

Opportunity Youth – Case Statement Outline

1. Why focus on OY?

- Equity and inequality
 - Access to opportunity for our youth (adult population among best-educated in the nation, yet only 1 in 4 residents with bachelors was born here)
 - Importance of educational attainment (career or college credential after high school increasingly important to succeed in regional economy)
- Cost if we don't
 - Huge loss of human potential, including civic participation
 - Significant financial cost
 - National estimate: lifetime cost to taxpayers of one OY - \$235,680
 - State estimate: per-student monetary benefit of graduating HS - \$451,482

2. What do we know about our region's OY?

(Sources: internal data work, youth focus groups, WA Oral Histories Project, national research)

- Prevalence
 - Scale of the challenge is significant – depending on approach, estimates range from between 13,700 to 26,600 opportunity youth in the region
 - Of the more than 19,000 students 16 + who begin a year in HS in the region, more than 2,300 will drop out or be 2 years behind by the end of the year
 - Very heterogeneous population (in terms of reasons for leaving high school, age, skill level, amount of school/credits, risk factors and strengths)
- Sub-groups and disproportionality
 - Certain youth are much more likely to drop out than others
 - Include specific data on students of color, low income students, ELL, homeless
 - Understanding where youth are in terms of age/educational attainment is critical to ensuring access to appropriate pathways
 - We have a lot of young dropouts, underscoring the need for early warning, prevention and intervention efforts (750 dropouts were 15 & under in 2012-13)
 - Nearly 300 dropouts in 2012-13 were “old and close”
- Opportunity youth face a range of barriers & needs
 - Dropping out is more often a long-term process of disengagement than a specific event, which is why focusing on prevention and not just reengagement is critical
 - May be dealing with a range of barriers including basic stabilization, academics, physical and mental health, social and civic disengagement, challenging life circumstances

- 2013 youth focus groups emphasized these barriers: lack of awareness of programs, lack of access (safety, transportation, cost, legal status, child care, language, scheduling); being labeled in negative ways; competing priorities; lack of support at school; lack of trust

3. What do we know about the current re-engagement landscape?

(Sources: site visits, interviews, landscape scan, work group, Open Doors learning group)

- District-operated alternative schools/programs for credit-deficient students exist in all Road Map districts but vary significantly in terms of capacity and offerings
- Avenues for high school completion exist at all community/tech colleges in the region but vary significantly in terms of capacity, offerings and accessibility
- Community-based re-engagement opportunities exist and are expanding. However:
 - Demand outpaces supply
 - Point-in-time estimate of slots: maybe 1,400 education and education/employment focused
 - Chart showing estimated slots by district w/ estimated # of dropouts
 - More programs available to Seattle youth than other parts of region
 - Map
 - Transportation challenges
 - Many programs designed for relatively high-functioning, motivated youth
 - Most programs get to capacity via referrals and passive recruitment
 - Many programs screen for motivation
 - Few programs target those with a high school diploma or equivalency or college drop-outs
 - Too few pathways integrate education with employment
 - Data from scan
 - Youth focus groups consistently underscore the need for education pathways that are connected to careers
 - Coordination is not a strength
 - No network of re-engagement providers
 - No updated go-to directory, which people want
 - There is potential for more differentiation/specialization
 - Refer to segmentation analysis
 - Though programs need to individualize teaching & support, it may make sense for some to specialize in specific pops or pathways
 - Evidence on effectiveness is limited and inconsistent
 - Few programs have been rigorously evaluated (true nationally and here)

- Target outcomes vary across and within programs (GED, GEDplus, diploma, postsecondary access, postsecondary success, work training, job placement)
- No consensus about what constitutes completion, persistence, or what completion rate would be good, bad, etc.

4. What do we know about re-engagement best practice?

(Sources: Jobs for the Future, National League of Cities, MDRC, American Youth Policy Forum PathNet)

Program level:

- Comprehensive, strengths-based intake, assessment and planning process
- Accessibility and flexibility
- Teachers as coaches and facilitators
- Real-world, career-oriented curricula
- Employment opportunities
- Wrap-around support services
- High expectations and clear codes of conduct
- Multi-faceted and long-lasting programming (particularly for the most vulnerable youth)
- Explicit postsecondary navigation support (to and through)

System level:

- Networked portfolio of learning options
- Actionable data that can drive policy change and program improvement
- Advocacy strategy to remove policy barriers and create incentives
- Lead entity or partnership charged with driving agenda, coordinating resources
- Sustainable financing strategy

5. What are emerging regional priorities?

Based on what we know about our region's OY population, what youth tell us, what we learned from the landscape scan, and what research suggests will be effective, the work group is developing an action plan focused on regional system-building. Strategy areas are likely to include:

- Improving the quality, quantity and coordination of re-engagement pathways
- Engaging stakeholders
- Data/information systems
- Supportive policies and financing

6. Who has been involved thus far; who else needs to be engaged and how?

- Prior to this effort, many orgs/initiatives have been committed to this population (Reinvesting in Youth, Uniting for Youth, Youth/Young Adult Homelessness Initiative...)
- Summer 2013 – Aspen proposal development (steering committee, interviews, webinars, focus groups, site visits)
- Fall 2013 – CCER effort initiated (input from ERN, Comm. Network Steering Committee, stakeholder interviews, SOAR partnership to involve youth, outreach to related groups and initiatives (e.g., ESD Education Advocates, SKCCG, Workforce Board Youth Committee, YFS Association, Uniting for Youth/PathNet, Youth/Young Adult Homelessness Initiative)
- Winter 2013 – Work group launched, Open Doors learning group launched, Puget Sound Coalition briefed and OY included in their Compact; landscape scan conducted
- Spring 2013 – SBCTC engagement in Open Doors; Youth Advisory Council/UWKC youth focus groups; input generated via Reclaiming Futures community events

Orgs represented on work group:

- King County Youth Advisory Council
- SOAR
- King County Prosecuting Attorney
- Seattle/King Co. WDC
- Treehouse
- WA State Oral Histories Project
- United Way of King County
- South Seattle Community College
- ID Mendoza Consulting
- Renton School District
- Seattle Education Access
- Federal Way Public Schools
- King County Comm. Services Div.
- Year Up
- YD Executives of King County
- Puget Sound ESD
- Seattle Jobs Initiative
- White Center Community Development Assoc.
- OneAmerica
- Office of the King County Executive
- YouthCare
- DSHS – Research and Data Analysis
- Highline Public Schools
- Renton Technical College
- Renton Area Youth Services

- Urban League of Metro Seattle
- City of Seattle Office for Education
- Safe Futures
- SkillUp Washington
- King County Public Health
- Southwest Youth & Family Services
- Multiservice Center
- Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Orgs in Regional Open Doors Learning Group:

- Kent Public Schools
- Green River Community College
- Seattle Public Schools
- King County Comm. Services Div.
- Seattle Education Access
- Renton Technical College
- Highline Community College
- United Way of King County
- SkillUp Washington
- YouthCare
- Shoreline Community College
- Bellevue Community College
- ID Mendoza Consulting
- Puget Sound ESD
- Seattle Community Colleges
- OSPI
- State Board on CTCs