Financial Aid Completion Strategies

Build a Team

Why? Applying for financial aid is complicated and can bring up sensitive topics for students and families. It's too big of a job for one person in a school to do on their own! Building a team at your school or organization can help make this big lift easier. Each staff member can play an essential role in helping increase the number of financial aid applications completed at your school.

To begin, think about the current beliefs of your staff members: Do they envision supporting students on their path to college as part of their role? Consider implementing the steps below to build a creative and committed team at your school or organization.

1. **Talk to your leaders**
   Ask to make financial aid application a priority. Ask for their support in building your team, dedicating time, paying extra time to staff and making this a schoolwide effort by asking teachers to encourage students to apply and by allowing a few minutes at a staff meeting to discuss the topic. Talking points could include the importance of education after high school and the importance and barriers of the financial aid process. Emphasize that that you are asking them to do small things to support the effort (such as talking about it in class).

2. **Build your team**
   Think creatively about who can play a role in promoting financial aid to students (e.g. bilingual staff, family liaisons, 12th grade advisory teachers, administrators, community organizations). Anyone who has a relationship with students or parents can play a role. For example, your bilingual Instructional assistants may not be knowledgeable about the financial aid process, but they have strong relationships with students and often parents, and are familiar with and often integrated in immigrant communities. Including them on the team can help you reach students in your target student population.
   When recruiting them, be sure to let them know that they do not need to become experts in financial aid to help students with this process, and that you will be available to support them along the way and answer more complex questions, but that their expertise is critical to the process (such as having strong relationships with students, parents or immigrant communities).

3. **Meet with the team**
   Set up an initial meeting with the team. Give a general introduction to financial aid, share goals you hope the team will collectively achieve, and determine roles and responsibilities

for each team member. Strategically divide students for a case management approach where each person has a specific group of students to follow up with. For example, perhaps a bilingual instructional assistant who speaks Somali may follow up with Somali speaking seniors, or an advisory teacher may follow up with the students in their advisory. For more information on this, see the case management section of this document.

4. **Create a system of support and accountability**
   Meet regularly with the team throughout the year to review caseloads, troubleshoot problems of practice, and maintain a focus on financial aid application rates. Seek funding for extra time for staff and make sure to provide the appropriate level of training for each member of the team. It is critical that all members of the team are knowledgeable about WASFA (Washington financial aid for undocumented students) and know to talk about it with students and families (see FAFSA/WASFA Conversation Guide,).

5. **Identify experts on your team**
   Some team members, such as school counselors and college and career specialists, will need to be experts and stay up to date through training each year on the latest in financial aid applications. For other team members, knowing the basics will be fine, as they can get help from these experts when unusual or difficult situations arise.

6. **Use a whole-school effort**
   Provide your teaching staff with a brief training on why applying for financial aid is important. Ask them to talk about this regularly in class, especially with seniors, and connect them to resources such as the student presentations in this toolkit to help them share information. Additional schoolwide effort could include regular financial aid updates in announcements or visual representations of progress such as a thermometer.

Tips for Getting Buy-in from All Staff

- Provide professional development opportunities for staff about the importance postsecondary education in earning a living wage (nearly all living-wage jobs in King County require some type of education after high school).

- FAFSA and WASFA are used to determine financial aid for nearly all education after high school (unless it's some type of on-the-job training, such as an employer-based industry certification). These financial aid forms are critical for students pursuing technical training, not just four-year and two-year colleges.

- Clarify that applying for financial aid does not obligate the student to attend any institution, nor does it obligate the student or the parents to pay any money. It does give institutions the information they need to determine the student's eligibility for financial aid.

