



Regional Challenge Grant Update: New Partnerships

May 2024

Executive Summary

The Regional Challenge Grant (RCG) seeks to intentionally grow the scale of its work by awarding funds to additional regional partnerships. This document includes five new partnership recommendations for Council consideration as a result of the 2024 Request for Letters of Interest. For additional details on the RCG budget, please see the [2023 Legislative Report on Use of General Fund Monies](#).

2024 Request for Letters of Interest

The 2024 Request for Letters of Interest received 38 total applications. This cycle included a Funding Vision rooted in our theory of change that community-based collaborations have the greatest potential to shift the local context and make progress toward the state postsecondary attainment goal. This vision prioritizes emerging or forming partnerships, credential completion-focused activities, and a concentration on adult learners. The 38 Letters of Interest received represented:¹

- 200 total organizations.²
- 34 of 39 counties across the state.
- \$11.9 million of requested funds.
- A wide range of proposed activities and awards amounts, including many that fall within the funding priorities.

The rigorous review of applications in this competitive process included more than twelve voices who evaluated Letters of Interest based on partnership function, community responsiveness, and the anticipated work's capacity to drive change.³

Regional Partnership Recommendations

The Washington Student Achievement Council is pleased to recommend funding to five regional partnerships as a result of the 2024 Request for Letters of Interest. In addition to investing in partners shifting the culture of college enrollment in their communities, our priority this year is to fund partnerships focused on adult learners, those seeking to advance credential completion in their communities, and partnerships at the earlier, emerging stages of their work.

The five partnerships presented here—which collectively represent more than 30 cross-sector organizations from 13 counties—exemplify strong alignment with our funding vision. The total amount requested across these five partnerships is approximately \$1.55 million over one year.

Regional Partnerships in 2024

Centro Cultural Mexicano |

King, Pierce, and Snohomish Counties | \$250,000

Partners: Cascadia College, Centro Cultural Mexicano, Latino Educational Training Institute (LETI), Mi Centro

The partnership will develop a report outlining the barriers that affect postsecondary enrollment and retention in Latino communities, with recommendations for future action. They will focus on Spanish-speaking learners who live in the Puget Sound area, including both rural and urban communities, and the assets that they bring to their respective postsecondary opportunities. This report will consist of a regional landscape study, community assessments, and data analysis to create a clearly defined, current understanding of postsecondary educational challenges facing Latino communities. The partnership will build shared understanding and alignment between community-based organizations (CBOs) and institutions of higher education.

Each partnership organization acts as a regional hub and an equal partner with deep trusted relationships in their community. They state, “Not only do our community members have lived experience in navigating these postsecondary education systems, but our organizations—the people who work to better our communities’ outcomes—also have our own lived experience as members of our Latino community. We are learning from a place of understanding and this partnership takes into account the very real challenges that face our communities.”

KEY



Adult learners



Emerging partnership



Credential completion

ELEVATE |

(Empowering Learners to Excel through Vocation Advancement, Training, and Education)

Snohomish County | \$288,420

Partners: Everett Community College, Evergreen Goodwill of Northwest Washington

The partnership will build on connections between the Job Training Center at Evergreen Goodwill of NW WA and the credential programs at Everett Community College to support adult learners in pursuing and completing a credential. They will evaluate Evergreen Goodwill Digital Skills and Job Readiness courses to find alignment with EvCC prerequisites and create a Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) process to award credits for individuals completing qualifying courses. Additionally, they will work to strengthen the on-campus culture that supports adult learners by dedicating campus space to support the adult learner community. This work is informed by the multitude of learner populations that they serve including refugees and asylees—many of whom come to their campus with previous credentials from their home countries. The partnership understands the wealth of experiences that adult learners bring to their continued learning and honors this value in their work. They state, “It doesn’t matter what land you were on when you got your credential, it counts.”

Regional Partnerships in 2024

The two primary organizations have a longstanding relationship, including previous efforts to develop CPL for high school graduation that stalled due to the pandemic. ELEVATE is representative of an emerging partnership that will recruit additional CBO partners from their broader community. This recruitment will occur on a strong foundation of community leaders who are embedded within the community they serve, which they will continue to reach, listen to, and engage with throughout their work.

