

Opportunity Youth Action Plan 2.0

January 2017

Background

In late 2014 the Opportunity Youth Work Group of the Road Map Project developed an [action plan](#) to build a regional system to reconnect opportunity youth to education pathways. The strategies in the original plan clustered into four areas of system-building work: Improving supply, increasing coordination, improving quality and increasing awareness and access. Significant work has been underway by multiple partners to implement the plan and put in place the building blocks of a strong system focused on youth who left high school without a diploma. A [review of implementation](#) conducted in late 2016 pointed to progress in many areas and much work ahead.

System reach (or the supply of programs) has expanded significantly since 2014. County-wide there are now roughly 2,100 youth enrolled in an Open Doors program (with system capacity at roughly 2,600). Geographic accessibility has improved, with much of the growth occurring in S. King County where need is great. Almost all local colleges and Road Map Project region K-12 districts participate in Open Doors partnerships. For young adults over age 21, new competency-based diploma options have begun at nearly every community college in the region in the past two years. A regional outreach team, [Reconnect to Opportunity](#), is now working to find opportunity youth and get them connected to whichever of these programs best fits their needs and interests.

This growth has leveraged significant new public funding for our region. An estimated \$11 million in state K-12 Basic Education Funding (Open Doors)¹ supported reengagement programming during 2016. During 2017, the County will pilot opportunity youth employment training services that by 2018 will be funded through a combination of Basic Food Employment & Training (BFET) and County funds. In addition, approximately \$1.7 million in federal Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act flows to the reengagement system, and state Adult Basic Education (ABE) funds support High School 21+ programs at local colleges.

During fall and winter of 2016, in conjunction with a [strategic refresh process](#) for the Road Map Project as a whole, CCER worked with King County and other partners to develop this revised plan to guide the next phase of reengagement system-building work.

System Building Blocks

In addition to the major expansion in program supply and the coordinated outreach strategy described above, several other building blocks are now in place that support the development of a strong regional system:

- **Leadership.** Perhaps the most significant development since work got underway on the action plan is increasing leadership from King County Employment and Education Resources (KCEER). KCEER has provided education and employment services to opportunity youth for over 30 years; has a track record of accessing federal, state, private and local dollars to serve this population; and has an explicit

¹ Assumes 2,100 enrollments, 85% of students billable each month.

commitment to racial equity. During 2016 two new infrastructure positions were created at King County (reengagement system manager and outreach manager), marking a key transition for the County from service provider to system leader.

- **Resources.** In addition to significant public funds now fueling this work, interest among private funders in our community is high. The Aspen Forum on Community Solutions was a key initial funder of CCER's regional backbone role in this work, along with a group of local funders that came together to provide a match. United Way of King County, Raikes Foundation and Ballmer Family Giving are examples of local funders that have made major commitments to reengagement in our region. Several new national initiatives have touched down locally in close alignment with this work since the action plan was developed in 2014 (see Appendix 1).
- **Engaged Providers.** CCER began convening reengagement providers in 2014. This has now evolved into a robust community of practice known as the [King County Reengagement Network](#), now facilitated by King County EER with support from CCER. Monthly meetings attract 50-60 practitioners and feature program consultations, sharing of promising practice, and skill development. Program participation was formalized during early 2016, through the signing of specific system commitments, including sharing data quarterly with the group.
- **Shared Vision.** In joining the reengagement system, providers agree to a set of shared values and system-building goals and commitments. Adoption of the [Back on Track model](#) to guide professional development and quality improvement as well as shared knowledge of labor market realities in our region have helped solidify a commitment to postsecondary and career training. Considering the diploma or GED as the launch and not the destination is now central to program and system culture.
- **System Data.** Much work remains to build robust systems and processes to support data collection, continuous improvement and evaluation at the program and state levels. That said, we are beginning to piece together, from aggregate annual data provided to the state and consistent [quarterly reporting](#) now underway at the regional level, an understanding of student enrollment, demographics, progress, retention and outcomes. Especially given the lack of industry benchmarks for reengagement programming, this emergent understanding of baseline system performance has been key to the development of the regional targets described in the next section.
- **Population-Level Data.** Our understanding of the opportunity youth population has also evolved since the development of the original action plan. Census data suggest there are over 32,000 OY in King County (nearly 25,000 are in the Road Map Region).² This includes many important subgroups, but two with significant implications for funding are youth who did not finish high school (13,711 in King County; 11,152 in Road Map Region), and those who did (19,019 in King County; 13,177 in Road Map Region). Youth who did not finish high school have been the primary target for the system to date, given the opportunity to leverage K-12 funding. Going forward we will pilot strategies for OY who *did* finish high school, with the possibility of broadening the system over time.

² Here we define opportunity youth as 16-24 year olds who are not in school and not working, as well as 16-24 year olds who are working, not in school, and haven't completed high school.

Regional Results, Aspirations and Targets

Our shared vision for this work revolves around two broad result statements:

1. Our region has a robust, coordinated, diverse system of reengagement pathways; and
2. Opportunity youth reconnect to education and progress towards college/career credentials and living wage work.

