

Establishing the Regional Challenge Grant

Local Partnerships Leading the Way to
Advance Educational Outcomes in Washington

Legislative Report

October 2023



Preface

The Regional Challenge Grant program was created under the name Washington Career and College Pathways Innovation Challenge Program as part of RCW 28B.120.060.

Details on partnership strategies and regional context draw from several source documents submitted to the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) by the designated fiscal partner for each partnership. These materials include the initial Letter of Interest submitted in Fall 2022, the Intake Survey and Progress Report 1 as completed by Implementation grantees, and Progress Report check-in conversations with Partnership Formation grantees. In some instances, descriptive language is lightly revised from these source documents. This use of source documents reflects our concerted effort to preserve partnerships' voices and perspectives in our reporting.

Data for the partnership profiles draw from publicly-available files from the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and the U.S. Census American Community Survey Education Tabulation (ACS-ED), both of which are made available at the school district level. Shape files for maps are from Washington Geospatial Open Data; service region maps built in ArcGIS Desktop, with credit to the following sources: Esri, HERE, Garmin, OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS user community.

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Introduction

Washington’s north star for educational attainment is 70% of adults aged 25 to 44 with a postsecondary credential that can increase their likelihood of being employed and earning a family-sustaining wage. Though there are signs of improvement in postsecondary access throughout the state—benefited by increased state investments in financial aid programs that have expanded access for all Washingtonians, and especially those historically excluded from higher education—we remain too far from our goal. Even with some of the most generous financial aid in the nation, Washington’s FAFSA completion and direct to college enrollment rates have not kept pace with national trends or the state’s economic needs. Furthermore, with only 60% of adults aged 25 to 44 having earned a postsecondary credential, we remain nearly 10 percentage points from our postsecondary attainment goal.

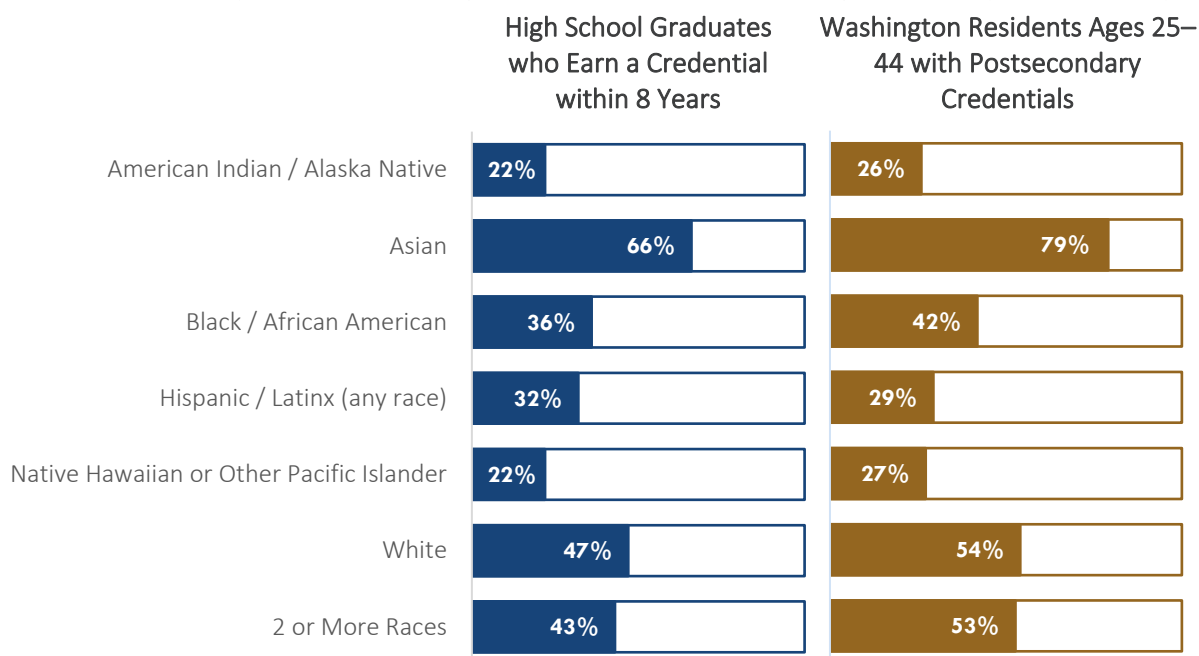
50%	45%	60%
of the high school Class of 2021 enrolled in a two- or four-year institution within a year of high school graduation ¹	of the high school Class of 2014 completed a postsecondary credential within 8 years of high school graduation	of adults aged 25-44 have a postsecondary credential—10 percentage points shy of Washington’s attainment goal ²

Nowhere is the need for advancing educational outcomes more pronounced than when examining statewide trends by race/ethnicity. Among 2021 high school graduates,³ only 33% of American Indian/Alaska Native high school graduates and 40% of Hispanic/Latinx students enroll in postsecondary programs within one year. Among Black high school graduates, the rate of immediate college enrollment is 55%—5 percentage points higher than the state average—but postsecondary completion rates within 8 years of high school graduation are 10 percentage points below the 45% state average. Completion rates are also more than ten percentage points lower than the state average for students who identify as American Indian, Hispanic/Latinx, and Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (Figure 1).

When disaggregated by race/ethnicity, postsecondary credential trends for adult Washingtonians mirror inequities seen at the K-12 level. Achieving 70% attainment for Washington’s American Indian/Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander, and Latinx populations will require increasing postsecondary attainment from current rates by over 40 percentage points—more than doubling current rates for these populations. Among the state’s Black population, achieving the statewide goal requires increasing educational attainment by over 25 percentage points. Longstanding underinvestment in communities of color and systemic exclusion of racially minoritized populations from educational opportunities have created and perpetuated these disparities in access and outcomes.

Structural barriers also impede access and outcomes for other underserved populations in the state, including: adult learners, youth in foster care, justice involved individuals, LGBTQ students, undocumented or DACA students, students experiencing homelessness, students receiving special education, and veteran learners. At the county level, postsecondary attainment ranges from a low of 21% to a high of nearly 60%, suggestive of geographic stratification that intersects with student identities to shape educational access.⁴ The end result is a set of geographic and systemic roadblocks that divert, misdirect, or fail to re-engage too many learners who could benefit from obtaining a postsecondary credential.

Figure 1. Postsecondary Attainment among HS Graduates and Residents Aged 25-44, by Race/Ethnicity



Source: Data on the proportion of high school graduates who earn a credential from ERDC’s High School Graduate Outcomes Dashboard for the high school graduating class of 2014. Credentials include certificates, associate degrees, and bachelor’s degrees; postsecondary credential attainment among Washington residents ages 25-44 calculated by WSAC staff from American Community Survey (ACS) PUMS 2021 1-year data. Data on educational attainment retrieved from ACS does not specify the number of adults who have a postsecondary certificate.

Mountain passes, bodies of water, and land use restrictions demarcate geographical and cultural boundaries. Within communities, the built environment and transportation infrastructure further influence students’ and families’ access to educational opportunity. Evolving perceptions of higher education intersect with the prevailing cultural context to shape each individual’s educational attainment decision calculus, which is itself far more complex than an abstracted estimation of lifetime earnings often used by higher education advocates to encourage postsecondary enrollment. A homogenous, top-down approach to state policymaking ignores this context and, in so doing, silences each community’s unique circumstances and diminishes their agency to determine how to best serve their population.

Washington State cannot reach its 70% attainment goal unless we identify and implement culturally relevant and regionally responsive solutions that expand access to postsecondary education and training opportunities, both for recent high school graduates and adults who have not completed a credential. The Regional Challenge Grant recognizes that our greatest chance of yielding systemic change in education requires that we center and uplift the strengths of communities in their collective efforts to improve educational outcomes for their students. The first cohort of Regional Challenge Grant partnerships know this implicitly, and their work demonstrates what can happen when states invest in communities so that they can invest in themselves.

The Regional Imperative, the Partnership Need

The individuals we seek to serve are most affected by the environment where they live, work and study, and it is their experiences on the ground, in the context in which they live, that must be changed if we are to create systemic change. Community-based collaborations have the greatest potential to change local context because they can accurately identify and implement localized strategies that are responsive to their community members' needs. Furthermore, by partnering together across sectors, local organizations and community leaders become jointly committed to changing the embedded status quo that has prevented members of their community from achieving their educational and career goals.

Regional partnerships are effective change agents because:

- They emerge from the needs of the community.
- They leverage the skills and strengths of partners from different sectors.
- They can target and personalize their community outreach to best support students and families.
- They can create localized feedback loops that respond to the community's changing needs.
- They can contribute to the strengthening of civic infrastructure by creating opportunities for students and families to address the community's education challenges together.⁵

If meaningful change begins at the local level, where structural barriers can be dismantled and individual trajectories can be shaped, then investing in regional partnerships can help the state progress towards its vision of equitable educational access and success for all Washington residents. The combined investment of state dollars and local resources offers regional partnerships much-needed capacity to shape student outcomes from a position of deep community knowledge, trust and needs.

What is the Regional Challenge Grant (RCG) Program?

Passed in 2022 with bipartisan support, Senate Bill 5789 established the Washington Career and College Pathways Innovative Challenge Program with a \$6 million initial investment in the first year and a \$16 million appropriation in the 2023-2025 Washington state biennium budget.⁶ The program awards competitive grants to existing and new community-based career and college pathways partnerships to increase postsecondary enrollment and completion rates and close opportunity gaps. SB 5789 provides direct financial support for cross-sector, regionally based partnerships whose work contributes to achieving the state's postsecondary attainment goal, especially for learners from populations historically underserved by higher education.

Since passage of SB 5789, WSAC staff have built the Regional Challenge Grant program, which allocated more than \$4.8 million in its first cycle. The program is built on the agency's engagement with Council members and diverse community members, including key voices from community-based organizations, higher education, K-12, workforce and labor, business, and industry groups. In total, more than 150 organizations have engaged with WSAC as staff designed the initial Request for Letters of Interest, nominated partnerships to the WSAC Council, and began to design the application cycle for 2024. This engagement has been and will continue to be integral to the agency's design of the RCG program.

How will we know that RCG's investments work?

Changing established patterns of individual and organizational behavior requires substantial investment of resources and time. RCG's model is predicated on the idea that shifts in local context will spur change in how individuals and families make decisions about their education. These individual-level changes in decision-making create ripples within individuals' communities. As educational decision-making begins to shift in communities, the effects are felt across the region and, when aggregated across all the regions served by RCG investments, can add up to increased postsecondary attainment statewide.

That said, we cannot wait for long-term results to conclude whether regional partnerships work. Students, families, and their communities benefit from an approach to evaluation grounded in ongoing learning into *how* partnership work affects community change for Washingtonians. By constantly learning from and about the communities in regions served by RCG partnerships, we create a feedback loop that prioritizes partnership responsiveness and continuous improvement. We commit to evaluating RCG's investments by pursuing learning in the following ways.

