



# Washington Office of Superintendent of **PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**

## *South Kitsap FAFSA Completion Pilot*

### 1. **Purpose:**

The proviso is designed to increase financial aid application completion rates for both the Free Application for Federal Student Aid [FAFSA] and Washington Application for Student Financial Aid [WASFA], especially for students and families who have historically been furthest from educational opportunity.

### 2. **Description of services provided:**

These funds were administered to the West Sound STEM Network (WSSN) based in the South Kitsap School District (SKSD), and the WSSN provided staff to facilitate this proviso work, in partnership with staff from multiple other statewide organizations and the other regional STEM Networks.

In this third and final year of this proviso, the funds were utilized to further implement best practices learned in the first two years by providing more in-depth support to a smaller number of districts. Districts were identified and assisted to better track data and to support a second financial aid completion push in the spring.

As in previous years, the WSSN utilized a variety of strategies to provide support districts with improving FAFSA/WASFA completion, especially for historically underrepresented communities, which included:

**STEM Networks' Support:** Drawing on existing expertise and established network foundations, the WSSN supported Washington's other regional STEM networks to connect with a wide range of local education, community, and government leaders to implement strategies designed to increase financial aid application completion in communities with historically lower completion rates.

#### **Student Services/Supports Provided:**

- In-school and community-based partnerships to support the provision of the annually required Financial Aid Advising Day (FAAD) from Senate Bill 6141 (2020).
- Follow up support in the spring to facilitate a "second push" utilizing school specific targeted support for FAFSA/WASFA completion.
- FAFSA/WASFA completion events (lead and/or support).
- Direct support for school counselors and high school staff to increase awareness and utilization of strategies to increase application completion.
- Dual language support for financial aid events.



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### School or District Services/Supports Provided:

- Identification and dissemination of existing resources and strategies as a foundation upon which to build new avenues for outreach and support.
- Training for staff on financial aid options, creating a college-going culture, available staff and resource support via the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC), College Success Foundation (CSF), and area colleges, and the process for completing FAFSA/WASFA applications.
- Data support for school districts to direct outreach efforts to students not yet engaged in application process or needing technical assistance.

### 3. Criteria for receiving services and/or grants:

The third and final year of this proviso funding was distributed through the WSSN to existing regional STEM networks that chose to opt in. They were identified as ideal partners who could utilize their existing community connections to assess regional and community-based needs, develop and implement strategies for increasing a college-going culture and financial aid application completion rates, and evaluate potential strategies for scope of impact and scalability to a statewide approach.

### Beneficiaries in the 2022-23 School Year:

- Number of School Districts:** 24
- Number of Schools:** 29
- Number of Students:** 6,780
- Number of Educators:** 61
- Other:** 7 regional STEM Networks participated  
31 partners from college access organizations were involved across the state

### 4. Are federal or other funds contingent on state funding?

No

### 5. State funding history:

Fiscal Year	Amount Funded	Actual Expenditures
2023	\$250,000	\$250,000
2022	\$250,000	\$250,000
2021	\$300,000	\$300,000



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## 6. **Number of beneficiaries (e.g., school districts, schools, students, educators, other) history:**

Fiscal Year	Number of Schools
FY23	29
FY22	137
FY21	Data not collected

## 7. **Programmatic changes since inception (if any):**

Based on Year 1 and 2 results, the third round of support for districts focused on utilizing four identified best practices and assisting districts/schools to:

- know their data,
- identify a financial aid completion champion,
- use the WSAC portal to ensure application completion, and
- track application completion data.

A fifth strategy implemented this year was to support districts in ensuring building leader support for the annual FAAD and utilization of the strategies outlined above. Partnerships with community organizations and stakeholders increased this year to provide more direct support.

It is worth noting that all 10 STEM Networks still supported financial aid completion efforts and utilized the learnings from Year 1 and 2. While the funding from this year's proviso provided a deeper dive in a smaller number of districts served than in FY22, lessons learned from previous years resulted in continued support that was not directly funded by this proviso. The three years of proviso funding for this work ultimately supported a broad effort to determine best practice strategies for FAFSA and WASFA completion that resulted in sustainable financial aid practices.

