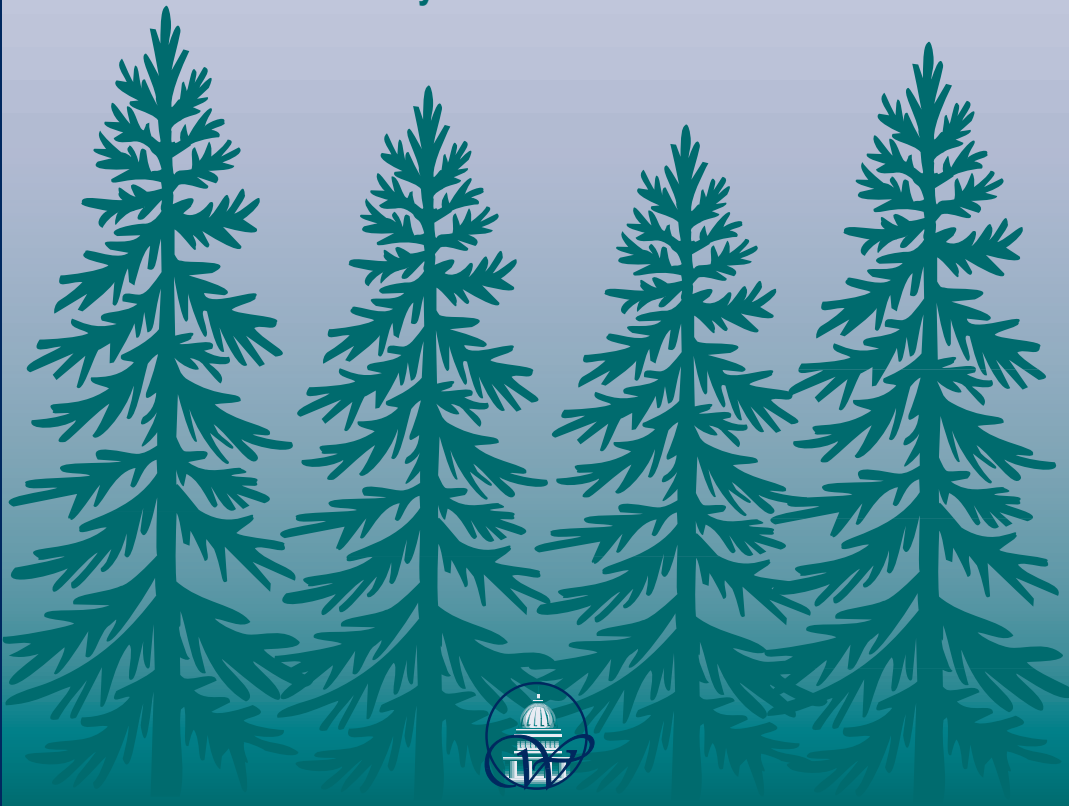


A REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

**Progress of Agencies
in Implementing**

*High Skills, High Wages:
Washington's Comprehensive
Plan for Workforce Training
and Education*

July 1999 - June 2000



Washington State Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board

WORKFORCE TRAINING AND EDUCATION COORDINATING BOARD

The Vision

The Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board is Washington State's valued and trusted source of leadership for the workforce training and education system.

Mission Statement

The Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board's mission is to bring business, labor, and the public sector together to shape strategies to best meet the state and local workforce and employer needs of Washington in order to create and sustain a high skill, high wage economy.

To fulfill this Mission, Board members, with the support of staff, work together to:

- Advise the Governor and Legislature on workforce development policy.
- Promote a system of workforce development that responds to the lifelong learning needs of the current and future workforce.
- Advocate for the non-baccalaureate training and education needs of workers and employers.
- Facilitate innovations in workforce development policy and practices.
- Ensure system quality and accountability by evaluating results and supporting high standards and continuous improvement.

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Introduction

The Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (Workforce Board) set an action agenda for the state's workforce development system when it adopted *High Skills, High Wages: Washington's Comprehensive Plan for Workforce Training and Education* in November 1998. To track progress on how the state's workforce training and education agencies are implementing the "High Skills, High Wages" agenda, the Workforce Board is required to report by December 1 each year to appropriate legislative committees.

