

Washington State Jobs Initiative

2025 Participant Persistence Insights



This resource was created by Washington STEM in collaboration with Career Connect Washington for the Washington Jobs Initiative, funded through the federal Good Jobs Challenge.

2025 Participant Persistence Insights

In 2025, backbone organizations for the Washington Jobs Initiative coordinated training programs and participant site visits. Insights from these visits informed the development of this resource, which highlights key findings.

Thank you to our participating backbone organizations and training programs:

- SEIU Healthcare - TRIAGE: Nursing Assistant Program
- SEIU Healthcare - TRIAGE: IHAP & Behavioral Health Apprenticeship
- Computing For All - Washington Tech Workforce Coalition: Per Scholas
- Computing For All - Washington Tech Workforce Coalition: PNW
- Spokane Workforce Council - Healthcare Talent Development Pipeline: Workforce Southwest Vancouver
- Spokane Workforce Council - Healthcare Talent Development Pipeline: Workforce Southwest Vancouver
- Spokane Workforce Council - Healthcare Talent Development Pipeline: Clark College
- Spokane Workforce Council - Healthcare Talent Development Pipeline: Career Path Services “NEXT”
- Spokane Workforce Council - Healthcare Talent Development Pipeline: The Vancouver Clinic
- Spokane Workforce Council - Healthcare Talent Development Pipeline: Cascadia Tech
- Workforce Central - Pierce Spokane Construction WORKS - Palmer Scholars
- Washington State Building and Construction Trades and Council - Construct A Career Initiative- Ironworkers

This resource was created by Washington STEM in collaboration with Career Connect Washington for the Washington Jobs Initiative, which is funded through the federal Good Jobs Challenge.

2025 Participant Persistence Insights

Synopsis

In 2025, backbone organizations participated in training provider and participant site visits. These visits generated observations, questions, best practices, and identified challenges. The insights captured from these visits are categorized into 6 areas and intended to inform considerations of participant experience and persistence needs.

Application

Use this resource with partners, in sectoral partnership meetings, in 1:1s with training providers, or internally.

Examples include:

- In sustainability planning, when reviewing what you are already doing well or what can be improved
- In placement strategies, to see what can be done to support participant success
- In sectoral partnership improvement conversations with employers, training providers, and CBOs
- In internal participant process/policy/procedure improvement efforts
- In contracting considerations for CBO and training partners
- In assessing the CBO intake process or training provider accessibility to various populations.

Considerations

The questions below invite reflection on how each insight can be applied to strengthen participant outcomes, partnerships, and sustainability efforts.

Consider:

- Which here might be easy to implement or explore?
- Which has the most ROI?
- Which could affect placement and performance?
- Which supports sustainability efforts?

2025 Participant Persistence Insights

- Which are most relevant to your role and area of influence as a BBO?
- Which would be most useful for training providers and/or employers to know or see?
- Which is most relevant to your sectoral partnership?
- Which builds on the work you are already doing well?

Key Findings

Clarity & Continuity

Programs should clearly communicate how learners progress from entry to employment, including stackable pathways, available supports, and next steps. Consistent mentorship, career navigation, and transparent policies help build student confidence, persistence, and long-term engagement.

Workplace Simulation

Training should closely mirror real-world workplace environments, expectations, and dynamics to ease the transition from classroom to job site. Early exposure to workplace realities and financial supports during unpaid training periods can significantly improve learner readiness and retention.

Equity & Representation

Programs must intentionally address diverse learner needs by embedding inclusive practices, accommodations, and culturally responsive support throughout training. Representation, equity-skilled staff, and data-driven reviews of student persistence are essential to reducing barriers and improving outcomes for marginalized communities.

Wrap Around Supports

Holistic supports—such as transportation, mental health services, flexible scheduling, and centralized community resources—are critical to sustaining participation and completion. Expanding and coordinating supports across providers strengthens learner stability and engagement.

2025 Participant Persistence Insights

Community & Cohort Models

Strong community partnerships and intentional cohort structures foster trust, accountability, and shared learning among participants. Career navigators with lived experience and community-based relationships strengthen outreach, enrollment, and long-term engagement.

Employer Alignment

Direct alignment with employers reinforces the relevance of training and improves job-placement outcomes for participants. Programs that collaborate closely with employers create clearer pathways to employment and ensure skills taught match workforce needs.

