



## CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE

MARCH 2025

### Sustaining Economic Advantage

Washington state's 13 Centers of Excellence link business, industry, labor, and educational systems to create a highly skilled and readily available workforce critical to the success of the state's economy. Through ongoing investment, centers are charged with narrowing the gap between employer workforce needs and the colleges' supply of work-ready graduates. Centers are critical to the state's strategy of sustaining an innovative and vibrant economy.

The Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges in 2004 established the Centers of Excellence to help the state maintain its competitive economic and industry advantage. The Legislature in 2009 established the centers in state statute, and tasking them with building "a diverse workforce for strategic industries"<sup>1</sup> and closing the skills gap.

### Strategic Attention on Industry-Specific Skills

Each center specializes in an economic area important to Washington's economy, benefiting all community and technical colleges in the state. Advised by representatives from business, labor and education, the centers serve as a way for each sector to stay up-to-date on emerging trends and training and workforce needs.

Centers are housed at their local community or technical college, ensuring strong links between the education, business and labor sectors. Because of the centers, colleges — already able to quickly adapt their programs to changing business and economic needs — are better prepared to teach the next generation of that center's industry employees.

1. Office of Program Research. (2009, April 10). Final Bill Report SHB 1323. <https://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary/?BillNumber=1323&Year=2009>

### Five Core Expectations

At the heart of each center lies five core expectations:

- **Economic development:** Each center supports workforce development and its local economic driver industry by serving as the link between local, regional, national and international education, labor and business organizations.
- **Industry sector strategy:** As the link between education and industry, the centers ensure teachers, counselors, and others have the latest knowledge of the field, and that curriculum accurately reflects evolving business needs.
- **Education, innovation and efficiency:** The centers continually look for ways to improve what and how students learn. In addition to keeping curriculum current, the centers advocate for expanded apprenticeship opportunities, credit for prior learning and industry-recognized credentials.
- **Workforce supply and demand:** The centers research, analyze and distribute to their partners the latest information specific to their driver industry. Sectors use that information to find ways to close skills gaps, expand training capacity and incorporate best practices into educational programs.
- **Equity and access:** The centers work with industry and colleges to maximize student and workforce potential within a culture that advances racial, social, and economic justice in service to our diverse communities.

### Agriculture and Natural Resources

**Walla Walla Community College's** Agricultural and Natural Resources Center of Excellence provides the means for all stakeholders to actively work towards cultivating and maintaining a healthy agricultural and natural resource economy for the state.

1

#### CONTACT INFORMATION

**Carolyn McKinnon**  
Policy Associate, Workforce Education  
p: 360-704-3903  
e: [cmckinnon@sbctc.edu](mailto:cmckinnon@sbctc.edu)

## Allied Health

The Allied Health Center of Excellence at **Yakima Valley College** is dedicated to addressing Washington state's health care workforce needs of today and tomorrow. The center provides innovative programs to prepare qualified and competent health care professionals and leaders.

## Aerospace and Advanced Manufacturing

The Center of Excellence for Aerospace and Advanced Manufacturing at **Everett Community College** provides expertise to support industry growth and homegrown talent to develop the talent pipeline for the next generation of aerospace and manufacturing workers.

## Semiconductors and Electronic Manufacturing

The Semiconductor and Electronics Manufacturing Center of Excellence at **Clark College** supports Mechatronics and STEM education programs that develop skilled workers for many of the state's industries within the Semiconductor and Electronics manufacturing supply chain.

## Clean Energy

The Pacific Northwest Center of Excellence for Clean Energy at **Centralia College**, along with industry and educational partners, provides career pathways, comprehensive degree and certificate programs, online courses, and regional classroom training opportunities that focus on the future of our state's clean energy sector.

## Construction

The Construction Center of Excellence at **Renton Technical College** is a resource for industry professionals, colleges and others interested in preparing a diverse workforce for the construction industry.

## Cybersecurity

The Center of Excellence for Cybersecurity at **Whatcom Community College** partners with the National Cybersecurity Training & Education Center (NCyTE)<sup>2</sup> to support the cybersecurity workforce education pipeline in Washington state.

## Careers in Education

The Center of Excellence for Careers in Education at **Green River College** supports, mentors and advises community and technical colleges and K-20 partners to create and expand career-ladder programs in education.

## Global Trade and Supply Chain Management

With 40% of Washington jobs tied to global trade, the Center of Excellence for Global Trade and Supply Chain Management housed at **Highline College** works with schools and colleges to build programs and career pathways creating a talent pipeline for the industry.

## Homeland Security Emergency Management

**Pierce College's** Center for Excellence in Homeland Security Emergency Management provides support to community and technical colleges as they develop statewide innovative education and training programs in public safety, security, and emergency management. The goal is to produce a skilled workforce focused on maintaining our national security and ensuring an effective response to all-hazard events.

## Hospitality

The Hospitality Center of Excellence at **Columbia Basin College** partners with local businesses and organizations, to provide best practices and strategies for industry-specific educational needs, offer guidance on the adoption of sustainable tourism practices, how to improve customer service, develop new marketing strategies, and offer innovative guest experiences.

## Information and Computing Technology

The Center of Excellence for Information and Computing Technology at **Bellevue College** collaborates with sector leaders to build an inclusive, highly skilled technical workforce for Washington. The center provides up-to-date research, curriculum resources, information on industry trends that impact employment, professional development for educators, and coordinated access to a diverse talent pool.

## Marine Manufacturing and Technology

**Skagit Valley College** is home to the Northwest Center of Excellence for Marine Manufacturing and Technology. The center creates a repository of information and best practices related to industry trends and emerging technologies to foster economic vitality.

2. NCyTE (pronounced "insight") is an Advanced Technological Education (ATE) National Center funded by the National Science Foundation and hosted at Whatcom Community College.