

Palouse Partners for Student Success

Application Point of Contact: Jim Kindle

Fiscal Agent: Educational Service District #123

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?

The Educational Service District 123 (ESD 123) region, encompassing our Palouse Partners for Students Success, unites partners with a shared commitment to enhancing educational attainment. These partners have come together to collaborate in a deeply rooted collective understanding of the transformative power that collaboration brings to the community. Motivated by the belief that a united front is more effective in addressing the diverse and evolving needs of our educational landscape, each partner purposefully joined this initiative to amplify and extend our combined impact, fostering a more intentional and cohesive regional plan. This collaborative endeavor is not only a testament to the strength of our partnerships but also an embodiment of our shared vision for advancing educational opportunities within the region.

Central to our collective vision is a commitment to data-driven decision-making. By pooling resources, expertise, and experiences, we aim to establish robust mechanisms for data collection and sharing, underlining our dedication to evidence-based practices. Moreover, our collaborative effort is fueled by a shared goal of providing structured pathways for career and college readiness. Recognizing the importance of preparing students for the modern workforce, we seek to create seamless transitions from high school to post-secondary education or career pathways through initiatives such as mentorship programs, internships, and curriculum alignment. The working relationships forged among these organizations, rooted in past collaborations, enhance the synergy of our joint efforts, allowing us to navigate the intricacies of work-based learning. In essence, our decision to unite is a testament to our shared dedication to the prosperity and well-being of the community, reflecting a belief that, through collaboration, we can bring about positive, lasting change in the educational landscape of our region. Our commitment to collaboration is not just a strategic initiative; it is a reflection of our collective ethos, acknowledging that our strength lies in unity, paving the way for a brighter and more equitable future for the students we serve.

2. How is or will the partnership be structured?

The collaboration for the WSAC Regional Challenge grant within the Palouse Partners for Student Success has been meticulously structured to harness the unique strengths and expertise of each participating organization. Designed for efficient implementation, effective communication, and a comprehensive approach to enhancing post-secondary attainment in the region, Educational Service District 123 (ESD123) will serve as the fiscal agent and convening partner. ESD123's leadership role involves bringing together each listed partner to amplify the impact and effectiveness of the region by leveraging existing work, collaborative efforts, successes, and areas of opportunity, while building upon the direction and vision of previous initiatives. Despite already established partnerships on a limited basis, ESD123's role is to unite these efforts, utilizing individual strengths and organizational structures for the collective good.

The partnership structure begins with work groups that have laid the foundation for collecting data on why young adults may not choose post-secondary pathways. Concurrently, other groups are researching, developing, and implementing post-secondary career pathways from K-12 to Higher Education through CTE courses, CTE graduation pathways, and innovative approaches that do not compromise FTE funding for K-12 partners (i.e CTE without Borders). Recognizing the unique geographic location, K-12 districts (Asotin, Clarkston and Pomeroy) collaborate with regional partners such as the Lewis Clark Valley Chamber of Commerce, Pomeroy Chamber of Commerce, Boys & Girls Clubs of the Lewis Clark Valley, and the Nez Perce Indian Tribe. Walla Walla Community College (Clarkston) and Lewis Clark State College play pivotal roles in supporting K-12 districts as thought partners for creating high school to post-secondary pathways and opportunities for students' post-secondary aspirations. The partnership structure is further solidified with the inclusion of the Eastern Washington Partnership Workforce Development Council, acting as the voice of regional business partners. This addition aims to create a cohesive alignment between educational initiatives and workforce requirements, facilitating a seamless transition from education to the local job market.

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?

The collaborative efforts of the partner organizations participating in the WSAC Regional Challenge grant are deeply rooted in a shared commitment to enhancing post-secondary attainment through place-based work. As part of this commitment, the partnership places a strong emphasis on continuous learning and adaptation, guided by the belief in the value of diverse perspectives and collective expertise. To facilitate this learning process, regular collaboration, communication, and peer learning opportunities are prioritized, creating an environment where partners actively exchange knowledge and best practices.

