



Region: Career Connect Southeast (CCSE)

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Regional Overview

According to Eastern Washington University economics researcher, Dr. Patrick Jones, “the greater Tri-Cities is the fastest growing metro area in the state.” Fueled by growth in global-economy sectors like energy, waste (nuclear) remediation, agricultural processing, and transportation/logistics and support sectors like healthcare and construction, all are struggling to keep pace with workforce demand. Population has grown 1.8% per year (2010-2022) to its current estimate of 312,000. People of color in the two largest counties (Benton; Franklin) expanded at a compounded annual rate of 3.8%. Washington State’s Office of Financial Management (OFM) population projections for 2030 are 350,000 with over 50% projected minority residents.

The region’s three largest school districts—Kennewick, Pasco and Richland—account for approximately 73% of enrolled students (aligned with ESD-123); adding four districts that encompass the “greater Tri Cities” area bumps this to 84%. However, education predictors for these students’ eventual careers and salaries show a flat, stagnant pattern; i.e., graduation rates and college-going behavior are not significantly changing. Beyond the Tri-Cities, rural communities show slower economic growth, but similar education trends. Most are over 50% minority, and majority low-income (per Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) enrollment levels, a proxy commonly used to identify low-income students). For these reasons, equity is at the center of our efforts.

Benton and Franklin Counties feature the majority of the region’s career opportunities; post-secondary institutions are in commuting distance of Tri-Cities and Walla Walla for most students. Our Expansion Plan’s opportunity areas include balancing equity (significant minority populations) with comparatively more job opportunities, and leveraging existing dual-credit programs to enroll more students in existing and in-process pathways.

Appendix 1 outlines our approach: Using dual-credit enrollment as a proxy indicator of post-secondary interest: the current average across 23 regional districts is 58% of high-school students enrolled in at least one dual-credit course. The region's calculated share of CCW's stated growth in program goals is: 2025--1,204 students; 2026--1,409 students; 2027--1,724 students. Beyond the existing programming aligned with Explore and Prep, we support with braided funds and collective impact several BIPOC-aligned supports, large-scale summits and "bridge" events (high school to higher ed/apprenticeship).

We are currently working with sector leads to develop a welding and fabrication pathway intended as a Career-Launch-endorsed program. We believe we are directly influencing students to pursue post-secondary options that meet the CCW goals.

Our consolidated regional Career Launch priorities include sectors facing significant workforce gaps in emerging and "bleeding-edge" technologies related to clean energy, cyber and IT, and the environment. The rapid pace of development in these industries impacts pathway development in that many technologies needed five years from now are still in the R&D phase; pathways cannot be clarified and sequenced until each technology is ready to deploy.

Expanding beyond Benton and Franklin Counties, the CCL Coordinator, through Palouse Partners, will be continuing to develop and strengthen relationships with CTC higher education at Walla Walla Community College (WWCC), for both the Walla Walla (main) and Clarkston campuses. With an existing Workforce and Business Development Center, Clarkston campus is a potential "target of opportunity" for expanded programs and endorsement(s). Further, WWCC offers comprehensive transition-to-post-secondary resources: College in the High School and Running Start, with fee waivers available for rural and low-income students.

Our choice of industry sectors is based on predominant workforce gaps synthesized with equity priorities—The Tri-Cities is forecast to be over 50% minority by 2030, so we will work toward comparable demographic workforce representation in these sectors:

Agriculture: This sector remains an economic driver fueling tourism and service industries. High-tech/precision agriculture interfaces with IT and engineering. However, in terms of equity priorities, Hispanic/Latinx workers in Benton-Franklin represent 57% of the labor force, down from 70%,

Healthcare and Social Assistance: This is Benton-Franklin's largest employing sector at 44%. Some 7,700 Hispanic/Latinx workers make up 1/3 of the workforce.

Environmental Remediation: Hispanic/Latinx workers make up 20% of the workforce.

Science & Professional: 25% of sector jobs are filled by Hispanic/Latinx workers, up from 15%.

Finance & Insurance: 40% of the workforce is now BIPOC, with the biggest increase among Hispanic/Latinx and Asian workers.