- Let staff know that they do not need to be experts or at all experienced in financial aid to help. Ways to support financial aid application that require almost no time and no prep include:
  - Making announcements in class to seniors that the FAFSA and WASFA are open for students to apply for financial aid, and where they can get help completing it (make sure staff have information about who can help at the school)
  - Asking staff to promote opportunities hosted by the school or community organizations for students and parents to complete financial aid applications
  - Sharing their own story of applying for financial aid
  - If given a list of students by the counseling office or college and career specialist or counselor, reminding those students to complete financial aid (provide the staff with a regular list, especially advisory teachers, special education teachers, ELL teachers, coaches and anyone who works with seniors)

Use Data for Case Management

Why? Data showing which individual students still need to complete the financial aid application process makes for a much more efficient and targeted use of staff time. It can also help with spreading out the load among staff members.

Developing a habit of consistently analyzing financial aid application data for your school is essential to implementing an effective case-management approach. A case-management approach utilizes staff members on the team to lead, monitor and support a caseload of students through the financial aid process.

To get started with an effective case management system:

☐ **Get a FAFSA portal account**
In Washington state, the FAFSA portal << Bit.do/WSACportal >> should be used to determine which students have completed the FAFSA. To protect student privacy, this portal does not display WASFA application data. The FAFSA portal data is updated every Monday, so every week, you can check in on the progress of your students. Note: Only school staff will be able to get an account (CBO staff will not).

☐ **Keep a current list of seniors**
It's recommended to keep a list of all seniors at your school and check those names in the portal. The portal will only be as accurate for your senior class as the data your school district sends to CEDARS. DO NOT KEEP A LIST OF UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS. The easiest way to do this is with a Google sheet that can be shared with your team members/student caseload leads. Fields to include on the spreadsheet (sample below) include:
- Checkbox for financial aid application (this way the list only shows they have completed financial aid applications, not which one)
- Notes (so you can keep track of other factors or things to remember from previous conversations with the student)

Financial Aid Complete (y/n)	Student Name	Caseload Lead (staff member)	Date of Update	Notes

☐ **Divide the team**

Once you have set up the tracking system, share the spreadsheet at a team meeting and discuss which staff members will take responsibility for which students. The process for dividing students will depend on your school's structure and staffing, but some suggestions include:

- Assign one staff member to focus on College Bound Scholarship students.
- Share your financial aid student lists with advisory teachers and ask them to follow up with the students in their advisory.
- Identify which students are being served by college access programs that can case-manage the student's financial aid application process.
- Ask community-based organizations to follow up with a specific group of students.
- Assign bilingual staff to follow up with ELL students and their families.
- Assign special education staff to follow up with their students and families.
- Assign the person who signs Running Start forms to follow up with Running Start students during registration.

☐ **Create a system of support and accountability**

Schedule regular meetings with the team to go over progress on their student caseload and strategize together around problems of practice. This will help promote a higher rate of financial aid applications. Reference the spreadsheet and ensure updates are made weekly to maintain focus on students who still need to complete their financial aid application. Highlight individual staff members who implement effective case-management strategies and spend time meeting with individual staff members who may need additional support.

☐ **Provide interventions and support**

For students who have not applied, consider that something may be blocking them from completing the process. Refer to "Challenging Financial Aid Situations" in this toolkit as well as studentaid.gov and the college's financial aid office for guidance on navigating these situations. Schedule a time to connect with individual students who have not completed to discuss and support their plans after high school.

Analyze Data as a Team

Why? Data use goes beyond case management. Analyzing the results for your school with the team will help you illuminate patterns based on student participation and will help you understand which groups of students the program needs to focus on more intentionally.

An important practice to using financial aid application data is to start with the completion rates from the previous year by subgroup (available here for Road Map region schools), particularly by race. The data can be filtered by all graduates and by College Bound Scholarship graduates. Analyzing the data can help you identify groups of students who are completing FAFSA at lower rates.

This data is not available for WASFA in order to protect the privacy of undocumented students. Avoid the assumption that low completion rates for Latino/Hispanic students are because they are undocumented. Most of your Latino/Hispanic students are US citizens, and undocumented students may be of any race or ethnicity.

Once you identify subgroups of students who are not being served by your current system, consult with students and parents, staff who work with that student population and community organizations that work in that community for ideas on how to serve students in that subgroup more effectively. This is long-term, challenging work (not a quick fix) and will require an investment of time and resources to really listen to students and parents and identify system improvements.

