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Partnership Name: Eastern Washington Talent Triad

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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?

Many of the partners were brought together through a recent project at the Pend Oreille County innovation center, centered around the concept of Food is Medicine, and in some cases, have been working together for 5 plus years. This Greenhouse project has attracted attention from state and federal officials, industry, community leaders, and tribal and county leaders and is led by Dr. Trevor Lane from WSU Extension. WSU Extension has helped establish strategic plans for counties and tribes, opening opportunities for collaboration. WSU Extension, Community & Economic Development, with over 120 years of service, bridges educational and research gaps in rural and tribal communities.

The POIC (Pend Oreille Innovation Center) with the Kalispel Tribe, Community Colleges of Spokane, CRAVE Northwest, the Health district, EBSCOed, and Merits are partnering together to create an ecosystem around upskilling, community resilience, and agriculture to support a sustainable community and opportunity for economic growth. Access to nutritious food is critical to health and resilience. Food is Medicine is a concept that reaffirms this connection, recognizing that access to high-quality nourishment for everyone is essential for well-being. By supporting the production of and facilitating access to nutritious food across a health continuum and range of settings, approaches to Food is Medicine support immediate and long-term resources for people, communities, and systems.

As mentioned above, the partners will include:

- **WSU Extension (project lead).** WSU Extension's Community & Economic Development (CED) serves 39 counties and more than 27 federally recognized tribes. WSU Extension CED has a longstanding history of achievement in community resilience. WSU Extension's Division of Government and Social Sciences (DGSS) will assist by providing an economic impact analysis through an economist in partnership with the WSU Medical College.
- **Kalispel Career Training Center (KCTC).** The Kalispel Tribe, along with community partners have developed KCTC and provides adults and youth vocational training needed to acquire living wage jobs in the community. The Kalispel Tribe works with WSU Extension through the Federally Recognized Tribal Extension Program (FRTEP).
- **Pend Oreille Innovation Center (POIC).** POIC is nurtured by International Nutritional Sustainability Partners (INSP) and facilitates non-credit and credit opportunities through apprenticeships and microlearning. This will be the first pilot project in the AgriProspect Clearinghouse (a USDA funded skills and competency-based credential engine for agriculture) that will serve adult earners, learners, and employers.
- **Community Colleges of Spokane (CCS).** CCS has residents serving at satellite campuses throughout the County. CCS offers continuing education programs that cater to adult learners seeking to enhance their skills, transition to new careers, or stay updated in their current fields.
- **CRAVE! Northwest** has a strong presence in the food system and small business ecosystems through world-renowned chefs and culinary programs. CRAVE! acts as a catalyst for community alliances. It brings together chefs, food enthusiasts, and businesses, fostering collaboration and creating a sense of togetherness. Through shared experiences, participants build lasting connections that extend beyond food.
- **FIRST Washington.** With the help of community and industry, *FIRST* Washington offers the most comprehensive STEM program in the state and is the preferred rural and tribal provider of K-12 STEM and robotics after school programs and teams. *FIRST* Washington will be submitting a planning grant to work in tandem with this implementation grant opportunity to achieve a statewide charter for universities, colleges, and state agencies. The planning grant hopes to achieve stakeholder buy-in for a fully functional solution leading to a skills-based economy. With support from the governor's office in Washington, this complete solution will ensure that every citizen and business have free access to the Washington Talent Triad for earners, learners, and employees.
- **EBSCO.** A global company supporting the needs of students and adult learners across every vertical, brings a unique skill-set in addition to being the provider of the Talent Triad solution. EBSCO is the

leading data management, data mapping, interoperability, platform innovator, and user experience organization in the industry. Because of their core competencies, EBSCO has created the Talent Triad to connect the needs of educational institutions, learners and earners, workforce development professionals, employers, and policy makers through technology. In support of bridging the gaps that exist within and between today's education and workforce solutions and initiatives, the Talent Triad has established a foundation for supporting a skills-based economy, which will be applied to this initiative and is well poised to connect to other local, regional, and statewide initiatives.