Lead with evidence-based strategies that center students and families.

RCG's vision begins with changing the context in which students and families make educational decisions. In practice, achieving this vision requires that strong partnerships implement effective strategies that advance outcomes for those furthest from educational justice.⁷ In RCG's first cohort of partnerships, these strategies include, among others, mentorship (DEEL and LaunchNW), two-generation models that emphasize early childhood education with long-term effects on educational attainment (Chehalis School District), and financial aid application assistance (Foundation for Tacoma Students).

Invite communities to partner in the research process.

To understand whether RCG investments lead to change in the regions served, we must listen to and learn from the communities of people whose lives intersect with partnerships' ongoing work. We will intentionally support partnerships in their efforts to design opportunities for learning that are community oriented and culturally responsive. This includes inviting partnerships and community members into the research process as contributors and co-owners, both during data collection and as we and RCG partnerships interpret the results.⁸

Design grant administration with implementation learning in mind.

Learning how the partnership works and how it implements its chosen strategies can offer invaluable context for subsequent evaluations of RCG's impact, and we want each step of the RCG granting process to be intentionally designed with this learning in mind. This includes gathering historical context from multiple perspectives across partner organizations, learning through visits to community events hosted by the partnerships, holding continuous check-ins that emphasize relationship building, and following up on these conversations to deepen our understanding of what situates each partnership's processes.

Identify short-term outcomes that capture each partnership's collective impact.

Our partners know which short-term outcomes best capture their capacity to advance their work. For this reason, each Implementation grantee worked with WSAC to co-design partnership-specific short-term outcomes. These outcomes center the population of students served by RCG investments; are intended to directly intersect with partners' existing work (i.e., already measured or, when new, will contribute to partnership-wide learning); and can be reasonably improved in a single academic year.

The 2024 report on RCG will feature implementation partners' preliminary data on short-term outcomes, as measured in the first full academic year encompassed by RCG investments (2023-24 AY). Partnerships will have the opportunity to iterate on these outcomes in collaboration with WSAC, so that the outcomes continue to reflect their understanding of their communities.

Maintain focus on systemic change by monitoring population-level outcomes.

At the start of each partnership's RCG award, we will identify baseline measures of high school graduation, direct to college enrollment, and college completion for school districts served by the RCG investment (see Appendix A for the first cohort's baselines). We will monitor these intermediate outcomes across time to capture whether there are observable population-level changes in these measures, overall and when disaggregated by race/ethnicity, income, or English Language Learner status.

Furthermore, RCG partnerships are implementing strategies that will increase postsecondary attainment through improvements in outcomes that extend beyond the high school to college enrollment pathway. Understanding how these strategies yield improvements in statewide postsecondary attainment will require that we expand the set of population-level outcomes we observe for RCG regions. These may include measures of Kindergarten readiness or re-entry of adult learners into postsecondary education.

Learn alongside partners in real time through a community of practice.

The RCG cohort of grantees will convene regularly alongside one another for the continuous cycle of reflection and action that is critical to changing state postsecondary attainment on the ground. WSAC believes that reflection and learning from those closest to communities is critical to understanding regional partnership needs and sharing equitable, sustainable, and effective methods with our state-level partners. The knowledge gained and networks created through deliberate cross-grantee learning will guide WSAC's approach to state level policy and systems change.

Sow the seeds of evaluation research to quantify the impact of regional work.

We are establishing reporting structures that, in several years, will allow for consideration of whether partnership work is associated with service region changes in long-term outcomes. Specifically, we are working with Implementation partnerships to track short-term outcomes for students and families served, so that they can ultimately observe whether improvements in short-term outcomes build toward improved long-term outcomes. These data, alongside the evidence accumulated through RCG's programming, become the foundation for potential outcome and impact evaluations of RCG's partnership-based investments.

Introducing the 2023 Regional Challenge Grant Cohort

WSAC received 80 Letters of Interest (LOIs) in response to its 2022 release of a Request for LOI. In total, the 80 applications requested more than \$69 million to support a wide array of regional partnerships advancing educational attainment across the state. After a thorough review, WSAC brought eight recommendations to the agency council—six in December 2022, and two additional in February 2023.

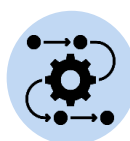
The inaugural cohort of the Regional Challenge Grant is a remarkable collection of eight partnerships comprised of more than 65 organizations. Though many of the organizations that comprise these partnerships have been active in their communities for years, this RCG investment marks the start of WSAC’s commitment to expanding their capacity and contributing to the development of their region’s civic infrastructure. These partnerships embody WSAC’s commitment to supporting regional collaborations as they shape innovative place-based approaches, follow best practices, leverage local and state investments, align with research and have the potential to scale around the state.

Partnership Formation Grants



Four partnerships received partnership formation grants, reflective of their early-stage work to understand local context, recruit new and retain existing partners across sectors, or explore potential strategies that serve community needs.

Implementation Grants



Four partnerships received implementation grants, reflective of their status as established partnerships that are testing, expanding, or scaling their strategies and increasing postsecondary attainment for focus populations.

In the profiles that follow, we introduce the inaugural cohort of partnership grantees. For Partnership Formation grantees, we describe the political, cultural, and social history that shapes each service region’s educational culture. For Implementation grantees, we detail the chosen strategies alongside the short-term outcomes each partnership identified for the 2023-24 academic year. We contextualize these descriptions with a high-level overview of each service region—the size and demographics of each partnership region’s total population and K-12 public school population.^a

To supplement these profiles, Appendix A includes data on high school graduation, postsecondary enrollment, and completion for each of the school districts included in the partnerships’ service regions. Where possible, these outcomes are disaggregated by race/ethnicity, participation in K-12 Free and Reduced Price Lunch (FRPL) programs, and English Language Learner status.

One in five Washingtonians lives in a region where an RCG partnership is advancing education

22%

of all Washington residents

18%

of all public K-12 students

19%

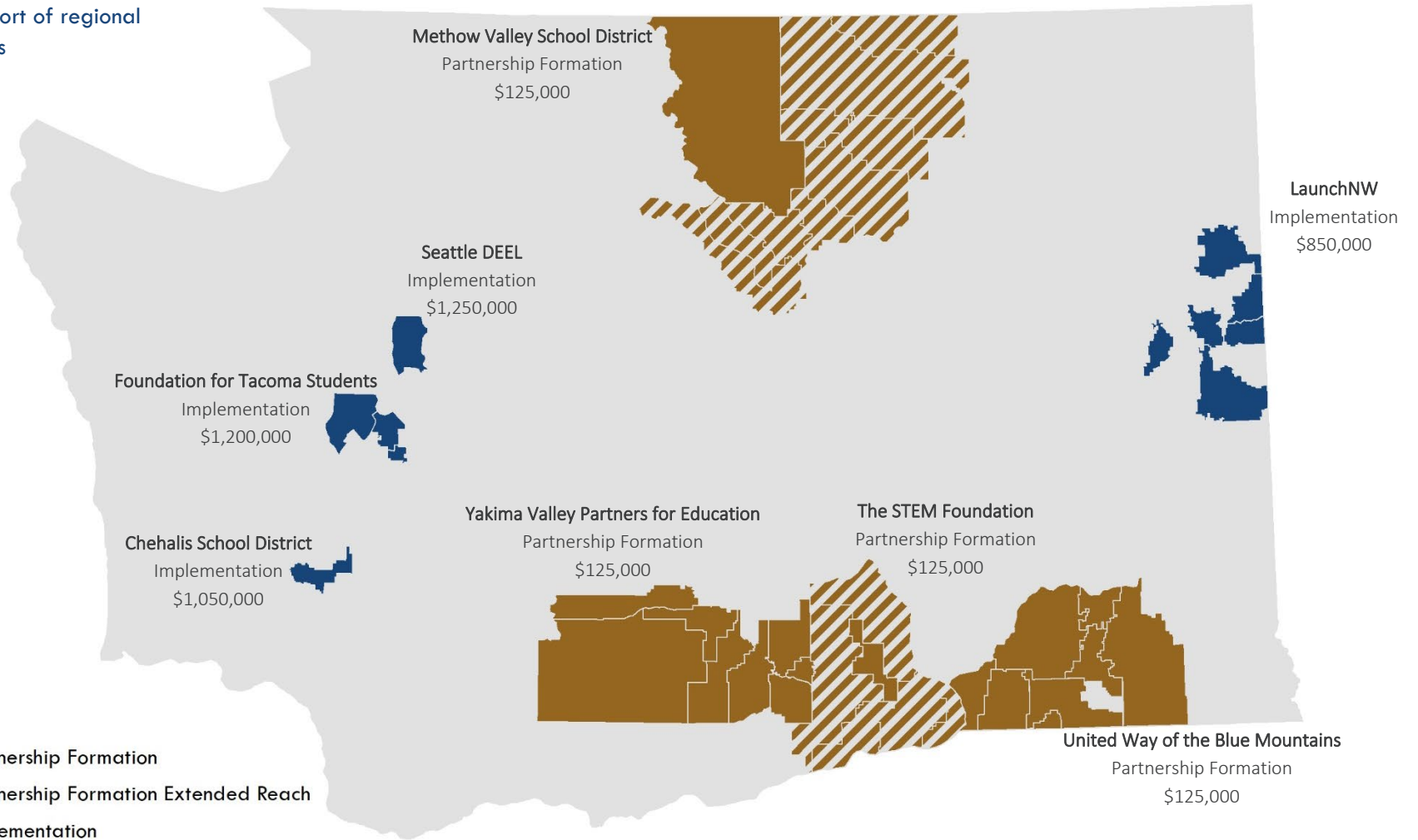
of residents aged 25+ with less than an associate degree

Sources: WSAC staff calculations of district-level data from ACS Education Tabulation (ACS-ED), state-level population and attainment data from ACS 2021 (5-year), and OSPI statewide enrollment data.

^a Names for partnerships are designated by the organization serving as fiscal agent for the grant. Partnership names may change in subsequent reports to better reflect the partnership-based nature of the investments. Furthermore, partnerships’ service regions may change to better reflect the geographic reach of each partnership’s ongoing work.

\$4.85 million

will be invested directly into the first cohort of regional partnerships

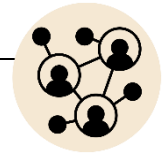


Data Sources: Washington State and Public School Districts shape files from Washington Geospatial Open Data (<https://geo.wa.gov/>).

Note: Hatched lines indicate the larger regions in which select partnerships are working to identify opportunities available to students and families in their primary service region. These regions are excluded from the calculations of RCG investments' population coverage on the preceding page.

