



# ELEVATE ANNUAL REPORT



**Fiscal Year  
2023-2024**

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# Letter to Community

Dear Partners, Supporters, and Friends,

As we embark on the 2024-25 year, I am thrilled to reflect on the remarkable journey we've had with the Elevate partnership over the past year. The Elevate Backbone team is immensely proud of the strides we've taken in strengthening our partnership, forging new alliances, and engaging more students and parents in our shared mission.

Over the past year, Elevate has made significant progress to improve kindergarten readiness by working to develop a system to match facilities and early learning care providers. We've expanded STEM programs for middle school, and we are creating sustainable systems to support students pursuing postsecondary certificates and degrees.

Elevate firmly believes that lasting change begins with the cultivation of powerful partnerships centered around common goals that touch the lives of every student and family in our community. While this report only scratches the surface of the innovative work undertaken in the past year, we extend an invitation to all to join us in our efforts and discover how you can contribute to the betterment of our community through improving educational outcomes for our youth.



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By fostering a culture of shared learning, addressing challenges collaboratively, and striving towards mutual objectives, Elevate nurtures a sense of collective responsibility for educational attainment, thereby leaving a broad and lasting impact on our community. Our focus remains creating sustainable opportunities that uplift education across our region.

As a collective impact initiative supported by United Way, Elevate collaborates with a diverse array of partners to dismantle barriers to student success and enhance educational alignment across Columbia, Walla Walla counties, and the Milton-Freewater area.

We express our sincere gratitude to all our supporters for their unwavering generosity and continued backing, which serves as the bedrock of our work. Together, we are effecting enduring change by harnessing our collective power to tackle the most pressing challenges facing our community.

As we look ahead, let us continue to stand together, united in our commitment to fostering positive change and creating a brighter future for generations to come.

With gratitude and determination,

**Christy Lieuallen**

Executive Director United Way of the Blue Mountains

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***BUILDING STRONG COMMUNITIES THROUGH  
EDUCATION***



# Values

We believe in the power of education to inspire individuals, create opportunities, and strengthen communities.



We believe sustainable change is possible when all stakeholders are meaningfully involved. We are committed to pursuing new ideas that support locally relevant ways to improve educational opportunities and outcomes.



We are committed to identifying and removing barriers to educational attainment for all populations.



We believe in collaboration and are committed to aligning goals and leveraging resources across our region so that all students have access to high quality education.



We are committed to supporting all students from cradle through career and believe that learning is a lifelong pursuit.



Students and families are at the center of all that we do. Our decisions are guided by their input and experience.



We are committed to using data to set goals and evaluate our progress.



# Guiding Documents

Elevate has a foundational framework for guiding the activities and measuring the impact of the collective impact work in the region. The following documents provide the structure, direction, and means for effective communication, strategic decision-making, and data-driven evaluation.

## ELEVATE FRAMEWORK

Created by the Elevate Steering Committee (Adopted December 2019, Revised May 2022)

Includes Common Agenda, Values, Backbone Role, Steering Committee Role, Working Group Role, Ground Rules, Steering Committee Structure (meeting frequency, administration, decision making, quorum, size, participation, diversity and recruitment)



**WEBSITE**

## DATA DASHBOARD

We developed a data dashboard which is currently accessible on our website. However, it requires updating. We're anticipating guidance from StriveTogether regarding the next platform to utilize, as the current dashboard is hosted on Tableau through StriveTogether, and they are in the process of transitioning to a new platform.



**DATA**

<https://uwbluemt.org/regional-data>



## COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

### DEVELOPED A COMMUNICATIONS PLAN FOR ELEVATE

1. Mission Statement
2. SMART Goals
3. Target Audience
4. Strategies for Information Sharing, Storytelling, and Cross-Team Collaboration
5. Industry Trends and Best Practices
6. Development of communication materials that are easily editable.
7. Audit of Existing Communications

## STRATEGIC PLAN

### GOAL 1: SHARED COMMUNITY VISION

A diverse group of people in Elevate's region agree on what shifts to policies, practices, resources and power structures produce equitable cradle-to-career outcomes.

