

# Career Connect Washington

## Policy Agenda Overview

### Background

Washington State's economy is one of the fastest growing in the nation. To fuel continued growth, local employers need access to a pool of young, diverse, skilled talent. But many young adults are not prepared for the career opportunities available in lucrative fields like information technology, healthcare, advanced manufacturing, and business services. Across the state, too many high school students are disengaged and need support navigating options after graduation. There are persistent equity gaps in postsecondary education attainment and employment outcomes for young adults. Even in today's thriving economy, the path to economic self-sufficiency and fulfillment is difficult for too many young people, especially those in under resourced communities.

Increased public and private investment in Washington's young adults is essential to meet the talent needs of employers, and to address the persistent opportunity gaps for young adults. Through Career Connected Learning, young adults can build awareness of, exposure to, and preparation for the full range of career opportunities that surround them. This includes building their resumes, networks and professional connections they need to connect to jobs. At the same time, Career Connected Learning is a learning laboratory to advance academic attainment, build needed soft skills, and offer multiple pathways to economic success and life fulfillment.

That is why in 2017 Governor Inslee charged the Career Connect Washington Task Force, composed of leaders from business, labor, state government, non-profit organizations, and education, to devise strategies to expand Career Connected Learning and make it available to all young people. In February 2018 the Task Force concluded that while Washington has many excellent examples of Career Connected Learning programs, such as Registered Youth Apprenticeship, these programs lack systemic supports, such as predictable funding and reliable data, to achieve the scale needed to have a transformative impact on Washington's economy. Scale is essential to ensure that all young adults, across communities and regions, have equitable access to these high-quality opportunities.

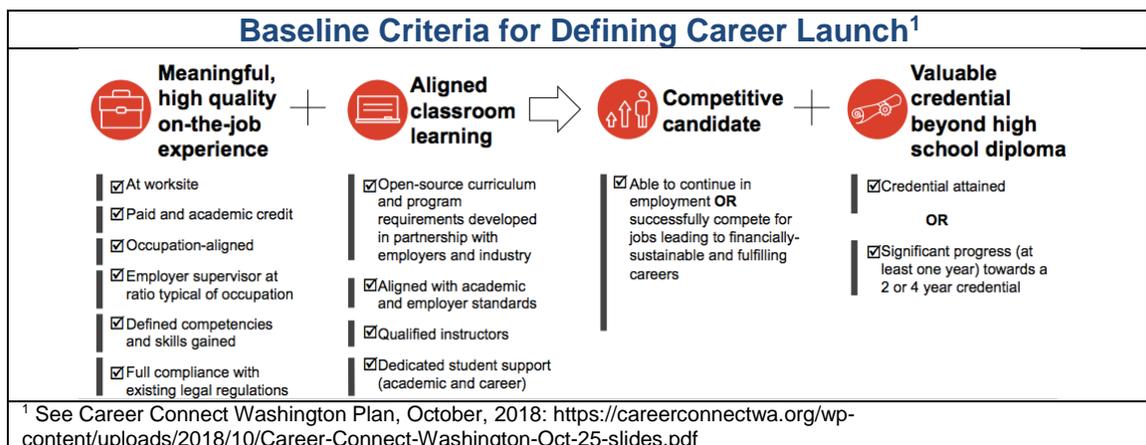
### The Career Connect Washington Vision

At the direction of the Governor's Task Force, the Career Connect Washington Strategic Planning process was initiated to develop a strategy to bring a sustainable, statewide vision to life. Designed through an inclusive process convening leaders across industry, education, workforce, government and others, the vision of Career Connect Washington is ***to ensure that every young***

**adult in Washington will have multiple pathways toward economic self-sufficiency and fulfillment, strengthened by a comprehensive state-wide system for Career Connected Learning.**

The Career Connect Washington vision is not starting from scratch. It builds upon many examples of programs that give students on-the-job learning opportunities. These programs are offered in high schools through career and technical education systems, in community colleges, universities, and through Registered Apprenticeship. Experiences vary in approach and intensity, but generally fall into three categories:

- **Career Awareness and Exploration:** Structured activities and events can provide early exposure to new jobs and industries. This can take many forms, including job fairs, guest speakers, job shadows, job-site tours and similar activities.
- **Career Preparation:** These programs give students hands-on skills and knowledge experience within a particular business, career track or industry, and help them be more prepared for being hired in a professional setting, such as career and technical education courses, on-site internships, pre-apprenticeship programs and other similar opportunities.
- **Career Launch:** The most intensive type of career connected learning program, Career Launch programs combine paid, meaningful work experience with aligned classroom learning so students can receive college credit and an industry-recognized credential, making them job ready. This includes Registered Youth Apprenticeship and other rigorous Career Launch programs in the K-12, Community and Technical College, 4-year college and university systems.



