We*Did That

Washington STEM | 2024 Annual Report

WASHINGTON STEM

We*did that

In 2024, we learned, led, co-created, supported, innovated, dug deep, doubled down, and delivered.

Together with our partners, *we did that.*

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Dear friends of Washington STEM,

I am thinking a lot these days about the power of collective action. Nothing we do is in isolation. When I say we, I'm not just talking about my colleagues here at Washington STEM. I'm talking about our partners—the parents, educators, legislators, business leaders, and community members working alongside us to transform Washington's education landscape. As a collective, we truly embody the African proverb, "If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together." And together in 2024, we demonstrated how strategic shifts, targeted investments, and coordinated efforts create the conditions for systemic transformation.

We know what's possible.

We built a strategic plan, charting an exciting direction that deepens the work and impact across our keystones of Early Care & Education, Preschool – 12 Grade STEM, and Pathways to Credentials & Careers. Through the planning process, our team made space to reflect on Washington's STEM's journey to this moment. We paused, took stock of our strengths, and clarified our priorities. We listened to each other and heard from over 450 partners across Washington that what we do matters to our state's collective impact.

Together, we imagined the most effective and just ways to accomplish our strategic priorities—from gaining a more comprehensive view of the early care and education landscape to deepening our understanding of how our organizational superpowers can enable systems change. We also expanded our focus on science, technology, engineering, and math to include STEM literacy. STEM literacy is about problem-solving, curiosity, and discovery—essential skills that enable lifelong learning. These are innate superpowers that belong to all learners, but they flourish with a strong cradle-to-career education.

With these insights, we entered 2025 emboldened.

We know our students.

Our data work proved what we know to be true: Washington's young people have high aspirations for themselves. **90% of students aspire to continue their education after high school.** This affirms what I've always believed: Young people know their worth, and they see their own potential. Still, only 44% of high school graduates in our state earn a degree within eight years. Washington's learners don't lack vision—they lack well-lit, supportive pathways to credentials, college, and careers. It's on us to create the conditions that make those aspirations a reality for every student in our state.

We won't stop now.

Our work is hard and often slow, but the urgency of this moment is undeniable. Each day brings a new disruption, a new threat to comprehend, and the need to pivot. The very foundation of our work—the right to public education—is being dismantled. The youth and communities that we center are less safe. Publicly accessible data, one of our most powerful tools to drive systemic change, is no longer promised.

We must rely on each other to stay focused and stay the course. Doing so requires doubling down on our values and leaning into what we do best: leveraging these strong partnerships, along with data and evidence, to change policies and practices. Together, we can aim higher than just mitigating the chaos of the current moment—we can work towards an education system that nurtures students' aspirations and well-being.

As you read this report, consider not just a year of shared learning and progress, but the power and possibility of collective action. We did that. And we'll keep doing it until we achieve educational and economic justice for every learner in every corner of our state.

We* are in this together.

With gratitude for all we achieve together,

Lynne K. Varner

CEO, Washington STEM

Lynne Varner

We* are driven by our passion for learning, discovery, and justice.

We think big and dig deep. We know that collective action and evidence-based strategies are critical levers that will shift power and change systems. *Together with our partners, we tackle the root causes of educational inequity so that learners in every corner of our state have what they need to become STEM-literate adults ready to step into in-demand, family-sustaining jobs.

Our strategies unapologetically center those historically excluded from high-quality STEM learning and career opportunities. We prioritize students of color, young women and girls, migrant students, students living in low-income conditions, first-generation students, and students living in rural areas.

Throughout our 14-year history, we've demonstrated the power of collective impact. We do this by changing systems of practice, policy, resource distribution, and power to ensure that all learners are supported through each critical phase of their educational journey.

* **Washington STEM is a dynamic team of 30+ educators, data scientists, communicators, leaders, creative problem solvers, connectors, and lifelong learners.**

We* leverage partnerships and data to fuel advocacy and change systems.

PARTNERSHIPS

We foster deep, cross-sector engagement with partners at the state, regional, and local levels. Our place-based and statewide initiatives allow us to identify, scale, and spread effective solutions that serve as models for broader systemic change.

Our place-based and statewide partners include leaders of regional cross-sector networks, coalitions, educators, advocates, state agencies, and decision-makers and legislators.

DATA & EVIDENCE

We directly support our state-wide partners through targeted community investments, data and measurement, and technical assistance.Our approach is grounded in data justice principles, which means we rely on data collected with and for the communities impacted by our work.

