

Finance Sector

Summary of key themes, needs, and opportunities: June 2025

Prepared by the Washington Bankers Association (WBA)

(1) What are the top 3-5 themes you hear from employers in your sector related to workforce development?

- Employers have noted that new employees may lack the ability to clearly articulate complex financial concepts or communicate effectively with clients, leading to misunderstandings or dissatisfaction.
- Employers have described issues with new employees who resist the regulatory and legal restrictions around client communications.
- Finance sector jobs often require employees to analyze complex problems and develop thoughtful and innovative solutions. Employers have intimated that new hires often struggle with critical thinking and problem-solving skills.
- Employers observe a lack of “grit” in many new hires, leading to high job turnover and challenges in filling certain high-need but challenging roles.

(2a) What are the 3-6 occupations that employers in your sector indicate should be high-priority for workforce development to help meet their hiring needs?

- Client Relationship/Personal/Universal Banker
- Credit Analyst
- Branch Manager
- Customer Service Representative

(2b) Which career connected learning programs are effectively meeting the hiring needs of employers in your sector?

- BankWork\$ & the soon-to-be rolled out BankWork\$ Academy, a CTE-aligned Industry Recognized Credential program
- GESA Credit Union in High School, which is in process of being recertified with WBA’s support and assistance

(2c) Which career connected learning programs could be adjusted, expanded, or scaled to other regions to meet the hiring needs of employers in your sector?

Note: the finance sector is still in “build” mode for CCL programming. The CCL model is a dramatic departure from the “traditional” career pathways and recruitment strategies the finance sector has used. This building process is progressing with all due speed and close to the timeline put forth in our Sector Accelerator proposal

- BankWork\$ & BankWork\$ Academy
- GESA Credit Union in High School

(2d) Which career connected learning programs should be developed to meet the hiring needs of employers in your sector?

- It has never been more apparent how absolutely necessary it is for financial literacy to be included in K-12 curriculum. Personal financial comprehension is a 21st-century skill that should be a cornerstone of a well-rounded high school pedagogy. Employers recognize the need for formal financial literacy education as a graduation requirement
- Expand access to BankWork\$ to provide a specific program implementation open to high school students enrolled in a CTE pathway. This will allow students interested in a finance sector career to gain basic, but necessary skills to apply for a job at a finance sector employer. The program includes a built-in job fair at the end of the program so students can interview with finance sector employers in their area.
 - The CTE model is in the process of becoming a pilot in ESD 112; awaiting a teacher-framework from our colleagues at the ESD to proceed (due before 7/31/25)

(3) What are the top 3-5 approaches you recommend to increase participation of underrepresented students in your sector's high priority occupations?

- Highlighting BIPOC professionals in finance through storytelling to counteract negative stereotypes. Sharing relatable success stories and career paths of individuals who have overcome adversity and succeeded in the finance sector to serve as inspiration.
 - This is core to the BankWork\$ Academy experience, which includes volunteer participation and messaging from existing finance sector professionals who share their lived experiences with students.
- Many negative perceptions of the finance sector stem from a lack of understanding or from negative portrayals in media and popular culture. Our educational initiatives can demystify the finance sector, explaining its role in society and how individuals can make a positive impact within it, which will help change these perceptions.
- Integrating financial literacy into outreach programs to empower individuals with the knowledge and skills to navigate the financial system and foster a sense of control and agency. This is especially important for communities that have historically been marginalized or exploited by financial institutions.
 - This is strongly aligned with the outcomes integral in any financial literacy education mandate.

(4) What are the top three efforts, initiatives, or investments that could meaningfully support the workforce development needs of employers in your sector?

- CareerWork\$ and the Washington Bankers Association had been working to integrate Financial Beginnings curriculum into BankWork\$ Academy and other finance-aligned CTE programs, blending practical financial literacy with career pathway exploration. This work began prior to the CareerWork\$ reorganization but was paused during the Sector Accelerator project and is now set to resume.

- CareerWork\$ is preparing to pilot ReadyWork\$, a soft skills curriculum designed for integration across all CTE programs, not just those focused on banking. The pilot is open to interested CTE partners who want to better prepare students with workplace readiness skills such as communication, professionalism, and adaptability.
- CareerWork\$ And WBA are exploring a summer bridge version of BankWork\$ Academy to serve students in districts with limited in-year elective availability. This model would enable broader access to students from smaller or rural schools and allow completion of the program prior to graduation.