



# Regional Partnerships

## Legislative Report on Program Implementation

December 2024

### Background

The Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) works collaboratively with place-based, cross-sector partnerships seeking to increase postsecondary attainment in their communities. The Regional Challenge Grant (RCG) is a key mechanism in WSAC's broader Regional Partnership (RP) approach to invest in partnerships that self-identify strategies to drive change to targeted populations in their local communities. Systems change and innovation are required to meet Washington's attainment goal of ensuring that 70 percent of Washingtonians receive a postsecondary credential. Since SB 5789's passage in 2022, WSAC has awarded more than \$11 million to 13 regional partnerships across the state. Today, more than 50 percent of Washingtonians live in a service region with at least one regional partnership.

### Executive Summary

The RP investment by WSAC is a long-term, strategic approach, necessary for creating lasting systems change in local communities. In this year's legislative report, we satisfy the reporting requirements outlined in RCW 28B.120.060 by:<sup>1</sup>

- Providing high-level programmatic updates (pgs. 1-2).
- Reporting on legislatively-mandated district-level educational outcomes for all school districts in which WSAC-supported regional partnerships actively operate (pgs. 2-3, Appendix A).
- Summarizing the work of WSAC-supported regional partnerships (pgs. 4-14).

### Programmatic Updates

When investing in regional partnerships, WSAC staff have continued to listen to communities and embed this learning within the programmatic process to ensure public accountability. In total, WSAC has committed more than \$11 million to partnerships in executed grant agreements (Table 1).<sup>2</sup> Additional details on WSAC's continued investment strategy can be found in the 2024 companion report, *Regional Partnerships: Legislative Report on Use of State Funding*. The programmatic updates highlighted here demonstrate WSAC's expanded investment in regional partnerships.

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<sup>1</sup> See also SB 5789: <https://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=28B.120.060>

<sup>2</sup> We define committed funds as those grant funds that are legally obligated in future progress payments in accordance with counter-signed grant agreements.

## Strategic Investment Growth

WSAC awarded Regional Challenge Grants to five additional regional partnerships through the 2024 Request for Letters of Interest. The review of submitted Letters of Interest prioritized partnership function and community responsiveness, as well as the proposed work’s capacity to drive local change.

## Sustained Investments for Eight Initial Partnerships

The Regional Partnerships team extended partnership contracts through June 30, 2025, for the eight partnerships in the 2023 cohort. These extensions right-sized the initial, shorter-term grant timelines and allowed WSAC staff to align processes with the fiscal and academic years. The two-year timeframe likewise signals that systems change is not achieved within a single year.

## Upcoming Re-Application Process for Eight Initial Partnerships

Partnerships in the first funded cohort will apply for a new two-year cycle of funding in the first half of 2025, with recommendations brought to the Council for approval in May 2025. This reapplication process is distinct from the contract extension process and will result in new two-year grant agreements, further committing us to a vision of sustained investment for systems change.

**Table 1. Committed Grants to Date for Regional Partnerships, totaling \$11.05 million**

Partnership	Total Award Amount	Total Contract Period <sup>3</sup>	Fiscal Years
Centro Cultural Mexicano	\$500K	24 months	2024 - 2026
Cornerstone (Chehalis School District)	\$1.57M	27 months	2023 - 2025
ELEVATE (Empowering Learners to Excel)	\$577K	24 months	2024 - 2026
Foundation for Tacoma Students	\$1.8M	27 months	2023 - 2025
Kitsap Strong	\$640K	24 months	2024 - 2026
Methow Valley School District	\$276K	25 months	2023 - 2025
MPower (LaunchNW)	\$1.37M	27 months	2023 - 2025
Olympic Peninsula Resource CO-OP	\$896K	24 months	2024 - 2026
Seattle Postsecondary Success Network	\$1.78M	25 months	2023 - 2025
STEM Foundation	\$290K	27 months	2023 - 2025
United Way of the Blue Mountains	\$284K	27 months	2023 - 2025
WSU Native American Health Sciences	\$495K	24 months	2024 - 2026
Yakima Valley Partners for Education	\$568K	27 months	2023 - 2025
<i>Total</i>	<i>\$11,053,650</i>		

