

Employer-Training Partnerships in Seattle/King County

A BLUEPRINT FOR WIN-WIN-WIN EXPERIENCES



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AUTHOR

Amy Nagley
Seattle Jobs Initiative



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INTRODUCTION

A key focus of Seattle Jobs Initiative (SJI) is on creating opportunities for low-income Seattle residents to advance to living-wage jobs through the attainment of skills that are in-demand within the labor market. As a workforce intermediary, SJI has emphasized and worked to facilitate mutually beneficial partnerships between the workforce system (namely training providers such as community colleges) and employers which, along with supportive services and navigation/coaching provided by partner community-based organizations, can effectively meet the need of jobseekers for well-paying jobs and of employers for skilled workers.

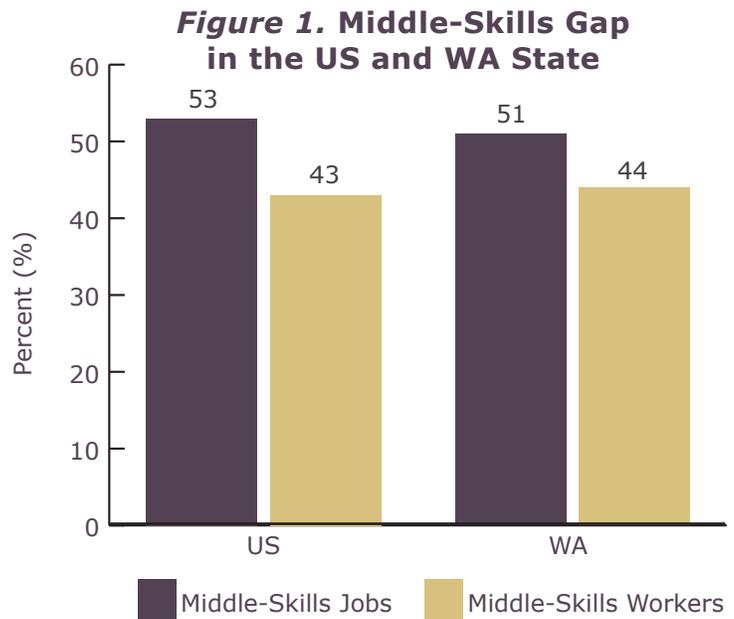
In 2017, SJI completed the development and launch of a new programmatic strategy, CareerConnect. CareerConnect is an “upskill-backfill” strategy in which individuals receive training for entry-level positions with local employers, who in turn provide opportunities for incumbent entry-level workers to advance to higher-paying positions at their businesses by supporting additional training. Upskill-backfill strategies like CareerConnect depend on formal partnerships between trainers such as community colleges and employers. Employers frequently cite fierce competition for the best candidates coming out of local training institutions and gaps in the levels of preparedness of those who complete training programs as critical human resources challenges. By partnering with training providers, employers can secure a talent pipeline of workers who have the specific skills they need, potentially reducing turnover and recruitment costs. At the same time, in partnering with employers, training institutions can improve the quality and relevance of their training programs while increasing the employment prospects of their students.

Beyond supporting programs built on employer-training partnerships such as CareerConnect, SJI, in conjunction with the City of Seattle’s Office of Economic Development, is committed to facilitating similar partnerships throughout the greater Seattle area. This research intends to do just this by providing context explaining why employer-training partnerships are so valuable, presenting some examples where these partnerships have been successfully developed, and providing a blueprint for training providers and employers interested in developing new partnerships.

BACKGROUND

Middle-skill jobs, which require education beyond high school but less than a 4-year degree, currently exceed the worker supply across the United States (US) and in Washington State (WA). When this type of “skills gap” exists, employers and industries struggle to remain globally and nationally competitive. In addition, the supply deficiency is indicative of missed opportunities for low-income individuals to improve their socio-economic conditions by receiving short-term training that would qualify them for the high-demand, middle-skill jobs.

Part of the skills gap issue stems from the disconnect between employers and trainers. Many employers report that trainers are sometimes not preparing students with the skills needed to succeed in the industry. Also, many trainers value and continually seek to increase employer engagement and participation in helping them to align curriculum experiences with industry demands. A variety of barriers have been identified as responsible for inhibiting better connections between employers and trainers; however, several organizations in the city of Seattle have overcome such barriers and are modeling ideal partnerships that lead to significant returns on investment (ROI) for trainers, employers, and jobseekers. The following sections will provide a discussion of the traditional employer-trainer disconnect, followed by ways that it can be addressed through employer-training partnerships. The discussion is based on qualitative data derived from model partnerships in the Seattle area, and includes details on the types of ROI that occur and can be expected from such partnerships. The last section includes an exploration of local employer-training partnership examples, how they work and were developed, and recommendations for expanding such partnerships to become the norm in the academic and industrial world.

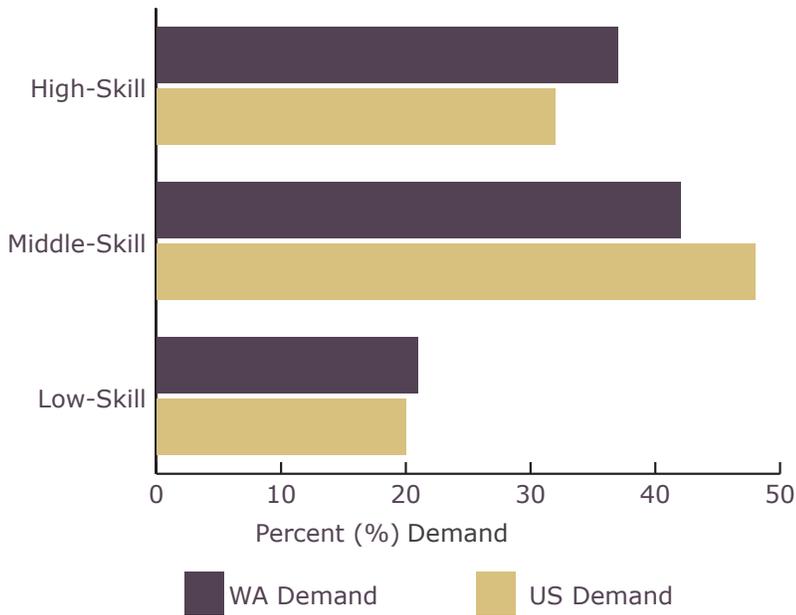


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THE LOCAL SKILLS GAP: WHAT ARE EMPLOYERS SEEKING?

Middle-skill jobs, which require education beyond high school but less than a 4-year degree are projected to comprise approximately 48% of total jobs in the US and 42% in Washington between 2014 and 2024.¹ While there is evidence that many of the country's middle-skill jobs have left the US (e.g., manufacturing, down 37% since 1979 peak),² the demand for middle-skill workers still outweighs the current supply as of 2015. These existing worker shortages have a negative impact on business productivity, local economic stability, and the US's ability to remain internationally competitive.³ The Washington Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board reports five major industries that are facing current and projected skills shortages across the state: (a) installation, maintenance, and repair, (b) manufacturing, production, (c) protective services, (d) health care, and (e) science technology.⁴ In Seattle/King County specifically, there are several occupational categories that require education beyond high school but less than

Figure 2. Projected Job Openings in the US and WA State by Skill Level



a 4-year degree that are projected to have high amounts of openings between 2014 and 2024 (see Figure 3). Shortages for Teacher Assistants, Nursing Assistants, and Computer User Support Specialist specifically, are expected to be between 400 and 500 positions per year through 2024.

The current skills gap is problematic for local business growth and community wellbeing. With shortages in these important industries, children may not receive the education they need, patients may not receive timely care, and technological advances

in the Seattle area may be inhibited. Furthermore, and equally important, the skills gap implies missed opportunities for individuals who are low-income with limited skill sets to advance into living-wage employment as a result of additional training. Whereas the national and local skills gaps are a product of many factors, a likely contributing factor is a wide-spread education-employer disconnect.⁵

Figure 3. Top Middle-Skill Job Openings: 2014-2024 in Seattle/King County

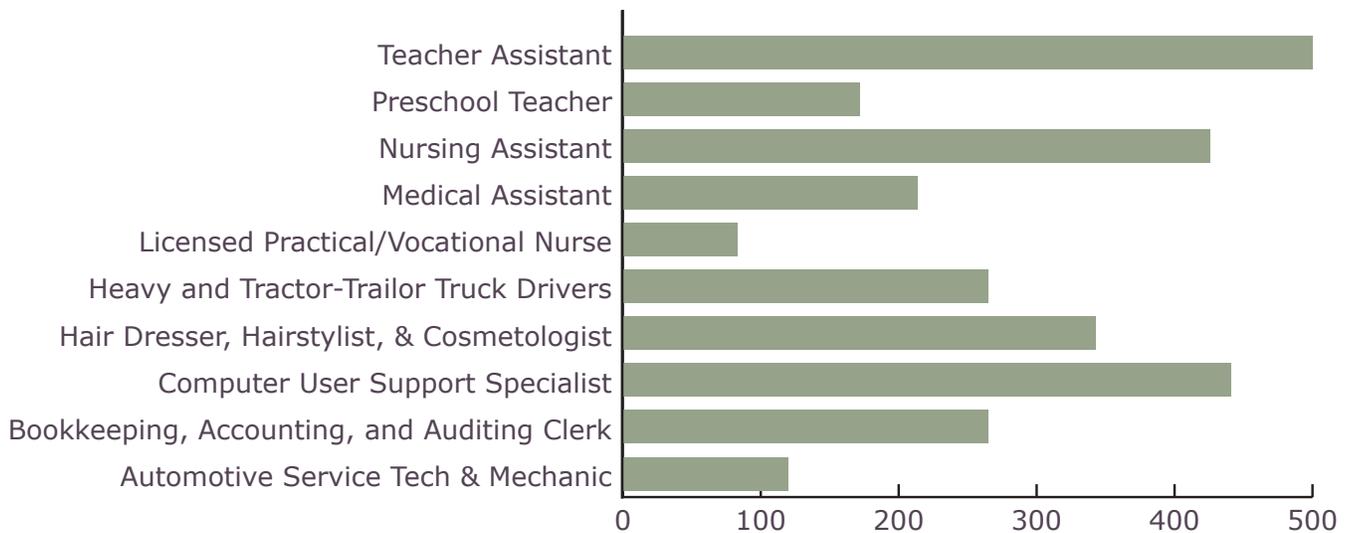


Figure 3 illustrates the middle-skill job categories in Seattle/King County that are facing the largest skill shortages. Source: Economic Security Department Data; retrieved 2017.