We are leading the way in creating open-source, actionable data dashboards and reports that connect the dots between childcare access and early learning, student indicators, and labor market projections.

POLICY & ADVOCACY

We champion transformative solutions by educating decision-makers, amplifying impact stories, and forging alliances across systems and sectors to drive lasting, equitable policy change.

Our advocacy efforts have led to reforms in early learning and childcare, broadband expansion and digital equity, expansion of dual credit and financial aid access, funding and infrastructure for career-connected learning, and more.

We* work accross Washington

Washington STEM partners with regional network partners, educators and school administrators, researchers, community-based organizations, legislators, government agencies, business leaders, and philanthropists.

Every star you see on the map represents one of our place-based partnerships.

WHERE WE* WORK

Regional Networks

Early Learning Coalitions

High School to Postsecondary Collaborative

Career Connect Washington Partners

Limitless Learning Network

> Previously, school districts and postsecondary institutions weren't engaging in discussions about data or the barriers students face in these settings. With [Washington STEM], we've seen a real shift toward **systemic change.**
>
> **— Participant, High School to Postsecondary Collaborative**

From Cradle to Career

When we say cradle-to-career, we're talking about the learning journey that begins at birth and spans a young person's entire experience with the education system.

0 — **EARLY CARE & EDUCATION (ECE)** — **5** — **PRESCHOOL – 12TH GRADE STEM EDUCATION** — **18** — **PATHWAYS TO CREDENTIAL & CAREER** — **25**

WHAT THEY NEED TO GROW

Accessible, high-quality, culturally responsive ECE settings that foster curiosity, numeracy, executive functioning, and teamwork

WHAT THEY NEED TO LEARN & PREPARE

An educational experience that cultivates STEM literacy, encourages career exploration early on, and prepares students to transition from high school to post-secondary learning

WHAT THEY NEED TO SUCCEED

Support in navigating college, internships, and credential attainment; Clear pathways from post-secondary training to in-demand STEM careers






We* focus on STEM in education because the 21st-century workforce demands STEM literacy.

Beyond the classroom

STEM literacy is the key to growing future-ready leaders who can innovate and shape our world in bold new ways. Our definition goes beyond the academic competencies gained through traditional STEM instruction. Abilities such as creative problem-solving, curiosity, and analytical thinking are the innate building blocks of STEM literacy.

Cultivating this type of learning begins at birth and is nurtured throughout a young person's educational journey, both inside and outside the classroom.

Toward belonging

Belonging has many definitions, but at its core, it is the sense that one's whole identity is valued and respected. Individuals experience belonging in STEM when they can engage with and succeed in STEM exactly as they are. STEM belonging can be fostered with our earliest learners through joyful learning experiences that affirm their unique identities, honor and facilitate agency, and meaningfully connect STEM content to learners' interests and strengths. **Centering belonging asserts that STEM is not just for some people—it belongs to everyone.**

Future ready

A STEM-literate person is comfortable engaging in STEM through their education, career, and daily life. They are multidimensional thinkers who consider how STEM innovations can improve the economic and civic health of their local and global communities.

Anyone can become STEM-literate, but not everyone has access to the same learning opportunities that enable this critical mindset.

How we get there

Washington STEM works to eliminate educational barriers and develop accessible, culturally relevant STEM learning practices that foster early and meaningful engagement. We use data and community conversations to identify biases and gaps. We work alongside our partners to develop localized programs that support educators and learners through each critical phase of their cradle-to-career journey.

STEM Literacy is more than a skill set or curriculum—*it's a mindset*

The journey to STEM literacy begins with early care and education (ECE).

Kindergarten readiness, especially in math, is the strongest predictor of student outcomes. When children's basic needs are not met early on, they enter school at a disadvantage and continue to struggle throughout their education. Without a systemic shift in how our state resources ECE, Washington will continue to fall short of graduating enough young adults ready to step into high-paying, high-impact careers in STEM.

Since 2021, our **State of the Children reports** have been an essential resource for advocates and policymakers focused on improving access to early care and education. While Washington STEM has consistently improved visibility into where service gaps exist, inadequate population data has limited our ability to fully understand what high-quality, accessible care looks like in different regions and communities.

In 2024, we said we'd figure out the supply and demand for early care and education.

We* did that

Here's what we* know now.

Supply

Washington does not have enough high-quality early care programs—especially infant care—to meet demand. Care offered during nontraditional hours, inclusive care for children with disabilities, and linguistically and culturally responsive care is out of reach for most families.

