WTDB
WORKFORCE & TALENT DEVELOPMENT BOARD

Workforce Readiness Committee:

Building a Skills-Ready and AI-Empowered Workforce Through an Integrated Partnership Strategy

Annual Report, December 2025

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HIGHER EDUCATION COORDINATING COMMISSION

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Executive Summary

The power of collaboration is making a difference in Oregon's talent pipeline. In 2025, the Workforce Readiness Committee (WRC) answered the call for coordinated and strategic action by advancing major statewide and CCL initiatives through Career Connected Learning (CCL) strategic framework. Together, these initiatives strengthen Oregon's talent pipeline, better meet the needs of employers, and increase alignment across education and workforce systems. Career Connected Learning in Oregon is a framework designed to provide students with career awareness, exploration, preparation, and training that is relevant to industry expectations, with a goal of removing inequitable barriers and supporting all learners.

These four CCL initiatives bring together a broad spectrum of agency, community, and industry voices to develop and leverage tools that enhance Oregon's talent pipeline. Success in foundational learning, tools that elevate understanding, greater access and lower costs for college credits, and expanding Oregon's CTE system are all woven together by the highly collaborative and action-oriented work of the WRC. Advancing this work requires continued focus on these system-wide priorities, overcoming funding challenges, support from decision makers, and engagement and advocacy from business and industry.

These efforts are timely given the recent announcement on the *Oregon Prosperity Roadmap,* which outlines strategic goals to accelerate economic growth, add more living-wage jobs, and retain and grow Oregon businesses.

Oregon Employability Skills (OES)

Oregon Employability Skills are crucial to preparing Oregon's students and workforce. These skills are foundational and complement both academic and technical skills. OES brings explicit instruction and practice, along with consistent terminology, which enhances understanding and success across education and workforce settings. OES serves as an equalizer, providing learners a pathway to success through intentional teaching of foundational skills such as Communication and Self-Awareness. Intentional instruction and a shared language are vital for collaboration among educators (K-12 and postsecondary), employers, and community partners.

Data from surveys and numerous WTDB Talent Assessments have long demonstrated that essential employability skills are crucial. By ensuring every student and adult masters these essential skills, OES directly strengthens the availability, quality, and productivity of

Oregon's future workforce "labor pool" and a critical factor in moving Oregon into the top 10 CNBC Workforce Rank as noted in Governor Kotek's Oregon Prosperity Roadmap (December, 2025).

Project STEMLIFT

To prepare Oregon's students for a rapidly evolving economy, we must empower educators to innovate in partnership alongside business and industry. Project STEMLift focuses on integrating emerging technologies, specifically reasoning AI platforms, directly into the classroom to democratize access to high-quality instruction. By deploying tools that offer 24/7 personalized support, we are not only assisting students, we are equipping educators with resources that ensure every student builds the technical literacy required for the jobs of the future.

This initiative supports the Oregon Prosperity Roadmap goal to foster innovation and solidify Oregon as a hub for advanced industries by providing resources that reduce administrative burdens and allow educators to focus on high-impact teaching. Project STEMLift is essential for modernizing Oregon's STEM curriculum and ensuring that every student, regardless of geography, develops the technical literacy required for participation in the future workforce.

Dual Credit and Early College

Oregon made significant progress toward establishing a universal statewide expectation that every student will have access to at least one college-level course during high school. Engagement sessions, surveys, and regional listening tours informed a shared vision. This work is essential to increasing affordability and accelerating pathways to living-wage jobs.

By eliminating cost barriers and ensuring credit transferability, Oregon is building the direct pipeline from education to employment that is called out in the *Oregon Prosperity Roadmap*. Continuing this focus will expand access, reduce costs, and broaden student success.

Career and Technical Education for All

While each initiative is distinct, they converge within a reimagined definition of Career and Technical Education (CTE). Rather than viewing CTE as a set of elective pathways or isolated programs, this report positions CTE as Oregon's foundational workforce development delivery system. CTE serves as a place where Employability Skills, STEM readiness, and Dual Credit access align to scale industry partnerships. This repositioning creates the direct pipeline from education to employment that is necessary for a competitive statewide economy.

Conclusion: Delivering on the Promise of Prosperity

The *Oregon Prosperity Roadmap* sets a bold target: moving Oregon into the top 10 states for workforce quality. The Workforce Readiness Committee's initiatives are the tactical engine to help achieve this, establishing Career and Technical Education (CTE) not as an elective pathway for some learners, but as the foundational infrastructure where these priorities converge, and from which all learners can benefit.

