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Northwest Workforce Council

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Northwest Workforce Council wins nearly \$1 million in federal funds to support young adults
Funding creates or expands access to career connected learning for area youth

BELLINGHAM– Nearly 900 young adults in Island, San Juan, Skagit and Whatcom counties will have new career learning experiences and expanded apprenticeship opportunities, thanks to new federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act funds. Distributed as part of the Governor’s Career Connect Washington Initiative, the funds promote and expand registered apprenticeship and career connected learning, engaging and training young adults on 21st century skills employers need. With emphasis on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Math) occupations, participating businesses build a talent recruitment pipeline with a focus on high-demand, family-wage careers.

“A four-year degree isn’t the only path to a fulfilling career,” Gov. Inslee said. “Business leaders have told us they are looking for talent in everything from information technology to health care. And that’s what this initiative is all about: connecting students to great employers and high-quality job training.”

Gov. Inslee announced a total of \$6.4 million in grants to 11 Career Connect teams across Washington, expecting to benefit roughly 29,000 young adults through 2019. Northwest Workforce Council received \$957,255.

Career Connected Learning: A sequence of STEM career exploration learning experiences such as mentorship opportunities, informational interviews, job shadowing, and structured work-based activities will be provided and linked to a young adult’s likely career choice.

Additionally, the project will expand the annual Washington Apprenticeship Vocational Training (WAVE) Tour for 200 high school juniors and seniors that promotes apprenticeship as a high-status, high-wage career path.

Apprenticeship Expansion: Nichols Brothers Boat Builders will expand entry into its five existing registered apprenticeship programs (Marine Shipfitter, Marine Pipefitter, Machinist, Marine Painter, Marine Welder); and create at least two new apprenticeship programs (Marine Tester and Marine Pipe Welders), resulting in an expansion of 45 new apprenticeship opportunities annually.

“We are thrilled the Governor’s Career Connect Washington Initiative has recognized and is supporting our efforts at Nichols Brothers Boat Builders to continue investing in, growing, and improving our apprentice programs,” said Gavin Higgins, CEO of Nichols Brothers Boat Builders. “With the help of these grant funds, we can further accelerate the growth of our programs in ways that will improve the learning experience for our people. This project will help the company and the careers/earning power of new apprentices. But, importantly, also benefit the regional economy and entire marine industry with a more skilled and efficient workforce which will allow the region to compete more effectively in a challenging market.”

Northwest Workforce Council and Skagit STEM led the local application team, which brought businesses together with schools, apprenticeships, community and technical colleges, and local youth organizations to connect young adults with local businesses.

“Northwest Workforce Council is pleased to expand partnerships between high schools, post-secondary institutions and business to help nurture interest in STEM careers for young adults,” said CEO Gay Dubigk.

“Attracting and retaining quality employees is the foundation of staying competitive and sustaining a successful business,” said Michelle Judson, Director Skagit STEM Network. “Key to the success of this work will be business engagement and a commitment to workforce development.”

There are many opportunities for business to get involved. To find an activity that will work for you and your schedule contact:

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