

July 2017

Workforce Development Council Develops Sector Strategies and Career Pathways

- Working with industry and educational entities to develop sector strategies
- Developing a holistic sector strategy approach
- Delineating an information technology career pathway

Introduction

The Workforce Development Council (WDC) of Seattle-King County plays a critical role in convening industry, education, and labor leaders around workforce issues and finding solutions that meet business needs and get people jobs.¹ Using a sector strategy approach, the WDC has concentrated its workforce development efforts on five current and three potential high growth industry sectors. One of its current high growth industry sectors is information technology (IT).

Workforce Need

From a national perspective the outlook for IT occupations is strong, particularly as workers attain industry-recognized credentials. National employment projections from the Bureau of Labor Statistics indicate that employment opportunities for computer occupations will increase by 12.5% between 2014 and 2024, almost double the average of 6.5% for all occupations. More specifically, the data also indicate that employment opportunities for computer systems analysts will increase by 20.9% from 2014 to 2024, significantly more than the national average for all occupations.²

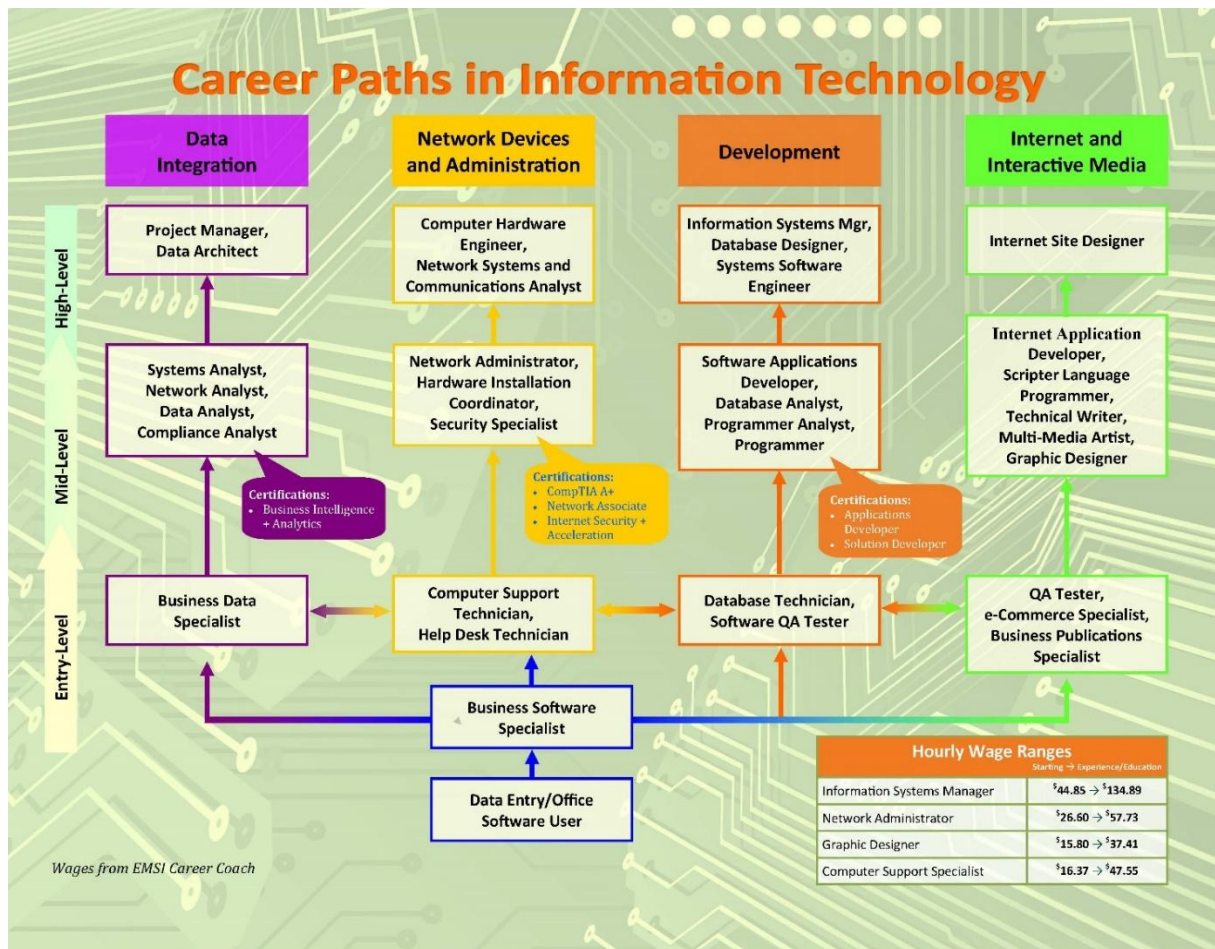
Approach

The WDC began convening industry sector panels in 2003 to determine what employers needed in terms of long- and short-term workforce development. “We review the industry sectors every two years to determine which sectors we should choose for our efforts and what our strategies should be,” says Bryan Pannell, Director of Performance and Research, WDC. “We take a holistic sector approach, interfacing with employers, industry associations, community/technical colleges and other entities in the workforce development community of interest.” One such strategy is sector panel meetings, co-chaired by a business leader from the industry and the WDC, to recommend solutions that can be undertaken by members.

