



**Workforce Talent
Educators Association**

Workforce Success Standards

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Standards for Workforce Success

Table of Contents

Section 1: Purpose	3
Section 2: Institutional and Programmatic Applicability	3
S2.1 Institution Type	3
S2.2 Delivery Mode	3
S2.3 Program Length	3
S2.4 Length of Operation	4
S2.5 Transparency	4
S2.6 Recruiting, Marketing, and Public Communication	4
S2.7 Institutional Eligibility	4
Section 3: Standards for Workforce Success	4
S3.1: Learner Achievement	4
S3.1.1 Skill Attainment	4
S3.1.2 Workforce Success	5
S3.1.3 Satisfactory Academic Progress	5
S3.2 Recruiting, Marketing, and Communication Practices	6
S3.2.1 Program Outcomes	6
S3.2.2 Mandatory Reporting	6
S3.3 Transparency	6
S3.3.1 Workforce Success Reports	6
Section 4: Workforce Success Metrics	7
S4.1 Metrics	7
S4.2 Definitions	8
S4.3 Documentation	9



Section 1: Purpose

The US Accreditation System serves to ensure quality of postsecondary education programs and institutions. To guide that mission, the HEA, requires recognized accrediting agencies to uphold standards of accreditation according to federal regulation. Current standards of many accreditation agencies do not include specific requirements for evaluating the workforce success of program or institution graduates. The standards contained here are designed to address this in support of a postsecondary education ecosystem that fosters economic mobility and equity.

WTEA Standards for Workforce Success are designed to validate the impact of postsecondary educational and training programs on learner post-graduate workforce success.

WTEA is **not** recognized by the Department of Education as either a programmatic or institutional accreditor.

Section 2: Institutional and Programmatic Applicability

The Standards detailed here are appropriate for *any program* with a mission or purpose of preparing learners for success in the workforce.

S2.1 Institution Type

A program housed in an Institution of Higher Education, Proprietary Institution, or Public or Private Career and Technical institution or any other education or training program with a mission or purpose of preparing learners for success in the workforce are eligible for evaluation according to the standards detailed herein.

S2.2 Delivery Mode

Distance education programs, face-to-face programs, and hybrid programs with a mission or purpose of preparing learners for success in the workforce are eligible for evaluation according to the standards detailed herein. If a program has multiple delivery modes with significantly different curriculum or assessment mechanisms, each delivery mode must be evaluated separately.

S2.3 Program Length

Programs of all lengths in credit hours, clock hours, or calendar days with a mission or purpose of preparing learners for success in the workforce are eligible for evaluation according to the standards detailed herein. Programs must cover sufficient competencies that graduation opens or significantly accelerates a career pathway that was otherwise unavailable to a learner.



S2.4 Length of Operation

The program has learners enrolled and has been in operation long enough to graduate one cohort plus one year. Programs that do not meet this requirement may begin the evaluation process within three months of this requirement with the understanding that workforce success metrics will not be evaluated until at least one cohort has been graduated for at least one year.

S2.5 Transparency

The program and institution agree to publish information on completion and post-graduation workforce success according to WTEA reporting requirements on the institution or program website (See S3.3). The institution publishes information on program cost, credential requirements, academic policies detailing participant academic progress, code of conduct, and tuition and refund policies.

S2.6 Recruiting, Marketing, and Public Communication

The institution agrees to adhere to WTEA standards (see S3.2) regarding the use of outcomes and employability statements in all recruiting, marketing, and public communications.

S2.7 Institutional Eligibility

For an institution seeking institutional evaluation according to the WTEA Workforce Success Standards, *each program* in the institution must meet the programmatic evaluation eligibility criteria stated above.

Section 3: Standards for Workforce Success

S3.1: Learner Achievement

Institutions must demonstrate that graduates are prepared to successfully work in fields related to their training.

S3.1.1 Skill Attainment

- Program Competencies
 - Programs must clearly identify and publish work-related competencies that all graduates are expected to attain as a requirement of program completion.
 - Programs must provide a curriculum map that clearly identifies required courses or learning units.
 - Programs must identify where in each learning unit each program competency is assessed for mastery.