THE EDUCATION-EMPLOYER DISCONNECT

Across the US, only 14% of Americans say they are confident that college graduates are adequately prepared for the workplace. Whereas 96% of chief academic officers of colleges and universities report confidence in the way that students are being prepared, only 11% of business leaders agree.⁶

These results were obtained through a country-wide Gallup study and are based on reports alone (versus actual preparedness measures); however, they indicate a major disconnect between the experience of educational entities and workforce professionals. To corroborate these findings in part, the Council for Aid to

Are College Students Prepared for the Workforce?

Chief Academic Officers
96% Agree



Employers
11% Agree

Education (CAE) administered an assessment to 32,000 students across 169 colleges and universities to evaluate the extent to which students were prepared across several areas. Results indicated that 40% of students lacked the complex reasoning skills desired by employers upon graduation. However, students graduating with degrees related to math and science scored significantly higher than other fields such as the helping and service fields, as well as business.⁷

To build upon these findings, an additional study in the healthcare context indicated significant differences between employers' and academics' perceptions of graduates' communication skills, workplace etiquette, professional/technical skills, and leadership skills. However, employers and academics did agree on the critical importance of experiential opportunities such as internships, apprenticeships, previous employment, and volunteering that would help build those skills.⁸

What Does Preparedness Really Mean to Employers?

It is clear that a disconnect exists between employers' and trainers' perceptions of student preparedness. However, it is somewhat unclear what each party has in mind when discussing the concept of "student preparedness." With such large gaps in perception, employers and trainers are likely to have disparate ideas of what it means for students to be "workforce ready." For example, the high-demand occupations listed in Figure 3 require some education beyond high school that would ideally prepare students for that position in the workforce. In addition, each position requires skills that may be less objectively identifiable. The Burning Glass platform refers to these skills as "baseline skills" (see Table 1). Baseline skills refer to the types of skills that fall outside of technical qualifications, but are needed to do the job well. (Table 1 lists the top baseline skills needed

to perform the roles of teacher assistant, nursing assistant, and computer user support specialist, for example.)

Table 1. High-Demand Occupations and Skills Needed

Top High-Demand Occupations (Seattle)	Top Baseline Skills Needed
Teacher Assistant	Physical Demand (66.11%), Organizational Skills (65.56%), Mathematics (64.44%), Problem Solving (60.00%), Computer Skills (60.00%), Communication Skills (17.22%), English (16.11%), Writing (14.44%), and Planning (13.89%)
Nursing Assistant	Communication (21.32%), Writing (17.28%), English (16.36%), Team Work/Collaboration (15.81%), Range of Motion (15.81%), and Computer Skills (14.34%).
Computer User Support Specialist	Troubleshooting (60.61%), Communication (46.74%), Writing (29.24%), Problem Solving (29.14%), Research (18.16%), Detail-Oriented (17.69%), Team Work/Collaboration (14.90%), and Organizational (12.01%).

Table 1 provides the top baseline skills needed to perform the top three middle-skill jobs in Seattle/King County. Source: Burning Glass Data Platform; Data retrieved 2017. Note: Percentages represent the percent of job postings in the area that require the listed skill.

Platforms such as Burning Glass can be extremely helpful for understanding the major categories of skills that are needed to perform highly on the job. However, one might wonder what it truly means to manifest certain skills such as “communication skills” or “organizational skills,” within the context of a specific job. The type of communication that is desired can vary widely among work cultures and organizations. For example, a teacher’s assistant may need to be good at asking clarifying questions of the teacher to ensure role clarity, be adept at providing feedback and encouragement to students, and be able to redirect inappropriate behavior to facilitate an orderly classroom; whereas a nursing assistant may need to be proficient in clearly communicating serious needs of patients to the nurse and talking with patients in a compassionate way while bathing and feeding. Because similar concepts can vary widely across positions and organizations, it is extremely important that **employers and trainers be in continual communication** with each other about what specific skills are needed to train “employable” students, and how they can be developed through training.

85% OF JOB SUCCESS COMES FROM HAVING WELL-DEVELOPED SOFT AND PEOPLE SKILLS, AND ONLY 15% OF JOB SUCCESS COMES FROM TECHNICAL SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE.

STUDY CONDUCTED BY HARVARD UNIVERSITY, THE CARNEGIE FOUNDATION, AND STANFORD RESEARCH CENTER

What Makes a Candidate “Employable”?

On a broad level, the concept of “employability” has continued to evolve relative to the changing needs of the workforce. For example, definitions have ranged from “possession of qualities and competencies required to meet the changing needs of employers and customers,” to “the capability to move into and within labor markets.” More specifically, previous versions of the term have given way to a three-factor concept that includes: (a) labor market performance employability (i.e., hard skills), (b) initiative and individual responsibility, and (c) interactive, adaptive, and collective employability.⁹

In a study conducted by SJI, more than 75% of employers reported that “soft skills” were as, if not more, important than technical skills for securing entry-level employment.¹⁰ Furthermore, a study conducted by Harvard University, the Carnegie Foundation, and Stanford Research Center indicated that “85% of job success comes from having well-developed soft and people skills, and only 15% of job success comes from technical skills and knowledge.”¹¹ While hard skill development is typically said to be academic/trainer territory, it is less clear whose responsibility it is to teach soft skills. In the aforementioned study by SJI, the majority of employers reported that “employees themselves” are responsible for developing soft skills. Furthermore, 67% stated that the educational system should have an important role, followed by 54% who stated that they would be willing to play a role in helping employees to develop soft skills.¹⁰

Are Training Organizations Preparing Students for the Technical and Soft Skills That Are in Demand?

In the US and WA, more people are receiving higher education than ever before.¹² However, many individuals are still unemployed. According to the Economic Policy Institute (EPI), approximately 5.6% of college graduates nationwide are unemployed, and 12.6% are underemployed.¹³ In the city of Seattle, 6.4% of residents with some college or an associate’s degree are unemployed, and 3.2% of individuals with a bachelor’s degree are unemployed (see Table 2).

Table 2. Seattle Unemployment by Education Level

	2012		2015	
	Total	Unemployment Rate	Total	Unemployment Rate
Less than high school graduate	21,675	13.0%	22,615	10.7%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	39,284	10.8%	39,536	7.5%
Some college or associate’s degree	93,888	7.5%	94,361	6.4%
Bachelor’s degree or higher	224,507	3.9%	247,418	3.2%

Table 2 includes total and unemployment rate for Seattle residents by educational level. Source: American Community Survey; Data retrieved 2017.

Figure 4. Unemployment Rate by Educational Attainment in Seattle, WA

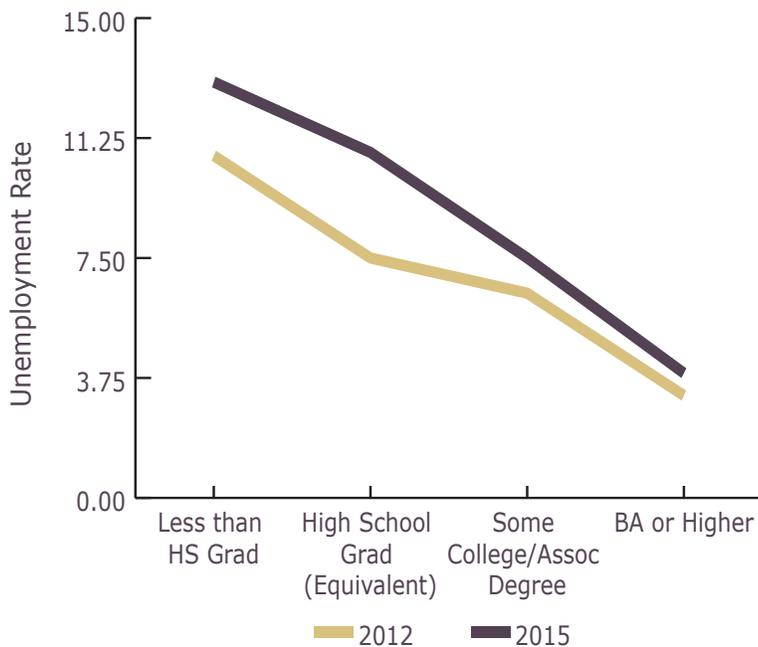


Figure 4 depicts the linear relationship between educational attainment and unemployment rate in Seattle, WA across 2012 and 2015.

These results suggest a linear relationship between educational attainment and unemployment rates (see Figure 4), indicating that residents who obtain some kind of education beyond high school tend to fare better than those who do not. However, the reality is that approximately 13,956 individuals with some college education (at least) are still unemployed in the city.

It is difficult to determine the reason for so many unemployed, educated individuals, especially when Seattle has informally been named “one of the hottest markets in the country.”¹⁴ Reasons likely include numerous scenarios such as a number of educated mothers who have chosen to stay home to

provide childcare, students choosing out-of-demand majors, or a lack of cultural capital that is needed to climb up the career ladder. The latter has been the target of a wealth of study endeavors in the educational and professional domains, such that it directly correlates with unemployment and can potentially be targeted through more intentional educational programming.¹⁵

Many Students Need Help Developing Cultural and Social Capital in Addition to Skills.

One reason some college-educated individuals may have difficulty connecting to employment is a lack of the cultural and social capital needed to network and compete in a competitive labor market. *Cultural capital* refers to class-specific dispositions, tastes/preferences, behaviors, material possessions, or even educational credentials that inform the way that individuals show up, interact, and act in the world.¹⁶ Furthermore, *social capital* refers to the extent to which one can carry out community norms, act in ways that align with social expectations, and communicate in ways that are common among the dominant group.¹⁷

Extensive research in the educational domain has suggested that minority groups, vulnerable populations, and first-generational college students are often limited in their ability to climb up social and cultural ladders as a result of the constraining power of capital.^{18, 19} In addition to being at an economic disadvantage, these individuals may be less likely than individuals from higher socio-economic status (SES) families to

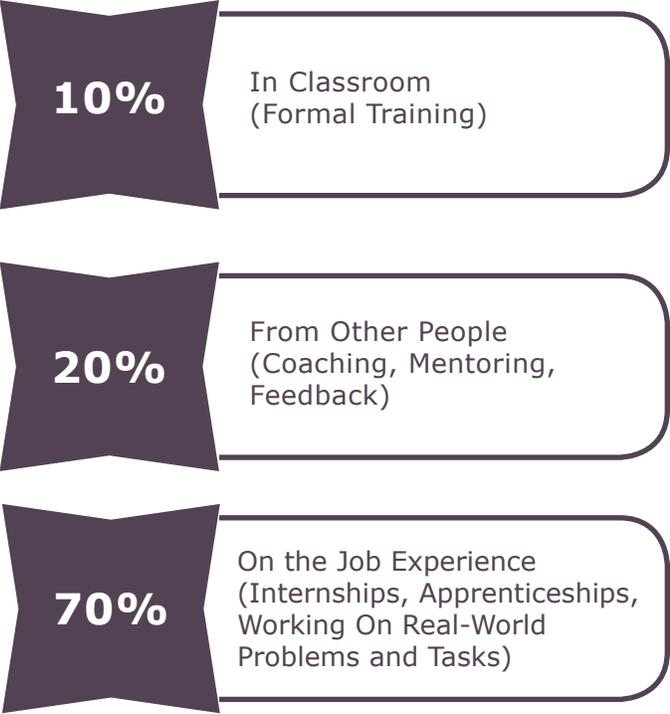
experience the opportunities that can help them to develop the behaviors and dispositions necessary to connect and thrive in the dominant culture’s workforce. Perhaps many of these individuals were able to leverage resources needed to get through college, but without the appropriate opportunities to develop forms of capital, they potentially find themselves unable to compete in the competitive workforce.

