

Reskilling and Upskilling in the Post-COVID-19 Economy

The COVID-19 pandemic has triggered a deep recession with a sharp rise in unemployment. A significant percentage of jobs lost may never return.¹ Washington residents need clear and efficient pathways to reskill to jobs in new industries that offer more opportunity to upskill for career advancement. Most upskilling opportunities require post-secondary certificates and degrees, so reskilling programs need to both help people get a new job and provide a head start to moving up in their new industry.

- **African American and Latinx workers², young adults, and those without postsecondary education are being hit hardest by the Covid-19 recession.**

- We know that during the Great Recession, workers without postsecondary education were the slowest to recover³.

- **Reskilling and upskilling are critical steps for many unemployed or displaced workers to successfully reenter the labor market⁴.**

- The Washington College Grant (WCG) can support workers' upskilling and reskilling efforts, especially for those who have not previously accessed postsecondary education.

- **There are credential pathways in a broad range of fields to assist students and working adults qualify for entry-level and next-step occupations.**

RESKILLING: Learning a new set of skills or obtaining a credential in a separate field, with the goal of transitioning to a new job or different industry.

UPSKILLING: Acquiring additional skills or new credentials with the goal of advancing to a more responsible position and higher wages in the same general line of work.

Strategies to Support Reskilling and Upskilling for a Sustained and Equitable Recovery

Short-Term:

- Increase awareness of short-term, non-degree programs that provide qualifications for living-wage jobs
- Ensure broad access to online courses that offer flexibility and alternatives to in-person classes
- Provide support services to students who face barriers to attending and persisting in postsecondary education and training programs
- Expand the use of Academic Credit for Prior Learning for certificate and degree programs

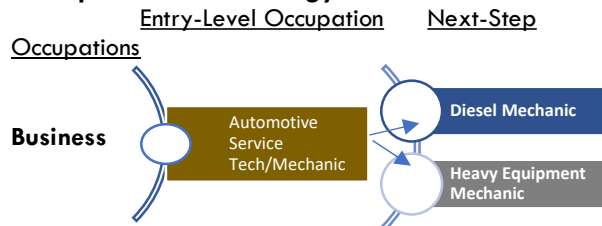
Long-Term:

- Continue to develop the range of certificate programs that are stackable toward degrees
 - Extend the availability of credential pathways in rural areas of the state that have been hardest hit by the COVID-19 recession
-

Illustrations of Upskilling and Reskilling in Washington

Upskilling Scenario: After high school, **Bailey** completed a 5-quarter Auto Repair Technician certificate program and was hired for an entry-level job in the field. After two years, he decided to **upskill** to broaden his expertise and qualify for more advanced positions in auto technology. Applying credits from the earlier certificate program, he completed an additional 21 credits to earn an associate degree in auto repair. With this more advanced credential, he obtained a higher-paying job doing more complex work in auto mechanics. After a few years of working in that position, he decided to **upskill** again, still within the general field of *transportation technology*. This time, leveraging the mechanical knowledge and skills he had acquired through his previous training and work experience, he entered and completed a 5-Quarter certificate program in diesel and heavy equipment technology. With this credential, he qualified to move up to significantly higher-paying positions.

Transportation Technology:

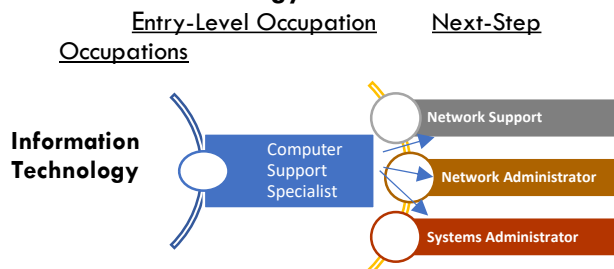


Lake Washington Institute of Technology, for example, offers the following certificate and associate degree programs⁵

- **Auto Repair Technician - Certificate of Proficiency (79 credits)** Preparation for an entry level job as an auto service technician
- **Auto Repair Technician – Associate Degree (100 credits – 21 credits beyond the Certificate)** Preparation for more advanced positions in auto mechanics and technology
- **Diesel and Heavy Equipment Technician – Certificate of Proficiency (73 credits)** Preparation for a more high-paying job in diesel or heavy equipment mechanics

Reskilling Scenario: When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, **Dana** had been working in the hospitality industry. This industry was among the hardest hit, with projections showing that a full recovery would likely take several years. She was laid off and decided to **reskill** for a new occupation in information technology, a field with better job prospects. She begins with a short-term, 24-credit certificate program in computer support and is hired relatively quickly for a job as a helpdesk technician. She decides to continue her **reskilling** training with additional certificate programs, eventually completing an associate degree, using credits acquired in each prior program to shorten the time necessary to complete the next one. She leverages her training and work experience to advance in her new career in information technology.

Information Technology:



Big Bend Community College, for example, offers the following certificate and associate degree programs in Information Tech.⁶

- **Computer Support Specialist - Certificate of Accomplishment (24 Credits)** Preparation for an entry level job as a computer support specialist or helpdesk technician
- **Network Support Specialist – Certificate of Accomplishment (29 credits)** Preparation for positions in IT network support
- **Systems Administration – Certificate of Accomplishment (47-51 credits)** Preparation for an entry level job as a computer systems technician
- **Systems Administration – Associate in Applied Science – Transfer** Preparation for a career in network systems and administration and/or transfer to a bachelor's program

¹ See, for example, Jose Maria Barrero, Nick Bloom, and Steven J. Davis. (June 2020) COVID-19 Is Also a Reallocation Shock, Accessed Oct. 6, 2020 from https://bfi.uchicago.edu/wp-content/uploads/BFI_WP_202059.pdf.

² Carnevale, Anthony P. (May 2020) Education, Race, and Jobs in the COVID-19 Crisis. Ibid.

³ Kwakye, Isaac and Kibort-Crocker, Emma. (2020) Lessons on Recovery: The Value and Potential of Higher Education in Response to the COVID-19 Crisis. Accessed Sep. 1, 2020 from https://wsac.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2020.08.20.Lessons.on_Recovery.Report.pdf.

⁴ Carnevale, Anthony P. (May 2020) Education, Race, and Jobs in the COVID-19 Crisis. Accessed July 27, 2020 from <https://medium.com/georgetown-cew/education-race-and-jobs-in-the-covid-19-crisis-c927be2c2487>.

⁵ Strada Education Network. (2020) Public Viewpoint: COVID-19 Work and Education Survey. Accessed July 15, 2020 from <https://www.stradaeducation.org/publicviewpoint/>.

⁶ see <https://www.lwtech.edu/academics/transportation-school/>.

⁶ See <https://www.bigbend.edu/academics/programs/computer-science/certificates/>.