**MAKING THE CASE**

**THE CHALLENGE**
There will be roughly 740,000 job openings over the next five years in Washington state. Of these openings, the majority will require some level of post high school education and many are in high-demand STEM fields and provide family-wage employment. Opportunities to access these great jobs are rapidly growing. Young people can look forward to working for some of the world’s most innovative companies as marine engineers, dental hygienists, viticulturists, wind turbine technicians, or programmers. Fortunately, there are multiple pathways to these and other STEM jobs, including apprenticeships, postsecondary certification programs, two-year technical degrees, and four-year university degrees.

Washington’s young people deserve an education that prepares them to take part in our booming economy. Career connected learning is a key part of this preparation. Such preparation also equips employers with an employee pipeline of youth that are reliable, skilled, motivated, and ready for 21st century challenges and innovation.

Yet, many young people - especially youth of color, rural youth, and low income youth – do not have access to experiences such as internships, job shadows, apprenticeships, and other technical training programs that will position them to enter high-demand, family-wage careers. And, in many cases, education programs are seeking stronger connections to local employers.

Many examples of excellence in career-readiness programs exist across the state. What is lacking however, is a coordinated system of aligned programs that leverages partnerships and resources to ensure equitable access to high-quality career connected learning that addresses workforce needs.

**THE SOLUTION**

*Career Connect Washington aims to support career connected learning - a continuum of awareness, exploration, preparation, and work experiences that engages, trains, and inspires young people to seek out Washington jobs while at the same time readying the workforce with the 21st century skills that employers need.*

Through a public private partnership, Career Connect Washington will create a statewide youth career readiness system that over time becomes a routine part of the educational experience for all Washington youth, with a focus on low-income, rural, and youth of color. Career Connect Washington will also become a routine part of the talent recruitment and development strategy for employers across Washington, with a focus on middle skill or “fast track” STEM and other targeted industry careers. This will change lives for youth, contribute to business success, and support Washington’s goal of having 70% of all adults aged 25-44 attaining a postsecondary credential by 2023.
Career connected learning is implemented in and out of school, through general education classes in K-12, through Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses for middle and high school students, and through Community Technical Colleges, community based organizations, and other postsecondary venues for young adults.

Career Connect Washington’s five-year goal is to connect 100,000 youth to great careers. To achieve this, in-school and out-of-school youth will participate in high-quality career connected learning opportunities throughout their K-12 experience and beyond.

**GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP FUNDING**

These guiding principles are intended to provide context and direction for organizations participating in Career Connect Washington and will be key drivers of funding and policy decisions. Successful projects will incorporate these four guiding principles into their program design:

1. Regional Partnership Collaborations to Drive a Shared Goal
2. Employer Engagement and Labor Market Data
3. Early, Frequent, and Relevant Engagement of Underrepresented Youth
4. Outcome-Based Programming
1. REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP COLLABORATIONS TO DRIVE A SHARED GOAL

Career Connect Washington is intended to support the scaling of high-quality, robust regional collaborations that promote a system of equitable access to career connected learning opportunities for in-school and out-of-school youth and dramatically increase the number of youth and employers involved in career connected learning. These regional partnership collaborations (herein referred to as “Career Connect Teams”) are central to the success of this initiative.

FIVE YEAR GOAL

Career Connect Teams should contribute substantially to meeting the overarching five-year goal of the initiative that 100,000 youth receive a high-value pathway to a great career. This five-year goal will provide the necessary foundation that will ultimately ensure all young people in Washington state have access to high demand, family wage career opportunities. To achieve this, 100,000 in- and out-of-school youth participate in at least three high-quality, coherent, career connected learning opportunities throughout their K-12 experience and beyond. These experiences should build upon each other providing a coherent system of experiences along a continuum from awareness to exploration, to preparation and training. (See the Career Connected Learning Framework below and Career Connected Learning Continuum for detailed descriptions and outcomes for these experiences.)

Some youth need a coordinated sequence of intensive career connected learning experiences, while others gain great benefit from shorter-term career-related experiences. Therefore, to serve the needs of all youth, at least 10 percent (10,000 youth) receive an intensive and comprehensive three-part package of 1. career planning, 2. adult mentoring, and 3. a locally-relevant in-depth career related experience such as a 90-hour internship, a worksite learning placement, or a registered youth apprenticeship. An emphasis of this intensive experience goal will be on building robust regional registered youth apprenticeship systems so that this pathway option is available to youth across the state.

REGIONAL CAREER CONNECT WASHINGTON TEAMS

Regional Career Connect Teams must include an existing Washington STEM Network, Workforce Development Council, business/industry champion, dropout re-engagement program, Career and Technical Education program, school district(s) or educational service district, post-secondary institution, and an apprenticeship-sponsoring organization such as an Apprenticeship Training Committee (ATC). There are a host of partner entities that may also be engaged in a Career Connect Team, including but not limited to: additional businesses; community based organizations; community and technical colleges; universities; homeless youth service providers; and other relevant local organizations.

COMMUNITY ASSETS

Career Connect Teams should leverage community assets. All partners should be fully involved in the design of the application, be prepared with adequate staff to take part in the activities described in the application, and contribute monetarily to the project. They should draw from local and regional entities that each play a significant and unique role in the career connected learning space. Where appropriate, state and national partners may also play a significant role in an effective regional partnership. Career Connect Teams should leverage multiple sources of funding and other resources (e.g. in-kind). This may include securing matching funds.
SUSTAINED CAREER READINESS SYSTEM
Career Connect Washington is intended to create permanent change in local communities with schools, workforce development councils, career and technical education, STEM networks, registered youth apprenticeship programs, dropout re-engagement programs, and other youth organizations. With a focus on a shared vision and goals, and a robust organizational structure that leverages the strengths and assets of each partner, these entities should work as a coordinated team to create a permanent career readiness system.

