



Approach 1

North Star Goal 2

Evidence Infrastructure 3

Case Study 4

Outcome Themes 7

Conclusion 8

WSAC Regional Partnerships Evaluation Framework

Co-authored by

Hannah Lodwick, Associate Director of Strategy & Partnerships
KC Deane, Associate Director of Research & Program Evaluation

Evaluation architecture by

KC Deane, Associate Director of Research & Program Evaluation



Regional Partnerships Evaluation Framework

Approach

Community-led solutions to educational challenges *can and will* sustainably increase the number of Washingtonians with education and training after high school. This framework demonstrates how we measure short- and long-term outcomes to capture partnership impact and population-level change.

Regional Challenge Grant is committed to uplifting stories and evidence that highlight the assets inherently present within communities and regions. We support partners as they work towards developing and implementing practices, activities, and approaches that will change systems and lived realities in their communities. We demonstrate our commitment to evaluating regional partnerships in the following ways:

- 1** Lead with evidence-based strategies that center learners and families.
- 2** Invite communities to partner in the research process.
- 3** Center relationship and trust building between WSAC as a state agency with community-embedded partnerships.
- 4** Measure both short- and long-term outcomes to capture partnership impact alongside population-level changes. (More on page 3)
- 5** Engage in partnership-to-partnership relationship building to de-silo learning from community-centered work through a community of practice.ⁱⁱ

Our reporting goal is to amplify the power of a regional approach to advancing educational attainment. When we are effective in doing so, we can also demonstrate the value of continued investment in the Regional Challenge Grant as a program and in the specific partnerships in which we invest.

ⁱⁱ [RCG Legislative Report](#)



Photo by Allison Shelley/
Complete College Photo Library

Regional Partnerships Evaluation Framework

North Star Goal: 70 Percent Attainment

WSAC's plan to achieve 70 percent statewide attainment relies on community solutions. The Regional Challenge Grant (RCG) is a key mechanism in WSAC's broader Regional Partnership (RP) approach to invest in partnerships that identify strategies to drive change to targeted populations in their local communities. RP elevates place-based approaches as a meaningful strategy for creating an educational system that works to help all learners succeed. The approaches funded by RP are built for and by local partnership networks because those closest to and most impacted by inequitable systems are best positioned to identify and implement what will prove effective in their communities.

We cannot wait for long-term results to conclude whether regional partnerships work. Students, families, and their communities benefit from an approach to evaluation grounded in ongoing learning into how partnership work affects community change for Washingtonians. By constantly learning from and about the communities in regions served by regional partnerships, we create a feedback loop that prioritizes local knowledge and shared leadership.

Definitions

Evidence

Regional Partnerships takes a broad view of what constitutes evidence. Included in this definition are learners' and families' stories—shared through conversations, focus groups, or surveys; quantitative data captured through reporting; Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) developed as part of ongoing initiatives in which the partnership is invested; and partner organizations' collective feedback as they support each other and the community.

Equity

WSAC defines equity as an outcome in which justice is realized within our society. This happens through a continuous, intentional process of identifying and abolishing racism and all forms of oppression designed to marginalize students, communities, and families. We are committed to bringing equity to all who are Black, Indigenous, Latino, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander, Asian, and multiracial, regardless of immigration status, and all groups who experience oppression.ⁱ

ⁱ [2026 Strategic Action Plan](#)

Regional Partnerships Evaluation Framework

Evidence Infrastructure



Progress Toward 70%

Our north star means that all Washington learners can have equitable access to economic opportunity. During Regional Challenge Grant's first two years of implementation, the state moved from 60 to 62 percent attainment after years of stagnation.ⁱⁱⁱ



Population-Level Measures

Monitoring population level outcomes takes time. For each partnership in which we invest, WSAC monitors population-level shifts in key educational outcomes. This information is published in the annual legislative report and is disaggregated by income, race, and ethnicity. 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 late 2025.



Short-Term Outcomes

We cannot wait for long-term results to evaluate impact. WSAC co-develops with partnerships short-term outcomes that are unique to the context of the local community and learner- or family-populations served. Short-term outcomes provide quantitative and qualitative measures that WSAC and partnerships can monitor each academic year to ensure we have evidence of Regional Partnership impact. (More on page 4.)



Outputs

Outputs provide real-time evidence in support of our intended outcomes. Through progress reports, partnerships submit activities and outputs to WSAC that count the number of individuals served. This information provides early and consistent monitoring.

ⁱⁱⁱ [WSAC Attainment Goal Dashboard](#)

Regional Partnerships Evaluation Framework

Case Study: Methow Futures

Each Regional Partnership co-develops with WSAC short-term outcomes (STOs) that the partnership can continuously monitor throughout each year of funded work. Current partnerships are collectively measuring over sixty unique short-term outcomes, each one intentionally aligned with a theory of change that guides their work. Utilizing the Methow Futures regional partnership, we demonstrate an example of tailored short-term outcomes that are unique to each of the regional partnerships.



