LEGISLATIVE REPORT

Standard Occupational Classification Reporting

NOVEMBER 2026



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STANDARD OCCUPATIONAL CLASSIFICATION REPORTING

Washington State Employment Security Department is the official source of Washington state labor market information. Employment Security's labor market information and research division specializes in economic analysis, research, program and policy evaluation, and risk assessment. The agency produces, analyzes and shares quality information for decision making.

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1. Executive summary

Washington is a leader in the national movement to collect enhanced administrative wage records. Wage records enhanced with occupation data give us a better understanding of labor markets, improve career planning and help us evaluate the effectiveness of education and training programs.

About 91% of Washington employers report occupation records to the Washington State Employment Security Department (Employment Security). This is the highest rate of occupation reporting in the United States.

And since high-quality data is critical for decision making, Employment Security created a method to assess and improve the quality of employer reported occupation data. ESD's proven strategy is an invaluable road map for other states rolling out occupational data reporting.

This report, as required by RCW 50.12.340, documents how Washington is using enhanced wage records to evaluate educational investments, modify and create training programs, and improve job placement results.

The report also covers implementation of occupation reporting in Washington, employer reporting rates over time and Employment Security's process for improving occupation data quality. Lastly, the report describes how economists, researchers, and state and federal agencies use occupation data now and plan to in the future.

Key highlights

- About 91% of Washington employers report occupation records to Employment Security. This is the highest rate in the United States.
- Around 5% of employers submit errors. Employment Security has a strategy to find errors and collaborate with employers to correct them.
- The Occupational Destinations project used occupational data to study outcomes of students leaving higher education. The project found a strong match between apprenticeship programs and occupations, with many students getting hired by the employer they apprenticed with.

- Employment Security used occupational data to help implement Workforce Pell, incorporating it with wage data and the Self-Sufficiency Standard to filter occupations that pay enough to support basic needs.
- Employment Security and collaborators use occupation data to develop several new products. One product helps unemployment insurance (UI)claimants looking for jobs in markets with fewer jobs available per job seeker. Another product summarizes wages and hours worked across occupations. A third product shows part-time and full-time employment, actual annual earnings and multiple employment within occupations.
- The Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board uses occupation data on its Career Bridge website, which gets millions of pageviews a year. The site shows the percentage of workers in an occupation who work part-time, wages earned and the percentage of workers who hold multiple jobs.
- The Workforce Board uses occupation data to enhance its Eligible Training Provider List by adding outcomes to education and training programs.
- Researchers and state agencies use occupation data to generate and analyze new labor market measures. The measures track performance of workforce programs and monitor changes in employment outcomes of participants.
- Employment Security received a grant from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) to explore how enhanced wage records could improve a core BLS program, Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS). Employment Security developed an algorithm to match wage records with establishments and found that employer-provided occupation data is more accurate than existing survey-based data.
- Employment Security shares occupation data with multiple state agencies for a variety of approved uses, including tracking occupation outcomes. Federal agencies such as the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Census Bureau have requested occupation data from Washington to advance their research and operational work.

2. Addressing the legislative objectives

RCW 50.12.070 mandates employer reporting of Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) codes or job titles as part of quarterly unemployment insurance tax filings (with voluntary participation of federally recognized tribal employers). This is part of a gradual movement to collect enhanced administrative wage records across state workforce agencies.

This effort to modernize state and national data infrastructure may yield numerous benefits for job seekers, employers, governmental agencies and researchers, including:

- Improved understanding of local, regional and statewide economic conditions.
- Insights into labor supply relevant to economic development efforts.
- More accurate information for students and job seekers for career planning.
- Reduced employer survey burden using administrative data.
- Improved ability to evaluate the effectiveness of education and training programs.

RCW 50.12.340 tasks the Washington State Employment Security Department (Employment Security), in coordination with the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (WTB), to provide a report to the appropriate committees of the legislature and the governor by Nov. 1, 2026. This report shall include information on how standard occupational classification or job title data-use achieved any of the following objectives:

- Evaluate educational investments.
- Add new or modify existing training programs.
- Improve WorkSource job placement results.

This legislative report documents how Washington state has used occupational data to address each of these three stated objectives.

This work also falls under the longstanding requirement of RCW 50.38.020 that Employment Security is "the responsible state entity for the development, administration, and dissemination of Washington state occupational information, including the state occupational forecast." Employment Security will continue to perform these functions with the new occupational data.

Evaluating educational investments. The Occupational Destinations project, a collaboration between the University of Washington and the Education Research & Data Center (ERDC) within the Office of Financial Management (OFM), is the first study to provide evidence on the value of educational investments in Washington state.

The project, funded by the Strada Education Foundation, used the new occupational data to study short-term labor market outcomes of school leavers (completers and non-completers) from in-state, two- and four-year higher education institutions in 2022-2023. Authors found:

- There is a strong match between the apprenticeship programs apprentices complete and the occupations they work in.
- Those completing AA and BA in Nursing are most likely to be employed as Registered Nurses, and Registered Nurses with BA degrees tend to earn about 10 percent higher wages than those with AA degrees.
- Those completing AA and BA in Business are employed in a variety of occupations, and graduates with BA degrees tend to earn more than those with AA degrees.

Adding new or modifying existing training programs. Workforce Pell is an extension of the Pell Grant program, which provides financial aid to individuals pursuing short-term workforce training programs that can lead to "high-wage, high-skilled or in-demand" jobs. Multiple agencies and partners across Washington state work to implement the program. To contribute to Workforce Pell implementation, Employment Security incorporated occupational and wage data as well as the Self-Sufficiency Standard, produced by the University of Washington, into the Occupations in Demand (OID) list. This allows us to determine if an occupation pays a wage that can support, at least, worker's basic needs. Washington state can also use occupational data to track the field of employment of training program graduates, which will help the state comply with the Workforce Pell Grant program requirements. Using new occupational information, therefore, allows Washington state to successfully implement and monitor the performance of Workforce Pell.

Improving WorkSource job placement results. New occupational data improves the quality and content of labor market information (LMI) provided to job seekers. This has potential to also improve job placement results. Examples include:

- Employment Security is in the process of developing a new LMI product to UI claimants looking for jobs in labor markets with fewer jobs available per job seeker. The new LMI product will include a list of recommended occupations for a claimant's job seeking efforts. Claimants will receive this prior to their reemployment services appointment and will have an opportunity to discuss the information with reemployment service providers.
- Workforce Board uses occupational data to enhance information provided through the Career Bridge. The website features new occupational data to describe labor market outcomes across different occupations. The website also enhances its Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) by adding occupational outcomes data to postsecondary education and training programs. By leveraging newly available occupational data, these enhancements provide a more complete picture of career pathways and training outcomes.

Researchers and state agencies can also use new occupational data to generate and analyze additional labor market measures related to job seekers' occupations. They can use these new measures to track performance of workforce programs and monitor the changes in employment outcomes among workforce program participants. For example, Employment Security currently conducts an outcome evaluation of the Partners for Reentry Opportunities in Workforce Development (PROWD) program. Employment Security staff examine the occupations in which program participants get employed.

Demonstrating implementation of occupational data reporting and data quality. In addition to demonstrating how Washington state has used occupational data to address three legislative objectives, this report:

- Offers a detailed overview of the implementation process of occupational reporting in Washington state.
- Outlines a comprehensive timeline of major milestones and legislative changes around occupational reporting.
- Shows the rates of occupational data reporting by employers over time.
- Provides an overview of assessment of occupational data quality.

Currently, around 91% of employers provide occupational records to Employment Security each quarter, which is the highest occupational reporting across the nation. While employers generally submit high-quality Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) codes and job titles, some employers provide erroneous information requiring revisions. To improve occupational data quality, Employment Security cross-validates SOC code submissions against other coding systems, communicates with employers to enhance data quality and examines job titles within industries. This information on reporting implementation and assessment of data completeness and quality will be an invaluable resource to other states that consider rolling out occupational data reporting.

Using occupational data for additional operational and research work. The report also describes how economists, researchers, and state and federal agencies have used occupational data beyond the legal requirements. Examples include:

- Employment Security executed the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Additional Activities to Maintain Currency (AAMC) grant project exploring how occupation-enhanced wage records could potentially improve one of BLS's core programs, Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS).
- Employment Security collaborated with Workforce Board on the labor market study to explore a replicable and consistent measure of clean energy employment. Occupational data showed potential to track occupations and earnings of workers in clean energy jobs.
- Employment Security is collaborating with Workforce Board to develop a new labor market information product that summarizes wages and hours worked across occupations.
- Employment Security shares occupational data with multiple state agencies. The data sharing process allows state partners to use data in a variety of ways, including occupational outcomes tracking.
- Federal agencies have requested occupational data from Washington state, including the BLS and the Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) program that is part of

the Center for Economic Studies at the U.S. Census Bureau. Federal agencies plan to use occupational wage records to advance and enhance their research and operational work.

- New occupational data received national attention during multiple meetings with state and federal stakeholders, as well as national events. One event was an occupational data forum organized by Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO (WSLC) and the Society of Professional Engineering Employees in Aerospace, IFPTE 2001 (SPEEA).

Using occupational data in future work. Lastly, upcoming initiatives intend to use occupational data for research and data analysis. Examples include:

- The Occupational Destinations project will continue work in several directions. The project will integrate more up-to-date occupational data, incorporate the experiences of certificate completers and non-completers, connect the field of study program to occupational codes and continue exploring the quality of occupational codes.
- Employment Security intends to use occupational data to improve occupational employment projections and the statewide training benefits OID list.

