

Registered Apprenticeships Continue to Deliver Substantial Returns on Investment

Christopher Dula | Research Investigator | Workforce Training & Education Coordinating Board

Every four to five years, the Workforce Board takes a closer look at the state's workforce development system to evaluate how well its programs are serving customers by measuring the direct economic impact programs have on participants and the broader public. This Net Impact and Cost-Benefit Evaluation study is rigorous and detailed.

Twelve programs are evaluated, including Registered Apprenticeships. These programs serve around 343,000 Washingtonians per year at an average total cost of \$2.6 billion, which includes federal and state funds plus student tuition. The direct social impact – the total economic impact of these programs – is a net gain of \$14.5 billion over five years, for a social return on investment (ROI) of \$5.60 per \$1.00 spent.

Registered Apprenticeships deliver significantly higher returns than the system average. However, each program within the system serves different clients, with different needs.

Participants in a registered apprenticeship program experience an average annual net benefit of \$30,230 per year after program exit, an earnings gain that would not have occurred if they did not participate in the program. The program also delivers a net increase in employment of about 550 people within the first year after exit on average, an employment gain that would not have occurred if the program did not exist. Employment gains alone account for an estimated \$111 million in economic output.

The net economic ROI for Registered Apprenticeships is \$2.8 billion over five years, rising to \$4.3 billion over 10 years – a \$20.77 and \$31.46 ROI per dollar spent – respectively. Taxpayers reach a breakeven point 1.6 years on average after participants exit the program, experiencing an ROI of \$4.80 over five years and \$7.75 over 10 years per dollar spent.

These findings result from a quasi-experimental design to estimate the causal relationship between programs and participant outcomes. The findings produce employment, earnings, and social assistance outcomes that are attributed to program participation *itself* by isolating other influencing factors, such as prior employment history, education, gender, or race. This makes it possible to calculate the average net benefit of these programs for individual participants, and a return on investment to society and taxpayers.

Impact estimates for Registered Apprenticeships in this latest study are remarkably similar to the 2016 net impact study commissioned by the Workforce Board. Registered Apprenticeships also served a more diverse group of participants in the 2021 study.

More in-depth details and analyses can be read in the [full report](#).

For questions, please contact Christopher Dula, Principal Investigator of the 2021 Net Impact and Cost-Benefit Evaluation of Washington's Workforce Development Programs, at chris.dula@wtb.wa.gov