STATE BOARD SPECIAL MEETING

Monday, November 23, 2026 (8:30 a.m. to 10 a.m.)

Virtual: https://zoom.us/j/91755377492?pwd=SZOEGAqaA6CWar6YvVaVo35iAKbn5P.1
Physical viewing location: SBCTC Agency Office, Room 1213 (1500 Jefferson St SE, Olympia, WA 98501)
Please note that Board members will participate virtually*

Board Members

Martin Valadez, Chair // Emily Yim, Vice Chair // Debra Entenman // Mack Hogans // Chelsea Mason-Placek // Naria Santa Lucia // Jay Schmidt // Jeff Wagnitz

Nate Humphrey, Executive Director // Marianna Watson, Executive Assistant

Statutory Authority: Laws of 1991, Chapter 28B.50 Revised Code of Washington

Special meeting Zoom link:
https://zoom.us/j/91755377492?pwd=SZOEGAqaA6CWar6YvVaVo35iAKbn5P.1

November 23 Special Meeting

Time	Item	Location/Activity
8:30 a.m.	**Welcome/Introduction** Martin Valadez, Chair	
8:40 a.m.	**Establish a Quorum and Adopt Special Meeting Agenda** Martin Valadez, Chair	
8:45 a.m.	**Public Comment**	
9:00 a.m.	**System Efficiency, Access, and District Structure (SEADS) Report Resolution 26-11-40** Nate Humphrey, Executive Director	Tab 1 (Action)
9:55 a.m.	**Adjournment** Next meeting: December 10, 2026 (Virtual/SBCTC Agency Office)	

EXECUTIVE SESSION: Under RCW 42.30.110, an Executive Session may be held. Action from the Executive Session may be taken, if necessary, as a result of items discussed in the Executive Session.

PLEASE NOTE: Times above are estimates only. The Board reserves the right to alter the order of the agenda. Reasonable accommodations will be made for persons with disabilities if requests are made at least seven days in advance. Efforts will be made to accommodate late requests. Please contact the Executive Director's Office at 360-704-4309

Washington State Board for
COMMUNITY AND
TECHNICAL COLLEGES



SYSTEM EFFICIENCY, ACCESS, AND DISTRICT STRUCTURE (SEADS)

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

Senate Bill 5998

December 2026

SEADS LEGISLATIVE REPORT

Acknowledgements

The Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) sincerely thanks the **hundreds of people** who contributed their time, energy, expertise, candor, and personal resources to this legislative report.

First, we deeply thank the members of the SEADS Work Group. They represented essential perspectives of community and technical college presidents and chancellors, faculty, staff, students, college trustees, and labor, business, and industry partners. **Their commitment to student success, access, and equity shaped every part of this report.** We also thank The Athena Group for facilitating the work group meetings.

We are grateful for the:

- More than 260 faculty, staff, and administrators who responded to the systemwide call for efficiency ideas.
- Washington Association of Community and Technical Colleges Equity Committee for feedback that strengthened the evaluation rubric.
- Presidents and chancellors who shared their proposals and list of reductions already made.
- Chancellors of the three multi-college districts for sharing their experiences with the work group.
- Communications and marketing colleagues who shared student pictures, as shown on the cover page of this report.

Finally, we thank the SBCTC staff who provided research and data analysis, policy review, meeting preparation, communications, and more — often on short timelines and alongside other responsibilities.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Washington's community and technical colleges (CTCs) provide affordable education, prepare students for in-demand careers, and strengthen communities and the economy. But rising financial pressures are making it harder to sustain that work. **Operating costs continue to rise while funding has not kept pace, forcing CTCs to make difficult choices.** Since 2020, CTCs have closed, suspended, or phased out about 50 programs, credentials, and services; eliminated about 250 positions; and left about 90 positions vacant.

The Legislature directed SBCTC to look at ways to reduce duplication and costs, improve regional access, and review district structure. In support of this work, the SEADS Work Group received 312 ideas from CTC employees, presidents and chancellors, and SBCTC staff, and developed an evaluation rubric to assess potential savings, costs, student impacts, and access.

The work group found that **additional efficiencies are possible, but cuts are different from efficiencies.** Eliminating positions, programs, or services may reduce spending, but it also reduces capacity and hurts students. Genuine efficiencies should make better use of resources while protecting student access and services.

Findings

- **Closures and mergers are not appropriate near-term solutions** to current financial challenges. Structural changes carry upfront costs, take years to implement, and do not provide immediate budget relief.
- **Geography matters.** An approach that works in a densely populated area may reduce access in a rural community.
- **Higher costs do not necessarily mean inefficiency,** particularly when CTCs maintain programs and locations needed to serve rural communities and students with greater needs.
- **The student experience should guide decisions about district structure.** Integration can make it easier for students to move between CTCs without changing governance.
- **More administrative work can be shared or standardized,** with ctcLink providing a common technology foundation.

Recommendations

Moving forward, the work group recommends:

1. **Continuing SEADS as an ongoing process** to evaluate and advance promising opportunities.
2. **Reducing operational duplication while protecting local student services** by identifying work that can be shared, standardized, or automated.
3. **Protecting regional access and expanding collaboration among CTCs** using regional data and voluntary partnerships.
4. **Improving the student experience and building evidence before considering structural changes,** drawing on lessons from Washington's multi-college districts.
5. **Removing state and system barriers that increase college costs,** including funding gaps and administrative requirements that reduce flexibility or pull resources away from students.

The goal is not simply to spend less. It is to make the best use of public resources while sustaining the programs, services and access Washington students and communities rely on.

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INTRODUCTION

In the 2026 supplemental operating budget — Senate Bill (SB) 5998 — the Legislature directed SBCTC to submit a report to the Office of the Governor and specific legislative committees:

> By December 1, 2026, the state board for community and technical colleges must submit a report, pursuant to RCW 43.01.036, to the governor and appropriate committees of the legislature. The report shall include recommendations that may reduce redundancy and expenses that do not directly correlate to student success. The state board shall also consider locations of current colleges by regions, districts that have more than one campus and other regional considerations where reduction and proximity may not substantially impact access to postsecondary education institutions. The state board shall include a review of the district structure and how it impacts campus operations and student success.

This report, created in partnership with Washington's CTCs, SBCTC State Board members, and other CTC system partners, will:

- Identify opportunities to reduce costs and duplication that do not clearly support student success.
- Consider regional access, including college locations, multi-campus districts, and potential impacts on students.
- Review the current district structure and its impact on operations and student success.

Before covering these parts of the report, let's set the stage.

VALUE & OPPORTUNITY

Washington's CTCs provide affordable education, prepare workers for in-demand careers, and strengthen communities and local economies. From workforce certificates to bachelor's degrees, CTCs give students many ways to reach their education and career goals while delivering a strong return on public investment.

CTCs Expand Opportunity

- **Affordable higher education:** Students can earn workforce credentials, degrees, and credits toward a bachelor's degree at a CTC while **saving thousands of dollars.** A full-time Washington resident can earn a two-year associate degree for about **$10,200 in tuition and fees.**
- **Workforce education and training:** CTCs offer **more than 300 programs in high-demand fields** like health care, advanced manufacturing, IT, aerospace, skilled trades, education, public safety, and many others.
- **Pathways to bachelor's degrees: More than ⅓** of bachelor's graduates from Washington's public four-year institutions **transferred from a CTC.**
- **Dual-credit opportunities:**
  - **Ninety percent of high school students take some form of dual credit.** Nearly 40,000 students participate in **Running Start**, and at least 5,700 earn an associate degree each year **while still in high school.**

- **More than 65,000 students take Career and Technical Education (CTE) Dual Credit,** connecting high school learning with college and career pathways.
- **College in the High School enrollment grew 69% in two years,** from 8,452 to 14,304 students, with at least 95% of registrations earning college credit.

CTCs Serve Washington

- **A diverse student population:** The majority of students — **that's 56%** —identify as students of color.
- **Every region and legislative district:** CTCs serve **more than 311,000 students statewide,** reaching communities in every legislative district.
- **Urban, suburban, and rural communities:** CTCs provide local access to education and workforce training across Washington, including in rural communities where other higher education options may be limited.