- Skill Assessment
 - Programs must provide for review the mastery-level assessment learners encounter closest to program completion for each program competency (for example, the final exam, project, or portfolio item that assesses each program competency).
 - Programs must demonstrate effective assessment of all work-related competencies as determined by the WTEA guidance. The program structure and design must require all participants to attain mastery of all work-related competencies in order to qualify for program completion.
 - All program competencies must be assessed for each learner within 1 year of program completion – a competency cannot be assessed early in the program and then never again before graduation.
 - Program graduates must attain 100% of competency credit from the institution, another WTEA accredited institution with the same program competencies, or allow participants to show competency by passing mastery assessments for course credit.
- Employment Requirements
 - If in recruiting, marketing, or public communications materials, the institution makes any claims alluding to the employability of program participants in a particular field, the program must require and provision for participants to attain all professional certifications and academic requirements required for licensure or employment in the field during the course of the program.

S3.1.2 Workforce Success

Programs must demonstrate learner workforce success through the measurement of employment rates and earnings.

- **Training-Related Employment Rate:** Programs must be able to demonstrate that at least 60% of graduates attain training-related employment within 1 year of program completion.
- **Employment Rate:** For programs that do not have particular training-related job targets, programs must be able to demonstrate that 70% of graduates attain employment within 1 year of program completion.
- **Minimum Economic Return Ratio :** Programs must be able to demonstrate that program graduates earnings are sufficient to justify the cost of the program. Median cohort earnings must be higher than the Minimum Economic Return defined as the median high school graduate earnings plus the total net cost of attendance.

S3.1.3 Satisfactory Academic Progress

Programs must demonstrate that participants complete the program at reasonable rates, are given adequate support and are not encouraged to invest time and money into programs for which they are not making satisfactory academic progress.

- Completion Rate
 - Overall completion rate must be no less than 50% for students who do not receive a full tuition refund.



- Programs must demonstrate that students who are not making satisfactory academic progress are not incurring additional tuition costs.

S3.2 Recruiting, Marketing, and Communication Practices

Programs must maintain ethical recruiting, marketing, and communication practices so that prospective participants are not misled about the expected economic and workforce impact of program participation.

S3.2.1 Program Outcomes

- In any instance that programs use program workforce outcomes, including completion rate, employment rate, training-related employment rate, and graduate earnings, in recruiting, marketing, or public communications, they must calculate and report outcomes according to published WTEA methodology.
- If programs choose to report the workforce outcomes for subsets of the program participant cohort, the program must report, with equal or greater visibility, the same outcome for the entire cohort.
- Outcomes reporting must be reported for the unit that is referenced in communication. For example, for programs with multiple locations, any advertising, recruiting, or communication that is specific to that location must report outcomes for that location only. Any communication about the program as a whole must use outcomes for the program as a whole.

S3.2.2 Mandatory Reporting

- If in recruiting, marketing, or public communications materials, the institution makes any claims alluding to the employability of a specific subset of the program participant population, the program must report employment and earnings (training-related if applicable) for the subset of program graduates according to WTEA calculation methodology and reporting rules.

S3.3 Transparency

Programs must complete an annual “Workforce Success” report according to WTEA guidelines and publish the report prominently on the institution’s official public facing website.

S3.3.1 Workforce Success Reports

- For each academic year, each program must produce a “Workforce Success” report including the following metrics calculated according to published WTEA methodology:
 - Completion Rate
 - Employment Rate
 - Training-Related Employment Rate
 - Graduate Earnings
 - Graduate Training-Related Earnings
 - Cost to Earnings
 - Debt to Earnings



Section 4: Workforce Success Metrics

The Workforce Talent Educators Association is committed to the use of Workforce Success Metrics in quality assurance processes for postsecondary education and training organizations. These metrics and methodologies were developed with input from educators, employers, and workforce development stakeholders to serve as an accurate, effective, and equitable measure of the workforce success of program graduates.

Capitalized terms are defined on the next page.

