

Employer Spotlight



BUILDING LOCAL TALENT SOLUTIONS IN LIFE SCIENCES

INDUSTRY NEED:

Lab technicians are among the most in-demand roles in the life sciences sector. Responsible for receiving, testing, analyzing, and recording sample results, lab technicians must have, at minimum, a one-year certification and hands-on lab experience. With additional education and training, career advancement opportunities include lab management, quality control, and scientific research.

LABLAUNCH PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:


To address a high need for lab technicians, Fred Hutch worked with [Washington Alliance for Better Schools \(WABS\)](#) and [Shoreline Community College](#) to build [LabLaunch](#), an accelerated Lab Tech Certificate Program that provides students with lab skills and academic training. Once students complete their final year of coursework at Shoreline Community College, they earn an Accelerated Lab Technician Training Certificate and a guaranteed job interview at Fred Hutch.

WHAT IT INCLUDES:

High school seniors complete a year of college coursework through Running Start at Shoreline Community College. Students then participate in a paid full-time six-week summer internship at Fred Hutch to build hands-on technical skills, followed by an additional year of academic training.

WHY IT MATTERS:

LabLaunch creates a direct pathway for students into entry-level lab technician roles, ensuring a skilled workforce for the life sciences sector. Employers benefit from a pool of well-trained, committed candidates ready to meet industry demands.



Washington's life sciences sector saw **14% job growth** from 2020 to 2022, boasting **46,000+ employees** statewide and **1,200+ employers**.



Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center (Fred Hutch) is an independent, nonprofit organization and the only National Cancer Institute-designated cancer center in Washington. Fred Hutch is a leading employer with over 5,700 employees contributing to Washington state's life sciences sector.

HOW THEY DID IT:



1. PARTNERSHIP:

Fred Hutch worked with Shoreline Community College and Washington Alliance for Better Schools (WABS), to convene education and industry partners and collaboratively build the program.



2. STARTER FUNDING:

WABS completed the [Career Connect Washington \(CCW\)](#) Program Builder grant application—assisting Fred Hutch with a previously unfamiliar grant opportunity and application—and, in June 2022, secured \$182,000 in state funds to develop LabLaunch.



3. PROGRAM BUILDING & ENDORSEMENT:

WABS convened partners across education and industry to collaborate and build the program, providing critical bandwidth and expertise. Fred Hutch and WABS met with lab technicians and managers to identify important skills, as well as with Shoreline Community College to ensure course alignment with those skills. The Fred Hutch executive leadership group also supported the effort. WABS then successfully shepherded LabLaunch through the CCW Career Launch endorsement process, which allows Shoreline Community College to receive state funds to support aligned academic enrollments.

TIMELINE:

SPRING 2021

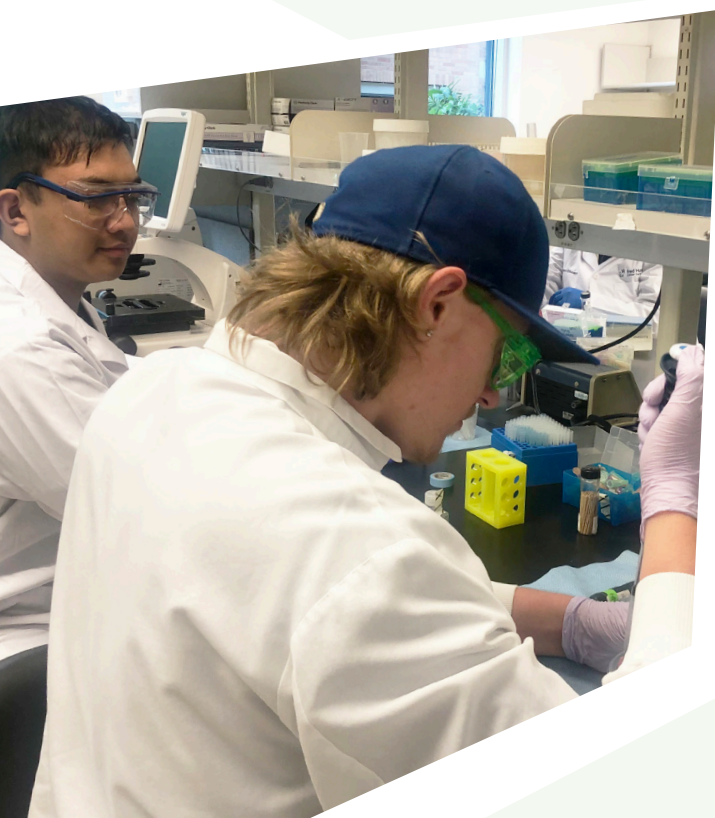
CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN FRED HUTCH AND WABS BEGIN

SPRING 2022

WABS APPLIES FOR AND SECURES THE PROGRAM BUILDER GRANT

SUMMER 2023

FIRST COHORT LAUNCHES



“Once we started to talk with our leadership about pathways for careers students may not know about, people across our Center came out of the woodwork internally—asking us, ‘Can you help us build pathways, too?’ It fired the imagination of our team.”