CTCs Strengthen Washington

- **Workforce preparation:** CTCs connect education directly to Washington's workforce needs, preparing students for in-demand careers and helping employers find skilled workers.
- **Local and state economies:** The 10-year impact of CTC professional-technical programs is nearly **$17 billion in economic impact** and return is **about $2.20 to taxpayers for every dollar invested.**
- **Employment and earnings:** Graduates of professional-technical programs earn about **$17,200 more per year and experience higher employment rates** than those without that training.

Employment, economic, and community data provided by the Washington Workforce Training & Education Coordinating Board and Brookings.

BACKGROUND

Past Efficiency Studies

Under SB 6359 (2010), the Legislature directed SBCTC to pursue efficiencies that increase student access and success, strengthen instructional programs, and develop and retain high-quality faculty through shared services, program collaboration, and standardized and centralized administrative functions.

As part of this directive, SBCTC submitted two reports in 2010 and 2011. A third report was in development; however, the Legislature opted for a work session instead.

Outcomes

The 2010 report inventoried more than 50 existing regional and statewide efficiencies across administrative services, student access and success, academic programs, and faculty and staff development.

> **In 2009–10, CTCs served 21,500 more full-time equivalent students — 16% above the level funded by the state — while receiving less state funding per student.**
>
> – From 2010 report

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The 2011 report documented new efficiencies in teaching and learning, student services, and business practices; described deepening regional collaboration; reported the launch of ctcLink, and began the governance analysis, including examination of other states' structures and governance-related cost factors.

> **As reported in 2011, state funding reduced by 22% since 2009 while enrollment grew 19% — forcing CTCs to cut staffing, hours, services, and course sections to balance budgets.**
>
> – From 2011 report

ctcLink

The most significant outcome from the 2011 study was ctcLink. This system is a centerpiece of statewide modernization, developed and implemented over the last decade, and fully deployed across all 34 CTCs in 2022. ctcLink brings student and employee records into a shared enterprise system and integrates key functions like admissions applications, financial aid applications, degree audits, and course catalogs.

Today, ctcLink is the cornerstone of the CTC system's shared technology infrastructure, providing a common foundation for statewide data, services, and improved business processes.

Four Big Budget Challenges Right Now

CTCs are facing growing financial pressure from:

- Tuition growth that has not kept pace with the cost of maintaining education programs and services.
- State-approved compensation and central service costs that are not fully funded.
- Increasing amounts of funding restricted to specific purposes.
- Inflation and rising utility, technology, and operating expenses.

> **These challenges squeeze tight budgets, forcing CTCs to cover the costs with less state funding. This means there are fewer resources for students, instruction, and the supports that help students succeed.**

CTCs Have Made and Continue To Make Cuts

Washington's CTCs are already making substantial cuts and operational changes. Since as early as 2020, they have consolidated leadership and administrative positions, redesigned processes, reduced space and facility costs, adopted technology, and imposed tighter budget controls.

- **Thirteen CTCs consolidated administrative roles** while preserving functions. This includes combining vice president positions, merging divisions, reducing the number of deans, and sharing administrative support.
- Nine CTCs reported process or technology improvements, including one that **reduced public records labor hours by 60% even as request volume tripled**.

- One CTC's co-location arrangement with a university saves about **$2 million annually** on custodial, facilities, grounds, parking, and safety services. Another college shares 15 or more functions across its multi-college district.
- Eleven CTCs reported practices like zero-based budgeting, mandatory vacancy reviews, and holding goods and services budgets flat.

There is a limit to what should be called an "efficiency." Some measures save money by reducing capacity, such as leaving positions vacant or offering fewer course sections. Those are cuts, even when services are reorganized around them. CTCs are increasingly making actual cuts because they need to balance their budgets. These cuts aren't generally happening because CTCs have fewer students to serve.

> **Thirteen CTCs made reductions while serving growing numbers of students, with enrollment increases as high as 31% since 2020.**
>
> – From Appendix C

The progression of cuts is also significant. CTCs started with the least disruptive options and moved toward harder cuts: Discretionary spending → vacancies → compensation → positions → programs and locations. For 2026–27, most CTCs have reached the point of cutting positions, programs, or sites.

A Closer Look

> **Budget pressures are affecting programs and student services now, including programs that serve students with few alternatives.**

Budget pressures led **14 CTCs to close, suspend, or phase out about 50 programs, credentials, and student services.** Cuts range from workforce and bachelor's programs to childcare, adult basic education, English as a Second Language, and Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST).

Since 2020, **13 CTCs have eliminated about 250 positions through formal layoffs**, with most of those cuts occurring in the last two budget cycles. CTCs have also left about **90 additional positions vacant and used furloughs, reduced work hours, and retirement incentives to lower costs.** Administrative and leadership positions have been part of these reductions, including vice presidents, deans, and executive assistants, along with faculty and student-support positions. Cuts now affect critical services, such as advising, financial aid, disability services, IT, records, and custodial services.

Seven CTCs reported cuts that directly affect student services and campus operations, including reduced advising, tutoring, disability services, and Running Start support. CTCs are also reducing custodial and other campus services and putting off needed repairs.

One college's branch campus has closed, another rural campus could close in 2028 without additional funding, and an outreach center no longer has a manager. Each college serves a community where students have no other college within a reasonable commuting distance.

View Appendix C to view cuts that CTCs have already made.

On a similar note, during the 2026 legislative session, the Legislature **closed Washington's Centers of Excellence, which connected business, industry, labor, and education to help people build strong skills to support Washington's key economic sectors.** The closure halted a successful, nationally recognized model of sector-based collaboration that brought together education and industry to strengthen our state's talent pipeline.

Unfunded Repairs

Capital repair and preservation needs across the CTC system far exceed available funding. In 2016, the Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM) estimated the CTC system's preservation backlog at nearly **$1 billion**. OFM has not updated that estimate since.

Every two years, SBCTC conducts the Facility Condition Survey to identify needed repairs and help guide capital budget requests. The 2025 survey identified **980** repair deficiencies totaling about $326.6 million. SBCTC's 2027–29 Capital Budget Request addresses **215** of them, **leaving $227 million in unfunded repairs.**

> **At this pace, CTCs would need more than six years to address the repair needs already identified, even as new needs continue to emerge.**

The OFM estimate and Facility Condition Survey measure different things, and both understate the system's full preservation backlog. The survey covers only state-owned buildings and estimates costs only for the most urgent conditions. **The lower total of $326.6 million does not mean the backlog has shrunk.**

Cuts Hurt Students, Communities, Employers, and Employees

Students are seeing fewer classes and programs, reduced tutoring and disability services, less walk-in help, higher fees, and delayed repairs and improvements to the classrooms, labs, and facilities they rely on. Some reductions affect students who have few other places to turn for services. At some CTCs, cuts have also affected services like childcare, parent education, and more.

> **These reductions have had a significant impact on low-income adults, immigrant and rural students, parents, and students with disabilities.**

College budget cuts also affect local communities and employers. Closing workforce programs reduces local training options in fields like nursing, automotive, engineering and the skilled trades, and those programs can take years to rebuild.

Campus closures leave rural communities without a nearby college, while reductions in childcare, community education, and other services reduce resources available to the broader community. College foundations are also increasingly helping cover operating costs, leaving fewer charitable dollars available for scholarships and program improvements.

Staffing reductions have increased workloads for remaining employees as CTCs redistribute work from eliminated and vacant positions. CTCs also report reduced capacity in areas such as Human Resources (HR), IT security, and institutional research, along with cuts to training and professional development that help employees maintain needed skills.

SEADS WORK GROUP

To support SB 5998 (2026), SBCTC established the SEADS Work Group. View the work group roster in Appendix B. The work group serves as an advisory body to the SBCTC State Board and is responsible for developing recommendations that:

- Improve efficiency
- Streamline costs and administrative processes
- Protect access
- Strengthen student success across the CTC system

Five questions guided the work group's discussions and analyses:

- Where do duplication or costs exist that do not clearly support student success?
- How does the current district structure support or affect operations and student success?
- Where could collaboration, shared services, or other changes improve efficiency while preserving access?
- What regional factors should be considered before making recommendations?
- Which recommendations are actionable, and by whom?

