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Columbia-Willamette Workforce Collaborative Quality Jobs Initiative






Accessible Hiring and Onboarding



Over the past year, the [Columbia-Willamette Workforce Collaborative \(CWWC\)](#) began the process to develop the [Quality Jobs Framework \(Framework\)](#). The Framework is part of the [Quality Jobs Initiative](#), a cross sectoral effort that seeks a regional approach to (1) define quality jobs, (2) provide guidance on standards employers can be encouraged or incentivized to adopt, (3) identify resources to help employers implement in accordance with their workplace needs, and (4) develop a roadmap of actions and implementation steps.

The Quality Jobs guides provide an in-depth look into each of the six Quality Job strategies for the Portland-Southwest Washington metropolitan area. The guides provide strategies, indicators and an interactive workbook to help improve job quality within your business. This guide explores the strategy Accessible Hiring and Onboarding Practices.

The Quality Jobs strategies include:

	Self-Sufficiency Wages	A quality job provides sufficient income to afford a decent standard of living. For example, jobs that offer pay consistent with established published self-sufficiency standards that consider family composition and cost of living.
	Safe Working Conditions/Worker Engagement	A quality job offers employees dignity and respect and welcomes engagement in workplace operations. For example, jobs that are subject to anti-discrimination and anti-discrimination policies and provide reasonable accommodation to employees with disabilities.
	Predictable Hours	A quality job offers employees predictability on the number of hours they are offered per week to minimize hardship on employees and their families.
	Comprehensive Benefits	A quality job provides basic benefits that increase economic security, improve health and overall well-being. Quality jobs include healthcare, childcare, transportation, wellness programs, and access to retirement savings programs, among other supports.
	Accessible Hiring and Onboarding Practices	A quality job offers transparent and accessible hiring and onboarding practices to ensure that employer and employee are set for success.

Employers

STRATEGIES

1 **Standardize the use of ADA compliant job description text and accessibility of all job application materials.**

While online job postings offer more reach and accessibility than ever, employers should ensure their recruitment platform and job postings are compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). This will ensure that the back-end infrastructure of job websites encourages or requires employers to update their job descriptions for accessibility. Employers should also include contact information in the job description or recruitment platform should candidates require assistance.

Employers can engage outside support to conduct an accessibility audit of their applicant process, or can connect to free government services (Washington Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) Division of Vocational Rehabilitation¹ and Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS): Vocational Rehabilitation²) to access technical assistance for submitting applications. WDBs can also direct employers to available Vocational Rehabilitation services or make a warm hand off, if desired.

Sample Metric



- Percentage (%) of revised job descriptions and materials.

2 **Post simple, skill-based job descriptions that include core competencies, essential job functions necessary to perform the job, and accurate salary range.**

Job descriptions help define a role that meets the needs of the organization. If crafted effectively, they will recruit the appropriate talent. As the demand for workers continues to increase, employers can stay ahead of the curve by ensuring their job descriptions effectively communicate essential responsibilities and qualifications needed for a role. Employers should consider the following best practices for improving job descriptions:

- a. Employers should reevaluate educational attainment or years of direct experience requirements. These requirements may deter applicants who may have non-traditional transferrable skills that qualify them for the role. Employers can adopt practices such as Skills-Based Hiring¹ to update their job descriptions and requirements.
- b. Employers should evaluate if often archaic physical requirements such as heavy lifting or holding a driver's license are necessary to perform the job. If it is not an essential job function, they should be removed.
- c. Job postings may often include gender coded language that may keep applicants from applying. If in doubt, employers can utilize free tools such as Gender Decoder² or paid software such as Textio³ to analyze and remove language.

Sample Metric



- Percentage (%) of revised job descriptions and materials.

3 **Expand recruitment efforts to reach a larger pool of qualified, diverse applicants.**

Employers can look beyond the usual hiring websites to identify job boards or networks for candidates of color, women, and more, as well as specific outreach and engagement strategies in the field to reach historically underserved and underrepresented populations. Employers can recruit from the public workforce system where they can access a wide variety of qualified and diverse candidates. Another opportunity is to share job descriptions with community-based organizations who are trusted within their respective communities.

