

RCW 28B.145.060 Opportunity expansion program—Generally—

Reports. (1) The opportunity expansion program is established.

(2) The board shall select institutions of higher education to receive opportunity expansion awards. In so doing, the board must:

(a) Solicit, receive, and evaluate proposals from institutions of higher education that are designed to directly increase the number of baccalaureate degrees produced in high employer demand and other programs of study, and that include annual numerical targets for the number of such degrees, with a strong emphasis on serving students who received their high school diploma or high school equivalency certificate as provided in RCW 28B.50.536 in Washington or are adult Washington residents who are returning to school to gain a baccalaureate degree;

(b) Develop criteria for evaluating proposals and awarding funds to the proposals deemed most likely to increase the number of baccalaureate degrees and degrees produced in high employer demand and other programs of study;

(c) Give priority to proposals that include a partnership between public and private partnership entities that leverage additional private funds;

(d) Give priority to proposals that are innovative, efficient, and cost-effective, given the nature and cost of the particular program of study;

(e) Consult and operate in consultation with existing higher education stakeholders, including but not limited to: Faculty, labor, student organizations, and relevant higher education agencies; and

(f) Determine which proposals to improve and accelerate the production of baccalaureate degrees in high employer demand and other programs of study will receive opportunity expansion awards for the following state fiscal year, notify the state treasurer, and announce the awards.

(3) The state treasurer, at the direction of the board, must distribute the funds that have been awarded to the institutions of higher education from the *opportunity expansion account.

(4) Institutions of higher education receiving awards under this section may not supplant existing general fund state revenues with opportunity expansion awards.

(5) Annually, the office of financial management shall report to the board, the governor, and the relevant committees of the legislature regarding the percentage of Washington households with incomes in the middle-income bracket or higher. For purposes of this section, "middle-income bracket" means household incomes between two hundred and five hundred percent of the 2010 federal poverty level, as determined by the United States department of health and human services for a family of four, adjusted annually for inflation.

(6) Annually, the council must report to the board, the governor, and the relevant committees of the legislature regarding the increase in the number of degrees in high employer demand and other programs of study awarded by institutions of higher education over the average of the preceding ten academic years.

(7) In its comprehensive plan, the workforce training and education coordinating board shall include specific strategies to reach the goal of increasing the percentage of Washington households living in the middle-income bracket or higher, as calculated by the office of financial management and developed by the agency or

education institution that will lead the strategy. [2014 c 208 s 6; 2013 c 39 s 14; 2011 1st sp.s. c 13 s 7.]

***Reviser's note:** RCW 82.32.800 creating the "opportunity expansion account" was repealed by 2025 c 399 s 1.