In order to track progress toward these results, we developed both youth and system-level indicators as well as ambitious 2020 targets meant to guide action and create urgency. With baseline data (albeit imperfect) about the size of the challenge and current program performance, partners have articulated where we want the system to be in the future. Baselines are still being refined, and annual targets are being developed for both youth and system indicators where feasible and useful.

Youth Indicators with 2020 Targets	Baseline (2014)
70% of youth who drop out reengage in high school completion within 2 years of leaving	42%
50% of youth who reengage earn a secondary credential (diploma or GED) within 2 years	20%
60% of reengaged youth who complete a secondary credential enroll in post-secondary	31%
60% of reengaged youth who enroll in PS complete a credential <i>and</i> at least 45 credits	
Note: Closing gaps is as important as improving outcomes. Where possible, we disaggregate indicators by subgroups to create accountability and focus system attention and resources on racial equity.	

Baseline data sources: OSPI CEDARS database via ERDC and National Student Clearinghouse; prepared by CCER data team in 2016. Note that baseline year/cohort for the first two 2020 targets is students who disengaged in 2011-12. Baseline year/cohort for the third 2020 target is all late or never graduates from the class of 2011. We don't have a baseline for the fourth target, though the persistence rate (ever persisted to a second year of college) for late or never high school graduates from the class of 2009 was 26%.

Interim Youth Indicators	Baseline (draft)
% "billable" under Open Doors (academic progress + minimum attendance)	83% (spring 2016); 7 programs reporting
Quarterly "stick rate" in Open Doors	78% (spring 2016); 7 programs reporting
HS credit attainment in Open Doors	
PS credit attainment in Open Doors	

System Indicators	Baseline (draft)
Articulated district referral mechanisms	2 MOUs with King County ReOpp (2017)
Reengagement Network participation	18 programs signed system commitments 15 programs share quarterly data (2017)
Use of Back on Track framework by Open Doors programs	5 programs articulated specific BOT improvement priorities (2017)
Access to post-secondary navigators within programs	90% of Open Doors programs partner with SEA; few HS 21+ programs (2017)
Access to employment supports within programs	42% of programs surveyed offer job readiness, search & placement (summer 2016)

System-Building Priorities 2017-2018

What will it take to meet these targets and close persistent gaps? While significant progress has been made since 2014 and important building blocks are in place, many challenges remain. The following are priority strategies to collectively advance reengagement system-building during 2017-18 (Appendix 2 includes more specific activities and funding status/gaps). Given the need to reengage opportunity youth and concurrently dismantle underlying barriers, strategy six focuses on preventing youth from becoming OY. As that work gets fleshed out during 2017, it will be important to align with other regional indicators and priorities related to increasing high school graduation and college/career readiness.

1. Expand and improve opportunity youth outreach

- Implement strong peer outreach strategy
- Formalize system referral mechanisms (e.g., districts, JJ, law enforcement, housing authorities)
- Strengthen data collection and use to inform and improve outreach

2. Improve program supply and coordination

- Improve program, pathway and initiative alignment (between Open Doors and HS21+, Open Doors & Postsecondary training, Open Doors & Apprenticeship)
- Use data to fill gaps and differentiate across program supply

3. Expand college and career transition supports

- For OY without a high school diploma
 - Expand employment offerings within reengagement programs
 - Strengthen, expand and sustain postsecondary navigation within reengagement programs
- For OY who finished HS or equivalent
 - Expand college/career exploration, transition and navigation supports
 - Expand supportive employment offerings

4. Strengthen quality and support innovation

- Support data-driven continuous improvement
- Expand professional development supports (coaching, training, cross-site sharing anchored by Back on Track and other effective practice frameworks)

5. Improve data collection, reporting and use at the program and systems level

- Monitor system reach and outcomes
- Build program capacity to use data for continuous improvement

6. Expand effective efforts to reduce dropout and increase high school graduation rates

- Strengthen implementation of early warning intervention systems in the 9th grade
- Increase effective use of non-exclusionary discipline policies and practices
- Expand collection and use of school climate data in high schools

System Resources & Gaps

Successful implementation of the 2017-18 priority strategies listed on page 4 will take collective work across many partners, alignment across many regional initiatives, effective influence over how public dollars are spent and in some cases, additional targeted funding.

The charts below attempt to capture the current and future resource landscape in terms of (1) core service delivery and (2) system leadership and coordination. This general assessment aims to serve as a jumping off point for engaging funders in discussions about priority investments and options in both the short and longer term.

Core Service Delivery. The chart below depicts current and anticipated funding levels for services considered core to the reengagement system.

