

WASHINGTON STATE

FACT SHEET

OUR MISSION

At the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, we believe every person should have the chance to live a healthy and productive life. We are committed to realizing this goal in Washington state, where the Gates family has lived for generations and where the foundation's permanent home is located. Given this deep commitment, Washington is the only state where we are actively coordinating all of our domestic initiatives.

OUR APPROACH

In Washington, one child in seven lives in poverty—and one child in three is part of a family living dangerously close to the poverty line. These children are less likely to get the support they need to succeed in school and life. In 2008, more than 28,000 students in Washington started their senior years of high school but did not graduate—and research estimates that collectively they would have earned nearly \$7.3 billion (U.S.) more over their lifetimes with a diploma.



A single mother and her child in their Vision House transitional housing unit (Renton, Washington, 2004).

To date, we have invested more than \$3 billion (U.S.) in Washington state. We direct our local investments to four areas where we feel we can have the greatest impact: preventing and ending homelessness among families with children; making sure all children have access to a high-quality education from their early years through completing their postsecondary education; responding to emerging community needs; and helping public libraries, a key community institution that helps connect people with valuable information online.

REDUCING FAMILY HOMELESSNESS IN WASHINGTON STATE

The path to opportunity begins with a place to call home—especially for families with children. Strong, productive communities are only possible when families have access to safe, permanent housing. Between 2000 and 2008, we supported the Sound Families Initiative, a \$40 million (U.S.) program that successfully tripled the amount of transitional housing paired with support services in King, Pierce, and Snohomish counties.

In 2004, based in part on the success of Sound Families, the Washington State Legislature created the Washington Families Fund (WFF) to replicate the Sound Families model statewide. During the lifetime of current grants, WFF programs will serve 12,000 children and their parents.

Still, on any given night, more than 22,000 people experience homelessness in Washington state, and half are children and families.

We have set an ambitious goal for our ongoing investments: reducing family homelessness in the Puget Sound region by 50 percent during the next 10 years by developing, demonstrating, and deploying promising practices and working with public and private sector partners.

Nearly half (47%) of the homeless in Washington state are parents living with children.

To accomplish this goal, we are working with partners in King, Pierce, and Snohomish counties as they implement pilot programs based on five key principles:

- early intervention and prevention
- coordinated access to support services
- rapid rehousing
- tailored programming
- increased economic opportunity

To date, we have committed up to \$100 million (U.S.) to end family homelessness in Washington state. We plan to apply what we learn from pilot communities statewide to ensure that every child has a safe place to call home.

RESPONDING TO EMERGING COMMUNITY NEEDS

Our Community Grants program in the Pacific Northwest builds upon our long-held commitment to communities throughout the region. The program takes a simple approach to grantmaking: listen, learn, and respond to the local needs of communities in Washington state and in the greater Portland, Oregon, metropolitan area.

Our Community Grants program works to improve the lives of vulnerable children and families. The majority of these investments support three core objectives:

- connecting families to government support
- supporting promising evidence-based approaches to preventing and reducing violence in our communities
- enhancing academic success through community and school collaboration

To date, the foundation has provided more than \$530 million (U.S.) through the Pacific Northwest Community Grants program to support children and families in need.

Children must enter kindergarten emotionally, socially, and intellectually ready for learning.



Children playing at a Head Start center funded by the Building Better Futures consortium (Kent, Washington, 2007).

MAKING QUALITY EARLY LEARNING AVAILABLE TO MORE CHILDREN

Research shows that children who start kindergarten prepared are more likely to be successful throughout school and life. But experts estimate that more than half the children in Washington state enter kindergarten without the language, social, or cognitive skills they need to succeed—and most never are able to catch up. These students are more likely to drop out of high school and face difficulties later in life. The costs—to them and to taxpayers—are enormous.

Early learning is a smart investment in our children's future and the future of Washington state. That is why we support high-quality and affordable early learning opportunities for at-risk children.

In 2006, we helped create Thrive by Five Washington, a public-private partnership that brings together education, government, and business leaders to create evidence-based early learning services. Thrive by Five created demonstration communities in White Center and Yakima that can serve as models for creating a network of high-quality and sustainable early learning opportunities.

Along with Thrive by Five, the Department of Early Learning, and other partners, we are working to expand promising early learning models and build the infrastructure for a statewide early learning system.

To date, we have invested more than \$85 million (U.S.) in early education in Washington to increase kindergarten readiness, close the achievement gap, and help all Washington children get off to the right start.



Gateway to College student completing a course evaluation form at Lake Washington Technical College (Kirkland, Washington, 2009).