There are two important ways to use data in financial aid application completion. The first is to look at data from the previous year by subgroup for program planning.

When you meet with the team for the first time, look at this data as a way of determining new things to focus on and new strategies to try. When you are looking at the data, some questions to discuss are:

1. What is our average FAFSA completion overall?
2. What racial and ethnic groups are completing at lower and higher rates? How much lower and higher?
3. How many students are in the groups completing at lower rates? (For example, you might notice that students who are homeless are completing at 10% and Latino students at 50%, and you have 6 homeless students and 100 Latino students.)

4. What might be happening in the financial aid process that is disadvantaging certain groups of students?
5. What are we doing in our advising system that is disadvantaging certain groups of students?
6. What can we change in our advising system to eliminate this gap?

Be Inclusive of Undocumented Students

Why? Undocumented students in Washington state have the right to state financial aid for college, and it's important that we are explicit in our honoring this as well as in our support for encouraging undocumented students to attend college. This also sends a message of inclusion to the school community.

Tips and considerations:

- Always include both financial aid applications (FAFSA or WASFA).
- When talking about financial aid, use "financial aid application" instead of FAFSA (unless you are talking to a specific student about their FAFSA).
- Make sure to present both application options (FAFSA and WASFA) every time you discuss financial aid.
- Be a vocal and visible advocate for immigrant families.
- Understand that students and families may not feel comfortable disclosing their immigration status to you, even if you say you are an ally. Don't ask for them to disclose their immigration status and don't expect they will.
- Make sure you are always talking about both financial aid applications and help students with either one as they need it.
- There may be a heightened level of caution for parents in filling out this federal government form. Stick to the facts about where the information goes (the colleges the student identifies on the forms, plus U.S. Department of Education for FAFSA and Washington Student Achievement Council for WASFA) and the purpose of collecting this information (to determine eligibility for financial aid).
- Make sure that your training for all staff includes a discussion of WASFA and the importance of encouraging ALL students to complete financial aid applications.
- Be aware that for mixed-status families (student is US citizen while parent is undocumented, for example), the student will do FAFSA (see Challenging Financial Aid Situations for specific guidance on filling out the FAFSA in this case).

Respectfully Work with Undocumented Students & Families

The information below was developed by Alejandra Perez and the Washington Dream Coalition.

Things to DO and NOT DO when working with undocumented students and families	
DON'T	**DO**
Ask a student or a family if they're undocumented	Take time to reflect on why you would even want to ask someone if they are undocumented. With that, take time to learn about the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (**FERPA**), which is a federal privacy law that protects student and family records, such as immigration status. Therefore, educators are not allowed to ask students or their families their immigration status. Undocumented students and families are able to disclose their immigration status to you if they choose to.
Share someone's immigration status with others	Understand that undocumented students and families often share their immigration status with an educator or service provider to access resources or out of fear. If a student or family discloses their immigration status with you, do not share that information in public or private without their explicit permission.
Share someone's immigration status in writing	If you have gotten permission from an undocumented student or family to share their immigration status with a third party, to be able to gain access to resources or support, make sure to do it verbally and in private. Never document in writing a student's or family's immigration status. Doing so could violate their privacy.
Assume a Spanish speaking student or family is undocumented	Be aware that ANY student or family member might be undocumented and many will not be.
Assume White, Asian, Pacific Islander, or Black students and families are U.S. Citizens or Legal Permanent Residents	Be aware that ANY student or parent might be undocumented, 26% of the undocumented population (250,000) in Washington State are Asian or Pacific Islanders (21 Progress FAIR!, 2015)
Hide your support for undocumented students and families	Undocumented students and families are often in fear to come out to educators and families. Instead of hiding your support towards undocumented students and families, be visible by being inclusive of undocumented students when speaking about college and financial aid and through welcoming signage in your office or desk.

