**Expanded Eligibility Policy for Worker Retraining Financial Aid**

**Discussion:** Determine whether the Expanded Eligibility Policy should be added to the Worker Retraining Annual Plan for FY 2015-2016.

**Policy:** The Expanded Eligibility Policy was created to extend the reach of WRT when the economy is growing by qualifying people who are employed but vulnerable to economic dislocation for program services and financial aid. Colleges that intend to use the Expanded Eligibility Policy must indicate so in the annual WRT plan. Colleges are expected to provide clear and compelling justification specific to their local economic conditions or circumstances for any use of the policy.

**Eligibility:** The college must document that the student meets at least two of the following three criteria. It should be noted that dislocated and unemployed students have priority for WRT services and financial aid.

• The individual is employed in an occupation identified as “not in demand” (declining) on the region’s Demand-Decline List (<https://fortress.wa.gov/esd/wilma/wdclists/>);

• The individual has not reached the “tipping point,” which is defined as one year of college credits (45 credits) plus any certificate or degree related to their college course work; and/or

• In order to remain employed, the individual needs to obtain new skills. The worker (and, optionally, their employer) must attest that the minimum qualifications for the worker’s position have changed and that the employee is unable to meet the new skill standard without retraining.

**Rationale**: With lower unemployment rates and job growth in Clark County and surrounding areas (see attached), adding the option of the Expanded Eligibility Policy would serve to shore up 2015-2016 Worker Retraining FTEs. Workers who find themselves in need of new skills to keep their current job or workers in declining occupations would be eligible for Worker Retraining benefits to obtain the necessary education. Priority funding would remain with unemployed and dislocated workers.

**Advisory Committee responsibility**: The Advisory Committee would review the use of the policy on a quarterly basis to determine if there are occupational sectors that should be targeted. The committee would also review the continued need for the policy based on unemployment and jobs data, as well as review the utilization statistics.

**Statistics from “Southwest Washington Labor Market News,” Scott Bailey, December 2014**:







