



STATE OF WASHINGTON
— OFFICE OF GOVERNOR JAY INSLEE —

**DIRECTIVE OF THE GOVERNOR
21-24**

December 1, 2021

To: Washington State Workforce System Partners
From: Governor Jay Inslee
Subject: Designation of additional WIOA focus populations

Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Section 3(24), governors have authority to designate certain communities that face barriers to employment or access to services as focus populations for state workforce systems. Workforce system partners (including executive agencies and local workforce development councils) are specifically charged to create strategies, and performance measures that ensure access to services for designated focus populations and measure progress in connecting focus populations to employment opportunities. This ensures a system-wide focus on achieving equitable economic recovery for all, placing an emphasis on serving and tracking the impact of our partnerships on moving the most disadvantaged Washingtonians towards economic self-sufficiency.

In response to a June 2021 request from local workforce development councils to designate specific additional WIOA focus populations based on the communities most directly impacted by employment impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, I am hereby designating the following as workforce focus populations for planning and performance accountability: Black, Asian, Native Hawaiian, Compact of Free Association (COFA) nations, and Pacific Islander communities; Latinos; LGBTQ communities; expectant persons; and veterans. This action aligns with our efforts to address historic racial inequity and systemic barriers to obtaining resources, services, and opportunities through the workforce system. It also aligns with our state's focus on changing or removing systemic and structural barriers faced by communities of color and other marginalized communities and will help drive our state's effort to achieve an equitable economic recovery.

In addition to creating policies to support implementation of programs that support these additional focus populations, workforce system partners must address how their programs and partnerships will improve access and service to these communities both in the state workforce development plan and in local workforce development council plans. I direct executive agency partners responsible for administering workforce development programs, including relevant partners at the Employment Security Department and Workforce Training and

Education Coordinating Board, to work collaboratively on performance accountability measures that inform policymakers on the workforce system's impact serving these focus communities, and to develop tools for policymakers and partners to assess our progress over time. I further request that other workforce development partners, including local workforce development councils that receive federal WIOA dollars through state workforce programs, assist in the implementation of this directive.

Preferential treatment of people based on racial classification is prohibited under Initiative 200, RCW 49.60.400. Accordingly, system partners shall recognize these focus populations to the extent allowed under state law. But taking that first step will enable us to begin discussions about doing the most that we can within the parameters of the law, with further guidance to be developed and issued in partnership with the state Attorney General's Office as needed.

The Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board will collaborate with workforce system partners and, by early 2022, report to the Governor's Office when policies to support implementation of this designation are developed and include proposed performance measures and expectations for updating state and local plans. The workforce development system shall incorporate these additional focus populations into their 2022 state and local planning processes and report to the Governor's Office, in mid-2022, how both state and local plans address the additional focus populations.

This designation will ensure that state and local partners work in alignment towards an equitable economic recovery enjoyed by all Washingtonians, and that our workforce system accurately measures how our services improve access to opportunity for all.