

**Partnership Name: Building Futures Through Pre-Apprenticeship Training**

**Application Point of Contact: Donna Romanick**

**Fiscal Agent: Boys & Girls Clubs of King County**

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Applicants must submit the [Letter of Interest Submission Form](#) and upload to the form a Letter of Interest as a PDF attachment **no later than February 16, 2024 by 11:59PM Pacific Time**. To ensure formatting aligns with the below guidelines, we encourage applicants to make use of this Letter of Interest template.

A Letter of Interest must adhere to the following guidelines:

- No more than five pages in total length, excluding the cover page
- Cover page identifies:
  - o Partnership name (If applicable)
  - o Application point of contact
  - o Name of the organization that will act as fiscal agent
- All bolded questions are numbered and answered serially (see pgs. 6-8 in the Request for Letters of Interest)
- Responses are single spaced in Times New Roman 11-point font

**Note:** All LOIs submitted to WSAC will be publicly available on the WSAC website in advance of the recommendations made to Council (est. May 2024).

**1. Why are the partner organizations that are or will be included in this work the ones that came together to address educational attainment through place-based work in your region?**

YouthForce is Boys & Girls Clubs of King County’s (BGCKC) teen employment program offering a unique approach to workforce readiness by providing teens with employment opportunities and career development workshops while creating rewarding employment solutions for local businesses. YouthForce is partnering with the Federal Way School District, Washington’s Construction Center of Excellence and Sound Transit to build a pipeline of talent to construction pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeship opportunities. YouthForce’s role will encompass college and career readiness workshops such as college explorations, application/essay writing, & financial aid & scholarships; provide workforce development trainings such as Basic Work Skills, resume writing, financial literacy and wrap-around services.

The Federal Way Public Schools (FWPS) will be the main resource of students and facilities (schools) with College and Career Readiness (CCR) and Career Technical Education (CTE) staff. FWPS is dedicated to every scholar’s academic success and is committed to making each classroom an environment where scholars are engaged, supported, and challenged academically. For this project, we will partner specifically with the Federal Way High School’s Office of Equity Native Education Program and CCR and CTE programs to identify youth who are not on track for post-secondary education or career training.

These disparities in educational achievement begin in the early grades and continue throughout the educational pipeline, with 74 percent of AI/AN students graduating from public high schools compared with the national average of 85 percent. Even though the number of AI/AN students enrolling in postsecondary institutions is increasing, they remain the most underrepresented group in higher education and are the least likely to earn a bachelor’s degree. In fact, about one out of every three AI/AN students enrolled in postsecondary education will complete a bachelor’s degree (NCES, n.d.b). Many of those who enroll and do not complete often return to communities with three times the average poverty rate of White communities, struggling to repay debts incurred during their first entry into postsecondary education. This loss is amplified in tribal communities that need college-educated professionals who will contribute to the well-being and sustainability of their sovereign nations. YouthForce will hold the lead role and act as the primary manager and convener of partners for this program. YouthForce will partner with Sound Transit, Federal Way Public Schools, and WA State Construction Center of Excellence to develop an apprenticeship prep program to be offered for high school students in Federal Way. The apprenticeship prep program will be designed to prepare students for careers in construction that align with long-term career opportunities in King County and across Washington State. YouthForce, with the support of Sound Transit, will identify industry partners leading in apprenticeship training programs with whom to partner as employers for program graduates. Creating a robust and comprehensive curriculum is a pivotal step in preparing young individuals for successful careers in the construction industry. A well-designed curriculum is the backbone of any successful educational program. It provides structure, guidance, and a clear path for learning and skill development. Washington’s Construction Center of Excellence will support the development of the curriculum as it employs innovative delivery of educational strategies to build a diverse and competitive workforce. This partnership will leverage its statewide network to connect schools, businesses, industry, and labor for the purpose of creating a highly skilled and readily available workforce critical to the success of the industries driving the state’s economy and supporting Washington families.