Many colleges are challenged to find ways to help these students acquire the capital needed to compete in the labor market. One important solution is providing students early, low-risk opportunities to experience the workplace, such as through employer internships and apprenticeships. Employer-training partnerships are valuable in offering these opportunities. See Appendix A for a detailed discussion of how many students are failing to develop cultural and social capital and how employers are needed to help.

Are Employers Doing Their Part in the Process of Preparing Talent?

Most would argue that training students and citizens for the jobs of tomorrow should be a two-way street between trainers and employers. In addition to academic curriculum that takes place in the classroom, all parties (employers and academics) argue that applied experiences and industry-led training are important. In fact, rigorous work in the field of Industrial-Organizational Psychology has indicated that only 10% of learning actually happens in the classroom under formal training, while 20% happens through other people (e.g., feedback, coaching, mentoring), and 70% happens through real work experience.²³ An Accenture survey referenced by the Harvard Business Review suggests that approximately 55% of workers and unemployed citizens feel like they are “under pressure” to develop

skills that are conducive to future jobs; however, only 21% believe that they have acquired the needed skills through formal, employer-led training.²⁴



In 2014, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) was passed (replaced the Workforce Investment Act; WIA), which strongly emphasizes and encourages employer engagement and applied experiences in workforce training programs. WIOA is the primary federal workforce development legislation administered by the U.S. Department of Labor, which seeks to “strengthen and improve our national public workforce system and help get Americans, including youth and those with significant barriers

to employment, into high-quality jobs and careers and help employers hire and retain skilled workers.”²⁵ During the WIA era, employers were required to make up a majority of the local workforce investment boards. However, they generally did not play a major role in directing local programs.²⁶ To date, a wealth of anecdotal writing on employer engagement in the US exists; however, there is little scientific evidence that suggests the extent to which employers are currently engaged (or disengaged) with educational institutions nationwide. As is evidenced however by the American Association of Community Colleges,²⁷ “pockets” of employer engagement relationships are occurring across the US.

Many employer and training entities are currently engaging in “sectoral training,” also known as, “sector initiatives,” a model of workforce development which focuses on quickly growing industries (e.g., health and technology) and strong levels of employer engagement. Sectoral trainings can take the form of partnerships between employers, trainers, and intermediaries that help to dissolve silos and prepare students for meaningful employment through real-world experiences. With the introduction of WIOA funds, training partnerships have been creating programs that can also provide resources needed to eliminate barriers to training (e.g., transportation, housing assistance, etc.). This model has shown to be extremely effective for a variety of outcomes (e.g., total earnings, hours worked, reduction in public benefits, etc.). The Sectoral Employment Impact Study,²⁸ which assessed outcomes of three different programs (i.e., Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership, Jewish Vocational Service-Boston, and Per Scholas) has provided the strongest evidence to date of the effectiveness of this type of workforce training model.

Employers & Workforce Investment

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SECTORAL TRAINING IN SEATTLE

Seattle Colleges, comprised of Central, North, South, and Seattle Vocational Institute, are dedicated to leading the way in innovative employer-training partnerships. As a built-in mechanism to facilitate partnerships across industries, each of their 135 professional-technical career programs has a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) that is comprised of professionals from local businesses, labor and professional organizations, and others who have expertise in the competencies needed to be successful on the job.

The TACs meet quarterly, and serve as a two-way street of communication between the college and the system of employers. Employers have the opportunity to voice their

talent needs, provide feedback to instructors on course offerings and schedules, and inform the college of upcoming industry changes. At the same time, the college has the opportunity to share their ideas for curriculum development with employers to ensure relevancy, ask for their help in terms of equipment or training supplies, and inform employers of the volume of students coming down the pipeline. In addition to the TACs, the Seattle college system comprises several elaborate partnerships between various departments and community employers that have led to employer-driven training, on-the-job experience, increased job placements, and more.

Of all the strategic partnerships that are occurring across the 135 Seattle college programs, three sets of partnership systems stand out as exemplary. The discussions that follows will be a product of qualitative data collected from individuals involved in the following three sets of Seattle partnerships: (1) South Seattle College and Vigor Industrial, (2) Shoreline College and the Washington Auto Dealers Association, and (3) South Seattle College and a Consortium of Heavy Diesel Mechanic Employers.

DEFINING EMPLOYER-TRAINING PARTNERSHIPS

An employer-training partnership refers to a strategic relationship between an employer and a training organization, such that both entities are better able to meet their goals and fulfill their missions with the assistance of the other. As mentioned, partnerships tend to come in many shapes and sizes, and involve various amounts of engagement between partners.

Who Initiates the Partnership

The partnership can be initiated by the training organization, or the employer. Training organizations may seek out employers to meet various needs (e.g., need updated, specialized equipment, or technical assistance with changing technology), and the employer must decide if the partnership will be a good investment for them. For example, in the 1980s an instructor in the manufacturing department at Shoreline College wanted to create better connections with local employers for the good of the community and the college students. He contacted the Puget Sound Automotive Dealership Association (PSADA) to see if they had a need for training incumbent workers. He initially framed the discussion in terms of projected ROI, which included saving approximately \$25-50K per employer as a result of training incumbent workers locally instead of sending them to Portland as had been traditional practice. As a result of continued discussions, building of relationships, and negotiations, PSADA began to lease space on the college campus. After multiple capital campaigns led by the instructor, the Professional Automotive Training Center was born. Today, the partnership is between the college and the WA Auto Dealers Association. Dealers such as Ford, GM, Toyota, Honda, Chrysler, and Subaru have training pockets on site, and lead their own sponsored programs at the college that have helped numerous students to gain meaningful, livable-wage employment (see Appendix B).^{29, 30}

On the other hand, an employer may approach a training organization with specific needs (e.g., needs access to a pipeline of talent for the next 10 years, or needs to provide training to incumbent workers), at which point the training organization decides if they want to commit to the partnership. For example, in 2013 Vigor Industrial Shipyards was interested in committing to a partnership that would help the shipbuilding community in the region. They had a need for creating a pipeline for future staffing needs, and desired a training program for incoming and incumbent workers. Following a convening referred to as, “Beyond Our Entities: What Does the Community Need,” the Executive Administrator of HR for Vigor and the Associate Vice Chancellor of workforce development at South Seattle College worked together to create a plan that would result in a partnership that would revolve around the “Harbor Island Training Center,” which is located on site at Vigor. Today, the training center is administered by the college, who leases space from Vigor. As a built-in continual connection between the college and Vigor, the college employs a current Vigor employee to serve as the lead instructor. The center allows for a clear pipeline of talent for Vigor, and the opportunity for high-quality on-the-job experience for students (see Appendix C).^{31, 32}

Partnering Systems

In addition to partnerships between a single training organization and an employer for meeting a specific need, many organizations are developing *systems of partnerships*. For example, the Diesel Industry Sector Cohort (DISC) program at South Seattle College encompasses a partnership system between the college and a consortium of employers who have committed to investing on various levels.^{31, 32} As a result of 25 years in workforce development, an instructor in South Seattle College’s Diesel and Heavy Equipment program leveraged previous connections to build partnerships with a consortium of diesel employers. There was a great demand for qualified mechanics in the industry, and many companies didn’t have the resources for internal training programs. Opportunities for ROI were apparent to industry employers; by participating in the partnership, they would have access to a pipeline of talent and local incumbent worker training. Costs associated with recruiting, training, and retaining talent would be greatly offset through the partnership. Today a variety of industry employers such as Pape, King County Metro, Cummins, and more participate in various levels of student sponsorship, incumbent worker training, and a variety of other engagement activities (see Appendix D).^{33, 34}

In addition, some employers are beginning to create and participate in their own training systems that involve a training entity. Throughout numerous focus groups with employers in the fields of healthcare, manufacturing, and other middle-skill occupations, a strong theme of “poaching” emerged. Many employers struggle with losing talented people to employers with greater resources, and fear that employees will turn over after the company has invested resources in training. Some companies however, have begun thinking about poaching in new ways. Vigor Industrial Shipyards for example, has discussed the potential for “linking arms” with other shipyard employers and inviting

incumbent workers into their partnership with South Seattle College (i.e., the Harbor Island Training Center). Their idea is that when demand shifts for different companies, they can strategically relocate skilled incumbent workers into their competitor companies instead of laying people off. When the demand comes back up for a given company, they do not have to start from scratch with the recruiting and hiring process, but can instead reach out to the shipbuilding community with their need. This model may sound idealistic, but the ultimate goal is to create a working “ecosystem” where employers work together instead of against each other.