This *Annual Report to the Legislature* fulfills the mandate of RCW 28C.18.080 (3) and (5). It includes information on progress made by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, the Employment Security Department, as well as the Workforce Board.

The Workforce Development System is Changing

An executive order on workforce development from Governor Locke; passage of the Workforce Investment Act; and recent changes in laws governing secondary and post-secondary vocational education, adult and family literacy, vocational rehabilitation, and the public labor exchange, brought important changes to the state's workforce development system. These changes provide the framework for Washington State and its communities to establish a system that meets the needs of the students, job seekers, those who want to further their careers, and businesses.

In the past year:

- The Governor certified workforce development councils in 12 regions of the state. Each council has a majority of members from business.
- The Workforce Board and the 12 local councils completed and adopted state and local strategic plans for workforce development. These plans respond to the three challenges facing the state's workforce development system that Governor Locke identified in his executive order.
 1. Closing the skills gap.
 2. Enabling incumbent and dislocated workers to make smooth transitions in the new, changing economy.
 3. Developing a wage progression strategy for low-income individuals.

- The Workforce Board established performance targets for programs of the state’s workforce development system.
- The Workforce Board and the Employment Security Department established an Internet-based “consumer report system” of training provider course descriptions and results to help consumers make informed decisions about the right training programs for them.
- State and local partners established WorkSource, Washington State’s “one-stop” access point to employment and training services in each of the 12 local workforce development areas.
- The Governor designated the Workforce Board as the state’s workforce investment board for purposes of leading implementation of the Workforce Investment Act.

These actions, as well as others to come, will improve coordination among workforce development programs; provide greater flexibility to design and administer a workforce development system that meets local needs; improve customer service; and ensure that report workforce development programs are accountable and successful.

Goals in the 1998 High Skills, High Wages Comprehensive Plan

GOAL 1 ► *K-12 education will prepare students for both further education and work. Students will graduate from high school knowing and being able to do what is needed to succeed at both higher education and the world of work.*

GOAL 2 ► *The gap between economic demand and the supply of postsecondary technical training will be closed. The state’s adult training programs will produce the number of workers with the skills Washington employers need.*

GOAL 3 ► *The training system will be a coherent and integrated system of customer services. We will build a network of training and related services that provides customers with easy access and portability among and between programs and avoids unnecessary duplication.*

GOAL 4 ► *Training programs will be accountable for results. Every workforce training and education program will have measured results and quality improvement efforts to improve those results.*

Progress Report on Achievement of the Goals in High Skills, High Wages

GOAL 1 ► *K-12 education will prepare students for both further education and work.*

The most important contribution that K-12 education makes to prepare Washington's students for further education and work is implementing the state's education reform initiative. The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) supports local districts as they implement new teaching strategies and curriculum designed to help students master the high-level competencies needed for success in the 21st century.

Since many students will only master those competencies if they have the opportunity to learn in applied settings, OSPI and local educators are working to expand the number of classes that offer students applied and contextual opportunities to learn. New technology helps increase the opportunities for students in rural schools to connect with the educational and career opportunities elsewhere in the state as well. Additionally, OSPI and the state's vocational educators are aligning the academic content of all vocational classes with Washington's essential academic learning requirements. This ensures that students preparing for technical certifications will be as academically prepared as all other students.

Work is underway to align secondary vocational courses with industry-defined skill standards so that students can begin earning industry skill certifications in high school. This ensures that students who want to work immediately after high school are fully prepared to enter the job market. OSPI's partnership with the Information Technology industry illustrates this. OSPI and its business partners have defined a career pathway that can certify students' skills in the broad range of careers available in a highly lucrative, high-demand industry. Businesses are providing hardware, software, staff development, student internships, scholarships, and more. Some students are earning certifications immediately useful in the industry; others are learning skills they will develop further in community and technical colleges, baccalaureate institutions, and graduate schools. Similar partnerships exist with the restaurant and lodging industry, secondary wood products industry, and for health occupations, and are being developed in communications, agriculture, transportation, and the building trades.

OSPI also assists local districts as they implement new strategies for ensuring students' success after graduation. Washington schools are helping students prepare portfolios of their work, make plans for their "next steps" after high school, and demonstrate to their communities the skills they have acquired in high school. Five pilot high schools around the state are implementing whole-school reform to enable successful transitions for all students. The results of these schools' efforts, and of many more around the state, will guide state policy and inform other schools' changes.

