Washington Jobs Initiative
Q1 2026 Update

May 2026

Highlights

With half a year remaining in the grant, the Washington Jobs Initiative (WJI) is nearing completion of all its targets. Job placements were strong this quarter, as sectoral partnerships focused on connecting participants to employment opportunities and collecting data on past placements.

Table 1. WJI Cumulative Outcomes as of Q1 (January - March) 2026.

	Targets	Q4 2025 Outcomes	Q4 2025 % Complete	Q1 2026 Outcomes	Q1 2026 % Complete
Enrollments	5,000	4,819	96%	5,041	101%
Completions	3,150	2,923	93%	3,097	98%
Placements	3,150	2,366	75%	2,800	89%

WJI Program Focuses on Sustainability Plans

As we near the end of the grant, the WJI team and sectoral partnerships are working on how to sustain effective programs and apply what we've learned in the future. Washington STEM, the WJI technical assistance provider, is helping sectoral partnerships create sustainability plans to identify what's working well and how to keep those efforts going. WSAC and the WJI team are also preparing a final report that captures key lessons and best practices. This report will guide future workforce programs in Washington and across the country. WSAC will use these insights to strengthen its other initiatives, including Career Connect Washington.

Apprenticeships Offer the Chance to Start Over to Struggling Parents

WJI works to ensure that all Washingtonians have pathways to good jobs and family-sustaining wages. This is particularly important for single parents who are struggling to make ends meet.

This quarter, we heard from Alexandra Murray, a participant in the Construct a Career sectoral partnership. Alexandra was a newly divorced, single stay-at-home mom receiving food assistance when she got the chance to start an ironworker apprenticeship. She took the opportunity to become financially independent, even though it meant long hours and a long daily commute. She shared how important the career navigation and wrap-around support from Construct a Career were in helping her succeed:

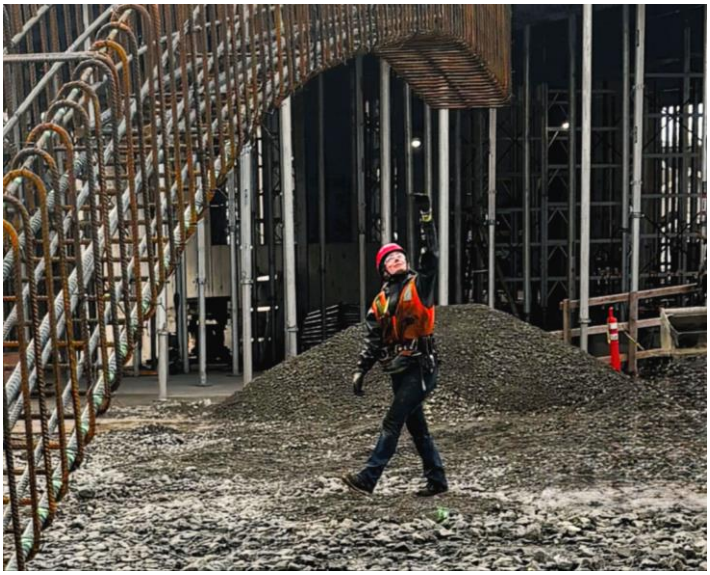

Photo of Alexandra Murray, a WJI Ironworker apprentice

"Just knowing someone had my back meant so much. It gave me confidence when things were tough and reminded me that I'm not doing this alone... The gas card helped me get to work when my commute stretched over 80 miles round-trip... The rain jacket and knee pads weren't just gear, they made long days safer and more comfortable... Because of Construct a Career, I've been able to focus on my apprenticeship, keep providing for my son, and keep moving forward toward a career I'm proud of."

Alexandra continues to be employed by the Sound Transit Sumner Parking Garage project, earning $38.95 per hour.

Sectors Continue Outreach and Support to Participants

In Q1 2026, the WJI sectoral partnerships continued expanding programs and outreach. This growth will help more participants, especially those from priority populations, to access quality training and career pathways. They also worked closely with partner organizations to make sure participants received support at every stage of their journey.

Advanced Manufacturing and Aerospace

The Advanced Manufacturing and Aerospace sector is focusing on supporting participants and employer engagement to help participants find jobs, even though hiring is slow.

Table 2. Advanced Manufacturing and Aerospace Outcomes as of March 2026.

	Targets	Outcomes	% Complete
Enrollments	940	968	103%
Completions	736	771	105%
Placements	453	332	73%

Highlights: The Manufacturing WORKS sectoral partnership continued to create more pathways into manufacturing jobs for priority populations. They recently launched a new AJAC Manufacturing Academy class. In this class, 18 percent of the students are women, 24 percent are young adults under 24, and 60 percent are BIPOC. The completion rate for the class was 90 percent. Just a few days after graduating, 10 of the 49 students landed jobs, earning an average of $23.12 per hour.

