School participants who needed housing assistance received it.
- Disability services: 17% of Private Vocational School participants who needed disability services received them.

A higher percentage of participants were served in the following areas:

- Career or job counseling – 73% of those who needed job counseling received that support.
- Appropriate work attire and tools – 71% of participants who needed work attire and tools received them.
- Information on job openings – 71% of participants who needed job opening information received that information.

Services met needs

Participants in Private Vocational School s indicated that services received met their needs, ranging from a low of 66% for financial assistance to a high of 88% for job interviewing and childcare assistance.

Unmet needs

The top unmet needs² for respondents were:

- Financial assistance – 16%
- Information on job openings – 12%
- Learning how to search for a job -11%
- Job interviewing techniques -11%

Training

Forty percent of participants said their job training program included training on the job, such as an internship, work-based learning, clinical experience, or cooperative education.

² 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.

Participants were asked about the training they received in their program. Private Vocational School participants most often received training in:

- The operation of machinery or equipment other than computers – 56% received training
 - 88% said the training improved their operation of machinery or equipment other than computers some or a lot.
- Teamwork skills - 58% received training
 - 96% said the training improved their teamwork skills some or a lot.

A smaller percentage of respondents received training in:

- Reading – 11% received training
 - 75% said the training improved their reading skills some or a lot.
- Writing - 13% received training
 - 74% said the training improved their writing skills some or a lot.
- Mathematics – 13% received training
 - 68% said the training improved their math skills some or a lot

Improving skills

Fifty-four percent of Private Vocational School respondents would like to further improve their skills. The skills respondents most want to improve are leadership or management (62%), operation of equipment (62%), and critical thinking or problem solving (57%).

Prior employment

Fifty-three percent of Private Vocational School participants respondents did any work in the three months prior to enrolling in their Private Vocational School program.

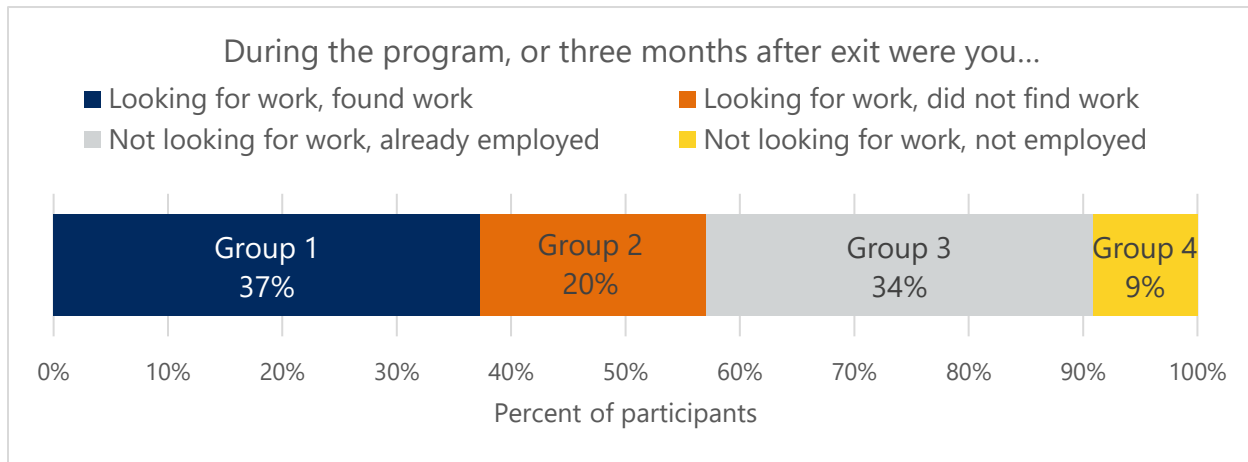
Of those who were employed in the three months prior to enrolling in their Private Vocational School program, 24% reported that the training program was very related to that job, 20% said it was somewhat related, 15% said it was a little related, and 42% said it was not related at all.

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

- 91% of Private Vocational School participants said it was their primary source of income
- 68% had employer-provided healthcare
- 21% were members of a union
- 9% said it was with a temporary employment agency
- 10% were self employed

Employment post-training

Private Vocational School participants 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.



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

- **37% looked for and found work (Group 1)**
 - 88% were somewhat or very satisfied with their job responsibilities.
 - Satisfaction was lower with salary (73% somewhat or very satisfied), advancement opportunities (71%), and with the job in general (71%).
 - 79% said their training or work experience was essential to getting hired
 - Over 75% said their job was extremely related to their program.
- **20% looked for work, but did not find work (Group 2)**
 - 40% were missing skills for available jobs
 - 36% responded that there were few jobs in their geographic region.
- **34% were already employed and not looking for work. (Group 3)**
- **9% were not looking for work and not employed. (Group 4)**
 - 73% were in school or a training program.
 - 45% indicated they were "doing something else."

Conclusion

While most Private Vocational School participants reported satisfaction with their training, significant gaps remain in support services, especially in housing assistance, disability assistance, and financial assistance. Employment outcomes after training were mixed, and many participants still want to improve key skills such as leadership and critical thinking.