### GOAL 2: EVIDENCE BASED DECISION MAKING

The process of rigorously collecting, analyzing, sharing and taking action with data (i.e., both outcomes and systems data), including youth and family perspectives and narratives, to make shifts in policies, practices, resources and power structures that produce equitable cradle-to-career outcomes.

### GOAL 3: COLLABRATIVE ACTION

Members of a partnership collectively adopt the tools and processes and build the necessary knowledge and skills to make powerful contributions that shift policies, practices, resources and power structures leading to equitable cradle-to-career outcomes.

### GOAL 4: INVEST AND SUSTAINABILTY

A partnership has cultural, financial and social assets to support the collaboration necessary for producing and maintaining shifts in policies, practices, resources and power structures that will lead to equitable cradle-to-career outcomes.



# Elevate Structure

## Early Learning



To provide age-appropriate, affordable, high-quality care for all children ages 0-5 in Walla Walla and Columbia Counties, WA and Milton-Freewater, OR.

## Middle School

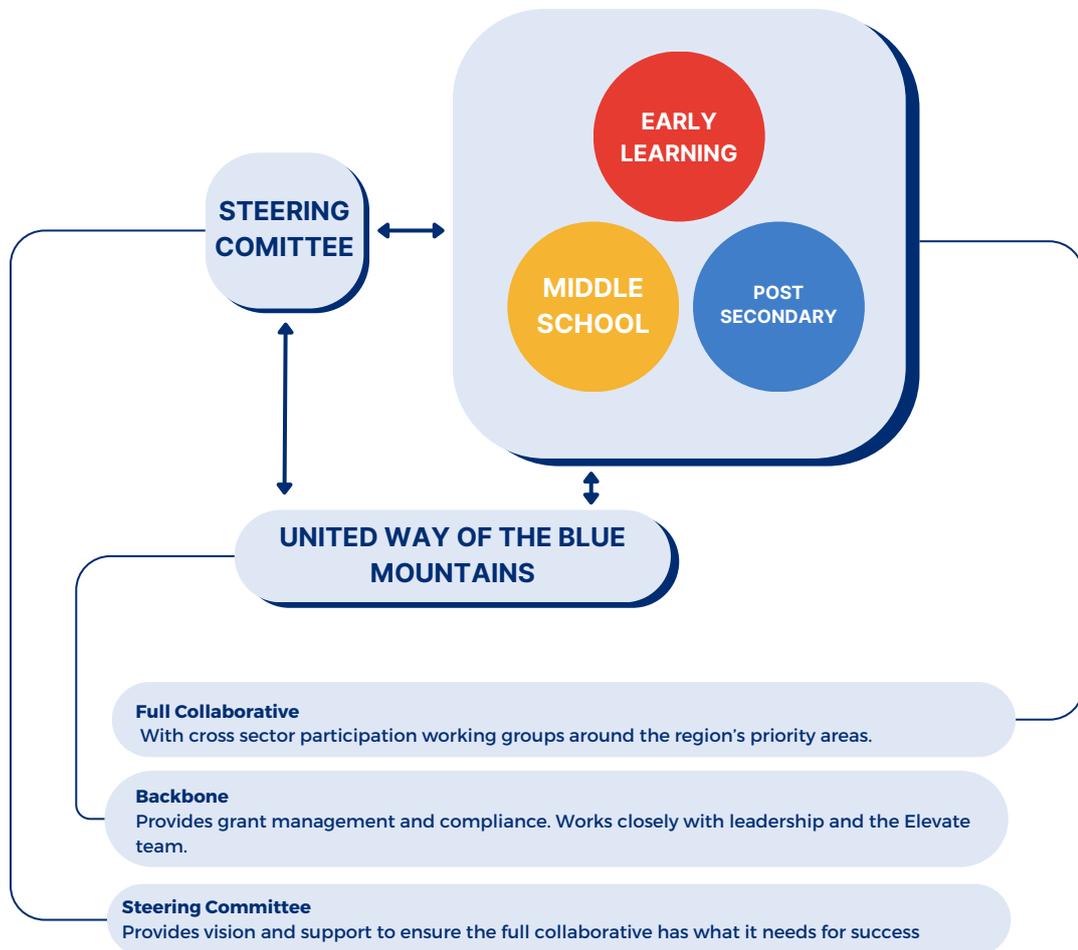


By 2026, 8th grade students in our region will exhibit an 11.5% increase in math proficiency, based on state standardized measures and using each district's 2022 baseline data.

