

Washington Jobs Initiative

Good Jobs Challenge



Overview and Context

The goal of the [Good Jobs Challenge](#) (GJC) and the [Washington Jobs Initiative](#) (WJI) is to help individuals secure good jobs and prioritize reaching individuals who have been hit hardest by the pandemic. GJC is an opportunity for Washington to increase educational attainment beyond the “traditional” postsecondary pathways of academic credentials. WJI will build upon [Career Connect Washington](#) (CCW) and leverage existing efforts to ensure Washington has a skilled and educated workforce. By 2025, WJI will place at least 3,000 residents in quality jobs. WJI will invest in education and training pathways that are industry-led and demand-driven, embed paid work-based learning, and help Washington residents secure a career pathway that leads to a good job with a family-sustaining wage.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Good Jobs Challenge?

The Good Jobs Challenge, one of EDA’s six innovative American Rescue Plan programs, made \$500 million available to help train Americans for good jobs. GJC will support the development and strengthening of regional workforce training systems and sectoral partnerships. These systems and partnerships will create and implement industry-driven training programs, connecting unemployed, underemployed, or under-skilled workers to existing and emerging job openings. These systems will equip workers with the skills they need to secure quality jobs that provide good pay, benefits, and growth opportunities.

What is the Washington Jobs Initiative?

The Washington Jobs Initiative (WJI) is Washington’s response to the EDA’s Good Jobs Challenge (GJC). WJI will ensure that at least 5,000 Washington residents receive training and education and 3,000 are placed in a good job. WJI will leverage existing Career Connect Washington partnerships and programs to meet this goal by 2025. WJI will create competitive awards that invest in industry partnerships to recruit, provide training, and embed paid work-based learning. These supports will help Washington residents find a career pathway that leads to a job with a family-sustaining wage.

How is WJI different from other funding opportunities?

WJI is a unique opportunity designed to get Washington residents into quality jobs through industry-driven training. This funding will be competitively awarded to industry sector partnerships. The partnerships will design and implement training in collaboration with employers to meet their hiring needs. This funding is not confined to a particular program and does not have participant eligibility criteria. The funding is available for recruitment, registered apprenticeships, and other “earn and learn”

training models, as well as upskilling and wraparound supports. The goal is to place 3,000 individuals into good jobs with family-sustaining wages.

What types of activities are allowed?

WJI will competitively award grants to fund workforce development activities through an industry sector partnership. Funds will be awarded for either **Program Implementation** or **Program Design and Implementation**.

- **Program Implementation**
 - Must operate an existing program
 - Recruit underserved workers who are unemployed or underemployed to join a program
 - Deliver skills training
 - Provide wraparound supports
 - Place participants in jobs

- **Program Design and Implementation**
 - Employers identify hiring needs
 - Employers identify skills needed
 - Industry sectors and regional partnerships develop demand-driven strategies
 - Design training model and curriculum
 - Organize community partners for wraparound supports
 - Develop strategies for closing equity gaps
 - Implementation (above)

What is an Industry Sector Partnership?

A “**sectoral partnership**” or an “**industry sector partnership**” is a partnership of employers from the same industry who join with other strategic partners to train and place workers into high-quality jobs. These are jobs that employers need filled and intend to fill through the partnership. The strategic partners can include government, education (including community and technical colleges), training organizations, economic development organizations, workforce development organizations, unions, labor-management partnerships, industry associations, employer-serving organizations, and/or community-based organizations.

A sectoral partnership is focused on one specific industry or functional area and one or more specific roles within that industry. Sectoral partnerships are effective because:

- they are carefully built to include all necessary partners before workforce solutions are designed;
- they cut across traditional economic development, workforce, education, and social services system silos;
- they are targeted to in-demand sectors with high-quality jobs;
- and they consider the economic realities of a regional industry in assessing workforce demand and training needs.

Sectoral partnerships increase the chance of job placement after program completion given their connection to real-time employer demand. The lead entity of a sectoral partnership is called a “Backbone Organization.”