Ask an undocumented person how they came into the country, why they didn't do it the "right way", or why they don't "just become citizens"	Know that immigration law is the second most complicated law in the United States. Undocumented immigrants get displaced from their countries and move to different parts of the world for various reasons. If an undocumented immigrant chooses to tell you their story, feel honored that you are privileged to hear it. In addition, filing to getting some type of permanent status in the U.S. is complex and it could take anywhere from 5 to 20 years (or more, or never) to get approved. On top of that, it is very costly. Just know that if undocumented people had the ability to file for permanent status in the U.S. many would.

Conversation Guide- Coming out as undocumented

IF	DO
A student or family shares with you that they're undocumented	Understand that it takes a lot of courage for an undocumented student or family to come out to you and that it is an honor and privilege that they shared something so personal about themselves with you. Therefore, take time to hold space, listen to them, and believe their lived experiences when they share them with you.
A student or family comes out to you, it is often because they are in need of resources	Share the tools and resources you have with them to support their current need. If you are unsure or do not know what tools and resources you have for them, refer to this guide and contact a colleague who might know how to support. Make sure you make a commitment to the student or family to do your best to find out the answer for them, and actually do it.

Conversation Guide- Going to College and applying to financial aid, WASFA

IF	SAY
A student is unsure if they can attend college because they're undocumented

A student tells you they have been told they can't go to college because they're undocumented. | "In Washington State, a law called House Bill 1079 (HB 1079) passed in 2003 allowing undocumented students to attend all public institutions in our state and pay in-state tuition. Going to college is challenging, but it is possible. Thousands of undocumented students have attended and graduated from college, in our state and throughout the nation. I am committed to help you through this journey, answer the questions you have to best of my abilities, and finding the accurate resources for you to attend college." |

You're sharing about the two financial aid forms for Washington State residents, FAFSA & WASFA, either individually or in a group (when talking to a group, always assume that someone in the room is undocumented to provide adequate information)	"In order to obtain financial aid to go to college, you must complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or the Washington Application for State Financial Aid (WASFA). Only U.S. Citizen, Legal Permanent Residents, or an eligible non-citizens can fill out the FAFSA. Eligible undocumented students with or without Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) can fill out the WASFA. If you are eligible for FAFSA, you cannot fill out the WASFA. If you're eligible for the WASFA, you cannot fill out the FAFSA. If you're unsure which of the two forms you should fill out, I am happy to talk to you one on one and in private."
You're talking one on one with undocumented students and they are unsure how they will pay for college	"Unfortunately, you are not eligible for federal financial aid. However, you might be eligible for in-state tuition, the Washington Application for State Financial Aid (WASFA), and private scholarships. We can work together to check your eligibility and explore further opportunities."
A student is scared to apply to college and financial aid due to their immigration status	"In order to apply to college and WASFA, you're going to have to disclose your immigration status. This may seem scary to you and your family. There is a federal law called the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) that protects student records and the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) has prohibited colleges from releasing your WASFA information."

Conversation Guide- Talking about the future, post-college plans, and careers

A student asks how they will be able to work after college	"Getting a college degree isn't going to change your immigration status, but it will open many opportunities for you. If you are eligible and approved for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), you can work in the United States. If you're not eligible, we can look at how you could get a business license, be self-employed, or become a contractor/consultant."

Best practices around education, detention, and allyship

ABOUT	WHAT TO DO
Creating a safe space and sharing resources	Show your support for undocumented students and families visually through posters and your actions. Create and increase resources available to undocumented students, young people, and their families (and be public

