



workforce
SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON

Jeanne Bennett, CEO, Workforce Southwest Washington
jbennett@workforcesw.org, 360.567.1073

Workforce Development Key to Economic Growth that will Keep America Great

This week the White House is shining a light on the nation's public workforce system by hosting Workforce Development Week through a series of events across the country. We're happy to see the White House highlight the importance of investing in our nation's workforce and the power of public-private partnerships.

Ironically, however, the Administration's proposed budget plan includes a 40 percent cut in public workforce funding, effectively eviscerating an engine that drives local economic growth, builds local small businesses, and helps young men and women train and educate themselves for the jobs of the future. Funding for workforce development has been reduced by close to \$1 billion since 2010. Continuing deep cuts would be devastating to millions of job seekers, their families, recent high school and college graduates, and businesses of all sizes.

During this week, the President is focusing on apprenticeships and the value they provide to both businesses and job seekers alike. We fully support promoting apprenticeships as a key workforce strategy. We have worked hard to advance this approach. Without a sustainable commitment of federal resources, however, our business partners would struggle to continue to employ such a promising strategy to develop their current and future workforce.

Workforce Southwest Washington administers around \$10 million in workforce funds annually – the majority of which is from the federal government – to serve the three-county region of Clark, Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties. Our budget is also comprised of investments by the State of Washington, the private sector and philanthropy. Our investments fund numerous community-based organizations throughout our area that provide regionally-focused job training programs. Our funded partners deliver results or they lose their funding – that is accountability. In addition, we conduct ongoing labor market research and use that information to align funding priorities to build our workforce to meet the unique needs of our employers.

Our workforce system is a lifeline to thousands, many of whom face significant barriers to employment. The broad range of services offered enables jobseekers to develop new skills and to advance in their careers. We close the skills gap every day at our career centers. We serve displaced workers. We serve young adults entering the workforce and people at every stage of their career. This is workforce development.

Thanks to many programs funded and delivered through Workforce Southwest Washington, young men and women, working adults, and recent graduates acquire new skills and get good jobs. We close the skills gap and put people to work. Every single day. Our local employers get skilled workers and our economy and society benefit in innumerable ways.

Serving businesses, job seekers and youth in Clark, Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties.



workforce
SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON

Federal training and employment services help millions of unemployed and underemployed individuals around our country, including approximately 186,000 people a year in Washington State. If this budget is enacted, more than 73,000 Washington residents could lose access to services that help them find work or acquire the skills needed to succeed. Unemployment will spike, the skills gap will grow and our society will suffer.

The return on investment is realized in other training programs that help unemployed workers, seniors, young people, people with disabilities, people with mental illness, veterans and others who are struggling to enter or return to the workforce. Job training programs provide not only hope, but real results that empower millions of workers to achieve a brighter future. Smart public investment with regional partners equals success for workers and businesses alike.

We disagree with the Administration's claim that the federally funded workforce system is inefficient and ineffective. It is too easy to paint with a broad brush and imply that the system doesn't work. More programs do not equal inefficiency. Just as every business has a different business model, so too follows their diverse human resource, training and, thus, programmatic needs. Assuming a scaled down "one size fits all" approach will effectively support long-term economic growth in our communities is penny wise and pound foolish.

Budgets reflect our nation's priorities and values. Investing in our workforce so that everyone can maximize their potential and contribute to our economy is the best investment government can make. Cuts hurt people, businesses and communities. Investing in people changes lives. We need more stable funding, not the devastating cuts proposed. Support jobseekers. Support our communities. Support workforce development.

Workforce Southwest Washington (WSW), a nonprofit organization founded in 2002, contributes to regional economic growth by providing investments and resources to improve the skills and education of the workforce in Clark, Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties. WSW-funded programs operated by WorkSource and community-based organizations help businesses find and hire the employees they need and provide adults and youth with the skills, education and training to find work or advance in their careers. WSW collaborates with employers, colleges and universities, labor groups, government and economic development agencies, high schools and community organizations. Learn more at www.workforcesw.org.

###

Workforce Southwest Washington is an equal-opportunity employer and providers of employment and training services. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to people with disabilities. Washington Relay Service: 711.

Serving businesses, job seekers and youth in Clark, Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties.

805 Broadway, Suite 412 | Vancouver, WA 98660

www.workforcesw.org

360.567.1070