

Partnership Name: Olympic Peninsula Healthcare Career Committee (OPHCC)

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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?

Jefferson Healthcare (the largest employer in Jefferson County) wants to continue our commitment to regional education and workforce development with a planning grant from Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC). The team comprising industry, education, and workforce development regional experts have successfully developed workforce projects to date, primarily focusing on K-12 healthcare career explore and prep educational opportunities. We are proposing the establishment of a formal Olympic Peninsula Healthcare Career Committee (OPHCC) to grow our work to include post-secondary attainment goals. The committee includes Jefferson Healthcare, Quilcene, Brinnon, and East Jefferson Fire and Rescue, Chimacum, Port Townsend, and Quilcene School K-12 Districts, Olympic Workforce Council, and Olympic College. The advisory team is Jefferson County Economic Development Council, OWL 360 (a regional non-profit focused on supporting underserved youth), a student advisor, the Career Connect WA healthcare sector intermediary project manager, and Jefferson County Immigration Rights Advocates (JCIRA).

These organizations will come together to address the lack of available educational attainment in Jefferson County. These partner organizations have a shared goal of creating an innovative scalable model that provides post-secondary credentials in the high-demand, living-wage healthcare sector locally. We have already established relationships that have begun addressing challenges in our education and industry workforce needs in our region.

This committee needs to expand upon our work to address Jefferson County's significant challenges related to healthcare staffing shortages and very limited post-secondary healthcare programs in our county. The healthcare sector is the dominant industry in our region, encompassing half of the top 25 in-demand jobs. In addition, according to the ERDC, 68% of Jefferson County students, respectively, will not earn a credential beyond their high school diploma 8 years after graduation. Jefferson County has only one current certification program in healthcare located in our county which is managed by East Jefferson Fire and Rescue. In partnership with Peninsula College, Jefferson Healthcare hopes to launch a second one in Spring 2024. This makes regional secondary healthcare training and development crucial to addressing the lack of post-secondary opportunities where rural, low-income community members are unable to access high-demand, well-paying careers.

2. How is or will the partnership be structured?

Our partnership will be structured with Jefferson Healthcare as the lead and fiscal agent for the grant. In our capacity as the grant recipient, we will assume responsibility for overseeing and reporting on the progress of the grant. The core team will comprise our industry, education, community-based organizations (CBO's) and workforce development partners. Additional advisory committee members have been selected to serve on an as-needed basis for their expertise in equity, student-centered experiences and state best practices. We want to ensure that we approach this work understanding the barriers to our focal populations so that we can effectively support and recruit priority populations.

Jefferson Healthcare is a public district hospital that will lead OPHCC. We are the primary provider of healthcare in Jefferson County and employ over 900 people with 70+ open positions, making us the largest employer in the county. We depend on our local talent to meet most of our staffing needs and want to help ensure that regionally offered post-secondary programs are reflective of the employment market.

The industry partners will be East Jefferson, Brinnon, and Quilcene Fire and Rescue, who will provide insights on an already established certification program in Jefferson County. They will also offer their

expertise in training and hiring paramedics, emergency medical technicians (EMTs), and firefighters, ensuring our program meets the needs of valued employers.

The education partners will be all of the K-12 public school districts in our county, Chimacum, Port Townsend, and Quilcene. Their expertise in dual credits, experiential education and credentials earned while in high school will allow us to seamlessly access and effectively engage with the young adult population in Jefferson County. Additionally, we have partnered with our neighboring community college, Olympic College in Kitsap County for their ability to provide post-secondary healthcare and/or related field programs and to inform K-12 curriculum and post-secondary pathway navigational support.

The Olympic Workforce Council will serve as our workforce development partner to ensure the development of innovative workforce systems that support a strong economy and community within Clallam, Jefferson, and Kitsap Counties.

The advisory team includes the Jefferson County Economic Development Council, who will assist us in our commitment to adopting a data-driven approach to our post-secondary attainment goals. The community-based organizations include OWL 360, which provides wrap-around services to young adults and emerging workers. A student advisor to ensure a student-centered approach to our initiatives. Jefferson County Immigrant Rights Advocates (JCIRA) is another essential partner, dedicated to building a supportive and safe community for immigrants to live and thrive. The Career Connect WA, healthcare sector intermediary from the SEIU Healthcare 1199NW Training Fund will provide statewide best practices and data to support our efforts.