- **Merits.** A technology company that developed Washington's first digital wallet contributing to the skills and competencies of earners, learners, and employers through the NGA/WSAC/GSI pilot project in partnership with Eastern Washington University and the Community College of Spokane. The pilot project focused on the health industry and apprenticeship opportunities.
- **The Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (WTB).** WTB was created by Washington Legislature in 1991. It is a Governor-appointed partnership of labor, business and government that is dedicated to helping Washington residents obtain and succeed in family-wage jobs, while meeting employers' needs for skilled workers. (included to ensure alignment, but will not receive funding)
- **The Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC).** SBCTC is led by a nine-member governor-appointed board — advocates, coordinates and directs Washington state's system of 34 public community and technical colleges and almost 275,000 students. (included to ensure alignment, but will not receive funding)

2. How is or will the partnership be structured?

The core design team for this project will establish governance protocols, project management processes, and group norms for accomplishing goals that will continue to be utilized to uphold proposal commitments. Core design team members will meet regularly, and as needed, to review project roadmap, assign tasks, and resolve any barriers to implementation. Transparency across the project team is also key as there are many stakeholders working within their area of expertise, but also connecting across silos. The core design team will also take advantage of the proposed statewide charter meetings by FIRST Washington to listen to industry leaders, policy leaders and credential issuers and incorporate feedback into the project roadmap. Dr. Trevor C Lane, a state specialist and associate professor, who has over 20 years of experience in public education, including a decade at a tier one community college mapping data and programs, will be the project leader. He is now an Extension specialist in Northeastern Washington, focusing on upskilling, community resilience, and agriculture. His efforts have led to successful upskilling of communities, improved broadband access, and the establishment of mobile units for broadband, meat processing, and health. Dr. Lane, along with a project manager, will foster collaboration between regional community, education, and training providers.

Our partnership will invite collaboration with existing and future workforce projects across the state, such as the The Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board's Talent and Prosperity (TAP) Plan and Washington Career Bridge. Collaboration, alignment, and interoperability with like-minded workforce projects such as these, as well as the Greater Spokane Inc. (GSI) LER project and with the Tri-County Health District, brings betterment for all jobseekers and employers and increases the ROI of all education and workforce projects. Utilizing the work in Alabama, which EBSCO is supporting to draw experience from, the above-mentioned projects are very analogous to initiatives such as those authored by 21st Century Workforce Commission and AlabamaWorks!. The partnerships and lessons learned from these collaborations will be a key reason for Alabama meeting its labor force participation rate goals.

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?

POIC has a symbiotic relationship with the Kalispel Tribe, community, small businesses, and industry. POIC is supported by WSU Extension to bring resources that build community resilience and address the area's economic sustainability and growth in partnership with the local Economic

Development Center (EDC). The Datacenter Greenhouse has been and will continue to be the center of this work bringing together innovation, agricultural needs, and economic growth opportunities. Aligning accredited academic programs alongside state-level departments, private businesses, a nationwide microcredentialing platform, and interns, the Datacenter Greenhouse is repurposing energy usage from a private industry partner with support from Community Colleges of Spokane, CRAVE Northwest, and many of the partners or stakeholders supporting WSU Extension which embodies a model that is both sustainable and replicable.

The Talent Triad technology will inform both supply and demand sides of the learning and earning economy with transparent, open linked data and connect disparate programs and resources for optimal insights and outcomes. Individual learners and earners/job seekers in the communities will serve and learn how to communicate what they know and can do, how to navigate personal career pathways and how to use modern workforce technologies to achieve their goals. Education and training providers will learn about in-demand skills and what participating businesses need in real time while employers will have the opportunity to truly understand the equivalent skills acquired from various education pathways.

Through regular meetings and reporting, the lessons learned will be captured in a Food is Medicine Playbook and available for public access to share these learnings with the broader community at large. The playbook will be available online and publicized through multiple media outlets including social media, news outlets, and applicable publications. All key partners, including the local community, will be continuously engaged to provide feedback for continuous improvement. This feedback will be directly incorporated into the project roadmap to best fit the needs of the community and partners. Each partner will amplify the lessons learned through media channels and outlets.

4. 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?

This collaborative will serve primarily adult learners in an area largely know for poverty and unemployment (low to middle income learners and earners) and the partners provide the following:

- KCTC provides vocational training and work-based learning to any community member who wants to increase their skill set in preparation for self-sustaining employment opportunities. Everyone in the community is given the opportunity to learn and grow as an individual.
- WSU Extension program for remote workers/supervisors.
- 4-H programs and activities.
- Tech Changemakers program that facilitates youth teaching adults digital navigation and digital literacy skills while the adults mentor the youth in life skills.

This same group is adult-centric for learners AND aims to amplify the success of these programs by providing stackable learning pathways in the form of flexible and modular sequences of microcredentials that can lead to employment, a certificate, or a full degree, depending on the learner's needs and goals. Microcredentials are short, focused credentials that provide in-demand skills, know-how and experience in various fields and disciplines that could have a large impact if a Talent Triad system existed for these tribal and rural communities to equitably access the information and resources to achieve their goals. The learners and families in the identified populations bring life and work skills which are valuable to employers. The goals of these initiatives are to make all learning count, support skills-based learning and hiring, and better connect education to the needs of these families and to the needs of employers.