## Educational Outcomes in Regions Served by RCG Partnerships

As required by RCW 28B.120.060, Appendix A includes publicly available data at the district level for all school districts within at least one WSAC-supported regional partnership’s service region. Specifically, Appendix A identifies district-level high school graduation rates, direct-to-college enrollment rates, and

<sup>3</sup> The first cohort include varying contract period sizes due to upstanding the program mid-fiscal year. Moving forward with the 2025 Re-Application Cycle, all partnerships will receive 24-month contract periods in alignment with the fiscal and academic years.

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college completion rates overall and by race/ethnicity, free and reduced-price lunch (FRPL) eligibility status, and English Language Learner (ELL) program participation. School districts are organized by broad geographic regions across the state.

District-level educational outcomes are not presented as evidence of partnerships' local impacts or as efficacy of the theory of change for WSAC's RP approach for at least three reasons:

1. **Reporting on population-level outcomes takes time.** High school graduation will be the first indicator to capture an academic year in which WSAC supported regional partnerships. Graduation rates that include this first funded year of work will not be available until early 2025.
2. **Learners supported by these investments are actively navigating their educational journeys.** High school seniors served during our first academic year of funded work—students who graduated in June 2024—are only now in their first year of postsecondary education.
3. **Improving population-level outcomes is a task bigger than any one partnership or any one academic year.** WSAC's investments in regional partnerships are but one part of a much larger equation that includes organizations, individuals, and communities working together to reverse trends that prevent learners from accessing opportunities.

Motivated by the need for more meaningful—and more timely—evidence, WSAC staff emphasize locally relevant measures of continuous improvement as the currency of community impact. These partnership-specific short-term outcomes, which are co-designed with WSAC staff, match the urgency of the work by capturing and celebrating positive impacts early and often.

Four partnerships will soon complete reporting on short-term outcomes for the 2023-24 academic year, and all thirteen partnerships will report on short-term outcomes for the 2024-25 academic year.

### The Regional Partnership Learning Brief Series

The 2024 RP Learning Briefs highlight the early impact of WSAC's investments in regional partnerships. Each brief explores early evidence of increased attainment within a component of the theory of change:

**Brief #1:** Leveraging State Funds to Change Systems Through Regional Partnerships (December 2024).

**Brief #2:** Partnerships are Creating Systems Change in their Communities .

Part I (December 2024) | Part II (Spring 2025)

**Brief #3:** What Partnerships Teach us about Place-Based Policy Change (Spring 2025).

## Summaries of Work for RCG Partnerships

### Centro Cultural Mexicano

2024 COHORT

#### King, Pierce, and Snohomish Counties

Partners: Centro Cultural Mexicano, Cascadia College, Latino Educational Training Institute (LETI), Mi Centro

The partnership focuses on the Latino and Spanish-speaking learners who live in the Puget Sound area, including both rural and urban communities. Based on this focus, the partnership is developing a Regional Strategic Action Plan outlining the barriers that affect postsecondary enrollment and retention in Latino communities, with recommendations for future action. This report consists of a regional landscape study, community assessments, and data analysis to create a clearly defined, current understanding of postsecondary educational challenges facing Latino communities and a recommendation for the next steps. The partnership also builds shared understanding and alignment between community-based organizations (CBOs) and institutions of higher education.

The partnership engages communities through arts and culture events and resource events. At these events, the partnership serves as trusted messengers in their communities, facilitating data collection through surveys conducted in a culturally and linguistically appropriate way. These events provide holistic supports and basic needs resources as well as critical access to a variety of opportunities. The implementation of the Regional Strategic Action Plan will occur through this partnership of by-and-for organizations. They will collect and interpret nuanced community data that is reflective of the Latino population in the Puget Sound region. It is not just a regional Strategic Action Plan that will be produced. This work will amplify the collective voice of the community, the organizational partnership, and the greater partnership with WSAC—leading to systemic changes that support educational empowerment.

