

THE CAREER CONNECT WASHINGTON INITIATIVE: VISION AND HISTORY



Vision: All Washington students engage in Career Explore and Career Prep activities, and 60% complete a Career Launch program by age 30.

Washington state is expected to see [1.5 million+ job openings](#) by 2032, with 75% requiring postsecondary credentials such as degrees, apprenticeships, and industry-aligned certificates and licenses. Meanwhile, [86% of Washington students](#) aspire to pursue education after high school, but only 40% are expected to complete the post-high school credentials needed for economic success.

[Career Connect Washington \(CCW\)](#) launched in 2019 as a collective action response to bridge the gap between employers and a diverse, future-ready workforce. CCW builds on Washington's strengths – a nationally recognized Registered Apprenticeship system; a robust community and technical college system; pathways for high school students to earn college credit and industry-recognized credentials; ground-breaking financial aid programs; and more – to create a continuum of career exploration, academic learning, and work-embedded training that lead to credentials and careers.

CCW fosters collaboration across education, industry, and government to create career connected learning experiences for Washington students.

With more than 9,700 young people having completed Career Launch and Registered Apprenticeship programs, CCW partners are building robust talent pipelines that equip students with the skills to succeed in high-demand fields, and provide industry with the skilled workforce they need to compete.

Results

The CCW initiative aligns directly with Washington's workforce needs and has had measurable impact in its first five years:

- **Growth:** CCW has supported the creation of more than 115 new Career Launch programs and 22 new Registered Apprenticeships in high-demand sectors such as technology, construction, healthcare, and advanced manufacturing.
- **Impact:** More than 9,700 young people have completed Career Launch programs, including paid work experiences and industry credentials or at least a year's worth of college credit. This represents a 28% increase in participation in Career Launch programs since 2019, despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Resources:** Secured more than \$30 million in new federal grants, including support from the Good Jobs Challenge and Apprenticeship Building America funds, to scale career connected learning statewide.
 - Good Jobs Challenge grants established 8 new Sectoral Partnerships to train 5,000 and place 3,150 Washingtonians into good jobs in high-demand industries.
 - Apprenticeship Building America grants have built and expanded 23 Registered Apprenticeships and 16 Recognized Pre-apprenticeships in the construction trades, advanced manufacturing, information technology, healthcare, and more.

Other recent achievements:

- Redesigned grant processes to ensure investments align with regional and sector needs.
- Expanded partnerships to support career connected learning for underserved students, including tribal students, students in foster care, and students experiencing homelessness.
- Expanded apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship models with proven success.
- Alignment of career connected learning experiences with the High School and Beyond Plan.

Stories of Success

CCW contributes significantly to Washington's economic stability by directly addressing sector-specific skill shortages. Collaborative programs with employers ensure local economies are supported by well-trained, locally sourced talent. For example:

- **Filling high-demand lab tech roles in life sciences: Career Launch | King County.** The Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center partnered with the Washington Alliance for Better Schools (WABS) and Shoreline Community College to build [LabLaunch](#), an accelerated Lab Tech Certificate Program to fill high-demand lab technician roles. Students gain lab skills and academic training leading to an Accelerated Lab Technician Training Certificate and a guaranteed job interview at Fred Hutch upon completion. At least three students who finished the program in 2024 have received job offers from Fred Hutch.
- **An employer collaborative to train skilled glaziers: Career Launch – Registered Apprenticeship | Spokane.** AllStar Glass in Spokane led a partnership of three employers who collaborated to solve their common need for skilled glaziers. Through a CCW Apprenticeship Building America (ABA) grant, the program provides apprentices with training, equipment, and incentives, ensuring a pipeline of trained glaziers to support the local construction industry.
- **“A business decision” – building a local healthcare talent pool: Career Explore & Prep | Jefferson County.** Jefferson Healthcare, a rural healthcare provider on the Olympic Peninsula, received a CCW Program Builder grant to collaborate with many industry and education partners and deliver a Career Explore event for middle school students as well as healthcare-focused science courses in high schools with Jefferson's in-classroom clinical educators. High school students can also complete CPR/first aid certifications, tour healthcare worksites, and shadow healthcare professionals on the job. The healthcare company is also working with education and training providers to build Career Launch programs for the Care Team Specialist and Surgical Technologist occupations. Workforce Development Program Manager Caitlin Harrison says, “We were never going to fix our staffing crisis if we didn't do something totally different. This is a business decision for us.”

“You get to have hands-on experience...we go out to an elementary school and we make connections. In the first semester we learn different learning techniques and teachings, but second semester you really get to experience it.”

Haley - Career Launch student in teaching at WSU Tri-Cities.

Current Initiative Priorities

With strong infrastructure and committed public-private leadership, CCW is ready to expand career connected learning through the following priorities:

- **Aligning Credentials:** Establishing state-level measures for Career Explore and Career Prep, and aligning valuable credentials across K-12, higher education, and industry for seamless pathways to high-demand careers.
- **Employer Engagement:** Strengthening employer partnerships to ensure work-based learning meets industry needs.
- **Equity and Accessibility:** Removing barriers to career connected learning and credential pathways, especially for BIPOC and rural communities.
- **Targeted Funding:** Prioritizing funding for programs aligned with regional workforce and sector demands.

CCW Structure

Public-private partnership: Over the last five years, CCW has developed partnerships to drive increased coordination between the public and private sectors, creating an equitable career connected learning system that benefits Washington's students and employers. Key partners:

- **Regional Networks:** Regional teams drive cross-sector engagement with K-12, apprenticeship programs, and higher education institutions to scale career connected learning and meet regional workforce needs.
- **Sector Leaders:** Industry leaders within Washington's high-priority sectors drive collaboration among employers to scale work-based learning that meets employer needs and provides equitable opportunities for students.
- **Program Builders:** Schools and districts, colleges, nonprofits, community-based organizations, and employers individually create and grow career connected learning programs in alignment with regional and sector needs.
- **Cross-Agency Work Group (CAWG):** Established in [RCW 28C.30.030](#), the CAWG coordinates state agency functions and external partnerships to scale high-quality career connected learning statewide.

"I'm the first in my family to graduate high school and go to university. I'm glad that I took this program because I learned so much and it inspired me to further my career."

Cynthia - Career Launch student in Fashion and Merchandising at Sno-Isle Tech Skills Center in Snohomish County.

Leadership: In early 2024, Governor Inslee appointed the Washington Student Achievement Council as the lead state agency for CCW, transitioning the initiative to a team leadership model comprised of four organizations:



Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC): Coordinates efforts across state government and reports on progress to the Workforce Education Investment (WEIA) Board.



Washington Roundtable: Leads industry engagement, working closely with the Association of Washington Business and Washington State Labor Council.



Employment Security Department: Administers CCW grants in collaboration with the Governor's Office and partners.



Washington STEM: Serves as the implementation partner; leads equity and data initiatives while providing statewide support to the CCW grant partners to align and grow programs.

CCW Resources

Authorizing Statute: [RCW 28C.30](#) | [Website](#)

