



workforce
SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON



Columbia-Willamette Workforce Collaborative Quality Jobs Initiative






Training and Advancement Opportunities



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 Training and Advancement Opportunities.

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.
	Training and Advancement Opportunities	A quality job provides opportunities to build skills and access new roles and responsibilities in a workplace. For example, quality jobs offer internal pathways to support career progression, professional development, and incumbent worker training opportunities.

Employers

STRATEGIES

1 **Build clear internal pathways and opportunities to support career progression.**

Career development and advancement remains a top determinant for employee retention. Clear career pathways can also encourage workers to develop their skills and seek additional training or education. It is especially important to consider how to build pathways for entry-level workers who have been invested in, oriented, and trained within a company.

Employers should consider what progress looks like within their organization – the needs of the company, types of positions, and specific job duties for those positions. This includes providing wage transparency so that workers can identify not just what they need to accomplish to meet certain position requirements, but how to reach certain wage thresholds. With that information, companies can develop career roadmaps, or lattices, that offer a visualization of where employees can either grow or reskill with adjacent competencies into a different role. Employees should also be aware of what skills, competencies, and achievements required to reach each new role. Employers can use resources such as the Transparent Career Pathways Tool¹ from the Institute for Employment Studies. Workforce Development Boards (WDBs) can provide technical assistance to support.

Sample Metric



- Percentage (%) of employees that progress within the organization over time.

2 **Create and expand on-the-job, professional development, and incumbent worker training opportunities to support advancement and cross training.**

Employers should invest in training opportunities to support their employees' professional growth. Employers will benefit from their employees' new skills, improve employee engagement and retention, and grow talent pipelines from within their company.

Employers can provide annual stipends for employees to participate in trainings to stay up to date with best practices, innovations, or skills in their industry. Supporting culturally relevant training opportunities is another way to ensure that women, individuals with disabilities, people of color, and LGBTQ+ staff can gain leadership skills and advance internally – mainstream training programs are not always one-size-fits all.

Depending on the industry, employers can also seek out public funding and other support to build their training programs. For example, Grads of Life² is an organization that works with companies to help skill up their talent while advancing equity and economic justice in the workplace. They provide consulting services which help employers or networks of employers build tailored regional talent pipelines, hiring programs, and advancement strategies.

Sample Metrics



- Percentage (%) of employees who are promoted within a year of completing training.
- Percentage (%) of workers who participate in rotational or cross-training programs.

3 Create or update tuition assistance programs.

Tuition assistance is an employee benefit that covers costs associated with an employee's continuing education. These include stipends for tuition, fees, and books. Tuition assistance invests in workers to help them build general and specialized skills that will help them improve their performance and contribute to their professional growth. Upskill America, an employer-led workforce development initiative within Aspen Institute, published a guide for employers to create tuition assistance programs.³ Tuition assistance programs should be disbursement based, rather than reimbursement based. Disbursement-based program models remove barriers such as upfront costs and lengthy wait times to be reimbursed, which are key to equitable access. Upskill America⁴ also has a step-by-step guide on tuition reimbursement models.

Sample Metrics



- Dollars allocated to tuition assistance.
- Number (#) of employees who complete education programs with tuition assistance.

Others

4 **Create local, regional, and state investment incentives for employers and workers that upskill, or reskill, workers for future jobs and swiftly changing industries.**

Skills required for in demand job industries are rapidly evolving. While employees can personally seek out training or learning opportunities in the field, upskilling can also be a beneficial investment for employers to improve retention, save costs, recruit job seekers, and foster a culture of learning.

Policymakers have a key role in closing talent gaps and giving workers skills they need to access quality jobs. WDBs and workforce training programs focus on industry needs and match training opportunities to in demand jobs that will need to be filled. Apprenticeship opportunities and other earn and learn models could be expanded to include more middle-skill jobs like computer programming. Targeted incentives are also crucial for addressing historic skills gaps for people of color, individuals with disabilities and women rather than relying on private investment which often perpetuates the status quo.

Sample Metrics



- Amount of public and private funding for upskilling/reskilling programs.
- Number (#) of workers who completed upskill programs.

Training and Advancement Opportunities

Quality Jobs Workbook

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Additional Resources

[Workforce Southwest Washington \(WSW\) offers grant funds](#) to reimburse companies for training their existing employees. Funds are available to manufacturing, healthcare, construction, technology, and professional, scientific and technical service companies. Funds should be used to enhance worker skills in high-demand jobs.

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.

[The Business Accelerator Program](#) offered by the Columbia River Economic Development Council helps entrepreneurs and small businesses to develop their ideas and skills in a cohort-based environment.

[WorkSource Vancouver and Cowlitz/Wahkiakum](#) offers virtual [Essential Skills Workshops](#) for job seekers and employees to grow their skills. LinkedIn Learning courses are also available for job seekers, employers and employees. WorkSource also offers Hiring Fairs and Workshops in Cowlitz and Clark counties. At WorkSource, job seekers can connect with paid internships and on-the-job training to gain career advancement. [View the event schedule and learn more about WorkSource services here.](#)

[Next](#) offers career and support services to young adults, ages 16 - 24, to help them find career and educational success. Next provides essential skill development, GED training and testing, internships, resume support and more.

[Results for America's Quality Job Playbook](#) offers guidance on metrics to [measure and evaluate learning and development](#) as a piece of job quality. The playbook includes information on leading practices in offering [renewable learning funds](#) and outlines how businesses can [develop springboard jobs](#).

End Notes

- 1 Institute for Employment Studies. Progression in Employment: An Employer Toolkit. <https://www.employment-studies.co.uk/toolkits/employment-progression/index.html>
- 2 Grads of Life <https://gradsoflife.org/>
- 3 Aspen Institute – UpSkill America. Key Elements of Successful Tuition Assistance Programs. <https://www.aspeninstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/UpSkill-i4cp-Tuition-Assistance-Infographic.pdf>
- 4 Aspen Institute – UpSkill America. A Step-by-Step Guide to Evolving from Tuition Reimbursement to Tuition Disbursement. <https://www.aspeninstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/UpSkill-i4cp-Tuition-Disbursement-Infographic.pdf>

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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