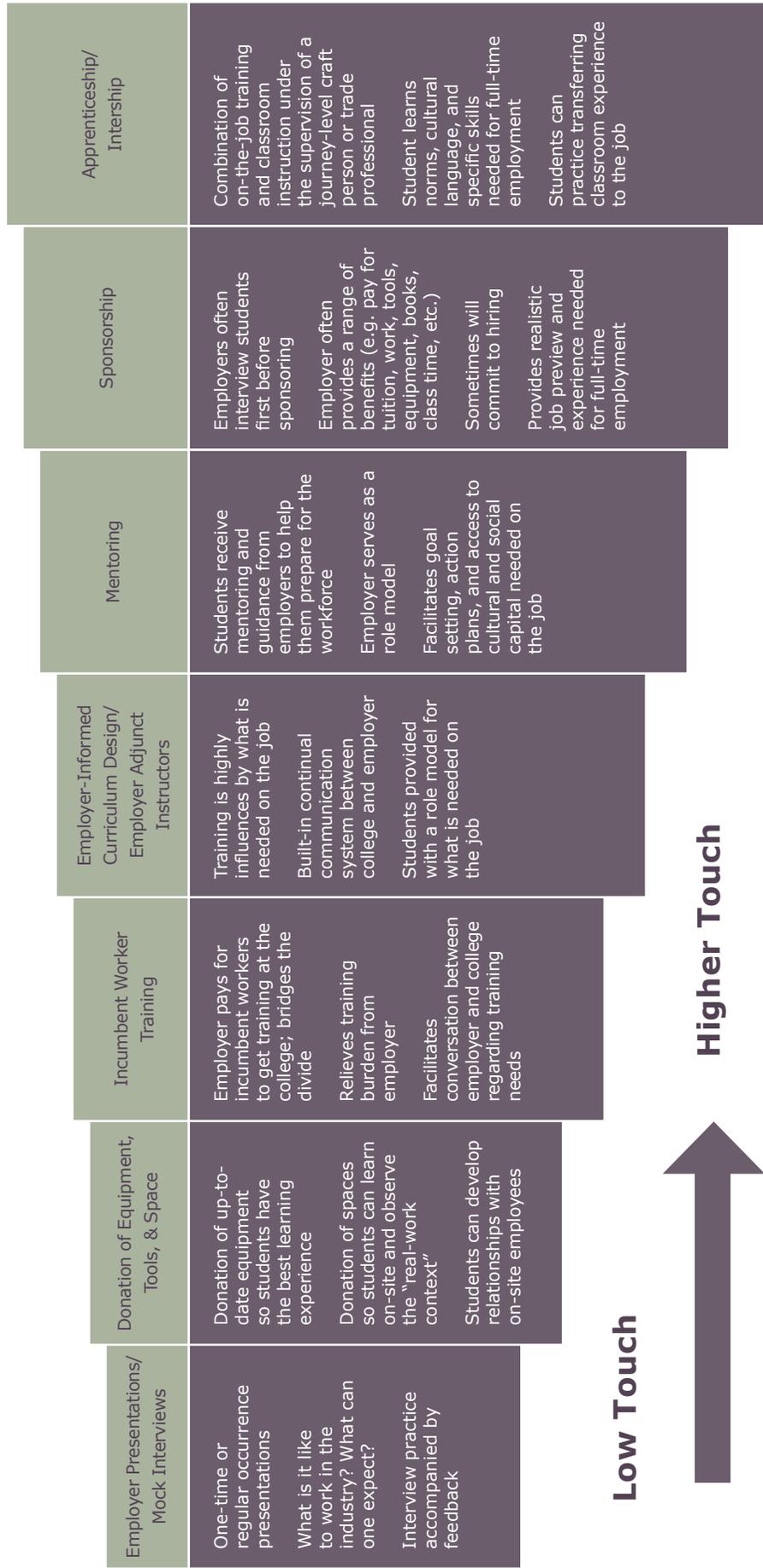
Providing a Continuum of Partnership Options

As mentioned, only 10% of learning happens in the classroom, leaving approximately 90% of learning to occur through real-world experience and the guidance of other professionals.²³ Therefore, the best case scenarios for employer-training partnerships are those that provide opportunities for applied learning options (e.g., apprenticeships, internships, sponsorships, etc.) and mentorship. However, because some companies are better equipped to partner in more rigorous ways than others due to available resources, it is in the best interest of the partnership sponsors to set up partnering systems to be flexible. South Seattle’s DISC program sponsor has suggested setting up a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to be conducive to various levels of engagement. By providing employers with a continuum of options for partnering, employers can decide what works best for them. For example, some employers such as King County Metro participate at a high level of engagement. They pay for tuition, wages for three hours of school per week, books, parking, and they provide an interest-free loan for students to purchase their tools.³³ Other companies that want to participate in the partnership but do not have a high level of resources may choose to lead mock interviews with students, donate equipment, etc. The college instructor that champions the partnership believes strongly that every partnership and effort, no matter how small counts. The following sub-section will briefly describe several of the options that may be are often included in local partnership MOUs, which include: (a) Apprenticeship, (b) Internship, (c) Sponsorship, (d) Mentoring Programs, (e) Employer-Informed Curriculum Design, (f) Employer Adjunct Instructors, (g) Incumbent Worker Training, (h) Donation of Equipment and/or Training Space, (i) Employer Presentations, and (j) Employer-Led Mock Interviews.

“IF YOU SET UP YOUR MOU TO BE FLEXIBLE, COMPANIES CAN CHOOSE THEIR LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT BASED ON THE RESOURCES THEY HAVE AND WHAT THEY CAN OFFER AT THAT TIME. THIS WAY, YOU GET A SYSTEM OF EMPLOYERS PROVIDING A REALM OF ENRICHING SERVICES.”

SOUTH SEATTLE COLLEGE DISC PROGRAM SPONSOR

Continuum of Options for Partnering



A Description of Partnership Options

Apprenticeship. An apprenticeship is a “combination of on-the-job training (OJT) and related classroom instruction under the supervision of a journey-level craft person or trade professional in which workers learn the practical and theoretical aspects of a highly skilled occupation.”³⁵ Apprenticeships typically need to be approved and registered by the state, and are subject to state and federal regulations. By participating in an apprenticeship, students are able to gain the cultural and social capital needed to succeed in the specific work environment for which they are training. They learn the norms, cultural language, and specific skills needed to work effectively with others and do the job well.

Internship. Internships may be provided inside or outside of a formal employee sponsorship. Either way, employers are likely to interview interested students and hire them for a time period (can be paid or unpaid) to come to the company and work on site. Students gain the opportunity to learn hard skills that are specific to the company, practice transferring their academic learning to a real-world setting, and develop the cultural and social capital that is specific to the company. Other soft skills can be learned as well, such as the importance of clocking in on time, being reliable, and engaging in strong work ethic.

Sponsorship. Employers may choose to interview students first, and then select the individuals that they will sponsor throughout the remainder of their academic program. Once the student is under sponsorship, the employer may provide a range of benefits (e.g., pay for tuition, part-time paid work, pay for tools and equipment, pay for books, pay for class time, etc.). While some employers may not commit to full-time hire upon graduation, many choose to hire 100% of the sponsored students. Like apprenticeships, employee sponsorships enable students to build social and cultural capital needed to succeed on the job in the specific work context. It also provides a realistic preview to employers of what they can expect out of that student once hired full-time.



Mentoring Programs. In many cases, employers may not have the resources to fully sponsor or hire students. However, they may choose to provide mentoring services that consist of regular meetings, guidance, discussions, reflections, goal setting, and other activities that will help the student to progress on their vocational trajectory. Mentoring programs work best when the mentor and the student schedule their meetings ahead of time, or structure a plan for ensuring that meetings happen regularly. The mentor may talk with the student about his/her own experience in the industry, ask questions of the student to help them identify their interests and next steps, and help them to set goals to take those steps. Many students find it helpful to discuss barriers that the

mentor has experienced in the past, and how the student can learn from the mentor's experience to identify and plan for anticipated barriers on their own path. While mentoring doesn't provide the direct on-the-job experience and training that apprenticeships and sponsorships do, it does provide the student with a professional role model that he/she can leverage as a network connection, source of information, and model for developing appropriate types of social and cultural capital needed to be successful in the field. In some cases, the mentoring relationship may lead to the student getting a job with the mentor's company or another company where the mentor has ties.

Employer-Informed Curriculum Design. Another major complaint by employers is that colleges and training organizations sometimes teach "by the book," and do not focus enough on teaching the skills that are actually needed to succeed in the industry. To ensure that there is proper alignment between the curriculum and the real work, employers may collaborate with the instructors to design the curriculum. The employers prepare for the curriculum design by conducting various forms of job analyses for the target roles (i.e., what knowledge, skills, and abilities are needed to succeed?) and bring them to the instructors. Subsequently, the instructors and employers co-design the curriculum to align with the real jobs.

Employer Adjunct Instructors. Going a step beyond employer-informed curriculum design, employers may actually send a highly-skilled incumbent worker to the college or training facility to teach. The college hires the person through their system, and provides them with autonomy to design the course the way they see fit for aligning industry with the classroom. This type of instruction can help students to not only learn the specific skills needed for the job, but provides them with a constant role model that can deliver feedback and show them what kind of person is needed to do the job. The instructor is likely to set up the classroom to mimic the work environment by requiring students to clock in and out, and engage in similar behaviors necessary for the real job. The instructor is also in a position to recognize "star students," and potentially help them to get their foot in the door with their company.

Incumbent Worker Training. On a bit of a different note, employers may also request that the college assist in training the company's incumbent workers. Many employers may not have the space and teaching resources to devote to ongoing training, so they can partner with the college to train their people. Often times, the training received will be highly influenced by the employer through collaborative curriculum design or employer adjunct instructors. It is a win-win for the employer and college to share resources and training burdens. For the employer, they are able to save large amounts of money by sending incumbent workers to a local training facility (rather than out of state). For the college, it is likely that they are receiving tools/equipment and curriculum guidance from the employer to ensure that the training is aligned with the industry need. This model can also help to continue the relationship and conversation between the college and employer.

Donation of Equipment and/or Training Space. One major complaint of people in industry is that colleges often train students with outdated equipment, and when the student is hired they do not know how to operate the machines or technology. Because colleges are typically operating on tight budgets, employers can donate equipment and training space to the colleges for win-win outcomes. Some examples may include cars (for auto repair), garages, tools, medical equipment, etc. When training spaces are offered on site at the company, students can drastically benefit just by being in close proximity to the job. They can observe the work that is being done, how people act, and may even meet incumbent workers and develop relationships.

Employer Presentations. Employers may choose to visit the college or training facility and provide various types of presentations for students. These presentations can be a one-time or regular occurrence, and may include specific information about the what it is like to work in the industry, safety training, or any other topic that the employer sees as pertinent to the student's education. These presentations can be helpful for providing realistic previews to students for what they can expect on their current career path, and can offer them a professional contact for future networking.



Employer-Led Mock Interviews.

Many students have no idea what it is like to go into a real job interview. To provide them with an opportunity to practice, some employers agree to lead mock interviews at the college or on site at their company. They will likely choose roles that are currently in demand, and interview the student as if it was a real-life interview. These mock interviews work best when employers take time at the end of the interview to debrief and provide feedback to the

student. The employer may also choose to provide feedback in real-time during the interview for immediacy. It is important that employers set up these feedback sessions by encouraging a "learning orientation." By communicating to students that it is okay to mess up or fail, they are encouraged to perceive the employer's feedback as a positive thing that can help them to learn and grow, and ultimately do better when a real interview occurs.

Regardless of the level of partnering at which an employer or college seeks to engage, the partnership will require an investment of time and resources. Those who are engaged in long-standing partnerships report that to truly nurture the relationship, **there should be a major champion on both the employer and trainer sides.** Before organizations feel comfortable investing, they may wonder what kind of returns they can expect. As partnerships are becoming more frequent in the Seattle/King County area, as well as throughout the US, dialogue around return on investment (ROI) has emerged as an important need.