Sample Metrics



- Number (#) of affinity-based job boards/communities engaged in recruitment processes.
- Increased diversity of applicants and increased diversity of hires.

4 **Implement resume review technology that removes bias.**

Employers can invest in resume software or use websites that will anonymize resumes for review. Software can hide names, demographic information, the application source, and other language used in the application that may create bias. Affinda⁴ offers resume redaction software, while Applied⁵ is an all-in-one debiased hiring platform. Both offer free or low-cost trials or demos of their products.

Sample Metric



- Increased diversity in submitted applications and increased diversity in hires.

5 **Implement a standard interview process for all candidates that is still responsive to different job seeker needs.**

Unstructured interviews are often preferred by hiring managers, but studies have found them to be a poor predictor of on-the-job performance.⁵ Lacking some sort of baseline for interviews, employers might look for candidates who look like them and continue to uphold racial, gender, age, or other biases, even subconsciously. All organization hiring processes should consider the following anti-bias and standardization strategies: (1) Ensure diverse interview panels or hiring committees; (2) Ensure available interpreter services for the interview, if needed; (3) Develop objective criteria for interview questions and share with the interview panel well in advance of an interview; and (4) Send sample questions in advance to candidates. This would particularly support ELL (English Language Learners) and applicants with disabilities by ensuring they bring their best selves to the interview.

Sample Metrics



- Implementation of a standard interview process that includes most or all the above strategies.
- Increased diversity in hires.

13 I. Bohnet. "How to Take the Bias Out of Interviews." Harvard Business Review. <https://hbr.org/2016/04/how-to-take-the-bias-out-of-interviews>

6 **Provide comprehensive, effective, and consistent onboarding for all new hires.**

Onboarding refers to the process of helping new hires adjust to the performance and social aspects of a job. Free online tools such as the Six C's of Onboarding⁶ can serve as blueprints for employers looking to implement a standardized onboarding process. The tool breaks down the onboarding process into six steps: Compliance, Clarification, Confidence, Connection, Culture, and Check-Back. Effective onboarding has shown to lead to faster adjustment, better job enjoyment, better performance, and increased retention.

Sample Metric



- Percentage (%) of new hire satisfaction with onboarding process.

7 **Assign formal or informal mentors to assist new employees with their transition (“buddy system”).**

Employers should pair a seasoned employee with each new hire for a set period at the beginning of employment who can help them navigate the workplace and answer questions they may have. Regular check-ins, however brief, can help surface any concerns that can help make the onboarding process smoother for future hires. It could also help build leadership skills amongst longer tenured employees.

Sample Metric



- Percentage (%) of new hire confidence and comfort based on mentorship.

8 Incorporate reasonable accommodation practices into onboarding.

Employers can ensure workplaces are ADA compliant and address the needs of workers with disabilities. Forms, building access, use of service animals, and physical workplace modifications are just a few examples of items that may require reasonable accommodation. Employees with disabilities should be active participants in making their workplace more accessible and should be consulted in any process. There are also various free trainings, technical assistance, and other resources available through the State of Oregon and Washington's Department of Health Services.^{7,8} Additionally, the U.S. Department of Labor offers accommodation resources.⁹

Sample Metric



- Number (#) of accessibility requests or modifications addressed.

Others

9 Improve enforcement of Ban the Box, discrimination, and reasonable accommodation laws.

For existing policies, state and local government bodies can improve the enforcement of anti-discrimination laws by increasing capacity or potentially implementing community-based engagement to educate workers and employers. This is especially important for lower-paying industries and during economic downturns – strategic enforcement is key for high-violation sectors. Labor and civil rights nonprofits can advocate for better enforcement mechanisms and assist government enforcement arms by supporting workers in identifying cases of discrimination or lack of accommodation. Employers can make changes to their applications by removing questions about justice involvement.

Sample Metric



- Number (#) of discrimination enforcement procedures or actions taken by the state or municipality.

10 Improve existing workforce development sector-based partnerships. Create and/or support new sector-based partnerships in emerging or recovering sectors.