Given these data, for the Benton-Franklin area, our Plan projects student growth occurring from primarily minority students enrolling in pathways based on what our industries have expressed as critical needs to build the workforce in these high-impact labor sectors (cross-walked to CCW's sectors) and opportunity areas:

Clean Technology and Energy—Links to environmental remediation (Hanford Site clean-up); importantly, it is strategically linked to the area's nation-leading focus on "Clean Up to Clean Energy."

Healthcare/Social Assistance—Rapidly expanding population necessitates more healthcare workers of all levels and specialties. Tri-Cities is officially designated a “medically underserved area,” along with the rest of the region.

Science & Professional—Our region is the only one in the state with a National Laboratory (PNNL) as its largest employer. This fast-growing sector includes clean energy development, IT and cyber and natural resources.

Construction—The sectors above require brick-and-mortar high-tech facilities and infrastructure for R&D, production and life-cycle operations. The need for highly skilled construction workers, architects, planners and engineers will be critical in the coming few years.

Agriculture/Natural Resources—the opening of two new high schools in Pasco School District will allow for introduction of emerging technology-based CTE pathways. “High-tech” or “precision ag” will allow students to explore cutting-edge technology and techniques coming to agriculture and food processing. Our rural-areas are likewise transitioning to precision agriculture.

For the same level of effort, focusing on BIPOC student populations as new enrollees in Career Launch (and BIPOC and low-income students in rural areas) and dual-credit programs rather than entire student populations in Benton and Franklin County districts supports the prioritization of equity and could influence systems-level change, including parents and families, mentors, potential employers and students supports.

Regional Expansion Priorities

Key leaders in K-12 and higher education in the Tri-Cities area (Superintendent/President/Chancellor level) have told us that—in some cases—they have limited faculty and administrative capacity to support creation of new programs; instead, they remain committed to working closely with Career Connect Southeast to increase the number of students who are prepared and supported to enroll in existing and emerging (in process) pathway programs. The building of new pathways and programs will mostly occur at the CTCs and baccalaureate institutions in rural and small-city areas of the region.

Career Connect Southeast Career Launch-Endorsed:

Systems Administration, AAS-T	Big Bend Community College
Agriculture Production, Applied Mgmt-Ag, Cyber-Security, Nuke Tech (Instrument/Controls Tech, Operator, Rad Protection Tech	Columbia Basin College
Cyber Security, IT	Columbia Basin College/Pasco School District
Banking Marketing Management	Kennewick School District
Financial Clerks	Pasco School District
Cyber Security, IT	Pasco School District/Columbia Basin College
Data Center Technician pathway	Quincy School District
Banking and Financial Support	Richland School District
Automotive Technology, Fire Science	Tri-Tech Skills Center (Kennewick SD)
Teaching Bridge	WSU Tri-Cities

The Region’s new Career Launch priorities, for the coming year and into the next biennium, include sector focus areas, with specific pathways to be determined.

2025:	Engineering, Mechanical (in-process) Education, Teaching Bridge	WSU Tri-Cities WWCC/SEATech	Baccalaureate Inst. CTC/Skills Ctr.
2026:	Agriculture, Precision Manufacturing Healthcare	Pasco School District Pasco School District Pasco School District	HS/TBD HS/PS HS/CTC
2027:	Agriculture Education, Teaching Bridge Construction	Walla Walla School District Pasco School District Walla Walla School District/SEATech	HS/PS HS HS/Skills Ctr.

For the region, our approach to reaching our numerical 2025-27 goals stated above encompasses the following approaches in rural areas (see Appendix 1 for detail)

1. Align Walla Walla School District (WWSD), College Place School District (CPSD), and Touchet School District (TSD) programs with WWCC.
2. Align WWCC-Clarkston Campus with Clarkston School District (CSD); Asotin-Anatone School District could add 37 students to WWCC. For Pomeroy School District, 309 students could transition to WWCC-Clarkston, for existing pathways.
3. The ESD 123 CCL Coordinator will support and collaborate with ESD 171 in building Othello School District’s (OSD) pathway to Big Bend Community College (BBCC) for the AAS-T in Systems Administration.

An estimated 1,268 rural students are then exposed to Career Launch programs. The addition of the three rural components significantly impacts regional goals. There is also potential for expansion in Tri-Cities-based CTC- and BI-level programs.