3. Implementation

3.a. Outreach and employer education projects

Washington's elected officials see the importance of understanding the state's labor economy. This section provides information about the collaborations and decisions that led to employer-reported occupational data.

Impact for Washingtonians

- All Washingtonians benefit from a dedicated effort to learn about and discuss the broad implications of the future of work and issues facing the state. The resulting policy recommendations focused on establishing the conditions for Washington's businesses and workers to prosper together in the current and projected future economy.
- Employers benefit from strategic outreach efforts to help them prevent penalties. The outreach helped employers understand how to log and report occupational data correctly.

Future of Work project and task force

In the summer of 2018, Washington's Legislature created and funded a Future of Work project and task force to investigate "what does the future of work look like?".

The project created a 16-member task force made up of legislators, businesses, schools and colleges, workforce training boards, state agencies that support various stakeholder groups and labor leaders. The task force set out to develop policy recommendations to establish the conditions for Washington's businesses and workers to prosper together in the current and projected future economy.

The task force identified the state's lack of accurate information on job titles or occupations as a significant limitation. It prevented creating an accurate picture of the state's workforce, trends in increasing and declining occupations, and gauging the effectiveness of education and training programs.

This observation led to the policy recommendation to improve labor market data by adding an occupation data field to the Unemployment Insurance tax and wage report provided quarterly by employers.

Implementation of occupational reporting

In 2020, Washington's legislature passed Substitute House Bill (SHB) 2308 and revised RCW 50.12.070 accordingly. Employment Security had a series of strategic activities to implement the changes in occupational reporting from SHB 2308. Project highlights include:

- Prepared systems, business processes and employees and employers.
- Performed rulemaking for collecting required information.
- Launched and managed a pilot program.
- Gathered employer feedback to understand needs and expectations.
- Conducted employer outreach, helping employers learn to log and report occupational data correctly.
- Created a landing page on the Employment Security website to learn about the occupational reporting requirement and email dedicated staff with any questions.
- Began assessing penalties for employers who knowingly fail to report occupational code or job title.

Implementation milestones

- Beginning in 2022, outreach efforts established and increased employer awareness of the changes and proper reporting practices.
- By July 12, 2024, Employment Security published 16 newsletters, held eight webinars and met twice with the National Payroll Reporting Consortium. See an example communication in Appendix 7.
- In 2024, Employment Security began assessing penalties with a corresponding uptick in employer participation.
- Ongoing, penalties have dropped each quarter as more employers provide occupational data. Note, those penalties never exceed $250 per quarter.
- Presently, around 91% of employers provide complete occupational data each quarter. This is the highest level of occupational reporting in any state.

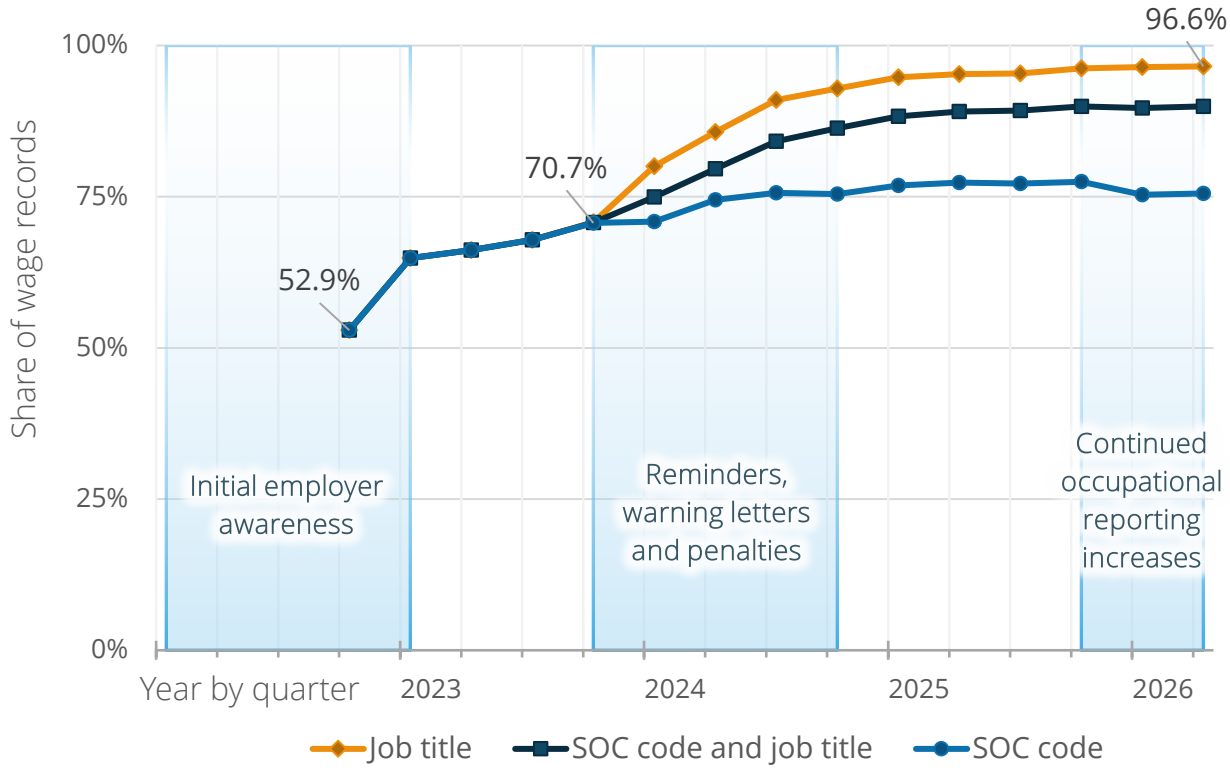
Gated Funding Technology Budget

The funding for implementation was, in part, through a Gated Funding Technology Budget (GFTB). The budget had four project gates geared toward helping employers begin reporting the SOC information while it was still optional. Major completion milestones of the GFTB:

- Phase one: Optional occupational reporting.
- Phase two: Capability to accept SOC codes in new Employer Account Management System (EAMS) and bulk filing submissions.
- Phase three: Functionalities to enter data in one of the three available paths.
- Phase four: All employers have the choice to supply SOC codes or job titles. Ability to assess penalties and interest for employers who fail to report occupational data.

See detailed timelines for implementation work in Appendix 6.

Figure 1: Employer adoption of occupational reporting, 2022-2026



Source: Employment Security Department, Labor Market Information and Research Division. See Appendix 4 for figure data.

3.b. Tracking and assessing employers' submissions

Employment Security ensures Washington's occupational data provide, and will continue to provide, a solid foundation for all subsequent partnerships, analyses and data products. The agency confirmed that overall employer reporting is consistent with the labor market and collaborates with employers to correct misreporting.

Learn about Employment Security's processes to ensure submissions result in quality data in the following section.

Impact for Washingtonians

- All data users benefit from Employment Security's work to ensure high-quality accurate occupational data. This supports the agency's vision – providing access to resources they need to flourish.

- Employers benefit from Employment Security's meaningful error responses – not simply stating there is an error but pointing them to the appropriate resources.

Identifying and correcting employer reporting errors

Most Washington employers submit high-quality Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) codes and job titles. However, around 5% of employers submit errors Employment Security must identify and correct. Employment Security developed processes to maintain the highest standards of quality for use in new research and data products.

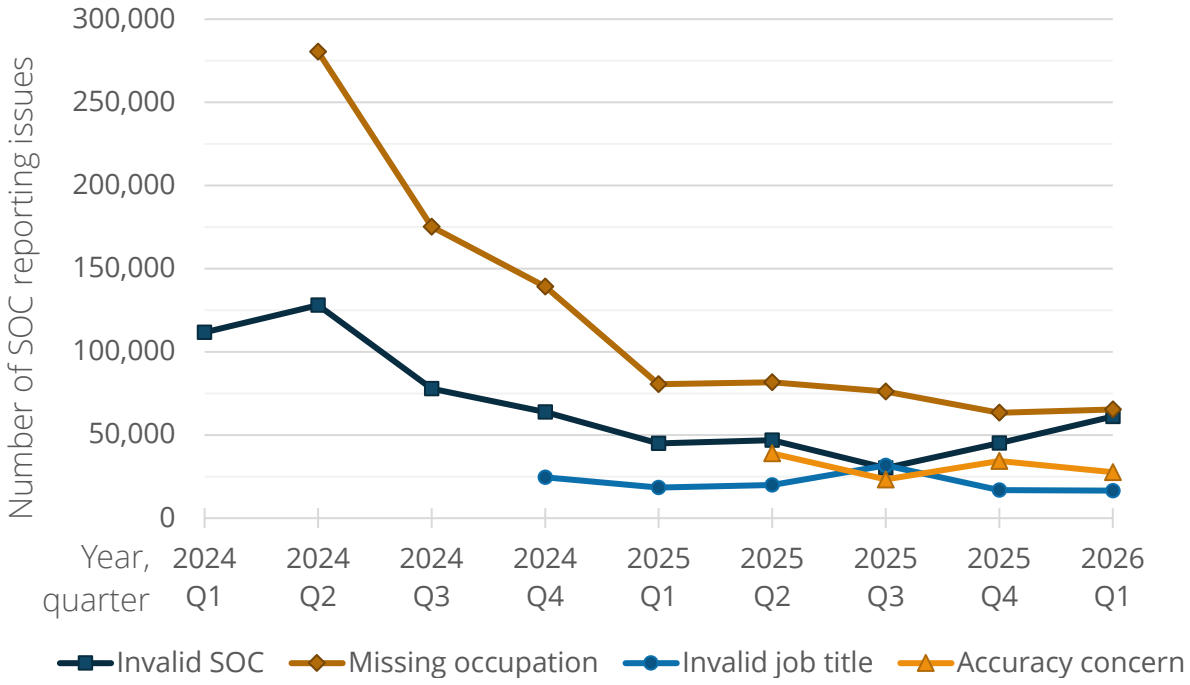
There are three main ways Employment Security ensures high quality:

- Checking SOC code submissions for crossover with other coding systems.
- Contacting employers to improve data quality in subsequent quarterly filings.
- Processing job titles to identify the main occupations in each industry sector.