Methow Valley School District

In partnership with Methow Valley Education Foundation, TwispWorks, Room One, Family Health Centers, and Western Washington University Sustainability Pathways



Methow Valley is a postsecondary education desert, where the nearest university is more than three hours away and even the nearest community college satellite campus requires a 30-mile drive over a mountain pass. Furthermore, the region has experienced a recent influx of wealthy, part-time residents while at the same time poverty among families with children has increased.⁹ This geographic and economic context necessarily shapes local students' educational journeys and creates a tension between coming and going: Students see that financial stability is most prevalent among residents who built careers outside the region, yet for many of the region's long-time residents, traveling outside the region for a postsecondary credential is neither financially feasible nor personally desirable.

Rather than message to students that they should enroll in a high-demand but far-from-home program because it will be worth the investment, Methow Valley and its partners have inverted the process, leading with career-based learning opportunities. They help students find local internships that demonstrate the value of a career path and the potential value-add of a related credential. Working in this place-based manner provides opportunities for students to thrive in the community they grew up in by pursuing jobs that pay a family-sustaining wage, fit their interests, and meet community needs.

The partnership is committed to supporting each student in their service region achieve their goals. Individualized career mapping helps students identify their strengths and talents and then build an educational program that leverages those strengths into wage-earning jobs that lead to upward mobility.¹⁰ By taking this approach, the partners can better understand the lived experience of each student and support them through the unique barriers they may face in the high school transition space.

Methow Valley School District and partners are focusing RCG-funded partnership formation efforts on:

- Formalizing existing partnerships and identifying potential new partners that can offer earn-to-learn opportunities for MVSD students
- Using the data systems being developed as part of the Washington STEM-sponsored High School to Postsecondary Project (H2P) to describe the region's post-high school opportunities, barriers, and attainment

Additionally, the partners are using braided funds to continue work in the following areas:

- Targeted alignment and connection of credential and dual credit opportunities in secondary CTE courses to connect with "earn to learn" apprenticeships
- Conduct secondary internship program review to develop a vision for internships, post high school planning curriculum, and High School and Beyond plans for MVSD graduating seniors

Methow Valley School District



Service Region

Students served are those enrolled in the Methow Valley School District. The partnership includes an increasing number of organizations based in the surrounding communities that can help students gain access to relevant post-high school opportunities aligned with their interests.

K-12 Student Population
755

Total Population
5,904

40%

of all students are eligible for Free and Reduced Price Lunch

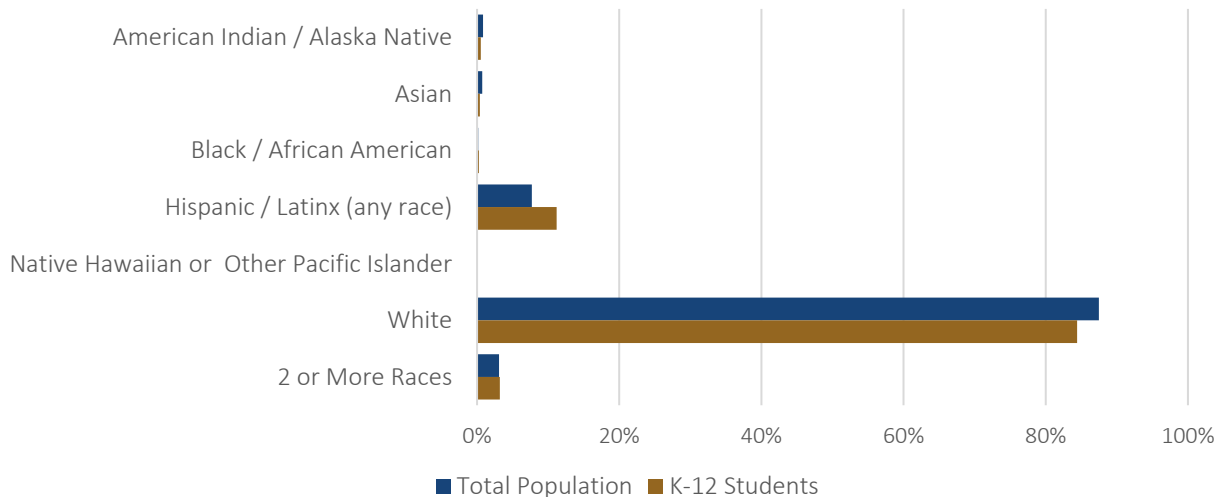
3%

of all students are English Language Learners

44%

of adults aged 25+ have no postsecondary credential

Service Region Racial/Ethnic Demographics, by Total Population and K-12 Students



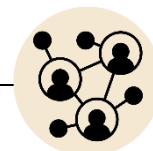
Data Sources: K-12 enrollment and student demographic data are calculated from OSPI’s Enrollment 2022-23 publicly available file; Data on population demographics calculated from ACS Education Tabulation (ACS-ED). Some other race category excluded from Total Population demographics due to small cell sizes and rounding. Numbers may not add to 100% due to rounding.

“Our one-on-one approach allows students to see school as a tool to add value to their lives, rather than an institution they have to move through.”

– Grant Storey, Career and Technical Education Director, Dual Credit and Technology Coordinator, MVSD

The STEM Foundation

In partnership with the Kiona-Benton City School District, Career Connect Southeast, Columbia Basin College, WSU Tri-Cities, The Rural Alliance, ESD-123 and the Tri-Tech Skills Center, WorkSource/TC Futures, TRIDEC (economic development), TC Chamber, Benton-Franklin Workforce Development Council, and Steward Leaders, LLC



Just 20 miles outside of the Tri-Cities, Benton City is a small, rural city experiencing pronounced economic distress. Median household income is below the state average, and more than 80 percent of students in the Kiona-Benton City (“Ki-Be”) school district are eligible for free or reduced price lunch. The region also has a large migrant farmworker presence, one which is mirrored in the Ki-Be school district’s demographics: A quarter of all K-12 students are English Language Learners, and seventeen percent belong to a migratory family (state average: 2 percent).¹¹ The region’s demographic composition necessitates an approach to increasing educational attainment that is uniquely attentive to the intersecting needs of rural, low-income, and migrant populations.

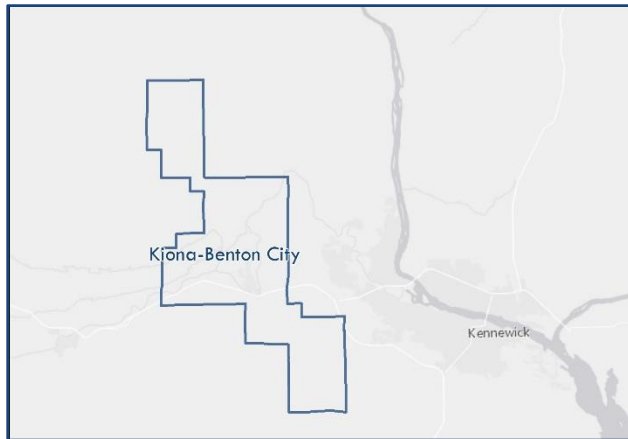
By taking a two-generation approach to their work, in which strategies and investments are deliberately designed to serve children’s and parents’ educational needs simultaneously,¹² the STEM Foundation and partners hope to remove barriers that prevent low-income students, migrant and undocumented students, as well as out-of-school youth, and their families from experiencing postsecondary education as a viable pathway. They are investing in trusted conversations that grow the regional culture surrounding the value of a credential among not just current K-12 students but their parents and family members, as well. At every instance, the partners are learning from the city’s trusted voices so that co-developed messages can be crafted with local communities’ cultures in mind.

The ultimate goal is to establish sustainable avenues for connecting residents of Benton City to the range of learning, job training, and career opportunities in both Benton City and the broader Tri-Cities region. The partnership will do so by bringing together a wide variety of cross-sector organizations, including those involved in regional business and economic development efforts.

The STEM Foundation’s partnership-formation work involves piloting a two-generational model of postsecondary to career pathways in a rural district, with the intention of scaling what works to neighboring districts.

The partners participating in this formation grant view their pilot as an intentional effort to identify how committed, trusted partners can build these pathways in a way that is faithful to a district’s culture while still expanding opportunity within the broader region. First-year partnership formation efforts will seek to build a culture of credential attainment for students and parents by:

- Identifying the structural barriers that contribute to the district’s low postsecondary attainment
- Connecting the region’s business community and sector intermediaries to Benton City’s community and education leaders
- Building a “platform” for connecting and communicating with Ki-Be’s families



Service Region

The partnership’s work centers on K-12 students and their families in the Kiona-Benton City (“Ki-Be”) school district. Partnership work to identify and capitalize on opportunities for Benton City students and families is occurring throughout the Tri-Cities metropolitan area where post-secondary and employment options are robust.

K-12 Student Population
1,409

Total Population
9,035

84%

of all students are eligible for Free and Reduced Price Lunch

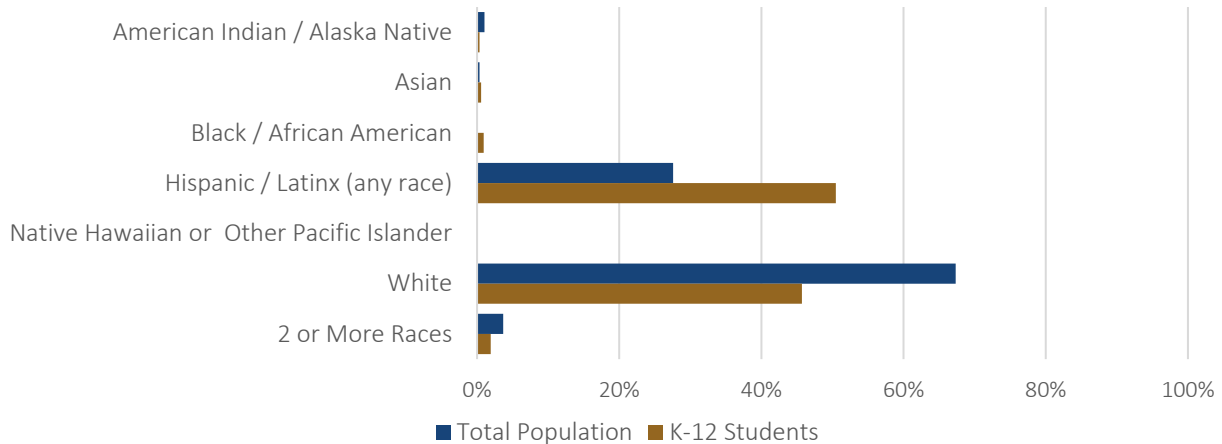
25%

of all students are English Language Learners

73%

of adults aged 25+ have no postsecondary credential

Service Region Racial/Ethnic Demographics, by Total Population and K-12 Students



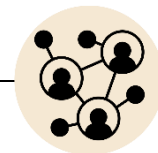
Data Sources: K-12 enrollment and student demographic data are calculated from OSPI’s Enrollment 2022-23 publicly available file; Data on population demographics calculated from ACS Education Tabulation (ACS-ED). Some other race category excluded from Total Population demographics due to small cell sizes and rounding. Numbers may not add to 100% due to rounding.