Students job shadow Grace Watson from Methow Salmon Recovery Foundation.

A Case Study of Methow Futures

In October 2024, RP staff traveled across North Cascades Scenic Highway to conduct a site visit in the Methow Valley. During the site visit, RP staff met with several community partners who host internship opportunities for local students enrolled at the Independent Learning Center, a local school utilizing Big Picture Learning design. During the visit, the team immersed themselves in the region's culture and the partnership's daily rhythm. We met Pacific Crest Trail hikers in the town of Mazama, a rest stop on their journey from the US-Mexico border to British Columbia, Canada. We joined students on a hike through the Loup Canyon, a former burn site from a 2009 fire, now rich with educational potential for students enrolled in the Summer Sustainability Pathways Institute with Western Washington University. In real time, our team created the basis for the partnership's theory of change to inform short-term outcomes. This basis further evolved after the site visit in an iterative, co-developed manner with the partnership. What follows is the result of this process.

Regional Partnerships Evaluation Framework

Case Study: Methow Futures

Part 1: The Partnership Theory of Change

The partnership is best described as a steward of its community, facilitating cross-generational match-making between learners and the local workforce. This process: 1) supports learners in identifying a pathway bespoke to their goals and journey, and 2) supports local industries that have the capability to sustain and grow if they can access skilled labor. This amplifying feedback loop invigorates the next generation of the community, for and by the community itself. Additionally, this approach honors the unique place-based nature of the knowledge generated and upheld locally.

Each partnership co-creates a **Theory of Change (TOC)** to guide 3 – 5 short-term outcomes. We define this theory of change as a description of what the partnership believes will change in the behaviors or actions of individuals directly involved in or served by each high-level area of work.

The TOC is how partnerships lead an individual or family to achieve the long-term goal of increased educational attainment.

In this partnership, support looks like a vast yet proximal collection of trusted community members who walk alongside students as they reflect on where they want to go and how they hope to get there. This web of local support helps students to pursue college and career training in a way that honors their individual goals and motivations; supports their potential for upward mobility; and situates their decision to stay local (or not) in an intentional understanding of the economic, cultural, and social tension that accompanies this decision. The partners intentionally expand their support to learners who may not have been ready to navigate next steps as they departed high school or who may have felt disenfranchised by the traditional education system. When taken together, the partners create, in the geographically largest school district in Washington State, a local example of how to authentically pursue systems change in education.

Part 2: Summary of the Key Evidence Sources

Group listening sessions, one-on-one interviews with learners, mentor surveys, pre- and post-student surveys, and meeting notes.

Regional Partnerships Evaluation Framework

Case Study: Methow Futures

Part 3: Report on the Short-Term Outcomes

- 1** By supporting learners in identifying a pathway bespoke to their goals and journey, the partnership helps learners feel like they can make educational decisions that fit their interests and preferences. When learners are equipped to make decisions that fit their interests and preferences, they are more likely to pursue and achieve their long-term educational and career goals.
- 2** By grounding its work in a model that encourages K-12 and opportunity youth to learn from and alongside local community members, the partnership creates cultural and social connections that are cross-generational and symbiotic. Engaging in meaningful work alongside community members increases learners' self-efficacy. When this happens, they are more likely to identify, pursue, and achieve their post-high school plans.
- 3** By surfacing and aligning its student supports with the skills gaps present in the local workforce and desired by residents, the partnership can support local industries that have the capability to sustain and grow if they can access the skilled labor that enables them to do so. When local industries can hire skilled workers from the community, they contribute to economic stability among residents.