## Postsecondary



By 2027, the goal is to achieve a 70% postsecondary attainment rate.



# Year in Snapshots



**SEPTEMBER 23**

Elevate team attends the Strive Together #cradletocareer Network Convening

Officially announces Limitless partnership



Elevate Insights newsletter released

**JANUARY 24**

Strive Together receives Schwab Foundation Social Innovation Award in Collective Social Innovation

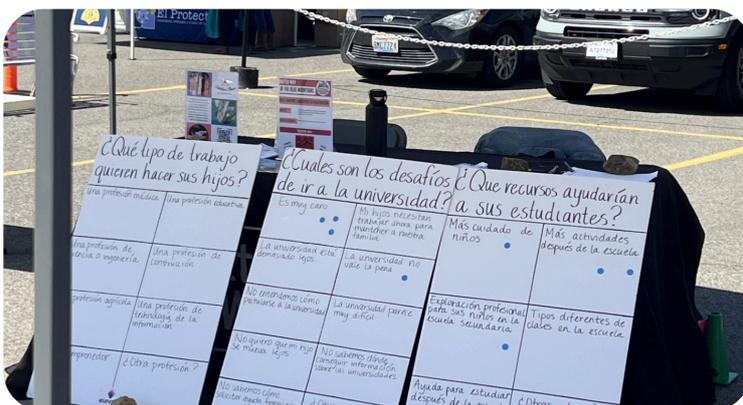


**APRIL 24**

Horizons Grant announced

Elevate team attends Prescott Resource Fair

Elevate hosts Dayton Middle School STEM Day



**MAY 24**

Horizons Grant Manager hired

Elevate team attends Rural Summit

Elevate team attends Vista Hermosa Resource Fair



# Progress by the Numbers

In 2023, the Elevate team continued their commitment to creating a full cross-sector representation of regional partners. This involved recruiting and engaging community members and partners in the Steering Committee and Working Groups. Collaborative members provided strategic direction and planning. Furthermore, they committed to taking action on aspects of the common agenda and working together to develop shared metrics, as well as individual interventions and project metrics.

**587**

Partner hours dedicated to propelling Elevate's mission forward.

**492**

Hours dedicated to knowledge building, community of practice, and professional enrichment.

**92**

Hours invested in community engagement.

**45**

Partner organizations supporting our mission.



# Early Learning

The Early Learning Initiative's primary goal is to provide age-appropriate, affordable, high-quality care for all children ages 0-5 in Walla Walla and Columbia Counties, WA, and Milton-Freewater, OR. Elevate is dedicated to accomplishing this goal through four strategic approaches:

- 1. Understanding the Local Early Learning Ecosystem:** Assess who has and does not have access to early learning opportunities.
- 2. Creating New Early Learning Opportunities:** Develop strategies to meet the overarching goal.
- 3. Disseminating Information:** Share gathered data through surveys and analyze for meaningful insights.
- 4. Public Data Dashboard:** Maintain a public-facing data dashboard for Walla Walla and Columbia Counties, displaying statistics on kindergarten readiness starting in 2019.

## KINDERGARTEN READINESS

Recent efforts have focused on supporting childcare through facility and provider matches, which significantly impact kindergarten readiness. Our studies in 2021 and 2022 identified key bottlenecks, including a lack of licensed care slots, inadequate facility space, and insufficient capital for facility development.