Employment Security checks SOC code submissions for crossover with other coding systems. Employers may confuse SOC codes with other six-digit coding systems. For instance, the Department of Labor & Industries has risk classifications used in the workers' compensation program. Additionally, employers often participate in the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS) program. When responding to employment surveys, they may use variants of SOC codes meant specifically for the BLS OEWS program. Employers may also be confused by other six-digit coding systems, as described in Appendix 1. When Employment Security identified these issues, it directs employers to the proper SOC code resources.

Employment Security contacts employers to improve occupational data quality in subsequent quarterly filings. Employers cannot update occupational data filings during the quarter, so they must correct occupational data errors in future filings. Third party administrators (TPAs) may file on behalf of employers. Employment Security contacted the appropriate party to correct filing issues. These outreach efforts reduced the number of employers with SOC reporting issues. Over the course of two years, these filing issues have dropped below 25% of what they were. However, data quality issues are a moving target, as Employment Security continues to improve identification of issues to help employers file more accurate occupational data.

Figure 2: Employer occupational data quality outreach progress by year quarter, 2024-2026



Source: Employment Security Department, Labor Market Information and Research Division. See Appendix 4 for figure data.

Matching job titles to industries

Employment Security processes job titles to identify the main occupations in each industry sector. While job titles are not employers' preferred way to file occupational data, they are a growing segment. Since job titles are open-ended text filings, they are much more difficult to analyze than SOC codes. Employment Security applies the following steps to analyze job titles:

- Remove invalid entries that do not have enough alphabet characters to represent a job title or abbreviation.
- Collapse similar entries together based on two-word pairs, such as "Lead Software Engineer" and "Senior Software Engineer" collapsing to "Software Engineer".
- Create statistics on the primary job title groupings by industry.

By analyzing open-ended job titles this way, Employment Security validated that employers provided valid job titles that agreed with their industries. For instance, nurses were present in Health Care and Social Assistance sector (the primary health care sector), and in Administrative and Support sector (with travel/placement of nurses). The top job titles in other sectors were similarly appropriate.

Figure 3: Examples of top job titles by industry as of first quarter 2026

56: Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services

Occupation	Share of industry's 96,574 total job titles
Registered Nurse	10%
Security Officer	8%
House Cleaner	3%
Nursing Assistant	3%
Behavior Technician	1%

62: Health Care and Social Assistance

Occupation	Share of industry's 218,013 total job titles
Registered Nurse	13%
Nursing Assistant	3%
Medical Assistant	3%
Home Care	2%
Patient Access	1%

Source: Employment Security Department, Labor Market Information and Research Division. See Appendix 4 for figure data.

See Figure A3 in Appendix 3 for more industries and details.

Employment Security continues to improve occupational data quality processes. Identifying invalid occupational data improves completeness, but maintaining accuracy requires additional work. Employment Security will expand outreach to employers to look for inconsistencies and anomalies in occupational reporting. Future efforts will also focus on improving job title quality by pointing out errors and ensuring job titles accurately reflect employee roles.

4. Current work

4.a. Collaboration with Bureau of Labor Statistics

Through work related to a grant from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Employment Security conducted analyses that revealed employer-provided occupational data is more accurate than existing survey-based data in both high-earning technical occupations and in part-time service occupations.

Read this section to learn more about the purpose of the grant, the occupational data involved and Employment Security's collaborations with BLS.

Impact for Washingtonians

- All data users, including job seekers, career advisors, program planners, employers, economists and policymakers benefit from Employment Security's new data tool. It provides a clear picture of wages and hours for occupations across industries.

BLS occupational data grant

Employment Security engaged in a Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) grant. Employment Security explored potential improvements to a core labor market information program, Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS). This was a nationally competitive grant (#24J75LM000035) conducted over the course of a year with the following objectives:

- Determine whether UI-respondent occupational data are accurate enough for use to support the OEWS program.
- Investigate opportunities to improve or complement the OEWS program with UI-respondent occupational data.

To achieve the objectives of the grant, Employment Security developed a state-of-the-art algorithm matching workers in the UI wage records with employer establishments. Currently, employers do not report work location, meaning UI records do not provide the establishment of an employer where the employee works. Staff used the algorithm to determine establishment assignments for the 35% of workers whose employers have multiple establishments. Manually completing that process would have been too time-consuming.

Employment Security achieved the following outcomes:

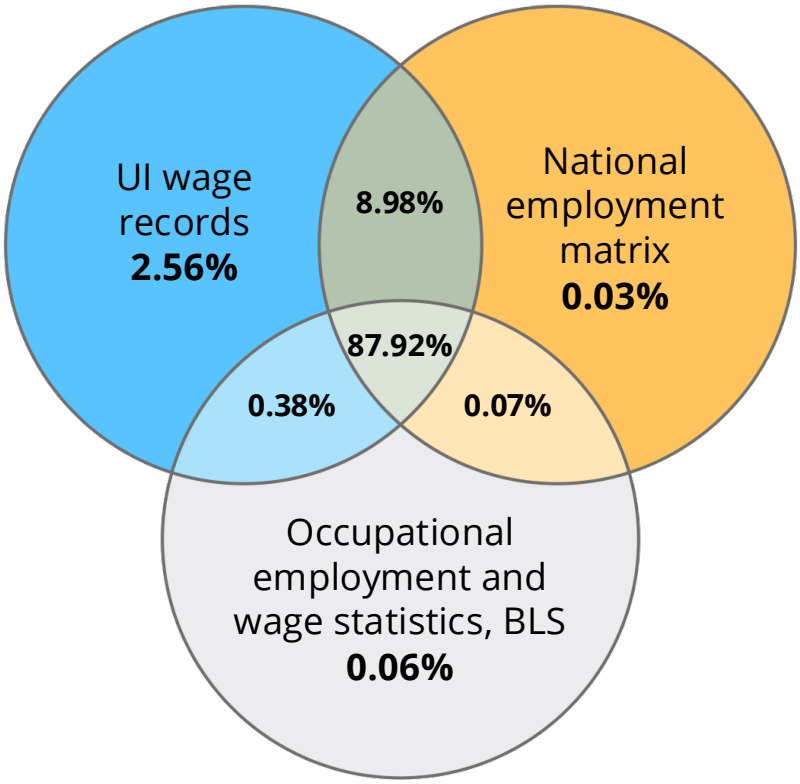
- Measured the similarity between UI-respondent occupational data and OEWS survey occupational data for the subset of establishments in the OEWS survey sample.
- Examined employment stability in the UI wage records to understand the composition of temporary, seasonal and continuing employment.
- Examined the potential for UI wage records to provide wage or occupation data missing from OEWS sample establishments.
- Developed a new data product using UI wage records to compute occupational employment and wage statistics and provide new labor market perspectives.
- Compared the output of the BLS SOC autocoder with UI-respondent SOC codes and OEWS survey SOC codes.

Consistent code-use

Employment Security identified that employer SOC code-use is consistent with existing data products. The analyses showed that employer-provided SOC codes align with their industry sectors. BLS has two programs producing annual employment estimates for SOC-industry pairs: Occupational employment and wage statistics (OEWS) and the national employment matrix (NEM).

Employment Security compared wage records SOC-industry pairs with employment estimates in OEWS and NEM. Around 88% of SOC-industry pairs are present across employer-provided reporting, OEWS and NEM. An additional 9% are only in employer filings and NEM, which correspond to "All Other" SOC codes that catch specialty occupations. Only around 2.5% are due to reporting issues or unusual business structure. Around 97% of employer SOC reporting is consistent with known SOC-industry usage.

Figure 4: Overlap of occupation and industry codes



Source: Employment Security Department, Labor Market Information and Research Division. See Appendix 4 for figure data.