**2. How is or will the partnership be structured?**

YouthForce will take the lead, with support from industry partners, in identifying a training space suitable for a construction-industry preparatory program that is also accessible for Federal Way school students and employer partners. YouthForce will track and report all progress toward the apprenticeship prep program development including expenditures, program development, community partnerships, and industry partnerships. YouthForce staff will be in charge of workshops (career readiness) and will create the curriculum in collaboration with FWPS and establish relationships and work with the school district to get CTE credit for youth internships. Partner building with mentorships includes both developmental and

instrumental mentoring that fosters relational interaction and skill-building work, respectively. Federal Way Public Schools will aid in the development of the apprenticeship prep curriculum to best align with and support students' educational needs and will assist in the identification of a space accessible to FWPS students for the implementation of the curriculum, up to and including providing a space for use in a FWPS high school. Through the use of FWPS scholar career surveys, FWPS will provide identified school-level student data regarding career interest to assist with the eventual recruitment of program participants. This will allow YouthForce staff access to FWPS for the purposes of student engagement, family engagement, and participant recruitment and will assist YouthForce with planning for participant transportation from Federal Way High Schools to the training site. Sound Transit will support YouthForce in the development of the training program as an industry expert, including but not limited to: infrastructure needs, facility equipment, and curriculum development. Sound Transit will advise curriculum development in collaboration with Washington's Construction Center of Excellence (CCE) so it aligns with industry needs and expectations for long-term career success and, once the program is implemented, will provide mentorship for youth in the program by participating in apprenticeship program events that allow program participants to speak with current employees about their career pathways. As an employer partner with the apprenticeship prep program, Sound Transit will mentor program participants by providing connections to potential employers for program graduates and will allow, once certifications are complete, preferred entry status through their Apprenticeship program. As noted above, Washington's Construction Center of Excellence will lend its expertise in the creation of the curriculum for this pre-apprenticeship program to align with OSPI and Federal Way Public Schools and serve as lead advisor and subject matter experts to ensure it aligns with current industry standards and prepares graduates to meet or exceed the minimum qualifications for entry into an apprenticeship.

At a minimum, the curriculum will include the following elements: Industry/occupation-specific safety training and education, Employability skill development, and Industry/trade-specific skills and knowledge; Course hours.

### **3. How have or will the partner organizations learn from each other and the communities served, and how does or will the partnership incorporate this learning into ongoing work?**

Sound Transit and YouthForce have pledged to act in good faith through consultations with tribal partners and coordinators of Native American programs in the development of programming that is culturally relevant and respectful and contributes, not hinders, the cultivation of resources. The goal of this partnership is to give young Native Americans and BIPOC youth starting in their careers, agency and voice to shape the social and economic landscape they envision. YouthForce will actively engage with the local community, including industry professionals, educators, and community leaders, to identify potential mentors who are committed to promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion in the construction industry. Collaborating with local trade unions, industry associations, and other organizations will enable us to tap into their networks of experienced journey-level workers who can serve as mentors. We will also seek input from program participants to identify individuals they feel comfortable and connected with, as they may be more receptive to mentorship from someone they can relate to on a personal level. We will provide mentors with comprehensive training that covers not only the technical aspects of mentoring but also the importance of cultural competence, identity affirmation, and fostering a sense of belonging. Mentors will receive training on cultural competence, diversity, and inclusion. This training will help them understand and appreciate the unique backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences of program participants. Mentor training will emphasize effective communication skills, including active listening and empathy, to ensure mentors can connect with and support participants effectively and will be educated on best practices for mentorship, such as setting clear expectations, providing constructive feedback, and helping participants set and achieve goals. We will establish a system of regular check-ins and feedback sessions with mentors to ensure they feel supported and are equipped to address any challenges that may arise during their mentorship. Mentors will have access to a repository of resources,

including educational materials, tools for promoting diversity and inclusion, and information on addressing bias and discrimination as well as have opportunities for peer support and learning, allowing them to share experiences and strategies with one another. Sound Transit's Mentorship Matters® program trains journey-level workers to effectively transfer knowledge and teaches apprentices essential skills, such as active listening and seeking constructive feedback. A pilot project, RISE-UP (Respect, Inclusion, Safety, Equity), has been launched to promote diversity and inclusion in the construction workforce. The RISE-UP program emphasizes inclusivity, diversity metrics, communication, and feedback. It aims to create an inclusive culture on-site and offers value-based training. Sound Transit's Retention Support Services provides tangible support to apprentices, including child or elder care assistance, transportation aid, and assistance with driver's licensing issues. It aims to create an inclusive culture on-site and offers value-based training. Key lessons learned include the commitment of Sound Transit's labor partners to success, the effectiveness of night and weekend pre-apprenticeship programs for the working poor, disparities in apprentice completion rates, challenges in tracking retention, and the need for basic support services. Construction Center of Excellence works with organizations to illuminate the vast web of information around construction apprenticeships, pre-apprenticeships, and post-secondary training programs. Critical role includes connecting high-school programs with pre-apprenticeship programs and partners to provide training, workshops, and professional development opportunities for all levels of the construction industry.