Objective 1

Improve career-related learning during high school.

RECOMMENDATION 1

PROGRESS

A. OSPI should support high school pilot programs with a combined focus on academic and work skills. OSPI should also support community partnerships of business, labor, and education for work-based learning and articulation of secondary and postsecondary vocational-technical education.

In Progress ► Currently, OSPI is providing financial support through federal school-to-work funds and guidance to five high school pilot programs within the state. These programs are at Nooksack Valley, Pasco, Sumner, Wapato, and West Seattle. Each program focuses on a unique teaching and learning strategy for combining academic and work-related skills. OSPI supports other community partnerships of business, labor and education through School-to-Work and/or Tech-Prep consortia.

B. The State Board of Education (SBE) should include workplace skills (such as good work habits, teamwork, and accepting supervision) in its new performance-based graduation requirements.

In Progress ► In March 2000, the Workforce Board recommended to SBE that new graduation requirements should include students' demonstrating proficiency in State Education Goal 4 through a culminating project and a student portfolio, and that students should complete an exploratory vocational course until a valid and reliable assessment of workplace competencies is developed.

SBE is expected to take final action on graduation requirements in the fall of 2000.

Objective 2

Improve career guidance in Washington schools.

RECOMMENDATION 2

PROGRESS

OSPI should, in cooperation with state and local partners, develop and implement a plan to improve career guidance for Washington's young people.

In Progress ► OSPI has commissioned a Career Guidance Task Force, composed of representatives from local school districts, colleges and universities and state partners, including representatives from professional associations concerned with career guidance for all students. The task force will develop and implement guidelines and frameworks for comprehensive career counseling and guidance.

Objective 3

Establish an accountability system for K-12 education that measures students' preparation for both higher education and work.

RECOMMENDATION 3

PROGRESS

The Governor and Legislature should enact an accountability system that:

A. Reports student post-high school experience in higher education and employment in the School Performance Report and later adds measures of post-high school experience to the accountability system.

Limited Progress ► In 1999, the Legislature created the Academic Achievement and Accountability (A+) Commission to provide oversight of the state's K-12 educational accountability system.

In June 2000, the A+ Commission developed preliminary recommendations to expand information that is collected relating to student success. The issue of adding measures of post-high school experience to the accountability system had not yet been addressed by the commission.

Objective 3 (cont.)

Establish an accountability system for K-12 education that measures students' preparation for both higher education and work.

RECOMMENDATION 3

PROGRESS

B. Includes a measure of the student dropout rate.

Limited Progress

▶ The A+ Commission's preliminary recommendations would use dropout rates to determine which schools would be eligible to receive voluntary assistance and for acknowledgement and recognition.

GOAL 2 ► *The gap between economic demand and the supply of postsecondary technical training will be closed.*

Skill standards are a key element in helping to close the skill gap in Washington State. The state's community and technical colleges are engaging business and labor to develop industry-defined standards that specify what employees must know and be able to do within a particular industry and occupation. Skill standards enable articulation between high school and college programs, recognize the skills of incoming participants, and provide certifications meaningful to employers.

The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC), in collaboration with private sector partners, has developed 19 skill standards projects covering 47 occupations, with additional projects scheduled during 2000-01.

Strategies to support further expansion and implementation of skill standards and competency-based education include:

- Emphasizing new skill standards for high-demand industries and occupational clusters.
- Developing a model for issuing portable, industry-endorsed skill certificates.
- Designing a process to update existing standards so they remain current with industry needs.

Skill standards have been completed for the following occupational groups:

Information Technology
Allied Oral Health
Cosmetology
Telecommunications
Secondary Wood Products
Travel and Tourism
Food Processing
Chiropractic Technicians
Chemical Dependency Counseling
Retail/Wholesale Trade
Manufacturing
Agriculture
Natural Resources Technology
Law Enforcement
Hearing Aid Technology
Early Childhood Education
Vocational Instruction
Para-education
Optician Technology

Objective 4

Increase the number of students who enroll in and complete postsecondary vocational-technical programs.