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

This investment will serve the geographic regions of Pend Oreille County, the Kalispel Tribal Reservation, and the Greater Spokane Area of Northeastern Washington. This is where work has been

conducted in collaboration with the project partners in the areas of upskilling, broadband, and remote worker/supervisor certifications. The opportunity to scale the program beyond these boundaries is plentiful with additional partners following our progress.

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

This remote, rural, and tribal community is economically distressed and extremely disenfranchised, due to some of the State's highest unemployment and poverty rates. Access to learning and earning opportunities providing economic mobility are plagued by a lack of access to technology and other workforce opportunities. WSU Extension is federally mandated to bridge these gaps. Dr. Lane has extensive experience in helping communities overcome systemic barriers by developing Local Investment Networks (LIN) and grant writing workshops that improve small business ecosystems and improve access to broadband, devices, and technology. WSU Extension is well-versed and prepared to help bridge the urban and rural divide while the Talent Triad technology is designed to remove bias, create opportunity, and empower every contributor across the ecosystem.

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

We propose implementing a unified system called the Washington Talent Triad. This work will take the first steps toward creating a skills-based talent marketplace that connects all workers, career opportunities, and learning experiences to power economic growth and the mobility of its citizens. In addition to increasing postsecondary enrollment, completion rates and closing opportunity gaps, it will seek to improve the labor force participation rate. The Washington Talent Triad will be comprised of 3 key components which could lay the foundation for a statewide solution potentially benefiting all learners, Washington citizens, businesses, and education and training providers. The Talent Triad is made up of Digital Wallets with Verified Learning and Employment Records for students and jobseekers, Skills-Based Job Description Generator for employers, and the Washington Credential Registry for education and training providers.

The Washington Talent Triad will set the foundation for the goals outlined above for adult learners by:

- Utilizing the Washington Credential Registry to
 - o Manage the greenhouse, remote worker, supervisor, 4-H, and tech changers programs.
 - o Asserting skills to the microcredentials and credentials affiliated with each program.
 - o Identify stackable credential and degree sequences from the educational partners affiliated with this grant.
- Utilizing the Skills-Based Job Description Generator to
 - o Support local businesses in writing skills-based job descriptions, apprenticeships, internships, and other WBL programs that can communicate the skills and credentials needed in language similar to those identified in the above programs.
 - o Identify recommended candidates for those open positions.
- Utilizing the Digital Wallet to
 - o Support adult students and jobseekers to embed their skills, credentials, and experiences, into their Learning and Employment Record
 - o Develop skills-based resumes.
 - o Apply to recommended job and WBL opportunities to ensure these efforts are centralized, marketed, supported, and receive training, Dr. Lane will provide strategic planning and thought leadership to those programs that directly and indirectly support adult learning through the implementation and credentialing of apprenticeships, certificates and other microcredentials with the following four partnerships:

And amplify the following partnerships and credential programs:

- Kalispel - Trade curriculum; agricultural apprenticeships
- POIC – Curriculum and apprenticeships for adult learning through the Greenhouse including the AgriProspect Clearinghouse greenhouse credentials, which area USDA-endorsed skilling and credential programs. Working with WSU Extension, KCTC, and the schools through FIRST Washington will create microcredentials for youth that will lead to post-secondary attainment through articulation agreements with the community colleges, trade schools, and universities.
- WSU – Fire training academy certificate (in partnership with Texas A&M) and the remote worker/supervisor certificate (in partnership with Utah State University)
- Community Colleges of Spokane – Curriculum and apprenticeships
 - o Culinary Certificates - CRAVE
 - o Certified Nursing Assistant – Health district; Merit; Kalispel
 - o

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

Students and jobseekers who participate in the Washington Talent Triad will be provided a digital learner wallet that includes the skills, credentials, and experiences in which they have earned and completed. They will also be able to sync their wallets with the project partner education and training providers to include a Verified Learning & Employment Record (LER) with their verified skills based on the training, short- and long-term education opportunities in which they have completed and are associated with the degree, certificate, licensure, apprenticeship, internship, and employer-based programs in scope. For students and jobseekers seeking new skills to become competitive in the marketplace, the Washington Talent Triad will provide recommended learning, apprenticeships, and upskilling opportunities as well as other resources to help support continued learning, as well as skill and credential development based on the concepts of career pathways and skills-based hiring.

The proposed partnerships, collaboration, and technology will demonstrate how a skills-based economy increases opportunities to identify both new earning and learning opportunities and exhibit how all learning counts. When both short- and long-term programs are seen as valuable and attainable, more jobseekers become and remain lifelong learners and students seeking continuous personal improvement. The Talent Triad will empower individuals to understand and communicate what they know and can do as well as recognize the opportunities available to them and achievable by them. These are skills that impact and influence communities and families through equitable opportunities.