



Adult Reengagement

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A degree or credential is the ticket to earning a living wage in Washington's high-skill economy. But almost a million adults (ages 25-44) in our state don't have one. These adults need different types of support than younger students who continue their education right after high school.

The goal of the Washington Adult Reengagement Framework is to empower adults so they can return to school, earn their credential, and advance in their careers. The framework provides systemic support in three areas: communication, cost, and completion. WSAC partners with stakeholders on strategies in these areas to help adult learners go back and finish school or training. This includes four-year or two-year colleges, vocational or career schools, or apprenticeship programs.


The challenge

Most adults understand the benefits of postsecondary education and training. But they face very real barriers, such as financial constraints and family obligations. These same barriers often cause adults to keep putting off school, or to abandon their aspirations altogether.


Adults need postsecondary options that acknowledge and mitigate the barriers they're facing. Delivering these options will require state-level coordination of existing resources and programs, along with the creation of new programs. Washington needs to build a state-level system to develop and deliver the postsecondary options adults need.


Success hinges on partnerships with key stakeholders: postsecondary education, businesses and employers, leaders in targeted regions, state agencies, and policymakers

Education levels of Washington adults ages 25-44

 = approximately 100,000





 Currently enrolled
(n=180,000)


 Credentialed
(n=770,000)

Target population to reengage



 Some college
(n=390,000)

 High school only
(n=400,000)

 No high school
(n=180,000)

Benefits to students

Adults with a postsecondary credential are less likely to be unemployed or underemployed. They are more likely to earn a living wage and experience better health over the course of their lives. And getting a degree or credential is one of the most powerful ways to break a cycle of inter-generational poverty.

Benefits to the state

A skilled and educated workforce is healthier and less likely to rely on public assistance. Higher levels of education correlate with higher levels of civic engagement and lower levels of incarceration. And adults with a degree or credential are more resilient during economic recessions.

The opportunity

Washington has a history of commitment to an inclusive and responsive postsecondary system. Our state supports:

- Strong financial aid programs.
- Accessible academic programs.
- Innovative academic policies.

This creates a sound foundation to serve adult learners.



Communication

Student identification, outreach, program and career match, enrollment navigator



Cost

Microgrant, financial aid, childcare financial assistance



Completion

Technical assistance to campuses, employer and regional partners, student support

Objectives:

- Provide information to recruit, retain, and graduate adults who don't have credential.
- Target Washington residents who have some college credit, yet don't have a credential.

But we know this group faces more barriers and needs more support. The Adult Reengagement Framework will provide state-level coordination to reach adult learners. WSAC is focused on key strategies in three areas: communication, cost, and completion.

The following principles guide this work:

- Engage campuses and employers.
- Integrate successful practices.
- Use an equity lens.
- Focus on sustainability and cost effectiveness.
- Highlight regional efforts.
- Evaluate and address barriers.

For the 2019-21 biennium, WSAC submitted budget proposals for enrollment navigation, financial assistance for child care and tuition, and effective practices for adult learners.