**IN 2023-2024**

**46%**

**OF STUDENTS  
DEMONSTRATED  
READINESS FOR  
KINDERGARTEN**



## FACILITIES AND PROVIDER MATCHING

Our assessments revealed a need to systematically identify and support current and aspiring providers in finding suitable facilities. Working with Arrowleaf Consulting, we reached out to businesses and providers in the Walla Walla and Columbia County regions. We engaged with **17 providers and 10 businesses** to understand provider needs and identify viable facilities. Our collaboration with ESD123 has been crucial, with Elevate addressing the shortage of childcare slots through identifying potential facility sites that may partner with childcare professionals and ESD123 tackling the needs of the childcare workforce thereby addressing the staffing shortage.



## DATA AND EVALUATION

Community engagement involved sending surveys to 17 current and aspiring early learning providers, with options for responses in English or Spanish. Eleven property holders responded to our questionnaire, and follow-ups were conducted as needed.

**31.25% of current and/or aspiring early learning providers reported they did not have facilities that meet their childcare space requirements.**

This work was supported by a grant from the Commerce Department. The budget summary, detailing income and expenditure, is available through our internal documentation.



## FUTURE PLANS AND GOALS

As we embark on the second year of the Child Care Planning Grant (CCPG), our focus is on leveraging data from the first year to raise funds and ensure sustainability. Identifying and matching providers with suitable facilities remains a priority.

Elevate is working to partner with Walla Walla child care professionals with the goal of supporting the Early Learning community through comprehensive resources and opportunities aimed at education opportunities for providers, efficiency in certification processes and development of the substitute teacher pool



Walla Walla County



Columbia County



Milton-Freewater  
Area

***Elevate's core ethos is rooted in the belief that the attainment of education is a collective commitment of the entire community.***



# Middle School

Elevate is committed to ensuring that every middle school student transitions smoothly to a secondary education experience tailored to their needs. To achieve this goal, Elevate established the Middle School Working Group in January 2021. The group's agenda includes:

- Recognizing the diversity of students and their families and developing strategies that build on their strengths and eliminate barriers to success.
- Enhancing positive connections among middle school students, their families, schools, and the community through effective communication and meaningful engagement.
- Creating opportunities within schools and the community that inspire students and support their successful transition to high school.

## STATE MATH STANDARD

Our data from the 2018-2019 academic year indicated that **34% of 8th grade students met the state math standard**. Our Middle School Working Group has focused on providing opportunities to increase engagement for middle school students in smaller communities with plans to scale up.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

As part of our data and evaluation efforts, we engaged extensively with the community to understand and address the needs of middle school students, most notably with the Middle school students, through focus group conversations, surveys and questions specific to STEM experiences.



## COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS

We have partnered with Dayton School District and Waitsburg School District along with the STEM WA Foundation, Junior Achievement. Through our Collaborative efforts, we have brought a STEM program to Dayton Middle School reflecting the STEM careers in the City of Dayton. Waitsburg School District is in discussion regarding a Middle School STEM explore day facilitated by STEM WA Foundation. Elevate and its partners have connected both Dayton School District and Waitsburg School District with Junior Achievement, with the results being planning meetings to bring Junior Achievement to both School Districts in 24-25 school year.



Dayton Middle School STEM Day, April 2024



**DESIRE FOR MORE STEM EXPERIENCES****90%****DESIRE FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL AFTERSCHOOL CLUB****89%****PREFERENCE FOR CLUB TO BE AT DAYTON MIDDLE SCHOOL****99%****CHOSE CAREERS IN STEM FIELDS****50%**

*"These programs can be life-altering for students, helping them envision rewarding careers and understand the pathways to achieve them. This is crucial not only for the students but also for securing our future workforce."*

**- Heather Tibbett, Sr. Program Manager at The STEM Foundation Career Connect Southeast**

**FUTURE PLANS AND GOALS**

The Middle School Working Group is actively planning a STEM after-school club at Dayton Middle School for the 2024-2025 school year. We aim to expand this effort to neighboring communities based on the information and data gathered from this initial initiative.



