

# Worker Retraining Programs at Community and Technical Colleges

Participant Survey 2026

## Participant Survey: Worker Retraining

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.

The Worker Retraining program helps dislocated workers and individuals experiencing long-term unemployment prepare for new careers through job retraining. Enrollment levels fluctuate in response to economic conditions and layoffs, with demand typically increasing during recessions. The industries from which participants are displaced also change over time. Although some participants attend private career schools, this evaluation focuses on the state's 34 community and technical colleges, which provide occupational training as well as basic skills and literacy instruction. Eligible participants may also receive financial assistance to help cover tuition costs.

The survey was administered via mail, telephone, and online among a randomly selected sample of Worker Retraining participants: For Worker Retraining participants the response rate was a solid 28.5%. See the [methodology report](#) for full details.

## Recommendations

Survey responses highlight several ways colleges can better support Worker Retraining participants.

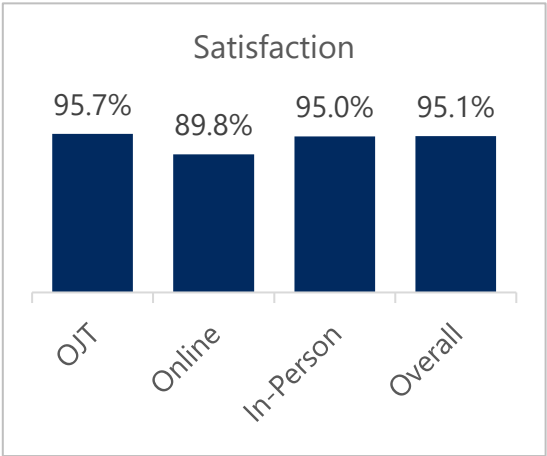
**Strengthen employment support** Over 50% of participants needed information on job openings, and 44% needed career or job counseling. Expanding access to job listings, career counseling, and job search assistance could improve employment outcomes.

**Increase access to financial aid** Financial assistance was the most commonly needed service, with more than three-quarters of respondents saying they needed help. Among these students, 13% 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.

# Survey findings

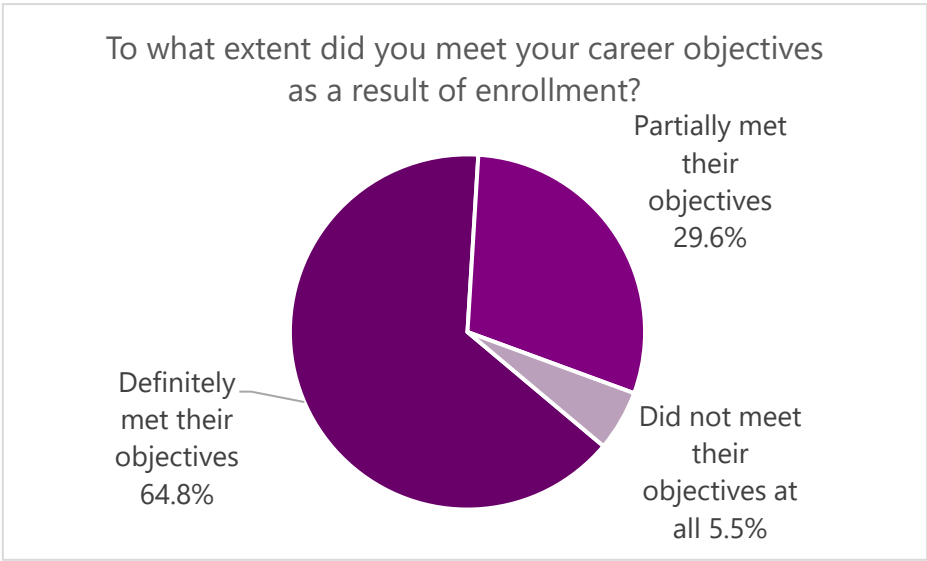
The top reasons participants enrolled in a Worker Retraining program were to earn a degree or certificate (93%), or to improve skills for a new job (91%).

