



# **Workforce Education Investment Accountability and Oversight Board (WEIAOB)**

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## **Legislative Report**

*October 2024*



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## **Acknowledgements**

The Workforce Education Investment Accountability and Oversight Board (WEIAOB or “Board”) would like to thank all members and supporting staff for their efforts to advance the Board’s work in 2024. Current members include:

### **Washington State Legislature**

- Sen. T’wina Nobles; Co-chair, WEIAOB; Chair, Senate Higher Education and Workforce Development Committee
- Rep. Vandana Slatter; Chair, House Postsecondary Education and Workforce Committee
- Sen. Jeff Holy; Ranking Member, Senate Higher Education and Workforce Development Committee
- Rep. Alex Ybarra; Ranking Member, House Postsecondary Education and Workforce Committee

### **Business Representatives**

- Jane Broom; Co-chair, WEIAOB; Senior Director, Microsoft Philanthropies
- Dr. Steven Ashby; Director, Pacific Northwest National Laboratory
- Ashraf (Ash) Awad; President and Chief Marketing Officer, McKinstry
- Barbara Hult; Senior Advisor, Boston Consulting Group
- Charles Knutson; Senior Manager – Public Policy, Amazon

### **Labor Representatives**

- William (Bill) Lyne; President, United Faculty of Washington State
- Mark Riker; Executive Secretary, Washington State Building Construction and Trades Council

### **Higher Education and Workforce Development Representatives**

- Ruben Flores; Executive Director, Council of Presidents
- Paul Francis; Executive Director, Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges
- Jeff Vincent; Chair, Washington Student Achievement Council
- Eleni Papadakis; Executive Director, Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board
- Dr. Theresa (Terri) Standish-Kuon; President and CEO, Independent Colleges of Washington
- Collin Bannister; Student, Washington State University-Pullman
- Mollie Kuwahara; Student, Tacoma Community College

## Introduction

The Board was established in 2019 through [E2SHB 2158](#) and is charged with the following responsibilities:

- Providing guidance and recommendations to the Legislature on what workforce education priorities should be funded with the Workforce Education Investment Account (WEIA).
- Ensuring accountability that the workforce education investments funded with WEIA are producing the intended results and are effectively increasing student success and career readiness, such as by increasing retention, completion, and job placement rates.

WEIA was also established in 2019 through E2SHB 2158 as a dedicated fund for higher education expenditures. As defined in [RCW 43.79.195](#), expenditures from WEIA may only be used for higher education programs, higher education operations, higher education compensation, state-funded student aid programs, and workforce development including career-connected learning. Additionally, expenditures from WEIA must be used to supplement, not supplant, other federal, state, and local funding for higher education.

The Board must submit an annual report to the Legislature detailing its recommendations for workforce education priorities that should be funded with WEIA. More information about Board governance and operations can be found in [RCW 28B.77.310](#).

### WEIAOB Website

All Board documents—including meeting materials, annual reports, and other publications about WEIA investments—can be found at <https://wsac.wa.gov/WEIAOB>.

## **Guiding Principles and Performance Accountability Metrics**

The Board approved a series of guiding principles and performance accountability metrics in 2021 to help shape annual recommendations for workforce education priorities that should be funded with WEIA. These include:

### **Guiding Principles**

- Help achieve the goal that 70 percent of students in each cohort of Washington high school graduates complete a postsecondary credential.
- Provide support for equitable educational access and economic outcomes for systemically underserved students.
- Help Washington businesses fill the jobs of the future with qualified Washington students, including the current workforce.
- Improve statewide systems and/or test innovative approaches that can be replicated across institutions.

### **Performance Accountability Metrics**

- Statewide Student Enrollment.
- FAFSA / WASFA Completion in Grade 12 (and others).
- Washington College Grant-eligible Student Enrollment.
- Postsecondary Completion Rate.
- High School to Postsecondary Retention Rate.
- Time to Degree.
- Economic Outcomes.