Each partnership organization acts as a regional hub and an equal partner with deep trust and relationships in their community. They state, “Not only do our community members have lived experience in navigating these postsecondary education systems, but our organizations—the people who work to better our communities’ outcomes—also have our own lived experience as members of our Latino community. We are learning from a place of understanding and this partnership takes into account the very real challenges that face our communities.”

### Cornerstone (Chehalis School District)

2023 COHORT

#### Lewis County

Partners: Chehalis School District, The Chehalis Foundation, Centralia College, United Way of Lewis County, The BERC Group, Summit Center, Bethel Church, & Boys and Girls Club of Chehalis

The Cornerstone Program represents a new body of work aligned with the Chehalis School District’s Student Achievement Initiative (SAI). The goal of Cornerstone is to build relationships and trust with the families of young children through a services-first approach so that they can better support their students throughout their educational journeys. SAI partner organizations, United Way of Lewis County and the Summit Center, collaborate with Cornerstone to support students and families. In partnership with the community, Cornerstone supports families and students in three ways:

- **Early and Primary Age Learners:** Cornerstone staff work with teachers and community partners to provide support and educational opportunities to enhance student preparation and growth for pre-K through 5th grade students. They host educational events, develop learning kits and summer programs, and offer preschool scholarships geared at strengthening the career and college readiness culture of the Chehalis School District.
- **Family Engagement and Support:** Staff work with community partners, focus on breaking down barriers, and walk alongside families. This includes providing a part-time Mental Health Counselor to ensure the engagement of parents and community members with their local schools. Additionally, they offer parent workshops and use a dual-generation approach to ensure the needs of both the student and their families are being met.
- **Responsive Communication and Access to Staff:** To reduce equity gaps in the Chehalis community, the district is providing enhanced communications and College and Career Readiness marketing targeted to low-income and Hispanic or Latino families.

### Empowering Learners to Excel through Vocation Advancement, Training, and Education (ELEVATE)

2024 COHORT

#### Snohomish County

Partners: Everett Community College, Evergreen Goodwill of Northwest Washington, among others being recruited.

The partnership builds on connections between the Snohomish County Job Training and Education Center at Evergreen Goodwill of Northwest Washington (SnoCo JTEC) and the credential programs at Everett Community College (EvCC) to support adult learners in pursuing and completing a credential. They evaluate Evergreen Goodwill Digital Skills and Job Readiness courses to find alignment with EvCC prerequisites and create a Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) process. This enables them to award credits for individuals completing qualifying courses.

The partnership is designing a dedicated campus space of wraparound supports for adult learners, such as a lending library, hotspots, and laptops. This space will foster a sense of belonging for learners who are often considered ‘non-traditional’ in a college environment. It will support adult learners to persist through their chosen pathway.

This work is informed by the multitude of learner populations that they serve including refugees and asylees. Many of these learners come to their campus with previous credentials from their home countries. The partnership understands the wealth of experiences that adult learners bring to their continued learning and honors this value in their work. They state, “No matter where or how you got your skills, it counts.”

These two primary organizations have a longstanding relationship. They previously worked to develop CPL for high school graduation, but it stalled during the pandemic. ELEVATE represents an emerging partnership that is recruiting additional CBO partners from their broader community. This recruitment is built on a strong foundation of leaders embedded within the community they serve. They continue to reach, listen to, and engage with their community in their work.

## Foundation for Tacoma Students (FFTS)

2023 COHORT

### Pierce County

Partners: Franklin Pierce Schools, Peninsula Schools, Tacoma Public Schools, Bethel Public Schools, Asia Pacific Cultural Center, Bates Technical College, Clover Park Technical College, Enhanced Prep, Imagine Justice, Mi Chiantla, Northwest Education Access, Palmer Scholars, Pacific Lutheran University, Pierce College, Priceless Inspiration Foundation, RISE Center, Tacoma Community College, Tacoma Youth Symphony Association, University of Puget Sound, University of Washington Tacoma, West Sound STEM Network and Write 253.