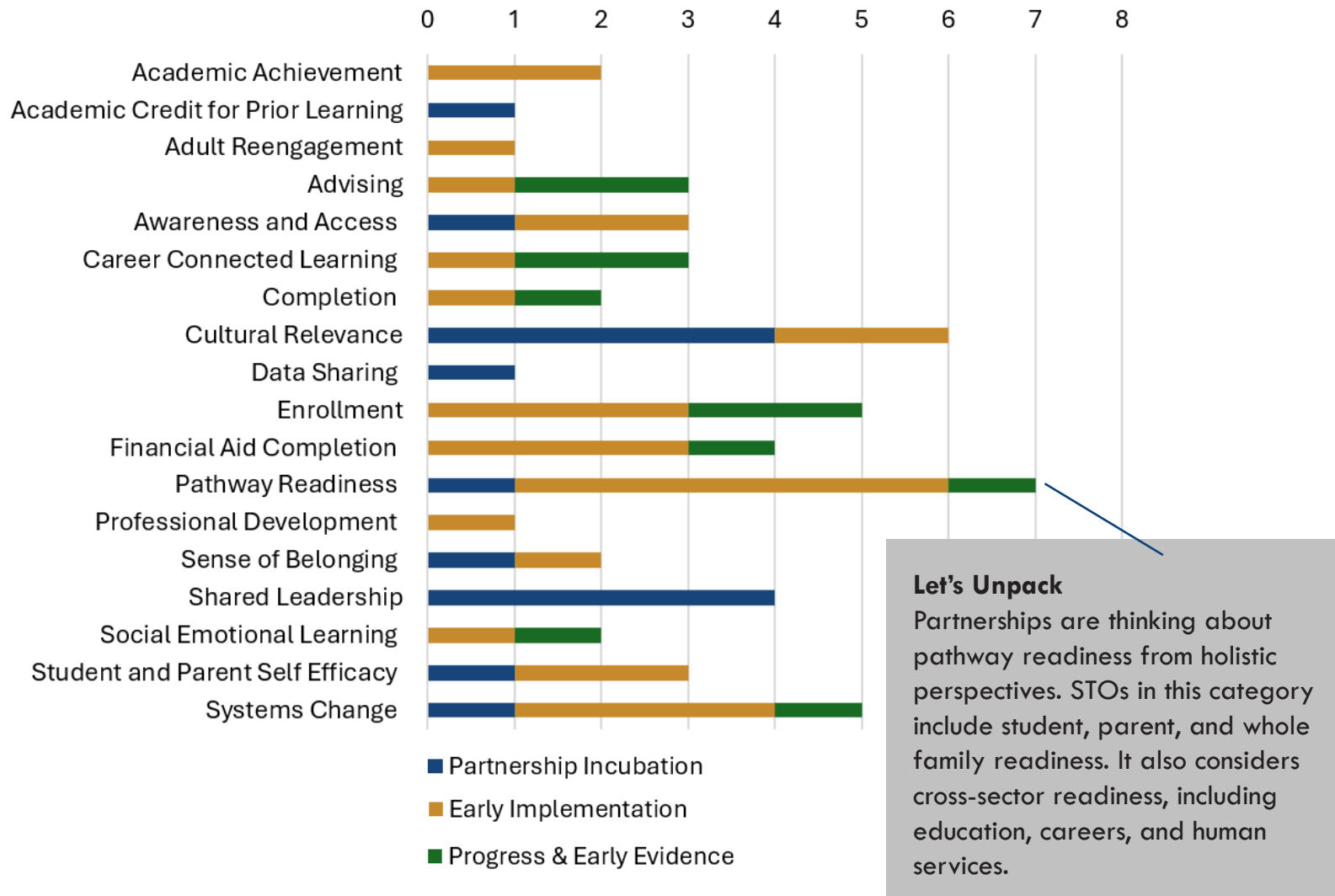
The example of Methow Futures is replicated across our cohort of 12 partnerships. Because each partnership creates place-based strategies informed by their local community, Regional Partnerships is representative of a complex network of intentional strategies. By leading with communities, we anticipate that regional partners' impact on outcomes will be straight to the point. Instead of spending years implementing strategies from a top-down approach, WSAC understands that those closest to policy problems are the best equipped to solve them.



Regional Partnerships Evaluation Framework

Themes Across Regional Partnerships

In the previous section, we reviewed one partnership's short-term outcomes. WSAC creates this level of detailed outcomes for all regional partnerships. In the graph below, we demonstrate themes across partnerships, disaggregated by the stage each partnership is in.



Regional Partnerships Evaluation Framework

Themes Across Regional Partnerships

The graph on Page 7 captures the nuance and complexity of leading with Regional Partnerships. Across the 18 themes, three rise to the surface as main themes across the state.

- 1 Cultural relevance** – Partnerships demonstrate that it isn't just about serving priority populations, it is about weaving strategies within culture to create mental model shifts.
- 2 Pathway readiness** – Partnerships ensure that students aren't just accessing their intended pathway, and their whole family system is ready to support them.
- 3 Systems change** – Systems change is not just a term or theory. Partnerships are putting systems change into practice by de-siloing organizations, changing access that is determined by geographies, and shifting pre-established norms for what is possible for specific populations of learners.

Conclusion

Through this intentional evaluation framework, WSAC consistently monitors program impact to spur innovation. Early evidence created by Regional Partnerships shows the clear efficacy of this approach: when power and resources are reallocated to the partnerships, communities, and individuals who are at the center of the work, real change can be created. To see selected early impacts and outcomes created by partnerships in the first two years of implementation, please visit our companion brief [What We Know: Regional Challenge Grants](#).