

WEC October 2025 Conference

Employment Security Department training benefits program presentation

Purpose

To gather stakeholder input and perspectives on potential modifications to the Training Benefits (TB) program, ensuring alignment with legislative intent and improved outcomes for participants. Training Benefits offer up to 26 additional weeks of unemployment support for individuals enrolled in approved training programs, as long as they're eligible and making progress. Applicants must be receiving or have exhausted unemployment benefits, and job search requirements are waived during training.

Background

A [Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee \(JLARC\) audit](#) concluded that the TB program is not meeting the Legislature's stated goal of enhancing participants' earning power. The audit recommended that the Legislature consider eliminating or modifying the program. In response, the Employment Security Department (ESD) is engaging stakeholders to explore program changes that better serve Washingtonians and fulfill legislative objectives. ESD has already initiated process improvements and seeks collaborative feedback to guide future direction.

Discussion Agenda

- Presentation (20 min)
 - Audit findings and program background
 - Overview of process improvements (completed, in progress, and planned)
 - Review of alignment options
 - Option 1: Modify legislative intent to reflect current program outcomes (e.g., focus on wage replacement rather than increased earnings).
 - Option 2: Adjust the program to meet original legislative goals (e.g., target lower-income participants and extend benefits to better support this group).
 - Introduction of customer personas
 - Persona A: Lower-income individual who benefits from the program with increased wages.
 - Persona B: Mid-career professional with higher earnings seeking a career change; may achieve wage replacement but not increased earnings.
- Q&A on presentation materials (10 min)
- Small Group Work (5 min prep, 25 min discussion)
- Group Share-Out (25 min)
- Closing & Next Steps (5 min)