From May–November 2026, the work group examined how the CTC system's existing functions, services, organizational structures, and resources align with current and future needs. The question was not how to operate with fewer resources, but how to use existing resources more effectively to serve students, support CTCs, and strengthen outcomes statewide.

Systemwide Ideas and How We Evaluated Them

The work group asked employees and leaders across the CTC system for ideas to improve efficiency, recognizing that those closest to the work often know where improvements can be made. The work group received **312 submissions**:

- More than 275 responses from college and SBCTC employees through a systemwide survey.
- More than 30 responses from SBCTC employees identifying opportunities for centralized services.

To evaluate these ideas consistently and meet the requirements of SB 5998 (2026), the work group developed the **SEADS evaluation rubric**. The rubric considers potential benefits, costs, student impacts, regional access, and other factors needed to determine whether an idea should move forward. Appendix E explains the rubric and how it was built and applied.

Key Findings and Conclusions

- **Keep using the rubric.** Testing and multiple rounds of review strengthened the rubric. It provides a consistent way to evaluate potential efficiencies while protecting student access and avoiding overstated savings.

- **Be clear about what counts as a benefit.** Distinguishing between savings, cost avoidance, staff capacity, and service improvements provides a more accurate picture of what each proposal could deliver for students and CTCs.
- **Ideas need development before they can be evaluated.** Many submissions identified an opportunity or problem rather than a fully developed proposal. Similar ideas needed to be grouped and developed further before the work group could evaluate their potential costs, benefits, and impacts.
- **The work cannot be completed in one year.** The 312 submissions demonstrate significant systemwide interest in improving efficiency, but fully evaluating the opportunities will take more time.
- **Future phases need broader engagement.** The initial process included input from college and SBCTC employees as well as work group representatives from students, labor, business, and industry.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The work group recommends five actions to continue improving efficiency while protecting student access, outcomes, and services:

1. Continue SEADS
2. Reduce operational duplication
3. Protect regional access
4. Improve the student experience before considering structural changes
5. Remove state and system barriers that increase costs

These recommendations are not ranked.

#1: Continue SEADS as an Ongoing Process

Build on the work already underway.

SBCTC should use the SEADS evaluation rubric to continue reviewing the opportunities for system efficiency, regional access, and district structure. Future phases should include students, employees, Tribal Nations, and college communities. SBCTC should report results and identify any recommendations that require legislative action.

Next Steps

- Review shared services and regional infrastructure.
- Continue evaluating the seven instructional proposals.
- Examine district structure after the shared-services and regional reviews identify what can be accomplished without changing governance.
- Evaluate any future structural options for their effects on students, access, employees, and communities, as well as their upfront costs and long-term savings.

#2: Reduce Operational Duplication While Protecting Local Student Services

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Review college operations to identify work that can be shared or standardized while keeping student-facing services accessible locally.

SBCTC should lead a phased review with CTCs and employee representatives, beginning with financial aid processing, student account receivables and tax statements, payroll and benefits, and data and reporting. Each review should determine:

- What can be shared, standardized, or automated
- What should remain with individual colleges
- What ctcLink changes are needed
- Whether the benefits justify the implementation costs

Next Steps

The reviews should:

- **Start with work already underway.** Complete the financial aid, payroll and benefits, and data and research reviews first, then review the remaining operational areas based on student impact, readiness, and potential benefit.
- **Use "shared where it helps, local where it matters."** Consider statewide, regional, and college-based options while keeping services students and employees use directly accessible locally.
- **Build ctcLink into every review.** Define the desired business process first, then determine how ctcLink, automation, reporting, and integrations can support it.
- **Minimize adverse impacts on students, employees, and student outcomes.** Evaluate effects on student access and outcomes, including impacts on different student populations, and involve bargaining representatives early when changes affect working conditions.
- **Act on low-risk opportunities as they are identified.** Move forward with changes that can be made now, without waiting for all the reviews to be completed.
- **Measure and report results.** Separate recurring savings, one-time savings, cost avoidance, and redirected staff capacity; include implementation costs; and report results to the Legislature.

#3: Protect Regional Access and Expand Collaboration Among CTCs

Use regional data to protect student access and identify opportunities for neighboring CTCs to work together.

SBCTC should use regional data to identify access gaps, overlapping services, and opportunities for CTCs to share programs, outreach, or services. The Legislature should support voluntary regional pilots where CTCs identify opportunities for collaboration and evaluate the results before broader adoption.

Next Steps

- **Use regional analysis in every SEADS review.** Evaluate gaps, overlapping services, and opportunities by geography and student population rather than relying only on statewide averages.
- **Fill key data gaps.** Complete program-overlap mapping, connect broadband access with

online participation, identify overlapping outreach, examine cross-border enrollment, and maintain a current inventory of college locations and services.

- **Assess regional collaboration.** Fund voluntary pilots for shared programs, outreach, navigation, or student supports and evaluate their effects on student access, outcomes, and costs before expanding them.
- **Recognize the additional cost of rural access.** Review whether the allocation model adequately accounts for large service areas, outlying locations, small in-person programs, and the students that rural CTCs serve.
- **Define regions only when needed.** Do not create a permanent regional structure. Define geographic areas based on the service, partnership, or problem being addressed and involve CTCs, workforce partners, and Tribal Nations.

#4: Improve the Student Experience and Build Evidence Before Considering Structural Changes

Apply lessons from Washington's multi-college districts to improve the student experience and inform any future decisions about college or district structure.

SBCTC should work with Pierce, Seattle, and Spokane to identify opportunities to improve practices across the system that make it easier for students to enroll, receive financial aid, access services, and take courses across CTCs.

Next Steps

- **Track changes are already underway.** Track costs, timelines, employee transitions, and student outcomes as multi-college districts continue integrating operations and services.
- **Remove funding barriers to integration.** Review the minimum operating allocation and other funding policies so districts are not financially penalized for consolidating accreditation or services.
- **Make it easier for students to move between CTCs.** Explore how shared applications, records, financial aid processes, and ctcLink could provide a more seamless student experience across CTCs without requiring structural change.
- **Build capacity for major organizational change.** Identify the funding, expertise, and employee-transition support CTCs and multi-college districts would need if they pursued deeper integration.
- **Set a high bar for future structural proposals.** Any proposal to create, combine, or separate CTCs or multi-college districts should demonstrate benefits for students and access and identify the full costs, timeline, workforce impacts, accreditation implications, community effects, and funding consequences.

#5: Remove State and System Barriers That Increase College Costs

Remove funding and administrative barriers that increase costs or limit CTCs' ability to serve students.

The Legislature, SBCTC, and state agencies should address funding gaps, rules, and administrative requirements that increase CTC costs, reduce flexibility, or redirect resources away from instruction and student support.

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Next Steps

Priority actions are to:

- **Fully fund state-mandated compensation and central service costs.** Fund state-mandated cost-of-living adjustments, negotiated salary increases, and central state service costs so CTCs do not have to absorb these increases with resources intended for instruction and student support. Quantify how the state-local fund split has affected CTCs over the past decade and use those findings to inform future funding decisions.
- **Delegate public works authority to CTCs that have the capacity to use it.** Coordinate with the Washington State Department of Enterprise Services (DES) to delegate risk-based public works authority to qualified CTCs as already allowed under RCW 43.19.450, while keeping DES project management and specialized expertise available to CTCs that need it.
- **Ensure timely information on paid family and medical leave claims.** Collaborate with ESD to ensure timeliness with the information needed to coordinate benefits, plan staffing, and comply with overlapping leave requirements. This includes approval status, start date, duration, and use pattern of approved claims.
- **Simplify funding requirements that add administrative burden.** Identify and revise SBCTC earmarks and legislative provisos that unnecessarily limit flexibility, duplicate requirements, or require significant staff time. Start with requirements that SBCTC can change under existing authority, then bring forward specific legislative changes where needed.
- **Evaluate the financial and operational effects of state policies and system requirements.** Quantify the effects of the tuition-setting formula and examine how full-scope faculty bargaining relates to student outcomes and educational quality, faculty recruitment, retention, working conditions, college operations, and institutional effectiveness. Collaborate with ESD to deepen understanding of academic year determinations and implications under Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 192-210. Evaluate the effects of the 1,050-hour part-time limit, overtime eligibility threshold, and 18-month non-permanent employment limit. Identify and eliminate unnecessary duplication among state audits, accreditation, and reporting requirements. Move forward with changes that show clear benefits.
- **Measure how fiscal pressures affect students.** Track and report on how fiscal constraints affect course availability, student services, and access, including sections eliminated, students turned away, and services reduced. Use those findings to evaluate funding and policy changes and identify where greater flexibility would protect instruction and student support.