For the Benton-Franklin area, growth would be based on enrolling students (with focus on BIPOC) in existing and in-process pathways primarily based on what our industries have expressed as critical needs to build the workforce in these high-impact labor sectors (cross-walked to CCW's sectors) and opportunity areas: clean energy, environmental remediation, healthcare, agriculture (precision), science/professional, and construction. Applying an achievable annual 1.5% increase to the current overall percentage of high-school students participating in dual-credit programs nets: Pasco School District: 48 new students per year; Kennewick SD: 62 new students per year; Richland School District: 50 new students per year; Kiona-Benton School District: 5 new students per year; Total: 165 new students per year.

The Network's board, Career Connect Council, rural partnerships and labor will engage schools and students in Career Explore and Career Prep using the High School and Beyond planning process. They will engage educators and business in Career Launch through internships, mentoring and pathway development. Our grants-to-teachers program provides supplemental support for career-enrichment events for students; our Nexus grant from Battelle allows for BIPOC student supports. Our partnership with United Way of the Blue Mountains through the Horizons grant aims to improve post-secondary attainment, while the ESD 123 Childcare Partnership Grant with the Department of Commerce will enhance educator pathways from early learning to certified teacher. We engage industry and CTE educators and leaders in new program development aligned closely with the CCW model.

Program Builder funding opportunities continue to align with industries that are integral to the Mid-Columbia region, while intentionally focusing on our populations kept furthest from opportunity, including students of color, Indigenous students, low-income and rural students, and students with disabilities. We support potential applicants by providing targeted information and resources about Career Connect Washington (CCW) and the system of Career Launch, Career Prep, and Career Explore programs. Support available across the Region includes guidance on aligning proposals with CCW priorities. Broad awareness and promotion of funding rounds includes facilitating workshops and informational sessions, promoting funding rounds electronically through newsletters and social media to district leaders, educators, and industry partners. This direct support is designed to deepen understanding of the available funding streams, including the current round's catalyst funding of \$4M from WIOA Statewide Activities funds.

K-12 program priorities were informed by Tri-Cities Area Educational Cooperative (TAEC), CTE Directors, Superintendents, CTE Advisory Committees, Community Leaders, Sector Leaders, and Palouse Partners for Student Success. Community and Technical College program priorities were informed by Columbia Basin College (CBC), Walla Walla Community College (WWCC), WWCC-Clarkston Campus, Career Connect Council-Tri Cities Regional, The STEM Foundation Executive Board, Career Connect Council-Palouse, and chambers of commerce. Four-year college program priorities were informed by regional higher education partners: WSU Tri-Cities, Heritage University, Whitman College, and Walla Walla University. Labor priorities were informed by labor councils, locals and training & education committees.

Approach to Expanding Regional Career Connected Learning

In order to reach the numerical goal for students completing Career Launch programs, we will continue to collaboratively audit with our higher education partners all current Career Launch programs to find enrollment capacity, and geographically align school districts and out-of-school youth/non-traditional student education programs to relevant CTCs and 4-year institutions. Our developing relationships with regional and state labor representatives possessing key-sector apprenticeship programs will expose capacity for new apprenticeships. This cycle, we understand more about the five-year apprenticeship process, and the challenges that are inherent in the employment contract.

Through in-depth interviews with rural superintendents last year, we learned that the High School and Beyond Plan can become a robust career-connected learning (CCL) roadmap if students are facilitated to “know themselves” (their interests and talents), “know what’s out there” (in terms of continuing education, training and employment), and then to collaborate on a plan of action. Over the next year, the Network will identify best practices and testbed districts across the region to develop pilot innovations to connect these two program areas.

Across the region, we will produce robust communications and outreach—in English and Spanish—to better inform students and their families/caregivers and other adults (utilizing our two-gen model) about credential options available that are realistic for them to achieve, given proximity and pathway interest. Beyond regional borders, the CCL Coordinator will partner with other regions to introduce “CTE Without Borders.” We will deliver existing programming and events, and ESD-123/regional district programs (migrant education, career networking, non-traditional internships, and micro-credentials). We design, sponsor and host presentations and information tables at community gatherings, convenings and summits that allow students to interact with representatives and experts from Career Launch programs.