## Initial Recommendations and Process for Determining 2025 Legislative Priorities

### Initial Recommendations

Based on its guiding principles and performance accountability metrics, the Board maintains the following recommendations and presents them to the Legislature for consideration:

- **Fully fund policy requests that closely track to WEIA’s original intent and the Board’s principles to equitably increase the number of Washingtonians with high-value credentials.** Specifically, the Board recommends that the Legislature fund programs which:
  - Increase outreach and recruitment efforts to communities with traditionally low rates of matriculation.
  - Increase the availability and accessibility of student retention, success, and support services.
  - Add capacity to current high-demand degree programs.
  - Add new programs in technical, high-demand fields and occupations.
- **Prioritize more WEIA resources on equitable high-tech degree production.** The Board recommends that the Legislature specifically focuses resources from WEIA onto high-tech degree production—inclusive of occupations in healthcare, the skilled trades, and other sectors and occupations that require technical knowledge, skills, and credentials—to align with the Legislature’s original intent and help address this critical access and equity gap.

### Process for Determining 2025 Legislative Priorities

On June 20, 2024, the Board agreed to form a workgroup for the purposes of developing key questions, language, and/or procedures to help determine 2025 legislative priorities. The Board then approved three deliverables from the workgroup on September 18, 2024:

- Rubric for reviewing 2025 legislative proposals (Appendix A).
- Timeline for solicitation and review of 2025 legislative proposals (Appendix B).
- Format for the workgroup to review 2025 legislative proposals (Appendix C).

The Board solicited legislative proposals from state agencies and external organizations in October 2024. A workgroup will review submitted proposals in the coming months and present a recommended package of 2025 legislative priorities to the full Board for approval on January 9, 2025. This package will be communicated to the Governor’s office and Legislature throughout the 2025 legislative session.

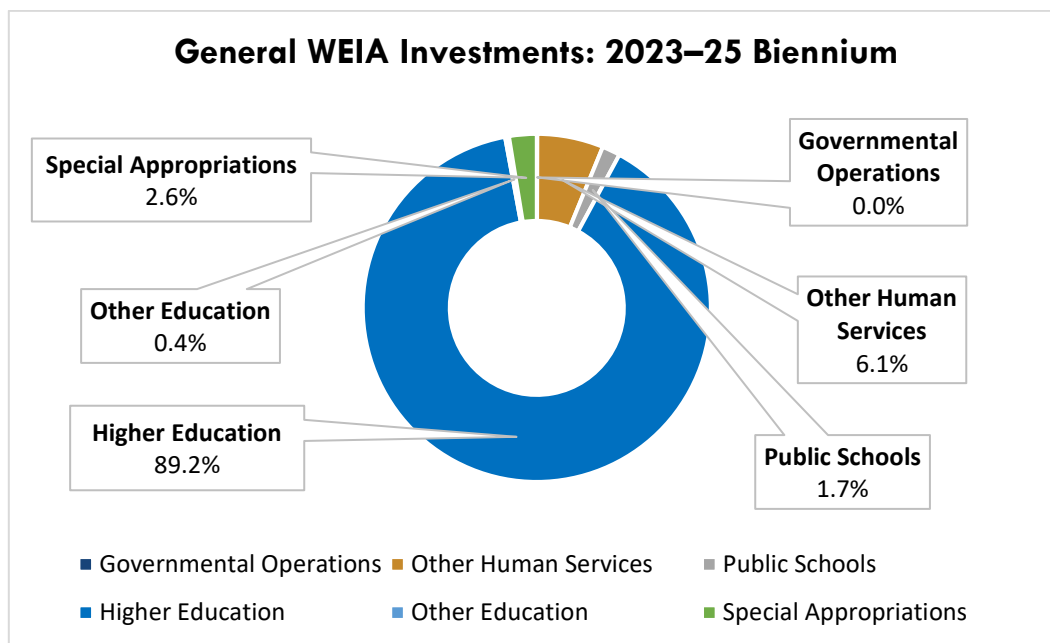
## Summary of WEIA Investments: 2023–25 Biennium