BARRIERS TO SECTORAL TRAINING

Whereas sectoral training results are compelling, many barriers continue to inhibit employer-based training programs. Some of these are: (a) high costs to recruit and engage employers combined with small numbers of trainees needed by individual employers, (b) difficulty in financing curriculum development, (c) institutional barriers to being responsive to employer needs, (d) training programs may not know how to communicate with employers, (e) firms are often wary of working with the government, (f) inhibiting faculty contracts and educational structures, and (g) firms are often wary of working with other firms.³⁶ These types of barriers continue to perpetuate silos between employers, training institutions, and other community-based organizations. A conglomeration of research focused on making meaningful change in the midst of barriers indicates three factors that need to be in place: motivation to change, knowing how to make a change, and how to sustain the change over time.^{37, 38} The following sections will target these factors with discussions around ROI (provides motivation to partner), high-level steps involved in beginning a partnership, and suggestions for understanding and overcoming barriers for sustained partnering.

THE BUSINESS CASE FOR EMPLOYER-TRAINING PARTNERSHIPS (ROI)

Return on investment is typically at the root of employer-training partnership formation and maintenance. For an employer, the ROI is often associated with reduced staffing, training, turnover, and lost-productivity costs. For the college, the major returns involve heightened reputation (higher admissions), student satisfaction, financial support for tools/equipment, and assurance of industry-aligned education. With regards to measuring ROI, many organizations have calculated various outcomes such as the cost of wages, lodging, food, and travel for sending students out of state for training (versus partnering with a local college at home) to justify the resources that go into partnering.

To gain a better understanding of the ROI variables that often bring people into partnerships, numerous interviews were conducted with individuals who have had significant roles in developing and/or maintaining employer-training partnerships in the Seattle/King County region. When asked why they chose to enter into such a partnership, three major themes emerged for both employers and trainers. The themes were:

Employer	Trainer
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Access to talent pipeline• Local training• Inform curriculum for job-ready talent	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• College reputation• Access to industry knowledge• Higher-quality education as a result of on-the-job training opportunities

Employer Themes

To gain access to a pipeline of talent that can fill the current and corecasted skills gap.

- A need for local training (as opposed to sending employees to other states to be trained) and/or to avoid in-house training costs (e.g., \$8,594 per workers in the case of the Shoreline College and WA Auto Dealers Association partnership, described earlier^{29, 30})
- To inform college curriculum to ensure that students are job-ready when entering into the local workforce.
- Labor savings as a result of employing a student (e.g., \$170,280 across two years in the case of the Shoreline College and WA Auto Dealers Association partnership, described earlier^{29, 30})

Trainer Themes

- Heightened college reputation; high percent of students being hired directly out of training.
- Access to industry knowledge in the form of adjunct instructors, employer-informed curriculum design, etc.
- Ability to provide higher-quality education for students as a result of on-the-job experience provided by employer internships, apprenticeships, etc.
- Increased enrollment (FTE) as a result of heightened reputation for quality education and job placement

Because return on investment (ROI) is specific to the context of a partnership, various metrics are discussed relative to each case study in Appendices B-D.

Measuring ROI Going Forward

Whereas most organizations discuss overarching reasons for why they choose to dedicate resources toward employer-training partnerships, few have built into their systems clear metrics for measuring such ROI. In addition to asking Seattle partnership leaders about the ROI that they experience, they were also asked what they believe would be ideal metrics that they wish they would have measured from the beginning (or that they would recommend others to measure). The following list includes ideas for ROI metrics that would ideally be identified and measure before, throughout, and after employer-trainer partnership formation. Employers and trainers who are just now starting to form their partnerships may find this list particularly helpful, as it is highly recommended that ROI metrics be identified at the onset of the partnership and measured throughout for evaluative purposes.

ROI

By partnering with Shoreline College, employers save approximately: (A) \$8,594 per incumbent worker that needs ongoing training, (B) \$26,928 per worker that would need to be trained to the equivalency of a program graduate, and (C) \$34,152 in employing and training a program graduate. Lastly, if the student logs four hours of labor for each eight hours worked at the dealership over two years in the program, the dealership realizes \$170,280 in additional labor income.

Shoreline College & WA Auto Dealers Association

Suggested ROI Metrics

Costs associated with training incumbent workers internally

Costs of lost productivity due to understaffing

Costs of recruiting for understaffed positions

Earned revenue as a result of employing students for 4 hours for every 8 hours worked over 2 years

Costs associated with turnover; Reasons for turnover

Measuring and Analyzing ROI Metrics

Rather than thinking about how a partnership is paying off after it has been underway, it is in the best interest of the employer and trainer to identify the main goals and objectives of the partnership up front so that metrics can be identified and collected at baseline and various time points thereafter. Some questions that employers and trainers might ask to identify these goals and objectives are:

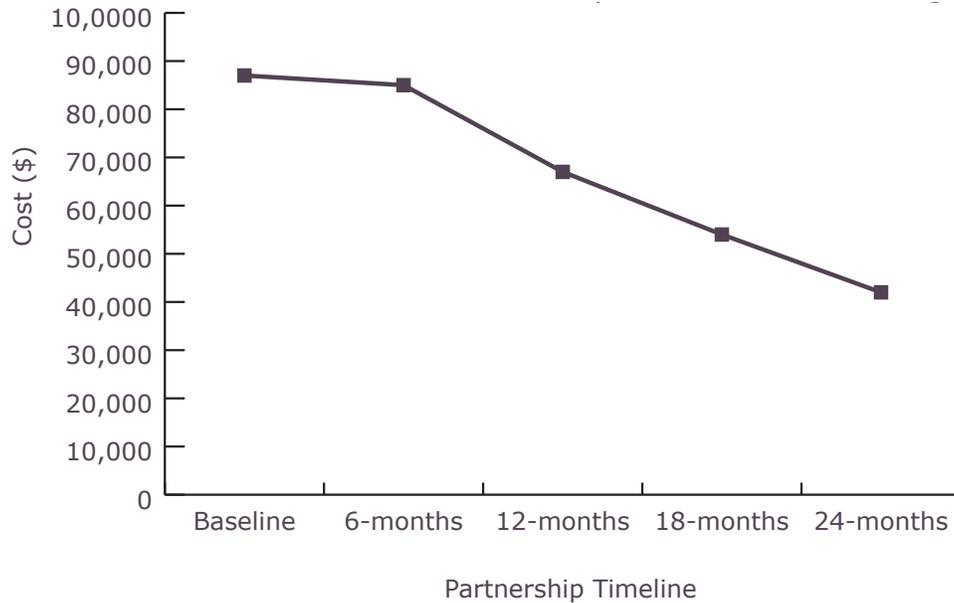
- **Why did we decide to partner?**
- **What is the objective goal of this partnership?**
 - ✧ How can we turn that goal into a metric?
 - ✧ How would we measure it?
 - ✧ Who would be in charge of measuring?
- **What do we hope to get out of this partnership?**
 - ✧ How could that be measured objectively?
 - ✧ Who would be in charge of measuring?

Once employers and trainers have identified their goals and objectives of partnering, it is important to think strategically about how that data will be collected. Depending on the goal, some of the data might be housed in the human resources department (e.g., training costs for sending incumbent workers out of state, etc.), and other data might be calculated and kept by department directors (e.g., cost of lost productivity due to understaffed positions). The important consideration is that the goals are clear, metrics are developed, and a plan is made for how and by whom it will be collected and stored.

Once baseline data is collected and the partnership begins, the same metrics can be used to collect additional data over time. It is important to have a person who is well versed in research methods and statistics to handle this data so that it can be converted

to meaningful stories about how the partnership is showing to be effective. For example, the data analyst might conduct statistical analyses to determine if significant differences exist between costs related to lost productivity at baseline and after the partnership.

Figure 5. Example: Cost of Lost Productivity Due to Understaffing



If significant differences do exist and plausible explanations have been ruled out, then the argument can be made that the partnership has likely improved productivity. In addition, the analyst might also calculate effect sizes (i.e., how large is the effect of the partnership on reduced costs), while controlling for partnership inputs (e.g., the amount of resources that have been put into the partnership through equipment, etc.). The more rigorously data is collected, the more clearly and accurately stories can be told regarding ROI of the partnership. **Partnership point people argue that they would be more likely to enter into a partnership if the other party came to them with well-thought-out ROI metrics and gauges for what they can expect by entering into the partnership.**

MAKING PARTNERSHIPS THE NORM: A BLUEPRINT FOR EMPLOYER-TRAINING PARTNERSHIPS

The second factor involved in making meaningful change amongst barriers entails understanding how employer-training partnerships are developed, and being capable of taking the actual steps. The following section will draw from local partnership models and provide a set of high-level steps involved in developing employer-training partnerships. Because the route to partnering may involve disparate steps depending on who chooses to initiate the partnership, the section will be divided between partnerships initiated by the college and the employer.



College-Initiated Partnerships

The 2014 Training Industry Report indicated that the average cost for training expenditures for large companies was approximately \$17.6 million, \$1.5 million for mid-size companies, and \$301,082 for small companies.³⁹ To alleviate the burden from employers, colleges may approach them to set up a partnership by marketing their ability to provide training for incumbent workers and students that will soon be entering the workforce. The college already has instructors that can dedicate large amounts of time to curriculum development and program improvement, and is equipped with training space that employers oftentimes do not have. Some of the multiple college motivations for entering into partnerships may include: (a) creating a pipeline from training to employment for students, (b) building business through incumbent worker training, (c) improving the college's reputation through high job placement values, (d) the need for updated and specialized equipment/technology, (e) the need for industry knowledge and remaining relevant to the market, and (f) enrichment of student education through employer engagement (e.g., mentoring, internships, apprenticeships, etc.).

Action Steps for College-Initiated Partnering^{29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34}

Based on best practices set forth by partners in the local system, the following high-level action steps have been developed for providing guidance to college leaders who are interested in setting up partnerships.



Internal (College) Planning

1

Identify Potential Employer Partnership Opportunities

The college department that is seeking partnership should first identify the industries and occupations that align with the department’s mission and targeted training programs, and then identify key local employers that are hiring or likely to hire a significant number of individuals for these occupations. Utilizing local labor market information (LMI) available from state labor/employment security agencies and local workforce development entities (e.g., American Job Centers) can help colleges identify employers that are likely to have significant projected growth and/or replacement rates. The department might do some preliminary work to determine potential partnership targets by writing out all the ways that the partnership will benefit the college and the employer’s unmet needs, and what steps and time would be required by both parties to make the partnership work. These metrics can be used later to inform a partnership plan (described below).



2

Develop a College Partnership Team

Create a partnership team to lead the effort on behalf of the college department to initiate and execute the partnership process with the targeted employer(s). The team should appoint a leader who will serve as a project manager and point person for approaching the employer(s). Ideally, this individual will be a great interpersonal communicator, have the ability to build meaningful and lasting relationships, have a drive for results, and be willing to think and work outside of the box for the health of the partnership. This individual should have a strong level of situational and interpersonal awareness, and be able to take others' perspectives and empathize.

