



# Washington Completes FAFSA Campaign Advisory Board

January 20, 2026



# About WSAC

- **Mission**
  - Expand economic opportunity for all by increasing the number of WA residents who complete education and training pathways beyond the high school diploma
- **Functions**
  - Policy support for the Governor and Legislature
  - Innovate with partners on the ground to learn what works
  - Support affordability through financial aid and college savings programs
- **The Council**
  - The agency is supported by a 10-person Council, including 6 Governor's appointees and 4 education sector representatives



# Advisory Board Overview

- Convened by the Governor's Office, led by WSAC
- Align and coordinate statewide FAFSA/WASFA completion efforts
- Strengthen implementation by sharing data, tools, and practices
- Identify barriers and recommend strategies to improve equitable access to financial aid



Governors Executive Order 2025  
<https://dub.link/EO2025>



# Meeting Cadence

Next meeting: Tuesday, Feb 17 2:00 – 4:00 P.M.

## Between meetings:

- WSAC will send agenda prior to meeting
- Surface barriers and opportunities to increase completion
- Share key updates and WSAC resources with your network & bring back learnings
- Help shape statewide strategies, recognition of high performing schools and campaign adjustments



# Objectives + January Focus

## Objectives

- Share progress since 12/16
- Align priorities (Jan – June)
- Refine “Finish your financial aid app week”
- 2026 legislative session updates
- Confirm next steps

## January Focus

- Financial Aid Data
- Strategy Highlight
  - 2B Regional Training for Trusted Messenger
  - 2C Expand OtterBot gen + basic needs
  - 3C Overhaul TM comms + FASFA dashboard & Leaderboard
- Discuss and plan for “Finish your financial aid app week”



# Goals: 2025 – 2026 Academic Year Campaign

## Our Goal: Increase financial aid completion across WA seniors

- Ensure 46,000 seniors complete the FAFSA or WASFA
- Raise FRPL-eligible student completions by 6% or more in at least 150 high schools
- Close the gap in FAFSA completion between FRPL and non-FRPL students
- Reduce disparities in FAFSA completion rates, especially among those from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups



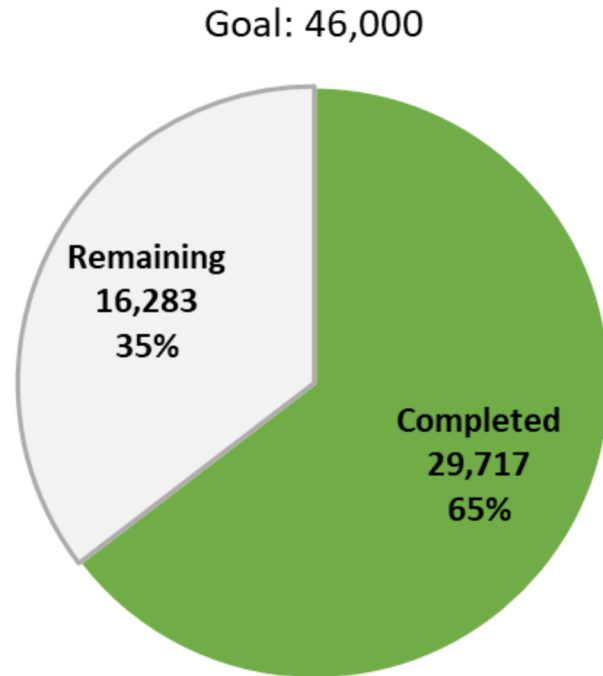


# Progress Towards Our Goal #1

**37 out of 53 weeks to go:** Campaign runs through September 2026

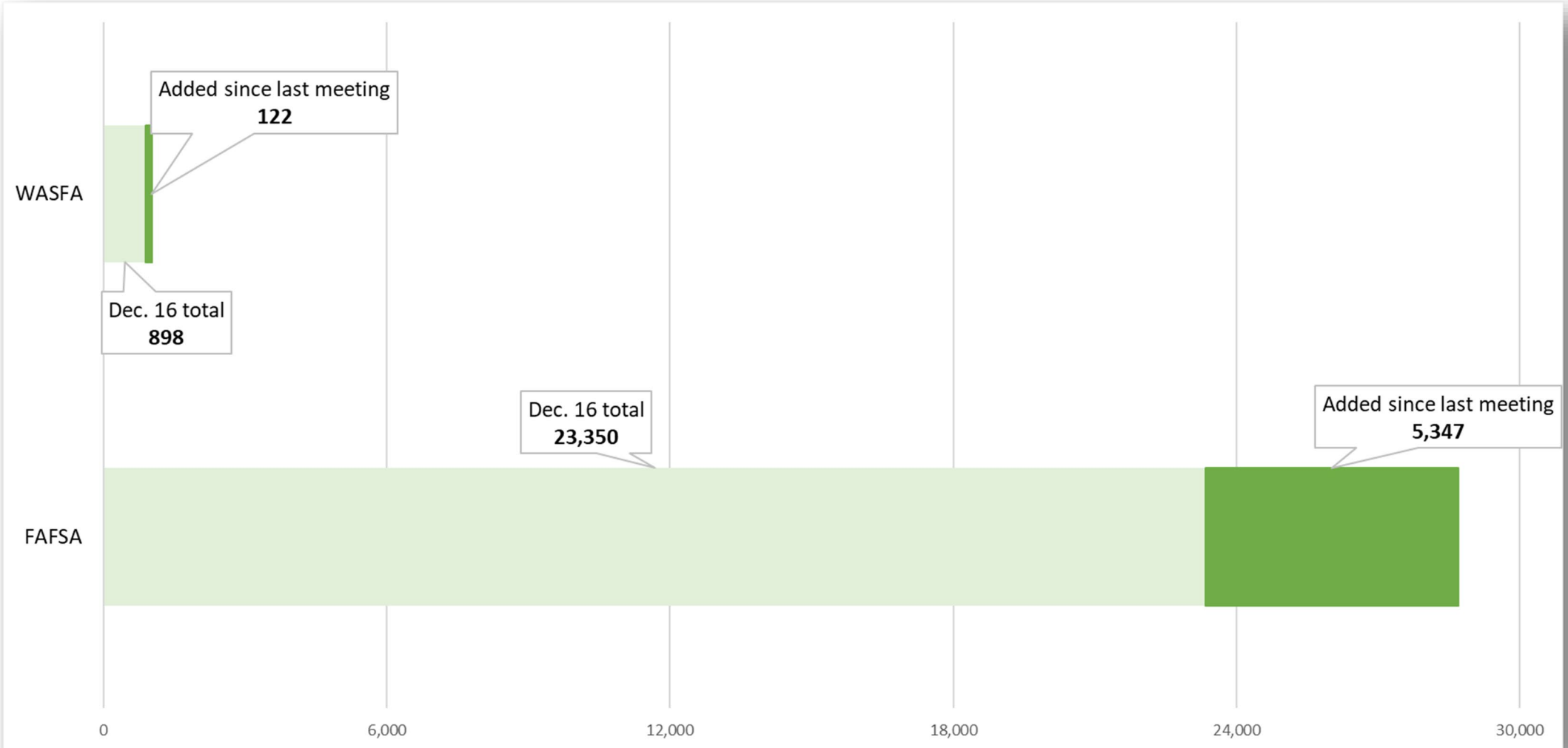
As of January 19: Class of 2026 FAFSA & WASFA completion rate is **34%**

In just 4 months, we have **29,717** FAFSA and WASFA completions, we are already *more than halfway to our goal* of 46,000 completions!





# Completions Momentum – Since December 16, 2025





# Progress Toward Our 2025-26 Goals

#2	69 high schools have already experienced a 6% increase in FAFSA completions among FRPL-eligible students. We're up 24 schools since last meeting, 81 more to reach our goal of 150.
#3	FAFSA completion among FRPL-eligible students is 8pp below FAFSA completion for non-FRPL students (29% vs. 37%). The gap has widened since our last check-in. We're prioritizing strategies that remove barriers for FRPL students.
#4	By race/ethnicity, Equity Gap Score is 2.9 – the group with the highest FAFSA completion has a rate that is three times the group with the lowest completion rate (Asian 46% vs. NHPI 16%). Without action, existing disparities in filing by race/ethnicity may worsen.