The Legislature’s 2023–25 biennial operating and 2024 supplemental budgets included nearly \$956.7 million in expenditures from WEIA overall, with close to \$853.4 million (89.2 percent) invested directly into the higher education sector. Meanwhile, the Economic Revenue and Forecast Council’s September 2024 revenue forecast projected nearly \$885.8 million in WEIA revenue during the 2023–25 biennium. Some of the largest WEIA investments are summarized below:

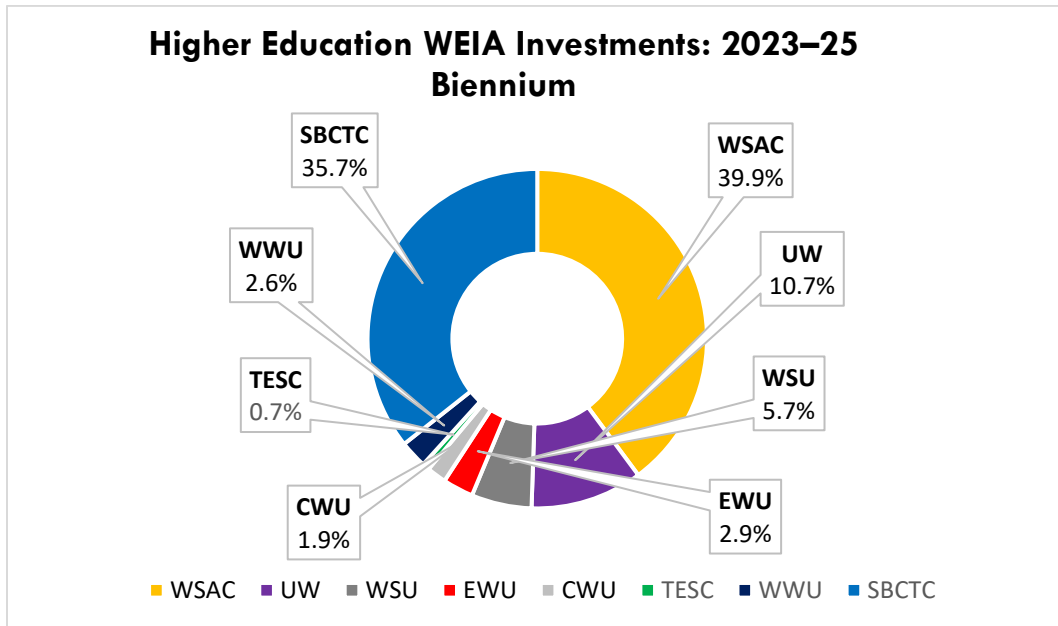
- **Washington College Grant (WA Grant) and Bridge Grants:** \$313.8 million
- **Guided Pathways:** \$75.8 million
- **Career Connect Washington (CCW):** \$28.1 million
- **College Operating Costs\*:** \$24.6 million
- **Institutional Priorities\*\*:** \$23.2 million
- **Other:** \$491.1 million

*\*College operating costs are defined in budget language as including “compensation and central services, in recognition that these costs exceed estimated increases in undergraduate operating fee revenue as a result of RCW 28B.15.067.”*

*\*\*Institutional priorities are defined in budget language as including “employee compensation, academic program enhancements, student support services, and other institutional priorities that maintain a quality academic experience for Washington students.”*

