

Regional Challenge Grants



\$6 million invested
to establish RCG



1 in 5 residents
live in a region with
an active RCG partnership



29 school districts
1 tribal school



8 partnerships
65+ organizations

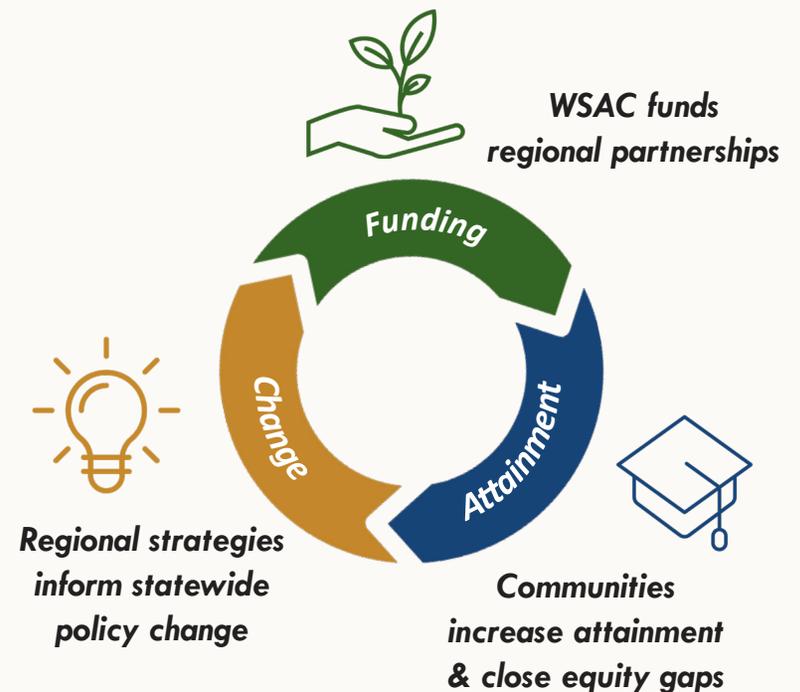
Moving the Attainment Needle

Washington's north star for educational attainment is 70% of adults with a credential beyond high school (including certificates and apprenticeships). Though there are signs of improvement across the state, we remain nearly 10 percentage points below this goal. At the same time, direct to college enrollment among Washington's high school graduates decreased dramatically during the pandemic—from 59% for the Class of 2019 to only 50% for the Class of 2021.

WSAC recognizes that our greatest chance of yielding systemic change in education requires that we center and uplift the strengths of communities in their collective efforts to improve educational outcomes for their students. Passed in 2022 with bipartisan support, Senate Bill 5789 established RCG with a \$6 million initial investment. In 2023, the Legislature increased the funding to \$16 million for the biennial budget.

In recognition of the need for culturally relevant and regionally responsive solutions, Regional Challenge Grants invest in the formation and growth of cross-sector partnerships that are committed to increasing educational attainment in their communities. Our goal is to empower regional partnerships that invest in communities so that structural barriers no longer impede educational access and outcomes, especially for students of color, students from low-income backgrounds, English-language learners, students with disabilities, students experiencing homelessness, and students in foster care.

Theory of Change



State investment in regional partnerships creates an opportunity for collective learning, collective understanding, and collective change

Partnership Formation Grants

- **Methow Valley School District** is formalizing business partnerships in the geographically isolated region so that more students receive career-based learning opportunities.
- **The STEM Foundation** is establishing a Benton City-based partnership that contributes to the culture of credential attainment for students and parents.
- **United Way of the Blue Mountains** is conducting a qualitative research study to understand why individuals in the region choose to forgo postsecondary education.
- **Yakima Valley Partners for Education** is educating parents on higher education in Spanish to increase access for students in the valley across six school districts.

Implementation Grants

- **Chehalis School District** is building the two-generation Cornerstone Program to support both students and their families in their educational journeys, beginning in early childhood.
- **City of Seattle's Department of Education and Early Learning** is expanding mentorship opportunities for BIPOC high school juniors, seniors, and Seattle Promise scholars with the Postsecondary Success Network. School staff are also being trained in culturally relevant and responsive college and career readiness.
- **Foundation for Tacoma Students** is expanding the reach of What's Next Senior Supports and Campaign Free Aid to support graduating seniors as they transition to postsecondary enrollment.
- **LaunchNW** is implementing the MPower mentoring program at six high schools throughout the Spokane region to support students' postsecondary and career pathway exploration.

Learning Through Partnerships

We aim to learn in tandem with partnerships whether and how RCG investments lead to regional change. To do so, we will listen to students and families, build connections across grantees, measure co-designed short-term outcomes, and observe changes in educational attainment.

A new request for Letters of Interest will begin in January 2024.



More information is available at:
wsac.wa.gov/challenge-grants