

Open Doors Youth Apprenticeship Consortium Planning Meeting Notes

On September 27, 2017 SkillUp Washington hosted two exploratory conversations in partnership with the Roadmap Project to discuss the idea that was surfaced in a recent Generation Work meeting to develop a regional strategy for connecting Opportunity Youth to registered apprenticeship pathways.

A smaller group consisting of SkillUp, the Community Center for Education Results, the Aerospace Joint Apprenticeship Committee, Puget Sound Education Service District, South Seattle College's Georgetown Campus, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, State Board of Community and Technical Colleges and the Center of Excellence for Construction at Renton Technical College met prior to the Roadmap Project's Opportunity Youth Advisory Group (OYAG) to further refine the vision and potential roles and timelines for implementing such a strategy. A larger group of OYAG participants met later that afternoon to discuss their reactions to that idea and voice any questions, concerns and other feedback.

The smaller, tactical group discussed challenges involved in the current system, including:

- Making connections between apprenticeship training committees, school districts, CTE programs and/or high school re-engagement programs are done on an ad-hoc basis, and most apprenticeship programs don't have the capacity to manage competing partnership requests from multiple school districts;
- Most apprenticeship training committees do not have expertise in the K-12 system – they are geared more towards post-secondary;
- Partnerships between one school district and one apprenticeship pathway limits options for young people;
- Partnering with one school district over another can be perceived as unfair and/or inequitable;
- Very few apprenticeship programs have a history of (or are equipped to) working with Opportunity Youth, and existing youth apprenticeship programs at AJAC are designed for in-school youth;
- K-12 Open Doors programs embed case management/support services for enrolled Opportunity Youth—most apprenticeship programs lack resources and knowledge to support this population;
- Most Opportunity Youth participating in re-engagement programs are not viewed as “job ready” as traditional high school students; and
- High schools with college-level courses in the high school requires that those teachers have credentials that the college accepts. Students are also required to pay the college tuition.

The group discussed the unique opportunity for using Open Doors funding to increase access to apprenticeship pathways for Opportunity Youth. The fact that FTE dollars follow students helps to reduce the transaction costs of working with individual students, and the overall framework of the funding supports the educational goals of completing a high school diploma within the context of work. The group also discussed the use of High School 21+ for students that age out of Open Doors.

For the current school year, the Basic Education allocation is \$6,570, and the allocation for vocational programs is \$7,559. This may go up significantly next year because of the McCleary decision. Typically, 7% of the allocation is held by the school district; consortium models tend to hold closer to 12% with the rest going to community partners providing services to enrolled students.

In order to capitalize on the opportunity provided by Open Doors to develop apprenticeship pathways for Opportunity Youth, the group agreed that a regional approach to brokering and managing relationships with individual school districts and apprenticeship programs was needed. There is a compelling case that can be made about the use of competency-based credit for high school completion, providing students with more personalized learning opportunities and greater flexibility in the way that credit can be earned or awarded. Piloting these strategies first with Open Doors Opportunity Youth could be a great way to bring others in the K-12 system on board with this approach.

Key roles and functions for an organization to provide coordinating support and oversight as a Regional Open Doors Apprenticeship Consortium include:

- Administrative capacity and ability to track the flow of Open Doors FTE dollars;
- Ability to partner with multiple apprenticeship training committees, as each apprenticeship program will only have a small number of available slots with partner employers at a given time;
- Ability to work with school districts, re-engagement providers and apprenticeship training committees to develop equitable processes for identifying students who are job ready and can participate in apprenticeship training;
- Communication capacity and knowledge to help explain to students, parents and community partners the benefits of apprenticeship, including what it is and is not (including degree pathways);
- Authority to devise uniform guidance and policies for how students across the region can enroll in this pathway;
- Capacity to provide case management as needed, or work in partnership with other organizations to provide that function; and
- Assurance that the needs of students identified as needing Special Education services are addressed.