As we review our progress and plan future activities for career connected-learning (CCL) initiatives in our region, we recognize a significant opportunity to enhance our strategies through closer alignment with the Washington Jobs Initiative (WJI). To date, our plans have not fully captured the potential synergies between CCL and WJI. Moving forward, we are committed to exploring how WJI funds and grants can further support our overarching goals for Career Connect Southeast. This strategic alignment will ensure that we leverage all available resources to maximize the impact of our efforts on workforce development in our region.

On the apprenticeship and credential fronts, we will continue to connect with apprenticeship coordinators who are committed to admitting students and adults furthest from opportunity. Our “two-gen” model seeks to engage parents of younger students, who themselves are young adults who may not have opportunity for seeking a credential or degree. We have had success in outreach activities aimed at the labor community, engaging their representatives as volunteers, speakers and table-representatives at community events. We have—and will continue to—strengthen partnerships with labor by publicly and formally recognizing their efforts in front of our multi-sector executive leadership, and by cooperatively hosting more labor-awareness events in communities with high-minority and economically disadvantaged populations. Many of these communities are located in areas with ample opportunity to attain geographically local journey-level, family-wage-earning credentials.

We continue to be a strategic partner of Battelle/PNNL for minority STEM education, through their Office of STEM. Through our NEXUS grant, we bring Explore and Prep content to students across the region, connecting them with real-world STEM professionals. The Laboratory's Director is on our board and we work to integrate their priorities in terms of workforce-development needs, including IT and cyber, and the hard sciences.

Career Connect Southeast will collaboratively partner on the following program elements, led by CCL Coordinator and CCL Manager, and in conjunction with existing programs and grant-funded work managed by their respective organizations:

More Industry-Aligned Pathways: Create the conditions for exploring new pathways in the Tri-Cities aligned with high-priority sectors and in Walla Walla, Clarkston and the Palouse communities aligned with their high-priority sectors, listed above.

More Career Launch-endorsed Programs, by direct CCL Coordinator support of current and potential new program builders, through a.) high-quality technical assistance to CTEs, K-12, and higher ed institutions, and b.) a series of events to support the growth of Career Launch endorsements and Program Builder proposals in service to students.

- A. Career Connect Southeast CCL Coordinator, based out of the ESD, will provide expanded guidance, technical assistance and liaison services across the region, based on geographic regional and customized support. District inputs from rural areas will help to pinpoint areas of potential growth and systems-level change. The technical expertise provided will enable new Launch and Program Builder applications and assess the readiness of our existing Launch programs to be scaled to other areas in our region.
- B. Career Connect Southeast Network Manager/CCL Manager works in partnership with the ESD CCL Coordinator to develop a series of workshops, "lunch and learns," summits, and professional development opportunities that engage multiple partners (sector leaders, program builders, regional employers, CBO's, K-12 and higher education partners).

We collaborate with: TSF Board of Directors, Career Connect Council (Tri-Cities), Career Connect Council (Palouse), Tri-Cities Area Educational Cooperative, Palouse CTE Director Support Alliance, CCW sector leaders (agriculture, energy, construction, manufacturing, healthcare).

Better Work-Based Learning Opportunities: Maximize access for enrolled students to work-based learning experiences, including internships, apprenticeships, job shadowing, and mentorship programs. We will work with business partners to identify Work-Based Learning supports and sources for each.

We will work with: K-12 school districts, mentorship committees at CBC, WSU Tri-Cities, and WWCC, Elevate/Horizons Committee, chambers of commerce, labor training & apprenticeship committees, employer professional development and DEI committees, CCW sector leaders.

More Availability of Dual Credit and Early College Programs: Through alignment to the ESD (dual-credit program leadership), confer to expand dual credit and early college programs in partnership with post-secondary institutions.

We will work with: ESD-123 Migrant Services, school and district leadership and counseling staff, CTE Directors, GEAR-UP staff, key teachers.

Leveraging the Power of STEM Education and Career Exploration: Enhance STEM education and career exploration opportunities for students, focusing on underrepresented populations in STEM fields, where there are workforce shortages. We are currently piloting the acceleration of the CCW Model to engage earlier grades, providing more access by school and district, and focusing on rural districts. We will work with regional business leaders, PNNL Office of STEM, TRIDEC, survey and assessment vendors, and other peer networks.