<sup>1</sup>As outlined in the Career Connect Washington Plan, "Career Launch" refers to a type of Career Connected Learning program that meets core criteria for the purposes of guiding goal setting, public investment, data collection, and branding. Existing programs, such as Registered Youth Apprenticeship may exceed these baseline criteria.

The Career Connect Washington Strategic Plan outlines steps to enable all Washington young adults to experience career awareness, exploration and prepare for future careers. By 2030, the plan aims to support a large enough system that 60 percent of students will choose the Career Launch experience. Meeting this goal will require cross-agency coordination at the state level, the support of regional networks and program development intermediaries and a concerted effort to activate employers and develop controls for quality, and robust communication to spread the word.

Realizing the transformational potential of achieving this scale also demands concerted efforts to ensure equitable access and outcomes for these programs across the state. This includes:

- Ensuring representation of key community stakeholders and voices within key advisory bodies related to Career Connected Learning at the state and regional level;
- Collecting and disaggregating program participation and outcomes data by race, gender, income, rurality, and other relevant categories;
- Clear targets for equity to guide action by regional partners related to program design and expansion, including specific equity focused criteria within grant funding processes and strategies;
- Funding to ensure affordable access to Career Connected Learning programming, and
- Targeted supportive services to ensure access and success for students facing barriers or living in underserved communities based upon a robust inventory of what is currently available and what is needed for student access and success.

### **The Role of Policy to Realize the Vision**

By combining learning on-the-job and in the classroom, Career Connected Learning straddles the worlds of education and the workforce. This is uniquely valuable to the participating young adults and employers, but poses some practical challenges, and too often relies on heroic acts by local partners from education, labor, workforce, and community-based organizations.

A clear state policy agenda will help partners at the state, regional, and local levels overcome these practical challenges and make it easier for them to work together to offer more young-adults and employers an impactful experience. This collaboration allows for innovation, engagement and investment by business, while formally integrating Career Connected Learning within Washington State's existing education and workforce systems.

The Career Connect Washington Strategic Planning process engaged leaders and stakeholders across business, labor, education, state and local policymakers and agencies, non-profit and community based-organizations, as well as students and families. These same stakeholder groups are essential for

successful implementation for the Career Connect Washington vision and will be kept engaged throughout the process.

In addition to identifying key policy gaps, the process identified a number of existing policy proposals from partner agencies and stakeholders that will be critical to the formation of an impactful, sustainable system. The result is a set of policy priorities to help advance the Career Connect Washington vision.

### **Career Connect Washington Policy Priorities Overview**

The Final Report from the Governor’s Career Connect Washington Task Force outlined the need for, “the development of a sustainable funding strategy, and a governance structure that recognizes the private sector as a co-investor of the talent pipeline.”<sup>2</sup> Realizing this vision and building an integrated system of Career Connected Learning in Washington is a long-term effort that demands both leadership and co-investment by the private sector, government, education and non-profit institutions. But action by the Governor and the State Legislature is essential today for laying the foundation for a sustainable system across these critical areas:

- 1. Statewide system development** through cross-sector coordination in priority areas including, system alignment, data and communications to promote the sustainable expansion of high-quality Career Connected Learning.
- 2. Funding to K-12 and higher education partners** to support enrollment in Registered Youth Apprenticeship and Career Launch programs.
- 3. Support for regional leadership and intermediaries** to create and implement Career Connected Learning programs, and help young adults and employers to navigate these opportunities.

#### **PRIORITY ONE: Statewide System Development**

Implementing Washington’s vision for Career Connected Learning demands high-level, cross-sector leadership, and dedicated capacity to coordinate near-term actions toward a sustainable Career Connected Learning system. Dedicated capacity creates a shared, central point of accountability for implementation progress and supports the integration of Career Connected Learning into existing education and workforce systems. It also ensures consistent guidance to make it easier for regional education, employer and workforce partners to come together to build and expand Career Connected Learning programs. This capacity will also take steps to make it possible to collect good data on programs, and send clear signals about the value of these opportunities to students and families. Specifically, the Legislature can lead by taking steps to:

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<sup>2</sup> Career Connect Task Force Report, February 2018: [http://www.wtb.wa.gov/Documents/CCT2018\\_8PgFolio\\_Final.pdf](http://www.wtb.wa.gov/Documents/CCT2018_8PgFolio_Final.pdf)

a) *Formally authorize and endorse the Career Connected Learning vision by:*

- i. **Articulating the Career Connect Washington vision and the need for joint action:** The statewide vision outlined in the Career Connect Washington Strategic Plan underscores the importance of shared action and accountability across state systems. By helping shape and articulating a clear vision for Career Connected Learning, the Legislature can help government and other non-government partners align toward shared goals and support their joint action.
- ii. **Codifying clear definitions for high-quality Career Launch and Registered Youth Apprenticeship programs to guide quality assurance:** Expanding Career Launch programs demands a clear approach to quality assurance to inform public investment, data collection, and make it easier for students, parents and employers to navigate these opportunities. This starts with codifying and establishing clear, statewide definitions for the key experiences the initiative aims to expand. These include addressing the need for definitions for “Career Launch” and “Registered Youth Apprenticeship” to ensure alignment across education and workforce systems regarding these programs, integrate Career Connected Learning into existing systems for quality assurance and data collection, and to inform public investment in these experiences. Definitions to build from include:
  - o A *Career Launch* Program meets at minimum baseline criteria outlined in detail within the Career Connect Washington Strategy, including:<sup>3</sup>
    - Meaningful, paid, on-the-job work experience supervision;
    - Aligned classroom learning to academic and employer standards;
    - Culmination in a valuable credential beyond high school diploma or significant progress towards a two or four year credential.
  - o A *Registered Youth Apprenticeship* meets the criteria of a Registered Apprenticeship program, but is designed to be accessible and support the success of apprentices who are high school juniors and seniors at the start of the program, but could include participation by the broader Career

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<sup>3</sup> See Career Connect Washington Plan, October, 2018: <https://careerconnectwa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Career-Connect-Washington-Oct-25-slides.pdf>

Connection Washington target youth population (under age 29).<sup>4</sup>

*b) Authorize and fund a set of priority activities to be carried out by a Career Connect Washington Implementation Team under the guidance of the Governor's Office, which include:*

- i. Coordinating cross-sector leadership to advance strategic priorities:** Under the guidance of the Governor's Office, the Implementation Team will be responsible for convening and coordinating action across partners:
  - Key state agencies including, but not limited to the Department of Labor & Industry Apprenticeship Division, the Department of Social and Health Services, the Education Research and Data Center, the Employment Security Department, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the State Board of Community and Technical Colleges, the State Workforce Training and Coordinating Board, Washington State Rehabilitation Council, and the Washington Student Achievement Council.
  - External, cross-sector advisory groups and leaders, including, but not limited to high-level representatives from business, labor, philanthropy, as well as students, parents and community partners.
- ii. Implementing a cohesive marketing and communications agenda:** The Implementation Team will develop and implement a robust communications strategy to help brand and promote the Career Connected Learning Vision and existing program opportunities statewide.
- iii. Mobilizing private sector and philanthropic leadership and resources to support system building:** The Implementation Team will be charged with mobilizing private sector and philanthropic investment to support near-term priorities, including

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<sup>4</sup> As governed by the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries and the Washington State Apprenticeship and Training Council there are clear guidelines for Registered Apprenticeship Programs. Within that framework there has been substantive innovation with Registered Youth Apprenticeship, programs designed to serve apprentices that at least at the start of the program remain in high school. But at this point there is not a clear definition to help guide further expansion of Registered Apprenticeship programs designed to serve youth. Career Connect Washington presents a set of policy priorities that will support expansion of the model. Establishing a clear statewide definition for Registered Youth Apprenticeship can make it easier to target support and investment as part of the Career Connect Washington effort, collect data on youth participation and outcomes, and provide clear guidance to prospective employer and education partners at the regional level.

increased awareness about Career Connected Learning and early stage efforts to design and implement new, exemplar Career Connected Learning programs.

- iv. **Transitioning systemic functions to key agencies and existing systems:** The Implementation Team will work across agency partners to establish key processes and rules, and transition key system responsibilities over time across various, relevant state agencies.
- v. **Reporting implementation progress to the Legislature:** The Implementation Team will abide by a regular reporting timeline on key progress metrics to the State Legislature. These reports will focus on implementation priorities established by the Legislature in consultation with the Governor.

*c) Fund dedicated and seconded staff capacity to support Career Connect Washington Implementation Team efforts, including:*

- i. **Seconded agency staff:** Fund dedicated staff within key agencies to serve on the Implementation Team. This capacity will help embed Career Connected Learning within existing agency operations.
- ii. **Dedicated staff to support plan implementation under the leadership of the Governor's Office:** In addition to seconded agency staff, funding for dedicated capacity is needed to coordinate with partners and be accountable for delivering on key implementation priorities within the Career Connect Washington Strategic Plan as directed by the Legislature.

