



# Creating New Opportunities for Career-Connected Environmental Learning

*Community Partner: Pacific Education Institute*

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

### Describe the specific need within the K–12 system

Washington state houses a number of important and ever-growing industries centered around environmental science and sustainable natural resource systems. To successfully transition Washington students into this growing and essential economic sector, these students need both exposure to environmental science learning standards and classroom content throughout their K–12 experience as well as career-informed, practical coursework offered by career and technical education (CTE) programs.

Beyond the state's economic needs, CTE and project-based learning have many specific benefits for students that participate. Application of math, science, and other subject matter helps students understand why a particular knowledge or skillset will be valuable to them. The opportunity to engage together in projects that make positive change in their communities strengthens students' sense of belonging and increases self-confidence and feelings of self-worth. Natural resource work is often outdoor, physically engaging work, and increased physical activity has many proven positive health benefits for youth. For students that do not have strong belief that they are "good at" school, traditional classes and online classes that are focused on reading and responding to prompts on paper or a computer can inhibit their potential for learning.

### How a state investment in community partnership meets this need

The Pacific Education Institute (PEI) has developed the Youth Engaged in Sustainable Systems (YESS) pathways program to offer CTE opportunities to students interested in environmental science and sustainable natural resource systems. YESS focuses specifically on economically disadvantaged students, working with the school district to identify ways to reach underserved youth, including youth that need summer school support to re-engage in school or to provide credit recovery. Increased funding will allow PEI to continue to develop, monitor, and encourage best practices across the school districts that participate in the YESS program.

The six-week YESS program provides students opportunities to engage in hands-on, project-based learning alongside their peers, developing their ability to work, collaborate, and communicate as a team with peers from different backgrounds with whom they might not otherwise come in contact, in addition to gaining industry-specific knowledge and skills. Students who participate in the YESS program enter the next school year with a strong support system and skills transferable both inside and beyond the sustainable resources industries.

## Describe existing or previous state investment in this work

The Legislature has invested in OSPI's partnership with PEI for several years, particularly in their FieldSTEM program through an Operating Budget proviso (currently Senate Bill 5950, Sec. 522[3][j]).

FieldSTEM is designed to support the K–12 system—from school districts to individual educators—to engage in and teach environmental sustainability. PEI aligns its FieldSTEM programming with state learning standards and integrates its hands-on natural science education into all subjects, fostering a deeper and more holistic understanding of environmental sustainability and the important place it holds for people both personally and professionally through K–12 and beyond.<sup>1</sup>

Further capitalizing on the state's investment by adding new funding to support the YESS pathways program will expand OSPI's partnership with PEI into the CTE space and allow the program to serve an important economic and educational need.

## SUPPORTING DATA AND EVIDENCE OF POSITIVE IMPACT

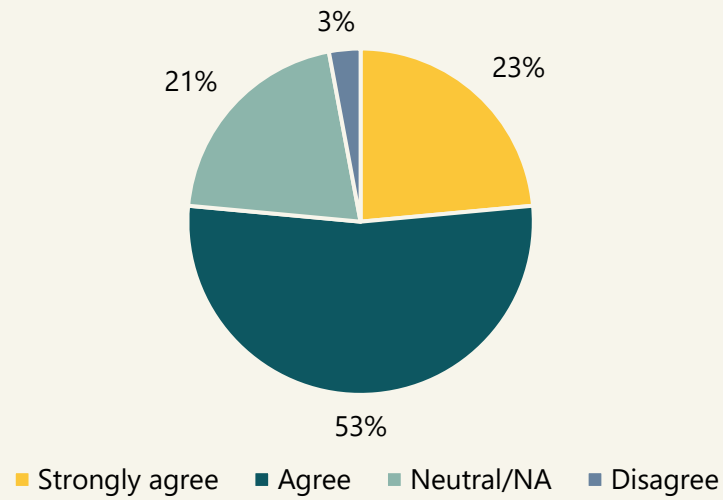
One of the goals of an increased collaboration between PEI and OSPI on the YESS pathways program is more sophisticated data collection strategies, potentially connecting with datasets and systems such as OSPI's Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS) to better track outcomes for student participants.

The YESS program currently surveys its students each year on their experiences with the program. Nearly half of participating students surveyed in 2023 reported that they had not considered pursuing a career in natural resources before taking the program, and 50% said they were interested in a career in natural resources after completing the program. Further, 76% said that the program prepared them to pursue their career goals. Finally, 85% said that the program increased their confidence and career skills.