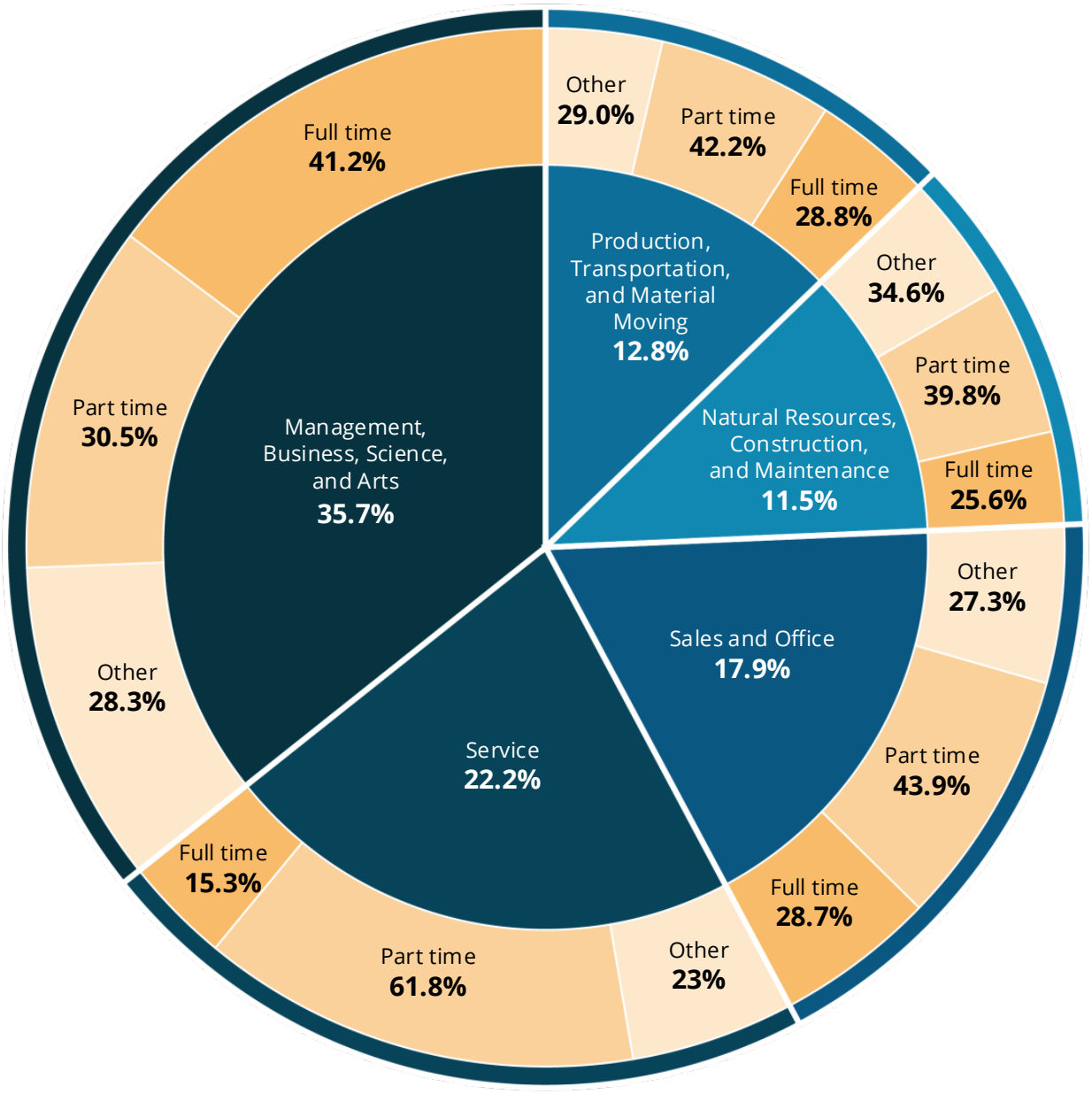
New data product

Employment Security created a new data product of occupational wages and hours from employer reporting. Employers provide SOC codes and hours worked that unlocked new perspectives not possible with the survey-based methodology of BLS OEWS. The data product shows part-time and full-time employment, actual annual earnings and multiple employment within and across occupations.

Figure 5 shows the breakdown of part-time and full-time employment for five high-level groupings of SOC codes in 2025. Full-time workers averaged 35 hours or more per week in a quarter. The "Other" category includes workers who engaged in both part-time and full-time work, whether due to an inconsistent work schedule or entering/exiting a position. The Management SOC category includes the greatest portion of full-time workers at more than 40%. In contrast, "Service" category workers have more than 60% part-time employment.

The earnings of service occupations across the year are far lower than in existing data products. This new perspective on full-time and part-time occupational work is only possible due to the combination of new employer SOC reporting with longstanding reporting of hours worked in Washington state.

Figure 5: Full-time, part-time, and other-hours work by high-level occupational groups



Source: Employment Security Department, Labor Market Information and Research Division. See Appendix 4 for figure data.

Employment Security's new data product showed more accurate earnings than existing data products. Two high-level occupational groups have majorly different earnings from what previous survey-based data products could show. Specific highly skilled occupations have 50% to 200% higher annual earnings compared to the OEWS estimates. These include occupations like computer hardware engineers and ophthalmologists. This may be due to OEWS capping

high earners' wages in their wage interval method. On the other end, specific service occupations earn 33% to 40% of the annual earnings stated in OEWS estimates. This is due to part-time workers working fewer hours than the full-time assumption in OEWS. This includes occupations such as exercise trainers, lifeguards/ski patrol and ushers.

Ongoing collaboration between Employment Security and the BLS will continue improving quality and accuracy of occupational data products.

4.b. Collaboration with Workforce Board

The state has invested in understanding the clean energy technology workforce. Employment Security provided evaluation and a compelling tool for tracking occupational and wage progression of workers in clean energy careers.

Employment Security also partnered with the Workforce Board to create a data product. WTB implemented the data on the Career Bridge website where it helps students, jobseekers and WorkSource staff by providing the most up-to-date occupational counts, wages and hours worked.

Learn more about the collaboration with WTB and the outcomes in the following section.

Impact for Washingtonians

- Clean energy technology jobseekers and policymakers benefit from industry-specific occupational data. Accurate data improves workforce decisions.
- Jobseekers benefit from better tools for WorkSource staff. WorkSource staff have, and therefore share, more accurate and detailed occupational information. This helps jobseekers understand total hours and wages for individuals in each occupation. This leads to job search and training activities aligning with their needs and expectations.

Clean Energy Technology Workforce Advisory Committee (CETWAC)

RCW 23C.18.210 directed establishment of the Clean Energy Technology Workforce Advisory Committee (CETWAC). The Workforce Board convened the committee with representation from government, business, labor and education. The committee's purpose includes conducting research and making policy recommendations on clean energy technology workforce development in Washington state.

Employment Security contributed a clean energy sector labor market study to the CETWAC's multi-agency report on Washington's Clean Energy workforce. This report included one of the

first published test cases for occupational wage enhancements. Working from the best data for this evaluation and analysis presented challenges Employment Security overcame.

- Challenge. Studies from the U.S. Department of Energy and the Net Zero Northwest report informed the CETWAC report. Both reports relied on traditional labor market indicators and embedded different policy assumptions and growth models.
- Solution. Employment Security used Washington's official labor market data and analysis to create a replicable and consistent measure of clean energy employment. The research team also used the opportunity to draw insights from occupational data.
- Challenge. Employment categories such as clean energy had no clear North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) or SOC-based definitions. Instead, the definition for this work derives from emerging technologies and deciding which industries or occupations to include required a certain amount of discretion.
- Solution. The team explored staffing patterns of occupations and industries, as well as keywords associated with clean energy jobs to allow for the possibility of discovering industries of occupations that fall under the clean energy umbrella in Washington.

In addition to setting a baseline, occupational wage data provided a compelling evaluation tool for tracking occupational and wage progression of workers in clean energy careers.

Had the study continued as planned, occupational wage information would have tracked the career paths and wage progression of students enrolled in clean energy education programs, including programs intended to transition workers from carbon energy jobs to clean energy jobs.

Career Bridge website

Employment Security developed a new data product in collaboration with the Workforce Board. This data product identified individuals working in each occupation, along with their wages and hours worked. WTB updated the Career Bridge website with the new data product.

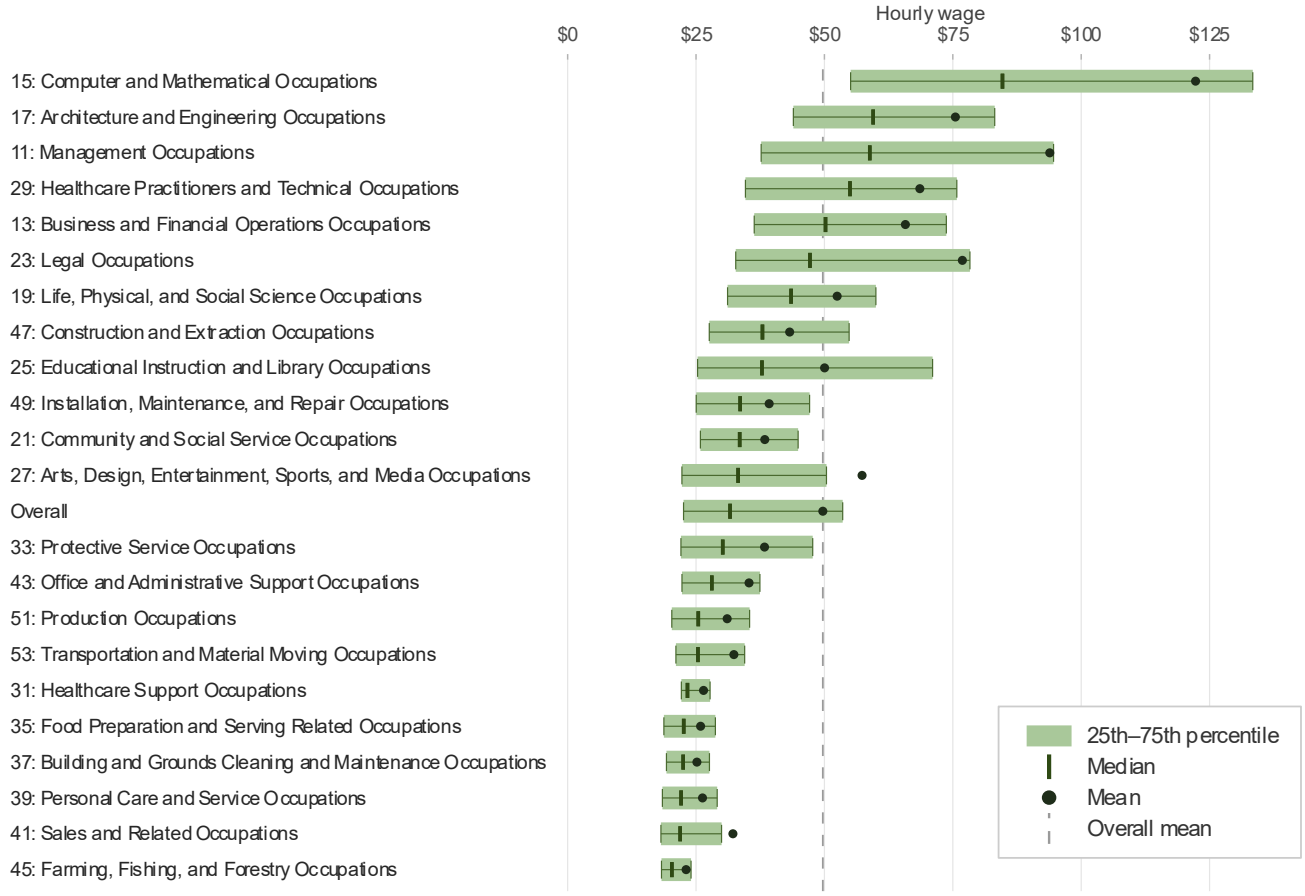
This creates more accurate measures of total hours and wages worked by the individuals in each occupation. For occupations like rideshare drivers, it's common to work for multiple employers in the same occupation. The new data product collapses work in the same occupation to the individual level.