FFTS and its partners are targeting increased educational attainment through the expanded reach of two strategies—What’s Next Senior Supports and Campaign Free Aid. Both strategies support graduating high school students with the transition to postsecondary education and training. These strategies reflect intentional efforts to foster a greater sense of belonging for historically marginalized students in the region.

- **What’s Next Senior Supports** leverages CBOs to respond to student needs with navigational and case management support. FFTS works with three school districts to survey senior students about their postsecondary plans. Then, a team of community mentors known as the Community Response Team (CRT) reaches out to students to offer personalized support, including help with applying to college, completing financial aid applications, finding and applying for scholarships, enrolling in pre-apprenticeship and job training programs, and more. FFTS strategy managers match student needs with mentor expertise, monitor progress, and provide programmatic support. The partnership aims for 40 percent of high school seniors within each partner district to participate in the survey, receive support, and have positive results each school year.
- **Campaign Free Aid (CFA)** 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. CFA builds capacity through regional convenings, financial aid trainings, messaging campaigns, and completion events. FFTS staff coordinate with districts, institutions of higher education, and additional community partners who staff these events from December through May, assisting students and contributors with creating FSA IDs, completing financial aid applications, and, in some cases, providing language assistance services. CBOs provide direct services to high school youth and also independently organize and host completion events at their facilities.

## Kitsap Strong

2024 COHORT

### Kitsap and Mason Counties

Partners: Bainbridge Island School District, Bremerton School District, Central Kitsap School District, Chief Kitsap Academy, Kitsap Community Resources, North Kitsap School District, North Mason School District, Olympic College, Olympic Educational Service District 114, South Kitsap School District, & Hope Centered.

Kitsap Strong seeks to increase enrollment and retention within the region. It will deepen its trauma-informed, hope-centered systems change framework using three related strategies:

- **Hope Navigators:** Kitsap Strong seeks to expand the Hope Navigator capacity in Kitsap and northern Mason counties by training 150 individuals from K-12, higher education, and youth-serving CBOs. As a part of their Community of Practice for Hope Navigators, they provide an

action framework for goal setting and the materials and resources for developing strategic implementation plans.

- **Summer Bridge Program:** The partnership is piloting an aligned Bridge opportunity with Olympic College. The two-week summer program includes a Math and English bootcamp, two field trips, workshops on wellbeing, motivation, and navigating college life, and relationship building within the cohort of students. Eligible students will be recent high school graduates from school districts in Kitsap and northern Mason County planning to enroll at Olympic College in the Fall 2025 quarter, with a special focus on recruiting ELL students.
- **Future Focused Summer Academy:** The partnership is expanding an aligned middle school Future Focused Summer Academy, previously piloted with Bremerton School District. The Summer Academy focuses on career and college pathways utilizing the Science of Hope framework for action. This strategy seeks to increase the levels of hope among 6th Grade students who participate in the summer program.

Kitsap Strong grounds their work in data and the voices of their community. Although the work with the Regional Challenge Grant includes ten targeted partners, Kitsap Strong’s place-based, Collective Impact partnership includes more than 110 organizations. Together, they are working to transform systems to improve the well-being and educational attainment of their community to alleviate generational poverty.

### **MPower (LaunchNW)**

2023 COHORT

#### **Spokane County**

Partners: LaunchNW – Innovia Foundation, Northeast Washington ESD 101, Spokane Public Schools, Medical Lake School District, East Valley School District, Central Valley School District, Riverside School District, Nine Mile Falls School District, Eastern Washington University, Whitworth University, Gonzaga University, Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Inland Northwest, Communities in Schools, EPIC Mentoring Program, Nuestras Raíces HBPA, Greater Spokane Incorporated, and Slingshot

LaunchNW and the Innovia Foundation partner with CBOs and local universities to implement a comprehensive mentoring initiative, MPower, to support students in the Spokane region. The MPower mentoring program is available to all interested 10th, 11th, and 12th grade students in the pilot schools, but focuses on connecting low-income students, BIPOC students, students experiencing homelessness, and English language learning students with mentors. Mentors include adult, college-attending (near-peer), and post-high school peers. They provide encouragement, guidance, and support that is tailored to each student’s academic, emotional, social, and financial needs. An integral part of MPower’s implementation includes the recruitment of BIPOC mentors through partnerships with CBOs.