S4.1 Metrics

Completion	Completion Rate: the percentage of students in the Cohort who completed the program within 100%, 150%, or 200% of the Expected Time to Completion.
Employment	Employment: the percentage of Cohort Graduates who were employed in paid, Full-Time work within 1 year of program completion.
	Training-Related Employment: the percentage of Cohort Graduates who were employed in paid, Full-Time, Training-Related work within 1 year of program completion.
Earnings	Graduate Earnings: Annualized Earnings of graduates who were employed within one year of program completion, reported on the 25th, 50th (median), and 75th percentiles.
	Graduate Training-Related Earnings: Annualized Earnings of graduates who were employed in Training-Related work within one year of program completion, reported on the 25th, 50th (median), and 75th percentiles.
	Earnings Reporting Rate: The percent of employed graduates who reported their earnings.
Return on Investment	Debt to Earnings: the annual cost of Cohort Median Debt amortized over 10 years at 5% interest divided by graduate median earnings.
	Cost to Earnings: the annual Average Net Cost amortized over 10 years at 5% interest divided by graduate median earnings.
	Minimum Economic Return Threshold¹: Average Net Cost of the program amortized over 10 years plus the Median State-Level High School Earnings.

¹ This metric uses methodology adopted from the Bill and Melinda Gates Postsecondary Value Commission's Equitable Value Explorer for the [Minimum Economic Return](#) threshold.



S4.2 Definitions

- **Annualized Earnings:** All salaries provided by Full-Time, employed Graduates, Training-Related if applicable. Hourly wages are converted to yearly by multiplying the hourly rate by 2,080. Bonuses, equity, relocation, and any other non-base compensation may not be included. If a student holds multiple qualifying positions within 1 year of program completion, the last available salary should be used.
- **Approved Job Titles:** Job titles deemed by a WTEA reviewer to be "training-related".
- **Average Net Cost:** The average total cost of attendance for cohort participants after all grants and scholarships are deducted
- **Cohort Median Debt:** The median debt incurred by Cohort participants in support of tuition or other necessary expenses of attending the program. Does not include accrued interest even if interest is accrued while attending the program.
- **Cohort:** All students who enrolled on a date for which the Expected Completion Date falls within the measurement year, regardless of if and when they graduated. Students who die, are deployed to the military, become incarcerated, or become permanently disabled are excluded.
- **Earnings Reporting Rate:** The percentage of job survey responses that report earnings.
- **Expected Completion Date:** The date on which a program participant is expected to complete, calculated by adding the Expected Time to Completion to the participant's start date. Learners transferring into a program with previously earned credit for portions of the program are given an expected completion date based on the percentage of coursework remaining at the date of transfer.
- **Expected Time to Completion:** The published duration of the program, or for programs with no published duration, the median completion time for the last 3 years.
- **Full-Time:** Work that is at least 30 hours per week and permanent, at-will, or a contract for at least 6 months.
- **Graduates:** All students who complete all requirements of the program, regardless of their completion date.
- **State-Level High School Earnings:** The median earnings of individuals who have attained a high school diploma or GED as their highest level of education. For institutions in one state, use earnings for the state where the institution is located. For institutions in multiple states, use the average of earnings for each state where students are located, weighted by the proportion of total cohort participants in each state. For institutions with online programs not located in a particular state, use earnings for the entire United States.
- **Training-Related:** Work that either a) the Graduate declared as "training-related" or b) whose job title appears on the Approved Job Titles list for the program.



S4.3 Documentation

To report a student as employed, the school must obtain documentation from the graduate, the graduate's employer, a third-party recruiter, legal, credentialed third-party employment history service, or government employment data.

The documentation may be verbal or written, including any electronic communication, such as email, text message, chat, or electronically submitted form. For information obtained verbally, the records must contain a written statement indicating:

1. The date of the conversation,
2. The school representative or agent who conducted the conversation,
3. The person who provided the information, and if that person is not the student, the person's relation to the student, and
4. The content of the conversation as it relates to the data being collected.

Documentation must show:

1. Either the offer date or start date. (If both are available, use the earlier to compute placement data.)
2. That the offer is paid. (Exact payment rate is not required. Unpaid offers do not qualify.)
3. That the job is full-time, or at least 30 hours per week.
4. That the offer or contract is permanent, at-will, or greater than six months.
5. That the offer was accepted.

For the avoidance of doubt: a contract-to-hire arrangement, where a contract states employment under six months and a potential permanent offer after, cannot be counted until a permanent offer is documented.

Documentation for training-related positions must either:

1. Include a learner or employer statement that the job is training-related, or
2. Include a job title on the Approved Job Titles list for the program.

If surveys are being used to measure graduate earnings, the program must have an 80% Earnings Reporting Rate.