¹ Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County, <http://www.seakingwdc.org/sector-initiatives>

² Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Projections, <https://data.bls.gov/projections/occupationProj>

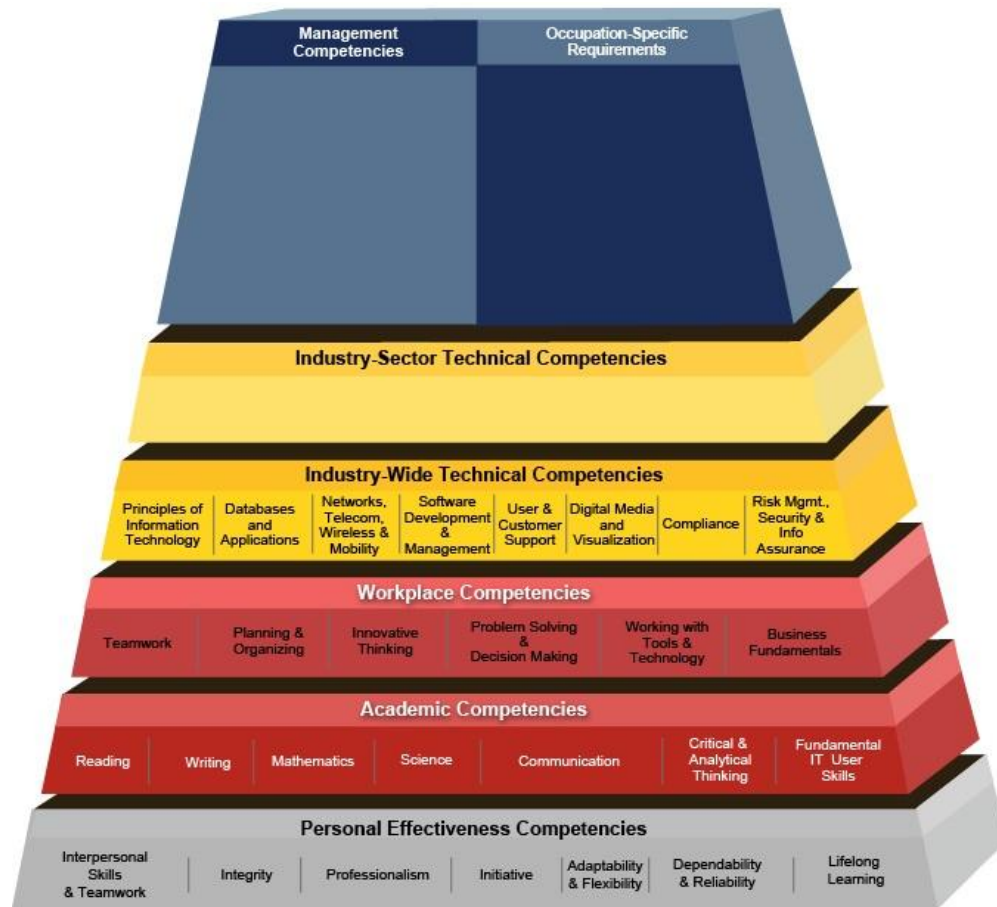
Another is intensive research into each sector. One issue that emerged during work around the IT sector was the need to define career pathways for specific high growth jobs within the industry. As a result of extensive labor market data analysis and subsequent deliberations, career paths were identified in four key IT occupational clusters as delineated below.



Source: Seattle-King County Workforce Development Council, [Map Your Career – Computer/IT Careers](#)

In addition, the WDC’s “Map Your Career” website displays the soft and hard skills cited by employers as essential components of a successful IT career. Many of these skills correlate with the Academic and Workplace Competencies in the Information Technology Competency Model developed under auspices of the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration. These competencies include Teamwork, Innovative Thinking, Problem Solving and Decision Making, Mathematics, Science, Communication, and Critical and Analytical Thinking.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY COMPETENCY MODEL



Source: USDOL, ETA, [Competency Model Clearinghouse](#)

“The response to our sector strategy activities has been very positive,” says Mr. Pannell. “Employers are finding qualified candidates for open positions and job seekers are finding positions that enable them to be self-sufficient.”

Next Steps

“This is a continuing evolution,” says Mr. Pannell. “We are keeping employers at the forefront. This is especially important in industries where technology is changing rapidly, not only in IT and advanced manufacturing, but also in health care and construction. The necessary skill sets are going to change, including jobs that were once manually-based and are now more technology-based.”

In addition, the industry sector panels have provided the WDC with opportunities to partner on new grant opportunities. “It’s an effective ecosystem where everyone helps each other out,” says Mr. Pannell. As a product of its strategic efforts in the IT sector, the WDC is partnering with Seattle Central College on an ETA TechHire grant to prepare individuals for multi-industry

IT occupations. WDC's role is to help the college find job seekers to recruit for their program as well as refer students for apprenticeship opportunities with partner industry entities such as the Washington Technology Industry Association.

Related Links

Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County Sector Strategies
<http://www.seakingwdc.org/sector-initiatives/>

Map Your Career
<http://www.mapyourcareer.org/>

Seattle-King County Talent Pipeline
<http://www.seakingwdc.org/talent-pipeline-app/>

Washington Technology Industry Association
<https://www.washingtontechnology.org/>