**3. Who are the focal population(s) in your partnership's work, and what assets do learners and families in these populations bring to their educational journeys?**

YouthForce is an established workforce development program with a great track record working with reputable partners in delivering programs to disconnected youth within South King County. Our partnerships have created access, engagement, and representation for YouthForce participants. These relationships with collaborating organizations have history and a common goal, giving opportunities to youth that would otherwise not be presented to them. We expect to primarily serve young people of color ages 16-24 in both Federal Way and Renton/Skyway; Last year, 83% of youth members at the Renton/Skyway Teen Center were students of color--with 54% identifying as Black/African American, 17% as Multi-racial, 5% as Hispanic/Latinx, 5% as Asian, and 2% as Native American/Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. Such diversity broadens the potential talent pool allowing organizations to access skills and experiences that may not be present in a homogeneous workforce. This can lead to a more skilled and versatile team with varied viewpoints leading to more thorough and effective decision-making processes. A diverse workforce can better understand and connect with a diverse customer base. This understanding can lead to improved products, services, and customer experiences tailored to different demographics. When employees feel valued and respected for their unique backgrounds and perspectives, they are more likely to be engaged and committed to their work. This can lead to higher employee satisfaction and retention rates. Demonstrating a commitment to diversity and inclusion can enhance an organization's reputation both internally and externally. It can attract top talent, improve relationships with customers and partners, and contribute to a positive brand image. Overall, a diverse workforce not only brings tangible benefits such as improved innovation and decision-making but also contributes to a more inclusive and equitable workplace culture, which is essential for long-term success and sustainability. Overall, Native Americans contribute to the workforce by enriching workplaces with their cultural diversity, resilience, environmental knowledge, collaborative spirit, creativity, leadership, and cultural sensitivity. Embracing and valuing these contributions can lead to more inclusive and successful organizations. Traditional Native American cultures often have a deep connection to the land and a strong understanding of environmental stewardship. This knowledge can be especially valuable in industries related to conservation, sustainable development, and natural resource management.

**4. What is the geographic region where the focal population(s) that would be served by this investment live?**

The proposed program, Building Futures through Pre-Apprenticeship Training, effectively addresses critical needs in King County and aligns with the urgent industry shortages and equity goals. The urgency of addressing industry shortages is highlighted by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, which projects an 11 percent growth in construction manager employment in Washington from 2020 to 2030, exceeding the average for all occupations. The August 2022 AGC Autodesk Workforce Survey echoed this concern, reporting that 93% of U.S. firms and 100% in Washington had unfilled hourly craft positions, hindering the industry's recovery and its ability to utilize federal infrastructure funds. Building Futures aims to tackle these challenges by ensuring that 100% of participating students complete the Pre-Apprenticeship training preparing them for careers in construction. The goal is for 60% of these students to be ready to enter the field before the high school class of 2030 reaches 30 years old. To address underrepresentation and increase equity, we are positioned to provide programming for students in Federal Way public high schools as well as provide an early introduction at the middle school level to raise awareness about the construction industry. These programs would introduce students to construction language and methodology, incorporating lesson plans and hands-on construction activities from a young age, building the pipeline to high-demand and high-paying jobs in the region. Sound Transit's commitment to expanding transit services aligns with the program's goals of creating equitable opportunities and addressing the forecasted construction occupational supply shortage in the region, estimated at 9%-10% during the 2018-2042 period. Building Futures plays a crucial role in preparing a skilled workforce to meet the demands of Sound Transit's ambitious transit expansion plans and ensure a prosperous and equitable future for the community.

**5. What are some of the systemic barriers that learners and families in your focal population(s) encounter?**

The Roadmap Project, a regional collective impact initiative focusing on improving system conditions so our young people of color are well supported to reach their full potential, identified about 10,000 16-24 years of age in South King County who were not in school or working. Against this backdrop, it is imperative to build training and education opportunities and wrap-around supports that can help young people enter or re-enter the workforce with in-demand skills. Among students in Federal Way schools, 22.6% met math standards, and 25.3% met science standards in 2023, according to OSPI. This program will provide these concepts in a hands-on learning environment that better suits some students who may not succeed in a traditional classroom. Five years after graduation, FWPS students without post-secondary education have a median earning of \$26.6k per year, or 200% of the federal poverty level, per the Education Research and Data Center. Currently, 59% of FWPS students do not have an advanced degree 8 years after graduation. In 2021, the journey-level wage for Cement Masons in King County was \$62.47/hour (including benefits) or just under \$130k a year pre-tax and overtime. As many pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs require individuals to have a GED or high school program to enroll, many students are not able to receive this job training while still in school. The average age of acceptance into an apprenticeship program is 26, our young people are graduating high school with the expectation that they need to go to college or into entry-level jobs. We hope to bridge this gap by bringing the training to accessible sites so FWPS students can access living-wage career opportunities when they graduate, not 5-10 years later.