Kitsap Strong |

Kitsap and Mason Counties | \$320,000

Partners: Bainbridge Island School District, Bremerton School District, Central Kitsap School District, Chief Kitsap Academy, Kitsap Community Resources, North Kitsap School District, North Mason School District, Olympic College, Olympic Educational Service District 114, South Kitsap School District

The partnership will increase enrollment and retention by deepening their trauma-informed, hope-centered systems change framework within the region, piloting an aligned Bridge opportunity with Olympic College, and expanding an aligned middle school Future Focused Summer Academy. Although this work with the Regional Challenge Grant includes ten targeted partners, Kitsap Strong's place-based, collective-impact partnership includes more than 110 organizations working to transform systems to improve the well-being and educational attainment of their community to alleviate generational poverty.

Kitsap Strong will continue to ground their work in data and the voices of their community. The Bridge opportunity will be designed intentionally with student voices to shape the process. These strategies builds on previous pilots, with an opportunity to take it to the next level with intentional integration with Olympic College. In particular, the design for the Hope Navigator Training is an effort to increase enrollment and retention, to train secondary school counselors, school advisors, local youth-serving CBOs, and outreach and advising staff at Olympic College to integrate a community of practice for Hope Navigators.

Olympic Peninsula Resource Co-Op |

Clallam and Jefferson Counties | \$447,819

Partners: Department of Social & Health Services, Olympic Angels (Human Services/Foster Community Non-Profit), Olympic Community of Health, Olympic Peninsula YMCA, Peninsula College, Serenity House (Homeless/Housing Services), United Way of Clallam County, West Sound STEM Network

The partnership will establish Resource Co-Ops (COnections and Opportunities) in Forks, Port Angeles, and Port Townsend. These one-stop shops will integrate access to housing, childcare, and transportation support services alongside financial aid, college enrollment, and advising resources. By addressing known factors that prevent adults from pursuing or re-engaging in degree programs, they seek to increase credential completion in their community.

Regional Partnerships in 2024

The partnership will meet learners where they live with a place-based approach to build trusted relationships rooted in liberatory design. This is directly reflected in their piloting of Co-Ops in DSHS offices and related efforts to increase connection with remote areas of the Peninsula like Forks, Washington. The partnership includes local organizations Serenity House and Olympic Angels, which have established trust with the variety of focal populations that they serve, including foster youth and persons experiencing homelessness.

Washington State University Native American Health Sciences | Chelan, Okanogan, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens, and Yakima Counties⁴ | \$247,615

Partners: The Coeur d'Alene Tribe, Community Colleges of Spokane, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, The Kalispel Tribe of Indians, Seattle Children's Hospital, Spokane Tribe of Indians, Washington State University NAHS, Yakama Nation

The partnership will coordinate K-12 and college-centered pathway programs in the health sciences for Indigenous youth and adults. This work is a direct reflection of requests by tribal elders and community members to support their youth in becoming healthcare workers who can in turn support their communities. The partnership is emerging and plans to develop aligned goals amongst cross-sector organizations to build, in their words, “true capacity in and with the community.”

The partnership includes multiple higher education institutions alongside community leaders, and together they are deeply embedded within their respective communities. They center their work with an approach to healthcare and medicine that honors its relationship with the land. Whereas WSU is located out of Spokane, the majority of this work will take place on tribal lands in Central and Eastern Washington. By centering trusted relationships in this work, the partnership is in a position to create change within education and healthcare systems.

¹ Submitted Letters of Interest from the 2024 LOI cycle [can be viewed online here](#).

² Including partnership organizations listed as duplicates.

³ For Council Members, please see the March and April RCG Council Memo for additional details about the process of reviewing Letters of Interest.

⁴ Washington State University Native American Health Sciences serves the tribal lands across our state that are within listed county lines, inclusive of the Spokane Tribe of Indians, The Coeur d'Alene Tribe, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, Yakama Nation, and The Kalispel Tribe of Indians.