We need: At least 220,000 more childcare spots

Workforce

Washington's ECE workforce is underpaid and unstable. The annual turnover rate for this sector is about 30%. The average salary for early care professionals is $42,000—less than most entry-level jobs and far less than any other K–12 educator position. 96% of the workforce are women, and 48% are people of color.

We need: At least 32,000 more early childhood educators

Family Resource Navigation

Families struggle to navigate disconnected and redundant systems meant to guide them to services, funding, subsidies, and other critical supports that can help them access quality childcare.

We need: Welcoming, supportive, and coordinated childcare navigation assistance

Affordability

The average cost of child care for two children in Washington is $37,380 per year, 26% of the average family income. The Department of Commerce states that child care should not be more than 7% of family income.

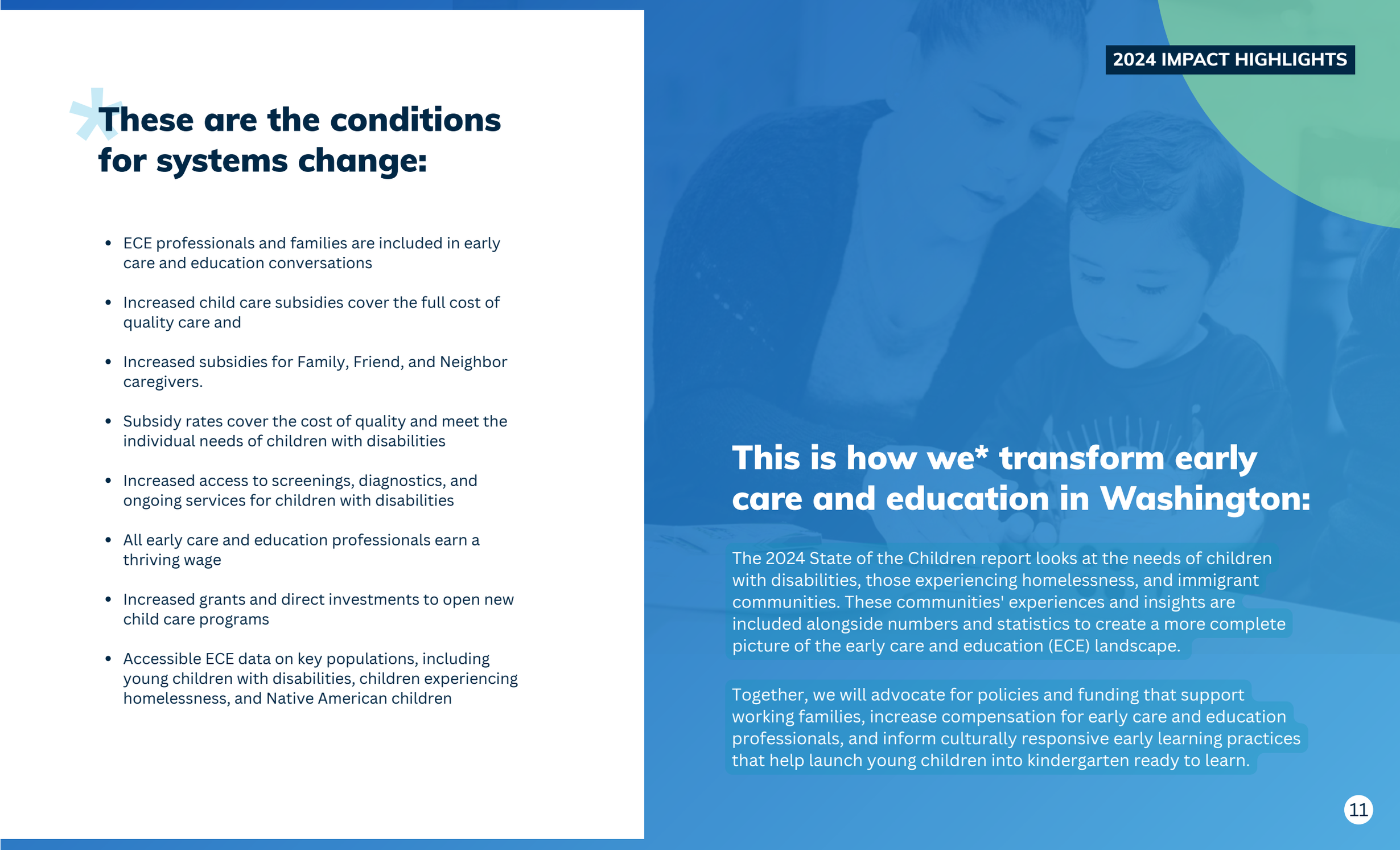
We need: A long term commitment from State and local leaders to fund high-quality childcare

Finding child care is difficult, and even harder for BIPOC or immigrant families with a special needs child…No child care wanted to enroll my 3-year-old sweet boy with significant delays, so I tried to teach him at home.

