

Opportunity Partnership Program 2022-2023

Project Overview – An integrated Collaboration

House Bill 1096 created the Opportunity Grant Program in 2007. The program provides financial aid and other services to students 200% below the federal poverty rate, while recipients are also enrolled at state community or community technical colleges in employer-demand programs of study.

Additionally, the legislation provides funding for the coordination of industry mentorship activities benefiting Opportunity Grant recipients who choose to enroll in the Opportunity Partnership Project (OPP).

In 2022, the three geographical regions were represented by Workforce Development Councils (WDCs) included Skagit Valley, Yakima, and Spokane. The WDCs design and facilitate regional OPP mentorship programs in concert with area businesses and community and technical colleges. Participating Opportunity Grant recipients are exposed to work-based activities with the intent of reinforcing the relevancy of academic coursework while also developing valued work skills and professional connections.

Opportunity Partnership - A Reflection of Continual Change

The Opportunity Partnership highlights how the program has adapted to dynamic change in regional communities, schools, and workplaces. It also serves as a source for real-time observation for what works and what does not as Washington seeks to develop a highly skilled workforce in high-demand occupations with living wages. Covid conditions continue to reverberate throughout institutional systems. The impacts to student attendance, engagement, and delivery of services remain in considerable flux.

From the time the state legislature conceived of OPP's inclusive, integrated, and collaborative structure, the program has been responsive to student conditions, education-training models, and changes in industry and technology. The mentor/mentoring focus has necessarily evolved to include students in workplaces, employers in classrooms, resume building, mock interviews, group tours, individually designed job shadows, unpaid and paid internships, social media for development of career networks, and virtual trainings. Industry tours and job shadowing through virtual media were introduced as internet access and cellphone ownership allowed extensive web-based entry points for those at differing economic levels.

2022-2023 OPP Participant Demographics

The demographic data collected during this program year was not consistently available to provide valid analysis.

Barriers to Enrollment in Opportunity Partnership

The post-pandemic conditions continued to affect the number of Opportunity Grant students enrolled in the community colleges. Those who learned of the OPP mentoring services conveyed that they were impacted by

remote and hybrid education, job and/or income loss; school site and childcare closures, irregular work schedules, reduced transportation options; learning curves with limited technological resources necessary to function in virtual-based classes, and lack of time.

Prior to 2019, Opportunity Partnership enrolled an average of 160 participants across four regions each year. Since the onset of COVID-19, students opting into Opportunity partnership has continued to dropped in the three OPP participating regions. Unfortunately, in 2022, the primary loss was directly related to student contact lists not being readily provided to the WDCs contractors to implement engagement.

South Central WDC, Spokane WDC, and their engagement partners encountered sustained barriers at their respective colleges where Opportunity Grant student lists were provided late in the quarter, late in the year, or not at all. The WDCs and the Workforce Board attempted to identify the factors contributing to the barriers. For Yakima Valley College, it appeared that the Opportunity Grant student lists were compiled but not provided to the WDC's contractor, People For People, despite extensive communication between South Central WDC, People For People, the Workforce Board, and the financial aid office at the college. Engagement with and assurances from the financial aid director and the special funding coordinator resulted in delayed results. Significant shifts in staffing and increased responsibilities in remote work were expressed as factors for Yakima Valley college not readily compiling and distributing the student lists to People For People. It was also discovered that a non-profit had a similarly named scholarship program that may have been confused with the state's Opportunity Partnership Program by college staff and students, despite People For People's longstanding relationship with the college. People For People increased their presence at the college to enhance greater visibility and student access, but it was access to the Opportunity Grant student lists at timely intervals that most interfered with successful engagement.

For Spokane Falls College, formal memos of understanding specific to data share agreements did not advance with area colleges' external partners. The reasons provided by the college primarily centered on loss of knowledgeable personnel, reestablishment of formal data share processes, and an restrictions to access to sensitive data external to the college. The Spokane WDC and their contractor, Talent Solutions, did not ever gain access to Opportunity Grant scholar lists at Spokane Falls College despite multiple efforts and follow up by the WDC and the Workforce Board. Fortunately, Spokane WDC contractors had in previous years established relationships with instructors interested in the Opportunity Partnership program at Spokane Community College.

For the Northwest WDC and their contractor, the Mount Vernon Chamber of Commerce Foundation, barriers to enrollment in the Opportunity Partnership program were associated with the significant drop in eligible Opportunity Grant scholars and those who had been identified through WorkFirst programs.

Business interest in mentoring doubled from 2021, from just 38 businesses last year, to 76 this year. But that participation level remains far below the average of 120 regional businesses participating in Opportunity Partnership prior to the onset of the pandemic.

