



# REGIONAL IMPACT REPORT

Washington students need strong science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) skills to pursue Washington's highest demand career pathways that lead to family-wage jobs – from advanced agriculture, ground-breaking biotechnology, to 21st-century manufacturing. Over the past few years, students in the **Mid-Columbia STEM Network** have received cradle-to-career STEM education opportunities thanks to our partnership with the Washington State Legislature.

## CAREER CONNECT WASHINGTON: LOCAL IMPACT

The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) provided **\$495,000** for agricultural equipment through the Career Connect Washington Career Launch program. The new equipment at Columbia Basin College (CBC) will serve multiple purposes given the widespread use of precision agriculture and hydroponics throughout our region. A thorough understanding of modern technologies is essential for our students to succeed in their future careers as crop advisors, irrigation specialists, agricultural technicians and mechanics, farm managers, consultants and more.

The new equipment will support coursework in CBC's new Associate in Applied Science (AAS) in Agriculture Production degree program as well as the existing Bachelor of Applied Science in Agriculture Administration degree program. The AAS in Agriculture Production degree was just endorsed by the SBCTC in May 2020. It is part of expanded agricultural offerings designed to serve the workforce needs of a host of major agricultural employers in the region, including *J.R. Simplot Company*, *ConAgra Foods* and *Lamb Weston*. The equipment includes a customized multi-crop research harvester, a windrower, hay baler, two hydroponics systems, a disc, packer, irrigation system and control panel, and two agricultural drones with sensors and digital imaging capabilities to collect data on crop yields, plant health, soil quality, nutrient measurements and more. The drones also will be available to CBC's engineering and computer science departments to educate students in how drone technology works in surveying, mapping and cybersecurity.

## COMMUNITY AWARENESS & ENGAGEMENT: FUTURE WORKFORCE SUMMIT

More than **200** regional business leaders, educators, parents and students met virtually in November to discuss how to help students better prepare for and take advantage of future career opportunities.

Attendees at the region's annual Southeastern Washington Future Workforce Summit learned about regional workforce and career connected learning challenges and opportunities. The day-long event included seven fifty-minute sessions that showcased **19** different organization and career-connected partnerships. Topics

## STEM NETWORKS SPARK CHANGE

STEM Networks are deeply rooted in their communities and provide local expertise to ensure that local needs are met. Each area of our state is unique and STEM Networks know how to drive maximum impact in STEM for every student in their region.



ranging from strengthening pathways and breaking down cultural barriers for college and career success, to employer engagement opportunities in building a career connected learning network in the region were covered. Collaborations between K-12, higher education, and leading business sectors in the community were explored, including internship opportunities and skilled trades programs. In all, 22 panelists, along with six session moderators, offered their talent, expertise, and varied experiences to highlight regional partnerships and commitments that advance a future-ready workforce in the Mid-Columbia Network.

We had overwhelmingly positive responses, along with numerous requests from educators and business, for copies of the recorded sessions. We have made the sessions available on the [Network's YouTube channel](#).

### EARLY LEARNING IN OUR REGION

Mid-Columbia STEM leadership completed an analysis of the current early learning landscape in the region and identified public messaging to Hispanic families via radio as an immediate opportunity. This messaging will be focused on the importance of early learning and early STEM. The network continues to work closely with regional and state leaders on a strategy for on-going, meaningful engagement.

### THANK YOU

We thank the Washington State Legislature for their engagement with STEM education issues and the Mid-Columbia STEM Network. Our collective and ongoing impact on Washington students means that every student, from our earliest learners to those on their way to a STEM career, will be prepared to thrive in Washington's innovation economy. Our collaboration with the Legislature is essential as we work to strengthen our education systems so that students in our region can thrive and contribute to the vitality of their communities.

If you have any questions, please contact Deb Bowen at [deb@stemlearning.org](mailto:deb@stemlearning.org) or 509.420.9316

**1,000,000 students across the state are supported through STEM Network activities and programs.**