Implementation

Table 1: Implementing the Recommendations

The table below outlines how each recommendation would move forward, including who leads, what is needed, and when action could occur.

Recommendations	Lead	Action needed	Legislative action	Timing
#1: Continue SEADS	SBCTC	Fund the next phase	Appropriation	2027–29
#2: Operational reviews	SBCTC and CTCs	Complete priority reviews	Possibly none initially	Phased

Recommendations	Lead	Action needed	Legislative action	Timing
#3: Regional pilots	SBCTC and participating CTCs	Design and fund pilots	Appropriation	2027–29
#4: District structure	SBCTC and multi-college districts	Track and evaluate integration	None initially	Long term
#5: State barriers	Legislature, SBCTC, and state agencies	Fund, delegate, or revise requirements	Varies	2027 session onward

Cost

All five recommendations will require additional resources and investment to implement. Specific costs have not yet been determined. **If the Legislature approves the recommendations, SBCTC will develop implementation plans and associated cost estimates.**

REGIONAL ACCESS & DISTRICT STRUCTURE

Regional Access

SB 5998 (2026) asks the work group to consider regional access to programs and services. **Needs and circumstances vary widely across Washington.** Students, local economies, transportation, geography, and workforce needs differ from one part of the state to another. Statewide averages can hide those differences. That matters when considering both access and efficiency.

> **A change that saves money with no loss of access in the Puget Sound area can remove the ONLY option in a rural area.**

To better understand those differences, SBCTC staff examined the data by region. Looking at the data regionally helps identify where there may be gaps in access, overlapping services, or opportunities to strengthen education and workforce pathways.

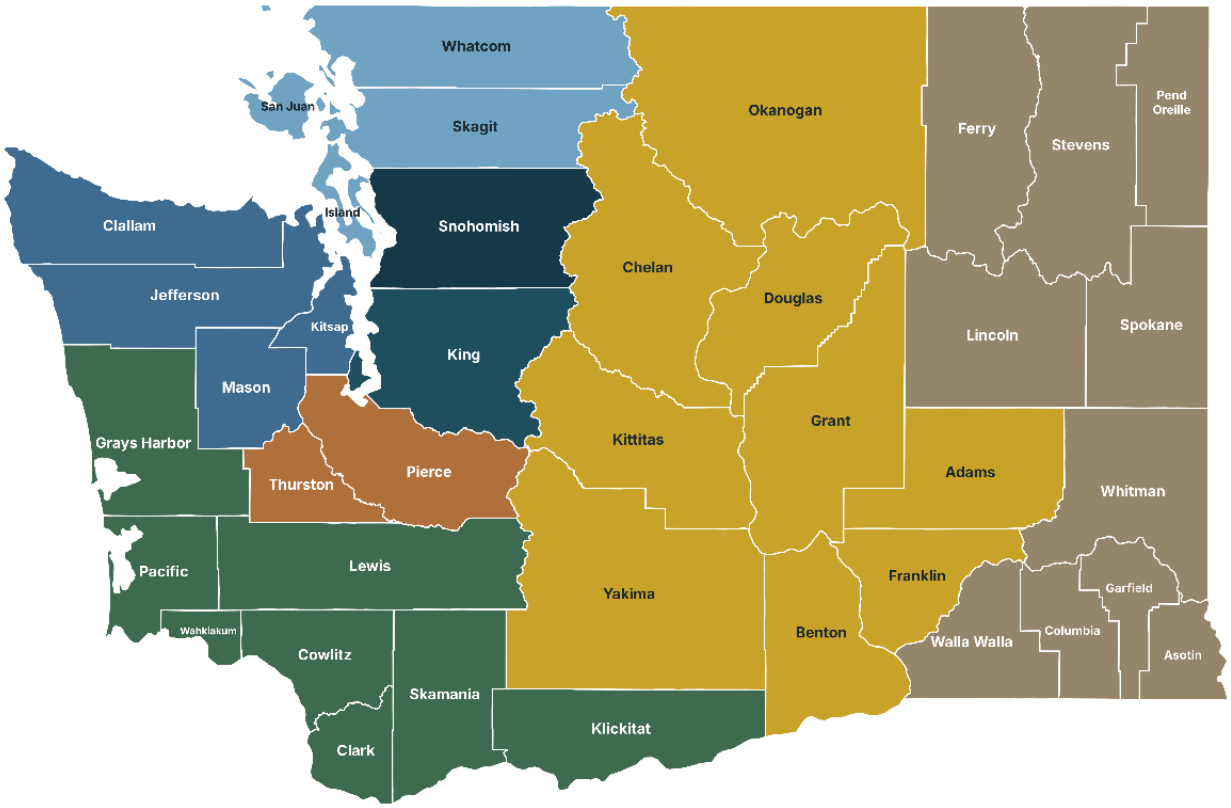
Defining a Region

Washington already uses different regional boundaries for different purposes, including nine Educational Service Districts for K-12, 12 Workforce Development Areas, and the 30 college districts. Students, workers, and employers do not necessarily follow those boundaries.

For this analysis, staff grouped counties into **eight regions**, based largely on the Workforce Development Areas, and divided the central Puget Sound area into North Sound, Mid-Sound, and South Sound. This allowed staff to examine access and other factors at a more local level.

The regions are a tool for analysis, not a proposal to change college districts, governance, or boundaries. Any regions considered for future policy decisions should be based on the specific purpose and may look different, depending on the issue being studied.

Image 1: Eight Regions, 34 CTCs



The next page contains a color legend for each region and the CTCs located within that region.

Central
Wenatchee Valley
Yakima Valley
Big Bend
Columbia Basin

Mid-Sound (King)
Seattle Central
North Seattle
South Seattle
Shoreline
Bellevue
Highline
Green River
Lake Washington
Renton
Cascadia

Northwestern
Skagit Valley
Whatcom
Bellingham

South Sound
Pierce College Fort Steilacoom
Pierce College Puyallup
Tacoma
South Puget Sound
Bates
Clover Park

Eastern
Spokane
Spokane Falls
Walla Walla

North Sound (Snohomish)
Everett
Edmonds

Olympic
Peninsula
Olympic

Southwestern
Grays Harbor
Centralia
Lower Columbia
Clark

Regional Access Data

The available data show where currently enrolled students live and attend college. These patterns help explain how students access CTCs across the state, including when they attend a college outside their home district. The work group used these patterns to shape its findings on regional access.

Some questions require additional information. College location records vary in how current and consistent they are, and district boundaries alone cannot describe the areas CTCs serve. The data provide limited information about broadband access, online participation, enrollment from neighboring states, housing, and athletics. Current enrollment patterns alone do not show **who CTCs are not reaching or the barriers those students face**.

Key Findings and Conclusions

- **Geography affects access.** Students in some parts of Washington face longer travel distances, limited broadband, and fewer transportation options. Any proposal to consolidate in-person services or move services online should consider whether students would still have reasonable access.
- **Higher costs do not necessarily mean inefficiency.** Rural and technical colleges may have higher per-student costs because they serve large geographic areas, operate smaller, specialized, or technical programs and locations, and serve higher shares of low-income and adult basic education students. Those differences should be considered when comparing CTCs.
- **Regional analysis can identify both duplication and gaps.** In some areas, CTCs serve many of the same students and communities; in others, a CTCs may provide the only nearby option. Looking regionally can help distinguish between useful overlap that preserves access and unnecessary duplication that adds cost.
- **Use regions for analysis and collaboration, not governance.** The work group does not recommend creating regional governing bodies, new administrative layers, or a permanent regional map. Regions should be used when they help answer a specific question or support collaboration among CTCs.