The group also discussed short- and long-term visions for a consortium approach to opportunity youth apprenticeship pathways. A long-term vision for the consortium consists of:

- A backbone organization (such as an Educational Service District) working to coordinate the flow of Open Doors resources from all interested school districts in the Puget Sound region;
- A unique re-engagement pathway consisting of apprenticeship options in multiple industries (e.g. construction, trades, manufacturing, healthcare, food service, etc.);
- Pathways that are inclusive of pre-apprenticeship and contextualized for high school completion, so that students who are not yet job ready can participate; and
- Pathways that are inclusive of Integrated Basic Education Skills Training (IBEST) and High School 21+ options for older students (21 and over) who do not have a high school credential.

More immediately, the group identified some short-term goals for a pilot project to help get this work off the ground:

- Identify 2-3 apprenticeship training committees willing to enroll a small number of employable Opportunity Youth into an apprenticeship program;
 - o For instance, AJAC stated that it could host up to 15 new Opportunity Youth in an apprenticeship program at their Kent facility beginning in January through the end of the school year. The Finishing Trades and Laborers were also mentioned as potential programs that might be interested, as they have shown a willingness to enroll some apprentices younger than 18.
- Develop screening and assessment protocols for interested young adults;
 - o AJAC shared its [Advanced Manufacturing Preparation](#) two-day manufacturing orientation as a promising practice that could be shared with other interested apprenticeship programs.
- Work with existing Open Doors re-engagement programs and the Reconnect to Opportunity team to refer interested young people to partnering apprenticeship programs;
 - o Caution was noted about existing re-engagement programs' willingness to give up FTE resources for a particular student. This will likely be less of an issue by working with Open Doors programs with larger caseloads (such as I-GRAD).
- Decide whether the Puget Sound ESD (or whatever organization takes on the role of the consortium) will directly provide case management or work in partnership with other entities to provide that function; and
- Begin developing an MOU for a new, unique re-engagement pathway that can build off the pilot.

Immediate next steps to move this forward was to vet the idea with Puget Sound ESD leadership. The group also discussed how this idea could be part of a larger strategy put forward for the upcoming Career Connect Washington grant, which is being convened by the Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County and the Seattle Region Partnership. Members of the group discussed the idea during the planning meeting for the CCW grant held the next day, Thursday September 28, at the Seattle Foundation. Additional follow-up with grant leads will be needed.

Feedback from OYAG members in the smaller breakout at the afternoon meeting about what excites, scares and/or confuses them about this idea included:

- Concern about funneling young adults into particular industries that are perceived as 'bubble' industries, such as construction. However, it was also noted that, despite the fact that a bubble exists, there are real, high-wage job openings in the sector due to other pressing factors like retirements.
- Concern about the equity issues of tracking young disconnected adults into apprenticeship who are perceived as not being ready for "real school."
- Ensuring that pre-apprenticeship is taken into account in the pipeline, especially because apprenticeship programs can only spend money on apprentices, and that existing resources to support case management and wrap around supports for both apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship (such as the Apprenticeship Opportunities Project) are incorporated in an intentional way.
- Ensuring that the focus of this work is on real jobs and not internships or work experience. These approaches are useful and valid ways to support career exploration and work experience, but they are not apprenticeships.
- Ensuring that there are connections with apprenticeship programs in new fields like technology, and that partnerships like the one between Year Up, Bellevue College and North Seattle College are connected.
- Managing expectations around how many companies actually step up to provide these experiences is important. Partnering with entities like a chamber of commerce can be a great way to market this kind of program, but it's important that businesses and apprenticeship programs are transparent about how many jobs are available.
- Reaching out to small businesses that are owned by people of color and interested in apprenticeship could be a good strategy for finding companies that would be better cultural fits for Opportunity Youth entering an apprenticeship.
- Developing more opportunities like field trips, site visits, and learning sessions to teach guidance counselors and teachers about apprenticeship is important.