More Explicit Support for K-12 and Business Equity and Inclusion Initiatives: We expressly support equity-focused programming in K-12 settings to encourage that all students have access to CCL opportunities. Our network is built with an equity lens to target under-represented student populations. These initiatives can prioritize closing opportunity gaps and increasing diversity and representation in high-demand industries. We continually encourage businesses, employers and volunteers to maximize representation in hiring mentoring, training and supporting underserved candidates.

We will work with: WA STEM, ERDC and OSPI for data synthesis, evaluation and analysis; business DEI leadership; U.S. Department of Energy, PNNL Office of STEM; higher education DEI and leadership committees; K-12 district superintendents and key staff; WSAC; College Success Foundation.

Leading Regional Collaboration and Partnership Building: We will maintain our standing as 'recognized convener' for collaboration among all sectors and stakeholders in Tri-Cities to coordinate resources and support CCL initiatives. By leveraging the expertise and resources of multiple partners in rural and eastern portions of the region, we will increase impact and reach more students and job seekers in Southeast Washington.

We will work with: SE Washington Partnership Workforce Development Council; SE Washington Economic Development Association; Benton/Franklin Workforce Development Council; Ports of Pasco, Benton, Kennewick and Columbia; regional chambers of commerce (Clarkston-Lewiston; Walla Walla, Tri-City); Elevate/Limitless Horizons; and TRIDEC.

Key Milestones

Major Milestones	Goal Statement	Audience	2024-2027 Action Steps
Increase CCW Funding Opportunities	Identify & support potential applicant organizations in key sectors. Host workshops & provide technical assistance for applications.	Educational Leaders, Business/Industry, Students/Families	Secure new Program Builder award—submit innovative proposals by > <u>three</u> diverse funders, and conduct two community Listen & Learns for input and partnerships. Develop sustainability plan for successful Y1 programs and establish registered apprenticeships in key industries; secure funding via collaborations and grant applications.
Develop and Implement Two Generational Model for Students & Families	Develop & pilot the two-gen model with community partners. Assess effectiveness in rural districts.	Educational Leaders, Business/Industry, Students/Families	<p>Establish nine new Career Launch Endorsed Programs in diverse sectors; collaborate on workforce needs with community stakeholders; design vertically aligned CCW continuum in three rural K-12 districts, develop sustainable curriculum aligned with industry standards, enhance internship and mentorship opportunities via five new industry partnerships, increase student participation in CCL programs by 15%; target 20% increase in industry-recognized credentials earned by EO Y3.</p> <p>Expand two-generation model with Kiona-Benton SD and introduce to Prescott SD to enhance family engagement and expand work-based learning activities; add five new rural K-12 districts, targeting parents of 1st-gen college goers. Baseline metrics and tracking systems to measure academic performance and</p>

			post-secondary enrollment gains, assessing family engagement.
Broaden Quality College and Career Advising for Rural K-12 Districts	Design broad college/career advising program supporting High School and Beyond Plan (HSBP) that equips students with prof. skills, academic knowledge, and technical competency aligned with credentials/career goals. Continuous improvement through targeted advisor training and ongoing feedback.	Educational Leaders, Students/Families	Introduce nine College and Career Navigators into partner schools in multiple districts; provide teacher prof. dvl. in bias and workforce development nine K-12 districts and six industry partners; goal: 25% increase in post-secondary attainment within two years of graduation.
Internal Performance Review & Strategic Adjustments	Conduct internal review of CCL expansion efforts. Adjust plans based on findings to ensure targets are met.	Educational Leaders	Conduct needs assessment in K-12 districts; strengthen industry partnerships to address skills gaps and policy implications; evaluate sustainability planning while measuring impact.

CCW Expansion Rationale, Target Districts, Higher Ed and Pathways vs. Priority Sectors