3

Develop a Partnership Plan to Pitch to Employer(s)

Intentionally develop a Partnership Plan to pitch to the employer (or group of employers) that includes general components of the desired partnership, roles and responsibilities, and what the college and employer can expect to get out of the partnership. For example, if the employer is currently sending incumbent workers out of state for training, the pitch may include the amount of dollars they could expect to save if they partnered with the college to build a local training facility. If possible, calculating an objective return on investment (ROI) for the employer showing how the partnership will make the company more competitive can be a valuable part of the Partnership Plan. The Plan should include as many process steps for the partnership activities as possible to make the pitch more concrete.

4

Identify the Target Employer Point Person

The college department planning team should identify for each employer a point person that the planning team leader will contact to begin the conversation about partnership. Ensure that the person has decision-making authority, and is in a position to advocate for the partnership at the corporate/administrative level. The individual, for example, may be a company executive or hiring manager/head of human resources. The college planning team leaders should approach this person and pitch the Plan that includes projected ROI.

Partnership Development

1

Collaboratively Develop a Partnership Logic Model and Strategic Plan

The college planning team should work together with the employer(s) to develop and formalize a partnership logic model that includes college and employer inputs, activities (i.e., process steps), outputs, and outcomes. With regard to the activities component, create a strategic plan that clearly documents each process step and who will be responsible for its completion. Taking time up front to complete these planning steps will facilitate clear roles and responsibilities and avoid later confusion. In addition, identify the metrics that will be measured throughout the partnership to calculate ROI. Once the employer and college groups agree on the model and plan, create and sign an MOU or contract. Be sure to build in flexibility so the partnership has room to change and grow with continuing needs.

2

Form a Curriculum Advisory Committee

After a MOU or contract has been completed, put together an advisory committee of employers that can inform curriculum development (make sure the employer point person is included). Sit down in person on multiple occasions to understand desired learning outcomes and specific competencies needed to perform highly on the job. After the curriculum has been designed, provide it to the advisory committee for feedback and amendment. Be creative in restructuring current course offerings to fit within the new curriculum.

3

Facilitate State Legislature Approval

If possible, identify and communicate with larger employers or employer associations that can help to involve state legislature representatives in the partnership process, as they can provide appropriation and advocate that the partnership speaks to the regional economic need.

Partnership Operations

1

Develop a Feedback Loop Between the Student, College, and Employer

If internships, apprenticeships, or sponsorships are part of the partnership, develop a plan for a college- or employer-based point person to engage in a regularly-scheduled feedback loop between the college, student, and employer to ensure that students are engaged in meaningful work that is part of the conditions of the partnership. This feedback loop may consist of regular visits to the employer site, regular meetings with students, etc. The process will also ensure that small bits of information can get translated back and forth on a continuous basis for process improvement.

2

Engage in Regularly-Scheduled Advisory Committee Meetings

Set up regularly-scheduled advisory committee meetings (e.g., quarterly) that include the point persons from the employer, the college, and others with relevant stake in the partnership. The purpose of these meetings is to give and receive feedback from partners, acknowledge barriers and identify solutions in the partnership system, and discuss other unanticipated events/situations. These meetings will also ensure that as employer needs change over time, the college can adapt quickly and efficiently.

Partnership Measurement & Evaluation

1

Measure and Evaluate Partnership Outcomes

Measure and evaluate outcomes of the partnership based on the original goals and objectives of the partnership. Because the nature of each partnership is different, there is no one-size-fits all approach to evaluation. Evaluation should be based on the logic model that was created at the onset of the partnership, and should be as concrete and specific as possible. These results can help inform partnership improvement, continued partnering, and potentially draw in more partners to the system.

Employer-Initiated Partnerships

Many employers across the country, including in Washington State, are currently facing worker shortages in middle-skills professions. Through a series of focus groups with middle-skills employers and recruiters in King county, the skills gap is believed to be related (but not limited) to factors such as: (a) misalignment between generational expectations of workplace culture, (b) lower interest as a result of negative stereotypes about middle-skills jobs (especially those related to manufacturing), (c) misalignment between secondary education and the workforce, (d) absence of soft skills and social and cultural capital in the upcoming workforce, and (e) failure to adequately market the benefits of middle-skills careers. As a result of the worker shortages, employers are turning to community colleges to provide a pipeline of talent.

By working with the colleges to fulfill hiring needs, companies can avoid some of the expensive costs of recruitment. Costs incurred during the hiring process can be as high as \$10,000/hire after advertising, in-house recruitment salaries, third-party recruiter fees, travel expenses, etc., have been paid. In addition to seeking a pipeline of skilled workers, employers may also look to the community colleges to meet their training needs. While some larger employers have the resources to build and operate elaborate on-site training facilities, others do not have those luxuries. If employers partner with colleges for meeting their talent and training needs, they can potentially allocate to the college such as updated equipment, tools, technology, and industry information. The partnership once again becomes a win-win situation.

Action Steps for Employer-Initiated Partnering^{29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34}

Based on best practices set forth by partners in the local system, the following high-level action steps have been developed for providing guidance to employers who are interested in setting up partnerships.



Internal (Employer) Planning

1

Identify Partners

The employer that is seeking partnership should first identify the college or colleges whose training capacity aligns with the company's hiring needs. The employer should consider doing some preliminary work to map out all the ways that the partnership will benefit the college and the employer's unmet needs, and what steps and time would be required by both parties to make the partnership work. If possible, the employer should calculate objective estimates of ROI to take to the college and show how the partnership could make both parties more successful. These metrics can also be used later to inform a partnership plan (described below).

2

Develop an Employer Partnership Team

Create an internal partnership team to lead the effort on behalf of the company to initiate and execute the partnership process with the targeted college(s). The team should appoint a leader who will serve as project manager and point person for approaching the college(s). This person should be a great interpersonal communicator, have the ability to build meaningful and lasting relationships, have a drive for results, and be willing to think and work outside of the box for the health of the partnership. This individual should have a strong level of situational and interpersonal awareness, and be able to take others' perspectives and empathize.

3

Draft a Partnership Plan to Pitch to College(s)

Intentionally develop a Partnership Plan to pitch to the college(s) that includes general components of the desired partnership, roles and responsibilities, and what the college and employer can expect to get out of the partnership. For example, the employer may offer to donate state of the art equipment, sponsor students with scholarships, and provide industry-specific knowledge that can align the curriculum with industry demand. If possible, calculating an objective return on investment (ROI) for the college showing how the partnership will improve outcomes for students and otherwise benefit the college can be a valuable part of the Partnership Plan. The Plan should include as many process steps for the partnership activities as possible to make the pitch more concrete.

4

Identify the Target College Point Person

The employer's planning team should identify the college administrator or instructor that you will contact to begin the conversation about partnership. Ensure that the person has decision-making authority, and is in a position to advocate for the partnership on the administrative level at the college. This individual, for example, may be a Dean in the college's workforce department. The employer's point person should approach this person and pitch the plan that includes projected ROI.

Partnership Development

1

Collaboratively Develop a Partnership Logic Model and Strategic Plan

The employer planning team should work together with the college to develop and formalize a partnership logic model that includes college and employer inputs, activities (i.e., process steps), outputs, and outcomes. With regard to the activities component, create a strategic plan that clearly documents each process step and who will be responsible for its completion. Taking time up front to complete these planning steps will facilitate clear roles and responsibilities and avoid later confusion. In addition, identify the metrics that will be measured throughout the partnership to calculate ROI. Once the employer and college groups agree on the model and plan, create and sign an MOU or contract. Be sure to build in flexibility so the partnership has room to change and grow with continuing needs.

2

Form a Curriculum Advisory Committee

After a MOU or contract has been completed, put together an advisory committee of employers that can inform curriculum development. You may also attempt to offer an incumbent worker to serve as an adjunct in the college program if the college is open to the idea. Sit down in person on multiple occasions to convey desired learning outcomes and specific competencies that you need students to gain. After the curriculum has been designed, ensure that the employer advisory committee has opportunities to provide feedback.

3

Facilitate State Legislature Approval

If possible, identify and communicate with larger employers or employer associations that can help to involve state legislature representatives in the partnership process, as they can provide appropriation and advocate that the partnership speaks to the regional economic need.

Partnership Operations

1

Develop a Feedback Loop Between the Student, College, and Employer

If an incumbent worker is not serving as an instructor at the college, the employer should appoint someone to engage in regular visits to the college to ensure that the curriculum continues to align with employer needs. The process will also ensure that small bits of information can get translated back and forth on a continuous basis for process improvement.

2

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Set up regularly-scheduled advisory committee meetings (e.g., quarterly) that include the point persons from the employer, the college, and others with relevant stake in the partnership. The purpose of these meetings is to give and receive feedback from partners, acknowledge barriers and identify solutions in the partnership system, and discuss other unanticipated events/situations. These meetings will also ensure that as employer needs change over time, the college can adapt quickly and efficiently.

Partnership Measurement & Evaluation

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Measure and Evaluate Partnership Outcomes

Measure and evaluate outcomes of the partnership based on the original goals and objectives of the partnership. Because the nature of each partnership is different, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to evaluation. Evaluation should be based on the logic model that was created at the onset of the partnership, and should be as concrete and specific as possible. These results can help inform partnership improvement, continued partnering, and potentially draw in more partners to the system.

BARRIERS AND LESSONS LEARNED - THOUGHTS FROM LOCAL PARTNERS

Even the most successful partnerships will come up against barriers and will accrue a list of lessons learned. The third factor involved in making meaningful change amongst barriers includes acknowledging those barriers and planning for how to overcome them through lessons learned. The following section is dedicated to helping leaders who are interested in launching employer-training partnerships to build on the wisdom that has come before them. Through several interviews with individuals who have played integral roles in highly successful partnerships in the Seattle/King County area, a few themes emerged and are discussed below.

Barriers

Design

- Periodic resistance to change at the college and with the existing curriculum.
- Maintaining healthy partnerships takes significant time, resources, and staff energy.

Student Welfare

- In the midst of serving employer needs, the value of a well-rounded education for the student can fall to the wayside.
- Oftentimes, students will have backgrounds that do not align with employer expectations (e.g., poor driving record, etc.).
- Students are often inexperienced in life and performance skills, and may not measure up to employer expectations.
- Without continual evaluation to ensure that students are engaged in meaningful work with the employer, students can sometimes fall into doing “grunt work.”

Execution

- Difficulties getting appropriation and advocacy for facilities and other components of the partnership through the state legislature.
- College administrators, employer representatives, and/or state legislature representatives saying “no” along the way.
- Gaining access to resources for building facilities, purchasing tools, etc. can be difficult.