Business-led regional partnerships can convene a critical mass of employers in key sectors to identify regional needs and solutions with high rates of buy-in. The national nonprofit Institute for Networked Communities has created a model and community of practice called Next Generation Sector Partnerships¹⁰ with comprehensive training offerings and an extensive toolkit¹¹ to help WDBs, in collaboration with others, establish successful industry-driven partnerships in their region. The Next Generation Sector Partnership Program is a business-led model of sector-based collaboration consisting of businesses, education, workforce development, economic development, and community-based organizations. Each partnership focuses on problem-solving within a regional industry, such as job training, education, and/or industry competitiveness.

Sample Metric



- Increased number (#) of joint ventures and partnerships; # of new or enhanced sector training programs.

11 **Expand and improve direct-hire job training programs.**

Direct-hire training programs support a demand-driven workforce where job seekers are trained based on the number of quality jobs available. WDBs can collaborate with employers to develop a job training curriculum tailored to the employer's workforce needs, including required certifications and skills. Employers can then offer priority in their application and interview process for participants who have completed the training program. Job seekers have incentive to complete a job training program if they know they will be connected to quality, stable employment opportunities, and employers have incentive to participate based on their access to a pool of candidates trained based on their specific needs.

Sample Metric



- Number (#) of direct hire training programs; retention of program participants hired by employer.

12 **Support foreign-born/trained job seekers in new credentialing process.**

Foreign-born workers, whether trained in the U.S. or abroad, are filling critical roles in the regional labor market, addressing shortages in impacted sectors. In 2019, Oregon passed SB (Senate Bill) 855¹² requiring licensure boards to find faster pathways for immigrants and refugees with advanced degrees. In 2021, Washington passed SHB1129, provides limited licenses to international medical graduates. Changes like this may substantially increase the number of trained or certified workers in healthcare or other large industries. WDBs can work with licensure boards to ensure these pathways are accessible, and case managers can support jobseekers in navigating and understanding updated processes.

Sample Metric



- Number (#) of immigrant or refugee job seekers hired in their previously credentialed field.

Accessible Hiring and Onboarding Practices Quality Jobs Workbook

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Additional Resources

[Accessibility Checklist, How to Provide Modern Digital Experiences for All](#), Informed by expert Geoff Ames, Executive ADA Consultant, Meeting the Challenge, Inc.

[Evergreen BizLink](#) offers a variety of services to support and foster small businesses across Washington State. Evergreen Bizlink provides guidance on starting a business, growing through marketing, recruitment and promotion, and funding opportunities including loans, grants and equity funding.

[The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation provides business services](#) to assist businesses in hiring and retaining individuals with disabilities.

[Greater Portland Inc.](#) offers confidential, no-cost assistance to domestic and international companies interested in investing and growing within the Greater Portland area. Resources offered include project management, connectivity to private sector providers and key assets, access to workforce and education partners, diversity and inclusion resources, data resources, research and analysis, market visits, assistance in securing government incentives and real estate connectivity.

[Impact Washington](#) works with manufacturers to identify their unique challenges and opportunities to make it more profitable and a better place to work. Impact Washington can help your manufacturing business in many ways, including help with hiring, retaining and engaging the workforce, increasing efficiency and productivity, developing new products or marketing existing products and more!

[JAN - Job Accommodation Network \(askjan.org\)](#) - JAN provides free consulting services for all employers, regardless of size or type. Services include individualized consultation about all aspects of job accommodations, including the accommodation process, accommodation ideas, product vendors, referral to other resources, and Americans with Disabilities Act compliance assistance.

Jobs for the Future produced [The Language of Racial Economic Equity, An Asset-Based Guide to Advance Black Learners and Workers](#). The guide emphasizes the importance of using asset-based language—words and phrases that focus on the strengths and potential of Black individuals and communities, rather than emphasizing disadvantages or challenges.

Recovery Cafés are a resource for employees managing substance use disorder and businesses looking to recruit, retain and support employees with substance use disorders. Southwest Washington has two Recovery Cafés.

[Chai Rivers](#) is a Recovery Café serving Cowlitz County. Chai Rivers supports individuals in recovery by providing resources, community and programming.

[Recovery Café of Clark County](#) supports recovery by empowering people through an ever-growing community of resources, real-time encouragement, and loving,

Additional Resources

[Recovery Career Services](#) helps people in recovery from addiction, homelessness, and past criminal justice involvement find and keep work. Recovery Career Services also provides education to employers and HR professionals about the importance of offering employment opportunities and support for these populations.

