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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

\$150,000 College Spark Grant Supports Rural Education Initiative

SPOKANE, WA, February 10, 2021—Innovia Foundation recently received a \$150,000 grant aimed at strengthening school-community partnerships and increasing post-secondary success for students in five rural Eastern Washington communities.

This grant, from the [College Spark Outcomes Acceleration fund](#) launches a two-year pilot project as part of Innovia Foundation's Say Yes to Education initiative. The first phase of the project will include community forums and surveys to gather input and will culminate with a strategic action plan for each community with solutions that advance college and career readiness for students.

The school districts participating in the project are Dayton, St. John-Endicott, Lind-Ritzville, Riverside and Inchelium.

"Every child deserves the opportunity to achieve educational success. Together, as a community, we should harness the power and passion to ensure that all students graduate from high school prepared and supported to pursue their goals and dreams," said Shelly O'Quinn, CEO of Innovia Foundation. "Success for all our children starts with the community's commitment so that every child has the necessary tools to fully develop their gifts and talents to achieve their college and career objectives."

Community-driven partnerships are necessary to engage a range of stakeholders, focus on eliminating student disparities, and create a culture of continuous improvement and education attainment.

The funding will support a community wide survey developed by the Center for Educational Effectiveness to provide leaders with locally relevant information related to educational improvement strategies. Results of the survey will be shared in a community education data walk to spark community-school conversations and help



establish a system of supports, so every student has an opportunity to participate in a postsecondary experience.

This research project will evaluate the role of community leaders in promoting post-secondary enrollment and educational success for all rural students – a factor often overlooked in the education research literature.

This grant helps support Innovia's *Say Yes to Students* ongoing initiative that aims to provide a scholarship to every student along with a wide range of community supports to help students and families succeed.

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Innovia Foundation ignites generosity that transforms lives and communities so that every person has the opportunity to thrive. As the community foundation for Eastern Washington and North Idaho, we partner with people who want to make our world better. We work together to address and solve our region's problems, help those in need, identify and respond to our greatest opportunities and leave a lasting impact. Each year, Innovia Foundation invests nearly \$7 million into our communities through grants to nonprofit organizations and scholarships to local students.

College Spark Washington envisions an education system that encourages learners to be their authentic selves and is eager and equipped to guide them towards realizing their dreams. College Spark seeks to eliminate oppression and disrupt educational inequities for students of color and students from low-income backgrounds. College Spark funding is rooted in love for community and justice and creates the educational opportunities that can transform our society. Grantees include community-based organizations, K-12 schools and districts, community and technical colleges, educational nonprofits, and public agencies. College Spark has awarded over \$70 million in grants since 2005 to support the postsecondary dreams of students throughout the state.