RECOMMENDATION 4	PROGRESS
A. The Governor and Legislature should establish an annual fund of up to \$9 million for scholarships covering up to two years tuition and fees for students in a high-demand postsecondary vocational-technical program.	No Progress ► Bills to establish scholarships for vocational-technical training for employment in high-demand industrial sectors were introduced in the House and Senate but were not passed.
B. The Governor and Legislature should establish an annual fund of up to \$0.5 million to assist low-income individuals with costs associated with entering high-demand apprenticeship programs.	No Progress ► This was proposed in SB 5589, but the bill was not passed by the 2000 Legislature.

Objective 5

Increase high-wage technical programs at community and technical colleges.

RECOMMENDATION 5	PROGRESS
The Governor and Legislature should fund a \$6 million annual grant program through SBCTC to establish new programs in high-demand, high-wage technical fields.	In Progress ► In 1999, the legislature appropriated \$4.5 million to support the startup or improvement of high technology and other high-demand technical programs. Five grants were awarded to colleges for programs that address the growing need for workers in the computer hardware, software, and telecommunications industries. Additionally, 13 colleges received grants to develop and expand high-demand programs that demonstrated employment demand, private sector support, and institutional capacity for the program.

Objective 6

Increase state investment in job-linked customized training.

RECOMMENDATION 6

PROGRESS

The Governor and Legislature should appropriate \$10 million annually in job-linked customized training by expanding the Job Skills Program.

No Progress ► State funding for the Job Skills Program remained unchanged at \$1.2 million for the 1999-2001 biennium.

Objective 7

Enhance the skills and earnings of low-income workers by increasing instruction in occupational skills.

RECOMMENDATION 7

PROGRESS

A. The Office of Adult Literacy and SBCTC should continue to strengthen the integration of adult basic skills instruction with occupational skills training, work experience, and computer training.

In Progress ► Specific grant funds support integrated basic and occupational skills instruction. In addition, WorkFirst efforts, including Families That Work, Workplace Basic Skills and Pre-Employment Training include elements of integrated instruction. Computer literacy became a new emphasis in student competencies.

B. Services for low-income individuals currently provided through the Job Training Partnership Act Title II should offer participants, whenever appropriate, the opportunity to enter and complete vocational-technical programs at community and technical colleges, private career schools, or apprenticeships.

In Progress ► In 1999, the state Job Training Partnership Act Plan was revised to reflect this policy. Added to the plan was a state performance standard to measure increases in occupational skills training.

Objective 7 (cont.)

Enhance the skills and earnings of low-income workers by increasing instruction in occupational skills.

RECOMMENDATION 7

PROGRESS

C. WorkFirst should use funds from savings in case load reductions to support wage progression among public assistance recipients and other low-income adults by combining occupational skills training with work.

In Progress ► WorkFirst is using caseload savings to provide vocational training, support services, and assistance with child care expenses for participants working at least 20 hours per week.

In 1999-00 the savings in case load reductions were used to fund three program components under WorkFirst that combine skills training with work for WorkFirst clients: WorkFirst Work Study; Tuition Assistance; and Pre-employment Training.

Objective 8

Increase employer investments in employee training.

RECOMMENDATION 8

PROGRESS

The Governor and Legislature should enact tax incentives for employer investments in training their employees.

No Progress ► A number of bills were introduced, but no legislation was enacted in the 2000 session.

Objective 9

Help small businesses gain better access to the workforce training system.

RECOMMENDATION 9

PROGRESS

The Governor and Legislature should, using existing entities, establish a public-private partnership of local brokers to connect small businesses to workforce training programs and resources.

In Progress ► The Governor's September 1999 executive order on workforce development requires local workforce development councils to provide for a coordinated and responsive system of outreach to employers.

Additionally, \$600,000 was appropriated to the Workforce Board in the 2000 supplemental budget to fund local SKILLS projects. These projects will result in public-private partnerships that will assess future employment and training needs, work with training providers to develop needed training, expand use of skill standards and customized training to meet specific business needs, and support increased on-the-job learning strategies.

Objective 10

Use the K-20 Technology Network to provide workforce training in rural areas.