The partnership serves students at University, East Valley, Shadle Park, North Central, Medical Lake, Riverside, Liberty and Nine Mile Falls High Schools, providing family mentor experiences at all eight schools. Site coordinators from organizations like Communities in Schools and Big Brothers Big Sisters are placed in the high schools to bring together regional mentorship partners, and to identify and place students with mentors.

MPower also provides career exploration and coaching to students via partnership with Greater Spokane Incorporated and Spokane Public Schools to create career exploration experiences, such as: job shadows, internships, tours, and business after hours events. They also include a component known as purpose

pathways provided by Slingshot in select schools to provide individualized coaching for students about career awareness and pathways to career attainment.

### **Methow Valley School District**

2023 COHORT

#### **Okanogan County**

Partners: Methow Valley Education Foundation, TwispWorks, Room One, Family Health Centers, Western Washington University Sustainability Pathways, Sawtooth Dental, Methow Trails, Methow Valley Elder Care Coordination Network (Jamie's Place), Classroom in Bloom, Three Rivers Hospital, Wenatchee Valley College, Family Health Center, North Central Educational Service District, with others being recruited.

Students in the Methow Valley School District partnership are matched with real-world learning opportunities based on their interests, including dual credit, Career and Technical Education (CTE), internships, and apprenticeships. This strategy is directly correlative to the place in which they reside, which is rural and geographically isolated from postsecondary pathways. By building out pathways to support learners within their own communities, the partnership can retain young adults in their region who can enter career pathways that are in need locally.

Based on intentional partner recruitment from the first year of funded work, the partnership is expanding to new pathway development, which includes piloting two new College in the High School courses to build out the natural resources CTE pathway. By integrating students into hands-on curriculum through the natural resources pathway, students can find good wage-earning jobs through major employers in this sector, which is of great need in their community due to the rise in forest fires and the support of recreation as a major economic driver through the tourism industry. In conjunction, the school district continues to explore the feasibility of offering a Health Sciences course. This would allow students to explore career opportunities and learn the basic skills and knowledge necessary for entry-level positions in the Healthcare field. Recognizing the skills gaps that currently exist in the trades industries, including construction and mechanics, the district continues to seek partnerships in those areas with the intention of establishing worksite learning opportunities in the future.

This intentional partnership expansion has occurred not just at the sector level but also in the learners served, from grades 7-12 in the local school districts, to young adult outreach. Increasing their network of learners served aids their goal of retaining more individuals to ensure the richness of their community.

### **Olympic Peninsula Resource Connections & Opportunities (CO-OP)**

2024 COHORT

#### **Clallam and Jefferson Counties**

Partners: Department of Social & Health Services, Olympic Angels, Olympic Community of Health, Olympic Peninsula YMCA, Peninsula College, Serenity House of Clallam County, United Way of Clallam County, West Sound STEM Network

The partnership meets learners where they live in a place-based approach to build trusted relationships rooted in liberatory design. They are piloting and expanding a collaborative Resource Connections & Opportunities (CO-OP) model in three communities: Forks, Port Angeles, and Port Townsend.

These Resource CO-OPs bring CBOs together in a single location to simplify access wraparound services and enter college. These weekly Resource CO-OPs offer potential students access to support for housing, childcare, transportation, financial aid, college enrollment and advising in a one-stop shop and prioritize



services for adult learners and youth aging out of the foster care system. The CO-OP will be offered one day a week at each location, starting with a pilot at the Port Angeles DSHS offices and soon followed by locations in Forks and Port Townsend. The Resource CO-OPs serve as onramps to training in high-demand fields and remove barriers to retention and completion.