SCHOOL DISTRICT	% DUAL CREDIT	POST-SEC. ENROLLMENT (Jr/Sr.)	# TARGET P-S ENROLL	CERT/DEG SOURCE	CL-ENDORSED/PLAN NED	PATHWAYS	KEY SECTORS (BLR)
Walla Walla	56%	52%	606	WWCC-WW Campus	Education (2025); Ag (2027)	Ag. Systems, Ag. Bus., Enology & Viticulture, Irrigation Bus. Mgmt., Auto Repair Tech., CDL Diesel Tech, Welding, Energy Systems Tech., Med. Asst., NA, Plebotomy, Computer Sci., Eng. Tech., Networking (IT).	Healthcare, Construction, Manuf, Agriculture
College Place	48%	57%	119	WWCC-WW Campus	Education (2025)	Ag. Systems, Ag. Bus., Enology & Viticulture, Irrigation Bus. Mgmt., Auto Repair Tech., CDL Diesel Tech, Welding, Energy Systems Tech., Med. Asst., NA, Plebotomy, Computer Sci., Eng. Tech., Networking (IT).	Healthcare, Construction, Manuf, Agriculture
Touchet	61%	52%	34	WWCC-WW Campus	Education (2025)	Ag. Systems, Ag. Bus., Enology & Viticulture, Irrigation Bus. Mgmt., Auto Repair Tech., CDL Diesel Tech, Welding, Energy Systems Tech., Med. Asst., NA, Plebotomy, Computer Sci., Eng. Tech., Networking (IT).	Healthcare, Construction, Manuf, Agriculture
Clarkston	50%	47%	246	WWCC-Clarkston	TBD	Ag. Systems, Ag. Bus., NA, Plebotomy, Welding, Energy Sys., Health IT, Bus. Mgmt., Clean Energy & Envi. Mgmt. (AA), Math, Chemistry, Comp. Sci., Networking (IT).	Healthcare, Construction, Manuf, Agriculture
Othello	36%	39%	260	Big Bend CC	Sys. Admin-AAS-T	AAS-T Sys. Admn., Med. Asst., NA, Aviation Maint. Tech., CDL-Ag. Equip., Welding, Process Tech.	Healthcare, Manufacturing, IT
All rural				in-school internships (2027)	existing pathways	Eval for CL-Endorsement: facilities, tech, marketing/comms	Healthcare, Construction, Manuf, Agriculture
TOTAL RURAL (NEW)			1268				

Pasco	51% (Hisp/Lat)	39%	47 new/year	Columbia Basin College	Ag. Production, Ag Mgmt (BS), Cybersecurity, Nuke Tech- Instrument/Cntrl Tech., Non- Licensed Operator, Rad Tech., IT; Education (2027)	Ag. Production, Ag Mgmt (BS), Cybersecurity, Nuke Tech- Instrument/Cntrl Tech., Non-Licensed Operator, Rad Tech., IT	Clean Tech/Energy, Healthcare, Sci/Prof., Construction, Agriculture
PSD-Orion HS (new)	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	Career Connect Tech-Manuf and Healthcare (2026)	TBD	Healthcare, Clean Tech
PSD-Sageview HS (new)	TBD	TBD	TBD	apprenticeships	Agriculture Career-Launch (2026)	TBD	Agriculture, Manuf, IT
Pasco, Kennewick, Richland, Ki-Be	59.2% (Hisp/Lat)	42.3%	TBD	WSU-TC	Engineering (2025)	TBD	Manuf, IT, Construction, Clean Energy
Kennewick	57.7% (Hisp/Lat)	48%	59 new/year			Ag. Production, Ag Mgmt (BS), Cybersecurity, Nuke Tech- Instrument/Cntrl Tech., Non-Licensed Operator, Rad Tech., IT	Clean Tech/Energy, Healthcare, Sci/Prof., Construction, Agriculture
Richland	63.9% (Hisp/Lat)	45%	46 new/year			Ag. Production, Ag Mgmt (BS), Cybersecurity, Nuke Tech- Instrument/Cntrl Tech., Non-Licensed Operator, Rad Tech., IT	Clean Tech/Energy, Healthcare, Sci/Prof., Construction, Agriculture
Kiona-Benton	63.9% (Hisp/Lat)	37%	4 new/year	Columbia Basin College	Ag. Production, Ag Mgmt (BS), Cybersecurity, Nuke Tech- Instrument/Cntrl Tech., Non- Licensed	Ag. Production, Ag Mgmt (BS), Cybersecurity, Nuke Tech- Instrument/Cntrl Tech., Non-Licensed Operator, Rad Tech., IT	Clean Tech/Energy, Healthcare, Sci/Prof., Construction, Agriculture

					Operator, Rad Tech., IT; Education (2027)		
TOTAL URBAN- MINORITY (EST.)			156 new/year				