Challenges and Strategic Shifts: Pierce County saw a big drop in job postings this quarter, with about half as many as three years ago. There have been more small layoffs, partly due to uncertainty about trade policies and rising costs for materials. In response, Manufacturing WORKS is reaching out to employers through discovery calls. They are helping employers navigate available services and coordinating with partner organizations.

Clean Technology and Energy

The Clean Technology and Energy sectoral partnership is expanding its program to serve more participants across Washington and increase its pipeline.

Table 3. Clean Technology and Energy Outcomes as of March 2026.

	Targets	Outcomes	% Complete
Enrollments	116	72	62%
Completions	98	57	58%
Placements	80	42	53%

Highlights: The King County JumpStart sectoral partnership has a new program administrator, Evergreen Goodwill. They will help serve more people with detailed case management and job-readiness support. They also set up new subawards to expand their work into other areas of Washington, including Snohomish, Pierce, and Kitsap counties.

Challenges and Strategic Shifts: The small size of the King County JumpStart sectoral partnership has resulted in ongoing bottlenecks in their participant pipeline. Some cohorts also started later than planned while Evergreen Goodwill was being brought on board. Even so, these changes should help create a stronger and more consistent model as the program grows.

Construction

Construction continues to be a strong sector with excellent process towards recently increased targets.

Table 4. Construction Outcomes as of March 2026.

	Targets	Outcomes	% Complete
Enrollments	1,355	1,262	93%
Completions	298	253	85%
Placements	1,235	1,073	87%

Highlights: The Construct a Career sectoral partnership has continued to grow its program. They recently increased who is eligible to participate so they can serve more people. They have also connected with local WorkSource offices to improve coordination and make referrals smoother.

Challenges and Strategic Shifts: Participants in the trades often face mental-health challenges and other major barriers that make it hard to succeed. The Construct a Career partnership helps by providing one-on-one career guidance, case management, and wrap-around services. This support has helped people find stable housing, get driver's licenses and GEDs, and return to work after long medical issues or injuries.

Healthcare

The Healthcare sector is growing its workforce pipeline by increasing outreach to underserved participants and supporting them in their career pathways.

Table 5. Healthcare Outcomes as of March 2026.

	Targets	Outcomes	% Complete
Enrollments	1,557	957	61%
Completions	975	699	72%
Placements	745	640	86%

Highlights: The healthcare sectoral partnerships have engaged in extensive participant and partner outreach to build strong relationships and opportunities. The Healthcare Talent Development Pipeline worked with Next Generation Zone to give a series of WJI presentations in Spokane. These efforts led to a large increase in new enrollments this quarter. The TRIAGE sectoral partnership completed more than a dozen onsite visits with employers, education partners, and community organizations to build further connections.

Challenges and Strategic Shifts: Uncertainty due to changes in federal rules, cuts in state-funded programs, and delays between completing training and receiving state certification has slowed hiring for apprentices and graduates. During this time, the healthcare sectoral partnerships are focusing on providing strong support to participants to help them succeed.

Information Technology and Cybersecurity

As grant activities wind down, the Information Technology and Cybersecurity sector focused on collecting data and reporting the results for participants.

Table 6. Information Technology and Cybersecurity Outcomes as of March 2026.

	Targets	Outcomes	% Complete
Enrollments	2,068	1,782	86%
Completions	1,550	1,317	85%
Placements	1,000	713	71%

Highlights: This quarter, the Washington Tech Workforce Coalition partnership worked hard to identify and reach out to past participants who had landed jobs. As a result, many additional job placements were reported, increasing the tech sector's total from 441 last quarter to 713 this quarter.

Challenges and Strategic Shifts: The tech sector continues to face challenges due to slow hiring, driven by layoffs and the effects of AI on entry-level roles. Training providers are responding to these changes by shifting their programs toward new roles in data centers, cloud operations, networking, and cybersecurity.

About the Washington Student Achievement Council

The Washington Student Achievement Council is committed to increasing educational opportunities and attainment in Washington. The Council has three main functions:

- Lead statewide strategic planning to increase educational attainment.
- Administer programs that help people access and pay for college.
- Advocate for the economic, social, and civic benefits of higher education.

The Council has ten members. Four members represent each of Washington's major education sectors: four-year public baccalaureates, four-year private colleges, public community and technical colleges, and K-12 public schools. Six are citizen members, including two current students (one graduate student and one undergraduate student).

If you would like copies of this document in an alternative format, please contact the Washington Student Achievement Council at:

Mail:
P.O. Box 43430
Olympia, WA 98504-3430

Phone:
360-753-7800
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