Opportunity Partnership 9 year Summary			
Program Year	Number of Opportunity Grant Students who enrolled in OPP	Number of Participating OPP Mentor-Business Hosts	Notes
2014-2015	152	121	
2015-2016	159	129	
2016-2017	186	96	
2017-2018	175	131	
2018-2019	146	133	
2019-2020*	80	34	*3 of 4 WDCs reporting; Covid-19 onset with statewide school and business closures; SBCTC terminated contracts
2020-2021*	60	20	*November 2021 launch of OPP instead of July 2021; Covid-19 school and business closures in full effect
2021-2022*	57	38	* Hybrid return to colleges and workplaces; 1 WDC's subcontractor requested termination of subcontract after Opportunity Grant scholars were unable to engage with OPP activities
2022-2023*	46	76	* Expanded hybrid return to colleges and workplaces, below pre-2020 levels; Workforce Southwest WDC opted out of OPP engagement; Opportunity Grant lists not readily provided to OPP contractors by Yakima Valley College and Spokane Falls College despite interventions

Table 1 – Illustration of Opportunity Partnership Project declining enrollment 2022-2023

Workforce Board 2022-2023 Summary of Active OPP Projects

Northwest Workforce Council and the Chamber of Commerce Foundation

One of OPP’s demonstrably effective projects involves the Mount Vernon Chamber of Commerce Foundation as Northwest Workforce Council’s OPP subcontractor. The Chamber coordinates with Skagit Valley College and local industries to recruit and host OPP students for in-person tours, one-on-one job shadows, and internships. This highly effective, personalized investment was disrupted by the continued closure of area colleges and businesses. In 2022-2023, Northwest Workforce Council’s project leads returned to in-person engagement with students and businesses.

Northwest Workforce Council Program Activities included:

To recruit qualifying students enrolled at Skagit Valley College [SVC]; the contractor representative scheduled two EWP [Experience Work Project] orientations during this academic quarter. The contractor representative explained the program as well as the impact of experiential learning activities.

During this academic quarter, the contractor held a virtual career panel presented by Ashley Gardens of Mount Vernon and designed for Allied Health, Human Services and Business Management students. Panelists Carla Hancock; Executive Director and Brandon Moran, Wellness Director at Ashley Gardens shared their career path, misconceptions about the memory care industry and resources for success.

Northwest Workforce Council Observations:

While OG/BFET students have remained engaged in the EWP [Experience Work Project] and other SVC programs and initiatives, WorkFirst student participation continues to decrease. SVC navigators reached out to Industrial Trade Classes in an effort to bring the contractor for in person presentations, however the team didn't get an answer from industrial trade classes.

SVC navigators shared that most WorkFirst students this year are ESL [Early English Learners] and high school completion students, many of them are Ukrainian immigrants who have been in the country for less than a year.

This specific group of WorkFirst students might not be familiar with the American workplace or how to successfully apply for a job. Hosting a learning opportunity that addresses this need would be valuable for them.

South Central Workforce Council and People for People

South Central Workforce Council's partnership with People For People (PFP) has allowed for sophisticated integration of wraparound federal and state services over a large and diverse geographic area. Part of PFP's success in previous program years was directly related to long-established hybridized in-person and remote access services already utilized and familiar to their clients. That infrastructure aided in PFP's ready shift from hybrid services to mostly virtual. With the Workforce Board's encouragement and South Central's approval, PFP expanded access to Virtual Job Shadow resources offered through CareerOneStop.org wherever in-person engagement was not possible. The greater difficulty this year continued to involve coordinating with the college financial aid personnel to gain access to students in both in-person and virtual classrooms.

South Central Workforce Council Program Activities included:

The Opportunity Grant Coordinator (OPC) reached out to department heads of various programs at Yakima Valley College (YVC) to inquire if they would be able to share information about the Opportunity Partnership Program (OPP) during their virtual student orientations. Unfortunately, the YVC programs were unable to consistently accommodate this request during the 2022-2023 school year. Recruitment efforts continued through phone calls, video calls, and some in-person meetings at PFP.

In PY22 we were able to enroll 15 OPP students and complete 10 mentorships. We provided presentations to 3 classes and provided resources at the YVC Career Fair.

We have successfully recruited new employers and thus new mentors to add to a growing list of industries associated with YVC and Yakima County. We have gained the partnership of at least five professionals in their respective industries of agriculture, business technology, early childhood education, information technology, and health care.

In collaboration with YVC we present in three classrooms, with an average of twenty students per class. We invited employers to present their industry standards and express services associated with the industry that would be beneficial to an entering workforce. The industries represented were Business Technology, Information Technology, and Social Services highlighting the broad range of this field including Health Care and Education. Presentations also presented our Employment & Training services such as Basic Food Employment and Training (BFET), Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Community Jobs (CJ), and our most recent Reentry Program. These programs are incredibly helpful for students who may need additional support to achieve their goals and succeed in their careers. 12 students were co-enrolled in an Employment & Training program to assist them with achieving their goals.