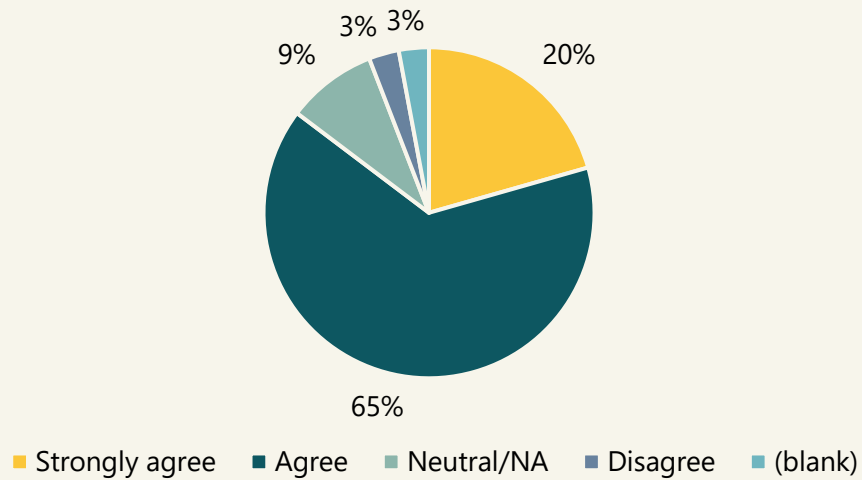
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<sup>1</sup> Pacific Education Institute. (2024). *FieldSTEM*. <https://pacificeducationinstitute.org/work/fieldstem>

### YESS Helped Me Feel More Prepared to Pursue Career Goals (2023 Survey Respondents)



### YESS Increased my Self Confidence and Career Skills (2023 Survey Respondents)



## FISCAL DETAIL

| Operating Expenditures    | FY 2026            | FY 2027       | FY 2028            | FY 2029       |
|---------------------------|--------------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------|
| Fund 001-1 (program 05X)  | 1,866,000          | 2,768,000     | 2,768,000          | 2,768,000     |
| <b>Total Expenditures</b> | 1,866,000          | 2,768,000     | 2,768,000          | 2,768,000     |
| <b>Biennial Totals</b>    | <b>\$4,634,000</b> |               | <b>\$5,536,000</b> |               |
| Staffing                  | FY 2026            | FY 2027       | FY 2028            | FY 2029       |
| FTEs                      | 0.35               | 0.35          | 0.35               | 0.35          |
| <b>Average Annual</b>     | <b>0.35</b>        |               | <b>0.35</b>        |               |
| Object of Expenditure     | FY 2026            | FY 2027       | FY 2028            | FY 2029       |
| Obj. A                    | 29,000             | 29,000        | 29,000             | 29,000        |
| Obj. B                    | 16,000             | 16,000        | 16,000             | 16,000        |
| Obj. C                    | 1,812,000          | 2,718,000     | 2,718,000          | 2,718,000     |
| Obj. E                    | 3,000              | 3,000         | 3,000              | 3,000         |
| Obj. G                    | 2,000              | 2,000         | 2,000              | 2,000         |
| Obj. J                    | 4,000              | 0             | 0                  | 0             |
| Revenue                   | FY 2026            | FY 2027       | FY 2028            | FY 2029       |
|                           | \$0.00             | \$0.00        | \$0.00             | \$0.00        |
| <b>Total Revenue</b>      | <b>\$0.00</b>      | <b>\$0.00</b> | <b>\$0.00</b>      | <b>\$0.00</b> |
| <b>Biennial Totals</b>    | <b>\$0.00</b>      |               | <b>\$0.00</b>      |               |

## ASSUMPTIONS AND CALCULATIONS

Expansion, reduction, elimination or alteration of a current program or service:

The is not an expansion, reduction, or elimination of a current program or service. No funding currently exists to support this effort.

Detailed assumptions and calculations:

### Contract

OSPI assumes a continued contract with PEI, and PEI bases their costs on the number of cohorts per year. Each cohort costs \$135,670. In fiscal year 2026, there will be 12 cohorts and in fiscal year 2027 and beyond, there will be 18 cohorts.

The cohort cost breakdown is as follows:

|                              |                  |
|------------------------------|------------------|
| YESS Site Specific Staffing: | \$44,443         |
| Student Gear Kits:           | \$7,148          |
| Program Materials:           | \$4,314          |
| Travel, Meals, and Lodging:  | \$7,779          |
| Student Stipends:            | \$46,080         |
| Program Coordination:        | \$13,573         |
| PEI Overhead at 10%:         | \$12,333         |
| <b>Subtotal Cost:</b>        | <b>\$135,670</b> |
| OSPI Indirect at 11.3%:      | \$15,330         |
| <b>Total Cost</b>            | <b>\$151,000</b> |

The total contract cost (including the indirect payments to OSPI), is projected to be \$1,812,000 in fiscal year 2026 and \$2,718,000 annually thereafter. See workforce assumptions below for details on the calculations for 0.35 full-time equivalent (FTE) resulting in \$54,000 of costs in fiscal year 2026 and \$50,000 annually thereafter.

## Workforce assumptions:

### Fiscal Year 2026 (Total = \$54,000)

#### Director: 0.35 FTE

- Salary: \$29,493
- Benefits: \$15,937
- Goods/Services: \$2,337
- Travel: \$2,337
- Equipment: \$3,896 (one time)

### Fiscal Year 2027 (Total = \$50,000 Annually)

#### Director: 0.35 FTE

- Salary: \$29,493
- Benefits: \$15,833
- Goods/Services: \$2,337
- Travel: \$2,337

## Historical funding:

### Fiscal Year 2026

- FTE = 0.0
- Total Funds = \$0
- Near General Fund = \$0
- Other Funds = \$0

### Fiscal Year 2027

- FTE = 0.0
- Total Funds = \$0

- Near General Fund = \$0
- Other Funds = \$0