Career Connect Teams should be designed to replicate, accelerate, and expand into new areas of the region, serve high-need populations, and scale best practices in career connected learning so it becomes a vital part of the education system. Local Career Connect Washington systems should design protocols for addressing problems as they arise, learn from mistakes, and adjust as necessary. They should result in lasting benefits, up to and well beyond the five-year goal period, for the target audience and be a model to support career connected learning opportunities in other settings.

2. EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT AND LABOR MARKET DATA
Authentic employer engagement is a key aspect of Career Connect Washington. Business and industry partnerships should inform program design and offer real-world opportunities for youth, including activities such as industry-based design challenges, employer mentorships, 90-hour internships, registered youth apprenticeships, and industry-based externships for teachers. Programs should also offer employers the opportunity to build a local recruitment and talent development pipeline. Employer engagement should be based on the value proposition (return on investment) for the employer. Employers should engage because the project helps them create a diverse talent pipeline that is good for their business.
Career-related programs should be informed by local labor market data to ensure that youth are directed to high-demand, living-wage careers, including STEM jobs. The use of timely and relevant data should be central to decision making around program offerings so that youth are making well informed decisions regarding career pathways. Programs should emphasize careers that are in demand, stable, and provide living wages, or jobs that offer a clear pathway to these careers.

3. EARLY, FREQUENT, AND RELEVANT ENGAGEMENT OF UNDERREPRESENTED YOUTH

At least 50 percent of youth served should be historically underserved. For the purposes of this initiative, historically underserved youth are defined as low-income youth (e.g. eligible for free and reduced lunch), youth of color, rural youth, out-of-school youth, or homeless youth. Programs will need to clearly articulate the sub populations served and the recruitment, engagement, and retention strategies specific to the served populations.

Youth need early and frequent career-related and mentoring experiences to develop a mindset for, and access to, pathways to great jobs in our state. Projects should provide a range of experiences along the career connected learning continuum for youth from grade K-12. A strong emphasis should be placed on a locally-relevant in-depth career related experience such as a 90-hour internship, a worksite learning placement, or a registered apprenticeship for high school age in-school and out-of-school youth and young adults.

Program design should maximize relevancy for youth through highlighting local job markets and how they relate to engaging and timely issues. For example, careers focused on alternative energy, climate change mitigation, the maritime sector, aerospace industries, healthcare, informational technology, and agriculture & food manufacturing are high priorities in Washington and should be included in the youth programming. Programs should emphasize real-world problem-solving so youth have the opportunity to contribute to industry challenges through internships and other career connected learning experiences such as the engineering fellows design challenge program.

Programs should demonstrate a commitment to youth voice and consider leveraging youth expertise through early and often solicitation of their input in program design.

4. OUTCOME-BASED PROGRAMMING

Outcome-based programming will be a major consideration in Career Connect funding decisions. Projects will be asked to identify current baseline for their region and targeted increase for both participation outcomes (i.e., number and demographics of youth participating in specific career related activities) and education outcomes (e.g. change in youth identity as a STEM professional).

During implementation, Career Connect Teams will provide quarterly reports of actual results versus targets. Career Connect Team may be asked to collect State Student Identification Number (SSID) or other unique identifier for all participating students, for long-term analysis of increases in graduation rates and young adult employment outcomes.

PARTICIPATION OUTCOMES

Career Connect Teams will need to identify and track participation outcomes related to projected increases in the total number and demographics of youth receiving the following high impact comprehensive experience:

1. Career planning (e.g., guidance to develop a high quality High School and Beyond Plan); and
2. A professional (business/industry) mentor; and,
3. 90-hour on-site or blended (on-site and virtual) internship, a worksite learning placement, and/or a registered youth apprenticeship
In addition to identifying and tracking the high impact experiences listed above, Career Connect Teams may identify and track the number and demographics of youth participating in career awareness, exploration, and preparation experiences such as:

1. Reinvented career fair
2. Career presentations/panel
3. Worksite tour
4. Industry based design challenge
5. Career preparation workshop
6. Networking event/informational interview
7. Job shadow
8. Work-based problems with classroom mentoring
9. Career connected learning embedded in general education class
10. Instructional or cooperative worksite learning
11. Pre-apprenticeship

EDUCATION OUTCOMES
Programs will also be expected to address and track the following education outcomes throughout the project period. Education outcomes may be tracked using a youth self-assessment survey tool developed by Washington STEM. Education outcome measures for youth participants will include increases in one or more of the following:

1. Awareness of career opportunities and pathways
2. Relevancy of academics to career opportunities
3. Connection of the experience to career opportunities
4. Sense of identity in high-demand family wage career
5. Interest in and preparation to pursue a high-demand family wage career
6. Degree of career-related social capital

Other outcomes may be included in a regional Career Connect Washington project such as the number of teachers completing teacher externships with local employers and the number of professionals/businesses engaged.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Statewide technical support workshops and webinars will be offered by Career Connect Washington lead partners (Department of Labor & Industries, Employment Security Department, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, Washington STEM, and Workforce Board) to assist Career Connect Teams and other interested parties in developing successful projects. Assistance with local planning meetings will also be available for communities that intend to form Career Connect Teams and apply for funding. For a current listing of technical support opportunities and to register for these workshops and webinars please visit: http://www.washingtonstem.org/CCLtechnicalsupport.