- **Protect access when pursuing efficiencies.** Regional differences should be considered in decisions about shared services, consolidation, and online delivery, particularly in rural areas and communities with limited broadband or transportation.

An efficiency is not truly an efficiency if it significantly reduces student access.

- **Consider regional infrastructure alongside shared services.** Continuing SEADS should examine what makes sense to provide statewide, regionally or at individual colleges rather than developing separate regional structures or recommendations.

View Appendix G to see regional differences across the state.

District Structure

What a Multi-College District Is

SB 5998 (2026) directs the work group to consider locations in districts with more than one campus and include a review of district structure and how it affects campus operations and student success.

In Washington state, there are 30 districts and 34 colleges.

Districts are defined in Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 28B.50.040. Each district is governed by a governor-appointed board of trustees responsible for local policy, budgets, and appointing the district president or chancellor. College districts are distinct from legislative districts, and at least one college serves every legislative district in the state.

Multi-college districts, including Seattle, Spokane, and Pierce, operate with one chancellor, one board, a president for each college, and college-level leadership.

- **Seattle Colleges** include South Seattle, Seattle Central, and North Seattle.
- **Spokane Colleges** include Spokane Community College and Spokane Falls Community College.
- **Pierce College** includes Pierce College Fort Steilacoom and Pierce College Puyallup.

CTCs often have multiple campuses, satellite locations, and learning centers, extending their reach closer to students. There are nearly 100 college locations across Washington serving students. Some CTCs — including multi-college districts — serve vast regions, such as Spokane College's 12,000+ square mile service area, with multiple rural sites.

How Multi-College Districts Are the Same, and How They Differ

Accreditation Plays a Key Role

The most significant difference is accreditation because it determines almost everything a student experiences. Pierce College holds one accreditation and one federal financial aid identity so that it can offer one application, one financial aid file, one transcript, and one set of student services across

both CTCs. **This means a Pierce College student can register for a class at the other college without having to reapply.**

Spokane and Seattle each hold one accreditation and one federal aid identity per college. **This means a student who moves between their colleges must reapply, has financial aid adjusted between two or three offices, and sometimes receives different aid decisions from colleges that share a name.**

Spokane removed one step with a free, automated transcript exchange between its two colleges. Both districts now present a shared public name, each college keeps its own name, catalog, and website.

Leadership

In all three multi-college districts, the chancellor is the district's Chief Executive Officer (CEO) — the only leader who reports to the board and is the district's voice with the Legislature and regional partners.

- Pierce's presidents supervise instruction and student services at their college but have no separate cabinets, and shared governance is district-wide.
- Seattle's presidents lead their own cabinets, college councils, budgets, hiring, and community relationships, and each college has its own student government.
- Spokane's presidents function within a shared decision-making model.

View Appendix F for a summary of differences.

Benefits of a Multi-College District

- **A smoother student experience when services are fully integrated.** Where accreditation allows, colleges can share applications, financial aid, advising, and student services. At Pierce, students can use services and take classes across both colleges without navigating separate systems.
- **Greater capacity for systemwide programs and fundraising.** Districts can combine resources to support larger initiatives. Seattle, for example, consolidated its foundations and operates Seattle Promise across the district.
- **More flexibility and a stronger regional voice.** Districts can move staff and resources where they are most needed and represent multiple colleges with employers, funders and lawmakers while maintaining local community relationships.

Limitations

- **Administrative consolidation alone does not create a seamless student experience.** Spokane and Seattle share functions such as HR, IT, payroll, and finance, but students may still encounter separate applications, financial aid, and other processes at each college.
- **College identity and culture can make integration difficult.** Long-standing college identities, practices, and relationships can make consolidation more complicated, particularly when changes affect local decision-making, roles, or relationships.

Key Findings and Conclusions

- **The focus should be on the student experience, not the number of CTCs.** Multi-college districts already share governance and many administrative services. What matters most to students is whether admissions, financial aid, records, and other services work seamlessly across the district.

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- **Structural change takes time and has costs.** Consolidating operations can take years and involves staffing, labor agreements, technology, and significant management capacity. Changes may also create short-term costs before producing savings.
- **Integration does not mean every college must operate the same way.** Districts can share systems and services while maintaining programs and approaches that reflect local students, employers, and communities.
- **Changing district structure will not solve current budget problems.** Multi-college districts are already facing rising costs and budget pressures, and structural changes alone would not close those gaps.
- **District structure should be considered after other opportunities for efficiency.** The work group recommends first examining centralized services and regional infrastructure to determine what can be accomplished without changing college or district governance.

WHY CLOSURES & MERGERS ARE NOT NEAR-TERM SOLUTIONS

The work group concluded that closures and mergers are not responsible or appropriate strategies for addressing the CTC system's immediate financial challenges.

Closures

Research shows that college closures can seriously disrupt students' education. A national study by the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO) and National Student Clearinghouse Research Center examined more than 143,000 students affected by the closure of 467 institutions. More than 100,000 students, or 70%, experienced an abrupt closure without adequate notice or a teach-out plan, and more than half of those students did not re-enroll.

Most institutions in the study were private, for-profit colleges. The findings do not predict the effects of closing a Washington community or technical college but demonstrate the risks that college closures can pose to students. Follow-up research found that nearly **1 in 3 students who experienced a college closure ended up in the "some college, no credential" population.**

> **When a rural college closes, the region loses an estimated average of 265 jobs, $14 million in wages, and $32 million in economic activity. Recovery can take decades, if it happens at all.**
>
> – From an upcoming SBCTC multi-state analysis of community college mergers, closures, and consolidation strategies

For Washington's CTCs, the effects of a closure would extend beyond enrollment. In many communities, colleges provide workforce training, adult basic education, English language instruction, and other services that may not be available nearby.

Colleges also support local employers and communities. Once technical programs, faculty expertise, employer partnerships, clinical placements, and other infrastructure are lost, it can take years to rebuild.

Closing a college may reduce institutional expenses, but it can also shift significant costs to students, employers, and communities.

Mergers

- **Mergers do not produce quick savings.** They require significant upfront investment in accreditation, technology, staffing, and organizational change. Potential savings may take five years or more to materialize.
- **There are lower-risk opportunities to pursue first.** Greater use of shared services and better alignment of business processes, labor partnerships, and academic calendars could improve efficiency without immediately changing college governance or structure.
- **Any future structural change requires deliberate planning.** A merger must protect student access and services, involve affected colleges and communities, and clearly demonstrate that the long-term benefits outweigh the financial and operational costs.

CONCLUSION

Washington's CTCs are essential to students, employers, communities, and the state's economy. Sustaining that value will require addressing the growing gap between rising operating costs and available resources.

CTCs have already reduced positions, programs, services, and locations while continuing to serve students and employers across the state. The work group found additional opportunities to share services, improve coordination, and reduce administrative burdens, but these changes require careful planning, reliable data, and upfront capacity.

The next phase of this work will require continued partnership with the Legislature.

CTCs and SBCTC can pursue efficiencies and improve how resources are used, but **we cannot address every barrier alone.** Legislative support will be needed to fully fund state-mandated costs, simplify unnecessary requirements, and provide the resources to put promising changes into practice while protecting student access and success.

The path forward is not simply to cut more. It is to use resources differently, address barriers, and invest in changes that deliver lasting benefits for students, CTCs, and communities.

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APPENDICES

- Appendix A: Additional CTC System Information
- Appendix B: Rosters
- Appendix C: College Actions Taken Since 2020
- Appendix D: Definitions
- Appendix E: Evaluation Rubric
- Appendix F: Washington's Multi-College Districts
- Appendix G: What The Regional Data Shows

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APPENDIX A: ADDITIONAL CTC SYSTEM INFORMATION

View the 2026 At a Glance and how Washington's CTCs are the solution.