In the context of the Nez Perce Indian Tribe, the partnership recognizes the significance of understanding and respecting the unique cultural perspectives, educational aspirations, and challenges specific to this community. Joint meetings with entities such as the Nez Perce Indian Tribe, Lewis Clark Valley Chamber of Commerce, Pomeroy Chamber of Commerce, and Eastern Washington Partnership WDC serve as platforms for improvisational discussions and sounding boards for shared insights. Close collaboration with the ESD123 Career Connected Learning Coordinator ensures alignment with Career Connect Washington frameworks, goals (60% Career Launch and 100% Career Prep and Explore), and funding opportunities, with a specific focus on the needs and aspirations of all students. (ALL MEANS ALL)

Peer learning initiatives, including site visits, regional think tanks, and intentional and collaborative problem-solving, further contribute to a rich tapestry of shared knowledge. This collaborative model ensures that the partnership actively incorporates insights gained from each other and the communities served into its ongoing work. The commitment to data-driven decision-making and continuous improvement is evident in the comprehensive approach that balances priorities across four key areas: Strategic Development (SD), Regional Champions (RC), Program Delivery and Technical Support (PDTC), and Performance Assessment and Evaluation (PAE). The measures identified for the first year of the Expansion Plan focus on output-based measures, with an anticipation of transitioning to outcome-based assessments in the future, aligning with the evolving needs and aspirations of the communities, including the Nez Perce Indian Tribe, to enhance post-secondary attainment in the region.

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?

The targeted geographic region for this investment is located in the furthest eastern part of the ESD123 region, running along the Washington and Idaho border, encompassing Lewis Clark Valley, Asotin, Pomeroy, and Clarkston School Districts. This expansive area showcases a distinctive demographic landscape, harmoniously blending urban and rural settings and exhibiting varying socioeconomic conditions. Within this diverse region, residents contribute to the community's overall richness, representing a spectrum of cultural backgrounds, age groups, and economic statuses. The unique characteristics of this specific target area emphasize the necessity of tailoring educational support to address the individualized needs of the diverse individuals and families residing in the eastern part of the ESD123 region.

Asotin School District, within this broader context, grapples with specific challenges, including 37.4% low-income population and 30% of 9th graders who failed one or more classes in the 2022-2023 academic year. The Hispanic population stands at 4.3%, contributing to the district's rich diversity. Clarkston School District, with 57.1% of its population classified as low income, faces a 37.7% failure rate among 9th graders in the same academic year. The Hispanic population in Clarkston is 11.6%. Meanwhile, Pomeroy School District, also part of this region, contends with a 49.3% low-income population and a 37.8% failure rate among 9th graders. The Hispanic population in Pomeroy is 11.7%. These school district statistics underscore the multifaceted challenges and diversity within the Palouse region, highlighting the need for tailored interventions to address the unique circumstances of each district and foster collaborative efforts to enhance career and college readiness. (Census Bureau and OSPI Report Card)

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

The geographic region where the focal population(s) that would be served by this investment reside is the furthest eastern part of the ESD123 region along the Washington and Idaho border, encompassing Lewis Clark Valley, Asotin, Pomeroy, and Clarkston School Districts. This area presents a diverse demographic landscape, blending urban and rural settings, and showcasing varying socioeconomic conditions. In Asotin County, the population is 92.4% White and 6.2% Hispanic, with a poverty rate of 16%. The education rates (8 years after graduation) within Asotin School District reveal that 44% of individuals hold Bachelor's degrees, 17% have Associate's or Certificate degrees, and 39% do not hold a degree. (ERDC). The education rates (8 years after graduation) within Clarkston School District reveal that 25% of individuals hold Bachelor's degrees, 19% have Associate's or Certificate degrees, and 56% do not hold a degree (ERDC).