— King County Parent

These are the conditions for systems change:

- ECE professionals and families are included in early care and education conversations
- Increased child care subsidies cover the full cost of quality care and
- Increased subsidies for Family, Friend, and Neighbor caregivers.
- Subsidy rates cover the cost of quality and meet the individual needs of children with disabilities
- Increased access to screenings, diagnostics, and ongoing services for children with disabilities
- All early care and education professionals earn a thriving wage
- Increased grants and direct investments to open new child care programs
- Accessible ECE data on key populations, including young children with disabilities, children experiencing homelessness, and Native American children



This is how we* transform early care and education in Washington:

The 2024 State of the Children report looks at the needs of children with disabilities, those experiencing homelessness, and immigrant communities. These communities' experiences and insights are included alongside numbers and statistics to create a more complete picture of the early care and education (ECE) landscape.

Together, we will advocate for policies and funding that support working families, increase compensation for early care and education professionals, and inform culturally responsive early learning practices that help launch young children into kindergarten ready to learn.

We* did that.

The Career Pathways Framework and the impact of equitable resourcing

We said we'd bring together education and industry leaders to help create well-lit pathways to credentials, college, and careers. **We did that.**

In 2021, we partnered with **10 regional networks** to co-design and implement the Career Pathways Framework. Local schools and businesses now use this tool to assess career-connected learning, identifying where career pathways exist, which students are engaged in them, and if schools and families have adequate training and resources to support their students.

In 2024, we provided technical assistance to the Career Connect Washington regional networks to complete their Framework-informed strategies. We convened industry leaders across the state to deepen engagement, identify momentum points, and align these regional strategies with sector-specific opportunities. This allowed us to identify program and knowledge gaps and channel resources to the greatest need.

Through these regional and sector strategies, grants were targeted to industry and community organizations to help scale work-based learning programs, creating new pathways for young people to access training and connect to in-demand jobs.

What a well-lit pathway looks like.
Washington Alliance for Better Schools (WABS) was funded to establish an internship program with Fred Hutch Cancer Center. Hutch provided staff time to coordinate with WABS and Shoreline Community College to build the LabLaunch Career Launch program for lab technicians.

Hutch now fully funds the LabLaunch program, including ongoing collaboration with Shoreline Community College, and has made job offers to several students from the program's first two cohorts.

Washington STEM in partnership with regional networks, schools, and industry leaders.

Early STEM Grants

We said we would champion culturally-relevant early STEM learning across the state.
We* did that.

We invested in **eight regional networks** and **community-based organizations** to co-design Early STEM programming with **school districts, educational service districts, early learning coalitions,** and **educators**.

These grant-funded programs and initiatives included family math events, professional development for child care providers, Spanish translation for curriculum and resources, distribution of early math backpacks, and a video series highlighting math skills in Native beading and ribbon skirt making practices.

The programs and initiatives **reached 3,000 teachers and families** across the state, **impacting** an estimated **10,000 children**.

***Washington STEM facilitating investments in regional networks and community-based organizations.**

Maximum Representation: Our work with Tribes in Pursuit of Data Justice

We said we would collaborate with tribal partners to achieve data justice for Native students.
We* did that.

With input from **Native education leaders** across the state, we created resources for schools and state agencies around maximum representation. This method of data collection and reporting recognizes every aspect of multiracial Native students' identities, correcting their long-standing under-identification in school data and the underfunding of Native education. Our resources, including two knowledge papers and a toolkit, were created to help schools access the federal funding that supports Native education.

We deepened our relationships with tribal partners and shared our maximum representation at the **Foundation for Tacoma Students'** Charting Our Futures Conference.

***Washington STEM with the support of OSPI's Office of Native Education and the Native American Parent Advisory Committee for Federal Way Public School's' Native Education Program.**

High School to Postsecondary (H2P) Collaborative

We said we would reimagine postsecondary transitions through the H2P Collaborative.
We* did that.