## Satisfaction



Worker Retraining respondents reported high levels of satisfaction across nearly every aspect of their program. A high percentage of Worker Retraining participants were satisfied with the program’s on-the-job training (96% somewhat or very satisfied), the in-person instruction (95%) and the program overall (95%) They were marginally less satisfied with the online instruction portion of their program (90%).

## Career objectives



Participants were asked, “To what extent did you meet your career objectives as a result of enrollment?” Sixty-five percent of respondents said that they definitely met their objectives, 30% partially met their objectives, and only six percent did not meet their objectives at all.

Sixty-eight 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 needs<sup>1</sup>

|                                                | Services Needed      |                              |                                | Total Unmet Need <sup>1</sup> |
|------------------------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
|                                                | Of entire population | Of those who needed services | Of those who received services | Of entire population          |
|                                                |                      | Received Services            | Needs Met                      |                               |
| Career or job counseling                       | 43.9%                | 66.7%                        | 95.5%                          | 14.3%                         |
| Assistance with resume writing                 | 39.9%                | 78.0%                        | 91.5%                          | 10.4%                         |
| Learning how to search for a job               | 28.2%                | 70.2%                        | 92.5%                          | 9.7%                          |
| Job interviewing techniques                    | 38.3%                | 65.0%                        | 92.2%                          | 15.6%                         |
| Information on job openings                    | 54.9%                | 72.6%                        | 89.9%                          | 18.2%                         |
| Appropriate work attire and work-related tools | 29.7%                | 66.3%                        | 88.8%                          | 10.8%                         |
| Childcare assistance                           | 14.6%                | 51.2%                        | 80.8%                          | 7.3%                          |
| Transportation assistance                      | 22.9%                | 71.8%                        | 83.9%                          | 8.5%                          |
| Housing assistance                             | 24.8%                | 64.9%                        | 80.8%                          | 10.5%                         |
| Financial assistance                           | 77.7%                | 88.8%                        | 93.3%                          | 13.1%                         |
| Information about government assistance        | 44.1%                | 70.6%                        | 93.7%                          | 14.4%                         |
| Disability services                            | 13.5%                | 61.0%                        | 90.0%                          | 6.1%                          |

### Services needed

The services that were needed most by Worker Retraining participants were:

- 78% needed financial assistance
- 55% needed information on job openings
- 44% needed information on government assistance
- 44% needed career or job counseling

### Services received

More than half of Worker Retraining participants who needed support services got them. The percentage receiving services varied by type of support:

- Lowest percentage of participants receiving needed services:

<sup>1</sup> 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.

- Childcare assistance: 51% of participants who needed childcare assistance received it.
- Disability services: 61% of participants who needed disability services received them.
- Highest percentage of participants receiving needed services
  - Financial assistance information: 89% of participants who needed financial assistance received it.

## Services met needs

Most Worker Retraining participants who received needed services said the services met their needs. Among those who received information on career or job counseling over 95% reported that their needs were met. Among those who received information on financial or government assistance over 93% reported that their needs were met.

## Unmet needs

The top unmet needs<sup>2</sup> for respondents were job interviewing techniques (16%) and information on job openings (18%).

## On-the-job training

Some 49% of Worker Retraining participants' 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. Worker Retraining students most often received training in:

- Teamwork skills - 60% received training
  - 93% said the training improved their teamwork skills some or a lot.
- Communication skills – 60% received training
  - 95% said the training improved their communication skills some or a lot.
- Critical thinking or problem solving - 57% received training
  - 90% said the training improved their critical thinking skills some or a lot.

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A smaller percentage of respondents received training in:

- The operation of machinery or equipment – 33% received training
  - 93% said the training improved their skills some or a lot.
- Reading - 27% received training
  - 87% said the training improved their reading skills some or a lot.

## Improving skills

Sixty-four percent of respondents would like to further improve their skills. The skills respondents most want to improve are leadership or management (75%), communication (66%), decision-making skills (57%), critical thinking skills (55%), and teamwork skills (55%).