	about it). Challenge people, current policies, or practices that hinder undocumented students' success. Work through process of enrollment, scholarships, and applications and navigating different institutions and organizations. Create space for undocumented students to meet role models.
Financial aid	Make all your events inclusive of undocumented students and their families "Financial Aid Event" or "FAFSA/WASFA Event". Include information for undocumented students in all presentations and publications rather than creating separate materials for them. Otherwise, undocumented students may feel isolated and demoralized. Make it known that you are trained to work with different types of students, including the undocumented.
Student gets detained (Provided by Colectiva Legal del Pueblo)	Contact the family and plan to contact immigration lawyers: Colectiva Legal del Pueblo or Northwest Immigrant Rights Project Connect with the Washington Immigrant Solidarity Network and find out if there is a local immigration raid rapid response team. These teams usually consist of attorneys, media personnel and community leaders who may be able to provide support. Most times, undocumented students have family members who are also undocumented and might not be able to visit them. Therefore, make a plan to visit the detention center: • Who will visit student (If family members are undocumented they should be advised of risks going to the detention center) • Talk with family about who to have visit. Family member, Teacher and/or Lawyer… • Find out how the student is • What their legal situation is • What their legal options are Other support options: • Fundraise campaign for bond and legal fees • Attend Court Hearings • Help collect letters about student that can assist with legal case

	• Contact media channels to raise awareness, but make sure you ask for explicit consent from family members and student • Contact your U.S. representative to raise awareness For longer term detention: Students have rights to continue their education while being detained, connect with OneAmerica for information
DO NOT TRANSFER YOUR FEAR	It is your responsibility to create a safe environment for your students, while giving them the freedom to choose how to handle their personal affairs. Instead, actively support students and their families by maintaining a list of resources, such as the names of social workers, pro bono attorneys and local immigration advocates and organizations, that can be shared with your students and their families.

Engage Students and Parents

Why? Financial aid applications require a high degree of trust between educators, students and teachers. Financial aid applications ask for sensitive information about family structure and finances. It is important to ensure that students and parents know why this information is being asked for and why it is important for a student's future, as well as building trust over time between educators, students and parents.

It is essential to intentionally build relationships with parents around college and career readiness starting in middle school. For students, focusing on college and career exploration and readiness beginning in middle school will help keep them engaged for tasks such as financial aid application in their senior year. Beyond this, being empathetic with parents about what they are being asked to do (provide sensitive personal and financial information) will help them understand their role in the financial aid process, so make sure you mention the importance of FAFSA and WASFA whenever you are discussing financial aid. This will be much easier if you have built relationships and trust over time.

It is also important to engage with your district's family-engagement staff person, who can help with messaging and connection to resources. This person will be a great resource for making family connections and can provide additional guidance and suggestions.

Further guidance and tips for engaging parents in the financial aid process can be found elsewhere in this toolkit:

- Talking about FAFSA and WASFA: FAFSA/WASFA Conversation Guide
- When parents don't want to apply for financial aid or are absent: Challenging Financial Aid Situations, studentaid.gov, college financial aid offices
- Getting parents to come to your evening event: Parent Presentation tips
- Presentations for Parents: Parent and student lessons

Create Impactful Financial Aid Support Events

Why? Financial aid support events can be an effective way to increase your school's financial aid application rate. Financial aid events create buzz and excitement about financial aid, provide an opportunity for parents to come and work on financial aid applications in the evening (or on a weekend), and provide an opportunity to get help from experts.

To receive event materials register your event as a 12th year campaign site at http://www.surveygizmo.com/s3/3380766/12th-Year-Campaign-Interest-Form-2017-18 . Events in King and Pierce County will receive communications/promotional materials included in the PSCCN Financial Aid Toolkit.

- **Timing**
  Hold your financial aid completion event on a Saturday morning or a weeknight. If possible, pair your event with another event parents are already coming for (such as open house, conferences, etc.). Avoid holidays of all religions (see a calendar such as this one http://www.interfaith-calendar.org/2017.htm for guidance).

- **Provide dinner and childcare**
  Talk with administrators at the school or district level for funding for these. If possible, use a local caterer from the school community (consider businesses owned by the parents or relatives of your students). Consider giving high school students service hours to support childcare (with a teacher being paid extra duty to supervise).

- **Location**
  Consider your technology needs and location options. For financial aid completion events, students and families will need access to a computer and the internet. A location other than the school building may feel more welcoming and may be easier to access by transit. Possibilities in addition to a school building may include public housing communities, community centers, places of worship, library meeting rooms and spaces with computer access.