[What's Next Washington's Partnering for an Inclusive Workforce Project](#) is designed to help employers tap into a labor pool ready to work—people with conviction histories. Developed by those directly impacted, the PIWP helps employers recruit, hire, and retain FIT™ (Formerly Incarcerated Talent) to meet their hiring goals.

The Washington State Department of Labor and Industries offers a [Preferred Worker Program](#). The program is a return-to-work incentive program for Washington businesses. If a worker is permanently restricted from their job due to a workplace injury, they may be certified as a “preferred worker.” Employers who hire a preferred worker for a medically approved job can be eligible for claim protection, premium discount, wage reimbursement and more.

[The Washington State Microenterprise Association](#) champions collaboration for economic justice where every micro-entrepreneur has equal access to economic development resources. Services include capacity building, training and technical assistance, resource coordination, grantmaking and networking opportunities.

[Workforce Southwest Washington's \(WSW\) Business Services Team](#) can help your business obtain services to recruit and retain top talent in the region. WSW also has resources to help your business with hiring and human resources.

WSW coordinates two internship programs that can help local business hire new talent and grow their pipeline.

[SummerWorks](#) connects businesses to qualified, pre-screened young adults ages 16 – 24 for paid summer jobs. Each young adult enrolled in the SummerWorks program participates in pre-placement work-readiness workshops and can assist with a diverse array of tasks and project-based assignments.

The [Future Leaders Project](#) is an initiative of WSW, [Columbia River Economic Development Council \(CREDC\)](#) and [Washington State University Vancouver \(WSU Vancouver\)](#). The FLP places students from historically underrepresented communities and first generational college students into employer sponsored summer internships, providing growth and professional development opportunities.

End Notes

- 1 Washington State Department of Social and Health Services. "Division of Vocational Rehabilitation: Services for Your Business" <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/dvr/services-your-business>
- 2 Oregon Department of Human Services. "Vocational Rehabilitation: Employer Information." <https://www.oregon.gov/dhs/EMPLOYMENT/VR/Pages/Employer-Services.aspx>
- 3 Textio provides guidance for inclusive, unbiased language in hiring and brand content. <https://textio.com/>
- 4 Affinda provides a free online resume redactor up to 25 resumes at once. <https://affinda.com/resume-redactor/>
- 5 Applied is a full talent acquisition platform for debiased hiring. <https://www.beapplied.com/>
- 6 Preppio. "New Employee Onboarding Framework." <https://preppio.com/tag/5c-of-onboarding/>
- 7 Washington State Department of Social and Health Services – Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. "Services for Your Business." <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/dvr/services-your-business>
- 8 Oregon Department of Human Services – Vocational Rehabilitation. <https://www.oregon.gov/dhs/EMPLOYMENT/VR/Pages/Employer-Services.aspx>
- 9 U.S. Department of Labor. Office of the Assistant Secretary for Administration and Management – Civil Rights Center. "Reasonable Accommodations for Employees and Applicants with Disabilities." <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/oasam/centers-offices/civil-rights-center/internal/reasonable-accomodations-resource-center>
- 10 Next Generation Sector Partnerships. <https://www.nextgensectorpartnerships.com/>
- 11 Next Generation Sector Partnership Training Manual. <https://www.nextgensectorpartnerships.com/toolkit>
- 12 Oregon State Legislature. Senate Bill 855, 2019 Regular Session. Directs professional licensing boards to study manner in which persons who are immigrants or refugees become authorized to practice occupation or profession. <https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2019R1/Measures/Overview/SB855>

Engage with the Quality Jobs Initiative

Quality Jobs guides are available on the [Workforce Southwest Washington Quality Jobs page](#) for all strategies, including:

- Self-Sufficiency Wages
- Safe Working Conditions/Worker Engagement
- Predictable Hours
- Comprehensive Benefits
- Accessible Hiring and Onboarding Practices
- Training and Advancement Opportunities

Learn more about the [Quality Jobs Initiative](#) and read the entire [Quality Jobs Framework](#) online.

Contact us!

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