

WASHINGTON STEM 2021 POLICY

PRIORITY: CAREER PATHWAYS



Washington STEM is a catalyst for opportunity, possibility, and prosperity in STEM. We work in partnership with eleven regional networks to provide equitable access to STEM education and pathways to careers in the in-demand fields of science, technology, engineering, and math for all Washington students, especially those furthest from opportunity

2021 CAREER PATHWAY PRIORITY

- **Maintain the Workforce Education Investment Account (WEIA) funding.**

WHAT IS WEIA AND WHAT DOES IT FUND?

The Workforce Education Investment account (WEIA) was established through legislation ([HB 2158](#)) in the 2019 session. It was funded by a new Business & Occupations tax, which was later updated in 2020. Currently, "...expenditures from the account may be used only for higher education programs, higher education operations, higher education compensation, state-funded student aid programs." It funds the following priority areas for student success:

- **Career Connect Washington:** The [Governor's Career Connect Washington initiative](#) started in 2017 and formally adopted in 2019 when the Legislature passed HB 2158, making Career Connect Washington a part of the Workforce Innovation Act. Maintenance of funding supports program grants that scale career connected learning opportunities across the state to bridge the gap between student opportunity and economic demand. Career connected learning is the bridge that puts young people on the pathway to a postsecondary credential and a rewarding career, contributing to the vitality of their families, communities, and local economies. [Career Connect Washington](#) continues to make impact to build education and training curriculms to prepare students for today's careers.
- **Washington State Grant:** Formerly the State Need Grant, is a critical piece of support for students in their post-secondary endeavors, providing full tuition and fees coverage for eligible Washington state students. [The program was expanded to increase](#) eligibility for more middle and low-income families to access the grant and includes workforce training programs, apprenticeship programs, and public colleges and universities. Eligibility has increased As of 2020-21, income eligibility has increased to 100 percent of median family income (MFI), with funding guaranteed for eligible students, meaning a family of four with an annual income of \$50,000 or less is eligible for a guaranteed full award.
- **Washington State Opportunity Scholarship:** The [Washington State Opportunity Scholarship \(WSOS\)](#) provides students with two pathways to high-demand Washington jobs. The Baccalaureate Scholarship is for Scholars pursuing a bachelor's degree in a STEM or health care field. The new Career and Technical Scholarship (CTS) is for Scholars pursuing a degree or certificate in a high-demand trade, health care or STEM field such as nursing, welding, or information technology. WSOS is funded through private-public partnerships and funds are matched by Washington state. A full legislative report is available [here](#).
- **Working Connections Child Care:** [Working Connections Child Care](#) is a subsidy program to help income eligible families pay for child care. Subsidy rates are currently far below the market rate for child care, and only a fraction of the cost of providing high quality care. Increasing the rate means parents can access a greater portion of the child care market, and child cares that accept the subsidy receive more of the funding they need to provide high quality care for low-income children. For families, the subsidy program reaches those making up to 219% of the federal poverty line, which is less than \$58,000 for a family of four. A family of four making just over this amount does not qualify for the program and can spend [more than 50% of their income on child care](#) (in a family

with one preschooler and one infant), an impossible financial burden that either prevents families from joining the middle class, or causes them to forgo raises and promotions because they would lose access to the subsidy. Increasing the rate is critical to support families and businesses in the recovery of the Washington state economy.

HOW CAN WEIA BE MODIFIED?

The Workforce Education Investment Accountability and Oversight Board was established through legislation ([HB 2158](#)) in 2019. The purposes of the board are to:

- a) Provide guidance and recommendations to the legislature on what workforce education priorities should be funded with the workforce education investment account; and
- b) Ensure accountability that the workforce education investments funded with the workforce education investment account are producing the intended results and are effectively increasing student success and career readiness, such as by increasing retention, completion, and job placement rates.

HOW IS WA STEM MEASURING PROGRESS TOWARDS CAREER PATHWAY GOALS?

[Labor Market Data Dashboard](#): By combining data focused on future job projections, wage ranges, and other labor-related statistics, all at the regional level, Washington students and families can know what careers are available to them, and what education is needed to achieve their career goals.

[Credential Opportunities by Region and Industry \(CORI Matrix\)](#): This tool informs 2-year and 4-year colleges, apprenticeship providers, employers, and K-12 schools about what career pathways are available in their region. They can compare the data to future job openings so that they can work with the community to add or scale programs.

[COVID-19 Impact Tool](#): In our state, STEM is at the forefront of discovery, on the frontlines of creative 21st century problem-solving, and serves as one of the largest pathways to family-sustaining wage careers and long-term economic security. In partnership with the Employment Security Department, Washington STEM created a COVID-19 Impact Tool that provides insight into the demographics of claims and the roles and industries more or less affected by unemployment and furloughs. Through this insight, it has become clear that STEM jobs are particularly insulated from volatility during these unprecedented times. Now, more than ever, it is critical to support career pathway programs.

[STEM by the Numbers](#): Our STEM by the Numbers report series offer statewide and region-by-region analyses of the need for STEM talent and opportunities for student success through STEM. Our annual reports let us know if the system is supporting more students, especially students of color, students living in poverty and/or rural backgrounds, and young women, to be on track to attain high-demand credentials.

ABOUT US

At Washington STEM, our work revolves around three main areas:

- **Strategically Convene and Partner** with 11 Regional STEM Networks, alongside business, education, and community leaders to identify and scale effective local solutions.
- **Provide direct support** through open-source access to data and measurement tools and targeted financial investments.
- **Advocate for change** through educating decision makers, storytelling, and collaboration in order to create the foundation for lasting, equitable change in our state.

If you have any questions about our work, please contact Washington STEM Policy Director Dr. Bish Paul at bish@washingtonstem.org.

1,000,000 students across the state are supported through STEM Network activities and programs.

