



**City of Seattle**  
Office of Economic Development

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**Memo**

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**Date:** May 15, 2012

**To:** Councilmember Sally Clark  
Councilmember Tom Rasmussen  
Councilmember Richard Conlin  
Councilmember Jean Godden

**CC:** David Yeaworth, Legislative Assistant to Councilmember Sally Clark

**From:** Steve Johnson, Office of Economic Development  
Nancy Yamamoto, Office of Economic Development

**Re:** *Pathways to Careers* Initiative

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**Summary**

The *Pathways to Careers* project is a collective impact partnership to align effort and investment in increasing training/education completion rates of low-skilled individuals so that they can compete in the region's labor market. The partnership, which includes the Seattle College District (SCCD), the City of Seattle's Office of Economic Development (OED), the Gates & Seattle Foundations, Seattle Jobs Initiative and SkillUp Washington, met over the course of a year to develop a strategy to create a world class system of education and training that prepares all Seattle adult workers, regardless of income, for middle wage jobs created by the region's dynamic economy. The immediate goal of the *Pathways to Careers* initiative is to demonstrate new models of service delivery and partnership that double student completion of education/training pathways that lead to good paying jobs with potential career tracks.

**Background**

There are significant race and social justice implications of the inequity in educational attainment rates:

- Median household income for people of color in Seattle is 50% to 78% of that for whites (African American at 50% and Hispanic/Latino at 78%)
- Roughly 80% of white residents of Seattle have at least an Associate's Degree or some college compared to 55% for residents of color
- There are **80,715 low-income** Seattle adults who are in the labor force (either working or actively looking for work). Of these,
  - 37,216 (46%) are persons of color
  - 47,321 (59%) have less than an Associate's Degree
  - 62,325 (77%) are employed at least part-time, and
  - 18,390 (23%) are unemployed and actively looking.

- Unless they are reversed with an effective “second chance” system of professional education and training, the trends will only worsen with negative consequences for the economy and government’s social service responsibilities. In other words, we are growing an underclass that lacks the skills to compete in today’s economy:
  - Only 17% of 9<sup>th</sup> graders in Washington are completing high school, entering and completing college on-time.
  - By 2018, two-thirds of all jobs in Washington will require at least some college and in failing to adequately prepare our residents for good-paying careers, we will continue to perpetuate disparity in economic conditions.
  - The majority of the workforce of 2030 is already out of high school and in today’s workforce.

### ***Pathways to Careers Initiative***

The Seattle Community College District (SCCD) is the largest community college district in Washington, with over 50,000 students attending three comprehensive colleges (Seattle Central, North Seattle and South Seattle Community Colleges), a technical institute (Seattle Vocational Institute), and four training centers. More than 50% are students of color, 28% received need-based financial aid and over 60% of the students work while attending college. While the SCCD plays a vital role in preparing the city’s workforce, only half of the students who enroll receive degrees or certificates of completion.

Under the joint leadership of the SCCD and the City, the goal of *Pathways to Careers* is to double student completion in four education/training pathways with labor market value. As a collaborative driven initiative, *Pathways to Careers* is bringing multiple partners together to align effort and resources across education, industry, government and philanthropy to:

- Double student completion of education/training pathways in four high demand occupational sectors projected to offer up to 50,000 job openings accessible to middle-skill, middle-wage job seekers over the next decade. The four sectors include Business Technology, Industrial Skills and Manufacturing, Healthcare, and International Trade/Transportation/Logistics.
- Develop career pathways to middle wage jobs with an entry point accessible to individuals who are likely in need of developmental education. Each pathway will incorporate one or more interim certificate credentials that lead to a certificate and/or associate degree. Students can “step off the path” upon completion of a sequential or “stackable” credential that prepares them for immediate employment, but also allows them to return for further training at a later date in order to earn a higher certificate or degree.
- Bring to scale student enrollment and retention strategies (such as the integration of academic assessment/COMPASS prep, mandatory orientation, intrusive advising, advisor dashboard, and early alert systems), **as well as** engaging with community based organizations (CBOs) to more closely integrate CBO navigators into college advising processes and services to support student retention and completion.
- Leverage investment and alignment around postsecondary completion. The City has invested \$620,000 in the *Pathways to Careers* initiative to demonstrate new approaches that will double student completion in four education/training pathways that lead to high demand careers. This initial investment has leveraged over \$5 million in additional resources, including the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation’s \$2.9 million Pathway to Completion Grant, to accelerate and improve student achievement across the Seattle Community College District.

- **Over the next 3 years, have 1,500 students successfully complete these 4 new training pathways, and double completion rates.**

### **Next Steps**

In addition to managing the deployment of the City's investment, the focus over the next year will be to expand partner investment and alignment around training and skills acquisition. This work includes:

- Establishing a *Pathways to Careers* Advisory Group, comprised of business, education, funders, and other stakeholders to provide oversight, sustain action and impact.
- Improving integration of community-based social supports into the menu of services available to students to address nonacademic needs and resources.
- Implementing a communications platform to build continued engagement and support. The SCCD has been selected as an Opportunity Nation project, a national initiative to "Recapture the American Dream" sponsored by Time Magazine and the Ford Foundation. *Pathways to Careers* will be launched at an Opportunity Nation event (tentatively scheduled for September, 2012), to create further interest and engagement.
- Establishing a district-wide student tracking system to monitor student retention, acceleration, progression, credential completion and career attachment for *Pathways to Careers* students.
- Establishing a district-wide employer engagement strategy to ensure content relevance and build connections to internships and jobs.