Rising employer demand for skilled workers has driven efforts to better align occupational training programs to industry needs. Yet, even as the demand for skilled workers increases, less than half of students who enter occupational training programs receive a credential within six years. Community colleges are working to find faster and more effective ways to train those in need of basic skills instruction in math, reading, or job skills. Traditionally, basic skills courses are offered in a sequence that must be completed before students can begin college-level occupational training. However, most students referred to basic skills training never enroll in college-level courses. As its name implies, Washington State’s Integrated Basic Education Skills and Training (I-BEST) provides integrated basic skills and occupational training that allows students to complete their training program faster, and provides supports designed to ensure students stay engaged in training. Washington State’s I-BEST program was developed by the Washington State Board of Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) and was first implemented in the 2006–2007 school year.

This What Works Clearinghouse™ (WWC) report, part of the WWC’s Postsecondary Career and Technical Education topic area, explores the effects of I-BEST on education and labor market outcomes. The WWC identified 12 studies of I-BEST. Three of these studies meet WWC standards.

Findings on I-BEST from three studies that meet WWC standards are shown below. The table reports an effectiveness rating, the improvement index, and the number of studies and students that contributed to the findings. The improvement index is a measure of the intervention’s effect on an outcome.

### What Happens When Students Participate in I-BEST?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The WWC found that implementing I-BEST:</th>
<th>Effectiveness rating</th>
<th>Improvement index (percentile points)</th>
<th>Number of studies</th>
<th>Number of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is likely to increase industry-recognized credential, certificate, or license completion</td>
<td>Positive effects</td>
<td>+18</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>44,367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May increase short-term employment</td>
<td>Potentially positive effects</td>
<td>+10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2,064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May increase short-term earnings</td>
<td>Potentially positive effects</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2,519</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May result in little or no change in credit accumulation</td>
<td>No discernible effects</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>42,894</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The improvement index can be interpreted as the expected change in percentile rank for an average comparison group student if that student had received the intervention. A positive improvement index does not necessarily mean the estimated effect is statistically significant.

**FINDINGS ARE BASED ON:**
3 studies with 45,413 postsecondary students in 9 states

**STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS:**
- Gender: 57% female
- Race: 40% minority
- Ethnicity: 11% Hispanic

**What Does I-BEST Cost?**

The total cost of I-BEST was reported in a cost-benefit analysis to be $2,417 in direct student costs and $7,279 in state costs as of January 2013. Since its creation, I-BEST has been replicated in other locations, sometimes under different names. The total cost of Accelerating Connections to Employment (ACE) as of May 2017 ranged from $4,828 to $13,033 per student across the nine sites. The total cost of Accelerating Opportunity as of November 2017 ranged from $2,635 to $7,128 per student across four states.

**LEARN MORE**

Read more about the I-BEST intervention and the studies that are summarized here in the Intervention Report. Contact the Washington State Board of Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) for additional information on implementing I-BEST.