

Career Connect Washington COVID-19 Recovery Proposal

Note - This document outlines the important role that Career Connected Learning can play in WA state's recovery from the COVID-19 crisis and emerging ideas for how Career Connect WA can aid in those efforts. This is a proposal that the Career Connect WA team is sharing with our cross-sector partners. None of the listed initiatives have been funded to-date, however, pieces of this have been or will be included in requests to DOL (COVID Response grant), the recent DOL Youth Apprenticeship Grant, and philanthropy. We are also researching possible ways to leverage federal CAREs funds (limited it appears) and the hoped- for next stimulus package which we understand likely will be focused on workforce education and training.

The coming challenge facing young workers

The Great Recession had a disproportionately negative impact on younger workers, which extended years into the nation's recovery. Over five years after the stock market collapse, unemployment among younger workers was 16.2%, more than double the national rate¹. Even once these early-career workers were able to find jobs, they continued to earn lower wages, resulting in lower lifetime earnings.

We are now faced with a new crisis, one that has the potential to surpass the collapse of 2008. Early projections suggest national unemployment exceeding 20%². With many of the early lay-offs impacting industries with higher proportions of under-30 workers (especially hospitality, travel / tourism, and gig economy workers), younger workers are more severely impacted by economic impacts of COVID-19³.

Career Connect Washington (CCW) is a key part of our state's economic recovery

Career Connect Washington (CCW) can help our state's economy and our young adult workforce (i.e. those under 30 years old) recover from this latest downturn. CCW is informed by the Swiss apprenticeship system and is designed to help train and re-train our young adult workforce for jobs in high-demand sectors. It is a model that has proven highly effective in blunting the worst effects of economic downturns. Following the Great Recession, the Swiss economy rebounded earlier than most countries, with a young adult labor participation rate similar to adult unemployment (ages 25 to 64)⁴. Even at the peak of the Great Recession, Switzerland's unemployment reached only 4.1% in Q4 2009⁵. Switzerland's apprenticeship system was a significant contributor to this recovery.

From our own state's data, we know that work-based learning models result in higher earnings⁶ and significant returns on investment for taxpayer dollars (state taxpayer return ranges from \$4:1 to \$36:1 according to a 2020 Washington Workforce Board report⁷). The speed and strength of our state's recovery is dependent on maintaining and growing our state's pipeline of skilled labor⁸.

At the core of CCW are Career Launch programs, which provide participants with paid, work-based training and aligned classroom instruction, that result in an industry-recognized credential and produce a competitive candidate for a real job. All state-approved registered apprenticeship programs are included as Career Launch. These programs are created in partnership with employers, labor groups, and educators, to ensure that the curriculum is high quality, that the

skills are transferrable, and that the training is aligned to employer needs (see Career Launch definition diagram on next page).

Track record of success

CCW has built a state-wide coalition of regional networks, intermediaries (i.e. program builders), industry associations, CCL coordinators within the K-12 system, and industry champions all primed to support the recovery effort. Since the career connected learning legislation was passed in April 2019, the CCW team has stood up this statewide coalition, a program approval process, a grant program including four rapid and responsive rounds of intermediary grants, and technical assistance all without an existing statewide infrastructure or a full-time team. This coalition stands ready to support Washington state’s young adults during the COVID-19 response and recovery.

Career Connect Washington by the numbers

14 Intermediaries funded to build new / expand existing student programs **9** Regional Networks established statewide **\$3.7M** Grants distributed to networks and programs¹

Career Connected Learning Experiences  **78,190 career experiences over 2 years**
 ~10,000 students enrolled in Career Launch programs²
 Over 400 projected Career Launch enrollees from grant recipients³

Higher Education  **11 Career Launch programs endorsed as of April 2020**
 (2 and 4-year)

Registered Apprenticeship  **16% growth in active apprentices (<30 y.o.) since July 2018**
 17 Registered Apprenticeship programs approved⁴

1. Pending finalization of second cohort intermediary contracts; 2. Includes 9,664 active apprentices under 30 years old as of September 1, 2019; 3. Projected enrollment across all Career Launch grantees after 2 years of operation; 4. Active Registered Apprenticeship programs approved in or after July 2018. Note: apprenticeship figures reflect total growth, influenced by a variety of factors, including significant economic expansion statewide

CCW economic recovery proposal supports expanded access for career connected learning

Our proposal focuses on immediate interventions and recovery efforts to support and expand career connected learning opportunities across the state:

Immediate Action:

Virtual Career Connected Learning (CCL) in Spring 2020: Schools across the state and nation have been ordered closed through the end of the school year. Not only are students at risk of missing out on their regular English and math instruction, but they are also left without critical career exploration programs that expose students to new industries, job functions, and



career pathways. We believe that it is our responsibility to ensure that students have the opportunity to participate in Career Exploration during this crisis.

That's why we've created [CareerConnect@Home](#).