By integrating OES, Project STEMLift, and Dual Credit into a unified infrastructure, Oregon strengthens the direct pipeline from education to employment envisioned in the *Oregon Prosperity Roadmap*.

Oregon stands at a pivotal moment. The pace of industry innovation — spanning AI, bioscience, clean energy, transportation, and advanced technologies — is outstripping the capacity of current education and training systems to prepare learners for emerging jobs. Without immediate, coordinated action, Oregon risks falling behind in talent competitiveness.

The Workforce Readiness Committee's work makes one message clear: Oregon cannot afford incremental progress. The shift must be urgent, unified, and boldly aligned across systems. With the Governor's support to overcome funding hurdles, Oregon can turn this vision into a reality, ensuring its workforce is not only ready, but world-class.

Introduction

Empowering the Future: A Unified Vision for Oregon's Workforce

The Workforce Readiness Committee (WRC) was established with a singular, clear purpose: to empower Oregon's future workforce to enter jobs and careers ready, aware, and equipped with the foundational knowledge needed for success. Guided by the Workforce and Talent Development Board's (WTDB) 2025-2026 Strategic Plan, the WRC

has moved beyond traditional boundaries to embrace a "Larger Workforce System" approach. This strategy recognizes that preparing a resilient workforce requires strong partnerships and alignment across K-12 education, higher education, community-based organizations (CBO's), local workforce boards, business and industry, and economic development.

In 2025, the WRC operated under a revised Charter centered on inclusivity, equitable prosperity, and the pursuit of bold innovations. The urgency for this work has never been greater. Oregon is currently navigating multiple economic transformations: the massive expansion of the semiconductor industry, the growth of clean energy, and the accelerating integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) across all occupations. To capitalize on these opportunities, Oregon must overcome persistent challenges, including fragmented governance and a teacher readiness gap related to emerging technologies.

Acting as a convener and broker between business and industry, K-12 education, community colleges, universities, CBO's, and local workforce boards, the WRC has focused its efforts on four high-leverage initiatives designed to disrupt outdated models and build bridges between systems. This report details the progress, challenges, and policy considerations for these major statewide and Career Connected Learning (CCL) initiatives: Oregon Employability Skills (OES), Project STEMLift, Dual Credit and Early College, and Career and Technical Education (CTE) for All. Together, these initiatives represent the *Oregon Prosperity Roadmap's* vision for a unified talent development ecosystem that ensures every learner, regardless of geography or background, can participate fully in Oregon's future.

These efforts are timely given the recent announcement on the *Oregon Prosperity Roadmap,* which outlines strategic goals to accelerate economic growth, add more living-wage jobs, and retain and grow Oregon businesses.

Oregon Employability Skills: Progress & Policy Recommendations

OES Future State

Oregon Employability Skills (OES) is a foundational framework designed to build a unified talent pipeline by embedding career readiness throughout education and industry. As an integrated requirement, OES becomes mandatory for graduation beginning with the Class of 2027, paired with credit-bearing workforce experience. This shift responds directly to industry requests to teach essential "human skills" and serves as an equalizer by granting every student access to the unspoken rules of professional success. By further integrating these skills into business onboarding and talent management, OES creates a continuous,

evidence-based development cycle that elevates the skill level of all current and future Oregon workers.

Progress Made in 2025-Disrupting Learning & Building the Bridge

Building the Foundation: Deliverables & Resources:

Our accomplishments in 2025 focused on establishing a statewide foundation for workforce readiness and creating the resources necessary for universal adoption.

- Unified Core Message: We successfully deployed a unified message positioning OES as a learner equalizer. This approach centers on the intentional teaching, practicing, owning and demonstrating of employability skills such as Communication, Digital Literacy, Entrepreneurial Mindset, Self-Awareness, and Resilience as the primary pathway to professional success.
- Industry-Aligned Toolkits: In collaboration with our strategic partners we released a Workforce Development Toolkit and sector-specific Skills One-Pagers that create a common skill language for learners, educators, and employers.
- Policy Implementation (Senate Bill 3): Through Senate Bill 3 (2023), Oregon established the Higher Education and Career Path Skills (HECPS) Standards as statewide graduation requirements beginning with the Class of 2027, embedding employability skills and career connected learning into the high school experience. Instructional guidance released this year supports culturally responsive, trauma-informed, and strengths-based instructional practices to ensure equitable and consistent implementation.

Strategic Impact & System Efficiencies

Beyond the deliverables, these initiatives have driven structural changes that are aligning education and industry systems.

