



# Regional Partnerships Legislative Report on Use of State Funding

December 2024

## Background

The Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) works collaboratively with place-based, cross-sector partnerships working 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 who self-identify strategies to drive change in their local communities to targeted populations. 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 grants 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 the early implementation of RP, the \$22 million allocation from the state will be committed by the end of Fiscal Year 2025 (as detailed in the summary table, Figure 3). Additional details can be found in the 2024 companion report, *Regional Partnerships: Legislative Report on Program Implementation*.

## Regional Partnership Implementation

The state investment facilitates regional partnerships to implement strategies from a position of deep community knowledge, trust, and needs. As written in RCW 28B.120.060, RP's purpose is to 'meet statewide attainment goals by developing regional partnerships that foster innovations to:

1. Increase postsecondary enrollment and completion for students enrolling directly from high school and adults returning to education; and
2. Eliminate educational opportunity gaps for students of color, English language learners, students with disabilities, and foster and homeless youth.'

Partnerships include several member organizations and funds are distributed by a lead partner organization and fiscal agent. While each network is unique and responsive to their region, all partnerships include the following in the context of their work:

### **Partnerships exist in a greater ecosystem.**

Regional partnerships exist within a larger education ecosystem respective of their local K-12 and postsecondary contexts. All 13 regional partnerships do not rely solely on their RP investment. WSAC

works with partnerships to ensure that funds support rather than supplant existing investments in their communities.

## Relationship building is key to our approach.

WSAC holds regular check-ins with partnership core teams to build relationships and trust. In addition to RP funding, WSAC connects partnerships with additional WSAC resources, including, but not limited to, state financial aid, college savings accounts, and opportunities to engage in policy development.

## Grant agreements provide accountability.

RP grant agreements include an approved statement of work (SOW), budget, and reporting requirements. Grant agreements also include the right to request further detail on program spending.

## Reporting requirements allow WSAC to learn alongside partnerships.

Partnerships are required to report on their progress regularly throughout the grant period at a level consistent with their grant award. In addition to providing accountability, reporting is an opportunity for us to learn more about partnerships and their communities to improve WSAC's own work.

## Allocation History

Figure 1. Allocations from the State to Date, Totaling \$22 Million



Governor Inslee initially proposed funding the Washington Career and College Pathways Innovation Challenge program account, known in implementation as Regional Partnerships, with \$50 million over the first three years. RP received a \$6 million investment and an additional \$16 million appropriation, totaling \$22 million for the initial three years (Figure 1). Of this funding from the state, \$8 million per year is considered maintenance level.

## Expenditures To Date

To date, WSAC has committed \$11.05 million to 13 partnerships and Figure 2 itemizes each partnership grant award over this period. Progress payments are issued bi-annually to correspond with completed reporting requirements. Additional monitoring, including overhead and disallowed costs, occurs in compliance with both bill language and RP policy.

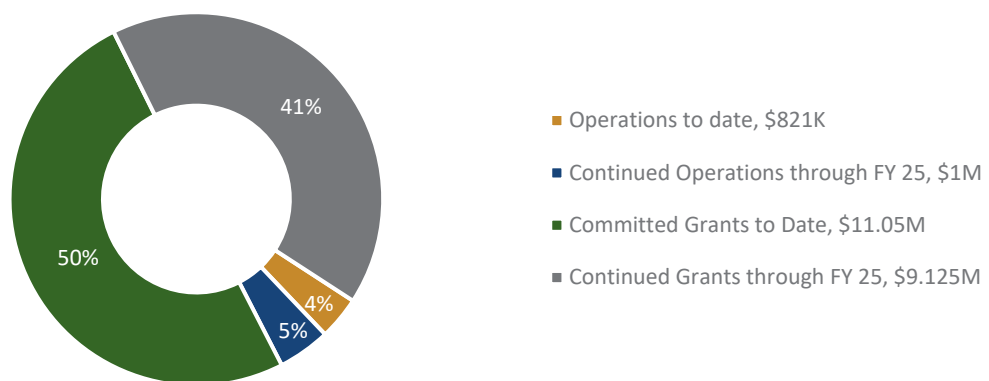
**Figure 2. Committed Grants to Date, Totaling \$11.05 Million**

Partnership	Total Award Amount	Total Contract Period <sup>1</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>		

## Continued Investment Strategy through Fiscal Year 2025

WSAC will maintain the current investment pace, totaling an additional \$10.13 million to support continued program implementation of RP through FY 25. Figure 3 summarizes all funding for program implementation totaling \$22 million. This investment strategy prioritizes more than 90 percent of the total allocation to direct grant awards.

**Figure 3. Summary of RP Funds through FY 25, totaling \$22 Million**



<sup>1</sup> The first cohort includes varying contract period sizes due to beginning the program mid-fiscal year. Moving forward with the 2025 Reapplication Cycle, all partnerships will receive 24-month contract periods in alignment with the fiscal and academic years.

## Continued Investment Strategy in the 2025 – 2027 Biennium

The RCG investment by WSAC is a long-term, strategic approach, necessary for creating lasting systems change in local communities. In the next budget biennium, WSAC will expand the number of partnerships with an additional Request for LOI and reapplication processes to sustain current partnerships as contract terms progress and expire. A continued state investment is required to sustain this work, requiring additional funding exceeding the current maintenance level (ML). As outlined in the 2025-27 Decision Package, \$20 million in funding, or \$4 million above the current \$16 million ML, is necessary to continue to implement RP in an innovative manner.

The RP approach addresses both the urgency of this work and the need to think long-term to achieve the systems change necessary to carry out lasting increases in statewide attainment. In the long term, we anticipate that partnerships will contribute to improvements in attainment within their communities and, since it will take time for their work to percolate into increased attainment, our short-term focus is on measuring the immediate impact of their work on the populations they serve.

## Conclusion

The task of systems change outlined in the bill requires a sustainable investment strategy to see clear impact. Simply put, this investment is required to see gains in postsecondary attainment to sustain communities who are implementing strategies focusing on learners who are historically underserved by higher education.

This investment type is one of few that prioritizes strong partnership network building. Without partnerships coming together, we will not break down the silos in education to shift mental models in local communities, where all learners can feel as though postsecondary opportunities are meant for and built for them. The 13 partnerships supported by this investment represent 137 cross-sector organizations, including 49 Community-Based Organizations, 30 K-12 entities (School Districts and Educational Service Districts), and 24 Institutions of Higher Education across the state. Each of these organizations works to support learners entering and completing their respective postsecondary pathway of choice.

## Purpose

As stated in the enacted 2023-25 Washington State biennial budget (in special appropriations, page 628 section 724): “The appropriations in this section are subject to the following conditions and limitations: The appropriations are provided solely for expenditure into the Washington career and college pathways innovation challenge program account created in RCW 28B.120.040 to implement RCW 28B.120.060. The student achievement council must report to the governor and appropriate committees of the legislature on the uses of the general fund moneys deposited in the account by December 1 of each fiscal year of the biennium.” [5187-S.PL.pdf](#)

## 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).

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