



# Washington Career and College Pathways Innovation Challenge Program Legislative Report

September 2022

## Legislative Background

Passed in 2022, Senate Bill 5789 established the *Washington Career and College Pathways Innovative Challenge Program*, a \$6 million investment that creates competitive grants for existing and new community-based career and college pathways partnerships to increase postsecondary enrollment rates and close opportunity gaps. SB 5789 supports the state's postsecondary attainment goal of 70 percent, providing an opportunity for cross-sector regionally based partnerships to address Washington's current enrollment crisis.

## Status Update

Since passage of SB 5789, Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) staff have engaged with Council members and diverse stakeholders to inform program design and ensure that the goals of the program are met, including the development of specific application parameters, evaluative criteria, and measures of success. Stakeholders include community-based organizations, higher education, K-12, workforce and labor, business, and industry groups, and over 150 organizations have engaged with WSAC throughout this development process. Detailed information regarding stakeholders and stakeholder engagement can be found in the appendices.

WSAC's implementation of this program is well underway; the competitive grant application begins in September 2022, with an anticipated project start date of January 2023. Two types of grants will be awarded, with the majority of the investment supporting implementation grants to established partnerships who are ready to test new strategies and expand efforts. The second grant represents a smaller subset of the investment and will be focused on partnership formation, awarded to groups who are focused on building or improving an early-stage partnership and who, at the conclusion of their grant cycle, will be well positioned to test implementation strategies or apply for a tier two grant in the future.

Up-to-date information can be found at <https://wsac.wa.gov/challenge-grants>.

## Engagement

WSAC hosted three public-facing sessions, multiple Council conversations at public meetings, and specific engagement opportunities for stakeholders explicitly named in the statute. An overview of sessions is below, with detailed information available in Appendix A.

- June 13, 2022: WSAC met with commission leaders and staff to solicit feedback regarding grant elements and overall program design.
- June 16, 2022: WSAC hosted an opportunity for the public to provide feedback directly to WSAC to inform the grant design process.

- July 26, 2022: WSAC hosted a networking session where participants engaged directly with peers interested in postsecondary enrollment and completion efforts across the state.
- August 16–22, 2022: WSAC solicited public comment on the draft application.
- August 24, 2022: WSAC provided a virtual community of practice with organizational leaders from across the country who have experience leading place-based community partnerships to share best practices and lessons learned.

### **Appendices**

- Appendix A: Public Sessions
- Appendix B: Stakeholder Engagement
- Appendix C: Council Discussion Guide
- Appendix D: Request for Letter of Interest

## 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 nine 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. Five are citizen members, including one current student.

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

Mail:

P.O. Box 43430

Olympia, WA 98504-3430

Phone:

360-753-7800

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