- Strategic Alignment: OES staff and Workforce Partners have established a unified framework, utilizing employability skills as the foundational lens for technical training and AI integration. By aligning OES with local workforce boards, youth and adult programs, WIOA Title I training, and apprenticeship preparation, we ensure learners encounter consistent professional expectations whether they are in a classroom, a training program, or a workplace.

- Enhanced Integration: We have deepened system adoption through expanded Learning Management System (LMS) access, enabling educators to design stronger advisory structures and simulated work experiences. Concurrently, Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs), Education Service Districts (ESD's), Oregon ACTE, and STEM Hubs are integrating OES into employer advisory groups to help learners better achieve success in high-demand careers.
- Sector Expansion: We have scaled the initiative by embedding OES into specific, high-growth industry pathways. This includes formalizing partnerships within the Oregon Life Sciences Apprenticeship Program, the Clean Energy sector, and Career and Technical Education (CTE) Programs of Study.
- Cost Efficiency & Resource Optimization: This systemic alignment is producing a significant return on investment. By co-developing work readiness tools and offering regional professional development that serves multiple agencies simultaneously, we avoid duplicative spending. This shared approach establishes a common workforce language and equalizes opportunity at a fraction of the cost of siloed efforts.

Challenges & Opportunities: Systemic Data and Sustainable Funding

OES has evolved from a K-12 curriculum into a lifespan skill framework that bridges higher education and industry. However, current data and funding systems operate in silos that do not match the cross-sector nature of this work.

The Systemic Barrier: Data fragmentation is not just an OES challenge — it is a statewide barrier. As learners and workers move throughout Oregon — transitioning between schools, districts, and jobs — we lose the ability to track their progress. To serve a mobile population, Oregon needs a unified system where data and micro-credentials travel with the learner.

Current Progress: We have established a baseline through pre/post surveys, launching micro-credentialing via badging, and Senate Bill 3 course enrollment data. However, these remain isolated touchpoints.

The Strategic Solution: To move from isolated programs to a cohesive ecosystem, we propose three potential structural shifts:

- **Codify OES as the Recognized State Standard:** Senate Bill 3 provides the employability skills mandate; there is an opportunity to formally recognize OES as the **standardized tool** for publicly funded K-12 and Workforce programs. This

addresses inequality by enforcing a common language and enables a **statewide micro-credentialing system** that validates in-demand skills across all sectors.

- **Braided Funding Efficiency Model:** Adopting a braided funding model transforms delivery from fragmented interventions into a unified support system. Instead of sending multiple, disconnected training teams funded by separate streams, a braided approach allows us to deploy a single engagement to serve all regional partners—schools, workforce boards, and CBOs—simultaneously. A braided funding model is needed to support not only course creation but the **sustained professional development** required for implementation. By funding the support structure, Senate Bill 3 becomes a **true equalizer** rather than a compliance checklist.

Invest in Data Portability: Oregon has the opportunity to prioritize the data infrastructure for **longitudinal tracking and interoperable metrics**, ensuring OES remains accountable and responsive. A centralized data approach ensures that verified skills are **visible and transferable,** whether a learner is entering a university, an apprenticeship, or the workforce.

Sustainability & Scalable ROI

While OES was originally built with K-12 investment and significant industry volunteerism, it has evolved into a statewide resource used by higher education, workforce boards, and private employers.

To realize the efficiencies outlined above, the gap between legislative mandates and implementation capacity must be addressed:

- **Closing the Capacity Gap:** Senate Bill 3 provides the legislative mandate for employability skills, but lacks the professional development funding required for effective delivery. To move from compliance to quality, dedicated resources are necessary to support the partners implementing this work. Without this investment, Oregon risks inconsistent application that undermines legislative intent.
- **Statewide Braided Funding:** Transitioning from exclusive K-12 funding toward a braided funding model that reflects our cross-sector work, is an opportunity for consideration to better reflect the cross-sector nature of this work. With nearly 1,000 industry and education connections annually, demand is proven. Equitable, stable funding is essential to ensure all partners — not just schools — can access

the training required to shift learners from simple "awareness" to true skill ownership.

- **Breaking Silos to Maximize ROI:** We are achieving a high return on investment by leveraging existing infrastructure rather than building new verticals. By embedding OES into Industry Associations, CBOs, LWDBs, and economic development programs, we amplify the impact of every dollar. Immediate next steps include expanding integration within high-growth sectors (Childcare, Hospitality, Manufacturing, Healthcare) and establishing grant-matching mechanisms. This ensures OES functions not only as a curriculum but as a statewide workforce asset.