“It’s a 360° view. What are all the component pieces that would take a student and their family through early education, through a credential, and into a family wage job? We’re trying to bring representatives of those component pieces to the table together.”

– LuAnn Stokke, Senior Program Manager, The STEM Foundation

United Way of the Blue Mountains

In partnership with Elevate and Walla Walla Community College



The northern Blue Mountain region is the kind of place with deeply rooted cultural values of personal relationships and face-to-face conversations. And, since each of the communities in United Way of the Blue Mountain's (UWBM) Washington-based service region has its own culture, partnership formation work necessarily emphasizes gaining an understanding of and responding to these local differences. The nine school districts in the partnership's service region span the populous urban centers of Walla Walla and College Place as well as small rural districts, some of which are predominantly Hispanic/Latinx. Taking a cross-sector collective impact approach to learning how these within-region differences manifest in the educational culture and, critically, credential attainment is at the core of their RCG-funded work.

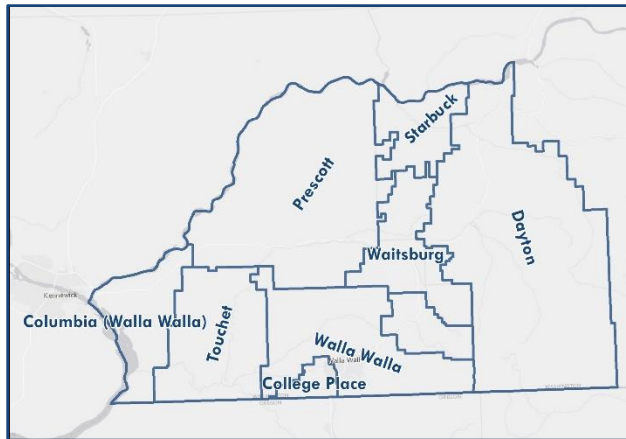
Invested in students from cradle to career, UWBM conducted a study in 2022 to better understand the early learning crisis in their region.¹³ The study found that for children under the age of five, 44% of them do not attend an early learning or care program. This study informed the partnership's call to action to increase the availability of and enrollment in affordable, high-quality early childhood care that is a critical need for the region. In addition to clarifying the need for expanded investments in early learning, the work on the study also situated UWBM to partner on investigations into the cultural context surrounding postsecondary attainment. Partners seek to holistically understand why a large percentage of high school students in their region forego or delay enrollment in postsecondary programs. This new area of work is a chance for partner organizations to break down siloes internally and within the community, leverage resources to increase the number of students enrolling in a postsecondary degree, credential or apprenticeship program, and co-design shared approaches to achieving common goals.

The partners' decision to begin with a research study is indicative of the care they take in understanding the needs of their community. The best example of this is the seeming disconnect between the amount of financial resources available to students and the low take-up of these same resources. It's more than financial concerns that cause potential students in the Blue Mountain region to forego postsecondary education, and a qualitative study provides an opportunity for the partnership to identify non-financial factors that influence students' postsecondary enrollment decisions. Furthermore, efforts to analyze, collect, and aggregate outcomes in small communities quickly stall when small sample sizes require data suppression or reveal wild variation in outcomes across years, or when the outcomes being measured are not those most relevant to the community.¹⁴ A qualitative study provides an opportunity to locally source data based on outcomes that matter to the community, then contextualize these data alongside aggregate data to surface the *why* and the *how might we change this*.

United Way Blue Mountain and partners are building capacity for future partnership-based work by completing a qualitative study on why individuals in the region choose to forgo postsecondary education.

The findings of the study will inform strategic action designed to increase postsecondary enrollment in the region, with district-specific strategies identified based on each district's unique needs and strengths. The partners can then leverage this evidence to inform action through a participatory planning process that is grounded in the collective impact model.

United Way of the Blue Mountains



Service Region

The partnership’s work centers on K-12 students and their families in eight Washington school districts: Columbia (Walla Walla), College Place, Dayton, Prescott, Starbuck, Touchet, Walla Walla, and Waitsburg. Because of the region’s economic integration with neighboring Oregon, the partnership also includes Oregon’s Milton Freewater School District in its designated service region (not pictured).

K-12 Student Population
9,520

Total Population
65,648

61%

of all students are eligible for Free and Reduced Price Lunch

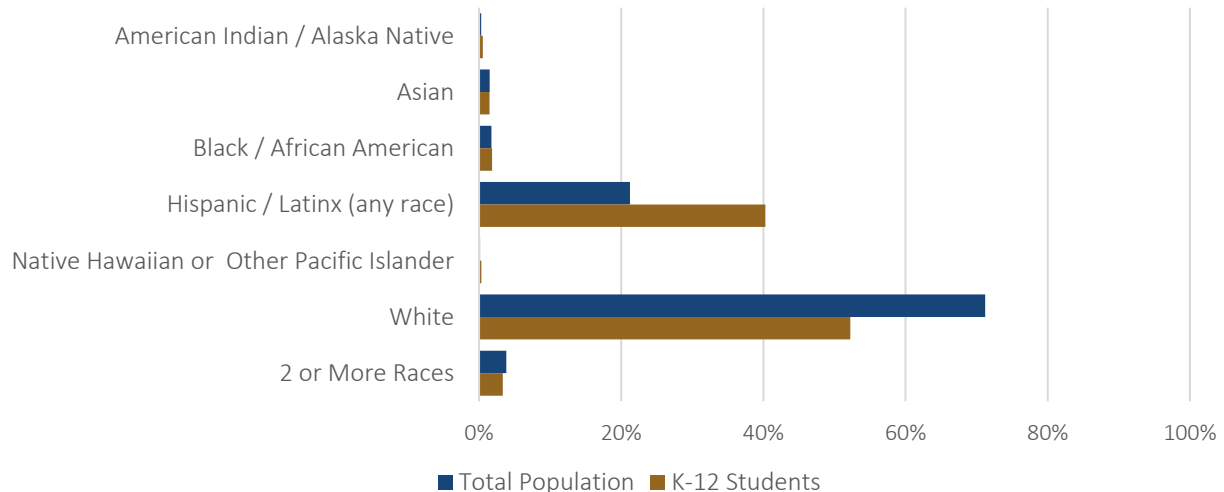
14%

of all students are English Language Learners

59%

of adults aged 25+ have no postsecondary credential

Service Region Racial/Ethnic Demographics, by Total Population and K-12 Students

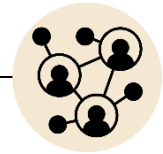


Data Sources: K-12 enrollment and student demographic data are calculated from OSPI’s Enrollment 2022-23 publicly available file; Data on population demographics calculated from ACS Education Tabulation (ACS-ED). Some other race category excluded from Total Population demographics due to small cell sizes and rounding. Numbers may not add to 100% due to rounding.

“We tailor our communication and our action according to our community.”

– Amanda Mount, Director of Policy and Advocacy, Elevate

Yakima Valley Partners for Education



A collaborative, cross-sector partnership with over of 20 members in a Collective Impact network with Nuestra Casa, Inspire Centers, Peacekeepers Society, Yakima Neighborhood Health, Catholic Charities Housing, Save the Children, UW Trio, UW GEAR Up, Save the Children Action Network, Mabton School District, Grandview School District, Granger School District, Sunnyside School District, League of Educated Voters, Heritage University, ESD-105, Yakima Valley College, Eastern Washington University, College Success Foundation, United Family Center, Raquel Crowley and Representative Chris Corry

Yakima Valley Partners for Education (YVPE) is comprised of 20 partners who began work in early 2020 committed to culturally responsive approaches to increase postsecondary attainment for students in their region. The partners seek to build community capacity so that families and students can receive culturally responsive high school and postsecondary support. They break bread with their community, reflective of their commitment to a multilingual and grassroots approach that centers community voices.

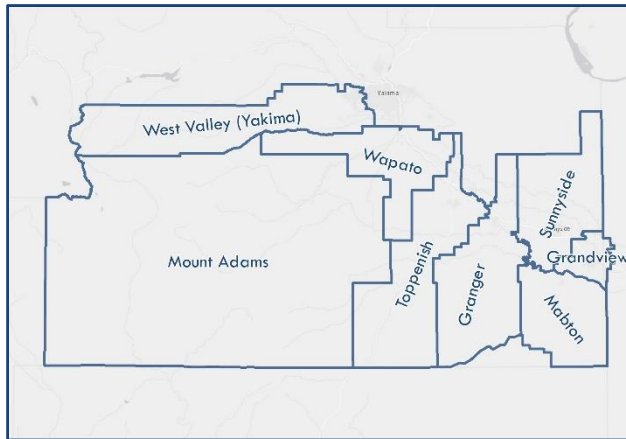
The partners' work takes place in rural settings and is intentionally designed with geography in mind. In the Lower Yakima Valley, where the majority of YVPE's work will occur, the presence of agriculture yields significant influence over families' lives and therefore YVPE's outreach efforts. When asparagus season begins in May, time becomes a family resource that is in limited supply, so YVPE adapts their outreach to fit within these constraints—meeting communities where and when they congregate.

The Mid-Valley partnership strategy is intentionally designed based on the strengths and needs of Yakama Nation's indigenous communities; it is Indigenous led and uses storytelling to learn the contours of students' educational journeys. The data dashboard for the region, designed in collaboration with EWU and which includes metrics chosen by the community, focuses on educational outcomes from cradle to career. In the Upper Yakima Valley, outreach will be directed at the district's Spanish speaking, often low-income families—populations of students for whom postsecondary attainment rates are below the district average. This includes community events conducted in Spanish and college visits that provide families with information responsive to their cultural context.

YVPE and its partners are pursuing school district-specific strategies to build community capacity.

- Grandview: YVPE will work in partnership with UW GEAR UP, United Family Center, YVC - Grandview to host community conversations around healthy transitions into college/career.
- Mabton: YVPE will host community conversations with parents and families. In partnership with WSU, GEAR UP, CAMP and additional migrant programs, they will coordinate college visits.¹⁵
- Sunnyside: YVPE will work with UW GEAR UP to close the gap on college outreach for special needs students who are currently underserved.
- Granger: YVPE will help provide meal and transportation support for a college visit for migrant, Spanish speaking families and is open to host a family night/field trip to Heritage University.
- Mid-Valley area: YVPE and Heritage University will co-host outreach for Native American families with a cultural approach that includes convening a student panel to lift the experiences of students, and helping families to complete the FAFSA/WASFA. YVPE will also provide support for a college site visit and meals to Mount Adams School District.
- West Valley: YVPE will co-host a community-based event for Spanish speaking families within the district boundaries, as well as a college visit to Central Washington University.

Yakima Valley Partners for Education



Service Region

The partnership’s work centers on K-12 students and their families in the Yakima Valley. Lower Valley school districts: Grandview, Mabton, Sunnyside, and Granger. The Mid-Valley service region includes the Yakama Nation Tribal School as well as the following three school districts: Toppenish, Wapato, and Mount Adams. Partners are also supporting Spanish-speaking students in the Upper Valley’s West Valley school district.

