

Reengaging Opportunity Youth in the Road Map Region

Executive Summary

The Road Map Project is a cradle-to-career collective impact effort in South King County and South Seattle that since 2010 has galvanized multiple sectors and a range of community stakeholders around a shared vision and focused attention and resources on increasing educational attainment and closing the opportunity gap. The goals of the Road Map Project are to double the number of students in the region who are on track to earn a postsecondary degree or credential by 2020 and to close achievement gaps for low-income students and students of color.

With strong engagement and leadership from a range of partners, the Road Map Project proposes developing and implementing an Opportunity Youth Initiative to reengage young people ages 16-24 who are insufficiently attached to education or employment. We have an opportunity to build on significant momentum and capacity that the Road Map Project has helped create and intentionally focus it on creating coordinated, transparent pathways for young people who are currently being left behind. An intentional, coordinated opportunity youth strategy will build momentum and awareness, address current barriers to effective system functioning and ensure many promising developments currently underway in our region are linked and leveraged to their fullest.

The Road Map region's demographics are undergoing a significant transformation. Need is growing steadily and the region's diversity is impressive and growing. Two-thirds of K-12 students are non-white and more than 160 languages are spoken by our residents. While our adult population is among the best-educated in the nation, only one out of every four King County residents with a bachelor's degree was born here. Given labor market trends, earning some kind of degree or career credential after high school is increasingly important to succeeding in the regional economy.

Current estimates¹ suggest that in the Road Map Project region, there are roughly 73,000 people ages 16 to 24. Roughly 14,500 have dropped out. Of the roughly 10,500 who are currently enrolled in high school, at least 760 are significantly off-track (at least two years behind in credits or grade level for their age). Of the approximately 48,000 who have graduated from high school, over 5,200 did so with a GPA of less than 2.0, making the likelihood of them enrolling in postsecondary education or securing living-wage employment very low. This makes for a target population of at least **20,000 young people**. These young people have a complex set of assets and challenges, and an array of programs and services are being implemented and piloted to respond to their needs.

In this complex and fragmented environment, we plan to engage a broad range of system leaders and community stakeholders, including youth, in a data-grounded process of understanding barriers, identifying strategies and implementing solutions. If funded, the Opportunity Youth Initiative will begin with the convening of an Action Team in early fall 2013 to undertake focused planning work over a period of several months. The planning process will involve gathering additional input from a broad range of stakeholders via multiple outreach methods; analyzing data about the local population and existing pathways and programs; reviewing research about effective approaches; discussing policy barriers and opportunities; identifying and prioritizing actions that could improve outcomes for as many youth as possible; and refining targets and indicators.

Based on information gathered to date, we anticipate pursuing the four-year goals and –one year objectives described on page two.

¹ These analyses are based on our most current enrollment records at the student level (2011-12) and the most current 5-year graduation data (class of 2010). They exclude private school students, and student mobility presents another challenge. In the near future, we will be able to use the state's longitudinal databases to do more accurate and comprehensive analyses. Meanwhile consider these estimates, particularly for students who were no longer enrolled after 2011-12, whose demographics we estimated based on their younger counterparts.

	One-Year Objectives	Four-Year Goals
Strengthening Collaborative & Backbone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with steering committee to formalize a cross-sector Opportunity Youth Action Team. • Involve diverse stakeholders in a community engagement and planning process to <i>take aim</i> on goals, <i>take stock</i> of existing pathways, <i>target actions</i> that support systems change, <i>identify and support implementers</i> on specific actions, and <i>track progress</i> of implementation. • Add individuals to collaborative structures (e.g., Data Advisors, Advocates Caucus), to ensure Road Map has access to OY expertise <i>and</i> that attention to OY cuts across Road Map as appropriate. • Create effective, realistic mechanisms to integrate youth voice into OY and other Road Map Project work, in advisory and action roles. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broaden cross-sector engagement and align systems serving opportunity youth toward the overall 2020 Road Map goal and specific goals related to opportunity youth. • Deepen parent, youth and community engagement in identifying and addressing barriers, tracking progress and naming and implementing solutions.
Expanding Data Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the Aspen/JFF team to establish indicators and targets. • Conduct deeper analysis of OY population to deepen understanding of dropout patterns and specific sub-populations. • Integrate State Board of Community and Technical Colleges data into current system and initiate discussions with Employment Securities and Department of Social and Health Services about data-sharing. • Identify College Bound qualifiers who do not enroll in fall 2013 and mobilize targeted outreach. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Track and communicate progress on indicators and long-term outcomes for OY using existing Road Map processes (e.g., annual community data report). • Integrate individual-level data from State Board of Community & Technical Colleges, Employment Securities, and Department of Social & Health Services. • Produce specific reports on OY population, trends and strategies. • Support the expansion of student-level data sharing/use among organizations working with opportunity youth.
Enhancing Pathways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish baselines of the quantity, reach and results of existing programs and pathways in the region. • Develop operational plan for regional capacity needed to support implementation of Open Doors-funded reengagement pathways (including developing a thorough understanding of administrative requirements, partnerships, accountability/ incentive structures and resource flows). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase availability of quality reengagement pathways for opportunity youth with and without high school credentials (specific targets TBD). • Increase awareness of and access to quality reengagement pathways (e.g., inventory; outreach; targeted FAFSA completion efforts). • Increase the number of opportunity youth earning credentials and achieving other positive milestones (specific targets TBD).
Supportive Policy Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and analyze policy barriers to supporting opportunity youth, including specific populations. • Review, vet and prioritize policy opportunities (e.g., truancy and discipline policy, access to juvenile records, extended foster care). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove policy barriers that prevent or serve as disincentives to reengaging opportunity youth. • Advance state and local policies that support effective reengagement.
Leveraging Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure 1:1 match commitments. • Initiate resource mapping and analysis across public funding streams available to support OY. • Explore the potential utility, home and approach for an OY Pathways Investment Fund designed to strengthen existing pathways and help launch new ones. • Explore viability/applicability of social impact bond/outcomes-based financing strategies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand funding for pathways for older youth (ages 22-24) to complement Open Doors (e.g. facilitate CBOs, colleges becoming BFET providers) • Blend and braid public resources to better serve OY.