The core takeaway is that OES is now a statewide, industry-aligned graduation requirement that provides Oregon with a common workforce language and a scalable readiness infrastructure that benefits all learners and employers. To ensure long-term, equitable learner success, Oregon must formalize and secure the OES framework. The Oregon Employability Skills team remains committed to preparing a robust, skilled, and adaptable workforce for the state's future.

Project STEMLift

Opportunity and Urgency

Oregon stands at the center of an unprecedented expansion in innovation industries. Yet the state faces a critical challenge: its school system is not producing STEM-ready graduates at the pace or scale required. Persistently low math and science proficiency, gender and racial disparities, and limited awareness of diverse STEM career pathways collectively constrain Oregon's competitiveness.

Project STEMLift addresses these gaps by leveraging AI-enabled learning, modernizing curriculum, and strengthening pathways across the full spectrum of scientific and technical fields.

Key Challenges Confronting Oregon's STEM Pipeline Oregon

Oregon faces a significant proficiency crisis: fewer than half of students meet benchmarks in math or science — among the lowest nationally when adjusted for demographics. This gap directly limits Oregon's competitive advantage in semiconductors, bioscience, sustainable agriculture, healthcare, and infrastructure.

Contributing factors include limited access to advanced coursework, regional disparities (particularly in rural communities), and curriculum misalignment with modern industry and research needs. Teachers face compounding challenges: rising instructional demands, limited time for support, and outdated materials disconnected from real-world problem solving.

2025 STEMLift Initiatives

In this context, the WRC advanced four STEM strategies:

- **AI-Enhanced Tutoring and Instructional Support:** STEM Hubs and ESD's are collaborating to pilot programs in grades 4–8 deployed reasoning AI (e.g., Khanmigo, Magic School AI, or Quill) as 24/7 personalized Socratic tutors. This approach engages students in guided problem solving and deep conceptual reasoning — cognitive skills essential for fields ranging from engineering to epidemiology. For teachers, the tools reduce administrative burden and provide professional learning on pedagogical innovation, allowing educators to focus on high-impact student relationships. Early results indicate improved engagement and stronger inquiry skills.
- **Curriculum Alignment and Modernization:** Working with Oregon Department of Education (ODE) and public universities, the WRC helped evaluate math and science curricula to ensure coherence from middle school through university coursework. This alignment supports readiness for both career and research tracks.
- **STEM Socialization and Representation:** Partnerships with industry associations and universities bring applied science into classrooms. Design challenges and mentorships connect students to high-demand pathways in technology, natural resources, advanced manufacturing, life sciences, and others. These efforts highlight the economic opportunity available to all students in Oregon's growing economy. Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) are essential partners in bringing industry experience into classrooms by organizing industry tours, coordinating work-experience programs, and ensuring employer voice and representation in STEM learning.
- **Financial Support and Incentive Structures:** State workforce agencies are exploring outcome-based funding tied to competency gains and expanded scholarships for technical and scientific pathways. Employer partnerships,

including internships, make STEM careers visible early in grades 4–8, ensuring financial barriers do not impede aspiration.

Recommendations for Consideration

There is a strategic opportunity to consider that will accelerate progress, Oregon should:

- Establish longitudinal assessments to track growth in computational and scientific literacy.
- Invest in AI-powered tools and adaptive learning platforms.
- Align curriculum with workforce and university research expectations.
- Strengthen graduation requirements to ensure broad STEM readiness.
- Consider a Governor-appointed Education & Talent Director to coordinate cross-sector strategy.
- Fund professional development focused on emerging technologies and interdisciplinary pathways.

The key takeaway is that Project STEMLift modernizes Oregon's instructional ecosystem by aligning AI-enabled learning tools, curriculum modernization, and industry partnerships to close critical skill gaps and broaden STEM opportunities statewide.

Dual Credit and Early College

Future State: Oregon's Vision for College Credit in High School

In support of Oregon's education and workforce goals, every student in Oregon will have access to college credit in high school. Through these courses, students will build skills, gain confidence, and gain a meaningful head start on their post-high school path.

Through intentional partnerships, high schools, community colleges, and universities will create purposeful college and career experiences that reduce the cost of postsecondary education and empower students to imagine and plan for their future.

Oregon will realize this vision by prioritizing:

- Affordability
- Sustainable funding
- Credits with purpose

- Shared responsibility between K–12 and higher education

This future state establishes a **common north star** for statewide action and is currently being finalized as one of the initiative's key deliverables.