K12 Student Population
26,198

Total Population
114,193

79%

of all students are eligible for Free and Reduced Price Lunch

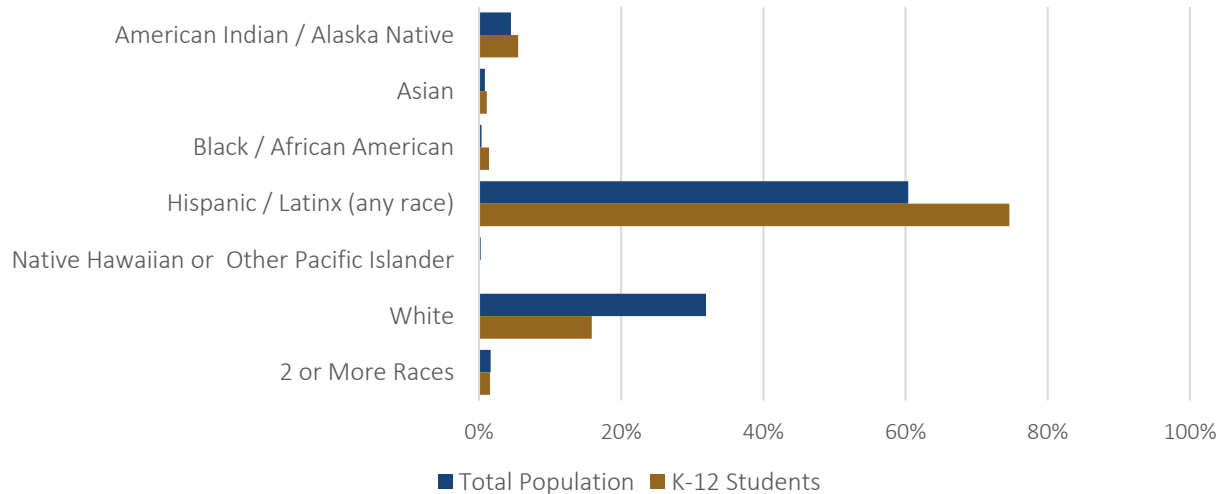
31%

of all students are English Language Learners

77%

of adults aged 25+ have no postsecondary credential

Service Region Racial/Ethnic Demographics, by Total Population and K-12 Students



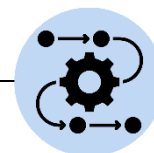
Data Sources: K-12 enrollment and student demographic data are calculated from OSPI’s Enrollment 2022-23 publicly available file; Data on population demographics calculated from ACS Education Tabulation (ACS-ED). Some other race category excluded from Total Population demographics due to small cell sizes and rounding. Numbers may not add to 100% due to rounding.

“We say in our work, we follow the energy, and when we follow the energy, people start seeing successes and they get excited. That’s how efficiency between partners is reached.”

– Suzy Diaz, Director of Collective Impact, YVPE

Chehalis School District

In partnership with The Chehalis Foundation, United Way of Lewis County, Centralia College, Summit Center, and The BERG Group



Chehalis, Washington—a name which reflects the historical peopling of the Chehalis River tribes in the region where the town sits¹⁶—has a history as a city in the commerce crossroads, located along the I-5 corridor halfway between Seattle and Portland. What was once a logging and railroad town¹⁷ is now working to counteract the causes and consequences of economic distress in its community. Nearly a quarter of families with school-aged children are eligible for food stamps,¹⁸ and K-12 attendance rates declined by more than 30 percentage points between 2019-20 and 2021-22.¹⁹ Chehalis School District seeks to reverse these trends, especially for the community's growing number of Hispanic/Latinx families.

By engaging with families through the entire PK-12 pathway—with dedicated coordinators and a comprehensive communications plan—the partnership's Cornerstone Program will take a two-generation approach to advancing educational attainment. The below strategies emphasize early childhood and K-8 awareness and preparation, a natural next step that expands on the community's remarkable success in connecting high school graduates with postsecondary credential programs²⁰ and contributes to building a local educational ecosystem that supports students and families across their educational lifespan.

Strategy #1: Hire a Children's Education and Career Coordinator to Build a College-Going Culture

The Children's Education and Career Coordinator is working with students and families to increase early educational awareness and expectations set by both the family and schools. This team member works with partners, including early learning centers, to provide support and education to enhance the college-going culture, targeting families whose parents have not yet earned post-secondary certifications.

Strategy #2: Hire a P-8 Family Engagement Coordinator to Leverage Parents' Influence²¹

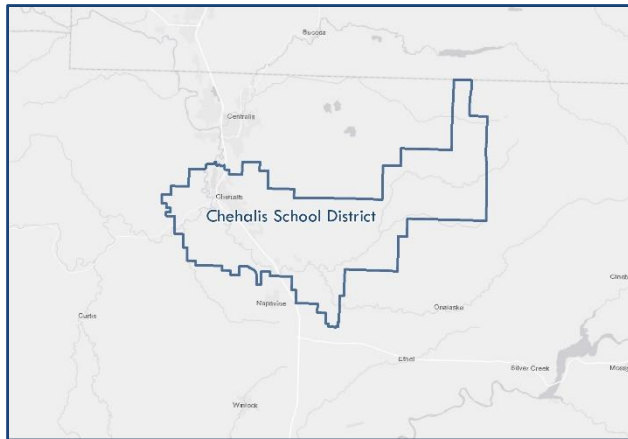
The school district will also hire a P-8 Family Engagement Coordinator who will facilitate communication and collaboration between the elementary and middle school. This coordinator, who will work directly with students and families, will be instrumental in removing barriers for families that have been historically marginalized in PK-12 education.

Strategy #3: Implement a Communications Campaign to Combat Information Asymmetries

The Cornerstone Program will create and distribute educational materials, organize events, and engage with the public through social media and traditional media to strengthen their community's collective awareness about the value of education and increase knowledge of educational opportunities. Communication outreach will target communities in the region that, due to structural barriers, receive more limited exposure to information about the potential benefits of educational attainment.

The Cornerstone Program anticipates that students and families served will experience increases in the following short-term outcomes: scholarship and FAFSA application rates, academic achievement, attendance rates, and Kindergarten readiness scores for students served; and postsecondary enrollment rates among parents without a postsecondary credential. The partnership will monitor these outcomes for families served, especially those in its target population of Hispanic/Latinx families, as well as low-income families, families experiencing homelessness, foster families, and those with students in special education or with 504 plans.

Chehalis School District



Service Region

Geographical boundaries of the Chehalis School District

K-12 Student Population
3,054

Total Population
16,772

51%

of all students are eligible for Free and Reduced Price Lunch

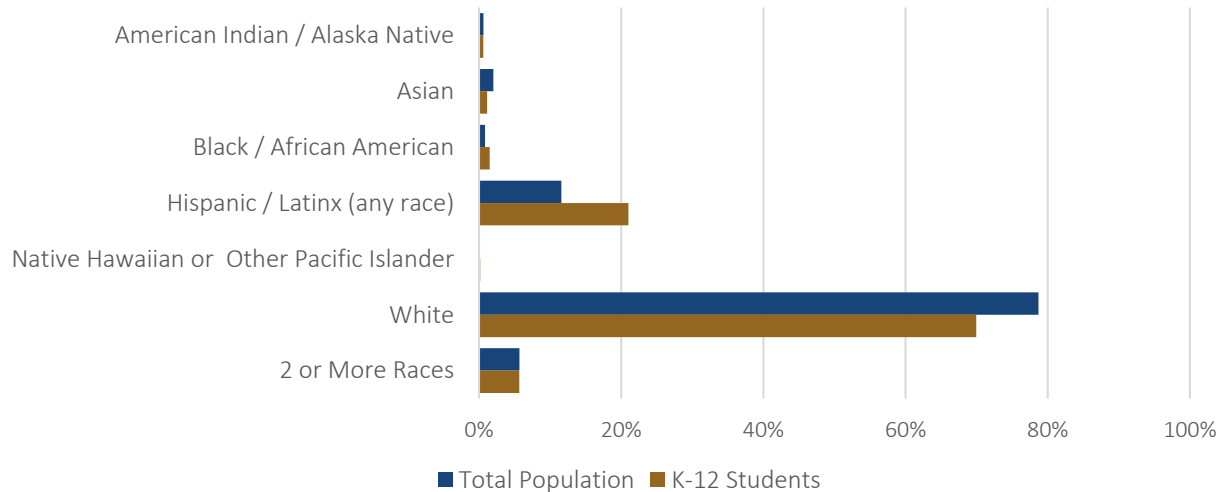
4%

of all students are English Language Learners

65%

of adults aged 25+ have no postsecondary credential

Service Region Racial/Ethnic Demographics, by Total Population and K-12 Students



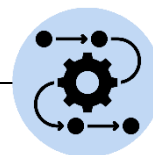
Data Sources: K-12 enrollment and student demographic data are calculated from OSPI’s Enrollment 2022-23 publicly available file; Data on population demographics calculated from ACS Education Tabulation (ACS-ED). Some other race category excluded from Total Population demographics due to small cell sizes and rounding. Numbers may not add to 100% due to rounding.

“Over the years we have learned, and national research supports, that for students to have high levels of achievement in high school and beyond, they must start with a strong foundation of skills acquired in their pre-school and elementary years.”

– Rick Goble, Executive Director of Student Achievement, Chehalis School District²²

City of Seattle's Department of Education and Early Learning

In partnership with Seattle Public Schools, Seattle Colleges, Seattle Promise, Empowering Youth and Families Outreach, El Centro de la Raza, Mentoring Urban Students and Teens, Brotherhood Initiative, Sisterhood Initiative, Project Baldwin, Technology Access Foundation, and Seattle Youth Employment Program



The City of Seattle sits on the historical lands of the Duwamish people. In present day, the city's economic and educational prosperity is complicated by the continued gentrification of historically Black and Brown communities. For youth and families living in these communities, the consequences are felt through rising housing costs,²³ the continued misalignment between student and teacher demographics,²⁴ and stark disparities in postsecondary attainment when examined by race/ethnicity.²⁵

The City of Seattle's Department of Education and Early Learning (DEEL) is leveraging the RCG investment to formalize the Seattle Postsecondary Success Network to provide coordinated wrap-around support for Black, Latinx, and Indigenous students from high school through their second year of postsecondary education. Embedded in this umbrella strategy are three related culturally specific and responsive efforts: the expansion of mentorship services; professional development for school staff; and expanded career-connected learning opportunities for high school juniors, as well as current and incoming students participating in the Seattle Promise scholarship.²⁶

Strategy #1: Provide Culturally Specific Responsive Mentorship to More BIPOC Students²⁷

Mentors from community-based organization partners Empowering Youth and Families Outreach (EYFO), El Centro de la Raza, and Mentoring Urban Students and Teens (M.U.S.T.) will take a case management approach to student mentorship, involving teachers, instructors, counselors, and Seattle Promise Outreach and Retention Specialists to ensure students' needs are holistically met. Project Baldwin, in connection with the Seattle Colleges, will provide similar support to Seattle Promise scholars.