## Prior employment

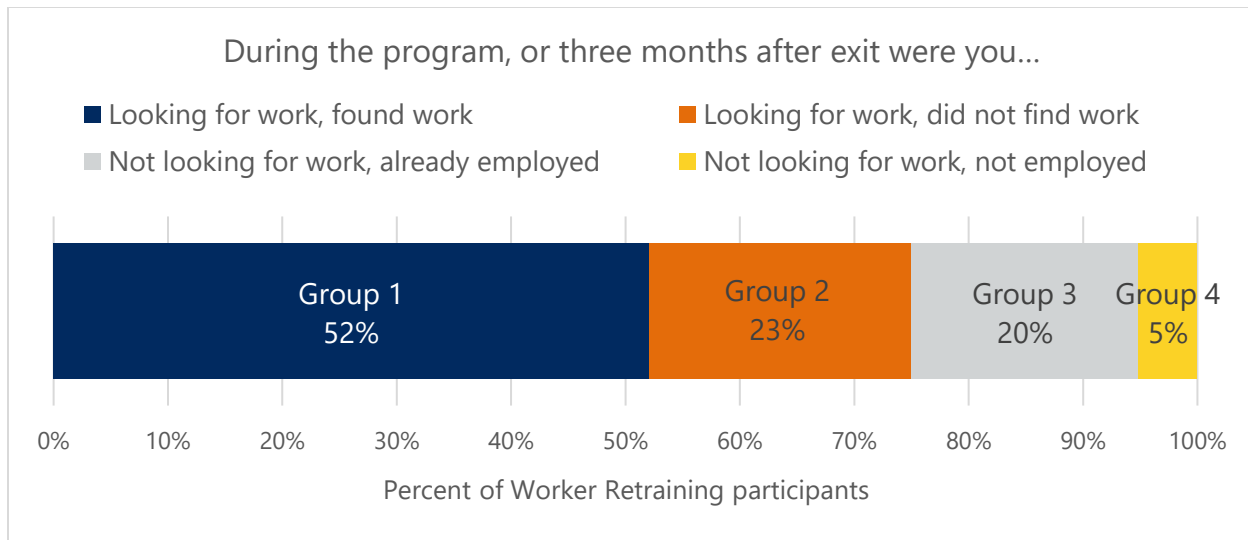
Forty-two percent of Worker Retraining respondents did any work in the three months prior to enrolling in their Worker Retraining program. Of those who were employed in the three months prior to enrolling in their Worker Retraining program, 35% reported that the training program was very related to that job, 19% said it was somewhat related, 14% said it was a little related, and 32% 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
- 68% had employer-provided healthcare
- 22% were members of a union
- 11% said it was with a temporary employment agency
- 9% were self employed

## Employment post-training

Worker Retraining 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.

- **52% looked for and found work (Group 1)**
  - 76% were somewhat or very satisfied with the job
    - 93% were somewhat or very satisfied with their job responsibilities.
    - 80% were somewhat or very satisfied with their salary
    - 76% were somewhat or very satisfied with advancement opportunities.
  - 55% said their training or work experience was essential to getting hired
  - 58% said their job was extremely related to their program.
- **23% looked for work, but did not find work (Group 2)**
  - 49% said they were missing skills for available jobs.
  - 42% said there were few jobs in their line of work.
- **20% were already employed and not looking for work. (Group 3)**
- **5% were not looking for work and not employed. (Group 4)**
  - 73% were in school or in a training program.
  - 43% were caring for children.
  - 39% had health problems.

## Conclusion

Survey results show that Worker Retraining programs are helping participants build new skills, earn credentials, and achieve their career goals. Participants reported high levels of satisfaction with the program, and many said it prepared them for job opportunities they would not have otherwise considered. More than half found employment after training, with most reporting satisfaction with their jobs.

The findings also identify opportunities for improvement. While most participants received the services they needed, unmet needs remain in areas such as job search support, childcare, and disability services. Expanding access to these services and continuing to strengthen career preparation and skill development could further improve participant outcomes.