What is a “Backbone Organization”?

A **Backbone Organization** leads and convenes one sectoral partnership. A strong Backbone Organization for each partnership key to a successful system. An effective Backbone Organization will have some or all of the following characteristics:

- Committed support of the executive leadership from the region and buy-in from appropriate stakeholders (e.g., mayors or chief executives of a jurisdiction, chief executives of major employers, heads of labor unions, presidents of two- and four-year institutions of higher education, etc.).
- Relationships and credibility with stakeholders in the workforce system, including employers, governmental entities, state or local workforce development boards, educational institutions, labor organizations, community-based organizations, and worker-serving organizations.
- A proven track record of coordinating across sectors and driving stakeholders to successful action.
- Strong fundraising capabilities and/or connection to a system with strong fundraising capabilities.

The Backbone Organization will be the lead applicant.

What entities are eligible for funding and can serve as a Backbone Organization?

- Career Connect Washington Industry Sector Partners
- Career Connect Washington Regional Network
- Employer or consortium of employers, may be represented by an industry association
- Public or private nonprofit organizations or associations, including labor unions, acting in cooperation with government agencies.
- Nonprofit service providers, including training providers and wraparound support providers
- Education or training provider, including higher education institutions (e.g., public/private colleges, CTCs, universities, tribal colleges and universities, and minority-serving institutions), and local education agencies (e.g., K-12 school districts)
- Community-based organizations, including those that serve historically underserved communities
- Local foundations or civic organizations
- Indian tribe or a consortium of Indian tribes
- County, city, or other local government agencies

Any of the entities listed above can serve as a Backbone Organization.

What is a quality job or a good-paying job?

A quality job (or a “good-paying job”) is a job that exceeds the local prevailing wage for an industry in the region. A quality job includes basic benefits (e.g., paid leave, health insurance, retirement/savings plan) and/or is unionized, and helps the employee develop the skills and experiences necessary to advance along a career path. “Prevailing wage” is defined by the Department of Labor as “the average wage paid to similarly employed workers in a specific occupation in the area of intended employment.” The average wage for prioritized WJI jobs will be around \$45.00/hour.

What does equity mean in the context of WJI?

WJI will prioritize funding for programs that reach historically underserved populations and areas:

- communities of color, women, and other groups facing labor market barriers such as individuals with disabilities, disconnected youth, individuals in recovery;
- individuals with past criminal records, including justice-impacted and reentry participants;
- individuals participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Women, Infants and Children (WIC);
- and veterans and military spouses.

WJI also encourages partnerships with community-based organizations, tribal colleges and universities, and minority-serving institutions.

Equity is defined in EDA’s [Investment Priorities](#) as projects or programs that directly benefit:

1. one or more traditionally [underserved populations](#) (PDF), including but not limited to women; Black, Latino, Indigenous and Native American, Asian American, and Pacific Islander individuals; or
2. underserved communities within geographies that have been systemically and/or systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic prosperity such as Tribal Lands, [Persistent Poverty Counties](#) (XLSX), and rural areas with demonstrated, historical underservice.

Are funds available for designing and building new programs?

The priority for WJI funds will be to support industry sector partnerships that will recruit, train, and place individuals in jobs. Funding may also be used to support designing and/or growing current programs in conjunction with training and job placement.

What project costs are eligible for funding under WJI?

WJI funding will support the recruitment, training, education, placement, and retention of a participant, including wraparound supports. Funds will also cover costs for Washington residents to join the program. These include childcare, transportation, language support, access to technology, financial coaching, and career navigation. Equipment costs, expenses related to securing adequate space (e.g., rent, leases), and other non-construction capital expenses, may be considered.

What is the maximum grant award?

Award levels will be scaled to each proposal, considering the proposed industry and the jobs anticipated. The total funding available to a Backbone Organization is \$15 million.

How long will awards be for?

Awards will be made for available for up to three years.