Partners will monitor short-term outcomes related to college enrollment rates for BIPOC Seattle Promise applicants and fall-to-fall persistence rates for first-year scholars who receive mentorship.

Strategy #2: Support Culturally Specific Responsive Mentorship through Professional Development²⁸

Alongside DEEL and Seattle Public Schools, the Technology Access Foundation (TAF) will co-design and implement a professional development curriculum on culturally relevant college and career readiness.

Partners will monitor short-term outcomes related to Seattle Promise enrollment rates among BIPOC students at TAF supported high schools and asset-based measures focused on knowledge/confidence gained by staff to better support BIPOC students in college readiness awareness.

Strategy #3: Help Students Build Life-Long Career Aspirations through Career-Connected Learning²⁹

DEEL and the Seattle Youth Employment Program (SYEP) will collaborate to grow the number of paid opportunities for career-connected learning and internships available to BIPOC high school juniors and seniors, as well as BIPOC Seattle Promise scholars.

Partners anticipate increases in short-term outcomes related to the total number of BIPOC high school and Seattle Promise students who secure paid career connected learning opportunities, as well as these students' satisfaction with these experiences as it relates to their educational and career aspirations.

City of Seattle’s Department of Education and Early Learning



Service Region

Although DEEL serves the region encompassed by the geographical boundaries of Seattle Public Schools (as reflected in the below profile), organizations providing CSR Mentoring and PD are targeting their services within South Seattle schools with higher BIPOC student enrollment and where the disparity between teacher and student demographics is most pronounced.³⁰

K12 Student Population
51,474

Total Population
726,822

34%

of all students are eligible for Free and Reduced Price Lunch

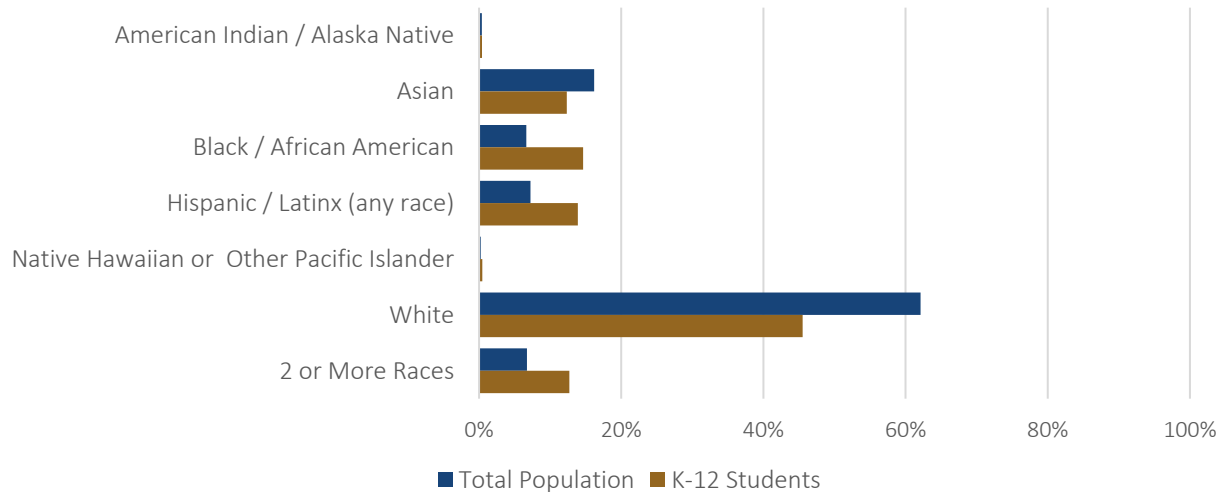
14%

of all students are English Language Learners

28%

of adults aged 25+ have no postsecondary credential

Service Region Racial/Ethnic Demographics, by Total Population and K-12 Students



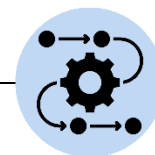
Data Sources: K-12 enrollment and student demographic data are calculated from OSPI’s Enrollment 2022-23 publicly available file; Data on population demographics calculated from ACS Education Tabulation (ACS-ED). Some other race category excluded from Total Population demographics due to small cell sizes and rounding. Numbers may not add to 100% due to rounding.

“A student who receives culturally specific mentorship and coordinated wrap-around support services from high school to postsecondary benefits from mentoring that dares to reinterpret marginalized identities and familial priorities as assets.”

– Brittany Ota-Malloy, Postsecondary Manager, Seattle DEEL

Foundation for Tacoma Students

In partnership with Tacoma Public Schools, Franklin Pierce School District, Peninsula School District (pending final agreement), Clover Park Technical College, Enhanced Prep, Northwest Education Access, Palmer Scholars, West Sound STEM Network, Workforce Central, and Pacific Lutheran University



Foundation for Tacoma Students (FFTS) partners with organizations and education providers across Pierce County—a region inclusive of the state’s third-largest city (Tacoma) as well as the footprint of Mount Rainier. Situated on Indigenous lands of the Puyallup, Nisqually, Squaxin, Steilacoom and Muckleshoot tribes,³¹ the county’s post-European settlement economic history is linked to the long-time presence of the timber, manufacturing, and shipping industries.³² In more recent decades, the region has experienced gentrification and an affordable housing shortage,³³ casting a spotlight on the importance of helping students and their families meet their basic needs so they can achieve their educational goals.³⁴

FFTS and its partners are targeting increased educational attainment through the expanded reach of two programs—What’s Next Senior Supports and Campaign Free Aid—that provide supports to students graduating high school. Embedded in these programs is an intentional effort to foster a greater sense of belonging for historically and perpetually marginalized and minoritized students in the region by providing greater access to mentors who share and reflect students’ identities and can offer support in their primary or preferred language.

Strategy #1: Administer the What’s Next Senior Supports Strategy

What’s Next Senior Supports leverages community-based organizations to respond to senior student needs with navigational and case management support. This strategy is built on the premise that a student who receives personalized guidance from a network of diverse mentors and professionals benefits from advice, resources, and support tailored to their specific needs and goals, which increases their ability to make informed postsecondary plans and choices. The initiative will survey senior students and coordinate a community response for individual students who request postsecondary planning and transition support.

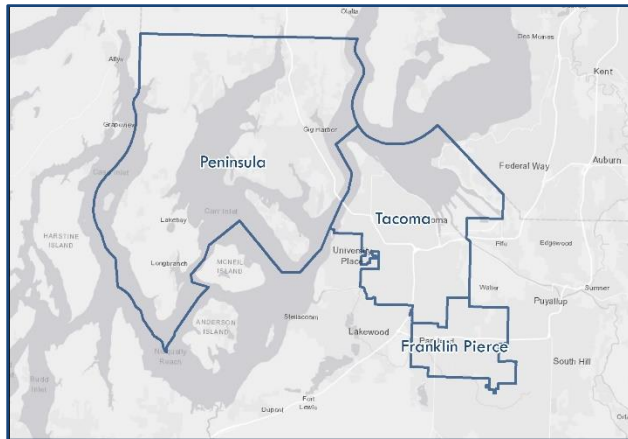
In the first year of RCG’s investments, FFTS and partners anticipate that the percentage and number of students seeking support and receiving referral within 48 hours of survey completion will increase. Furthermore, they anticipate that students who participate in the Senior Support process will file the FAFSA and enroll in college at higher rates than economically and demographically similar students who did not participate in the Senior Support process in the same academic year.

Strategy #2: Administer Campaign Free Aid³⁵

Campaign Free Aid is a multi-district strategy to increase Pierce County FAFSA/WASFA completion rates through community capacity building, with a focus on closing racial and income equity gaps. The campaign will involve financial aid completion events,³⁶ technical assistance and training for school district and community-based organization staff; tracking completion and managing student case referrals; and coordinated communications and marketing materials.

FFTS and partners will monitor year-over-year changes in FAFSA filing rates, district wide and among school and demographic sub-groups of interest, with baseline rates established during the 2023-24 AY. Partners anticipate that districts and students served by Campaign Free Aid will experience higher FAFSA filing rates, especially students of color and low-income students in the districts served.

Foundation for Tacoma Students



Service Region

In the 2023-24 AY, FFTS will provide supports to students and families who live in the boundaries of Tacoma Public Schools, Franklin Pierce School District and, pending final agreement, Peninsula School District. The partners intend to expand to an additional school district in Spring 2024.

K12 Student Population

45,000

Total Population

355,532

50%

of all students are eligible for Free and Reduced Price Lunch

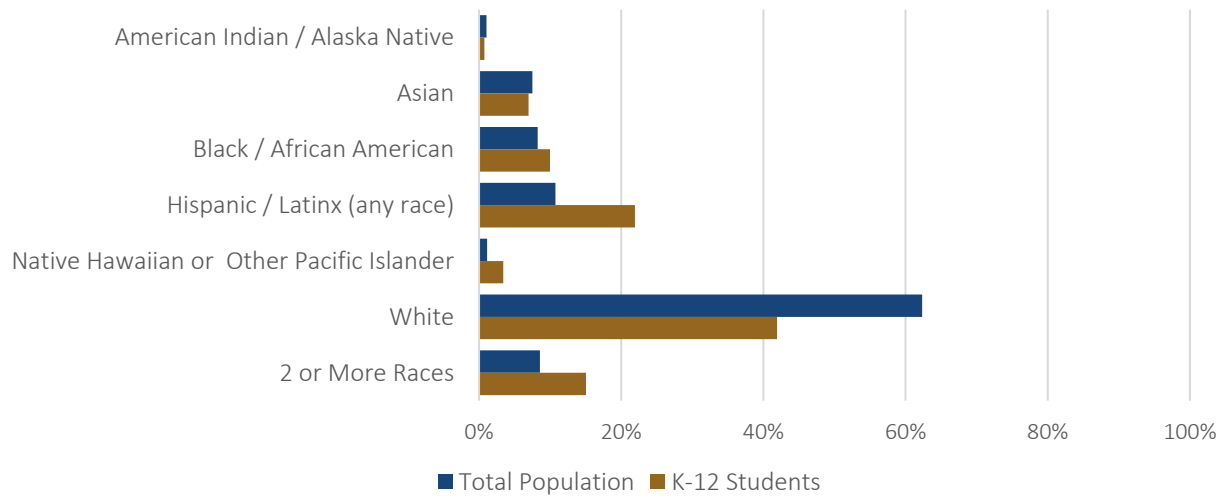
10%

of all students are English Language Learners

57%

of adults aged 25+ have no postsecondary credential

Service Region Racial/Ethnic Demographics, by Total Population and K-12 Students



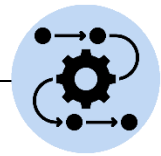
Data Sources: K-12 enrollment and student demographic data are calculated from OSPI’s Enrollment 2022-23 publicly available file; Data on population demographics calculated from ACS Education Tabulation (ACS-ED). Some other race category excluded from Total Population demographics due to small cell sizes and rounding. Numbers may not add to 100% due to rounding.