Progress Made in 2025

In 2025, Oregon made significant progress toward building the foundation for this future state by systematizing access, elevating coherence, and advancing equity across college credit in high school opportunities that lead to high-demand careers.

In 2024, Oregon was chosen as one of seven states to participate in a multi-state policy cohort focused on advancing college credit in high school at the state level. This partnership has enabled Oregon to accelerate policy development, improve alignment across systems, and elevate student voice statewide.

Oregon's key deliverables under this initiative include:

- Establishing a state vision for college credit in high school
- Launching the development of an advising toolkit to support local implementation
- Developing a coordinated communication plan
- Preparing evidence-based, community-informed legislative recommendations for 2027

2025 Project Highlights

In 2025, the project successfully developed and presented a draft state vision for college credit in high school, shaped by over 600 survey responses across 33 counties. Through more than 20 engagement sessions with state agencies, advisory councils, and workforce partners, the team established statewide priorities and concluded the year with three regional convenings to support local implementation and planning.

Challenges & Opportunities: What We Learned

Data shows that many students still do not have opportunities for college credit in high school, and Oregon has the opportunity to use the state vision as a call to action to increase student exposure to career and college planning beyond high school.

Survey feedback revealed clear statewide priorities:

- College credit at no cost to students and families
- Credits that are transferable and purposefully aligned to pathways
- Shared responsibility for access and quality across K-12 and postsecondary institutions
- Sustainable funding models for college credit in high school programs

Looking Ahead to 2026

In 2026, the project team will focus on operationalizing the statewide vision by:

- Developing strategies that support the statewide vision and crafting a policy proposal that reflects the priorities identified in the statewide survey
- Continuing regional engagement to refine resource and policy needs
- Launching development of a statewide Advising Toolkit to provide consistent, timely information and support for students and families

Policy Direction: Key Shifts

Funding will prioritize high-impact practices that improve student success in college courses aligned to purposeful pathways.

Going forward, Oregon will emphasize:

- Data-driven decision-making
- Quality assurance
- Measurable outcomes for equity and participation

Collaboration Across Systems

This initiative has brought together educators, workforce leaders, and policymakers to reduce silos and strengthen alignment. ODE and HECC provide regular updates to the Workforce Readiness Committee, whose members continue to guide strategy development through cross-sector collaboration. This partnership will remain essential as implementation continues.

Voices from the Field

Quotes from student and partner engagement:

> *"There is also a set group of people that take them, and I would say those people are the ones that have confidence at school, academically, and those who are not taking them have been discouraged by the message that they are too hard."*
>
> *"Our school is so remote that having opportunities in the building is key."*
>
> *"We need more accessible data about what is happening with our high school students after they take college courses."*

Policy and Funding Considerations

Propose a comprehensive policy framework to:

- Eliminate student costs
- Guarantee access to at least one college-level course
- Streamline standards, funding, and reporting structures
- Strengthen accountability across systems

The key takeaway is that Dual Credit expands equitable access to college-level learning and lowers the long-term cost of higher education, creating a momentum-building bridge from high school to postsecondary.

Career and Technical Education for All

Future State Vision

Imagine a future where Career and Technical Education (CTE) functions as Oregon's integrated workforce system — an aligned statewide architecture that seamlessly connects K–12 schools, community colleges, universities, local workforce development boards, and industry. In this future, career connected learning serves as the central hub unifying employability skills, AI literacy, STEM readiness, and high-quality technical pathways, scaling industry partnerships across every region and sector.

Through intentional alignment between the Workforce Readiness Committee (WRC) charter and the CTE State Plan, Oregon ensures that every learner — youth and adult, in every community — has access to clear, supported, and equitable pathways into high-demand careers. This unified approach strengthens transitions from school to

employment, drives higher credential attainment, diversifies workforce participation, and expands economic mobility for individuals and communities across the state.

Progress in 2025

Oregon's CTE State Plan and the WRC charter have been reviewed and aligned, driving progress toward three outcomes: integrated career connected learning, equitable participation, and dynamic collaboration across education and workforce systems. This alignment is strategically linked to Oregon's educational attainment goals for both youth and adults.

Oregon's "40-40-20" goal aims for

- 40% of young adults to earn a four-year degree
- 40% to complete a two-year degree or short-term certificate
- 20% to finish high school or the equivalent.

In addition, the Adult Education Attainment Goal commits the state to helping 300,000 adults ages 26–64 earn new degrees, certificates, or credentials between 2020 and 2030, while reducing gaps for people of color, low-income learners, and rural populations.