## 8. **Program evaluation or evaluation of major findings:**

The WSSN staff leading the implementation of this year's proviso work collected data from all seven participating regional STEM Networks that captured the schools served and successful strategies for increasing financial aid application completion rates that were used in the region. They tracked the four evidence-based 'foundational practices' identified in Years 1 and 2 that have been proven to positively impact financial aid application completion rates. The networks also supported but did not track a newly added fifth strategy to directly support building leaders with implementing the first four strategies. All of the curated strategies from the first two years of this proviso were shared with STEM Networks and utilized in schools based on the needs of the students and families in the surrounding community.



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STEM Networks tracked best practices used by the schools that included:

<b>Best Practices Implemented</b>	<b>% of schools</b>
Know your data	100%
Identify a champion	100%
Access and use the FAFSA portal	85.7%
Track individual students	71.4%
No best practices used	0%

## **9. Major challenges faced by the program:**

The ongoing student attendance and acute staffing issues still evident in many high schools during the 2022–23 school year as COVID-19 recovery continues made it challenging for school staff to have the capacity and time for direct connection with students to support seniors in completing their college and financial aid completions.

While more in-person contact and support events were possible in 2022–23, STEM Network partners still had to maintain and attempt to expand connections with school staff and community leaders via mostly virtual/digital means, often without direct access to the students and families they were trying to serve.

## **10. Future opportunities:**

As described in the program evaluation section, the regional STEM networks have curated and developed sustainable practices for supporting FAFSA and WASFA completion for students who have historically been furthest from educational opportunity. This work needs to continue.

The multi-organization Steering Committee comprised of representatives from the Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP), CSF, OSPI, WSSN and WSAC also worked collaboratively to support improvements in high school staff understanding and implementation of the fall 2022 FAAD events as a prime strategy for increasing financial aid application completion rates. Staff at WSAC continue to lead state efforts to directly support building staff with providing students access to an annual FAAD via their 12th Year Campaign program, often in partnership with staff from CSF, GEAR UP, OSPI, the Washington Council for High School and College Relations (WCHSCR) and other organizations dedicated to supporting students in reaching their college admissions and enrollment goals.

Finally, the best practices learned during his FAFSA-WASFA Completion Proviso initiative resulted in a Playbook full of case studies that illustrate a variety of approaches to utilizing the best practices documented by the regional networks as having the most impact on



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application completion rates. This Playbook has been shared across all 10 regional STEM Networks and made public for any partners to utilize.

## **11. Statutory and/or budget language:**

\$250,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2022 and \$250,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2023 are provided solely for the south Kitsap school district to codevelop a pilot strategy to increase completion rates for the free application for federal student aid (FAFSA).

## **12. Other relevant information:**

Via the inclusion of a financial aid information requirement in the High School and Beyond Plan (HSBP) via House Bill 1599 (2019) and the added requirement for districts to provide a Financial Aid Advising Day (FAAD) from Senate Bill 6141 (2020), there are systemic strategies being employed statewide to ensure students understand financial aid options and know how to access those fiscal supports. Given the challenges districts have experienced in recent years with providing the FAAD in-person, more time is needed to realize the impacts of these strategies. In addition, the still relatively new auto-enrollment process for the College Bound Scholarship for students who qualify as low-income per Senate Bill 5321 (2021) and the elevation of the income level requirement for the Washington Grant should also soon result in better postsecondary matriculation outcomes for all students.

## **13. Schools/districts receiving assistance:**

[preliminaryfy23state-fundedprovisograntawardsupdated-42823.xlsx \(live.com\)](#)

## **14. Program Contact Information:**

**Name:** Kim Reykdal  
**Title:** Director, Graduation and Pathway Preparation  
**Phone:** 360-870-8563  
**Email:** [kim.reykdal@k12.wa.us](mailto:kim.reykdal@k12.wa.us)