*d) Fund data capacity to support regular reporting, timely research and analysis through:*

- i. **Dedicated Career Connect Washington data capacity to provide a clear picture of program participation:** Support the Implementation Team to collaborate with EDRC and other state partners to analyze and report on program participation disaggregated by race, income, geography to the Legislature, Governor and the broader public.
- ii. **Establishment of Data Enclave:** Support efforts to create a robust, secure, and anonymized data enclave under the Education Research and Data Center to collect, combine, and clean all relevant P-20 and workforce data for analysis. Data will be made available for independent researchers following robust student

privacy protections and access protocols. This includes carrying out efforts with external research partners to conduct impact evaluations and identify CCL outcomes.

*e) Direct the Washington Student Achievement Council to identify and align existing supports to promote equitable participation in Career Connected Learning, by:*

- i. Supporting statewide inventory and promotion of supportive services:** In collaboration with the Workforce Training and Coordinating Board and many other state agencies, inventory existing support systems for students and work with CCW staff to create a portal to connect students, especially those facing access barriers (e.g. rural, low-income, students of color), with existing supportive services (e.g. including transportation, materials, equipment, rural broadband, etc.).

## **PRIORITY TWO: Funding to Education Partners for Student Enrollment**

Formally integrating Career Connected Learning within secondary and higher education is essential to promoting equitable participation statewide. New funding can support educators' critical role in program delivery, and support students' affordable access to postsecondary credit and credentials through participation in Career Connected Learning. To support the capacity and leadership of education partners to expand student participation in Career Connected Learning, the Legislature can act to:

*a) Support the K-12 system and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to increase and streamline funding for student participation by:*

- i. Increasing K-12 CTE Funding:** Provide up to 1.2 FTE for Career Launch programs and Youth Registered Apprenticeship to support year-round participation. Additional funding will allow schools to adequately staff programs beyond during the school year and into the summer when much work-based learning is likely to occur. Funding may be used to support teachers or work-based learning coordinators, who place students, liaise with employers and college partners, and document learning.
- ii. Strengthening dual-credit programs to ensure equitable access to dual credit courses:** Develop a sustainable funding formula to promote equitable access for students to Registered Youth Apprenticeship and Career Launch programs. This approach will reduce current costs to students that come in the form of program fees. It will also provide a clear funding solution for Washington's high schools and postsecondary institutions to form

clear, sustainable partnerships and simplify communication to all stakeholders.

*b) Support Community and Technical Colleges and other higher education institutions to address postsecondary funding challenges for young adults participating in programs post-high school by:*

- i. **Increasing Community and Technical College enrollment funding to build capacity for Career Launch:** To promote program participation by high school graduates or out-of-school youth, provide enrollment-based funding to Community and Technical Colleges to build their capacity to support Career Launch and Registered Apprenticeship programs for young adults. This capacity is important to support engagement with employers and state community partners in the start-up and program implementation phases, as well as ensuring that students are adequately supported while participating in programs.
- ii. **Filling Registered Apprenticeship tuition waiver funding gap and extend to Career Launch:** To ensure that education costs are not being inequitably borne by young adults participating in Registered Youth Apprenticeship and Career Launch programs, fill the funding gap for fifty percent tuition waiver for Registered Apprenticeship programs, and extend the benefit to Career Launch Programs.
- iii. **Enabling the use of Work Study funding to support Career Connected Learning:** Align the use of work-study funds to support Career Launch and Registered Youth Apprenticeship programs so that students can build meaningful work experience relevant to their career goals.
- iv. **Clarifying Financial Aid eligibility and exclusions from Caps:** Ensure participation in Career Launch and Registered Apprenticeship programs will not impact students' future eligibility for state and federal financial aid, including any financial aid caps that could adversely impact high school students participating in Registered Youth Apprenticeship or Career Launch programs.

*c) Promote innovation in equivalency and credentialing within endorsed Career Launch and Youth Registered Apprenticeship programs by:*

- i. **Supporting use of flexible 24-Credit diploma:** Provide funds to the Washington State Board of Education to coordinate with the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to offer guidance and technical assistance to local education agencies to use 24-

credit diploma flexibility to ensure students take advantage of this flexibility, and earn high school credit for Career Launch and Youth Registered Apprenticeship.

