

Professional-Technical Programs at Community and Technical Colleges

Participant Survey 2026

Participant Survey: Professional-Technical Programs

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.

Professional-Technical programs are training or education programs that prepare students for employment in a specific industry, provide a vocational degree or a vocational certificate, and are located at one of Washington's 34 community or technical colleges.

The survey was administered via mail, telephone, and online among a randomly selected sample of Professional-Technical participants: For Professional-Technical participants the response rate was a solid 20.7%. See the [methodology report](#) for full details.

Recommendations

Survey responses highlight ways colleges can better support Professional-Technical students.

Increase access to financial aid Financial assistance was the most needed service, with more than half of respondents saying they needed help. Among these students, 12% said they either did not receive assistance or the help they received did not meet their needs. Colleges can improve access by providing more outreach and hands-on support to help students complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or the Washington Application for State Financial Aid (WASFA), especially for students who are unfamiliar with the process or unsure whether they qualify.

Strengthen employment support About one in six respondents said they needed more information about job openings, and one in 10 said they needed career or job counseling. In addition, 15% were looking for work but had not found a job while enrolled or within three months of leaving their program. Expanding access to job listings, career counseling, and job search assistance could improve employment outcomes.

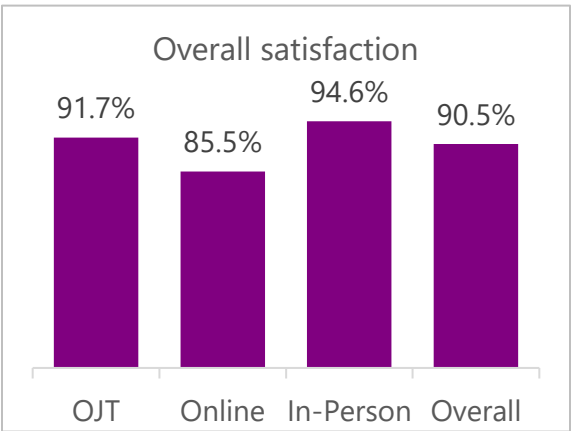
Continue improving online instruction While most Professional-Technical participants were satisfied with online instruction, it did receive the lowest satisfaction rate of all instructional formats. Colleges should regularly evaluate online course quality and student outcomes, using

student feedback to improve instructional practices, technology, accessibility, and student support services.

Survey findings

The top reasons participants enrolled in a Professional-Technical program were to improve skills for a new job (90%) or to earn a degree or certificate (88%).

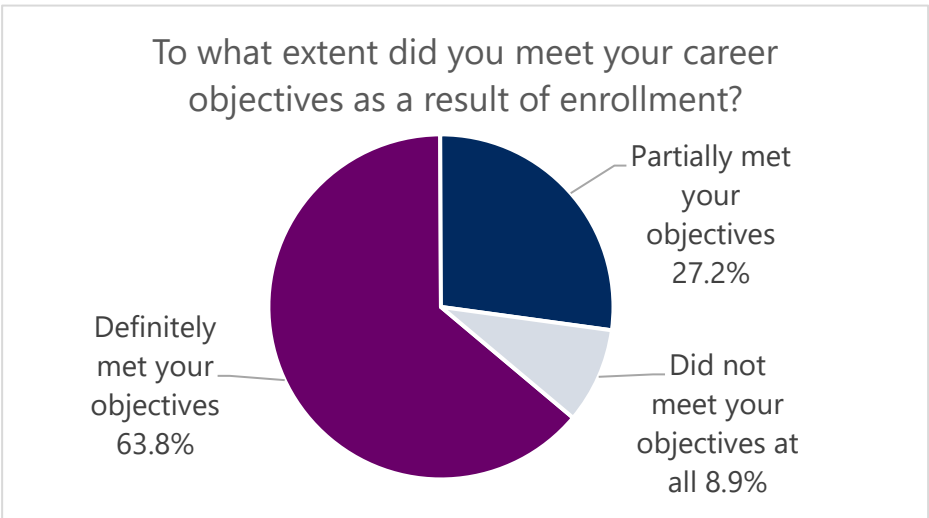
Satisfaction



Professional-Technical participants reported high levels of satisfaction across nearly every aspect of their program. They were most satisfied with the in-person instruction (95% were somewhat or very satisfied). Respondents also rated the quality of instruction highly (92%) and were satisfied with on-the-job training (OJT-92%). They were marginally less satisfied with the online instruction portion of their program (86%).

Career objectives

Participants were asked, “To what extent did you meet your career objectives as a result of enrollment?” Sixty-four percent of participants said that they definitely met their objectives, 27% partially met their objectives, and only nine percent did not meet their objectives at all.



Sixty-two 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	33.0%	71.8%	95.5%	11.5%
Assistance with resume writing	35.6%	82.6%	91.5%	7.5%
Learning how to search for a job	29.2%	71.4%	92.5%	8.7%
Job interviewing techniques	38.4%	80.0%	92.2%	10.0%
Information on job openings	50.7%	75.0%	89.9%	16.0%
Appropriate work attire and work-related tools	31.6%	77.2%	88.8%	7.2%
Childcare assistance	11.7%	73.3%	80.8%	3.4%
Transportation assistance	14.4%	77.1%	83.9%	3.4%
Housing assistance	17.7%	73.3%	80.8%	6.0%
Financial assistance	53.5%	85.7%	93.3%	12.4%
Information about government assistance	26.1%	61.9%	93.7%	10.6%
Disability services	11.0%	71.4%	90.0%	4.2%

Services needed

The services that were needed the most by Professional-Technical participants were:

- Financial assistance – 54%
- Information on job openings – 51%
- Job interview techniques - 38%

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

Most Professional-Technical participants who needed services received them. More than 60% of those who needed information about government assistance received it, the lowest access rate across all service types. Access was higher for every other service, reaching 86% among those who needed financial assistance.