- **Accommodations**
  Consider accommodations for parents/ families who have a disability (persons who are part of the deaf or blind community).

- **Marketing and promotion**

- Translate all documents into your top languages (some can be ordered from 12th year campaign).
- Hire interpreters for the event and advertise that this will be available.
- Partner with your parent liaisons and bilingual staff to help share event information to parents and families. Pay them extra time to make phone calls in home languages to invite families (work with them to translate a phone script).
- Use your school's automated phone/text and email system for event invitations and reminders.

- **Preparing for the event**
  - Recruit trained volunteers to work one on one with students on their financial aid applications. Reach out to alumni, college access providers, community organizations and school staff to see if they're available to volunteer. (Note: This step is extremely important! Do not skip or delay it). Once you register your site at 12th year, you will be able to receive materials and a webinar to guide preparation.
  - Use the sample procurement letter below to ask local businesses for food and raffle donations for the event.
  - Invite interpreters who can provide translation support to families at the event.
  - Partner with community-based organizations, college access and youth programs for collaborative financial aid efforts.

- **During the event**
  - Have enough staff present to welcome families as they arrive and thank them for coming.
  - Keep presentations short and avoid overwhelming people with a lot of information at one time. Keep it focused on how you are here to support them in supporting their student.
  - Leave lots of time for questions and have plenty of staff present to answer questions; introduce them during the welcoming (this also serves the purpose of letting them know who they can reach out to later).
  - Make the effort to highlight a parent, alumni or student's previous experience with the financial aid process.

- **Consider parent and student panels**
  There's nothing as powerful as other parents sharing their experience. This takes effort but the effort is worth it. Student panels may be helpful as well. Stay in touch with

alumni parents, as well as parents who have a middle or high schooler as well as an older student who might already be in college. Ask school staff and your partner community organizations that have students who recently graduated. Stay in touch with your alumni and invite them back to share their experience. Ask bilingual staff and family liaisons to help make connections to parents from immigrant communities. Prepare a small number of questions (three or so) to get things started, and let the parents in attendance ask more.

- **Get it done!**
  For financial aid application events, make sure that the bulk of the time is spent on the computer working on completing the FAFSA and WASFA.

- **Debrief**
  This is an important step after the event. Bring the team together to talk about what was successful and not successful about the event, and determine how many students made progress on or completed financial aid applications. This will help to determine the value of the event and any needed changes for future ones.

Helpful Event Resource: College Signing Celebration Toolkit
https://www.wcan.org/file/college-signing-celebrations/WCAN---College-Signing-Day---Toolkit.docx

SAMPLE PROCUREMENT LETTER

Suggested materials to include with letter: YOUR EVENT FLYER

<<INSERT SCHOOL LOGO>>
<<INSERT SCHOOL ADDRESS>>
<<INSERT Date>>

Dear <<INSERT CONTACT NAME, ORGANIZATION, OR COMPANY>>,

My name is <<INSERT YOUR NAME>> and I am <<INSERT TITLE/DESCRIPTION OF WORK>>. I'm writing on behalf of <<INSERT SCHOOL NAME>>. We are planning <<INSERT NAME OF EVENT>>, which is an event for students to <<INSERT DESCRIPTION OF EVENT>>. <<INSERT 2-3 SENTENCE ABOUT WHY THIS EVENT IS IMPORTANT, WHAT YOU HOPE TO ACCOMPLISH, OR HOW THIS EVENT WILL BE BENEFICIAL FOR STUDENTS>>.

We are reaching out to your <<CORPORATION/STORE/ORGANIZATION>> to seek donations for our event. We are asking for (INSERT WHAT YOU ARE ASKING FOR>>. <<INSERT SENTENCE ABOUT WHAT YOU WILL DO WITH THE DONATION>>. Any support is much appreciated by myself, our fellow staff, and the students at our school.

We also invite you to join us during the celebration. <<INSERT EVENT SCHEDULE>>

Thank you for your time and consideration. If you would like to make a donation, to volunteer in any way with <<INSERT EVENT NAME>>, or to receive further information, please feel free to contact me at <<INSERT CONTACT INFORMATION>>.