RECOMMENDATION 10

PROGRESS

The Community and Technical College system should design and implement ways of using the K-20 Technology Network to provide rural areas with training linked to economic development efforts.

In Progress ► The K-20 Network provides the capacity to offer online and interactive video courses. Distance learning opportunities have doubled each year since use of the network began. In the 1999-00 academic year, the community and technical colleges served more than 34,200 students via the K-20 network.

GOAL 3 ► *The training system will be a coherent and integrated system of customer services.*

WorkSource is the cornerstone for improving access to employment and training services in “one stop” in Washington. WorkSource connects the employment and training services of many different state and local programs and makes them accessible through a shared point of access, in person or electronically. This approach, coupled with the advantages of technology-based, self-service strategies, makes it possible to serve greater numbers of people than in the past, and to provide easier entry into the workforce development system.

A WorkSource center has colocated and integrated services offered through a variety of self-service, group, and one-on-one activities. The centers provide customers one point at which to access many programs administered by multiple agencies.

An affiliate site operates on a smaller scale and can be run by service providers that focus their efforts on specific populations or services. They are able to provide linkages to core services to anyone entering the system at that site or through Internet linkage. Affiliate sites might be community-based organizations, local offices of state agencies, or education and training institutions.

As of June 30, 2000, 20 WorkSource centers and 13 affiliate sites were open for business.

The major focus for 2000-2001 is to:

- Provide all sites with a technology system that supports combined case management, management information, and performance accountability functions.
- Implement a statewide marketing campaign to inform all citizens of the services and ease of access.
- Improve integration of services and removal of barriers to seamless delivery of services to customers.

Objective 11

Integrate the Workforce Investment Act into the state's workforce development system.

RECOMMENDATION 11

PROGRESS

The Workforce Board will develop and make recommendations to the Governor and Legislature regarding mechanisms for integrating the federal Workforce Investment Act of 1998 into Washington's workforce development system.

Complete ►

The Workforce Board recommendations led to the Governor's certification of 12 local workforce development councils and approval of their workforce development unified plans, as well as to federal approval of the state's plan.

Objective 12

Implement a One-Stop Career Development System for providing employment-related services.

RECOMMENDATION 12

PROGRESS

A. The Governor and Legislature should enact legislation authorizing the Employment Security Department (ESD) to enter into data-sharing agreements with partners of the One-Stop Career Development System.

Completed ►

SSB 6236-Sharing Customer Information with WorkSource Partners passed. This law permits ESD to enter into contracts to provide customer information to WorkSource partners for program operation and for research and evaluation.

B. The Executive Policy Council of One-Stop should ensure that the One-Stop information system enables program operators to share information on participant services, and that participant information is cumulative, and common intake and assessments and other common tools are used to the maximum reasonable extent.

In Progress ►

The Executive Policy Council selected a technology system for WorkSource. A transfer study has begun to identify Washington's business needs. Interfaces, data conversion and access issues are currently under development.

Objective 13

Expand the use of portable skill standards in workforce development programs.

RECOMMENDATION 13

PROGRESS

A. SBCTC should increase the number of industry-designed skill standards, develop a process for updating existing standards, and develop skills standards-based curricula and assessments.

In Progress ► Nineteen skill standards projects covering forty-seven occupations have been completed with several new projects scheduled for 2000-01. SBCTC is using a \$600,000 appropriation to establish new skill standards and to develop curriculum and assessments. SBCTC includes skill standards as a key criterion for awarding grants to colleges to develop programs in high-demand fields.

B. OSPI should support the development of skill standards-based curricula and assessments to incorporate skill standards in secondary schools.

In Progress ► The Governor's School-to-Work Transition Task Force's has set a high priority on the development of skills standards curricula and assessment. School-to-Work consortia are encouraged, but not required, to develop and pilot curricula and assessment tools. Additionally, OSPI supports the Tech-Prep consortia that are working to develop and assess skills standards curricula.

C. The Workforce Board will convene a working committee to review recent efforts to identify, assess, and credential general workplace skills and make recommendations for next steps leading to a portable credential of workplace competency.

No Progress

Objective 14

Develop a new State Plan for Adult Literacy that will improve efficiency and effectiveness of adult basic skills education.