We will convene regularly to establish strategic direction, review goals and objectives, and collect and analyze data to ensure the successful completion of the grant which results in an action-oriented plan ready for our next steps of implementation.

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?

We will begin our learning by conducting a thorough assessment of both current and projected regional workforce and educational needs by reviewing the qualitative and quantitative data that we have already collected, identifying our data gaps and collaborating with data experts to gain additional information as needed. The qualitative and quantitative data-driven approach will inform subsequent stages of our work, enabling us to pinpoint which programs should be offered locally, determine optimal locations for these programs, ensure accreditation and devise effective strategies to recruit and eliminate barriers for our target populations.

We have a track record of learning from previous federal, state and regional grant partnerships. Currently, our team is actively implementing two Career Connect Washington program builder grants, which focus on enabling local students to explore and experience healthcare careers. We have a regional Olympic Community of Health (OCH) grant dedicated to healthcare workforce development. Additionally, our collaboration with Chimacum and Port Townsend schools has led to the award of OSPI grants aimed at establishing and expanding healthcare science classes. Through these previous grants, we have demonstrated our ability to share curriculum, leverage resources, and adapt program for state-wide scaling based on feedback from students and participants.

In addition, we hope to launch in Spring of 2024 a Nursing Assistant Certified program hosted locally at both Jefferson Healthcare and the Peninsula College satellite branch in Port Townsend. This will be the first healthcare certified college course offering. This type of partnership may become the template for future post-secondary attainment credentials.

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The OPHCC remains committed to building upon these best practices by continuously assessing and adjusting our direction as needed, ensuring that we remain responsive to the evolving needs of our community and the insights gained from our ongoing partnerships and engagement with the communities we serve.

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?

Our service area encompasses three Federally Qualified Opportunity Zones, where poverty rates exceed 20%, or median family income falls below 80% of the statewide median. 69% of students who live in Jefferson County come from families qualifying for free and reduced lunch compared to the state average of 47%, according to OSPI. The poverty facing many of our families in Jefferson County creates a financial access issue to all forms of postsecondary programs, including traditional degrees; career-technical education certificates; registered apprenticeships; and credits, degrees, and credentials earned while in high school when they are not available regionally.

Our first focal population is 16–24-year-old young adults in Jefferson County that are in vital need of support pertaining to post-secondary enrollment. According to Measure of America 25.1% of Jefferson County Youth are “Disconnected” “Disconnected youth are young people between the ages of 16 and 24 who are not in school and not working.” The national average is 12.1%. This data supports the need to build a supportive educational environment for rural students.

Our second focal population is adults who are returning to education. Currently, Jefferson County offers limited post-secondary education opportunities. This specifically impacts lower income and immigrant people who have limited transportation, limited income, and limited time opportunities due to economic, transportation, and opportunity barriers.

The students in our area demonstrate significant resilience and adaptability, having navigated through increased economic and logistical challenges brought by the Covid-19 pandemic. Despite our local challenges, there is a strong sense of community in our county. This leads to robust informal support networks that are a critical asset in helping students navigate their educational pathways and access necessary resources. Our rural backgrounds contribute to a richer educational environment, offering varying perspectives and insights for all students.

Jefferson County also has low housing inventory and a high median house price of \$606,800, the 5th highest in the state. This situation results in longtime locals having the asset of housing security in an otherwise untenable situation for new community members.

Many of our students have practical work experience due to economic necessity, which equips them with a hands-on approach to learning, particularly advantageous in furthering education. There is a perception that rural student’s achievement is defined as leaving their communities, but we know many students want to stay in our community but the opportunities for economic mobility are limited.

The assets of resilience, community ties, housing and practical experience are invaluable contributions that our focal populations bring to their educational journeys. Our partnership is committed to recognizing and nurturing these strengths as we work towards enhancing educational equity in Jefferson County.

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

This grant primarily serves Jefferson County and will welcome trainees from Clallam and Kitsap Counties as reflected in our current workforce demographics. In addition, our planning committee will include the Olympic Workforce Development Council that serves Jefferson, Clallam and Kitsap Counties. Olympic College is based in Kitsap County.

Jefferson County is located on the Olympic Peninsula of Washington State, on the ancestral and contemporary homelands of the S'Klallam, Chemakum, T'wana and other indigenous nations. Jefferson County experiences rural isolation due to several geographical and infrastructural factors. We have limited direct access to neighboring urban centers. The county's transportation infrastructure is primarily limited to two main highways, namely State Route 20 and State Route 104. It requires bridges and ferries to access our county or for us to access further education. These routes may be subject to closures or have limited access during inclement weather or emergencies, further isolating the region.