GETTING YOUNG PEOPLE READY FOR SUCCESS BEYOND HIGH SCHOOL

Ensuring our youngest students are prepared for their first day of school is just the beginning. Good jobs with sufficient income to support a family require a high school diploma and, increasingly, a postsecondary degree or certificate.

Yet nearly one-third of Washington students drop out before graduating from high school. Almost half of young minorities do not earn a high school diploma. Even a majority of graduates who enter community college must take a remedial class before earning their first college credit.

Nearly one-third of Washington students do not finish high school.

While Washington state is a leader in implementing reform to ensure more students complete college, our state lags behind most others in ensuring that students graduate from high school or enroll in postsecondary programs. We are working with partners to significantly improve education so that more young people graduate from high school and college.

Our priorities in Washington state include:

- investing in the Excellent Schools Now Coalition, a broad group of education advocates and civil rights leaders working to achieve meaningful reform of the public education system that increases student achievement

- working with public and private partners to establish the Washington STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) Center with the goal of doubling the number of students entering related fields in college
- supporting Seattle Public Schools' Excellence for All strategic plan and its partner the Alliance for Education, which helped lead to a groundbreaking new contract with teachers which promotes teaching excellence based on clear, measurable results
- investing in the Community Center for Education Results, a community organization working to improve education for students from their early years through completing their postsecondary education

Good jobs increasingly require a postsecondary degree or credential, a trend that is certain to continue.

While college enrollment has grown nearly 35 percent since 1970, the completion rate has remained flat during that same period. In fact, by 2018, 67 percent of Washington jobs will require a postsecondary degree or credential.

Realizing the dangerous economic implications for Washington's families, the foundation is focused on making sure that young adults can get to college and complete degrees—two-year, four-year, or technical—with genuine economic value.

The foundation is working with local and state leaders and the Washington State Board for Community & Technical Colleges to:

- support the Student Completion Initiative, with the aim of ensuring that the state's community and technical colleges help more students succeed and graduate from college
- help reduce the barriers that prevent young adults from learning and reinforce students' motivation to learn and succeed
- connect Washington residents to well-paying jobs by improving workforce training programs, providing more flexible course schedules, and working with employers to determine their needs

To date, the foundation has invested \$230 million (U.S.) in high school and postsecondary reform in Washington state.



Patron using a public computer in the Charles Simonyi Mixing Chamber at the Seattle Public Library's Central Library branch (Seattle, Washington, 2009).

INCREASING QUALITY INTERNET AND TECHNOLOGY ACCESS IN LIBRARIES

Millions of people rely on computers and the Internet in public libraries for access to vital health, education, and employment information and government services. Today, 40 percent of adult users below the federal poverty line report that the public library is their sole source of access to computers and the Internet, but many libraries struggle to maintain the high-quality technology services their patrons need. Our goal is to ensure that public libraries continue to offer free, quality access to computers and the Internet so everyone can benefit from technology.

Our most recent investments in Washington state have supported two programs:

- We supported the Washington State Library's successful efforts to access federal funding for improved Internet connections in public libraries through the Broadband Technology Opportunity Program (BTOP) by providing some of the matching funds required to receive the grants as well as technical assistance to secure federal funding to sustain ongoing broadband connection costs for patrons.
- The Washington State Library's Renew Washington Grant Program helped 17 public libraries across the state offer new or enhanced services that addressed the specific economic challenges of their communities.

More than 70 percent of people who use public library computers say libraries are the primary place they connect to the Internet.

Our Opportunity Online hardware grant program also made local matching grants to incent sustained public investments in technology access in public libraries. The program trained local library leaders to build the skills they need to advocate for technology access in libraries.

To date, we have invested \$3 million (U.S.) in public libraries in Washington state. Previous investments in Washington's public libraries supported the installation and maintenance of public access computer workstations and Internet connections for patrons across the state.

TO LEARN MORE

About the United States Program:
www.gatesfoundation.org/united-states

About our work in Washington state:
www.gatesfoundation.org/washington

Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation works to help all people lead healthy, productive lives. In developing countries, it focuses on improving people's health and giving them the chance to lift themselves out of hunger and extreme poverty. In the United States, it seeks to ensure that all people—especially those with the fewest resources—have access to the opportunities they need to succeed in school and life. Based in Seattle, Washington, the foundation is led by CEO Jeff Raikes and Co-chair William H. Gates Sr., under the direction of Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffett.

For additional information on the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, please visit our website: www.gatesfoundation.org.

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