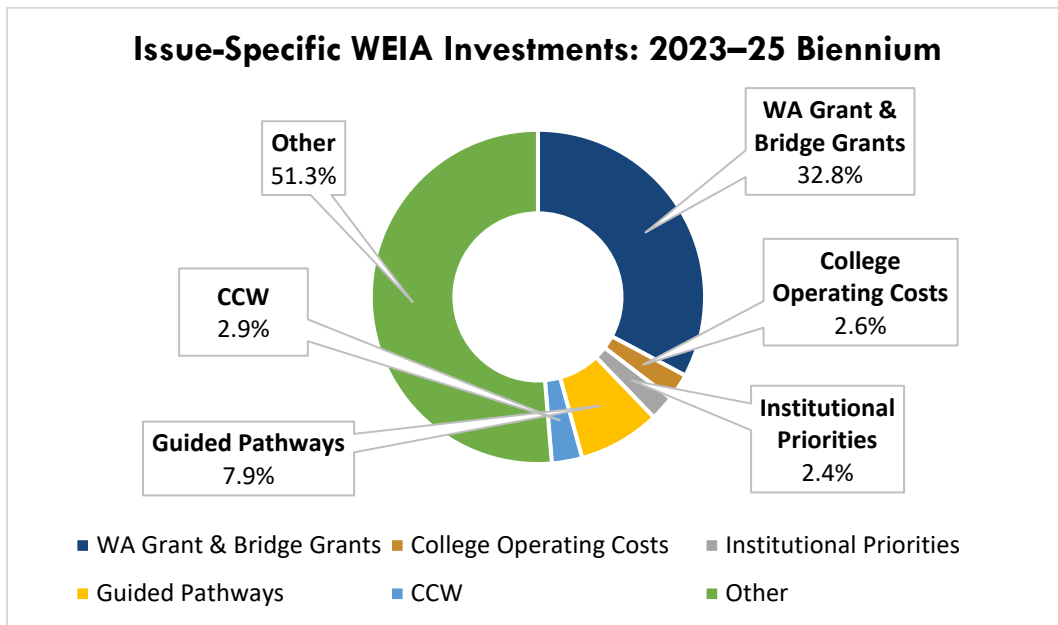


Almost 90 percent of all WEIA investments in the 2023–25 biennium have been made in the higher education sector.



More than 75 percent of higher education WEIA investments in the 2023–25 biennium—\$644.3 million—have been received by the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) and Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC). The state’s six four-year institutions—University of Washington (UW), Washington State University (WSU), Western Washington University (WWU), Central Washington University (CWU), Eastern Washington University (EWU), and The Evergreen State College (TESC)—received the remainder of higher education WEIA investments (\$209.0 million).





Nearly a third (32.8 percent) of all WEIA investments in the 2023–25 biennium have been made in the WA Grant program and Bridge Grants (additional stipends for students who receive maximum WA Grant awards)—totaling approximately \$313.8 million. Guided Pathways and CCW represent almost 11 percent of WEIA investments (\$103.9 million) while college operating costs and institutional priorities make up 5 percent (\$47.8 million). Other expenditures account for the majority of WEIA investments (\$491.1 million).

*Note: The Board’s 2023 annual legislative report erroneously stated that \$132.6 million from WEIA was invested in compensation. This number included 2023–25 biennial operating budget appropriations from both WEIA and General Fund-State in error. The chart above correctly captures WEIA investments in compensation during the 2023–25 biennium as part of college operating costs and institutional priorities.*

## Appendix A: Rubric for Reviewing 2025 Legislative Proposals

The following questions will be considered when determining whether the Board should recommend a proposal to the Legislature:

- 1. Which of the Board’s guiding principles does the proposal address?**
  - a. Help achieve the goal that 70 percent of students in each cohort of Washington high school graduates complete a postsecondary credential.
  - b. Provide support for equitable educational access and economic outcomes for systemically underserved students.
  - c. Help Washington businesses fill the jobs of the future with qualified Washington students, including the current workforce.
  - d. Improve statewide systems and/or test innovative approaches that can be replicated across institutions.
- 2. How will the proposal help Washington residents do one or more of the following?**
  - a. Afford and enroll in a postsecondary program.
  - b. Persist and complete a postsecondary degree or credential that aligns with industry and employer job needs.
  - c. Obtain a good-paying job and/or access a high-quality career-connected pathway or credential that will lead toward a good-paying job.
- 3. Which of the Board’s performance accountability metrics will be used to measure the proposal’s success?**
  - a. Statewide Student Enrollment.
  - b. FAFSA / WASFA Completion in Grade 12 (and others).
  - c. Washington College Grant-eligible Student Enrollment.
  - d. Postsecondary Completion Rate.
  - e. High School to Postsecondary Retention Rate.
  - f. Time to Degree.
  - g. Economic Outcomes.
- 4. What postsecondary credentials and/or jobs will the proposal produce?**
  - a. Does the proposal intentionally target an area of need in the labor market?
  - b. Will the proposal expand degree/credential programs that are over capacity?
- 5. What is the estimated time frame by which the proposal will achieve its intended outcomes?**
- 6. How will the proposal address the diversity of Washington State?**
  - a. Does the proposal have a particular demographic or regional focus?
  - b. Will the proposal prioritize historically underserved communities such as American Indian or Alaska Native, Black, Latino, low-income, and/or others?