Weekly Resource CO-OPs at three locations will provide the following: housing resources (Serenity House), financial aid support (United Way Clallam County; Peninsula College), childcare resource navigation, food, transportation, and healthcare support by this network of CBOs (YMCA, DSHS, and Peninsula College's Benefit Navigator), postsecondary enrollment and advising (Peninsula College), and assisting with navigation of foster youth aging out (Olympic Angels).

### The Seattle Postsecondary Success Network (City of Seattle)

2023 COHORT

#### King County

Partners: City of Seattle's Department of Education and Early Learning (DEEL), Seattle Public Schools, Seattle Colleges, Seattle Promise, Empowering Youth and Families Outreach (EYFO), El Centro de la Raza, Mentoring Urban Students and Teens (MUST), Brotherhood Initiative, Sisterhood Initiative, Project Baldwin, Technology Access Foundation, and Seattle Youth Employment Program, Scholar Fund, and Right Standing Solutions

The Seattle Postsecondary Success Network (PSSN) represents a partnership between the City of Seattle's DEEL, local CBOs, and Seattle Colleges. PSSN provides coordinated mentorship and College and Career Readiness (CCR) support for Black, Latinx, and Indigenous students from high school through their second year of postsecondary education. This partnership supports the following three related, culturally specific, and responsive efforts:

- **Expansion of mentorship services.** Multiple CBOs provide mentorship to support postsecondary planning and navigation to BIPOC students in Seattle high schools and for Seattle Promise scholars. Mentor models vary, but common mentor services offered include a combination of 1:1 and group mentoring activities and workshops focused on college and career preparation, exploration, and readiness. Some providers offer specific supports such as multi-lingual and Spanish language support (El Centro), community-building outings with a specific focus on cultural identity and pride for Black Males (MUST), and a Healthy Relationships workshop series (EYFO).
- **Co-creation of College and Career Readiness (CCR) Capacity Building.** At Garfield and Franklin High School, the work engages CBOs, school staff, students, and families to build adult capacity around resource coordination and expand learning on Culturally Specific Responsive CCR strategies. The end goal is to ensure BIPOC students feel supported and well-prepared for post-secondary opportunities. This engagement is tailored to the unique needs of each specific school.
- **Expanded career-connected learning opportunities.** With an emphasis on expanding opportunities for BIPOC students, the partnership works to increase high school juniors and current and incoming Seattle Promise scholars' access to additional, paid opportunities for career-connected learning and internships throughout both the academic year and summer.

## The STEM Foundation

2023 COHORT

### Benton County

Partners: Kiona-Benton City School District, The STEM Foundation, Columbia Basin College, Washington State University Tri-Cities, Educational Service District-123, Open Doors/TC Futures, Tri-City Development Council, Tri-City Regional Chamber of Commerce, Benton-Franklin Workforce Development Council, Mid-Columbia Libraries, and Steward Leaders, LLC, among others being recruited.

The STEM Foundation is a cross-sector partnership engaging families in rural Kiona-Benton City (Ki-Be), which is just outside of the Tri-Cities region, where the partnership resides. The STEM Foundation supports students in the local school district to gain access to postsecondary pathways and familiarizes parents with resources available to support their students and their own re-entry. The “why” of this strategy is vital — students in Ki-Be are 84 percent free and reduced price lunch (FRPL) eligible<sup>4</sup>—and with growing West Richland nearby, some students can choose to have a longer commute time to access a more resourced school district. If the partnership can uplift the Ki-Be school district and the trusted work they implement—and supplement their efforts through a robust partnership network—rural Ki-Be can retain students in their school district and support their college and career pathway.

The partnership categorizes their work to:

- **Inspire:** Introduce students in the Ki-Be School District to career options and develop their postsecondary pathway of interest (inclusive of out-of-school and ‘non-traditional’ students). Through this strategy, students understand how their plans help them leverage their individual strengths and skills within the pathway they pursue.
- **Empower:** Equip parents and caregivers with the confidence to support their student’s postsecondary pathway and connect adults with support structures for their own education and career development in a two-generation approach. This approach is culturally responsive to family system support in a rural district with a nearly 50 percent Hispanic/Latino population, and programs are administered in both English and Spanish.<sup>5</sup>
- **Engage:** Include local community voices to share the message of credential attainment in workforce development. This strategy includes partnership recruitment such as recently engaging the local library network, which can operate as a hub for learners to receive support about college and career pathways. This allows for continuous program co-creation that reflects the community’s needs, strengths, and preferences.