- Each day in May (and into June), employers, labor groups, industry associations, and others would host live discussions on YouTube about their industry and organization.
- Discussion topics will include employee panels that highlight different careers at an organization, industry panels that give an overview of a job sector, or job search and application skills.
- Students can access the live videos by going to CareerConnect@Home and navigating to the YouTube link for that day's session. We chose YouTube because students across the state can access CareerConnect@Home via any internet connected device including mobile phones.
- Each discussion will include a live Q&A portion, where students can ask questions via Instagram for the panelists about their job, career path, what it's like to work at their company, etc. (Instagram: [@Career.Connect.at.Home](#))
- CCW has partnered with our system of regional networks, intermediaries, industry, labor, and government partners to help spread the word to students and families statewide. Washington's superintendent's office has been invaluable in helping spread the word to superintendents, principals, counselors, and teachers.
- Additional sponsors of CareerConnect@Home include [Challenge Seattle](#), [Washington Roundtable](#), [Washington STEM](#), and [School's Out Washington](#)

In addition to CareerConnect@Home, we will continue to investigate opportunities to virtualize career connected learning programs at the Career Prep and Launch levels.

FUNDING REQUEST: CareerConnect@Home: ~\$80K for staff time to support recruitment and technical support to employers, website creation, and spreading the word to students. Accessible to all 1.1M+ WA students. OSPI, ESD coordinators, regional networks, and other key partners are providing in-kind support to help get the word out to teachers, counselors, and students to build awareness for this program.

Career Launch Preservation and Expansion Strategy in Spring / Summer 2020: We propose a rapid and responsive pool of grant funding designed to leverage existing CCW programs and pathways to preserve and grow Career Launch Enrollment. The funding would be open to existing partners including regional networks, Career Launch-endorsed program providers (including registered apprenticeships), and program intermediaries. Grant awarding process will build on similar rapid response efforts (e.g. StartUp Washington Small Business Emergency Grants⁹, and other programs). The funds would be targeted to:

- Rapidly increase enrollment in existing programs either by increased outreach or porting successful programs across region or industry



- Support for vulnerable participants including childcare, transportation, equipment, career navigation, fees, and basic needs
- Educate participants and providers about other resources available to them as part of the recovery (e.g. short-term compensation support¹⁰, etc.)
- Assist intermediaries to adapt and scale virtualized engagement and instruction models for all levels of career connected learning (e.g. Career Explore, Prep, and Launch)

FUNDING REQUEST: \$5M, supports up to 100 programs with small \$50-100k grants, ~10,000 eligible participants based on current Career Launch and Registered Apprenticeship enrollment

Recovery:

Career Launch Recovery Fund beginning Fall 2020: Many young workers displaced by the COVID-19 pandemic may not have jobs to return to as the economy restarts. It is therefore vital that these displaced workers have sufficient opportunities to up-skill or re-skill in new industries. We propose a grant pool designed to create pathways for young adults into industries forecast to be more resilient after this crisis, as well as industries deemed essential during the pandemic, such as health care and technology. As part of this grant funding, we will explore opportunities to target these programs to populations disproportionately impacted by the economic crisis (e.g. those from heavily affected industries like hospitality and tourism or opportunity youth as during the original CCW pilots in 2018-19). We also will seek to support and prioritize programs that will incorporate virtual engagement and instruction.

FUNDING REQUEST: \$5M, 20 new programs, ~1,000 participants

Policy change to remove disincentives for CCL participation: Career Launch and Registered Apprenticeship participants are eligible for a variety of state, local, and program-specific supports, most notable the Washington College Grant created in 2019¹¹.

CCW will work with state agencies to identify policy changes to ensure students can receive career connected learning tuition aid without counting against other government aid eligibility (e.g. unemployment eligibility, food subsidies, housing vouchers, etc.).

FUNDING REQUEST: Minimal anticipated cost

Our proposal is supported by a broad coalition of partners across the state

This proposal is supported by a strong network of stakeholders cultivated over 2+ years including educators, labor organizations, employers, industry associations, philanthropy, state government agencies, and community-based organizations. With these partners, we have developed the capacity for collaborative decision-making and rapid and responsive grantmaking, all centered around a robust framework for program creation and expansion. The

many organizations that comprise the CCW coalition stand ready to help our workforce following COVID-19, and believe the interventions outlined here are an essential part of our state's economic recovery and are critical to ensuring our early-career workers are not left behind.

[1] [Center for American Progress \(2013\)](#)

[2] ["Mnuchin Warns Senators of 20% US unemployment without coronavirus response" CNBC \(2020\)](#)

[3] [Balk, Gene. "Washington young adults are getting slammed financially by coronavirus crisis, new survey shows." Seattle Times. 15 April 2020](#)

[4] [Center On International Benchmarking \(2015\)](#)

[5] [OECD via U.S. Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis \(7 April 2020\)](#)

[6] [Stockman, Farah. "Want a White-Collar Career Without College Debt?" The New York Times \(19 December, 2019\)](#)

[7] [Washington Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board \(2020\)](#), Workforce Board Analysis

[8] [Seleznov, Eric. "We Must Sustain Apprenticeship in a Post-Pandemic Downturn." Jobs for the Future \(JFF\) \(1 April 2020\)](#)

[9] [StartUp Washington, Department of Commerce \(8 April 2020\)](#)

[10] [Parton, Brent. "We have a Powerful Tool to Flatten the Unemployment Curve." New America \(27 March 2020\)](#)

[11] [Washington Student Achievement Council](#)

Career Launch definition

Career Launch Programs: Positioning young adults for promising careers