—Jeanne Chowning, PhD
Associate Vice President, Science Education
Office of Education and Training
Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center

BUILDING A CAREER LAUNCH PATHWAY IN YOUR SECTOR:

1. IDENTIFY AREAS OF GREATEST WORKFORCE NEEDS. In the life sciences sector, lab technicians represent one of the greatest needs and opportunities for early career workers. In other industries, Career Launch pathways to medical technician roles in the healthcare sector and apprenticeships in the building and construction trades, for example, are similarly vital to building skills. Engage with leadership to examine your greatest needs, particularly among entry-level positions. Articulate the trajectory of the entry-level position and the training/education required, and brainstorm ways to accelerate or innovate associated skills development. There may also be opportunities to work with other employers in your industry.

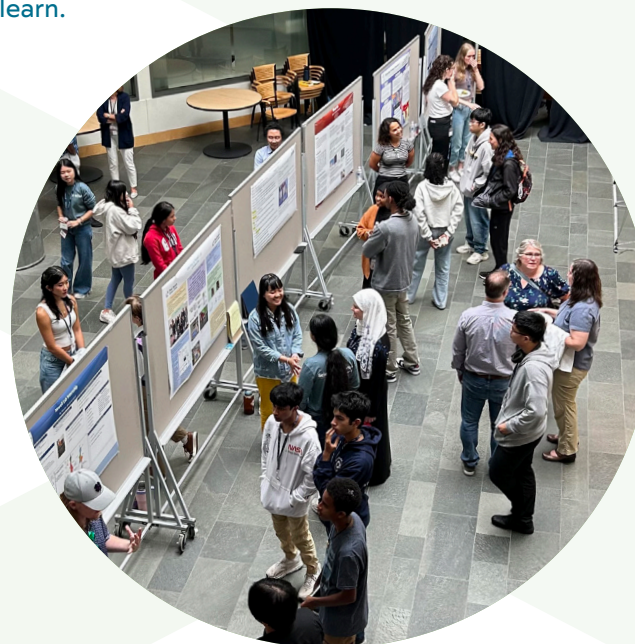
2. CONNECT WITH A CCW REGIONAL NETWORK OR SECTOR LEAD. Infrastructure and resources are available to connect you with the partners and start-up funding to scope and build a career connected learning program, be it an exploration activity as early as middle school, a career preparation internship or pre-apprenticeship program, or a Career Launch program in partnership with a college or registered apprenticeship model. Start by seeking out CCW leaders, either by sector or by region, to provide partnership and technical assistance.

3. COMMIT TO PROVIDING WORK-BASED LEARNING EXPERIENCES FOR STUDENTS.

Whether your company brings students in for worksite tours or offers full-time paid work experiences, work-embedded learning is critical to filling skills gaps. Clarify who internally will coordinate programming and logistics for your program that will allow students to explore and learn. When passions and skill sets are identified, the potential for future recruitment and retention awakens.

“The Program Builder grant helped kickstart our efforts to build a suite of workforce programs under a broader enterprise-wide initiative we call Hutch Advance.”

—Jeanne Chowning, PhD
Associate Vice President, Science Education
Office of Education and Training
Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center



OUTCOMES:



FOR EMPLOYERS: **SKILLED TALENT & PARTNERSHIPS**

Deep engagement with K-12 and postsecondary partners enables companies like Fred Hutch to develop career pathways that pair academic coursework and hands-on technical training to fill skills gaps, improve recruiting and retention, diversify the workforce, and improve the resiliency of talent pools. The LabLaunch model has catalyzed interest across Fred Hutch in building similar programs to fill other high-demand positions.



FOR STUDENTS: **ACADEMIC TRAINING & REAL-WORLD WORK EXPERIENCE**

LabLaunch is an example of one new pathway for students to earn high-demand credentials coupled with real-world experience in a growing industry.



FOR WASHINGTON: **A WORKFORCE PREPARED FOR TODAY & TOMORROW**

Over the next decade, the vast majority of job openings in Washington state will continue to require postsecondary credentials—degrees, apprenticeships, and industry-aligned certificates and licenses. Prepare the workforce you need and cultivate future talent pools through career exposure, tailored skill development, and on-the-job training for Washington’s young people—supporting your company’s success, employees’ economic mobility, and a stronger future for our state.

“Pathway opportunities like LabLaunch create a ripple of positive effects for young people, employers, and our communities. Students gain the skills for successful careers in our industry, and employers benefit from a diverse and talented pool of local young people to fill high-demand roles with their creativity and energy. We need all kinds of innovative and brilliant minds to help solve the pressing problems of our time.”

—Mary Grace Katusiime, PhD
Career Exploration & Workforce Development Program Manager
Science Education, Office of Education and Training
Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center



LEARN MORE:

[Career Connect Washington](#) is a public-private initiative that seeks to create and expand meaningful, hands-on learning experiences and aligned academic coursework that together build skills, credentials, and careers to launch students into rewarding futures and meet the demands of our state’s economy. This employer spotlight series profiles Washington employers that are leading the development of and successfully running career connected learning programs to expand talent pools, build diverse teams, improve retention, and more.

LEARN ABOUT PROGRAMS ACROSS THE STATE OR HOW TO LAUNCH YOUR OWN

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