

ABSTRACT

With this proposal, NWDS aims to expand on the success of the Think College Inclusion Oregon Coalition (TCIOC), building an asset-based collaboration for creating more inclusive post-secondary education (PSE) options across Oregon and the Northwest. Convened by NWDS in 2014, TCIOC is a values-driven coalition of parents, youth, agencies and educational institutions working to integrate Think College National Coordinating Center precepts into regional efforts to increase critical access to inclusive PSE options. We will build on the success of coalition partner Portland State University's (PSU) program, and use it as one template to help ensure that new programs in this region are inclusive and outcome based. We will also draw on national expertise and data.

TCIOC was convened in response to the fact there were no inclusive academic-based PSE options in the state, and kids in our community were wanting to go to college. Parents and transition staff from two local school districts and PSU attended the 2014 State of the Art conference, and returned to Oregon to found TCIOC. Since 2014, the coalition has grown to include NWDS staff, families, Portland Public Schools, David Douglas School District, the Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities, Oregon Department of Education, Oregon Division on Vocational Rehabilitation, PSU, Concordia University, and Western Oregon University. TCIOC is chaired by the NWDS Executive Director.

With funding of this grant TCIOC will:

- Meet four times annually.
- Collaborate with parents, youth, professionals and IHE in Washington, California, and Idaho to create a regional hub for exploring best-practices, innovative programs and high-quality awareness materials. The Hub will convene twice a year (with TCIOC) and draw on federal level TA.
- Create presentations and durable resources to build awareness among parents and youth, as well as the education and business communities, that college is an option for students with intellectual disabilities, and that the benefits are real and far-reaching.
- Influence policy at the local, state and federal levels to promote the development of inclusive programs.

NWDS has a strong track record for effective, empowering awareness work, and the durable resources we produce and curate will enable TCIOC Hub members to advocate in their local communities for more IHE opportunities. We have existing partnerships with policy makers at the local, state and federal level, and this grant will allow us to strengthen our work with these leaders. We will ensure that the voice of young people with disabilities is included in the awareness and advocacy work through our Youth Program, and two Youth Program leaders will sit on the TCIOC, help create resources, and participate in presentations. We will encourage partners from other states to also draw on youth voice in their work.

Collaborative work, as well as ongoing communication, will resource change agents in this region with the values of Think College and NWDS to push change in this arena in a best-practices driven manner. An investment at this critical moment will ensure that we maintain momentum to create high-quality inclusive post-secondary opportunities in the Northwest.