A major collaborative achievement in 2025 has been the expansion and integration of CCL across Oregon. Through partnerships among state agencies, regional colleges, K-12 schools, local workforce boards, and industry, thousands of students, including youth and adults, now participate in hands-on experiences, career exploration, and structured pathways that guide learners from awareness and exploration through career preparation and training.

Implementation of CCL Systems Navigators at community colleges has fostered more than 3,900 regional partnerships, supported over 450 learning activities, and engaged 18,500 students statewide, closing gaps between K-12 and post-secondary career education. Despite its success, this initiative rests on a fragile foundation. Initially funded by ODE and sustained this year through a temporary commitment from community colleges, the Navigator network lacks long-term security. Because this work serves as the connective tissue between K-12, Higher Education, and Industry, relying on a single sector to fund it is unsustainable.

Oregon still faces challenges such as regional disparities in access, inconsistent integration of CCL within curriculum, and inequities affecting rural and underserved populations. These obstacles highlight the ongoing need for systematic solutions, including sustained funding for regional support, expanded collaboration between schools

and employers, and robust data tracking to ensure all learners, including adults, benefit equitably from career connected pathways.

Challenges and Opportunities

Oregon's alignment of the CTE State Plan with the WRC charter has revealed both persistent challenges and powerful opportunities in pursuit of the state's educational attainment goals.

Key Challenges include:

- Uneven access to high-quality CTE and dual credit programs
- Regional disparities and fragmented dual enrollment systems
- Inconsistent credit recognition for both high school students and adults
- Data showing that underserved groups, including learners of color, rural populations, and working adults, experience significant barriers to equitable participation and credential attainment

These challenges slow statewide progress and signal the need for more consistent, coordinated system supports.

Opportunities Emerging from Alignment

- Expanded collaboration is enabling standardized pathways across regions.
- Increased portability of credits and credentials
- Targeted interventions to close opportunity gaps
- Stronger partnerships among state agencies, schools, colleges, employers, and workforce boards

Policy and Funding Considerations

Possible legislative actions flowing from this alignment include:

- Statewide backbone/capacity funding for CTE
- Broader transfer guarantees to support seamless credit mobility
- Greater transparency through public data dashboards

- Investment in high-quality career exploration beginning in middle grades
- Expanded outreach to marginalized and adult learner communities
- Improved onboarding and professional development for CTE educators
- Strengthened collaborative governance and system-level problem solving

Collaboration

Collaboration is a cornerstone of Oregon's approach to aligning the CTE State Plan with the WRC charter. Our strategic partners work closely together to design, implement, and evaluate high-quality career connected learning experiences. This cross-sector partnership has enabled the development of aligned pathways supporting both high school students and adult learners.

These collaborative efforts are evidenced through:

- Shared governance structures
- Regular data-sharing
- Joint policy-making initiatives
- Deep cooperation between secondary and post-secondary sectors
- Ongoing employer engagement ensuring CTE pathways remain responsive to local workforce needs
- Professional development for educators
- Targeted outreach to marginalized communities

Through these partnerships, Oregon is cultivating a nimble, equitable, and integrated CTE ecosystem that advances the state's ambitious education attainment goals for all residents.

Cross-Cutting System Challenges

Across all four initiatives, Oregon faces several systems barriers that must be addressed to achieve transformative results:

1. **Accessibility Inequities:** Educators lack access to: (a) high-quality curriculum aligned to industry and post-secondary education, expectations, (b) professional development that enables personalized instruction at scale, and (c) AI tools that reduce administrative burden.

2. **Rapid Pace of Workforce Changes:** Rapid advancements across fields such as AI, automation, semiconductors, healthcare, manufacturing, clean energy, skilled trades, and others are evolving faster than traditional curriculum cycles. This misalignment makes it difficult for education and workforce systems to keep pace. Braided funding drives a significant return on investment when compared to siloed approaches.
3. **Fragmented Governance:** Siloed responsibilities across ODE, HECC, local school districts, local workforce boards, WorkSource Oregon, and higher education institutions limit statewide accountability. To better bridge the gap between education and workforce, there is a compelling opportunity to consider a more coordinated talent governance structure.

Comprehensive Policy Considerations

To achieve a cohesive statewide talent system, the WRC offers a potential strategy to consider, a multi-year legislative strategy anchored in three core pillars: Alignment, Innovation, and Measurable Outcomes. These pillars would guide the immediate, mid-term, and long-term policy actions needed to create a synchronized, equitable, and industry-aligned talent ecosystem.