Lessons Learned

Design

- Listen to and heavily involve the employer in the curriculum development. Be flexible with curriculum design.
- Appoint someone who will go the extra mile to head up the partnership on both sides (college and employer). The following characteristics are desirable: (a) figures out a way to get things done, (b) excellent relationship builder and communicator, (c) cares about the student and the trade deeply, (d) is open to freedom to make mistakes, and (e) a “go-getter.”
- Design the partnership with evaluation of ROI in mind from the beginning.

Student Welfare

- Keep the student at the forefront of the partnership. Be creative in meeting the employer’s need as well as the student’s need for a well-rounded education that includes life skills.
- Internships, apprenticeships, and other on-site work are crucial for the success of the partnership.
- Develop an understanding with the employer that the students are still learning, and need the opportunity to practice (they will not be perfect).
- Ensure that the partnership is set up so that the instructors are continuously going back to school and learning as technology and needs change.
- If possible, offer a corporate certification for the student through the partnership. Ensure that the student is leaving with a value-add.



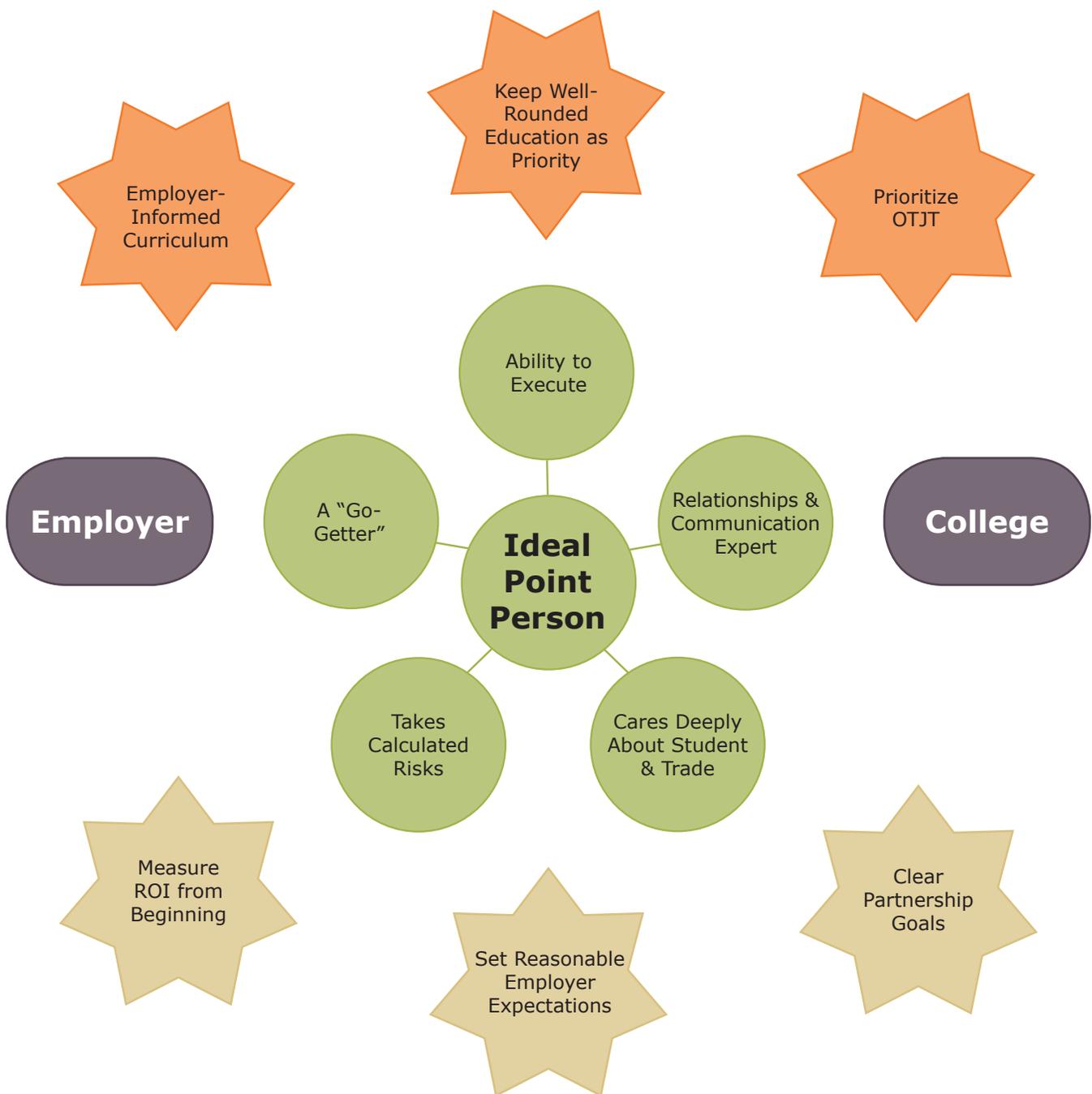
Execution

- Have connections to the legislature, and to the college budget.
- Ensure that roles, responsibilities, and goals for the employer and the college are clear and mutually understood. MOUs are a great way to ensure clarity and mutual understanding.
- Evaluate major outcomes as the partnership progresses.

EMPLOYER-TRAINING PARTNERSHIP MODEL

Based on the barriers that have been acknowledged by employers and trainers, as well as the lessons learned from overcoming those barriers, the author created a high-level model that revolves around the major champions of the partnership (i.e., the point persons), and includes the following components: (a) employer-informed curriculum, (b) well-rounded education as a priority, (c) prioritize OTJT, (d) measure ROI from the beginning, (e) set reasonable employer expectations, and (f) set clear partnership goals.

Employer-Training Partnership Model



Whereas many barriers to partnering exist, the previous sections have shown that it may often be in the best interest of employers and trainers to think strategically about how they can overcome those barriers and partner. It has been suggested by local partnership leaders that ROI from partnerships is well worth the initial struggles, and the process need only to begin with the right point person and the first step.



MOVING FORWARD

Effective partnerships between employers and trainers are crucial for the wellbeing of the community, economy, and individuals who are seeking meaningful and livable-wage careers. When training organizations partner with employers in creative ways, it can be a win-win-win for the college, employer, and student in terms of ROI. From the employer's perspective, clear talent pipelines and effective training systems make it possible for them to stay competitive and do what they do best. From the college's perspective, employer-informed curriculum and access to the most current tools and technology keep them at the forefront of education as they provide relevant and effective training. From the student's perspective, hands-on experience with an employer, and support in areas such as tuition, books, tools, and pay-for-school hours can set students up for success from the beginning.

With the demand for middle-skill jobs outweighing the supply across the country and in the state of Washington, and with a strong disconnect between employer needs and training strategies, it is as important as ever that silos be broken down and partnerships emerge. As colleges and employers join forces to engage in effective recruiting, training, and on-the-job development, companies and career seekers can be set up for success. The goal of this blueprint is to assist leaders who are interested in starting employer-training partnerships to gain a deeper understanding of how some of the best-of-the-best local partnerships have emerged, and what is needed to get them started.

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APPENDIX A.

Are Students Failing to Develop Cultural and Social Capital in College? Employers are Needed to Help.

Many advocates argue that educational institutions need to do a better job of helping students to develop the forms of capital needed to make the most of their college degrees. It may be the case that some individuals make it through college but do not obtain the “social” and “cultural capital” that it takes to network and compete in a competitive work environment. *Cultural capital* refers to class-specific dispositions, tastes/preferences, behaviors, material possessions, or even educational credentials that inform the way that individuals show up, interact, and act in the world.¹⁶ More specifically, dominant cultural capital is the extent to which individuals are able to exercise the same cultural capital that is expected of the cultural elite. Examples may include the way one dresses for work, speaks, and discusses culturally-relevant topics.

Furthermore, *social capital* refers to the extent to which one can carry out community norms, act in ways that align with social expectations, and communicate in ways that are common among the dominant group.¹⁷ Once again, dominant social capital is the extent to which individuals can carry out those behaviors conducive to the social elite. Examples may include showing up to work on time, handling disagreements in a specific way, or being proactive in helping out a co-worker when needed.



The diagram consists of two L-shaped brackets. The left bracket is green and contains the text 'Social Capital'. The right bracket is dark purple and contains the text 'Cultural Capital'. A small yellow triangle is positioned at the top of the left bracket, pointing towards the right bracket, suggesting a relationship or flow between the two concepts.

Extensive research in the educational domain has suggested that minority groups, vulnerable populations, and first-generational college students are often limited in their ability to climb up social and cultural ladders as a result of the constraining power of capital.^{18, 19} In addition to being at an economic disadvantage, these individuals may be less likely than individuals from higher socio-economic status (SES) families to experience the opportunities that can help them to develop the behaviors and dispositions necessary to connect and thrive in the dominant culture’s workforce.

The limiting power of capital may in part explain why so many college-educated individuals are still unemployed in the Seattle area. Perhaps many of these individuals were able to leverage resources needed to get through college, but without the appropriate opportunities to develop forms of capital, they potentially find themselves unable to compete in the competitive workforce. With large lecture halls that often lack 1:1 interaction between professors and students, or time-strapped instructors who barely have the temporal resources to provide appropriate feedback on academic assignments, many students may fail to receive the feedback and coaching necessary for building social and cultural capital.

How Trainers and Employers Can Facilitate Social and Cultural Capital Gains

Research has shown that individuals who are better connected to mentors and high-class professionals through real-life work experiences in college are more likely to obtain a job than those who are not. An important study funded by the National Institute of Health (NIH) suggested that three



major factors should be in play in educational institutions to properly train students to gain forms of social and cultural capital. Those factors are: (a) High-quality advisors who can help students to navigate the unfamiliar institutional context, (b) Opportunities for an Alternative Intellectual Community (i.e., regular exposure to people “like me” who have been successful in the field), and (c) Strong undergraduate research experience.^{19, 20} Such experiences help students to learn cultural norms and successfully operate within the cultural system of academia by way of natural and formal types of feedback. They have also been shown to facilitate higher rates of graduation and likelihood of continuing education for students that otherwise would not have continued.