# Postsecondary

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In the fall of 2023, Elevate, with local partners Walla Walla Public Schools, College Place Public Schools, Walla Walla Community College, Whitman College, ESD 123, joined Limitless, a Postsecondary Enrollment Learning Network. Limitless brings together practitioners across the state who are leading the implementation of initiatives and programs that support students' transitions from high school to postsecondary education. This includes college and career readiness district directors, higher education enrollment staff, and nonprofit organizations providing advising and other college and career guidance support. Being a member of Limitless gives participants an opportunity to learn about and test local innovations in postsecondary student support, build on each other's strengths, and enhance programming by accessing and applying relevant data. Local partnerships will have the opportunity to learn from each other, share insights, improve program relevance and outcomes, and strengthen the state's ecosystem of support—all with the goal of unlocking opportunities for young people across the state and helping more students transition from high school to postsecondary.

Limitless partnerships will work over the course of four academic years with three goals:

- Improve partnership capacities to drive cross-system engagement, action and outcomes and support scaling in the long term across Washington State.
- Improve data capacity for increased access to and use of high school to postsecondary data among participating Learning Network members.
- Increase awareness and improve access to strategies and approaches (e.g., strategies related to high-quality advising, FAFSA and dual credit completion, etc.), as well as improve ability to implement these strategies among practitioner leaders who support the transition of students from high school to postsecondary and who prioritize closing equity gaps.

Elevate and local partners attended the inaugural in-person convening at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in November 2023 and the spring convening in Spokane in April 2024. Additionally, partnership members attend virtual whole-group sessions every other month.



# Limitless Learning Network and Horizons

Elevate engaged Phase Two Consultants to conduct an in-depth study exploring the factors influencing students' choices of post-secondary paths in the region. The insights and strategies derived from this study are currently being integrated into the initiatives of the Post Secondary Access and Success (PAS) group, as well as the Limitless and Horizons partnerships. The Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) Regional Challenge Grant, which has been instrumental in supporting the post-secondary study, will now be extended to implement the recommended strategies. As part of the Elevate program, student, family, and community advisory groups will be established in three communities within our region to enhance community engagement and ensure educational programs are responsive to stakeholders' needs, fostering a more inclusive and supportive educational environment.

The PAS group, which met monthly throughout the year except for July, dedicating a total of 55 hours through a combination of virtual and two in-person meetings, is slated to join the Horizons working groups starting in the fall of 2024.

<b>Push Factors</b> - <i>Factors that drive students away from college.</i>	<b>Pull Factors</b> - <i>Factors that draw students towards postsecondary enrollment.</i>
Costs and Return on Investment (ROI)	Formal Encouragement
Negative Experiences with Schooling	A Sense of Future-Orientation
Compelling Future without Postsecondary Education	Family Influences



## HORIZONS REGIONAL GRANT

The Horizons Regional Grant Program funds regional partnerships to put Limitless strategies and learnings into practice to increase postsecondary attainment. The Gates Foundation awarded Horizons grants to four regional partnerships, including Elevate and its local partners. Elevate serves as the backbone organization that coordinates the partnership, and is joined by four K12 districts (Walla Walla, College Place, Prescott, and Dayton), two institutes of higher education (Walla Walla Community College and Whitman College), ESD 123, the Walla Walla Chamber of Commerce, the Port of Columbia, and Communities in Schools of the Blue Mountain Region.

This grant aims to address persistently low college-going rates in Washington state. Each regional partnership will implement place-based strategies to support students' access to postsecondary education. Horizons defines postsecondary education broadly, to include four-year colleges and universities, community colleges, certificated programs, and registered apprenticeships. Horizons partnerships will support all high school students in the region, with a particular focus on the students who face the most significant barriers to postsecondary education, including students from rural and low-income backgrounds, and Latino students.

To reach these goals, the partnership partnership will enhance supports for students and families, improve postsecondary pathways through expanding and improving college and career advising programs, and establish a network of internships, apprenticeships, and workforce mentors to empower students with real-world experience and essential skills for future endeavors.