Field Informed Insights for Backbone Organizations

Category	Insight	Reference Notes
Clarity & Continuity	Pair classroom hands-on learning with mentorship or networking opportunities.	WSLC - A lot of growth opportunities in how training providers can take more ownership. Leverage current resources. EQUITY - Intentional mentorship structures and relationship-building opportunities remain essential for long-term participant success and connection to the field. Equity Toolkit , Section 2
	Creating intentional mentorship structures and access to networks will be crucial for learner success and long-term engagement in the field.	
	Provide career navigators, classroom visits, or wraparound support personnel to foster effective student buy-in.	
	Clearly show stackable programs by keeping the next-step class in a proximate location.	WSLC - Participants should clearly see the progression of programs and also where there

2025 Participant Persistence Insights

		will be certifications as part of a program or stackable experience, so they can jump in and out of trainings more easily
	Seek more information on how to duplicate programs that are having success.	
	Provide participants with information or create materials on the types of support they receive throughout the training-to-hiring process, including job placement support, study assistance, and networking opportunities through the program.	Equity Toolkit , Section 2
	Ensure introductory courses to stackable programs include very clear information on how to continue and what supports are provided to students who continue as well as the process.	
	Have clear policies, processes, and procedures for student intake, placement information, qualifiers, supports, and related information.	EQUITY - Make intake processes transparent. Clear placement criteria and support information reduce hidden barriers that disproportionately impact frontline communities.
Workplace Simulation	Mirror real-world work environments and interpersonal dynamics closely to ensure a greater understanding of the field and an easier transition into the workplace.	EQUITY - Create learning environments that mirror real workplace dynamics. This helps learners transition more confidently into employment and develop a grounded understanding of industry expectations.
	Provide workplace environment information earlier in the training.	

2025 Participant Persistence Insights

	<p>Consider exploring stipends or partnerships to support learners during any unpaid training period by leveraging other funding mechanisms.</p>	
<p>Equity & Representation</p>	<p>Ensure there is an environment where participants can express the need for more intentional outreach, accommodations, and inclusive practices for those with ADHD, learning differences, or sensory needs.</p>	<p>WSLC - Ensure cultural needs are met. Consider accessibility improvements, such as smaller hand tools for females.</p> <p>Establish a women's committee to lift awareness of their specific needs.</p> <p>EQUITY - Foster environments where participants can openly express needs related to ADHD, learning differences, or sensory support. Intentional outreach, accommodations, and inclusive practices are critical for learner belonging and retention.</p> <p>Equity Toolkit, Sections 2 - 3</p>
	<p>Ensure participants are prepared technically, AND emotionally and socially—especially in environments where bias and marginalization persist in the workplace.</p>	<p>WSLC - Examples of model programs include those with diverse cohorts/classes that include women, people of color, and perhaps equity committees focused on a wide array of participant concerns.</p> <p>Pay attention to retention, which may indicate that the training-to-placement experience is meeting the needs of participants and employers.</p> <p>Promote an environment where historically marginalized groups know and feel that they have a voice at the table and a seat in all</p>

2025 Participant Persistence Insights

		<p>spaces.</p> <p>EQUITY - Prepare participants both technically and emotionally/socially. This is especially important in workplaces where bias or marginalization may persist.</p>
	<p>Assess each student's language needs and resources, and identify ways to make accommodations during training.</p>	<p>WSLC - Opportunity for continued work beyond entry exams. Consider IBEST programs <u>Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST)</u>.</p> <p>EQUITY - Assess and support language access needs.</p> <p>Identifying each learner's language requirements early and providing accommodations during training increases inclusion and reduces barriers.</p> <p>Equity Toolkit, Section 2 - 4</p>
	<p>Understand your local landscape. Which participant demographics in your area are less represented in your programs?</p>	<p>Equity Toolkit, Section 2 - 4</p>
	<p>Evaluate any career navigator on their skill competency related to working with frontline communities.</p> <p>A skilled career navigator is vital. Success is determined by their willingness to discuss, listen, and share information around racism, sexism, and other forms of bias and discrimination in the workplace.</p>	<p>Equity Toolkit, Section 1 - 4</p>
	<p>Notice demographic changes driven by social shifts and prepare accordingly. This could mean language support for new refugees, food support for current</p>	<p>Equity Toolkit, Section 3</p>