Contrastingly, in Garfield County, the population is 66.0% White and 30.5% Hispanic, with a lower poverty rate of 8.0%. The education rates (8 years after graduation) within Pomeroy School District reveal that 21% of individuals hold Bachelor's degrees, 17% have Associate's or Certificate degrees, and 63% do not hold a degree. (ERDC)

The unique characteristics of this specific target area underscore the importance of tailoring educational support to the diverse needs and characteristics of the individuals and families residing in this eastern part of the ESD123 region. Palouse Partners for Student Success, initiated by ESD123, and the establishment of mini-consortiums within geographical areas strategically address the unique challenges faced by rural K-12 school districts within this demographic context. The overarching objective is to fortify career and college readiness through cross-district collaboration, efficient resource allocation, policy advocacy, and regional coordination. This collaborative and tailored approach creates a supportive educational ecosystem across the culturally diverse and socioeconomically varied Palouse region, addressing the nuanced needs of Asotin and Garfield Counties within the broader context of this dynamic and vibrant region.

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

The gap between our primarily rural and disadvantaged students in areas outside of the Tri-Cities, the majority of whom are minority and/or low-income, and our immediate and ballooning demand for credentialed workers is the distinctive feature in this region that will guide most of the partnership's activities. High school students in the Lewis Clark Valley, akin to many regions, confront various common challenges impeding their pursuit of post-secondary attainment. These challenges encompass limited access to advanced courses, economic disparities affecting low-income families, inadequate college and career guidance, the impact of rural isolation on resource accessibility, under-resourced schools, and a scarcity of comprehensive college preparation programs. Additionally, cultural and language barriers, insufficient financial aid awareness, a dearth of visible college role models, and a mismatch between education and regional workforce needs compound the obstacles faced by students. Addressing these systemic barriers necessitates a collaborative, multifaceted approach involving educational institutions, community organizations, policymakers, and families. This collective effort aims to create a supportive environment that empowers all high school students in the Lewis Clark Valley to pursue and achieve post-secondary attainment despite these challenges.

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

Our communities, leaders, and partners will strive to bridge education and industry, fostering career pathways in the geographically isolated Lewis Clark Valley. Through strategic outreach and systematic and personalized onboarding of businesses, individually student tailored career and college guidance, and collaborative programs, we aim to elevate post-secondary attainment, by collecting needed data, and establishing an integrated data-sharing platform that connects all stakeholders, facilitating real-time data collection and sharing to make data informed decisions that equip students with the skills needed for thriving careers in our local workforce.

We will do this by using these three strategic prongs -

- **District Leadership and Educators** - Implement a coordinated effort involving community leaders, businesses, and educational institutions to actively promote and support career-based learning opportunities, fostering hands-on experiences aligned with local workforce needs.
- **Students and Families** - Enhance college and career readiness services (HSBP) within educational institutions and conduct qualitative research to better understand the specific needs and aspirations of individuals in the community related to post-secondary education and career pathways.
- **Business and Communities** - Collaboratively develop industry-driven initiatives addressing workforce needs and conduct a comprehensive needs assessment and gap analysis to inform strategic development in the region.

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

The proposed work will significantly contribute to increasing educational attainment for the focal population(s) in the geographically isolated Lewis Clark Valley by employing a comprehensive approach focused on bridging the gap between education and industry. First, through a coordinated effort involving community leaders, businesses, and educational institutions, we aim to actively promote and support career-based learning opportunities, providing students with hands-on experiences aligned with the needs of the local workforce. This strategic prong ensures that educational pathways are directly connected to real-world industry demands, enhancing the relevance and practicality of post-secondary education.

Secondly, by enhancing college and career readiness services within educational institutions and conducting qualitative research, we will gain a nuanced understanding of the specific needs and aspirations of individuals in the community. This personalized approach allows for tailored guidance, ensuring that educational pathways align with the unique goals of students. This not only addresses potential barriers but also cultivates a supportive environment that encourages educational attainment.

Finally, the collaborative development of industry-driven initiatives, coupled with a comprehensive needs assessment and gap analysis, will directly inform strategic development in the region. By aligning educational programs with workforce needs and addressing identified gaps, we ensure that students are equipped with the skills needed for thriving careers. The establishment of an integrated data-sharing platform will further facilitate real-time data collection and sharing, enabling data-informed decisions that enhance the overall educational experience and contribute to increased post-secondary attainment in the Lewis Clark Valley.