- ii. **Supporting the expansion of portable credits and credit for prior learning:** The transferability and equivalency of course credits earned through Career Connected Learning are essential to consistency and quality across the system. Improving transferability will demand collaboration among key partners, particularly the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instructions and the State Board of Community and Technical Colleges to drive increases in portable credits across CTCs and 4-years. Agencies should additionally explore flexibility to maximize the recognition of prior learning, bearing in mind risks and limitations related to accreditation.

### **PRIORITY THREE: Regional Leadership and Program Intermediaries**

Career Connected Learning programs should be tailored to the local needs of students and employers, but designed so that student learning is portable across education settings and across an industry throughout the state. Public and private sector partners at the regional and local level need capacity to form networks that can expand student and employer participation in Career Connected Learning. At the same time, program intermediaries working within and across regions can mobilize multiple employers to develop new and innovative programs and scale existing programs aligned to lucrative careers. To support the formation of an agile, cohesive system driven by regional and employer needs, the Legislature can act to:

#### *a) Support regional leadership to expand participation in Career Connected Learning:*

- ii. **Funding the formation of Regional Networks:** Competitive grant funds to regions aligned with Education Service District Areas to convene and manage regional, cross-sector networks that will lead expansion of the spectrum of Career Connected Learning experiences. Funds would support dedicated staff capacity and their activity at the regional level to establish connections between business and education and provide technical support to start and expand programs. These Network conveners would be selected via a formal request for proposal process designed by the Commission and agency partners. Proposals will be evaluated on a set of criteria that that includes, but is not limited to:
  - o Status as a trusted partner of business and education stakeholders;
  - o Track record of success with Career Connected Learning and aligned initiatives, and

- Commitment to equity.

These regional Networks will be periodically reevaluated by the Commission to assess progress. Possible lead entities could include, but are not limited to: Workforce Development, Councils, Chambers of Commerce, Regional STEM Networks, Educational Service District Areas, Economic Development Councils.

- iii. **Fund a Network of Career Navigators:** Fund community-based career navigators to work with schools to be a resource to K-12 and CTC educators to help young adults navigate local CCL opportunities. Navigators would be embedded within Regional Networks aligned with the state's Education Service Districts Areas to work with school leaders, counselors and teachers across a region.
- iv. **Fund Equipment Costs:** Fund regions to purchase equipment and materials related to the implementation of Registered Youth Apprenticeship and Career Launch programs.

*b) Direct support for innovative program design and expansion of Registered Youth Apprenticeship and endorsed Career Launch programs by:*

- i. **Funding for Department of Labor and Industries to build capacity in the Registered Apprenticeship system for youth Programs:** Support new, dedicated capacity at the Department of Labor & Industry to support Youth Registered and Pre-Apprenticeship expansion and data collection, including developing and disseminating clear guidance on young adult employment policies through Regional Networks.
- ii. **Providing grants for program design and expansion:** Provide competitive grants to support intermediaries to design, launch, and scale Registered Apprenticeship and Career Launch programs. Intermediaries may include, but are not limited to: new or existing industry associations, joint labor management councils, regional networks, postsecondary education and training institutions working with multiple employer partners (including community colleges, 4-year institutions and independent colleges), and other community-based organizations.

Intermediaries will use funds to work with industry and education partners to build curriculum for new programs, and then engage Regional Network infrastructure and Career Navigators to recruit young adults and increase employer participants. Funds to intermediaries should provide clear direction to support innovation

with competency-based approaches to credential structured work-based learning and should be based on programs that they will help to scale and are in high demand, high potential pathways. All curricula will be open sourced, and available to transfer anywhere in the state.

### **Aligned Career Connect Washington Policy Priorities**

The Career Connect Washington policy agenda supports the leadership and action across a number of state partners. However, in addition to the core policy priorities described above, Career Connect Washington is aligned with several, broader, important policy priorities being advanced by other partners in the State. These include:

- **State Need Grant Expansion:** In order to ensure that all students can access education opportunities beyond high school, including career connected learning, expanded, sustainable, and reliable funding of State Need Grant is critical.
- **High School and Beyond Plan:** Support proposals to promote a robust, technology-enabled, and dynamic (i.e. frequently revisited) HSBP that links to Career Connect Washington Plan.
- **Guided Pathways:** Support for existing proposals to grow guided pathways and college to career advising in 2-year and 4-year institutions that link to Career Launch opportunities.
- **Support for New Market Airplane:** Support for added workforce capability, aligned with the Career Connect Washington plan, proposed in the strategy to attract the new market airplane.
- **State Broadband Expansion:** Rural communities need connectivity to participate in educational opportunities otherwise unavailable to them, including career connected learning.