# December – What We Said We'd Do

## Shared Ask

- Share resources & boost completion in your area
- Report back wins/challenges from the field
- Join recognition group or host a training

## Action Items

- OSPI partnership
  - Migrant support & additional WA Grant integration in HSBP
- Expand statewide partners
- “FA is easier than you think” messaging
- Onsite admission & financial aid integration
- FA Challenge Week



# Strategy Progress & Highlights

## 2B Regional Trainings for Trusted Messengers

- **What we're seeing:**
  - In person trainings are the highest impact
  - Demand is growing beyond counselors
  - Trusted messengers want a clear “what I need to know” and “where to send students” model
  - Families increasingly need special topic support
- **How we're adjusting:**
  - Eastside regional trainings – Wenatchee Public Library: 3 trainings in one (**Feb. 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1-4 pm**) and Walla Walla in progress.
  - Expanding messenger lanes – Washington Education Association
  - Launching income adjustments/appeal training to respond to emergent needs

## 2C Expand OtterBot for students & parents + basic needs

- **What we're seeing:**
  - **30,924:** Total # of HS senior users statewide (since Nov)
  - **1,791:** Total # of HS senior users at the 25 priority schools
  - Approx. **40,000** parents/guardians of College Bound HS seniors
- **How we're adjusting:** Adding 2025-2026 non-College Bound seniors (**est. 14,000**) and parents (not done before) from OSPI directory information into OtterBot. We are reaching adult learners, too, asking about interests and sending pathway options and new steps based on responses.

## 3C Strengthen Trusted Messenger Communications

- **What we're seeing:**
  - Schools respond when messaging is role-specific
  - Trusted messenger channels are driving follow-through when we pair them with to local authority and timely prompts
- **How we're adjusting:**
  - Sent (Jan.16) another round of outreach to trusted messengers, superintendents, principals, and counselor
  - **2,479** recipients with an average open rate of **54%**



# FAFSA Portal and College Access DSA Update

## *What we're seeing:*

- Last year **47** districts without a DSA.

This year combined College Bound & FAFSA portal DSA

- DSA is bringing in new districts:
  - **219** districts signed in 2 months, and **73** are currently unsigned.
  - If past signers re-sign, only **36** districts remain.
- Portal access statewide: **513** active portal users
  - **88.5%** of students are in schools with at least 1 portal user
  - **202** schools still have no portal users.

## *How we're adjusting:*

Continue targeted outreach, especially to large districts that require more review, and create a short “how to use data” video (10min.), so portal users can take action fast.



# 2026 Legislative Session: Relevant Bills

Bill Number (Sponsor)	Description	Current Status
<b><u>SB 5841</u></b> (Sen. Boehnke)	Requires FAFSA or WASFA completion as part of a student's High School and Beyond Plan	Senate ELK12 Committee; scheduled for executive session on Thursday, Jan. 22
<b><u>HB 2132</u></b> (Rep. Leavitt)	Limits disclosure and retention of personally identifying information related to the WASFA	House PEW Committee; scheduled for executive session today, Jan. 20



## Roundtable Discussion – Part 1

- What have you tried or learned about since 12/16?
- What worked?
- Where did you or colleagues/networks get stuck?
- What barriers did you see or what did you hear?



# Complete Your Financial Aid Application Week – April 20

- Statewide push to complete financial aid applications before summer, during the week of April 20 – build on momentum
- Email campaign to superintendents, principals, counselors, and community partners ahead of April 20
  - Collateral
  - Supports and training
  - Virtual events for students and parents/caregivers
- Student/family outreach campaign – email and text
- Incentives to complete before the end of the week (or before)
  - Working with partners on options



## Roundtable Discussion – Part 2

### Question 1:

Picture the week of April 20<sup>th</sup> going really well.

What are 1 -2 visible signs of success for schools, students/families, statewide?  
What is the single lowest lift action a school can take to get us there?

### Question 2:

What can YOU as an Advisory Board member do to make this week a success?  
Where can you assist?

**\*\*\*3-5 action items\*\*\***



# Asks of Advisory Board Members

- Between now and February 17, help drive increases in financial aid completion within your school, organization, and networks.
  - Share out WSAC resources
  - Share back successes, challenges, and other learning opportunities
- Promote a resource, event, etc in February for *Financial Aid Awareness month*
- Host or join a regional training in your area to support the work to increase filing statewide
- Finish Your Financial Aid Application Week planning!



# Community Voices

- Open floor for guests and partners to share



# Moving Forward Together

- Next meeting: February 17, 2026 (2-4 PM) Virtual
- Materials will be shared approximately one to two weeks in advance
- [wsac.wa.gov/wa-completes-fafsa-advisory-board](https://wsac.wa.gov/wa-completes-fafsa-advisory-board)
- Please contact Sarah Weiss at [sarahwe@wsac.wa.gov](mailto:sarahwe@wsac.wa.gov)