## United Way of the Blue Mountains

2023 COHORT

### Walla Walla and Columbia County

Partners: Elevate, Walla Walla Community College, Dayton School District, Columbia Burbank School District, Touchet School District, Prescott School District, College Place School District, Walla Walla School District, Waitsburg School District, Dixie Elementary and Starbuck Elementary

The Collective Impact partnership is establishing student and family advisory groups to build community trust in the Blue Mountains region, which includes Walla Walla, Touchet, Prescott, Starbuck, Waitsburg,

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<sup>4</sup> See OSPI’s Washington State Report Card for state- and district-level measures of students in the Ki-Be School District: <https://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/ReportCard/ViewSchoolOrDistrict/100389>

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

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Dayton, and College Place school districts. The advisory groups will be led by a trusted Community Advocate and will inform greater development of the partnership to provide an opportunity to share information about all postsecondary opportunities. This strategy is informed by their first year of work, where the United Way of the Blue Mountains partnership conducted a qualitative research study to better understand why individuals in the region choose to forgo postsecondary education.

By utilizing a Results-Based Facilitation framework, the partnership plans to move the advisory groups towards action to work towards the common agenda of increasing postsecondary attainment in a place-based manner in their community. The partnership's region is expansive. It includes Walla Walla, with its population of approximately 34,000 residents. It also includes the town of Prescott, with less than 400 residents and a school district where 72 percent of students are low-income and 68 percent are Hispanic/Latino.<sup>6</sup> Despite this contrast, the partnership seeks to ensure through the Community Advocate and advisory committee strategy that postsecondary opportunities can be equitable for all in the Blue Mountain region.

When students and families can participate in a community-based advisory group and are given access to a Community Advocate who centers their needs, the partnership believes that community members will have more agency over their decisions about post-high school plans. Through this work, the community itself will create new spaces for conversations about educational decisions, and students and families will think about the potential "fit" of different types of post-high school pathways. Changes through implementing community advisory groups will, over time, create changes in students' post-high school plans that will lead to increased educational attainment.

### Washington State University Native American Health Sciences

(WSU NAHS)

2024 COHORT

Chelan, Okanogan, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens, and Yakima Counties<sup>7</sup>

Partners: The Coeur d'Alene Tribe, Community Colleges of Spokane, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, The Kalispel Tribe of Indians, Seattle Children's Hospital, Spokane Tribe of Indians, WSU NAHS, Yakama Nation, among others being recruited.

The partnership coordinates K-12 and college-centered pathway programs in the health sciences for Indigenous youth and adults. This work is a direct reflection of requests by tribal elders and community members to support their youth in becoming healthcare workers who can, in turn, support their communities. The partnership is emerging and plans to develop aligned goals amongst cross-sector organizations to build, in their words, "true capacity in and with the community."

Together, the higher education institutions, alongside community leaders, are deeply embedded within their respective communities. The partnership centers their work with an approach to healthcare and medicine that honors its relationship with the land. Whereas WSU's NAHS program is located at WSU

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<sup>6</sup> See OSPI's Washington State Report Card for state- and district-level measures of students in the Prescott School District: <https://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/ReportCard/ViewSchoolOrDistrict/100204>

<sup>7</sup> Washington State University Native American Health Sciences serves the tribal lands across our state that are within listed county lines, inclusive of the Spokane Tribe of Indians, The Coeur d'Alene Tribe, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, Yakama Nation, and The Kalispel Tribe of Indians.

Spokane, the majority of this work will take place on tribal lands in Central and Eastern Washington. By centering trusted relationships in this work, the partnership is in a position to create change within education and healthcare systems and also serve whole families. Their approach is considered three-generation: serving the students in a K-12 system through a postsecondary pathway, engaging their family as a support system, and engaging tribal elders in convenings throughout the planning process.