Figure 6 shows hourly wages across occupations by top-level major SOC groups. Notably:

- Highly specialized technical and professional occupations have much higher hourly wages.
- Service-oriented occupations have lower hourly wages, but most pay above minimum wage.

Coupled with Figure 5's details about full-time and part-time work, there is a clear picture of lower wages and lower hours in service occupations.

Figure 6: Hourly wage statistics by occupational group in 2024



Source: Employment Security Department, Labor Market Information and Research Division. See Appendix 4 for figure data.

Career Bridge helps students, jobseekers and WorkSource staff. With millions of annual page views, Career Bridge serves as a one-stop resource for education and career information. Since the addition of employer-provided occupational data in June 2026, Career Bridge has direct information on occupations in the Washington workforce with more frequent quarterly updates.

This benefits students who visit to learn about careers and education. It benefits jobseekers who want to see the latest job trends. It also benefits jobseekers receiving WorkSource staff's career counseling, since it provides the most up-to-date and comprehensive view of occupational earnings and hours.

Employment Security and the Workforce Board will continue to collaborate on future occupational information to benefit Washingtonians.

4.d. Data sharing and dissemination

Data sharing multiplies the benefits of occupational data, as other agencies and researchers use it to better understand outcomes of programs. Employment Security engaged in data sharing and dissemination activities to bring benefits across the state.

Employment Security also engaged in an occupational data forum with labor organizations and the Workforce Board to discuss and share the great potential of the data.

Impact for Washingtonians

- Government agencies and their customers benefit from access to improved data. Agencies work to serve Washington residents. To make good decisions and recommendations, those agencies need quality data.
- Researchers benefit from more complete and accurate information. More data points enhance their ability to study the Washington state labor market in more depth.
- Other states' workforce agencies learn about our occupational data enhancements as a model for their initiatives. More complete data across the nation improves the federal government's understanding of Washington and helps Washington evaluate patterns relating to its place in the national landscape.

Data sharing

While administering unemployment insurance programs and benefits, Employment Security collects quarterly occupational information from employers. Most of the collected information is confidential. Employment Security protects information that identifies a person or an employer in accordance with stringent state and federal laws. Those laws allow the agency to release certain types of confidential information if the request or requester meets specific requirements.

State policymakers, school superintendents, school principals, university administration and academic researchers benefit from seeing not just how many jobs exist, but what kinds of jobs they are, where workers are going and how well training systems align with industry demand.

Appendix 5 includes a list of Employment Security's active, occupational-data-related data sharing agreements.

Data dissemination

In April of 2026, the Society of Professional Engineering Employees in Aerospace (SPEEA) teamed up with Employment Security, the Workforce Board and the Washington State Labor Council to conduct a forum titled "New Data, New Possibilities: Reimagining Workforce Insights with Washington's New Occupation Data".

The forum elevated the importance of Washington collecting occupation data with a range of public and private stakeholders. It led to more presentation opportunities and cross-organization outreach to further leverage the data's potential. It also brought attention to the value of additional data sets over time.

Feedback from the event was positive and resulted in a wider constituency familiar with the investments made by the state and employers to collect occupation data and the promise the data offers in better understanding workforce dynamics. See Appendix 3 for a detailed description of the occupational data forum.

4.e. Occupational Destinations project

The Occupational Destinations project received national attention. Washington is one of the first states to add occupational codes to the UI data and link the occupation codes to a robust longitudinal educational data system. This project revealed insights about the occupational and wage outcomes of apprenticeship, associate's and bachelor's programs.

Learn more about the Occupational Destinations project and current results in this section.

Impact for Washingtonians

- Training and educational organizations benefit from more outcome information. This helps them evaluate educational investments by studying wage and occupational outcomes of their educational investments.
- Students and prospective students benefit from more information when they explore educational programs that align with careers they're interested in. This helps them make education and training choices aligning with their desired outcomes.

The Occupational Destinations project

One of the first projects to use the new occupational codes in the Washington Unemployment Insurance (UI) data system to evaluate education outcomes was the "Occupational Destinations of Postsecondary Students" project.

The Occupational Destinations project studied the one-year occupational and hourly wage outcomes of school leavers (completers and non-completers) from Washington's two- and four-year public higher education institutions who left school during school year 2022-2023.

Project partnership

The Occupational Destinations project is a partnership between the University of Washington and the Education Research and Data Center (ERDC) within the Office of Financial Management. ERDC manages and maintains Washington's P20-W longitudinal education to workforce dataset based on administrative records in partnership with the data contributors across state agencies.

The Occupational Destinations project uses linked educational enrollment and completion data. The data comes from four sources. First, four-year universities through the Public Centralized Higher Education Enrollment System (PCHEES) managed by the ERDC. Second, from the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC). Third, from Labor & Industries (L&I) apprenticeship data. And fourth, workforce data from the UI records from Employment Security. The UI records cover 95% of workers in Washington and include quarterly wages, quarterly hours, occupation (since 2022), industry and employer.

A grant from Strada Education Foundation funded the project. The foundation shared research briefs and findings through its network and with leaders in multiple states. This sharing supports their effort to support states in building out education and workforce administrative records systems.

Sharing the research

To date, the project released three research briefs on construction apprenticeships, AAs and BAs in Business, and AAs and BAs in Nursing.

In May 2026, the co-Principal Investigators presented the next round of results at the Education Research and Data Center's (ERDC) including:

- Occupational destinations and hourly wages by program field of study for all AA and BA completers.

- Early results studying the differential outcomes of AA and BA completers vs. non-completers by program.
- A newly developed measure of the program to occupation alignment or linkage based on the flow of school leavers between program and jobs.

In the coming months, the Occupational Destinations project will release research briefs and reports on these findings.

Researchers on the Occupational Destinations project presented at a webinar in July 2026, sponsored by the National Governor's Association and the Strada Education Foundation, related to using occupational data to studying work outcomes in the context of Workforce Pell implementation.

The Occupational Destinations project found the expected strong alignment for apprenticeship programs and occupational destinations.

- Apprenticeships smooth the transition from school to work as many apprentices are hired directly by the employer where they work during the apprenticeship.
- BA completers earn higher wages than AA completers across the board and are much more likely to be working in professional, scientific and management occupations.
- Many BA programs are strongly linked to specific occupations.
- The largest AA program at about 70% of completers is a general liberal studies AA.
- This and other similar general studies AA programs are not strongly linked to an occupation with students dispersing across jobs (if not continuing on).
- On the other hand, specific AA program from example in nursing, engineering technicians and criminal justice provide strong links to specific jobs.

5. Initiated and future work

5.a. Improving occupational research and projections

Projections are a vital piece of planning for the future. Learn more about how occupational employment projections may improve with employer-provided occupational data in the following section.

Impact for Washingtonians

- Decision-makers will benefit from improved occupational employment projections in their statewide planning.
- Economic development professionals will benefit from improved occupational employment projections. It will help them with workforce investments, education and training funding, and general economic development.

Limitations of existing projections data sources

Occupational employment projections are the blueprint for Washington's workforce investments, steering funding for higher education, apprenticeships and economic development. However, current occupational projections rely heavily on static employer-based survey responses which typically suffer from temporal lag, small sample sizes and inflexible industry-to-occupational employment matrices.

Future projections can be more detailed and timely

By leveraging a near universe of occupational employment data, Employment Security not only enhances the accuracy of its occupational employment projections, but also:

- Estimates county level occupational employment.
- Captures immediate shifts in occupational demand of employers.
- Distinguishes between structurally declining occupations and temporary cyclical shifts.
- Models exact career-path longevity and attrition rates.
- Improves the statewide training benefits occupations in demand list.

5.b. Workforce Pell

Washington's investments in education through grants aim to prepare recipients to successfully enter the labor force.

This section provides more information on how employer occupational reporting prepares Washington for the Workforce Pell grant program that began in 2026.

Impact for Washingtonians

- Decision-makers will benefit from qualifying occupation and outcome insights. The data will help them evaluate and make educational investments.