Our commitment to building programming regionally will allow more Jefferson County residents to enroll in programs and complete credentials.

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

The largest barrier students face in our county is access. There are geographic and economic barriers to post-secondary attainment opportunities. Jefferson County is an educational desert that requires students to commute long distances for almost all post-secondary credentials that link to high demand and living wage careers. We recognize the need to build an affordable and supportive educational environment that is low barrier for all Jefferson County residents. This will enable more students to enroll in programs and successfully complete their credentials. This is essential to ensure equitable access and success for rural students.

Currently, among the other high-demand occupation sectors in the Olympic region (Kitsap, Jefferson, and Clallam Counties), only maritime offers a post-secondary credential linked to a self-sufficiency wage job in Jefferson County. The time commitment, transportation costs, childcare expenses, and other barriers associated with attending college classes make furthering education inaccessible for many residents of Jefferson County. This includes individuals facing income inequality, systemic racism, caregiving responsibilities, sole financial support of their families, and other socioeconomic challenges.

There are currently no in-person or hybrid options in nursing or medical assisting in Jefferson County. The limited short certificate programs offered in our county further exacerbates the systemic barriers, leaving us disproportionately disadvantaged in accessing educational opportunities or hiring locally certified professionals. Additionally, small and rural school districts struggle to offer sufficient Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses, further hindering students' ability to pursue in-demand occupations.

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

The Olympic Peninsula Healthcare Careers Committee (OPHCC) will function as a planning committee comprising industry, educational, community-based organizations and workforce development partners.

Our primary purpose includes:

- Creating a strategic and actionable plan that uses data to outline our goals, objectives, and the overall direction of providing post-secondary credentials in the high demand healthcare sector. Resulting in an increase in post-secondary credential attainment in Jefferson County. We will assess the current situation using data and our previous experiences, identify the challenges and opportunities, and formulate actionable strategies to achieve our outcomes.

- We will establish key performance indicators (KPIs) and measurement tools to track our progress. We will involve key stakeholders and reach out to other successful programs in the state. We will also work to identify funding sources and add additional advisors as necessary.
- The mission of our committee will also be to include a focus on removing barriers and making our program accessible. By partnering with organizations who represent individuals with diverse backgrounds, skills, and expertise who will inform our comprehensive approach to creating post-secondary pathways that meet the needs of all community members.

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

This partnership aims to provide flexible learning opportunities for post-secondary attainment close to home, by:

- Leveraging our existing qualitative and quantitative data, supplement with any additional data we may need to inform our strategic plan.
- Planning the creation, scaling or expansion of programs to establish healthcare career pathways, such as:
 - K-12 Pre-Emergency Medical Services and Pre-Medical Assistant internships to increase direct postsecondary enrollment among high school students.
 - Creating a medical reception training program locally in conjunction with our neighboring community college, scaling the Nursing Assistant Certified, Emergency Medical Services, Pharmacy Technician, Dental Assistant and Medical Assistant Apprentice program (and other programs deemed necessary by the data) to increase enrollment among adults returning to education and postsecondary credential completion rates.
- Developing a recruitment plan for trainees that removes barriers to access of programs with a strong focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion. This will result in recruiting, curriculum and training opportunities that promote cultural sensitivity, equity, and address the distinct challenges faced by underrepresented populations.
- Communicating and presenting our plan to Washington State Achievement Council (WSAC).

The OPHCC's efforts will directly tackle the hurdles hindering our community members from accessing post-secondary opportunities. In Jefferson County, the primary challenge lies not in the absence of high-demand, well-paying jobs, but rather in the shortage of qualified candidates due to limited access to educational opportunities. Our aim is to ensure opportunities for local students in sustainable, family-supporting positions while simultaneously enhancing access to healthcare services for our community.

The committee's work endeavors to establish a scalable and replicable model, offering a solution to the barriers faced by rural and underserved communities across Washington and the US, where limited access to programming remains a common obstacle. Our objective is to design a data-driven, inclusive, and accessible program that provides opportunities for accessible post-secondary attainment. Together, we will chart a course toward equitable post-secondary education, establish guaranteed hiring pipelines, and foster a healthier future for our community.