The Horizons grant is currently in its planning phase, which runs between April 1 and August 30, 2024. During this phase, the partnership is creating a detailed implementation plan, including internal partnership development, universal and targeted goals, objectives, and activities, data systems development, project timeline, solution identification, continuous improvement strategy, and communication and reporting plans.



## HORIZONS PARTNERS

The local Horizons Partners include Walla Walla Public Schools, Dayton School District, College Place Public Schools, Prescott School District, Walla Walla Community College, Whitman College, the Walla Walla Chamber of Commerce, the Port of Columbia County, Communities in Schools, and Educational Service District 123.

## DATA AND EVALUATION

Creating comprehensive data systems, processes, and routines for collection and measurement is a key component of the Horizons grant. ELevate will engage a local data intermediary to assist school districts with accessing and interpreting student data in aggregated and disaggregated forms.

The Horizons grant will also utilize a local Measurement, Learning, and Evaluation (MLE) partner to test the partnership's efforts, help understand the successes, enablers, and barriers to implementing proposed strategies, assist in tracking the partnership's progress toward the grant's goals, and generate learning to inform future implementation. This MLE partner will work with Horizon's statewide MLE experts at Sankofa to support the partnership's MLE efforts.

## FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

The Horizons Grant includes \$2.9 million in funding from the Gates Foundation over three academic years. The timing of the disbursement of the funding is pending final approval of the partnership's implementation plan.



## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

An essential part of the Horizons grant is engaging the local community to determine solutions based on regional needs and goals. To that end, Elevate has engaged regional students, families, and school professionals in various ways.

In 2023, Elevate surveyed students, parents, and community members through a grant from the State Board of Education. These conversations identified multiple areas for improvement, including expanding educational options to include a wide range of life and practical skills, revising curriculum to support mental health and well-being, and offering a diverse range of opportunities for students for career exploration, including internships, mentorships, and trade options.

Elevate also met with high school counselors to assess the state of college and career advising in the region. These conversations led similar conclusions about how to enhance the college-going mindset of students in the region and how to best support their aspirations. Ideas included providing dedicated college and career advising (particularly in the smaller districts), more robust opportunities to learn about career options and arranging visits to regional colleges and universities, and beginning career and college exploration in middle school.

Additionally, Elevate engaged Phase Two, a consulting firm, to survey the region's students, families, and community members about the state of postsecondary attainment in the region. This data affirmed what prior qualitative data showed: students and families see economic barriers to college going and would value broadened career exploration programs, strengthened college and career advising, and enhanced family and community engagement in college and career development.

Through the Horizons grant, Elevate and its partners will amplify these community voices when designing, developing, and implementing meaningful solutions that will yield positive impacts.



# Acknowledgements

## THANK YOU PARTNERS

**Elevate wouldn't be where it is today without the support of our incredible community partners.**

Children's Home Society  
 College Place Public Schools  
 Columbia School District Burbank  
 Columbia County Health Systems  
 Dayton School District  
 ESD 123  
 GEAR UP  
 Little Angels Bio Dome Day Care and Pre School  
 Milton Freewater Unified School District Parents  
 Port of Columbia  
 Port of Walla Walla  
 Prescott School District  
 Sherwood Trust  
 Starbuck School District  
 The Club Plus Delta  
 Touchet School District  
 Waitsburg School District  
 Walla Walla Community College  
 Walla Walla Valley Disability Network  
 Walla Walla School District  
 Walla Walla University  
 Walla Walla Valley Early Learning Coalition  
 Walla Walla YMCA  
 Whitman College

## THANK YOU FUNDERS

**With the support of dedicated funders, Elevate can continue the work of removing obstacles that impede student achievement.**

Anonymous  
 Ballmer Group  
 Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation  
 Education First  
 Partners for Rural Impact  
 StriveTogether  
 United Way of the Blue Mountains  
 Washington Cradle to Career Coalition  
 Washington State Board of Education  
 Washington Student Achievement Council  
 U.S. Department of Commerce

**Powered By**



**United Way  
 of the Blue Mountains**



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# Contact Us

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