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APPENDIX B: ROSTERS

Table 2: SEADS Work Group roster

Name	Position and organization
Mack Hogans, SEADS Work Group Chair	SBCTC State Board member
Naria Santa Lucia	SBCTC State Board member
Jay Schmidt	SBCTC State Board member
Jeff Wagnitz	SBCTC State Board member
Emily Yim	SBCTC State Board member
Kevin Brockbank	District Chancellor, Spokane Colleges
Ivan L. Harrell II	College President, Tacoma Community College
Amy Morrison	College President, Lake Washington Institute of Technology
Gary Chandler	Trustee, Big Bend Community College
Doug Mah	Trustee, South Puget Sound Community College
Bertha Ortega	Trustee, Yakima Valley College
Kangna	Student Representative and ASB President, Everett Community College
Jacqui Cain	President, AFT Washington
Tracy Stanley	Labor Representative, Council 28 Secretary, WFSE, Lower Columbia College
Nate Humphrey	Executive Director, SBCTC
Anthony Campbell	Facilitator, The Athena Group

Table 3: SBCTC staff roster

Name	Position
Rachelle Alongi	Communications Director
Felix Braffath	Director of Equity, Diversity & Inclusion
Maya Esquivido-Strom	Director of Tribal Government Affairs
Choi Halladay and Cherie Berthon*	Deputy Executive Director, Business Operations
Joyce Hammer	Deputy Executive Director, Education

Name	Position
Arlen Harris	Senior Director, External Affairs
Sam Herriot	Government Relations Associate
Julie Huss	Human Resources Director
Darrell Jennings	Capital Budget Director
Summer Kenesson	Senior Director, Research and Performance Management
Dani Rider	Assistant CIO – ctcLink Support
Grant Rodeheaver	Deputy Executive Director & CIO, IT
Marianna Watson	Executive Assistant
Stephanie Winner	Operating Budget Director

* Choi Halladay retired in mid-fall, and Cherie Berthon took over the role.

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APPENDIX C: COLLEGE ACTIONS TAKEN SINCE 2020

The table below summarizes actions CTCs have already taken, without identifying individual CTCs.

Table 4: List of changes

Type of action	CTCs[1]	Scope of changes	Who and what absorbed the impact
REDUCTIONS			
Campus and site closures	3	One branch campus closed; one rural campus scheduled to close in 2028 unless new funding is found; one outreach center's manager position was eliminated.	Communities: Loss of the only local provider; place-bound and rural students; local employers.
Program closures, suspensions, and teach-outs	14	Roughly 50 programs, credentials, or student services closed or suspended: Culinary, baking, and hospitality; paralegal; several applied baccalaureate degrees; engineering technology and land surveying; computer support and software development; veterinary technology; automotive; broadcast radio; clean energy; parent education at four CTCs; a Certified Nursing Assistant program and a nursing cohort. Four CTCs reduced adult basic education, English as a Second Language, High School +, or I-BEST (reducing 16 I-BEST pathways to 6). One college closed its bookstore, subsidized food services, and childcare.	Students; adults without a high school credential and English learners with no alternative provider; parents; employers who co-invested in programs; faculty whose programs closed.

[1] This is not a fully comprehensive list of actions.

Type of action	CTCs[1]	Scope of changes	Who and what absorbed the impact
Course and schedule reductions	8	Schedules contracted by more than 11% at one college over two years; 30 sections cut by non-renewal of part-time faculty at another; 19 courses inactivated; a $1.3 million adjunct budget reduction; Saturday and summer sections dropped; phased out upper-level transfer courses for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), which included second-year chemistry, physics, calculus at one college; tutoring hours reduced.	Students: Longer time to completion, fewer scheduling options, loss of local access to transfer STEM sequences; part-time faculty.
Reductions in force and position eliminations	13	About 250 positions have been eliminated or reduced through formal reductions in force since 2020, most in the last two budget cycles, excluding adjunct non-renewals; individual actions ranged from 3 to 38 positions. Positions span faculty, advising, records, accounting, HR, IT security, transcripts, testing, student activities, diversity and outreach, custodial, and executive roles. Several CTCs report the cuts occurred while enrollment grew 6 to 31%.	Staff lost positions; remaining staff absorbed additional duties without additional compensation; students and staff experienced slower service.
Positions held vacant and hiring freezes	10	About 90 positions held open, including 14 tenured faculty lines at one college; automotive, aviation, business, and nursing faculty; a faculty librarian; an institutional research manager; international and workforce development leads; and campus operations and IT	Students in programs with unfilled faculty lines; workload on remaining staff; institutional research and compliance capacity.

Type of action	CTCs[1]	Scope of changes	Who and what absorbed the impact
		roles; hiring delays of six months to two years.	
Furloughs, compensation, and voluntary workforce measures	11	Furloughs of 5 to 12 days for administrators at three CTCs and campus-wide across all bargaining units at one; about $180,000 in earned faculty increments withheld and a presidential general wage increase declined at one college; faculty agreement to furlough days if a financial emergency is declared; voluntary reductions in FTE and 12-to-9-month contract conversions; early retirement and tenure buyout incentives; adjunct and annualized appointments used in place of tenure-track hiring.	Employees: Lost pay and increments; shift toward contingent faculty; retention risk.
Service-level and operational reductions	8	Reduced custodial staff to Association of Physical Plant Administrators level 4 and grounds to level 5, service levels realigned as a result; shuttle capacity and cashier window hours cut; drop-in student services replaced by appointment only; reduced advising, enrollment support, outreach, Running Start outreach, and disability services capacity; tutoring and learning support hours cut; Running Start book waiver ended; deferred repairs including stairwell lighting and building envelope sealant.	Students, especially those who rely on walk-in help, disability accommodations, and tutoring; campus safety and building conditions.

Type of action	CTCs[1]	Scope of changes	Who and what absorbed the impact
Travel, goods and services, discretionary	13	Reported by nearly every respondent: Travel limited to essential or grant-funded; professional development paused; goods and services cuts from about $25,000 to $462,000 per college; printing, furniture, subscriptions, consulting, recruiting, and meeting food eliminated or frozen.	Staff development and recruitment; largely invisible to students in the short run.
Deferred investment	2 (explicit)	Equipment and technology replacement cycles extended; needed facility repairs and preservation projects delayed.	Future budgets; building conditions and safety.
EFFICIENCIES			
Administrative consolidation and reorganization	13	Combined vice president roles ($140,000 at one college), merged instruction and student services divisions, dean structures reduced (10 to 8 at one college, by two at two others), shared executive assistants, institutional research merged with institutional effectiveness, HR and eLearning roles combined, bookstore and printing merged into one coordinator with three fewer positions, cross-functional business operations teams.	Function preserved by design; span of control and workload on remaining administrators increase; risk of thinner compliance and oversight capacity.
Shared services and partnerships	6	Co-location with a university saving about $2 million a year in custodial, facilities, grounds, parking, and safety; a long-standing multi-college district shared-services model spanning 15 or more functions; external partner funding sustaining a bilingual GED program after	Generally neutral or positive for students; depends on partner stability.

Type of action	CTCs[1]	Scope of changes	Who and what absorbed the impact
		a federal grant loss; a program moved to self-support; regional IT service exploration.	
Process redesign and technology	9	Public records software cutting labor hours 60% as requests tripled; transcript evaluation redesign; curriculum management software; centralized software contracting; replacing paid analytics tools with open-source; hazardous waste collection combined across programs; renegotiated fire protection funding; ctcLink workflow optimization; multi-quarter master scheduling; a temporary project and quality management office.	Positive for students where service speeds up; modest one-time investment; staff retraining.
Facilities, space, and energy	3	Leases ended and a building sold with functions moved to owned space; underutilized buildings closed, and classes relocated; central materials store; HVAC controls and retro-commissioning for energy savings.	Neutral to positive; some relocation inconvenience.
Budget discipline and vacancy management	7	Zero-based budgeting; required annual departmental reduction exercises; review of every vacancy before refill; flat goods and services budgets absorbing inflation; spending student-fee funds before unrestricted funds; temporary backfills used to redesign work; employee-engagement investment to reduce turnover cost.	Ongoing managerial load; vacancy savings are often reductions in disguise (see note).