- Workforce Pell trainees will benefit from informed criteria associated with outcome monitoring with occupational data.
- Throughout the system, people will benefit from results data. They will get a better picture of whether hiring of Workforce Pell trainees aligns with the occupations for which they trained.

Grants for students

Workforce Pell is an extension of the Pell Grant program that provides grants to students who pursue short-term training programs. Workforce Pell requires eligible programs to lead to "high-wage, high-skilled or in-demand" occupations.

Employment Security already produces a list of occupations in demand (OID) used for programs administered internally and by other agencies.

High demand occupations list

Employment Security introduced the high-wage dimension to the OID using the Self-Sufficiency Standard produced by the University of Washington and an Employment Security internal data product of occupational wages and average weekly hours.

Leveraging the incorporation of SOC codes to the wage records, the internal data product provides the universe of wages in the state for most occupations. This allows Employment Security to determine if an occupation pays a wage above what workers need to meet their basic needs.

Starting in program year 2029-2030, Workforce Pell requires monitoring that at least 70% of people who complete a program find a job in the occupation for which the program trained them within 180 days of program completion. Until that program year, the requirement is that 70% of trainees are employed within 180 days of program completion.

While a delay was introduced to give states time to comply with this requirement, the availability of SOC codes in wage records already allows the state to comply with this requirement.

5.c. Improve WorkSource job placement results

Employer-provided occupational data is foundational for a new tool. This tool will help job seekers in labor markets with limited jobs find useful recommendations for new opportunities.

It also allows Career Bridge users to get a more in-depth, accurate view of occupations so decision-making aligns with their goals and expected outcomes.

Read this section to learn about how employer-provided occupational data will improve existing job placement programs and resources.

Impact for Washingtonians

- People making UI benefit claims will benefit from new labor market information. Employer-provided occupational data will help UI claimants find good jobs.
- PROWD program staff will benefit from improved ability to evaluate PROWD participant outcomes. This helps program staff understand the success of job placements and consider those outcomes moving forward.
- Job seekers will benefit from expanded Career Bridge occupational data. It helps them identify trends in occupational hours and multiple occupational employment not previously available anywhere.
- Students, job seekers, workforce professionals and policymakers will benefit from the updated Eligible Training Provider List on Career Bridge. It will help job seekers evaluate education and training programs they're interested in. Similarly, professionals and policymakers will be able to review effectiveness of training programs.

Reemployment services

Employment Security is developing a new labor market information (LMI) product for UI claimants based on occupational data. This product will serve UI claimants looking for jobs in labor markets with fewer jobs available per job seeker.

The new LMI product will include a list of recommended occupations to aid a claimant's job seeking activities. When Employment Security recommends a transition from the claimant's current occupation to a different occupation:

Jobs in the occupation need to be available.

- Transitioning needs to be feasible.
- The new occupation needs to be more lucrative.

Employment Security will also use occupational data to identify which claimants will receive the new information. This may focus on UI claimants who worked in occupations with fewer jobs available per job seeker.

Claimants may receive this information prior to their reemployment services appointment and as early in their job search as possible. They will be able to discuss this information with reemployment service providers during a reemployment appointment.

The expectation is this new tool will speed up job seekers' return to work by redirecting their job search efforts from low-probability-of-success activities to high-probability-of-success activities.

Previous research showed that recommending alternative occupations improves employment outcomes by 5-6% 18 months after product receipt. Employment Security will evaluate this new LMI product to understand whether it reduces UI duration and leads to better jobs. It will also explore the best ways to integrate the new LMI product with current reemployment services practices and highlight the challenges and opportunities for delivering the new LMI.

Partners for Reentry Opportunities in Workforce Development

Employment Security is examining occupational outcomes of participants in the Partners for Reentry Opportunities in Workforce Development (PROWD) program. The PROWD program is a four-year initiative jointly funded by the U.S. Department of Justice (USDOJ) and the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL).

The program provides mentorship, coaching, training, employment and other support services to people in federal custody before and after their release. The goal of PROWD is to improve employment and earnings and to reduce recidivism.

The outcome evaluation of the PROWD program employs descriptive statistics to analyze labor market outcomes of program participants. It examines how labor market outcomes may vary across participant characteristics. The study uses Employment Security administrative data to analyze which industries and occupations program participants get employed in, and how it varies by participants' characteristics.

The study is in progress. Final results will be available in 2028.

Eligible Training Provider List

The Workforce Board is enhancing Washington's already robust Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) on CareerBridge.wa.gov. WTB is adding occupational outcomes data to thousands of postsecondary education and training programs.

In addition to providing independent, third-party evaluations of employment and earnings outcomes, Career Bridge will now show the top three occupations in which recent graduates found work. This includes the percentage employed in each occupation.

Programs prepare participants with intended career outcomes. This new information will help students, jobseekers, workforce professionals and policymakers better assess the success of programs at achieving those outcomes. Career Bridge will continue to display the industries where graduates are employed while adding this more detailed occupational view of program outcomes.

The Workforce Board is also expanding the use of occupational data across Career Bridge career pages. Users can now see the percentage of workers in an occupation who work part-time, the wages earned by part-time workers and the percentage of workers who hold multiple jobs.

Together, these enhancements provide a more complete picture of career pathways and training outcomes. By leveraging newly available occupational data, the Workforce Board is advancing its commitment to credential transparency and helping Washingtonians make more informed decisions about education, training and career investments.

5.d. CIP-SOC crosswalk

Education and employment use different classification codes. Learn more about how employer-provided occupational data will improve mapping of educational programs to careers in the following section.

Impact for Washingtonians

Students, educators and policymakers will benefit from real-world data on occupations and educational programs. The data will reveal more accurate linkages of training to careers.

Connecting classification codes

The CIP-SOC crosswalk is a joint effort by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the National Center for Education Statistics. It matches six-digit CIP Codes from the 2020 Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) with six-digit detailed descriptions from the 2018 Standard Occupational Classification (SOC).

The purpose of the crosswalk is to match postsecondary programs of study that provide graduates with specific skills and knowledge to occupations requiring those skills or knowledge to be successful.

The ERDC-UW Occupational Destinations research project examines the occupational destinations of postsecondary students in Washington state. The CIP-SOC crosswalk identifies program-job matches.

The main take-away from this project is the CIP-SOC crosswalk doesn't do a good job in predicting where workers go. The recommendation for future analysis was to abandon the CIP-SOC crosswalk in factor of a flow linkages measure, which is a much better predictor of program to occupation linkages. The program-occupation flow linkage is an alternative to the CIP-SOC measure. It is calculated from the flows between all programs and all occupations and captures the probability that the program and occupation are linked based on the size of all these flows.

5.e. Collaboration with the U.S. Census Bureau

The U.S. Census Bureau has an interest in occupational transitions. Read this section to learn about how Washington's employer-reported data connects with the U.S. Census Bureau's data.

Impacts for Washingtonians

Workforce professionals, researchers and policymakers will benefit from future Census LEHD work. Census will eventually update LEHD with employer-provided occupational data, improving workforce insights for economic development and policymaking.

Filling data gaps

The Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) program is part of the Center for Economic Studies at the U.S. Census Bureau. The LEHD program produces cost effective, public-use information combining federal, state and Census Bureau data on employers and employees under the Local Employment Dynamics (LED) Partnership. State and local authorities increasingly need detailed local information about their economies to make informed decisions. The LED Partnership works to fill critical data gaps and provide indicators needed by state and local authorities. As part of the partnership, states agree to share their confidential wage records through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). While not a product of the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), it complements BLS programs by combining federal survey data with state unemployment insurance wage records to track local jobs and workers.

Analyzing occupational transitions

The Census Bureau is interested in receiving and analyzing occupational transitions in Washington state's employer-provided occupational data. Employment Security and the Census Bureau are engaged in ongoing discussions to amend the LEHD MOU, enabling the Census Bureau to develop the new labor market information.

5.f. Continuing the Occupational Destinations project

Learn about upcoming research in the Occupational Destinations project in the following section. This research links educational programs to career outcomes using employer-provided occupational data.

Impact for Washingtonians

- Educators and students will benefit from expanded analyses of education and training program completion. This will provide a broader view of student and trainee outcomes.
- Workforce professionals, researchers and policymakers will benefit from benchmarking employer-provided occupational data against existing surveys. It will identify broader labor market trends, such as self-employment and out-migration.

Proposed phase two

At the time of this report, University of Washington and Employment Security are in discussions with the Strada Education Foundation for a second phase of the Occupational Destinations project. If adopted, phase two will incorporate new data in more recent years and have three primary objectives.

Outcomes for certificate completers and non-completers

The analysis will extend to study outcomes for SBCTC certificate completers and non-completers. Distinguishing enrollment, completion and work histories of certificate completers and non-completers is complex.

- Students earn multiple certificates, sometimes at the same time, and often continue earning additional certificates.
- Students can earn a mix of certificate types, including certificates that stand alone and ones associated with an established program. Completers may earn a single certificate or stack them as they progress through a program.

- The population of students earning certificates are more likely to be working while enrolled and moving between education and work.

In phase two, the Occupational Destinations project will make sense of the types of pathways in the certificate landscape and how certificates are contributing towards and support job alignment in conjunction with AAs, BAs and apprenticeships.

Field of study to occupation alignment

Phase two of the Occupational Destinations will further develop the program-occupation flow link measure for field of study to occupation alignment. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in conjunction with the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) produces a measure of field of study to occupational alignment called the Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) to Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) Crosswalk (or CIP-SOC crosswalk).

The CIP codes are a field of study classification system across degree types, for example majors. The SOC codes are an occupational classification system also used in Washington's UI occupation codes. The CIP-SOC crosswalk is an expert-derived approach about field of study to job alignment.