**6. What work do you propose undertaking during the granting period?**

The proposed partnership with Sound Transit is an innovative new on-ramp program designed to equip young people to be successful in the workforce. Our model seeks to facilitate both the creation of new careers and businesses in vulnerable communities. "Building Futures through Pre-Apprenticeship Training" is designed to align closely with the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries (L&I) Apprenticeship Program requirements for Program Sponsorship and Program Standards. The program is committed to active engagement within the construction industry, making us eligible for

program sponsorship. We work closely with industry partners, including employers, unions, and trade associations, to ensure that our training aligns with industry needs and standards. Our program will develop a comprehensive plan that outlines the structure and content of the pre-apprenticeship training. This plan will be designed to meet and exceed the industry's training standards, aligning with the curriculum and skill requirements defined by the construction industry. We will provide essential on-the-job training to our pre-apprentices, ensuring that they gain practical experience and hands-on skills that are directly applicable to their chosen trade within the construction industry. In addition to on-the-job training, our program incorporates related instruction in partnership with CCE, which includes classroom training and educational components. This instruction ensures that pre-apprentices receive a well-rounded education that complements their practical experience. As referenced in question #3 above, in alignment with Sound Transit's apprenticeship program, experienced journey-level workers will be assigned as mentors to our pre-apprentices. These mentors play a vital role in guiding and supporting pre-apprentices throughout their training, aligning with L&I's mentorship expectations. Our program places a strong emphasis on providing high-quality training that aligns with industry standards. We will continuously assess and update our curriculum to ensure that it meets the evolving needs of the construction sector and specify the required duration of our pre-apprenticeship training program, ensuring that it complies with the industry's standards and expectations for the respective trade. Safety standards are integrated into our training program to ensure that pre-apprentices are well-prepared to work safely in the construction environment. We maintain meticulous records of pre-apprentices' progress, including hours worked, skills acquired, and assessments completed, in line with program standards. Our program adheres to all federal and state labor laws and regulations, ensuring equal opportunity and non-discrimination policies are rigorously followed. YouthForce is dedicated to regular monitoring and evaluation of our program to assess its effectiveness and make necessary improvements to meet or exceed program standards. By aligning our program with the L&I Apprenticeship Program requirements for Program Sponsorship and Program Standards, we ensure that our pre-apprentices receive high-quality training, prepare them for successful careers in the construction industry, and contribute to the growth and sustainability of the workforce in Washington State.

**7. How will this proposed work contribute to increasing educational attainment for the focal population(s) in your region?**

From Day 1, youth receive regular 1:1 support from a YouthForce case manager. Case managers connect youth to wraparound supports (basic needs, employment certification, educational supports, post-secondary transition, and more). They help youth navigate and address challenges they face along the way, and celebrate success alongside youth. We specifically hire case managers who are credible messengers with similar lived experiences as youth, who know from their own personal journey how to navigate barriers BIPOC youth will encounter. Youth are connected to mentors from the community with similar backgrounds. We partner with organizations like Mentoring Urban Students & Teens, Blacks at Microsoft ERG, and Black Owned Business Excellence so that youth build a network of BIPOC mentors that they can turn to for support, inspiration, advice, and guidance as they encounter challenges. We require that all businesses who host YouthForce interns provide a dedicated mentor to support youth to navigate workplace challenges. Many youth participants are the first in their family to attend college, so we share resources and guidance to support youth to work toward their post-secondary education goals. We provide college preparation support, guide youth through the process of applying for financial aid/scholarships, and help youth explore colleges and other post-secondary training and apprenticeship options. For example, YouthForce case managers supported a BIPOC participant to apply for and receive a TRIO scholarship for low-income and immigrant students at Seattle Central College. We connect with youth through a continuum of career development opportunities starting from where they are at and engaging with programs on a path that aligns with their career goals. We provide career experience at increasing intensity levels across a variety of careers that enable youth to gain confidence as they gain experience.