“We apply a model of collective action to bridge sectors and support systems in favor of kids.”

– Tafona Ervin, Executive Director, FFTS

LaunchNW

In partnership with NorthEast Washington ESD 101, Spokane Public Schools, Medical Lake School District, East Valley School District, Central Valley School District, Riverside School District, Eastern Washington University, Whitworth University, Gonzaga University, Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Inland Northwest, Communities in Schools, EPIC Mentoring program, Carl Maxey Center, Nuestras Raíces, Greater Spokane Incorporated, and Slingshot.



LaunchNW's RCG-supported work is taking place in Spokane County, located on the traditional homelands of the Spokane Tribe.³⁷ Spokane County is home to 12 school districts, ranging from small rural districts to large urban/suburban districts. Local residents face multiple challenges: Educational attainment on average is low and as a result, young adults are often not adequately prepared to join the workforce and earn a living wage; and poverty rates are high, with many residents struggling to afford a cost of living that has increased in recent years.

LaunchNW and the Innovia Foundation are partnering with CBOs and local universities to implement two strategies designed to support students in the Spokane region. The partners' RCG-funded strategies are designed to facilitate students' post-high school training/educational transition by fostering connections with trusted mentors, supporting their capacity to identify and connect their values to future training endeavors, and identify their strengths and how education/training aligns with these strengths.

Strategy #1: Implement the MPower Mentoring Program at Six Area High Schools

MPower, which emphasizes both college and career exploration, is available to all interested tenth and eleventh grade students in the pilot schools, but will focus on supporting students who are low-income, experiencing homelessness, as well as BIPOC and English language learning students and families. MPower will connect students with adult, college-attending near-peer, and college bound peer mentors who will provide encouragement, guidance, and support that is tailored to the academic, emotional, social, and financial needs of each student.³⁸ Parents involved in MPower will receive parent-to-parent mentorship.

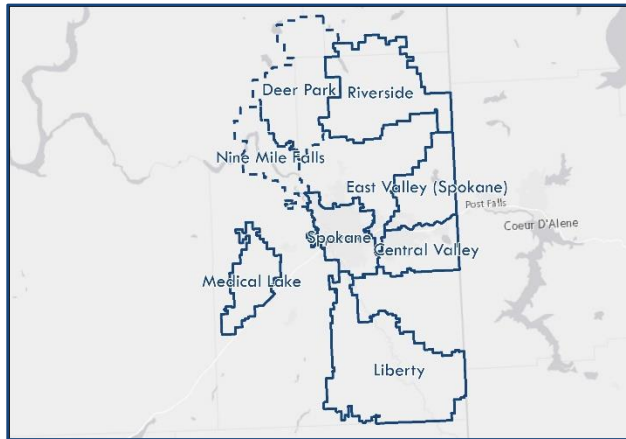
Site coordinators in the six high schools will bring together regional partners who can provide mentorship support, and will identify and place students with mentors. An integral part of MPower's implementation will include the recruitment of BIPOC mentors through partnerships with community-based organizations.³⁹

Strategy #2: Provide Career Exploration and Coaching to Spokane Students

This program will bring together Greater Spokane Incorporated and Spokane Public Schools to provide individualized career exploration and coaching in the mentorship centers established as part of MPower. This strategy is designed to fuel students' post high school dreams and aspirations.

Partners will monitor the following short-term outcomes for students served by MPower or who receive the career exploration and coaching support, including:

- Post high school program application and matriculation rates, FAFSA filing rates, and degree of alignment between students' stated goals as outlined in their High School and Beyond Plan
- Social and Emotional assessment scores, based on student responses to the Panorama survey administered in the fall and spring of each year



Service Region

The partnership’s work centers on K-12 students and their families in the following six Washington school districts: Central Valley, East Valley, Spokane Public Schools, Riverside, Medical Lake, and Liberty.

Additional work will occur in Nine Mile Falls and Deer Park school districts if capacity allows.⁴⁰

K-12 Student Population

51,847

55%

of all students are eligible for Free and Reduced Price Lunch

Total Population

386,344

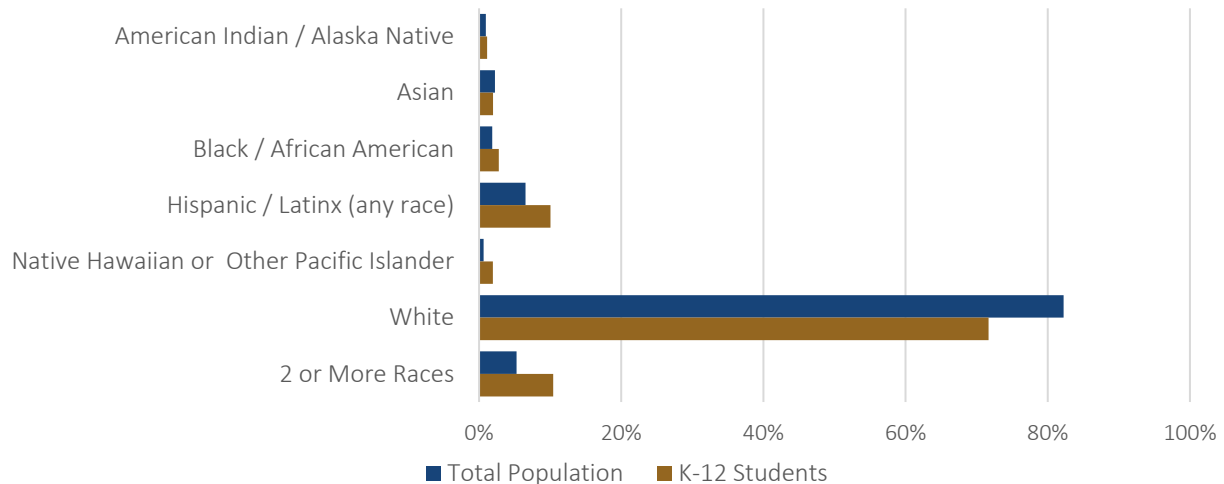
5%

of all students are English Language Learners

56%

of adults aged 25+ have no postsecondary credential

Service Region Racial/Ethnic Demographics, by Total Population and K-12 Students



Data Sources: K-12 enrollment and student demographic data are calculated from OSPI’s Enrollment 2022-23 publicly available file; Data on population demographics calculated from ACS Education Tabulation (ACS-ED). Some other race category excluded from Total Population demographics due to small cell sizes and rounding. Numbers may not add to 100% due to rounding.

“It is paramount for students—especially marginalized students—to have a community mentor in their corner with an outside perspective that can focus on connection and relationships.”

– Debra Raub, Executive Director, Communities in Schools Spokane and MPower Partner

RCG's Next Steps in 2024

A new request for Letters of Interest (LOI) will be released in January 2024. Additional details on the 2024 application cycle will be available in Fall 2023. Recommendations will be made in advance of the June 2024 WSAC Council meeting, with funding to partnerships beginning the new fiscal year. We anticipate that we will replicate this January-June application cycle in subsequent years.

The Regional Partnership team synthesized the collective geographic reach of the first RCG cohort, as well as the cohort's use of innovative strategies, cross-sector collaboration, and the student populations served. Based on this synthesis, we have identified two additional priorities for future grantmaking that align with RCG's directive: strategies aimed at supporting adult learners, and strategies focused on credential completion. Strategies that support adult learners' unique needs, strengths, and barriers improve the accessibility of educational opportunities for the 40% of adult Washingtonians without a postsecondary credential. Strategies that help postsecondary students reach credential completion are imperative complements to ongoing enrollment efforts and can help move the needle on statewide educational attainment. We encourage applications from all perspectives and regions in the state that clearly articulate promising strategies to address local needs and contribute to systemic change.

The RCG Budget Report will be submitted in December 2023. Next year's RCG legislative report will provide a preliminary look at Implementation partnerships' short-term outcomes. This report will also continue telling partnerships' stories using multiple forms of evidence that, together, amplify their work and demonstrate the value of regional partnerships in effecting change for students and families, their communities, and the regions in which they live.

Conclusion

The Regional Challenge Grant leverages the power of regional partnerships to help us improve the embedded status quo so that more Washingtonians can achieve their educational and career goals. We seek to learn together to better effect change because collective learning is more powerful than learning done in isolation. Through collective learning, we can build collective understanding for what it takes to create systemic change, and through that collective understanding, we can achieve statewide progress toward our goal of 70% postsecondary attainment.

This investment in regional work is just beginning, and the partnerships featured here share the common goal of achieving Washington's postsecondary attainment goal. They approach the work in regionally and culturally specific ways—and they will continue to adapt their work as the needs of their communities change. At the same time, many of these partnerships overlap in their approaches to partnership-based work and in the strategies they implement. These parallels across partnerships afford the state, K-12 schools, postsecondary institutions, and community organizations a rich opportunity to learn what it takes to effect change through place-based work.

Appendices

Appendix A: Educational Outcomes by Partnership Service Regions

Appendix A includes publicly available data at the district level for all school districts within each partnership’s service region for the key outcomes and student sub-groups identified in RCW 28B.120.060.⁴¹ Specifically, we identify district-level high school graduation rates, direct to college enrollment rates, and college completion rates overall and by race/ethnicity, FRPL status, and ELL program participation.

The data points included in this appendix establish baselines that can be used as the work of the RCG investments unfolds in the coming years. Of note, all data points included in this appendix are population-level outcomes for students enrolled in the K-12 service regions for each partnership. This use of school district boundaries to define service regions represents a preliminary delineation of region and will evolve differently for each partnership depending on their approach to RCG-funded work.

Although we include these district-level outcomes, we readily acknowledge that these data points tell only part of the stories that are unfolding in our partners’ service regions. The storytelling power of these data are limited not only due to the need for data suppression when sample sizes are small, but in their capacity to holistically capture students’ identities and experiences. Adult learners, families served by dual generation strategies, and learners who forego direct enrollment into college after high school are not captured by these measures. As RCG evolves, we may expand the set of population-level outcomes to capture the potential effects of strategies aimed at learner populations beyond those in the K-12 system.

Furthermore, the limitations of population-level outcomes motivate the co-creation of short-term outcomes alongside our Implementation grantees. Whereas we expect that population-level outcomes will change slowly over time as work scales, short-term outcomes chosen based on the partners’ understanding of their strategies and the students served are a more immediate barometer of how students’ and families’ day-to-day educational experiences are evolving because of RCG investments.