The partnership describes their two years of partnership engagement as putting a bundle together, a process by which key stakeholders and tribes are brought together to assign what should be put in this bundle by way of serving Indigenous learners in the health sciences. This bundle will remain place-based throughout their engagement, honoring the unique attributes of each of the five tribes they are engaging. It will also be documented throughout their journey of putting the bundle together, honoring the culturally relevant methods of storytelling through a videographer that will capture the assets and stories amongst the tribes engaged.

### Yakima Valley Partners for Education

2023 COHORT

#### Yakima County

Partners: The College Success Foundation, Catholic Charities Housing, Communities for Colleges, Communities in Schools, Eastern Washington University, El Conquistador, ESD 105, Fred Hutch Center, Granger High School, Heritage University, HU-Adelante STEM Program, HU High School Equivalency Program (HEP), OSPI-Office of Native Education, KDNA Radio, Mabton School District, Mount Adams School District, Northwest Harvest, Nuestra Casa, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Safe Haven, Yakima Valley Farmworkers Clinic-Parents as Teachers, Self Help Bank, Silvias Taxes, StriveTogether, Sunnyside School District, Taxes Y Mas, United Family Center, the University of Washington GEAR UP, West Valley School District, Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, Yakima Neighborhood Health, and Yakima Valley College.

Yakima Valley Partners for Education implements community-responsive strategies focusing on Spanish language access in the middle and lower areas of the Yakima Valley. Through data collection, the partnership finds that community members are interested in postsecondary pathways but are unsure of the 'how' to make that possible. All implemented strategies support families from this perspective, including:

- **Trusted Tax Approaches** provide local, Spanish-speaking tax preparers to families to support families filing their income tax from a place of trust. This is a necessary step to ensure a family has the financial forms completed that are required before filing a FAFSA or WASFA. By participating in this event, families view college affordability as less of a barrier and the partnership provides parents an opportunity to grow in how they can support their students' pursuits of postsecondary opportunities.
- **Community Conversations**, where students and families are greeted with a warm meal and can learn from a variety of sectors about postsecondary opportunities and resources, including local institutions of higher education, College Success Foundation, and GEAR UP. Each conversation is tailored to the community in the valley where it resides, focusing on two main student populations: Latino and Indigenous families. At these events, all community leaders share their own stories of college access alongside actionable information. This conversation helps learners embrace as possible the full landscape of postsecondary opportunities by seeing adults who look like them speak to their own experiences from a place of belonging.

- **School-Based Approaches** include direct K-12 support to provide college campus visits to students, which expands their access to postsecondary opportunities. This strategy is intentionally sequenced with Community Conversations, FAFSA/WASFA completion nights, and other postsecondary programs to catalyze the sense of belonging students receive from their campus visits. When students are on college campuses through this approach, they feel a sense of belonging that when coupled with their community at home providing support, creates a feeling that their pathway of choice can be accomplished.

### Appendices

- Appendix A: [Educational Outcomes in RCG Service Regions, by Geographic Region](#)
- Appendix B: [Washington Student Achievement Council 2025 Strategic Action Plan](#)
- Appendix C: [May 2024 Recommendations Submitted to the WSAC Council](#)
- Appendix D: [May 2024 Resolutions on Existing Regional Partnerships to the WSAC Council](#)
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#### **The Regional Partnership Theory of Change**

A regional culture that values educational opportunities for all residents will improve educational attainment more than any one program or intervention. WSAC believes that the work of cross-sector community-based collaborations can nurture this culture alongside local populations, and the combination of local work and state dollars offers regional partnerships the capacity to do exactly this. In contrast to state-level officials, local community members can shape student outcomes from a position of deep community knowledge, trust, and needs. Furthermore, a regional partnership's learning becomes statewide learning that can ignite support for state policies that close institutional gaps in educational access and outcomes.

## 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).

If you would like copies of this document in an alternative format, please contact the Washington Student Achievement Council at:

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