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## Career Readiness for a Working Washington/YouthWorks Background and Next Steps

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### Highlights:

- \$250,000 pilot last year doubled mentorships, doubled internships, and tripled other work-based learning for students in Renton, Yelm, Vancouver, Wenatchee, and Spokane.
- \$1.96 million second round now in the field. Applications due November 13, awards to be announced November 20.
- The high outcomes are due to leveraging existing funding. The \$1.96 million is for disadvantaged youths, but to apply, you must have a partner school (or dropout re-engagement program) commit to increase work-based learning for a broader population of students within their existing budget.
- This is hard. The leaders in the field are being asked to do a lot with just a little new funding. So far they have risen to the challenge and found ways to make it happen.
- Schools, Workforce Development Councils, and dropout re-engagement programs must work as a team, leveraging the business-matching capacity of the workforce system to create work-based learning opportunities for students and teachers.
- We will not know until November 13 if the second round can be expected to double and triple outcomes like the first round did. We expect large increases, but doubling and tripling might not be possible at this scale, partly due to inflexibility in the federal funds we are using.

**Background:** Last year, Governor Inslee and Superintendent Dorn directed us to:

- Increase work-based learning and increase graduation rates,
- Strengthen partnerships between employers and schools, and
- Help more students pursue and obtain the career of their choice.

In response, school districts, Workforce Development Councils, OSPI, Employment Security, and the state Workforce Board conducted a \$250,000 experiment in Renton, Vancouver, Spokane, Wenatchee, and Yelm, with several unique characteristics:

- You could not apply for the funding unless you projected large increases over the current year in the number of students with business mentors, internships, other work-based learning, and the number of teachers performing externships at local employers.
- The funding was focused on serving disadvantaged youths, but you could not apply unless your school committed to make reforms within its current funding, as well, to commit more existing resources to achieving those outcome increases for *all* students.
- Partnership between schools and their local Workforce Development Council was required, to access the Workforce Development Council's connections to businesses and

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expertise matching employers with workers—in this case, to match employers with students or teachers.

**Results: Part 1.** We did not know whether schools and Workforce Development Councils would take us up on this challenge. Our first indicator was when the first round of applications came in. The schools and Workforce Development Councils projected that they would double or even triple most of the outcomes in a single year. That is, compared to last year’s baselines, they would increase business mentorships, internships, other work-based learning, and teacher externships dramatically.

**Results: Part 2.** We did know whether the local sites would achieve their goals. Actuals came in quarter by quarter, and by the end of the year, these local leaders had in fact made it happen.

**Results: Part 3.** Now we are replicating this on a larger scale. Governor Inslee and Superintendent Dorn have identified several funding sources to put \$1.9 million into the field to reach youths and schools across the state. We will know the projected level of outcome increases across the state on November 13, when the applications are due. Awards will be announced for communities across the state on November 20.

**Next Steps:** The new round of funding builds upon the first round’s experience and other best practices in schools and Workforce Development Councils. It opens up this approach to dropout re-engagement organizations as well as schools, and the mix of funding this year relies heavily on federal funds that have fairly strict rules attached to them. We are confident the local school and workforce development leaders will rise to the challenge and increase outcomes at high rates.

**Stay tuned!** We hope for exciting news when the applications come in on November 13, and we are working on plans for announcing the awards on November 20. Remember two critical points.

1. This is a strategy to keep decision-making and design local, while providing clear state leadership to increase work-based learning and graduation rates. It provides additional funding for disadvantaged students, while also requiring more work-based learning for *all* students through local deployment of existing funds. That way, a relatively small investment can be a catalyst to produce system-wide results.
2. Here is the bottom line. When kids get mentors, business experience, and a great career path, that’s good for kids, good for our economy, and good for all of us!