Best regards,

<<INSERT YOUR NAME>>
<<INSERT YOUR TITLE>>
<<INSERT YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION>>

Integrating Financial Aid Applications into your Community-Based Youth Program

Why? Youth programs provide another opportunity to connect with students around financial aid and have a strong element of trust.

If your youth program focuses on a different area that is not specifically college and career related, don't feel like you need to be an expert to help your students with this! You can still play a critical role in supporting students to complete their financial aid applications. In addition to the suggestions for partnering below, find others in the community who can help you with questions, and attend training to learn the basics yourself.

Partner with a school
Partnering with the schools that students in your program attend is very helpful, as schools can help with accessing individual student financial aid application data and can support with parts of the financial aid process that may require their expertise. To begin a partnership with a school:

1. Identify schools where a significant number of your students attend.
2. Contact each school and schedule a meeting with a school counselor or college and career specialist. Let them know that you want to meet with them to better understand how to support your students in financial aid for college.
3. Be prepared to share a bit about your program, what you focus on and how many students you serve, but keep it brief.
4. After the meeting, stay in contact and keep the school updated. If you help students complete financial aid forms, let the school know who has completed!

Partner with local colleges
Partnering with local colleges can be helpful in supporting students with the award letter process and their transition from high school to college. To start a partnership with a college:

1. Identify a close-by campus that many of your students attend or could attend with more support (a two-year college is a great place to start).
2. Contact the admissions or outreach office and ask for a meeting. Let them know that you are hoping to support more of your students to attend that campus.
3. Be prepared to share a bit about your program, what you focus on and how many students you serve, but keep it brief.

4. After the meeting, stay in contact and keep them updated about students who have applied.
5. Ask them to help you host a visit to explore the campus, as well as a transition visit for admitted students.

Partner with other organizations

You can also find other youth programs to partner with, either ones that focus more specifically on financial aid or others that want to. To start a partnership with another organization:

1. Identify organizations you might want to partner with.
2. Contact the organization and schedule a meeting to discuss how you might work together to support students in financial aid.
3. Ask questions about how they work in financial aid, including what type of training is provided to staff and how they track their data, and be prepared to share how you do the same.
4. Determine what a partnership might look like and define roles for the partnership.

Additional Ideas for Increasing Financial Aid Completion

Embed Financial Aid into Student Led Conferences
- Ask teachers and staff to include conversations about post-high school plans and options for paying for college.
- Have a desktop computer ready for junior and senior families to create an FSA ID (FAFSA only)
- Reserve a laptop cart or technology classroom to hold drop-in FAFSA/WASFA support. Be sure to have a few volunteers who can help families of seniors complete the application.

Use Incentives
- Give students or families a raffle ticket for attending an event and/or completing the FAFSA/WASFA. Consider raffling any donations or school related prizes such as extra graduation tickets, a school year book, etc.

Engage Partners
- Invite alumni, parents and community leaders to support as volunteers for financial aid events.
- Invite speakers from your local college's financial aid department to speak to families.
- Present at a staff meeting about the importance of financial aid completion and ways that teachers can share common messages about accessing and completing financial aid. See page Tips for Getting Buy-in from All Staff on page 4 for ideas.

Create a Buzz Around Financial Aid
Use resources included on the Communications/Promotional Materials page of the PSCCN Financial Toolkit to create a buzz around financial aid.
- Change the background desktop wallpaper/screensavers on all computers to a financial aid reminder.
- Build a college-going culture that is visible by decorating a bulletin board or posting posters with financial aid information for students and families to see.
- Use the sample family letters to share financial aid information in the format of actual letters that are sent home, as well as emails and/or phone scripts.
  - Setup automated calls to student's homes for high school seniors who have missing information or an incomplete financial aid application.
    - Ask parent leaders, family liaisons or interpreters to make personalized phone calls home to share financial aid information or give an update on their student's application status.