Services met needs

Most people who needed services and were provided with those services responded that their needs were met. This ranged from a high of 96% who needed and received career or job counseling to 81% for childcare and housing assistance.

Unmet needs

The top unmet needs² for respondents were:

- Job openings - 16%
- Financial assistance - 12%
- Career or job counseling - 12%
- Government assistance - 11%

On-the-job training

61% of programs included training on the job, such as an internship, work-based learning, or clinical experience.

Skills

Participants were asked about the training they received in their program. Professional-Technical students most often received training to improve their skills in:

- Communication– 75% received training
 - 92% said the training improved their communication skills some or a lot.
- Teamwork - 72% received training
 - 92% said the training improved their teamwork skills some or a lot.
- Critical thinking - 68% received training
 - 94% said the training improved their critical thinking skills some or a lot.

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A smaller percentage of participants received training in:

- Reading – 34% received training
 - 82% said the training improved their reading skills some or a lot.
- Writing - 53% received training
 - 86% said the training improved their writing skills some or a lot.
- Math – 56% received training
 - 81% said the training improved their math skills some or a lot.

Improving skills

Nearly 60% of participants would like to further improve their skills. Among those who wanted to improve their skills, the skills participants most want to improve are leadership or management (73%), communication (59%), and critical thinking or problem solving (58%).

Prior employment

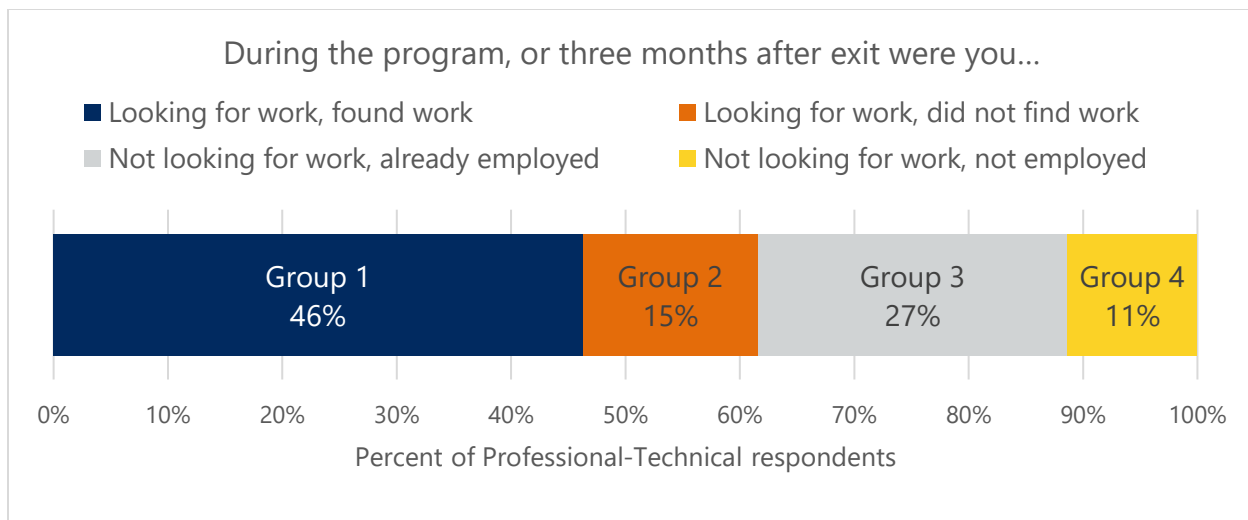
Just over half (51%) of Professional-Technical participants did any work in the three months prior to enrolling in their professional-technical program. Of those who were employed in the three months prior to enrolling in their professional-technical program, 31% reported that the training program was very related to that job, 18% said it was somewhat related, 10% said it was a little related, and 41% said it was not related at all.

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

- 94% of participants said it was their primary source of income
- 61% had employer-provided healthcare
- 19% were a member of a union
- 10% said it was with a temporary employment agency
- 8% were self employed

Employment post-training

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



- **46% looked for and found work (Group 1)**
 - Nearly three-quarters said their job was extremely related to their program.
 - 34% said their training or work experience was essential to getting hired
 - 92% were somewhat or very satisfied with their job responsibilities.
 - Satisfaction was lower for salary (69%), advancement opportunities (73%), and overall satisfaction with the job (73%).
- **15% looked for work, but did not find work (Group 2)**
 - The most common barriers to employment:
 - Few jobs are available in their line of work - 50%
 - Few jobs available in their geographic area - 47%
 - Lacked the necessary skills - 45%
- **27% were already employed and not looking for work. (Group 3)**
- **11% were not looking for work and not employed. (Group 4)**
 - Nearly two-thirds (64%) were in school or in a training program.
 - 33% were caring for children.

Conclusion

Survey results show that Professional-Technical programs are preparing participants well for employment, and earning high marks for instruction, training, and student satisfaction. Most enrolled to gain skills for a new job and to earn a degree or certificate, and the majority said their program helped them meet their goals.

The survey also points to areas for improvement to strengthen student success. Expanding access to career services, job search assistance, financial aid, and other support services could help more participants complete their training and successfully transition into employment.