

**Opportunity Youth Work Group**  
Summary of Jan. 22, 2014 Meeting

**Objectives**

Continue building relationships and informing the development of an action plan

- Advance work on local program/system scan
- Explore research on promising practices related to GED instruction
- Begin exploring system-building opportunities

**Icebreaker**

Youth participants in the work group led an ice breaker that had us talking in small groups about our first paid jobs and connections (or lack thereof) between our own education and employment experiences.

**Reviewing our charge**

We reviewed the work group charge (below) and how it relates to the Road Map Project 2020 goal. We also revisited the overlapping phases of work we will do, and the ground rules established at the first meeting.

*Charge: The Opportunity Youth work group will help develop a strategic action plan to help 16-24 year-old opportunity youth in the Road Map region connect to pathways that lead to postsecondary or career credentials. This involves identifying priority strategies our region should pursue in order to achieve significant improvements.*

**Updates related to opportunity youth data**

Nicole share updates related to data about our local opportunity youth population:

- We are working to better understand the scope and characteristics of the population so that strategies reflect need and in order to track progress over time. We have this group's feedback on estimates we shared in December (derived from school district data), and are working with publically available data like the Census and Bureau of Labor Statistics to refine our understanding.
- We are working with the research team at DSHS to understand how many 16-24 year olds in their service population are disconnected from school and work and who they are. Also they will be able to look longitudinally at risk factors that predict becoming an opportunity youth.
- We now have de-identified postsecondary data on students in the Road Map Region. In addition following "straight shot" students who go right from high school into postsecondary, we can also look for "returners" – students coded as dropouts who show up in the postsecondary data as GED or diploma completers later, or students who graduate but don't enroll right away.
- Related to the above, we are starting to identify indicators to track regionally, like % of students who did not complete high school on time who achieve a high school credential; % of students who did not complete HS on time who enroll in postsecondary; who progress in postsecondary; complete postsecondary. We will seek further input from this group and the Road Map data advisors.
- We are working with OSPI to help shape data collection expectations for Open Doors reengagement programming. This is important for tracking reengagement progress as a region and can also pave the way for using data to inform program improvement.

**Local program/system scan**

In addition to understanding as much as we can about opportunity youth themselves, we also need to understand the current options and gaps in order to respond strategically. We reviewed the purposes of the landscape scan, discussed preliminary findings, and split into small groups to get feedback from you on some key questions.

Purposes of scan:

- Not a detailed or exhaustive study of the region. Primary goal is to understand supply vs. demand and identify key gaps. Another is to identify potential actors in a coordinated re-engagement system.

- Though not the primary driver, the process could also help inform outreach and information sharing efforts designed to increase access to existing programs.

Preliminary observations (based on partial findings):

- More programs available to Seattle youth than other parts of the region
- Very few programs target opportunity youth *with* a high school diploma
- Demand probably outpaces supply
- There may be potential for more specialization
- Coordination is not a strength

Small groups:

- District offerings. This group grappled with how to include district offerings for off-track students. Though difficult to describe/categorize in a consistent way, districts do a range of things along the continuum of prevention to re-engagement that we want to include in the scan. The main feedback was to come up with consistent criteria and questions for districts (i.e., what programs and/or schools do you offer for students who are at least two years behind in credits or grade level for their age).
- Community/Technical College offerings. This group grappled with how to include community college offerings for opportunity youth as a layer in the scan. While it would be unrealistic (and unhelpful) to include every CTC offering in the region, we do think it's important to capture and estimate the current capacity of CTC programs/pathways that specifically target this population and/or provide specialized supports for this population.
- Community-based offerings. This group reviewed the list of programs identified and brainstormed several additional programs for possible inclusion in the scan. We also discussed the importance of clarifying the universe of programs included and why (including every organization that serves opportunity youth in any way is impossible yet only including programs with explicit education/employment offerings is limiting). The group recommended we consider including military options in the scan.

### **Promising practices - focus on GEDplus**

We watched this [brief video](#) about a contextualized approach to GED instruction at Laguardia Community College with very promising results, and discussed what it would take to improve the quality of all GED offerings in our region in order to ensure they provide a true bridge to postsecondary/employment.

### **System-building brainstorm**

In small groups, members discussed *what might a regional reengagement system for opportunity youth look like?* Some themes included:

- The problem is no one owns dropouts. Ideally reports could be generated daily or weekly by districts or at the regional level and shared with some entity charged with reaching out to students/families to inform them of their options and develop individualized plans.
- Need for accessible re-engagement centers where young people can walk in and someone can immediately help them identify their options.
- All students who are re-engaging need effective and holistic case management that includes but goes beyond academic advising.
- Shared goals and outcomes with data use/sharing would be an important component of a regional system.
- Centralized, proactive outreach is something we could do as a region as opposed to every program trying to do it individually.
- A clearinghouse or up-to-date directory about current options could be an early step. There are case workers and advocates who currently do not know all available options.