Appendix B. Summary of Partnership Payments through August 31, 2023

WSAC has processed \$2,721,000 in payments to the eight partnerships selected during the 2022 LOI cycle. Remaining payments will be made to partnerships based on the payment schedules outlined in their grant agreements and upon satisfactory completion of reporting milestones. The December 2023 Budget Report will include additional details on grant spending to date.

Partnership	Amount Received to Date	Percent of Total Payments to Date
Methow Valley School District	\$63,000	2.3%
The STEM Foundation	\$63,000	2.3%
United Way of the Blue Mountains	\$63,000	2.3%
Yakima Valley Partners for Education	\$63,000	2.3%
Chehalis School District	\$550,000	20%
City of Seattle’s DEEL	\$819,000	30%
Foundation for Tacoma Students	\$650,000	24%
LaunchNW	\$450,000	17%
<i>Total</i>	<i>\$2,721,000</i>	<i>100%</i>

Note: Percentages do not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Additional Appendices

- Appendix C. [Washington Student Achievement Council 2024 Strategic Action Plan](#)
- Appendix D. [June 2023 Regional Partnership Strategic Update for WSAC Council Meeting](#)
- Appendix E. [February 2023 Recommendations Submitted to the WSAC Council](#)
- Appendix F. [December 2022 Recommendations Submitted to the WSAC Council](#)
- Appendix G. [December 2022 Regional Challenge Grant Overview Submitted to the WSAC Council](#)
- Appendix H. [December 2022 Legislative Report on Expenditures](#)
- Appendix I. [2022 Request for Letters of Interest](#)

Endnotes

- ¹ Kwakye, I. & Lacalli, E., (March 2023). *Postsecondary Enrollment Trends: Fewer Washington High School Graduates in the Classes of 2020 and 2021 Enrolled Directly in Postsecondary Education*. Washington Student Achievement Council. <https://wsac.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2023.03.09.ResearchSpotlight.DirectEnrollment.pdf>
- ² Washington Student Achievement Council (August 2023). *2024 Strategic Action Plan* [Draft submitted to Council for approval]. <https://wsac.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2023-08-31-0341-SAP.pdf>
- ³ ERDC. (February 2023). *High School Graduate Outcomes* [Dashboard]. See: First Year Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity. <https://erdc.wa.gov/data-dashboards/high-school-graduate-outcomes>
- ⁴ See Appendix A in Kwakye, I., Kibort-Crocker, E., & Pasion, S. (October 2020). *Equity Landscape Report: Exploring Equity Gaps in Washington Postsecondary Education*. Washington Student Achievement Council. <https://wsac.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2020-10-20-Report-Equity-Landscape.pdf>
- ⁵ Scholars Nabatchi and Leighninger define civic infrastructure as “the laws, processes, institutions, and associations that support regular opportunities for people to connect with each other, solve problems, make decisions, and celebrate community” (pg. 6). Nabatchi, T. & Leighninger, M. (2015). *Public Participation for 21st Century Democracy*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- ⁶ See SB 5187 from the 2023 Regular Session (pg. 628): <https://lawfilesexternal.wa.gov/biennium/2023-24/Pdf/Bills/Senate%20Passed%20Legislature/5187-S.PL.pdf?q=20230516172937>
- ⁷ Kwakye, I. & Oliver, D. (December 2021). *Improving Postsecondary Access: Washington Career and College Pathways Innovation Challenge Program*. Washington Student Achievement Council <https://wsac.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2021-12-Innovation-Challenge-Brief.pdf>
- ⁸ We are indebted to Chicago Beyond for demonstrating how researchers and funders can address power inequities in the research process. Chicago Beyond. (2019). *Why am I always being researched? A guidebook for community organizations, researchers, and funders to help us get from insufficient understanding to more authentic truth*. Equity Series, Volume 1. <https://chicagobeyond.org/researchequity/>
- ⁹ Tate-Libby, J. (October 2021). *Comprehensive Economic Study of the Methow Valley*. TwispWorks. <https://methowconservancy.org/state-of-the-methow/socio-economics-and-human-demographics>
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- ¹⁵ Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) offers state or partnership grants to increase the number of low-income students in high-poverty middle and high schools that are successfully prepared for postsecondary education. For more on Washington State’s GEAR UP program, see <https://gearup.wa.gov/>. The Washington Supplemental Grant for College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) supports students from among the migrant and seasonal farmworker population. CAMP funding is paid to colleges to provide direct student services. For more on Washington State’s CAMP program, see <https://wsac.wa.gov/college-assistance-migrant-program>.
- ¹⁶ See the Territories page for the Sq’wáyáíqtmš (Chehalis) on Native Land Digital’s Native Land app: <https://native-land.ca/maps/territories/chehalis/>
- ¹⁷ See the history of Chehalis published online by the City of Chehalis: https://www.ci.chehalis.wa.us/sites/default/files/fileattachments/Chehalis%20History%20on-line_0.pdf
- ¹⁸ See the ACS-ED District Demographic Dashboard 2017–21 for Chehalis School District: <https://nces.ed.gov/Programs/Edge/ACSDashboard/5301170>

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²³ BERK. (April 2021). *City of Seattle: Market rate housing needs and supply analysis*.

<https://www.seattle.gov/documents/Departments/OPCD/OngoingInitiatives/HousingChoices/SeattleMarketRateHousingNeedsAndSupplyAnalysis2021.pdf>

²⁴ Based on OSPI's Washington State Report Card data for Seattle Public Schools, 45% of students in 2022-23 identify as White, compared to 78% of teachers in 2021-22.

<https://washingtonstatereportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/ReportCard/ViewSchoolOrDistrict/100229>

²⁵ Among 2014 high school graduates in the district, 61% of Black/African American students and 62% of Hispanic/Latinx students had not earned a postsecondary credential eight years later, compared to 36% of White students. See ERDC's High School Graduate Outcomes Dashboard for Seattle Public Schools: <https://erdc.wa.gov/data-dashboards/high-school-graduate-outcomes>

²⁶ Seattle Promise is a scholarship and support program that provides tuition and supports for graduates of Seattle public high schools who enroll at a Seattle College campus. For more on the program, see: <https://www.seattlecolleges.edu/promise>

²⁷ Students who received culturally relevant mentorship report increased development of academic skills: Haeger, H., & Fresquez, C. (2016). Mentoring for inclusion: The impact of mentoring on undergraduate researchers in the sciences. *CBE—Life Sciences Education*, 15(3), ar36. An evaluation of a mentorship program for research faculty found that the program, which trained mentees to provide more culturally responsive mentorship, positively affected both mentees' and mentors' experiences: Pfund, C., Sancheznieto, F., Byars-Winston, A., Zárate, S., Black, S., Birren, B., Rogers, J. & Asai, D. J. (2022). Evaluation of a culturally responsive mentorship education program for the advisers of Howard Hughes Medical Institute Gilliam Program graduate students. *CBE—Life Sciences Education*, 21(3), ar50.

²⁸ Comstock, M., Litke, E., Hill, K. L., & Desimone, L. M. (2023). A Culturally Responsive Disposition: How Professional Learning and Teachers' Beliefs About and Self-Efficacy for Culturally Responsive Teaching Relate to Instruction. *AERA Open*, 9. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23328584221140092>.

²⁹ J-PAL Evidence Review. (2022). *The Promises of Summer Youth Employment Programs: Lessons from Randomized Evaluations*. Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab. https://www.povertyactionlab.org/sites/default/files/publication/SYEP_Evidence_Review-9.22.22.pdf

³⁰ In South Seattle schools, only 22% of students identify as White, whereas 28% of students identify as Black/African American, 21% identify as Asian, 17% as Hispanic/Latinx and 10% as multiracial. In contrast, 69% of teachers in South Seattle identify as White. For detailed demographics of students and teachers in South Seattle schools, see Road Map Project's Data Dashboard: <https://roadmapproject.org/data-dashboard/#our-students-teachers>.

³¹ For a map of tribal territories in the Pierce County area, see Native Land Digital's Native Land app: <https://native-land.ca/>

³² Becker, P. (November 2006). *Pierce County – Thumbnail History*. History Link. <https://www.historylink.org/file/8001>

³³ Pierce County. (August 2021). *Affordable housing recommendations*.

<https://www.piercecountywa.gov/DocumentCenter/View/113643/Affordable-Housing-Workgroup-Recommendations-FINAL>

³⁴ For additional detail on basic needs security among Washington's college students, including by region, see: Washington Student Achievement Council. (2023). *Basic Needs Security Among Washington College Students*. <https://wsac.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2023.BasicNeedsReport.pdf>

³⁵ An analysis of a nationally longitudinal dataset found a positive correlation between FAFSA completion and postsecondary enrollment in the fall after high school graduation overall and within income quintiles: DeBaun, B. (April 4, 2019). *Survey data strengthen association between FAFSA completion and enrollment*. National College Attainment Network. <https://www.ncan.org/news/news.asp?id=456025>

³⁶ For evidence of the positive effects of direct assistance with FAFSA completion on college enrollment, see Bettinger, E. P., Long, B. T., Oreopoulos, P., & Sanbonmatsu, L. (2012). The Role of Application Assistance and Information in College Decisions: Results from the H&R Block FAFSA Experiment. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 127(3), 1205–1242. *JSTOR*.

³⁷ For a map of tribal territories in the Spokane County area, see Native Land Digital's Native Land app: <https://native-land.ca/>

³⁸ One successful pre-college program geared toward Latinx and low-income high school students utilized a near-peer model by hiring college students to aid high schoolers in the college application and enrollment processes. The study showed positive effects on postsecondary enrollment for Latinx students in the program: Bettinger, E. P., & Evans, B. J. (2019). College Guidance for All: A Randomized Experiment in Pre-College Advising. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 38(3), 579–599. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pam.22133>

³⁹ Research shows that students taught by same-race teachers perform better on assessments and have more positive perceptions of their teachers. In the long-term, students who have even one same-race teacher in their elementary years have been shown to be less likely to drop out of high school and more likely to enroll in college: Gershenson, S., Hart, C., Hyman, J., Lindsay, C. A., & Papageorge, N. W. (2022). The long-run impacts of same-race teachers. *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy*, 14(4), 300-342. DOI: 10.1257/pol.20190573

⁴⁰ Both school districts are excluded from the calculation of K-12 student and total population demographics for the partnership's service region.

⁴¹ See also SB 5789: <https://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=28B.120.060>

About the Washington Student Achievement Council

The Washington Student Achievement Council is committed to increasing educational opportunities and attainment in Washington. The Council has three main functions:

- Lead statewide strategic planning to increase educational attainment.
- Administer programs that help people access and pay for college.
- Advocate for the economic, social, and civic benefits of higher education.

The Council has ten members. Four members represent each of Washington's major education sectors: four-year public baccalaureates, four-year private colleges, public community and technical colleges, and K-12 public schools. Six are citizen members, including two current students (one graduate student and one undergraduate student).

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