**7. What is the scale and scope of the proposal?**

- a. How much does the proposal cost?
- b. Does the proposal focus on one higher education sector and/or industry, or is it inclusive of multiple sectors and/or industries?

**8. How will the proposal spur innovation, create change, and/or move beyond the status quo?**

## Appendix B: Timeline for Solicitation and Review of 2025 Legislative Proposals

The following timeline will be observed to help the Board determine 2025 legislative priorities:

| Month/Date         | Event and Details                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| September 18, 2024 | <b>Fall 2024 Board meeting</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Workgroup presents deliverables (proposed rubric, timeline, and format for workgroup to review legislative proposals) to Board for consideration.</li> </ul>                                                         |
| October            | <b>Proposal solicitation and evaluation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State and external stakeholders submit 2025 proposals.</li> <li>WSAC staff conduct initial review of proposals with rubric.</li> <li><i>2024 Board report due to Legislature—October 31.</i></li> </ul> |
| November           | <b>Workgroup evaluation of proposals</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Workgroup reviews proposals and WSAC staff summary and then prepares recommendations for full Board.</li> </ul>                                                                                            |
| December           | <b>Communication to full Board</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>WSAC staff send out materials for January 2025 meeting, including workgroup recommendations.</li> </ul>                                                                                                          |
| January 9, 2025    | <b>Winter 2025 Board meeting</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Board reviews the Governor’s budget and WEIA balance.</li> <li>Board votes on final 2025 legislative priorities and communicates them to key legislators/committees.</li> </ul>                                    |

## Appendix C: Format for Workgroup to Review 2025 Legislative Proposals

To help review legislative proposals, the Board will establish a workgroup. The workgroup should include representation from various sectors, such as below:

- One business representative.
- One higher education representative.
- One labor representative.
- One representative from WSAC.
- One student representative.
- Optional: one legislator.

The Board intends to have 5–6 workgroup members participate. The workgroup will perform an initial review of submitted proposals in collaboration with WSAC staff and a Board Co-chair (Jane Broom), then recommend a package of proposals to the full Board. These proposals will be discussed and voted on during the Board’s January 2025 meeting.

## Appendix D: 2024–25 Meeting Timeline

The following table outlines quarterly meeting dates and agenda topics for the Board through the end of the 2025 calendar year:

| Meeting Date    | Agenda Topics*                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| January 9, 2025 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Discuss and vote on recommendations and outreach strategy for 2025 legislative session.</li></ul>                                                                                                                             |
| May 8, 2025     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Discuss results of 2025 legislative session.</li><li>• Review 2025–27 operating budget and WEIA expenditures.</li><li>• Review new research and reports on higher education and workforce development.</li></ul>              |
| July 17, 2025   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continue reviewing new research and reports on higher education and workforce development.</li><li>• Initiate design of process to determine 2026 legislative recommendations.</li><li>• Vote on 2025 Board report.</li></ul> |
| October 9, 2025 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Vote on process to determine 2026 legislative recommendations.</li><li>• Review WEIA revenues/expenditures.</li><li>• Vote on 2026 meeting timeline.</li></ul>                                                                |

*\*subject to change*