The CIP-SOC crosswalk has issues for studying field of study alignment in Washington:

- It is not based on empirical data.
- It does not differentiate credential level (certificate, AA, BA).
- It is not specific to the jobs in Washington.

The program-occupational flow link measure addresses all these challenges:

- It uses the flow of students between detailed field of study program by credential to occupational destinations.

The measure identifies the degree to which that flow is greater or lesser than expected, based on the random flow of all students from programs to jobs.

- Strongly linked program to occupations indicate are where there is a much higher flow than random movement given the size of programs and the size of occupations.

A key characteristic of the program-occupational flow link measure is it uses all the flows from programs to job for all students in Washington (whether completed or not) across all educational levels.

- In phase two, they would further develop and refine the measure for use across in studying all programs in the analysis.

Analyzing missing unemployment insurance data

The Occupational Destinations phase two project is seeking funding for an analysis in partnership with Employment Security. It will benchmark the quality of the occupational codes to national datasets and seek to quantify why students leaving school may be missing in the UI data.

Initial studies by Employment Security have found the occupational codes are of high quality. The phase two project would extend this analysis and create national facing reports for other states considering the addition of occupational codes to their UI data.

People may be missing in the UI data if they moved out of state, are self-employed, are working in a job in Washington not covered by UI program or are unemployed. The project will use national data as a benchmark. It will use the degree of out-of-state migration by educational credential, self-employment and unemployment. This will allow the project team to characterize the degree to which the missingness in UI records is likely a result of each of these outcomes.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Categories of SOC reporting issues

Employment Security identified the following categories of six-digit codes that have incorrectly appeared in employer filings:

- Incomplete SOC code level of detail: employers may file partial SOC codes from less detailed top levels of the coding system. These codes end in zero and do not represent a specific occupation.
- Outdated SOC codes: employers may refer to old versions of the SOC system, such as those from 2010 or 2000. These codes look similar but have been replaced with SOC 2018 codes. There will be another SOC system update in 2028.
- BLS OEWS survey codes: employers may file codes they're used to providing in their BLS OEWS survey responses. Most of these codes overlap with SOC 2018, but some collapse multiple SOC 2018 codes or are specific to university research.
- Labor & Industries risk classifications: employers may be used to filing these codes as part of the workers' compensation program. Confusingly, these refer to specific risks within certain occupational duties, such as 3103-01 for risks in cement or lime manufacturing. However, these codes refer to work risks rather than occupations.
- North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) codes: employers may also be familiar with their industry codes. Employment Security assigns these codes to employers when they are enrolled or updated in our systems. However, these six-digit codes refer to the industry segment of the employer rather than the occupations of their employees.
- Classification of Instructional Programs codes: employers are unlikely to file these codes, but they are another six-digit coding system that may cause confusion. These codes are associated with areas of knowledge and skills in educational programs.

In addition to the six-digit confusion categories above, Employment Security currently identifies these additional types of reporting errors:

- Invalid job titles: too few alphabet characters to be a job title or abbreviation.
- Single SOC code for almost all employees: these are checked against industry staffing patterns to identify when the SOC code is inaccurate to the employer industry. Some industries, like agriculture, may employ many workers in the same occupation.

- Known invalid SOC codes: these include occupations that would not be reported through state unemployment insurance (e.g., federal military roles) or occupations known to be invalid within a specific industry segment.
- Unknown six-digit codes: this is a catch-all category for filings that don't fall within a known six-digit coding system. These may correspond to employer internal position codes or placeholders.
- Missing data: this includes employer filings without any occupational data.

Appendix 2 - The national landscape

Occupational reporting in other states

- Alaska, Indiana, Louisiana, South Carolina and West Virginia currently require employers to report workers' occupation codes and/or job titles in their quarterly UI wage reports.
- North Carolina and Nebraska allow voluntary reporting of occupation codes and/or job titles, but do not require it.
- California, Texas and Virginia have passed legislation to explore the possibility of adding occupations and/or job titles to their quarterly UI wage reports. Texas recently proposed a rule to implement the new requirements in August 2026.
- Connecticut passed legislation to add new data elements, including occupations to their UI wage records. It repealed the requirement before it went into effect.

States' reasons for enhancing wage records

Except for Alaska, every state that requires occupations and/or job titles in their UI wage reports began the requirement in the past decade. States are making greater efforts to align education and training programs with the needs of the labor market. The data improves their ability to evaluate the performance of these programs.

Louisiana's law requires the data be used to "aid in the improvement of workforce development and educational alignment."[1] A goal of South Carolina's legislation is to "help students, parents of students, and job seekers make career choices based on an awareness of jobs, skills in demand, and related educational pathways."[2]

The recently passed Workforce Pell grant requires that eligible programs lead to "high-wage, high-skilled or in-demand" occupations. Program evaluation is by, among other things, the rate at which students are employed in "relevant occupations."[3] Having access to occupation codes in quarterly UI wage reports will enable states to more easily comply with these requirements.

A second reason for this increase in interest in adding occupational data to quarterly UI wage reports is that response rates for the Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS) surveys have steadily decreased in recent years. In May 2015, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported a 73.5% response rate.[4] In May 2025, this number was 66.3%.[5] This decrease in survey response rate has created a greater need for more reliable data on occupation-specific employment and wages, which could be met through enhanced quarterly UI wage reports.

Differences with Washington's wage records

There are two notable differences between Washington's enhanced wage records and those collected by the five other states. First, while Washington gives employers the choice to report either SOC codes or job titles, other states have opted to require only one or the other. Second, in addition to collecting data on occupations, some states have also begun collecting information on work location. For example, Texas's recently passed legislation will also add "county of primary employment" and "remote work status" to its quarterly UI wage reports in addition to occupation.[6] Similarly, Indiana requires employers report the "ZIP code of the physical work site location." [7] With the prevalence of remote work in today's workforce, this information could shed greater light on where work is being done.

States are seeking federal guidance and standardization of the data states are collecting.

Washington state contribution

Employment Security has shared our state's experience enhancing our wage records starting with hours worked in 1978, through conferences or in direct conversations with representatives of other states: California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, North Carolina, New Jersey, Oregon, Tennessee, Texas and Wisconsin. The information they seek is before the legislation and after the legislation: stakeholders, cost, how to assess quality and employer participation.

Appendix 3 - Occupational data forum description

Occupational Forum

April 23, 2026

Background

The Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO (WSLC) and the Society of Professional Engineering Employees in Aerospace, IFPTE Local 2001 (SPEEA) have long had an interest in seeing better occupational data as part of labor's efforts to improve outcomes for students and workers in the labor market. With the new enhanced wage records in Washington state in place, WSLC and SPEEA reached out to ESD and WTB to talk about how to make the advances of this data more widely understood and used.

What came out of those discussions was an agreement to host an Occupational Data Forum. The purpose was to bring in experts and advocates from Washington state and the country to talk about the significance of the new data and how it might lead to better understanding and improving labor markets.

The forum, titled "New Data, New Possibilities: Reimagining Workforce Insights with Washington's New Occupation Data," was held virtually on April 23rd and had more than 110 attendees.

Content

The presentation had four components: A description of the effort to get the law passed, how the effort of collection has gone and what were the challenges, what is the national landscape and viewpoint, and what are the use cases in place and shortly upcoming.

Why we pushed for the data and what its' potential is: The first panel of the day covered three speakers involved in the passing of the legislation. They spoke on why they felt this data was so important and effort behind getting the law passed.

In the second session ESD's LMI Director spoke. He updated the attendees on what has occurred and challenges encountered by the state agency charged with collection of the data.

In the third session there was a panel of national figures who spoke on the importance of this new data collection and how Washington state has been a leader on the issue. There were panelists representing research foundations and universities.

The last session covered three panelists who spoke on current use cases for the occupational data and what is in the planning pipeline.

Post-Forum Outcomes

The forum elevated the importance of Washington collecting occupation data with a range of public and private stakeholders, leading to more presentation opportunities and cross-organization outreach to further leverage the data's potential. It also brought attention to the

value of additional data sets over time. Feedback from the event was positive and resulted in a wider constituency familiar with the investments being made by the state and employers to collect occupation data and the promise the data offers in better understanding workforce dynamics.

Appendix 4 - Figure data

Figure A1: Occupational data in UI wage records

Year-quarter	SOC code, percent of total	SOC code and job title, percent of total	Job title, percent of total
2022 Q4	52.92	-	-
2023 Q1	64.84	-	-
2023 Q2	66.16	-	-
2023 Q3	67.85	-	-
2023 Q4	70.66	0.04	0.06
2024 Q1	70.88	4.09	5.06
2024 Q2	74.49	5.13	6.10
2024 Q3	75.66	8.51	6.83
2024 Q4	75.45	10.86	6.57
2025 Q1	76.88	11.41	6.48
2025 Q2	77.32	11.77	6.21
2025 Q3	77.16	12.06	6.17
2025 Q4	77.47	12.46	6.31
2026 Q1	75.34	14.33	6.77
2026 Q2	75.54	14.40	6.61

Source: Employment Security Department, Labor Market Information and Research Division.

Figure A2: Employer occupational data quality outreach progress by year quarter

Year-quarter	Invalid SOC	Missing occupation	Invalid job title	Accuracy concern
2024 Q1	111,622	-	-	-
2024 Q2	128,025	280,424	-	-
2024 Q3	77,816	175,263	-	-
2024 Q4	63,716	139,224	24,525	-
2025 Q1	45,018	80,494	18,317	-
2025 Q2	46,926	81,608	19,937	38,919
2025 Q3	30,152	76,029	31,701	23,300
2025 Q4	45,205	63,358	16,853	34,450
2026 Q1	61,063	65,356	16,555	27,649

Source: Employment Security Department, Labor Market Information and Research Division.

