Talent and Prosperity for All: The Strategic Plan for Unlocking Washington’s Workforce Potential (TAP) is the state’s plan for creating a world-class workforce development system that helps jobseekers gain the skills and credentials needed for employment, and ensures that our state’s businesses have the talented employees they need for successful participation in the economy.

A dual-customer focus puts Washington’s workers and businesses at the heart of the state’s workforce system and TAP. Governor Inslee set three overarching goals for the Workforce Board (Board) as we began developing the state’s plan:

- Help more people find and keep jobs that lead to economic self-sufficiency, with a focus on disadvantaged populations.
- Close skill gaps for employers, with a focus on in-demand industry sectors and occupations.
- Work together as a single, seamless team to make this happen.

As the Board has been driving toward implementation of these goals, we’ve also been hearing from our state and local partners implementing the plan about a few major challenges in actualizing the vision of TAP. Based on this feedback, the Board has prioritized three key areas that are limiting the reach of the plan and its partners in implementing the necessary changes to transform the state’s workforce system.

**Incumbent Worker Training**

**Problem:** Today’s economy—and the economy of tomorrow—require ongoing adaptation, resiliency, and skills upgrades, yet Washington only invests in customized incumbent worker training in the range of six million dollars a year. In the last issued national study of customized industry training, our state ranked #46 in the nation. For the state’s economy to thrive, businesses need workers with the right mix of
skills, education, and aptitudes to increase productivity and profitability. Washington needs an investment that equips our state and local workforce development partners with the tools to expand our support for businesses and workers in achieving long-term economic security.

**Solution:** Washington needs to increase its commitment to training our workers by investing in an Incumbent Worker Training Fund. This recommendation would significantly build on the success of the State Board for Community and Technical College’s (SBCTC) Job Skills Program and other incumbent worker investment strategies by doubling our investment to provide current workers with increased skills and credentials. The program would provide a 50/50 match to employer funds, and would be a co-investment model providing an opportunity to leverage capital, expertise, and existing workforce infrastructure to prepare for rapid transformations taking place in industry, while retaining and growing the existing workforce.

*(Cost: $12.5 million annually)*

**Increased Business Engagement**

**Problem:** We know that in order to meet the goals of TAP to help workers get more jobs, and businesses get the help they need when they need it, we have to reach more businesses. We estimate that the state’s workforce system is only directly serving between 4-8 percent of businesses. These services can make a tremendous impact in the success of the participating companies, but we are not reaching enough potential customers. Being able to more quickly identify businesses in need of services will help the workforce system more effectively use limited staff and funding resources. Up until now, there was no way to do this without extensive research and analysis costs.

**Solution:** The Board has identified a program that could help with more effective targeting of resources through Dunn & Bradstreet, called EconoVue. The program employs a wide range of data to recognize businesses that are showing signs of growth and are likely to add workers, so the system can help them secure the talent
that they need to be successful. Conversely, EconoVue can also quickly find those businesses at risk of layoffs or closure so the workforce system can offer assistance to mitigate layoffs or even prevent closure.

*(Cost: $350,000 annually)*

**Integrated Service Mapping**

**Problem:** The new federal workforce legislation (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, 2014) called for service integration across programs and funding streams to achieve better outcomes, but did not provide any new resources. Instead, it provided mechanisms for states to break down the walls between funding and program silos. True integration of service planning and delivery requires that programs can communicate with each other on critical aspects of the customer relationship. As an example, a business with critical workforce shortages should be able to access the full breadth of services available across WorkSource centers, community and technical colleges, and the Department of Commerce without having to retell their story, or supply the same intake information or qualification requirements across multiple agencies. For both businesses and jobseekers, an integrated case management system will streamline the customer experience, save time, and reduce duplication on the path to customer goals. Every agency has its own data collection and service management system, and these systems don’t talk to each other, limiting our ability to operate as a comprehensive system.

**Solution:** Funding is needed to support an IT business analysis of our system’s MIS infrastructure. New technologies have provided more options, at less expense, for data sharing and integration, while still maintaining personal data security. Under the Board’s proposal, a business analyst will scope the technological and legal challenges to data sharing, and will scan the national environment and technology solutions to make recommendations for cost-effective mechanisms for sharing data across existing systems, without having to rebuild any single system.

*(Cost, TBD)*