Short-Term Priorities (0-12 Months)

Focus: Stabilize the system and accelerate visible progress

Pillar 1: Alignment – Coordinated Governance & System Coherence

- Establish an Education & Workforce Talent Director to coordinate cross-agency work across K–12, post-secondary education, workforce boards, and industry.
- Stabilize backbone funding for cross-agency partnerships.
- Launch regional professional development and training, leveraging existing partnership infrastructures to ensure consistency and reduce duplication.

Pillar 2: Innovation – Modern Tools & Universal Access

- Fund AI-enabled learning pilots focused on Oregon growth areas such as math, science, career connected learning and workforce development.
- Begin planning for universal Dual Credit access, including removal of all student cost barriers.
- Initiate educator mastery development in AI tools, emerging STEM careers, and OES integration.

Pillar 3: Measurable Outcomes – Data, Equity & Accountability

- Begin foundational work toward an integrated data system that will ultimately track longitudinal outcomes in OES, STEM proficiency, Dual Credit, and CTE participation, workforce development in youth and adult programs, and across partnerships.
- Identify high-priority regional priorities and prepare targeted investment strategies.

Mid-Term Priorities (1-3 Years)

Focus: Build system infrastructure, scale innovations, and strengthen coherence

Pillar 1: Alignment – Curriculum, Pathways, & Partnerships

- Harmonize curriculum and pathways across K–12 and post-secondary education to align with high-demand industries (semiconductors, clean energy, healthcare, advanced manufacturing, and others).
- Expand cross-sector alignment efforts between state agencies, LWDB's, ESD's, community colleges, universities, extended learning programs and employers.
- Continue to build out professional development systems supporting statewide partners.

Pillar 2: Innovation – Scaling Tools & Expanding Access

- Scale AI-enabled learning tools statewide based on pilot results.
- Ensure universal access to aligned pathways and industry-recognized credentials across Dual Credit, OES, STEMLift, and CTE.
- Advance pilot innovations—including AI-enabled learning, OES credentialing, Dual Credit expansion, and CTE Without Limits—into operational statewide models focused on equity and workforce relevance.

Pillar 3: Measurable Outcomes – Integrated Data & Regional Capacity

Develop integrated talent data systems, including:

- Longitudinal learner tracking from K–12 through postsecondary and employment.
- A unified employer engagement platform supporting internships, mentorships, guest speakers, and simulated projects.
- Scalable micro-credentials aligned with OES and regional business and industry sector needs.

- Training access for learners, families, and partners to ensure equitable participation and visibility across the system.

Long-Term Priorities (3-5 Years)

Focus: Achieve durable system alignment and sustained economic mobility

Pillar 1: Alignment – Structural Coherence & Workforce Competitiveness

- Maintain a governance structure that ensures ongoing alignment between education and workforce systems, including employer partnerships and community representation.
- Sustain regional and statewide professional development, training, and partnership networks to ensure consistent system performance.

Pillar 2: Innovation – Deep Industry Integration

- Increase industry alignment to technical skills through the OES lens, ensuring a common language and expectations across education and employment.
- Expand industry training, mentorships, apprenticeships, and sector partnerships that support Oregon's economic growth and talent needs.

Pillar 3: Measurable Outcomes – Accountability & Long-Term Success

- Fully operationalize the statewide talent data ecosystem to ensure accountability, equity, and continuous improvement.
- Leverage outcome-based funding and transparent dashboards to maintain statewide commitment to talent competitiveness and economic mobility.

Conclusion

Conclusion: From Silos to Synergy

Oregon's economic future demands a fundamental shift from fragmented silos to a synchronized talent ecosystem. The four initiatives detailed in this report are not independent projects; they are the interdependent gears of a single engine driving workforce readiness:

- **Oregon Employability Skills (OES)** provides the essential "human skills" and common language needed in every sector.

- **Project STEMLift** future-proofs the pipeline by leveraging AI to modernize instruction and close critical proficiency gaps.
- **Dual Credit and Early College** accelerate student success by removing cost barriers and building momentum toward credentials.
- **CTE for All** serves as the delivery mechanism where these priorities converge to scale industry partnerships.

However, this engine is fueled by our expansive partnerships. The progress achieved in 2025 demonstrates that our strength lies in **shared voice, responsibility, and accountability**. From the Tribes and Local Workforce Development Boards guiding regional strategy, to the educators and industry leaders co-designing curriculum, this coalition has moved beyond simple collaboration to true system integration.