In the third year of the Collaborative, regional, district, and school leaders continued using student data and feedback to change how they prepare students for postsecondary pathways, ultimately **impacting almost 30,000 high school students** across the state.

Washington STEM provided technical assistance and convened regional leads to collaborate and share learnings.

***Washington STEM heading the Collaborative, along with the eight regional leads representing 40 schools and 33 districts across the state.**

MORE HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2024

Strategic Planning

In 2024, we embarked on the yearlong process of creating our 2025–2028 Strategic Plan. With input from over **450 statewide partners,** this plan will guide the next 3½ years of our work.

It includes a continued commitment to our cradle-to-career approach; a renewed dedication to justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion; and a greater focus on STEM literacy.

Celebrating Rising Stars

We recognized 11 high school students, selected in partnership with regional networks, for our 4th annual Rising Star awards. Collectively, these students represent the next generation of STEM talent.

Their individual achievements include advocating for equity and inclusion on a robotics team, working with Tribal fisheries, telling community stories through video production, leading healthcare career exploration clubs, and monitoring local bighorn sheep populations.

The Rising Stars were honored at the STEM Summit in November.

Washington STEM's Legislators of the Year

We recognized two state legislators for their work: Sen. T'wina Nobles, who sponsored a bill that expanded a financial pilot project was successfully expanded to an additional region with the aim of future statewide adoption

And Rep. Alex Ybarra, who has secured resources to strengthen career pathways as the ranking member of the House Postsecondary Education and Workforce Development Committee.

Our Annual STEM Summit

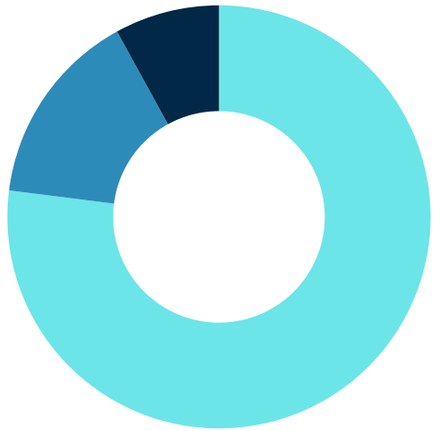
At our 13th annual STEM Summit, over 250 partners came together for a day of collaboration and networking on Microsoft's Redmond campus.

During the Summit Luncheon, we celebrated Gov. Jay Inslee, who spoke on the importance of a strong STEM workforce. We also recognized our Rising Star awardees and our 2024 Legislators of the Year. We were joined by a cross-sector panel of experts who discussed challenges in STEM teaching and learning.

2024 Financials

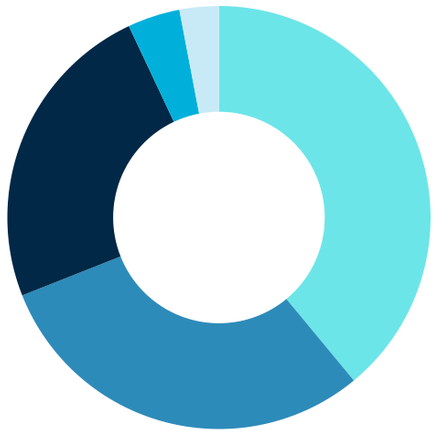
Transforming our state's cradle-to-career education system takes time, hard work, and resources. Here's how investments fueled our work in 2024:

Functional Expense By Percentage



- **77%** Programs
- **15%** Management & General Services
- **8%** Fundraising

Revenue Sources (Accrual Basis)



- **39%** Corporate
- **30%** Foundation
- **24%** Earned
- **4%** Individual
- **3%** Interest

Your partnership makes collective impact possible.

*Businesses, foundations, and individual donors all play a critical role in this work.
Our team thanks you for investing in STEM learning.

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New Venture Fund
The Norcliffe Foundation
PNC Foundation
Tulalip Tribes Charitable Contributions
Weyerhaeuser Giving Fund

Together we*re creating a stronger, more just cradle-to-career education system for all Washington students.