Another success was the access allowed to stage a promotional table in commonly used areas, further increasing exposure of PFP services, including OPP. By being on YVC's campus as a constant presence, we were able to recruit a broader range of students into all PFP Programs. Students reached as a direct result of the promotional services accounted for nine OPP enrollments and 14 into other PFP programs. Many of our OPP students are co-enrolled between these programs and receive support in collaboration with the mentorship aspect, vastly increasing the student's ability to succeed in a fluid workforce.

Overall, we connected 10 students with mentors, creating a lasting learning experience that will benefit the student, mentor, and industry. Of these ten students, one also completed a job shadow, in a business sector often unthought of. The student was enrolled in the B-Tech program and is interested in opening his own business in the future. We were able to pair him with a mentor in the automated car wash industry.

South Central Workforce Council Observations:

Through the idea of mentorship, we have created a bridge between employers and potential employees in their field. Incorporating the use of classroom presentations, mentor presentations, staging areas, and support systems put in place by both PFP and YVC, we have helped five students enter employment and three students realize the value of higher education, also maintaining another ten students continuing their education.

Growing the mentor community across a variety of industries and improving communications with Yakima Valley College (YVC) faculty and professors are important steps in building a stronger foundation for the program's success. Increasing exposure to students through classroom visits, job fairs, and other campus events is also a proactive and effective strategy for engaging with the community. Ultimately, these efforts will

help to create a culture of collaboration and support between the community and the program, which can only strengthen and enhance its effectiveness. While the lack of individual involvement from traditional opportunity grant recipients may be disappointing, it's important to recognize that progress has been made in other areas and to continue to explore new and innovative solutions for engaging with students and providing them with valuable mentorship experiences.

OPP has helped engage a greater number of non-traditional students, and co-enrollment with other People For People (PFP) programs has increased the number of participants overall. Furthermore, the fact that 10 of these students completed a mentorship or job shadow is a testament to the value and importance of the program. Building a strong network and fostering a culture of support and encouragement can go a long way in helping students overcome the challenges they face and achieve their goals. Additionally, word-of-mouth is a powerful tool that can contribute to the growth and success of a program. By sharing the accomplishments and positive experiences of students involved in OPP, we will be able to inspire greater interest and participation in the future. In fact, several of our participants were recruited through the positive feedback of previous OPP participants.

Spokane Workforce Council and Talent Solutions Team at WorkSource Spokane

Spokane Workforce Council had informally developed their next generation of online industry and career outreach through videos paid for by local businesses and hosted on a local, public television website. These virtual tours and in-depth career explorations were accessible to any interested party across the state.

Spokane discussed and strategized with the Workforce Board on the expansion of their videography as an integral part of their student engagement with local businesses. OPP students were alerted to the existing video resources but the videos have not been a required component due to barriers in tracking and attestation methodologies. Prior to the coronavirus impacts, Spokane discussed with WTB their vision to utilize platforms such as Linked-In and Facebook to help students and other WDC clients build their online professional presence and to create career networks. COVID-19, in effect, accelerated the need for virtual engagement for all job seekers. One of Spokane's innovative and equitable engagement strategies occurred because of the willingness of a college department to provide virtual access to OPP presentations independent of OPP eligibility. This had the effect of energizing the interest of all students and resulted in successful engagement with those eligible for the services available under OPP funding. Another innovative strategy was college instructors offering extra credit to all students who participated in OPP activities.

Spokane Workforce Council Program Activities included:

Spokane Community College (SCC) shared their list of students receiving the Opportunity Grant. We did not receive a full student list from Spokane Falls Community College (SFCC) because we did not have a MOU in place.

Individual emails were sent to the 76 SCC students, welcoming them to this year's program. The email shared insight into what to expect and included a survey to allow them to enroll in the program. They were encouraged to share relevant information about their studies and goals so that we could better adapt this

year’s offerings to their studies and goals.

A total of 13 students enrolled in the Opportunity Partnership Program (OPP). Among those who responded to the survey, we saw the following programs of study:

Spokane Community College (SCC): (11 total)

- Business: 6 receiving grant, 4 enrolled.
- Dental Assistant: 1 receiving grant, 1 enrolled.
- Administrative Assistant: 2 receiving grant, 1 enrolled.
- Health Information: 1 receiving grant, 1 enrolled.
- HVAC: 2 receiving grant, 1 enrolled.
- Medical Assistant: 1 receiving grant, 1 enrolled.
- Cosmetology: 9 receiving grant, 1 enrolled.
- Respiratory Care: 6 receiving grant, 1 enrolled.