Type of action	CTCs[1]	Scope of changes	Who and what absorbed the impact
Revenue and cost shifting (annex)	8	Foundation support covering operating costs (from $4,500 for signage to $225,000 in operating support; salary, professional development, clinical supervision, equipment); new or increased student fees (housing, comprehensive, IT, course and lab); space rentals, cell tower, lockers, conference, and food services; grant-funded program replacements.	Students (fees); donors and foundations; sustainability risk when one-time sources fund recurring costs.

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APPENDIX D: DEFINITIONS

The work group clarified and defined several words, which are directly from SB 5998 (2026) or brought up in meeting conversations or proposals.

Student Success

This term means students making timely and equitable progress toward, completing, and benefiting from the educational goal they came for: A certificate, degree, or apprenticeship; transfer to a four-year institution with credits that apply to the bachelor's degree; a basic education, high school completion, or English language gain; or the skills for employment or advancement. It is measured by progression, completion, transfer, and post-completion outcomes in further education and living-wage employment, tracked at cohort level, and disaggregated by student characteristics and region.

Efficiency

This term means the relationship between the resources the system uses and the student success and access it produces. For administrative and business functions, it means delivering the same or better service at lower cost per transaction, with service-quality and accuracy standards held constant so higher volume alone never counts as improvement.

For programs and structures, it means achieving the same or better student outcomes per dollar of resources, measured against a stated baseline and against programs and colleges of comparable scale, mission, and cost structure, so small, rural, specialized, and high-cost programs are compared with their peers rather than the statewide average.

Spending that clearly supports student success is not inefficiency; an efficiency gain is capacity freed and redirected toward students, and every claimed gain is labeled as recurring savings, one-time savings, cost avoidance, redirected capacity, or improved service quality. Efficiencies preserve the service while using fewer resources: Consolidation, process redesign, technology, shared services, and better use of space.

Access

This team means that people in every part of the state can practically enroll in and complete programs that lead to their goals. Practical access accounts for the real constraints students face; for example, distance and transportation, program schedules, cost and financial aid, childcare, broadband, language, and disability. A program is accessible to a student only if they can actually reach it, afford it, gain admission to it (including that the program has capacity to admit them), and fit it into their life; a program that exists somewhere in the state is not, by itself, access.

Reductions

This term means lowering what a college produces: Fewer programs, sections, people, hours, or dollars of compensation.

Revenue Generation and Cost Shifting

These terms mean moving costs to another payer (students, foundations, grants, tenants) rather than lowering them.

Centralized Services, Shared Services, and Standardized Practice

Table 5: How We Use These Terms

	Centralized services	Shared services	Standardized practice
What is it?	A single unit performs a function for all colleges, using one set of processes that it operates and controls.	A provider (SBCTC, a host college, or a regional group) performs a function for colleges as its customers under agreed service levels.	Each college continues to do the work itself, following common definitions, processes, and standards.
Who shapes the service?	In most cases, the central unit; colleges have limited influence over how the work is done. The central unit may or may not be SBCTC.	Colleges as customers, through service-level agreements and a voice in how the service is designed and reviewed.	Colleges together, through agreed standards.
Accountability	Upward, to the organization that runs the unit.	To the colleges served, measured by published service levels and performance indicators.	Each college, against the common standard.
Strengths	Removes duplication; enables consistency and consolidated expertise.	Removes duplication while keeping the provider focused on cost, quality, and responsiveness.	Consistency and comparability with the least disruption. Most flexibility for local needs.
Main risks	Rigid and slow to respond when local needs differ; the provider may not be answerable to those it serves.	Requires investment in service agreements, measurement, and customer governance to work as intended.	Duplication of effort remains.

APPENDIX E: EVALUATION RUBRIC

The evaluation rubric was designed to directly apply the conditions of SB 5998 (2026).

Applying the Rubric

Table 6: What Happened at Each Rubric Stage

Stage	What it does
Screening	Four pass/fail questions: • Does the proposal address costs, duplication, access, shared services/collaboration, or district structure within the CTC system? • Does the proposal target cost or duplication that does **not** clearly support student success — or affirmatively strengthen student success at equal or lower cost? • Is there an identifiable owner who would implement the proposal? • Can it be evaluated?
Scoring	Proposals were scored on seven criteria from 1 (adverse) to 4 (strong): Student success impact; access and regional equity; fiscal realism; evidence base; feasibility and authority; implementation risk and reversibility; and governance and autonomy fit.
Classification	Proposals were classified as: • Advance forward • Develop further • Park

Principles of the Rubric

Several principles are built into the rubric:

- **Equity is built in, not added on.** Equity is built into the evaluation rubric, not treated as a separate criterion. No proposal can score well if its effects on students of color and other underserved groups go unexamined.
- **A student success floor.** A score of 1 on student success or access “parks” the proposal, regardless of its total score.
- **Honest accounting.** Every claimed benefit must be identified as recurring savings, one-time savings, cost avoidance, redirected capacity, or service quality. No proposal advances with an unlabeled savings claim. Budget reductions are not counted as efficiencies.
- **Analysis, not assumption.** An effect is considered “neutral” only if analysis supports that conclusion. If there is no analysis, the proposal receives a lower score.
- **Students, employees, and communities.** Every evaluation considers effects on students, employees, and surrounding communities. The rubric also distinguishes between a college receiving a service and a college affected by a governance decision.
- **A visible record.** SBCTC staff screen each proposal, giving work group members more time to evaluate those that advance. Any member may challenge a screening decision. Proposals that do not advance are documented, along with the reason.

APPENDIX F: WASHINGTON'S MULTI-COLLEGE DISTRICTS

Table 7: Summary of Differences

	Pierce College	Spokane Colleges	Seattle Colleges
Colleges and sites	Fort Steilacoom, Puyallup	Spokane Community College, Spokane Falls Community College	North Seattle, Seattle Central, South Seattle
Key sites	Joint Base Lewis-McChord: McChord AFB Education Center, Fort Lewis Stone Education Center	Five rural centers; Pullman Transfer Center	Health Education Center, Harbor Island Training Center, Maritime Academy, New Holly Learning Center, Wood Technology Center
Origin	One college (1967); Puyallup grew from a one-building branch into a college (1999); district now holds a single accreditation	Spokane Falls began as a campus of Spokane Community College and became separately accredited in the 1960s	Three colleges founded as distinct institutions under one district from the start
Students (as described)	About 14,000; most take classes at a mix of both colleges and online	About 20,000 across 12,000+ square miles, urban and rural	About 30,000 to 33,000 in a dense urban area
Accreditations / federal aid identities	1 / 1	2 / 2	3 / 3
District leadership	Chancellor and CEO; presidents supervise learning and student success at their college; no separate district office	Chancellor; presidents function within a shared decision-making model; services hired at district	Chancellor leads citywide strategy, finance, HR; presidents lead college budgets, hiring, and community relations
Shared governance	District-wide; presidents have no separate cabinets	College-based	College councils, cabinets, and student governments at each college
Current direction	Mature integrated model, described by an outside study as "complex but collaborative"	Active transformation from competition to collaboration; exploring single accreditation	Active transformation toward a unified student experience; centralized back office in the last four to five years

APPENDIX G: WHAT THE REGIONAL DATA SHOWS

Table 8: Looking at the Regional Data

What was examined	What the regional data shows	Why it matters for efficiency and access
Where CTCs and access points are	CTCs and other points of contact (centers, partner sites, basic education, and corrections sites) are predominantly in areas of mid- or high population density; large parts of rural central and eastern Washington are far from any college site.	Places with the fewest options also have the weakest transit; consolidating in-person services will hit the hardest.
Population change	Southwestern grew in nearly every age band over 10 years. North Sound, Central, Northwestern, and Olympic lost young adults.	Outreach and program planning need regional, not statewide, enrollment assumptions.
Adults without a credential	Large shares everywhere, including nearly 70% in Mid Sound. In Central, about two-thirds are uncredentialed and close to a quarter live below 150% of the poverty level.	The adult market differs by region: In Mid Sound, many are working and may not qualify for full aid; in rural regions, cost and distance are the barrier.
High school graduates and college-going	High school population is projected to decline in several regions, offset in part by rising graduation rates. College-going ranges from about 69% in King County to near 20% in some rural northeast districts, which also show higher high school dropout rates.	Capture rate, not the size of the cohort, is the larger lever. In rural regions, adult learners may be the more durable market.
Low-income support and basic skills	Rural and technical colleges serve a share of students receiving low-income supports (Basic Food Employment and Training program, homelessness grants) and of adult basic education students well above their size. Basic education students pay little tuition and are not aid-eligible.	Uniform cost or per-student comparisons misread these colleges; shared supports and practice could help CTCs that are carrying the heaviest loads.