Employee Matching Programs

Google
Instacart
Intellectual Ventures
Jacobs Engineering
lululemon
Microsoft Corporation
Premera Blue Cross
ServiceNow
Silverado Contractors
Synchrony
Trane Technologies
USAA

Tribute Gifts

In honor of Lyle, Washington students
Martha Denis

In honor of Lynne Varner
Geri & Christopher Carlson
Paul Hollie

In honor of Zach Fountain
Timothy Fountain

Individuals

Michael Adams
Anonymous
Ramesh Arimilli
Jean-Loup Baer
Ed Baisa
Brooksie Barton
Charles & Jacqueline Bays-Muchmore
Morgan Bechtold
Frederic Behr
Christine Belliveau
Jeff Blackwood
Sean Britto
Alex Bykov
Geri & Christopher Carlson
John Carreon
Daniel Chandler
Vinjamuri Krishna Chari
Donald Chinn
Ashton Choi
David & Joy Church
Andrew Clapp
Nicole Dalluge
Rishabh Das
Mellanie de Mata
Nicholas DeBruno
Martha Denis
Hao Dong
Tonya Erickson
Cian Fenton
Micki & Robert Flowers
Joshua Fooks
Candies Foster
Timothy Fountain
Adam Foxman
Lawrence Froeber
Andrew & Sarah Funk
Roger Gable
Anjali Ganpule
Michael Gardiner
Shawn Gaul
Bin Ge
Wayt Gibbs
Christian Goodrich
Haifeng Guo
Emilda Gwerengwe
Omar Hafez
James Hallissy
Brody Hanssen
Brian Hardcastle
Stacy Hauser
Pablo Hernandez-Perretti

Individuals (continued)

Nathan Hill
Paul Hollie & Lynne K. Varner
Brian Holloway
Ron Holmes
Min Hwangbo
Carley Jackson
Kristi Jacobsen
Lisa Johnson
Karli Johnston
Angela Jones
Thomas Joyce
Michelle Judson
Giridharan Vivek Kandadai
John Karasky
Jeremy Keith
Kathryn Kenniff
Anna Kirdahy
Amy Klinger
Teresa and Keven Knuth
Kelly Ko
Melissa Kosciusko
Venki Krishnababu
onstance Kuney
Erika Latham
Marie Lazarenko
Robert Lee
Melissa Lilley
Terry Lundeen
Rachel Lytton
Kai-Uwe Maetzel
Michael Magnani
pedrito maynard-zhang
Marc Mendonca
Pam Miller
Kimberly Motonaga
Deborah Mrazek & Michael Niquette
Kaden Nugent
Carlos Oseguera Guerrero
Channy Ouk
Susan Ouzts
Earl Overstreet
Shankar Pal
Laura Peckyno
Lesley Pettigrew
Jerry Qiu
Da Qu
Satya and Rao Remala
Cristina Rice
Eric Riel
Russell Rigby
Joan Robinson-Berry & Chris Berry
Ben Rodriguez
Everson Rodriguez Muniz
Karl Roebke
Sabrina Rogstad
Laura Rose
Brian Rossick
Valerie Rucker
Cali Russo
Kaytlyn Schleef
Jeffrey Schmidt
John Schneider
Eric Schreiber
Gargee Sharma
Yoko Shimomura
Rob Short & Emer Dooley
Marcella Silva
J.G. Slatter
Kevin and Karen Smith
Mary Snapp & Spencer Frazer
Leonid Sorkin
Jennifer Sosh
Rajagopal Sreepathi
Gregory Stephan
Jacob Stephenson
Royal Stevens
Gregory Stinson
Pamela Maricela Tamez Lucio
Sean Teague
Jennifer Thomas
Liz & John Tinkham
Joshua Trachtenberg
Cynthia Tran
Erin Trimingham
Mia Tuan
Jim and Megan Urbaitis
Bapayya Vallabhaneni
Jakob Vasiloff
Itzel Villanueva
Mary Wagner & Richard M. Carlblom
Kira Weiss
Nickolas Welton
Kristine Wiyrick
John Woo
John Wright
Zackary Wright
Cheng Ta Wu
Alicia Yamamoto & David Gray
Wei Zhong

Together, we’ve* gone the distance.

You’ve been with us from the beginning, bringing the vision and the heart to help launch Washington STEM. Your commitment continues to inspire and sustain our work.

Our Foundation: McKinstry

Since our doors opened in 2011, we’ve shared more than office space at McKinstry’s Innovation Center in Seattle. Our partnership is grounded in a shared commitment to building a thriving future workforce through STEM learning.

Our Utility Player: Microsoft

We value giving in all its forms. From giving time through its employee volunteer program to providing space for our annual STEM Summit on its Redmond campus, Microsoft embodies this ethic through sustained engagement and support.

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