



Western Governors' Association Policy Resolution 2017-12

Workforce Development in the Western United States

A. **BACKGROUND**

1. Workforce development efforts in the West are necessary to create better professional opportunities for students, graduates, displaced workers, and other current and prospective members of the labor pool to develop a productive workforce that is trained and ready to satisfy staffing needs of the region's employers. The future economic growth of Western States, and the businesses in western states, demand significant alignment of the workforce pipeline with the needs of employers.
2. Workforce development regularly involves tools such as Career-Technical Education (CTE), Sector Partnerships, Career Pathways, competency-based learning, Work-Based Learning, apprenticeships, and other educational programs and methods.
3. Western states are utilizing these and other innovative approaches to help improve career options for the region's citizens and fill critical economic needs. States are also partnering with regional employers to identify critical staffing needs and the skills required to fill them.
4. Western universities, community colleges, secondary schools, and other educational institutions are incorporating new skills-based approaches – as well as new course-delivery approaches and structural innovations – into their curricula so that students are prepared to contribute meaningfully to the region's economy with good-paying jobs at graduation.

B. **GOVERNORS' POLICY STATEMENT**

1. As "laboratories of democracy," Western states have developed a body of experience, knowledge and perspective with respect to workforce development efforts. The Western Governors Association (WGA) is ideally situated to collect and disseminate such information (including best practices, case studies and policy options) to enhance workforce development throughout the West.
2. Western Governors recognize that, despite past and ongoing regional workforce development successes, significant challenges remain. Certain industries currently face

severe personnel shortages, while many graduates and other members of the labor pool are unable to find work for which they are qualified.

3. Workforce development challenges are particularly acute in rural communities, which are commonly characterized by a lack of economic diversity, geographic isolation, a less educated work force and job demand volatility. Western Governors are committed to creating new opportunities for rural students, workers and industries.
4. Moreover, the dynamic nature of technology and the American economy are sure to exacerbate these challenges in the future, as automation displaces workers and entire industries undergo game-changing technological transformation.
5. To meet current and future workforce development challenges, Western Governors are committed to identifying innovative approaches that connect western citizens in need of career advancement opportunities to western business sectors with employment vacancies to be filled.

C. **GOVERNORS' MANAGEMENT DIRECTIVE**

1. Western Governors direct WGA to pursue a workforce development initiative to leverage the region's best thinking to help bridge the gap between prospective workers and western employers, now and in the future.
2. Goals for the workforce development initiative include:
 - a. identification of current and prospective staffing needs of regional employers and the necessary skills to satisfy these needs;
 - b. creation of enhanced career opportunities for students, graduates, displaced workers, and other members of the labor pool through new educational programs, career training and other means;
 - c. activation of mechanisms to connect regional employers with appropriately trained students and prospective workers; and
 - d. development of innovative strategies to enhance economic opportunity for students, workers and industries located in rural communities of the West.
3. In fiscal year 2018, WGA will utilize a series of forums, webinars and other means of outreach to engage regional partners in discussions examining successes and challenges of workforce development efforts, priorities and opportunities across the West.

4. Western Governors will employ the lessons learned during the first year of the workforce development initiative to identify regional best practices and actionable opportunities that will be supported by the Governors and pursued by WGA in subsequent years.
5. The Governors direct WGA staff to work with industry representatives; State Workforce Boards and other state programs; regional partners; workforce development experts; educational professionals; government officials; and other entities to achieve the objectives of this resolution.
6. Furthermore, the Governors direct WGA staff to consult with the Staff Advisory Council regarding its efforts to realize the objectives of this resolution and to keep the Governors apprised of its progress in this regard.

Western Governors enact new policy resolutions and amend existing resolutions on a bi-annual basis. Please consult <http://www.westgov.org/resolutions> for the most current copy of a resolution and a list of all current WGA policy resolutions.