



Regional Challenge Grant Update: Existing Partnerships

May 2024

Executive Summary

The Regional Challenge Grant seeks to continue investing in the first cohort of partnerships by increasing investment in one partnership and expanding the contract period for all eight partnerships through June 2025. This document includes additional information about existing partnerships. For additional details on the Regional Challenge Grant budget, please see the [2023 Legislative Report on Use of General Fund Monies](#).

Yakima Valley Partners for Education

Yakima County | \$405,780 over a 15-month period

35 total partners, including: College Success Foundation, Catholic Charities Housing, Central Washington University, Communities for Colleges, Communities in Schools, Eastern Washington University, El Conquistador, ESD 105, Fred Hutch Center, Granger High School, Heritage University, HU-Adalente STEM Program, KDNA Radio, Mabton School District, Mount Adams School District, Northwest Harvest, Nuestra Casa, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Peacekeepers Society, Safe Haven Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinic, Self Help Bank, Silvias Taxes, StriveTogether, Sunnyside School District, Taxes Y Mas, United Family Center, the University of Washington GEAR UP, West Valley School District, Yakima Neighborhood Health, Yakima Valley College

The Regional Challenge Grant seeks to increase the partnership investment size for Yakima Valley Partners for Education to support the implementation of three strategy areas:

1. Growth of the school-based approaches to shift the culture around a credential and catalyze students to pursue their desired postsecondary pathway
2. Expansions of trusted tax filing services, which support families in financial aid application completion
3. Added capacity for community leaders who are grounded in the partnership's approach to systems change.

This increased investment is reflective of the work undertaken in the initial granting period, which exceeds WSAC's expectations for an emerging partnership.^a In the first year, the partnership utilized a culturally responsive, multilingual approach to support students and, through this work:

- Connected 231 families with paid, trusted tax preparers to ensure families have the proactive tax step completed before filing a FAFSA or WASFA;

^a In alignment with the contract extension criteria.

- Served 1,080 warm meals at Community Conversations with Spanish-speaking community members, where families connected with local institutions of higher education and community-based organizations and received information about FAFSA/WASFA filing college and career programs;
- Implemented School-Based Approaches with local school districts and coordinated more than 16 college visits for more than 178 students to local, state, and national colleges to increase students' sense of belonging in a postsecondary environment;
- Through this work, Mabton School District increased FAFSA application filings by 10 percentage points, from 67% in 2022 to 77% in 2023.^b This increase reflects the intentional sequencing of tax filings, community conversations, and school-based approaches to catalyze student momentum toward their desired pathways.

Program Improvements and Existing Partnerships

As the Regional Challenge Grant develops, staff continue to align grant processes with WSAC's original vision to sustainably support place-based partnerships in their efforts to increase postsecondary attainment in their communities. To right-size the initial shorter-term grant timelines and align processes with the fiscal year and academic year, staff seeks to extend contract periods for the original partnership cohort at commensurate funding levels through June 30, 2025, and based on the completion of the extension process. These changes will enable staff to operate more efficiently and provide clear and consistent reporting timelines for partnerships.

Thus, the Regional Partnerships team has thoroughly reviewed the first 12 months of the initial cohort's partnership work to determine readiness for negotiated extensions through June 30, 2025. The criteria used in this process included:

- The partnership is making progress toward their goals alongside the communities they support and based on the partnership's ongoing learning.
- The partnership's approach to their work is aligned with the vision of WSAC's Regional Challenge Grant.^c
- The partnership is spending state funds as approved and outlined in the grant agreement.

For additional details on this process, please see the [Regional Partnerships Update](#) from the January 2024 Council Meeting and the [Fall 2023 Update](#) from the November 2023 Council Meeting.

^b Source: [WSAC FAFSA Completion Dashboard](#).

^c For more information about the Regional Challenge Grant vision, please read the 2023 Legislative Report.

Appendices

Appendix A: List of Partnership Organizations for Contract Extensions

Partnership Name	Contract Period
Chehalis School District	9/16/2024 – 6/30/2025
The City of Seattle, Department of Education and Early Learning	11/3/2024 – 6/30/2025
Foundation for Tacoma Students	9/23/2024 – 6/30/2025
Launch NW	9/3/2024 – 6/30/2025
Methow Valley School District	5/16/2024 – 6/30/2025
The STEM Foundation	3/14/2024 – 6/30/2025
United Way of the Blue Mountains	3/31/2024 – 6/30/2025
Yakima Valley Partners for Education	3/14/2024 – 6/30/2025