

New Skills for Youth Phase One Snapshot: Washington

Prior to Phase One, Washington State had developed two innovative career preparation models. The Core Plus curriculum draws on industry expertise to identify core knowledge, skills and abilities in related career pathways and the Integrated Basic Education Skills Training (I-BEST) model is a postsecondary program that integrates basic education with workforce skills. Washington's approach to the Phase One early implementation and planning grant period was to draw upon these and other employer-led initiatives to design high-quality career pathways in high-demand industry sectors that could be scaled statewide. The state leveraged the opportunity through New Skills for Youth to lay the groundwork for building a statewide career preparation system, honing in on challenges related to data, career advisement and local implementation.

Foundations for the Work

Washington State's employer-driven Core Plus curriculum was developed jointly between the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), the Boeing Company and the Manufacturing Industrial Council (MIC). [Core Plus](#) is a two-year curriculum that draws on industry-validated knowledge to provide the skills and abilities that prepare high school students for employment in the manufacturing industry. Boeing and MIC began the standards review process in 2012, and have since expanded the program to support teachers in 40 high schools and technical centers across the state. Although Core Plus is still developing and expanding, Boeing in 2015 signaled its commitment and faith in the program by

hiring 150 Core Plus graduates as full-time, entry-level aircraft assemblers.

Another initiative underway in Washington, the I-BEST training model, is delivered through the community and technical college system. I-BEST accelerates postsecondary degree attainment while simultaneously developing basic skills in order to prepare English language learners and students with low basic skills for the workforce. I-BEST includes 250 pathways in 14 high-skill, high-demand industries, and uses an integrated teaching method that exposes students to basic skills and technical instruction simultaneously. [Compared to students in other basic education programs](#), I-BEST students were three times more likely to earn a college credential and

Phase One of JPMorgan Chase & Co.'s New Skills for Youth grant extended from May to October 2016. With bold visions for improving career readiness in K-12 education, each Phase One state spent the grant period performing a diagnostic assessment of their career preparation system and preparing for implementation of a new action plan. This snapshot describes Washington's experience and progress in Phase One, including promising practices and innovations.

nine times more likely to earn a certificate or degree.¹ The I-BEST program, along with numerous statewide and regional articulation agreements within the community and technical college system, affords Washington students several opportunities to earn postsecondary credit in high school.

Washington State law requires all students to develop and maintain a [High School and Beyond Plan](#), which documents a set of goals, opportunities and course offerings along the path to graduation that are linked with the student's specific academic and career interests. The guidance plan became a statewide graduation requirement beginning with the graduating class of 2008 and was recently updated to more intentionally integrate postsecondary opportunities.

Work during Phase One

Recognizing the work already underway through Core Plus, I-BEST and other initiatives, Washington approached Phase One of the New Skills for Youth initiative with a plan to transform its statewide career preparation system by building upon and scaling existing employer-led efforts. To do this, the state formed a cross-agency planning and implementation team called the Guided Pathways Collaborative. The Collaborative – made up of representatives from K12, the community and technical college system, the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board, plus several additional trade and business associations – brought together many state leaders who had never worked together before. The team developed a joint charter and scope of work and met weekly to engage in planning and early implementation of Washington's New Skills for Youth action plan.

Washington's needs assessment and data analysis highlighted key challenges related to efficacy of implementation of statewide policies. For example, the project team discovered that, despite a state requirement that all graduating students complete the High School and Beyond Plan, implementation and fidelity to the design of the Plan varied from district to district. Additionally, efforts to review and streamline programs of study were siloed across the state. The lack of a statewide mechanism to convene stakeholders across agencies in order to review labor market information and make decisions about scaling or retiring career pathways was one of the biggest gaps brought to light in the needs assessment.

Early Efforts to Scale Core Plus and I-BEST

During the Phase One grant period, Washington covered a lot of ground in its strategy to strengthen and scale the Core Plus and I-BEST models. Notably, the State Board of Education approved math, science and language arts credit equivalencies for Core Plus, increasing opportunities for students to choose both academic and career pathways by enabling them to apply course credit towards a diploma. The Core Plus project also launched a full 1,080-hour manufacturing curriculum and developed early versions of teacher and student certificates.

One of the key strategies in Washington's action plan is to replicate the Core Plus and I-



BEST models in other sectors, drawing upon lessons learned in order to engage industry champions and identify relevant knowledge, skills and abilities in each pathway. Based on analysis of labor market data, the Washington project team plans to prioritize development of curriculum in the maritime and healthcare industry sectors.

Planning Data and Career Guidance Strategies

Another noteworthy accomplishment during Phase One was the launch of a cross-system data group, which included experts from higher education, K-12 and the Workforce Board. The group met regularly throughout Phase One, working to address data limitations, analyze workforce data, and provide recommendations for Washington's Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) accountability system. A primary focus of the cross-system data group moving forward will be to examine and reflect on subgroup data to prioritize equity in Washington's career readiness work.

The Guided Pathways Collaborative also noted the need to address rural and local implementation challenges to ensure systems-wide transformation. Specifically, the team plans to provide technical assistance and guidance on how to implement the High School and Beyond Plan and ensure that all students receive quality career advisement. To support local implementation of the Plan, Washington aims to expand the web-based

[Career Bridge](#) platform, which connects students, parents and educators with labor market trends and job information in order to make informed decisions about education and training opportunities. The project team hopes local educators will use Career Bridge as a tool to create and strengthen guided pathways for students.

Looking Ahead

The Core Plus and I-BEST models have not yet been integrated in such a way that drives student learning and accelerates postsecondary credential attainment. Using Core Plus as the curriculum and I-BEST as the delivery mechanism, the Guided Pathways Collaborative aims to integrate both models to create career pathways that can be scaled statewide. After signing an agreement to introduce the I-BEST model in secondary schools, OSPI and the community and technical college system are positioned to launch the pilot program in January 2017.

The 2016 election resulted in a close win for Washington's incoming Superintendent Chris Reykdal. Anticipating the importance of sustained commitment for the work underway, the Washington project team engaged both candidates early in the election cycle to secure verbal commitments. Additionally, the team made outreach throughout Phase One to ensure that all stakeholder groups, including employers, were appropriately engaged in the work.

¹ <http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/how-i-best-works.html>