Spokane Falls Community College (SFCC): (2 total)

- We did not receive a list of students. The two students enrolled met with Amy during a student orientation and informed her they were receiving the grant.
- Integrated Community Services: 2 receiving grant, 2 enrolled

We reached out to the program of study for each Opportunity Grant recipient, sharing information about the grant and networking opportunities that we would like to partner with them on. Programs included in the communication include:

Spokane Community College (SCC):

- Nursing: No response from program
- Invasive Cardio: No response from program
- Medical Office Specialist: No response from program
- Welding: No response from program
- Pharmacy Tech: Responded with interested but has been delayed in further communication.
- Cosmetology: No response from program
- CNC Machining: No response program
- Respiratory Care: Responded with interest but delayed in further communication.
- Baking: No response from program

Spokane Falls Community College (SFCC):

- Addiction Studies: Due to the ongoing relationship built with the Addiction Students Program we hosted two networking events.
- Integrated Community Services: We also have an ongoing relationship with this department. We began working with this program and Amy attended the student orientation in April.

Networking and Mentorship Events:

- An Addiction Studies Event was held 11/16/22.
 - 15 students attended (without student list we do not have number of OPP students)
 - 4 business attended including: Maddie’s Place, Spokane Recovery & Treatment Services / Cub House, Break Through Recovery Group & Community-Minded Enterprises
- An Addiction Studies Event was held 2/22/23.
 - 17 students attended (without the list we do not have the number of OP grant recipients who attended)
 - 7 businesses attended including Pioneer Human Services, Spokane Regional Stabilization, Spokane Tribe of Indians Behavioral Health, SPARC, STARS, Catholic Charities and Royal Life Centers.
- An additional Addiction Studies Event was scheduled for 5/24/23. However, the event was cancelled per Shane Sorey, Addiction Studies Program Coordinator II from SFCC.

Resource Room in Premier Virtual:

We created an Addiction Studies Resource Room in Premier Virtual.

- The 11 businesses who attended both Addiction Studies events were invited to join.
- The 32 students who attended both Addiction Studies events received an invitation to register for Premier Virtual and join the Addiction Studies Resource Room.
- Active members in the resource room currently include: The Healing Lodge, Pioneer Human Services, Merit Resource Services, Compassionate Addiction Treatment and Partners With Families.
- Students active in the resource room include Cassandra Moors, Corina Roullier, Kaydee Steele, Sean Devries and Teresa Andrew.

Employer/Mentor Listing:

The following employers are participating in the program

Group Networking Events

- Pioneer Human Services: Addiction Studies Networking Event
- Spokane Regional Stabilization: Addiction Studies Networking Event
- Spokane Tribe of Indians Behavioral Health: Addiction Studies Networking Event
- SPARC: Addiction Studies Networking Event
- Spokane Recovery & Treatment Services: Addiction Studies Networking Event
- Catholic Charities: Addiction Studies Networking Event
- Royal Life Centers: Addiction Studies Networking Event
- Maddie’s Place: Addiction Studies Networking Event
- Break Through Recovery Group: Integrated Community Program
- Community-Minded Enterprises: Integrated Community Program
- Gateway Counseling Services: Integrated Community Program
- Frontier Behavioral Health: Integrated Community Program
- Spokane Housing Authority: Integrated Community Program

The Davenport Hotel participated in a video. It was an industry-focus on engineering, administration, and culinary. The video was launched and is on Career Explore NW website and on the PBS channel. We also developed agreements so that future WIOA-funded work experience and On-the-Job Training placements can be provided at their work site.

- Introduced Directly to Students:
- Providence: Admin Assistant
- Davenport Hotels: Business
- Spokane County: Business & Admin Assistant
- CHAS: Dental Assistant
- Atlas Staffing: Business
- Gateway Counseling Services: Integrated Community Program
- Frontier Behavioral Health: Integrated Community Program
- Spokane Housing Authority: Integrated Community Program

Spokane Workforce Council Observations:

Talent Solutions is working with both students and employers to create direct, meaningful mentorship opportunities.

Continuing to offer options both virtually and in-person allows us to provide for distance learners, social distancing, and personal preference and appears to increase engagement.

Talent Solutions connected with students one-on-one to offer resume help and candidate matching.

All students were introduced directly to businesses. Three students found employment.

All students were informed about WorkSource services, some expressed interest in resume and LinkedIn workshops.

Talent Solutions helped students set up their LinkedIn accounts and upload their resumes, in addition to working with employers and delivering business services including help with job postings and WorkSourceWA accounts.

Amy continues to work with Shane Sorey and Dan Ruddell from SFCC to continue further develop a more effective mentorship program for both students and employers and grow more engagement.