For students who will be going into middle-skill jobs however, work placements may serve a similar function to the research experience in a 4-year college context. Such

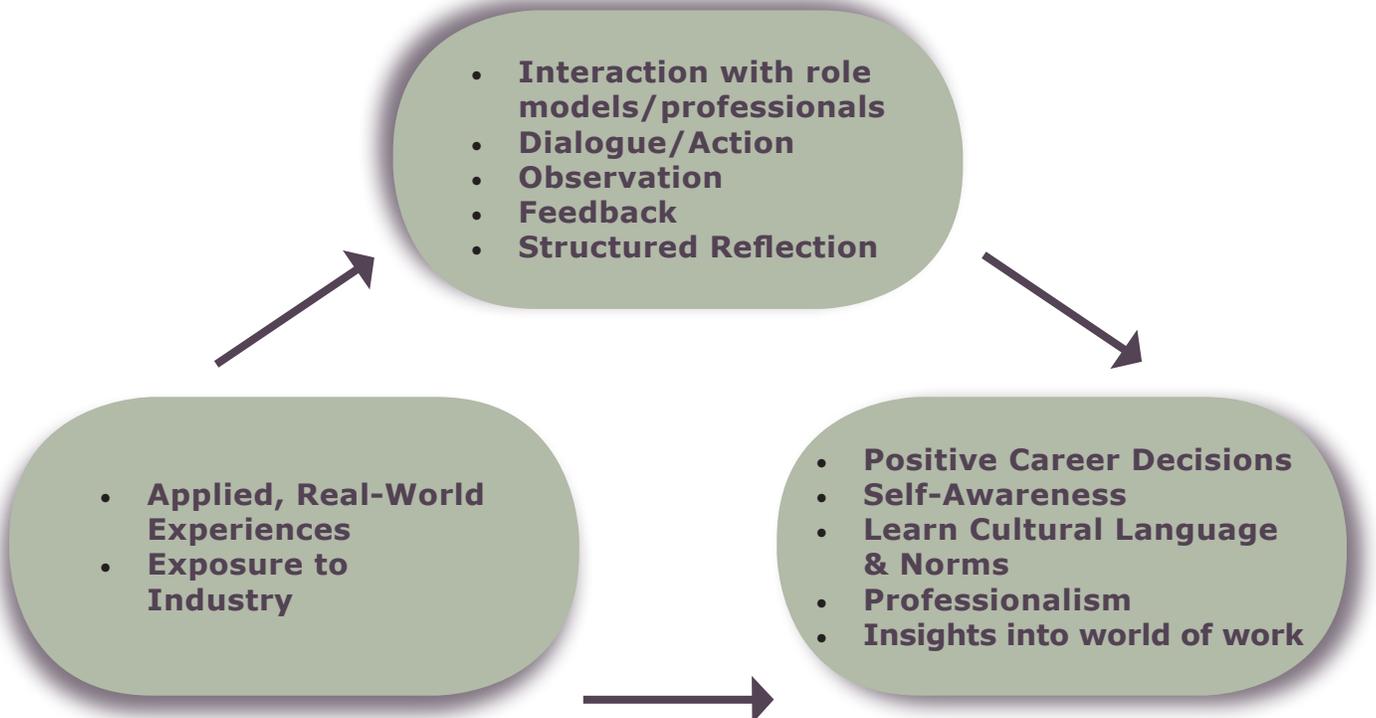
Only 17% of students across the U.S. reported having applied experiences throughout their college experience.

GALLUP STUDY

work placement experiences have been shown to significantly impact students toward positive career decisions, build self-awareness and professionalism, and prepare them with insights into the world of employment.^{20, 21} These forms of cultural and social capital help students to construct a schema for obtaining information, observing, and interacting with others. Such capital is believed to be built *through* the interaction, dialogue, observation, feedback, and reflection that occurs for the student in the work and academic context.²² With this being said, a recent Gallup study indicated that only 17% of students across the U.S. reported having applied experiences throughout their college experience.⁶

With more involvement from employers, trainers can be better informed about the specific forms of social and cultural capital that they should be introducing to students, and employers can bring students in for more real-world practice through internships, apprenticeships, etc. These intentional relationships can set up all parties for success by ensuring that the skills learned by students in the academic setting closely align with those needed to succeed in the industry.

Capital Development Process



APPENDIX B.

Best Practices: College-Initiated Partnership²⁸ Shoreline College & WA Auto Dealers Association

In an effort to live up to the college's purpose of serving the community, an instructor in the manufacturing department at Shoreline College in Washington contacted the Puget Sound Automotive Dealership Association (PSADA) in the 1980's to see if there was a "need for training." To alleviate the costs associated with sending incumbent workers to Portland for training (\$25-50K/dealer), as was the current practice, the instructor proposed that the Association lease space on the college campus. After the agreement was made, the instructor raised two capital campaigns for \$9 million to build the Professional Automotive Training Center, which opened in 1992 and was expanded in 2010.

Once the training facility was on-site at the college and available for incumbent worker training, the instructor took the employer demands for qualified mechanics to the college administration, and requested to begin a program. To best serve the community, he wanted to start a program that was supported by local dealers. Upon acceptance, he put together an advisory committee of people who would be hiring the students. He made it a point to share meals together, as he believes that "something special happens when people eat together." He learned about the specific competencies needed by the employers, and let those needs inform the curriculum design.

Today, the partnership is between the college and the Washington Auto Dealers Association (previously merged with the PSADA). Dealers such as Ford, GM, Toyota, Honda, Chrysler, and Subaru have training pockets on site, and have their own sponsored programs at the college. The program also includes an entry-level general service technician program. The programs do their own recruiting for students, and when a student comes to the college to apply for the program, the instructors send them to the dealers to interview. Once accepted, they receive a commitment of FT hiring upon completion of the program. For the duration of their program, students attend 11 weeks of college, followed by 11 weeks at the dealership. Most students tend to receive opportunities to continue working during their 11 weeks of college as well.

The manufacturers provide curriculum, cars, tools, and equipment. As a result of the partnership system, they save approximately: (a) \$8,594.00 per incumbent worker that needs ongoing training, (b) \$26,927.71 per worker who would need to be trained to equivalency of a program graduate, and (c) \$34,152.00 in employing and training a program graduate. Lastly, if a student logs 4 hours of labor for each 8 hours worked at the dealership over the two years the student is in the program, the dealership realizes approximately \$170,280.00 in additional labor income.

The partnership has shown to be a win-win-win among the student, college, and employer system. Over 1,300 students have been trained and hired into livable-wage careers since the training center's opening. Based on labor market data, an experienced technician in the Seattle/King County region can expect a median salary of approximately \$56,320/year. While entry-level median salaries are much lower (median = \$28,198), the employers that are partnered with the college have rigorous training programs for incumbent workers that enable them to upskill as quickly as possible to continue meeting industry demands.

APPENDIX C.

Best Practices: Employer-Initiated Partnership Vigor Industrial Shipyards & South Seattle College^{29, 30}

Vigor Industrial Shipyards entered into partnership with South Seattle College understanding and committing to a partnership that would help the shipbuilding community in the region. In addition, they had two major needs: (a) to create a pipeline for future staffing needs, and (b) to have access to a relevant training program for incoming and incumbent workers. Following a convening (“Beyond Our Entities: What Does the Community Need?”) between South Seattle College, Vigor, and other CBOs, the Executive Administrator of HR for Vigor and the Associate Vice Chancellor of workforce development at South Seattle College partnered up to create a plan that would eventually result in creation of the “Harbor Island Training Center.”

Vigor had an old warehouse on site at the Harbor Island shipyard, and developed it into an 8,000-sq foot training center where curriculum would be run by the college (modeled after Vigor’s successful program with Portland Community College on to Swan Island, 2008). There were a few champions with the state legislature that were interested in seeing how the partnership would come together, and a government relationships person at the college that helped get the program into the budget. Welding equipment was donated by the Pipefitters Union, and the state legislature provided the state appropriation to launch the program. The Workforce Development Council (WDC) of Seattle-King County funded a cohort (i.e., tuition and additional tool support), and a career navigator was brought on board to provide referrals, career readiness training, and a soft skills curriculum.

South Seattle College leases the training center space from Vigor, administers the program, and pays instructor salaries. Vigor’s corporate welding training professional became the lead instructor at the college, and continues to work at Vigor after hours. He requires students to clock in and out for training, and ensures that the training curriculum is continually adapted to align with the changing needs of Vigor. Having the training center on site allows for continual improvement and connectedness between Vigor and the college. Students are exposed to the work environment early on, and gain a realistic preview of full-time work at Vigor. Vigor currently hires approximately 50% of the students into welding, fitting, fabricating, and other trades positions, and has a list of other employers that other grads are often referred to. An entry-level employee can expect to make an average of \$21/hour as a pre-apprentice.

The Harbor Island Training Center also runs an after-hours advanced certification course. The course is geared toward people who need to brush up on skills, as well as existing Vigor employees seeking to diversify their certifications to remain adaptive during

turbulent times. The center continues to expand, and is now offering training to people who are employed with other shipyard employers. Vigor is dedicated to setting up their pipeline to be conducive to the ebb and flow of the market, such that by partnering with other shipyard employers, new talent can come and go throughout their system.

For ROI, Vigor enjoys the benefit of a clear pipeline of relevantly trained staff right from the start (i.e., reduced training costs and salaries paid during training), less turnover as a result of better culture fit and realistic previews before being hired, and a contribution to the community that involves gainful employment of residents.

APPENDIX D.

Best Practices: South Seattle College & Consortium of Heavy Diesel Mechanics^{31, 32}

As a result of 25 years in workforce development, an instructor in South Seattle College's Diesel and Heavy Equipment Program leveraged previous connections to build a partnership with a consortium of diesel employers. There was a great demand for qualified mechanics in the industry, and many companies didn't have the resources for internal training programs. In partnership with several employers, the instructor sought to develop the Diesel Industry Sector Cohort (DISC) program. The main objectives of the program are to: (a) provide diesel and heavy equipment training to sponsored students and incumbent workers across employers, and (b) develop and maintain a highly effective collaboration between the college and the industry employers.

At the end of the 7-quarter program, students earn an Associate of Applied Science degree in the Diesel and Heavy Equipment Technician trade. The college is responsible for all aspects of the college experience including curriculum, assessment, final determination of program eligibility, quality instruction, grading, and program administration. The employers on the other hand choose who goes into the program, and have the autonomy to sponsor students and incumbent workers on various levels. For example, King County Metro pays for tuition, wages for a portion of the school day, typically 3 hours, books, parking, and provides an interest free loan for students to purchase their tools. In addition, anyone who is in the diesel program qualifies for discounts of up to 50% on tools through student programs from Snap-On and Mac.

To support the students through their college endeavors, a CBO is contracted to provide career and college navigation that includes helping students with registration, funding, and admissions services. During the 7th week of each quarter, DISC employers, college instructors, and navigators meet to review, coordinate, and evaluate each student's progress, prepare progress guidance for each student, refine target employment plans for students, and update each other on their policy and resource changes (e.g., college financing, registration, procedures, personnel changes, etc.).

Once each quarter, employers are invited to attend the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting at the college, where they have an opportunity to discuss how things are going with their employees and sponsored students. The TAC meetings are a great opportunity for employers to provide feedback to college instructors, voice concerns over perceived barriers (e.g., scheduling of courses), and inform the college of new technical expertise needs.