To honor this collective commitment, means the dismantling of the status-quo and remaining structural barriers through braided funding and coordinated governance. Unifying these diverse partners under a shared vision secures a future-ready, learner-centered system where every investment yields a return in talent and prosperity. The path is clear, the partnership is strong, and Oregon is ready.

Appendix

For additional information, partners may reference:

- **Oregon Employability Skills (OES) Resources**
  - Framework and Definition
    - Skills and Traits
  - Workforce Development Toolkit + "Skills One-Pagers
  - SB 3 HECPS Standards Instructional Guidance on OES
  - Micro-credentialing/Badging Model
- **STEMLift Resources**
  - STEM Hubs Regional Networks Directory
  - STEM Hub rules and map of participating regions
- **Dual Credit & Early College Initiative Resources**
  - Vision Statement & Statewide priorities
  - Transferability guidance (for Common Course Numbers)

- **CTE State Plan Alignment Resources**
    - Oregon CTE State Plan
    - Oregon Apprenticeship Pathways (especially in life sciences, clean energy, construction and IT)
- **Workforce System & LWDB Alignment Resources**
    - Overview of Oregon's Workforce System (structure and governance)
    - Map of Local Workforce Development Boards and service regions
    - Sector partnership examples (healthcare, tech, energy, manufacturing)
    - Work-based learning models supported by LWDBs
    - Employer advisory group examples
- **Workforce and Talent Development Board**
    - **2025-26 Strategic Plan and Scorecard**
- **Oregon Prosperity Roadmap**
- **Oregon Executive Order Number 13-08: Chartering Partnerships for Job Growth and Talent Development**

Glossary of Terms

- **Artificial Intelligence (AI) Literacy**: The knowledge and skills required to critically understand and use emerging technologies, such as reasoning AI platforms, to democratize access to high-quality instruction and prepare for future occupations.
- **Career Connected Learning (CCL)**: A strategic framework designed to provide students with career awareness, exploration, preparation, and training relevant to industry expectations, with the core goal of removing inequitable barriers for all learners.
- **Career and Technical Education (CTE) Programs of Study**: Oregon's foundational workforce development delivery system where Employability Skills, STEM readiness, and Dual Credit align to create direct pipelines from education to high-wage employment.
- **Dual Credit**: Programs that provide high school students with access to at least one college-level course, accelerating their path toward postsecondary credentials and reducing the overall cost of higher education.
- **Higher Education and Career Path Skills (HECPS) High School Standards**: The Oregon-specific graduation standards (established via Senate Bill 3) that embed

employability skills and career connected learning into the high school experience beginning in 2027.

- **Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDB)**: The regional, business-led entities that manage local workforce systems, organize industry tours, and ensure employer voice is integrated into regional STEM and CTE learning.
- **Micro-credentials**: Digital badges or competency-based recognitions that validate in-demand skills (such as OES) and provide a portable, transferable record of a learner's verified abilities.
- **Oregon Employability Skills (OES)**: A foundational framework designed to build a unified talent pipeline by embedding intentional instruction of "human skills"—such as Communication, Self-Awareness, and Resilience—throughout education and industry. As of the Class of 2027, OES is a mandatory statewide graduation requirement.
- **Sector Partnerships**: Industry-led collaborations within high-growth sectors (e.g., healthcare, clean energy, semiconductors) that align education and training with specific regional employer needs.
- **STEMLift**: A WRC initiative focused on modernizing Oregon's STEM curriculum by integrating AI-enabled learning tools to close proficiency gaps and broaden technical opportunities statewide.
- **Strategic Partners**: A broad coalition—including Oregon Tribes, state agencies (ODE, HECC, OED), ESDs, and industry associations—that work across silos to build a synchronized talent ecosystem.
- **Work-Based Learning (WBL)**: Structured experiences, such as internships or apprenticeship preparation, that provide learners with hands-on technical training and direct exposure to industry expectations
- **Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)**: The federal legislation that establishes the state's workforce delivery system, overseen by the WTDB and implemented through WorkSource Oregon and Local Workforce Development Boards.
- **Workforce & Talent Development Board (WTDB):** Oregon's state-level, business-led advisory body appointed by the Governor to provide leadership and strategic vision for the state's workforce development system. It is responsible for establishing a "common north star" for system alignment, coordinating across state agencies and industry to ensure workforce investments are job-driven, equitable, and responsive to employer needs.

WTDB
WORKFORCE & TALENT DEVELOPMENT BOARD

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