What was examined	What the regional data shows	Why it matters for efficiency and access
Where students come from	Home-address maps show rural colleges recruiting across exceptionally large areas (one central Washington college draws from much of the eastern region), heavy overlap among three central Washington colleges, and statewide draws for unique technical programs and athletics.	Several colleges fund outreach and navigators in the same communities; a regional view shows where coordination could replace duplication.
Broadband	Household broadband subscriptions range from about 60 to 70% in the lowest regions to over 90% in the highest; in some rural areas service exists but is unaffordable.	Online expansion is not a substitute for presence where students cannot connect; online learning may mostly serve Puget Sound students.
Regional economies and wages	Health care is the largest employer in most regions, but not all: Agriculture leads in Central at about $39,000 average annual pay, manufacturing in North Sound. Pay in traded industries (information, professional services, manufacturing) varies up to fourfold across regions.	Workforce outcomes and living-wage expectations have to be read regionally; in some communities the need is for more employers, not just more trained workers.
Employment and remote work	Employment rates and remote-work shares vary sharply, and some high remote-work areas also have weak broadband.	Assumptions about what graduates can do after completion (including remote work) don't hold everywhere.

COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGES
Washington State Board

REGULAR ITEM (RESOLUTION 26-11-40)

November 23, 2026

Tab 1

Consideration and Approval of the System Efficiency, Access, and District Structure (SEADS) Work Group Report and Recommendations

Brief Description

In the 2026 supplemental operating budget, the Legislature directed the State Board to submit a report to the governor and appropriate legislative committees by December 1, 2026. The report must include recommendations to reduce redundancy and expenses not directly contributing to student success; consider regional access, multi-campus districts, and other geographic factors; and review the current district structure and its impact on campus operations and student success.

On April 9, 2026, the State Board adopted Resolution 26-04-19 chartering the SEADS Work Group, followed by approval of its Work Plan and Timeline on August 20, 2026. Together, these actions established an advisory process for developing a report and recommendations for State Board review and approval.

The proposed final SEADS Work Group Report and Recommendations, included as **Attachment A**, present the Work Group's findings on operational efficiency, educational access, regional considerations, and district structure. It documents the evidence and proposals considered, describes the evaluation process, and identifies recommendations for action and continued analysis.

The State Board is asked to approve the report and recommendations for submission in fulfillment of the legislative directive. Approval would establish the document as the State Board's report and authorize its transmittal by December 1, 2026. Future implementation decisions would remain subject to applicable authorities and approval processes.

How does this item link to the State Board's Strategic Plan?

The SEADS report advances the State Board's 2020–2030 Strategic Plan, particularly its focus areas of Institutional Financial Health and Equitable Student Success.

Goal 4 calls for systemwide strategies to strengthen colleges' financial sustainability and resiliency, including greater efficiency, cost savings, and process improvements. The report identifies opportunities to reduce duplication and administrative burden while considering implementation costs, benefits, and impacts on services.

The report also supports Goals 1 and 2, which emphasize equitable access, retention, and completion. Its consideration of regional differences, program availability, student supports, and potential structural changes connects system efficiency with equitable student access and success.

Background Information

The 15-member SEADS Work Group began meeting in June 2026 to examine operational redundancies, regional access, opportunities for collaboration, and district structure. Its report

distinguishes findings ready for action from areas requiring further analysis, stakeholder engagement, or decisions by other authorities.

The report organizes its recommendations into five areas:

- **Continuing SEADS as an ongoing process** to evaluate and advance promising opportunities.
- **Reducing operational duplication while protecting local student services** by identifying work that can be shared, standardized, or automated.
- **Protecting regional access and expanding collaboration among CTCs** using regional data and voluntary partnerships.
- **Improving the student experience and building evidence before considering structural changes**, drawing on lessons from Washington's multi-college districts.
- **Removing state and system barriers that increase college costs**, including funding gaps and administrative requirements that reduce flexibility or pull resources away from students.

Together, these recommendations establish a sequenced, evidence-based approach that considers student outcomes, regional access, operational feasibility, costs, and impacts on colleges and employees.

Implementation would involve multiple decision-makers, including the State Board, college districts, the Legislature, and other governmental partners. Approval of the report does not independently authorize specific proposals or alter existing governance or labor responsibilities. Actions requiring State Board approval would return for separate consideration.

Upon approval, the Executive Director will submit the report by December 1, 2026, pursuant to RCW 43.01.036, and is authorized to make non-substantive editorial, formatting, accessibility, and technical revisions before submission.

Recommendation/preferred result

Staff recommend adoption of Resolution 26-11-40 approving the SEADS Work Group Report and Recommendations, included as Attachment A, as the State Board's report in fulfillment of the 2026 legislative directive.

Approval authorizes the Executive Director to transmit the report by December 1, 2026, with subsequent implementation actions subject to applicable approval processes.

Policy Manual Change Yes ☐ No ☒

Prepared by: Nate Humphrey, executive director

COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGES
Washington State Board

STATE OF WASHINGTON
STATE BOARD FOR COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGES
RESOLUTION 26-11-40

A resolution approving the System Efficiency, Access, and District Structure Work Group Report and Recommendations and authorizing its submission to the Governor and Legislature.

WHEREAS, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges carries out its responsibilities and duties imposed upon it within the confines of the authority, power, and discretion granted to it by law (see RCW 28B.50); and

WHEREAS, the 2026 supplemental operating budget, Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5998 (ESSB 5998), Chapter 268, Laws of 2026, § 602(44), directs the State Board to submit a report by December 1, 2026, pursuant to RCW 43.01.036, to the governor and appropriate committees of the Legislature concerning potential reductions in redundancy and costs not directly related to student success, regional access, and district structure; and

WHEREAS, on April 9, 2026, the State Board adopted Resolution 26-04-19 chartering the System Efficiency, Access, and District Structure (SEADS) Work Group, and on August 20, 2026, the Board approved a work plan and timeline to guide its activities; and

WHEREAS, the charter established the SEADS Work Group as an advisory body to the State Board and provided that its proposed final report and recommendations would be subject to State Board review and approval prior to submission; and

WHEREAS, the Work Group conducted a structured review of system efficiency, student access, regional considerations, campus operations, and district structure and has presented its proposed report and recommendations to the State Board as Attachment A; and

WHEREAS, the report addresses the legislative charge and identifies recommendations concerning continued State Board review, operational efficiency, regional access and collaboration, district structure, and state-level fiscal and administrative barriers; and

WHEREAS, the State Board has reviewed the proposed report and recommendations and intends to fulfill its statutory reporting obligation while retaining authority over any future Board actions arising from the report; and

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges hereby approves and adopts the System Efficiency, Access, and District Structure Work Group Report and Recommendations, provided as Attachment A, as the State Board's report in fulfillment of the 2026 legislative directive; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Executive Director is authorized and directed to submit the approved report to the governor and appropriate committees of the Legislature by December 1, 2026, pursuant to RCW 43.01.036; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Executive Director may make non-substantive editorial revisions, technical, formatting, and accessibility corrections necessary to finalize the report for transmittal, provided that such changes do not alter the substance of the findings or recommendations approved by the Board; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that approval and submission of the report do not themselves authorize any implementation action requiring separate State Board, local governing board, legislative, or other approvals.

APPROVED AND ADOPTED on November 23, 2026

Attest

_____	_____
Nate Humphrey, secretary	Martin Valadez, chair