

Testimony to the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure's  
Aviation Subcommittee on 23 July 2014

My name is Dave Cox and I am the Dean of Instruction for the Technical Education Division at Spokane Community College and I serve in the additional capacity as the Lead Administrator for the U.S. DOL TAACCCT round 1 grant titled "Air Washington".

I'd like to start off by thanking the subcommittee for inviting me today to speak to you about the Air Washington project we've been so fortunate to have been a part of.

As part of my testimony I've included a short series of three slides that will highlight my speaking points to the subcommittee.

In mid-2010 a small delegation made up of community college and local business executives from Washington State traveled to Washington D.C. to speak with our elected officials about workforce education and training needs and to explore potential resources for such at the federal level. This delegation became aware of the upcoming grant opportunity through the U. S. Dept. of Labor and returned to Washington State to craft a cohesive plan to compete for funding under what became known as the Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training Grants Program or "TACT" for short.

Upon the delegations return a state-wide community college discussion began about what type of project would bring the most potential return to the Washington State workforce needs and very quickly the Aerospace Industry sector was chosen as the specific focus of our proposal. The proposal was constructed and submitted to the U.S. DOL for consideration in early 2011 and in mid-September of the same year we were notified that our project had been chosen for full funding beginning 1 October 2011 with a scheduled completion date of 30 September 2014. This project is an in-state consortia project consisting of 11 separately accredited community colleges within the state of Washington (Washington State has 34 separately accredited state supported public community colleges total). Slide number 2 of the power point presentation shows the geographic locations of these eleven community colleges throughout the state.

I've provided a one page highly detailed informational document simply titled "Air Washington" for the subcommittee to review at its convenience. In it you will find much of the critical data we use to evaluate ourselves on our efforts in meeting our stated outcomes and deliverables as well as much information about the details of what we are doing and where.

Part of my testimony for the subcommittee is focused on the "why" this project has met with such success during it's performance period. Slide number three lists the five success factors I believe can be most precisely attributed to why we got this one right.

Number one: "Fingerprint" of Washington State. Simply said we matched this project to fit the uniqueness of Washington State industry / businesses. Washington State is proud to be the national

leader in the Aerospace Sector and values its status highly. We knew that our highly technical and specialized workforce needs would only increase in the coming years and in order to adequately prepare for this demand we must undertake large scale effort state-wide. The U.S. DOL TAACCCT grants program, with its high award ceiling and "get folks to work ASAP" philosophy was the perfect solve for our state-wide dilemma.

Number two: Industry Connection. Involvement in this project by business / industry was not only desired it was actually required by the detailed statement of work provided to the DOL in our application materials. Letters of support / commitment from employers were an integral part of our proposal. Additionally, our work plan included the function of an executive advisory board which included significant membership from Washington business and industry. I'll speak in greater detail about this later but we found that the function of the transition coordinator / navigator at each college became critically important in establishing good communication and trust between the businesses / industries and the project management teams. I also believe that its' safe to say that Washington State Aerospace industries understand the critical importance to their future that a project of this scope and magnitude plays and stays actively engaged because of that.

Number three: State Government connection. At all levels of state government there is an active and positive interest in and engagement with the Air Washington project. Due to the project's obvious significant impact on the Aerospace workforce in the state our elected officials have enacted permanent legislation that will ensure that the workforce training supported by the project will continue past the project end date indefinitely into Washington State's future. This \$8M annual addition to the community college system budget line is real proof that our lawmakers know the value of what Air Washington has done for all Washingtonians and desire to maintain it.

Number four: Project Management. The lead management team (Spokane Community College) has maintained three basic tenets in carrying out their function as peer leader for the other 10 colleges that make-up the consortium. 1) An open and transparent management style that encourages discussion, questions, feedback, and critique. 2) A highly reliable and verifiable data management system and process. 3) Deliberate and uncompromising demand for intra-consortium communication venues that at a minimum require the consortium to physically gather together quarterly to discuss the project as a whole and brief their responsibilities back to each other.

Number five: Transition Coordinator / Navigator. This "lynch-pin" function serves the multiple roles of industry liaison, employment preparation counselor, system navigator, instructional technician, and last but not least "tough love mom" to the students that need it. It should be noted that this function is resourced through the regional Workforce Development Councils (WIBs) throughout the state.

This concludes my formal testimony to the subcommittee and I would be pleased to attempt to answer any questions the subcommittee might have for me. Again, thank you all for your interest and commitment to keeping America competitive through your investments in community college workforce training.