RECOMMENDATION 14

PROGRESS

The Office of Adult Literacy and SBCTC should develop a new Washington State Plan for Adult Literacy, whether as a stand-alone plan, or as part of a unified plan for workforce development as permitted under the newly enacted Workforce Investment Act.

Completed ► The State Plan for Adult and Family Literacy was integrated into the state's unified plan for workforce development.

Objective 15

Provide for regional coordination of workforce training and education.

RECOMMENDATION 15

PROGRESS

The Workforce Board will consider the lessons learned from the voluntary regional alliance pilot as one source of information as it prepares its recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature on implementation of the federal Workforce Investment Act's provisions on local workforce investment boards.

Completed ► The Workforce Board recommendations to the Governor and Legislature were informed by Southwest Washington regional alliance work and lessons learned.

GOAL 4 ► *Training programs will be accountable for results.*

The Governor's Executive Order on Workforce Development, the Workforce Investment Act and the Carl Perkins Vocational and Technology Education Act all require an accountability system for the state's workforce development system. This required the state to build on its existing performance management work by identifying core indicators to measure program results, setting performance targets for programs, and being accountable for future results.

The Workforce Board and its multiagency Performance Management for Continuous Improvement workgroup identified state performance indicators that, when used with required federal indicators, will measure results that are important across workforce development programs. In general, these indicators will measure the percentage of trainees who become employed and their earnings, the percentage who complete school or college, and the satisfaction of trainees and the employers who hire them.

Using the indicators and past performance, the Workforce Board negotiated performance targets for the state workforce development system with the U.S. Departments of Labor and Education. The targets will apply to secondary and postsecondary vocational education; Workforce Investment Act Title I-B programs for dislocated workers and low income adults and youth; and work-related Adult Education and Family Literacy. The state could receive additional federal training funds—or lose money—in future years, based on state and local performance.

Work to be completed on the state's workforce development accountability system during the July 2000 through June 2001 period are performance targets for providers who train individuals with the Workforce Investment Act Title I-B individual training accounts, and a state incentive policy.

Objective 16

Extend the measurement of results to more workforce training and education programs.

RECOMMENDATION 16	PROGRESS
<p>OSPI should provide for more comprehensive collection and maintenance of data required to evaluate the results of secondary vocational-technical education.</p>	<p><i>In Progress</i> ► OSPI is currently working with the 235 school districts that offer secondary vocational/technical education to upgrade and streamline the collection, analysis and reporting of student and program outcomes.</p>
<p>The Office of Adult Literacy should provide for the collection and maintenance of data required to evaluate results from non-college providers of adult basic skills education.</p>	<p><i>Completed</i> ► All training providers that receive SBCTC funding, including noncollege organizations, are required to use the Washington State Adult Basic Education Reporting System.</p>
<p>A. The Workforce Board will require licensed private career schools to collect and maintain data necessary to evaluate their results.</p>	<p><i>Completed</i> ► Beginning July 2000, the Workforce Board required all licensed private career schools to report the data necessary for evaluation purposes.</p>
<p>B. As the subcabinet leading WorkFirst, the state's welfare-to-work initiative, continues to refine the program, it should review the definitions for the performance measures for employment and earnings for consistency with the measures used for the training system so that practitioners are supported as they coordinate services to low-income clients.</p>	<p><i>In Progress</i> ► Performance measures, based on the state's Performance Management for Continuous Improvement framework, are used to assess college training programs for WorkFirst recipients.</p> <p>WorkFirst partners review these performance measures annually.</p>

Objective 17

Implement a consumer report system of training provider results that is readily accessible to participants, potential participants, and employers.

RECOMMENDATION 17

PROGRESS

The Employment Security Department should, in cooperation with the Workforce Board and the programs to be included in the reports, implement a consumer report system.

In Progress ► This system is online at www.jobtrainingresults.org; work continues to improve the system's usability.

Objective 18

The state's workforce training and education programs should increase their use of quality management principles to improve continuously.

RECOMMENDATION 18

PROGRESS

Workforce training organizations should, consistent with the principles of the Governor's Executive Order on Quality Improvement, complete quality self-assessments and use the findings to improve performance.

In Progress ► All validated WorkSource Centers and Affiliates have completed quality self-assessments. One-third of the centers are beginning year two quality assessments.