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
<i>Assumed system reach</i> ³	2,600 seats 2,100 enrolled	2,700 seats 2,200 enrolled	2,800 seats 2,400 enrolled	2,900 seats 2,600 enrolled	3,000 seats 2,700 enrolled
Core Services					
<i>High School Completion</i>	K-12 BEA funding provides adequate, sustainable support for high school completion instruction				
<i>Case Management</i>	K-12 BEA funding provides partial support for effective case management and wrap-around supports. Programs either have very high caseloads or supplement with other fund sources.				
<i>Employment Training</i>	WIOA funds provide limited support for employment training in a limited number of Open Doors programs. King County anticipates using BFET to fund similar services starting late 2017. Even with this pending expansion, employment training services are only available to fewer than one-third of youth enrolled in reengagement.				
<i>College/Career Navigation</i>	SIF federal funds (plus private match) supports team of 5 postsecondary navigators deployed across the reengagement system through June 2018.				

System Leadership. King County Employment and Education Resources has begun building a small staff to provide centralized leadership to the growing reengagement system. Services are provided by a mixed delivery system; program staff work for a variety of organizations, with some programs operated by the County but many others operated by school districts, community colleges and CBOs. The chart below depicts current and anticipated funding levels for system leadership and coordination.

³ Assumes 80% of seats filled in 2016, 85% filled in 2017-18, 90% filled in 2019-20

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
<i>Assumed system reach</i>	2,600 seats 2,100 enrolled	2,700 seats 2,200 enrolled	2,800 seats 2,400 enrolled	2,900 seats 2,600 enrolled	3,000 seats 2,700 enrolled
System Leadership					
<i>Management & Coordination</i>	Raikes Foundation seed-funded system manager position. CCER providing 1 FTE (Aspen & match)		1 FTE in KC EER budget; add'l FTE to support growth and backbone		
<i>Outreach & Communications</i>	Raikes seed-funded outreach manager and comms platform; UWKC funding peer outreach; CCER providing support via Raikes.		1 FTE in KC EER budget; add'l funds needed to sustain peer team		
<i>Capacity Building</i>	Raikes Foundation and UWKC funding Back on Track quality improvement project		Continued support for quality improvement efforts likely via UWKC Reconnecting Youth and Raikes Foundation		
<i>Data & Evaluation</i>	Aspen & Raikes support active CCER .5 FTE	King County EER has some limited in-house data support for reengagement. CCER has limited support to continue backbone data support. Additional funds needed to strengthen systems and processes for data collection, continuous improvement and evaluation at the program and system levels			

Appendix 1

Opportunity Youth Funding Initiatives

Funding Initiative	Lead Agency	Primary Goals or Strategies	Target Population	Funding Level	Timeline
Aspen Opportunity Youth Incentive Fund	CCER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build a regional reengagement system oriented toward postsecondary; Improve system supply, quality, coordination and access 	16-24; focus on OY with no HS diploma	500K + local match	Fall 2013 – 2017
United Way of King County Reconnecting Youth	United Way of King County	Invest in reengagement programs and system building in order to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reengage 9,590 opportunity youth Ensure 4,795 opportunity youth complete secondary credential 	16-24; focus on OY with no HS diploma	\$20M goal	2014 – 2020
Social Innovation Fund Opp Works	United Way, CCER, Seattle Education Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embed postsecondary navigators within Open Doors programs 	16-24 year-old OY	\$720,000 + local match	July 2015 – June 2018
Federal Performance Partnership Pilot (P3)	Workforce Development Council of Seattle-KC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pilot sequenced Open Doors/WIOA co-enrollment strategy Strengthen regional outreach and referral efforts Advance system data alignment/sharing 	16-24 year-old OY	\$700,000	2016-2017
Generation Work – Annie E. Casey Foundation	SkillUp Washington with Port Jobs & South Seattle College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase access for young adults to good jobs & careers in TDL & advanced manufacturing; Embed employer & young adult feedback loops into regional on-ramp efforts; Demonstrate new re-engagement models which support work & school 	18-29 low-income, low skilled	\$200K 2017; \$600K 2018-19; TBD 2020 & beyond	2016-2019; 2020-2022 TBD
100K Opportunities Initiative – Aspen, Schultz	Educurious with CCER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connect opportunity youth with education-friendly employment Support/enhance opportunity fairs 	16-24 year-old OY	\$150K annually for up to 3 years; \$200K one-time	July 2016 – June 2019 TENT
Pathways to Careers Fund	Aspen Forum for Community Solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create, accelerate, expand career pathways to improve job placement and retention 	16-24 year-old OY	2-4 grants of up to \$100K	July 2017 – June 2019
Best Starts for Kids (Opp Youth strategy)	King County Employment & Education Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help young adults with challenges transition to adulthood Support opportunity youth to reengage 	16-24 year-old OY	\$1.4 M annually (tax levy)	Launches 2017

Related Initiatives, Coalitions & Investments

- Raikes Foundation
- BSK School-to-Prison Pipeline
- WDC Youth Workforce System Planning
- Uniting for Youth/PathNet
- Seattle Mayor's Youth Employment Initiative
- S. King County Coordinating Council on Gangs
- Reclaiming Futures
- Puget Sound Coalition for College and Career Readiness
- Project Finish Line
- Mecha WA Partnership Project
- TechHire Seattle-King County (Seattle Central & LaunchCode)