2025 Participant Persistence Insights

	students, and so on.	
	Expand outreach to engage with those who have been justice-impacted.	Equity Toolkit , Section 2
	Stay committed to equity in practice. Even if the organization is not explicit about its equity intentions, frontline workers can still demonstrate commitments and activities that support equity. Capture these activities and record their implications and successes.	Equity Toolkit , Sections 5 - 6
	Ensure diverse representation at various engagement points with participants. Reach further into communities if there is a visible lack of representation.	Equity Toolkit , Section 4
	Notice, endorse, celebrate, and highlight programs that offer curriculum and experiences that support those with diverse needs.	EQUITY - Celebrate and uplift programs that meaningfully support diverse needs. Highlighting these models helps normalize inclusive practices as core to program quality.
	Aim to be diverse to enhance the learning experience, especially when there is a noticeable lack of diversity. Ask what perspectives might be missing.	EQUITY - Strive for diversity as an intentional learning asset. When diversity is limited, ask whose perspectives are missing and what that reveals about outreach, recruitment, and access.
	Notice when gender-related safety concerns may be at play for certain opportunities, especially when any co-ed travel is needed.	
	Consider including equity clauses in partner contract materials to sustain commitment.	Equity Toolkit , Section 5

2025 Participant Persistence Insights

	Launch review of student persistence data based on key demographics (women/ELL/justice-impacted).	Equity Toolkit , Section 6
Wrap-around Supports	<p>Think of other unique wraparound supports and build on what's available from different training providers or at different training locations.</p> <p>(AA on site after training on certain evenings, credit unions for specific unions, and technical support on how to start a business).</p>	<p>WSLC - Consider supports already in place around the state. For example, Unemployment Insurance navigators. Increase childcare accessibility, such as the new childcare Little Wings for non-traditional hours and the Tacoma Pierce County AFL-CIO Central Labor Councils - Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO/UFCW 3000. There are legislative bills for mental health, sanitary protections, protecting kids, and no fines for kids on job sites.</p> <p>EQUITY - Ensure consistent wraparound support. Transportation, mental health resources, accommodations, food access, and language services make programs truly accessible.</p> <p>Equity Toolkit Section 2 - 4</p>
	Consider ride share as transportation support.	Equity Toolkit , Section 2
	Consider mental health as a potential wraparound support offering	Equity Toolkit , Section 2
	Find ways to physically centralize specific community supports available to participants.	
	Mitigate attendance issues. Hybrid courses or days that allow online classroom work can support student engagement and	WSLC - Think of hours requirements and setting up programs that have some financial incentives through

2025 Participant Persistence Insights

	mitigate attendance issues when attendance rules are strict.	Earn and Learn (apprenticeships). Consider common barriers such as access to transportation and to accessible childcare services. Equity Toolkit , Section 2 - 4
Community & Cohort Models	Select career navigators and related team members based on their skillset and experience working with marginalized groups.	Equity Toolkit , Section 2 - 4
	Expand on community relationships, as community-based organizations are critical.	EQUITY - Deepen community partnerships. Collaborations with CBOs, tribal governments, and justice-impacted organizations strengthen pipelines and improve demographic representation. Equity Toolkit, Section 2
	Build relationships of mutual benefit.	
	Be a good partner with tribal communities. Tribal governments should be considered and included in program development, recognized for their sovereignty and tribal governance structures, and supported if they decide to create their own programs.	
	Formalize the cohort model. Ask students to join a group chat platform to communicate among one another, and ask and walk them through how to create and use community agreements/norms.	WSLC - See below.
	Support cohort model for participant engagement, increased learning, shared accountability (and potential follow-up and survey distribution)	WSLC - Example: Apprenticeships, or Earn & Learn models, up to journeyman level. Use models that foster solidarity among

2025 Participant Persistence Insights

		<p>Union Councils.</p> <p>EQUITY - Support cohort-based models. Cohorts boost engagement, shared accountability, and connection, and often support more equitable outcomes.</p>
	<p>Consider reviewing how the participants who converted from outreach to enrollment learned about the program.</p> <p>Check whether there is a high percentage of community or word-of-mouth referrals.</p> <p>Target marketing efforts and partnerships with community organizations to build trust with underrepresented groups.</p>	<p>WSLC - Best practice</p> <p>Equity Toolkit, Section 5</p>
<p>Employer Alignment</p>	<p>Look for opportunities to tie programs directly to employers to benefit students. Training programs with a direct link to an employer tend to be strong in student placement</p>	

The insights gathered here were referenced from equity audit site visits, the 828 transition plan, and related materials. Each insight or observation is anonymized and framed as an opportunity for any backbone organization to consider.