Figure A3: Top job titles by industry as of first quarter 2026

Industry	Industry title	Total job titles by industry	Job title	Percent job titles in industry
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	218,013	Registered Nurse	13%
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	218,013	Nursing Assistant	3%
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	218,013	Medical Assistant	3%
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	218,013	Home Care	2%
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	218,013	Patient Access	1%
56	Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	96,574	Registered Nurse	10%
56	Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	96,574	Security Officer	8%
56	Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	96,574	House Cleaner	3%
56	Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	96,574	Nursing Assistant	3%
56	Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	96,574	Behavior Technician	1%
72	Accommodation and Food Services	95,234	Team Member	6%
72	Accommodation and Food Services	95,234	Shift Supervisor	3%
72	Accommodation and Food Services	95,234	Crew Person	3%
72	Accommodation and Food Services	95,234	Help/PX [food prep]	2%
72	Accommodation and Food Services	95,234	Line Cook	2%
44	Retail Trade	88,424	All Purpose Clerk	12%
44	Retail Trade	88,424	Food Clerk	5%
44	Retail Trade	88,424	Team Member	4%
44	Retail Trade	88,424	Courtesy Clerk	3%
44	Retail Trade	88,424	Sales Associate	2%
54	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	84,578	Software Engineer	4%
54	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	84,578	Demonstrators and Product Promoters	2%
54	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	84,578	Senior Manager	2%
54	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	84,578	Project Manager	2%
54	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	84,578	Medical Assistant	1%
51	Information	52,747	Software Engineer	21%

51	Information	52,747	Product Manager	3%
51	Information	52,747	Program Manager	3%
51	Information	52,747	Senior Manager	3%
51	Information	52,747	Mobile Expert	1%

Source: Employment Security Department, Labor Market Information and Research Division.

Figure A4: Overlap of occupation and industry codes

Occupational data source	Percent
All three sources	87.92%
UI wage records + National employment matrix	8.98%
UI wage records only	2.56%
UI wage records + Occupational employment and wage statistic, BLS	0.38%
National employment matrix + Occupational employment and wage statistic, BLS	0.07%
Occupational employment and wage statistic, BLS	0.06%
National employment matrix	0.03%

Source: Employment Security Department, Labor Market Information and Research Division.

Figure A5: Full-time, part-time, and other work by high-level occupational groups

Occupational group	Percent of wage record SOC	Percent full-time	Percent part-time	Percent other
Management, business, science, and arts	35.7%	41.2%	30.5%	28.3%
Service	22.2%	15.3%	61.8%	23.0%
Sales and office	17.9%	28.7%	43.9%	27.3%
Production, transportation, and material moving	12.8%	28.8%	42.2%	29.0%
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance	11.5%	25.6%	39.8%	34.6%

Source: Employment Security Department, Labor Market Information and Research Division.

Figure A6: Hourly wage statistics by occupational group in 2024

Industry	25th percentile	Median	75th percentile	Mean
15: Computer and Mathematical Occupations	55.10	84.67	133.41	122.27
17: Architecture and Engineering Occupations	43.95	59.49	83.16	75.50
11: Management Occupations	37.68	58.83	94.62	93.88
29: Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	34.62	54.98	75.78	68.58
13: Business and Financial Operations Occupations	36.33	50.21	73.74	65.77
23: Legal Occupations	32.73	47.19	78.33	76.86
19: Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations	31.14	43.51	60.02	52.48
47: Construction and Extraction Occupations	27.58	37.93	54.81	43.23
25: Educational Instruction and Library Occupations	25.30	37.84	71.06	50.03
49: Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations	25.04	33.59	47.11	39.24
21: Community and Social Service Occupations	25.85	33.50	44.88	38.39
27: Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations	22.25	33.19	50.40	57.33
33: Protective Service Occupations	22.06	30.20	47.72	38.34
43: Office and Administrative Support Occupations	22.26	28.07	37.44	35.32
51: Production Occupations	20.28	25.44	35.43	31.06
53: Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	21.08	25.37	34.47	32.37
31: Healthcare Support Occupations	22.14	23.33	27.73	26.46
35: Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	18.74	22.60	28.77	25.89
37: Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations	19.24	22.50	27.61	25.17
39: Personal Care and Service Occupations	18.45	22.09	29.12	26.26
41: Sales and Related Occupations	18.16	21.91	29.97	32.18
45: Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations	18.27	20.29	24.03	23.07
Overall	**22.57**	**31.63**	**53.56**	**49.69**

Ranked by median values

Source: Employment Security Department, Labor Market Information and Research Division.

Appendix 5 - List of data sharing agreements

Among Employment Security's various data sharing agreements, this appendix highlights the key agreements for sharing the new occupational data set.

Figure A7. Table of data sharing agreements

Entity	Purpose/Intent
State Board for Community and Technical Colleges	Analyze student outcomes, program eligibility and enrollment, labor market participation, fund allocation, state reporting, and program evaluation.
Workforce Training Program	Net Impact study to help evaluate the return on state investments in the workforce system.
Office of Financial Management (OFM); Economic Research & Data Center	To perform state and federal statute required studies, forecasts and program measures. For the analysis of student performance and progress that integrates education data with social, income, workforce, and other data
Labor and Industries	To make ESD data more accessible to L&I employees through the BEAR system for purpose of tracking claimant wages, employment verification, and employer information
Spokane Colleges	Evaluate how well CCS/Spokane Colleges' educational programs prepare students for entry into specific industries and careers, as well as for earning a living wage
Walla Walla Community College	Evaluating the effectiveness and market value of postsecondary credentials earned at Walla Walla Community College

Source: Employment Security Department, Labor Market Information and Research Division.

Appendix 6 - Implementation timelines

Implementation of occupational reporting

The following timeline depicts the major implementation milestones and legislative changes around occupational reporting.

2018-2019: Future of Work task force formed and reported back policy recommendations.

2020: Substitute House Bill (SHB) 2308 passes. State revises RCW 50.12.070 accordingly.

- Employers must report job titles/SOC class to ESD quarterly.

2021-2024: Employment Security RCW 50.12.070 implementation project.

- Prepare systems, business processes, and employees and employers.
- Perform rulemaking for collecting the required information.
- November 2021: Employment Security starts the pilot.
- Gather feedback from a group of employers. Use it to understand needs and expectations.

2022-June 2024: Employer outreach.

- Employment Security project team used the information gathered through employer outreach efforts to help assist employers in understanding how to correctly log and report occupational data, reducing underreporting and misclassification of occupational reported information.

2022: Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill (ESSB) 5693.

- Limitation of the SOC project's provided funding. It only applies to the IT costs related to the implementation.

2023: House Bill 1684 passes.

- Federally recognized tribes may elect to report the occupational code or job title. They retain the option to opt out.

May 2024: ESD begins assessing penalties.

- This applies to employers who knowingly fail to report occupational code or job title.

May 2024 onward: increasing employer participation.

- Employer participation continued to increase. It has not plateaued as of 2026.

Gated Funding Technology Budget specific timelines

The following timeline depicts the major milestones of the Gated Funding Budget to implement RCW 50.12.070.

November 2021, phase one:

- Completion for optional occupational reporting (a pilot for single-filing employers without locked services).

September 2022, phase two:

- Completion of work for adding the capability to accept SOC codes in new EAMS and bulk filing submissions (all employers can submit SOC codes).

June 2023, phase three:

- Functionalities added to enter data in one of the available paths (via paper forms, New EAMS, or bulk filing, formerly ICESA Washington Reporting).

January 2024, phase four:

- Completion of the necessary activities including the technology changes, organizational readiness activities, and customer communication and support systems (EAMS, NGTS, ILNIX, ESD Webpage) so that all employers have the choice to supply SOC codes or job titles and add the ability to assess penalties and interest for employers who fail to report occupational data.

Appendix 7 - Sample outreach, OC Newsletter

Employer Newsletter

Special edition

May 2022 | Issue 20 | Special Edition

Unemployment insurance: Sign up now for upcoming SOC code webinars

Learn more about Standard Occupational Classification codes on May 20 or June 3

Do you have questions about Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) codes? Sign up for one of our upcoming webinars!

All employers will be required to report SOC codes when they submit their quarterly tax reports starting with their fourth quarter 2022 report. At that time, you could get a penalty for incorrect SOC reporting. Reporting SOC codes is currently optional and is available only to single filers.

Upcoming webinars

If you have questions or want to learn more about using SOC codes, register for one of our free webinars.

Friday, May 20, at 11 a.m. - Link to webinar registration

Friday, June 3, at 11 a.m. - Link to webinar registration

During these webinars, we'll talk about:

What are SOC codes?

When are SOC codes mandatory?

How to you look up SOC codes.

- How to add SOC codes with keyed wage data.
- How to add SOC codes with imported wage data.

Note: We will provide the same information in both webinars. However, questions could vary in each webinar, so you are welcome to sign up for both!

What is SOC?

SOC is a federal coding system that helps government agencies and private businesses compare occupational data.

In 2019, the Washington State Legislature passed a law requiring employers to report SOC codes in their quarterly reports for unemployment insurance.

Other resources on SOC

- Watch this short instructional video.
- Try out the SOC code search tool. Click "Browse" under the "Find Occupations" section. You'll be able to search by keyword, SOC code or industry.