



COLORADO

Governor Jared Polis

Reimagining the Future of the Postsecondary Talent Development System in Colorado

A Report for Executive Order 2025-006

December 2025

In accordance with Executive Order 2025-006, this Report was prepared by staff in the Office of Governor based on collaboration with and feedback from leaders in Colorado's Department of Higher Education (CDHE), Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE), the Office of Economic Development and International Trade (OEDIT), and the Department of Regulatory Agencies (DORA), as well as from the Department of Education (CDE) and the State Approving Agency for Career and Technical Education (CTE) at the Colorado Community College System (CCCS). Other state agencies, institutions of higher education, local workforce centers, and external workforce and education intermediaries were asked to contribute feedback on the strengths and opportunities in the current system.

Any inquiries should be directed to any member of the Special Workforce Systems Team:

Katherine Keegan, Special Workforce Systems Lead:
katherine.keegan@state.co.us

Rachel Snyder, Special Workforce Systems Advisor
(Workforce focus): rachel.snyder@state.co.us

Anna Perkins, Special Workforce Systems Advisor
(Education focus): anna.deese@state.co.us

Jessica Kostelnik, Senior Policy Advisor (Workforce and Higher Education): jessica.kostelnik@state.co.us



Executive Summary

Colorado has a history of delivering strong results for constituents pursuing postsecondary education, training, or employment support. Our workforce is one of the most highly educated in the country, yet the majority of our homegrown talent does not go on to earn a degree or advanced credential beyond a high school diploma. Colorado has seen robust job growth, but our businesses report that finding the right talent is their top challenge.

We've made a lot of important progress. Legislative efforts like Care Forward Colorado and Career Advance Colorado helped train Coloradans for in-demand jobs at any Colorado community college or technical school and the Colorado Promise funds two free years of college for students that qualify. Colorado has prioritized apprenticeships and skills-based hiring, and we continue looking for new ways to meet the needs of every Colorado learner, whether they are pursuing a postsecondary degree, a short-term credential, or learning on the job. But we know there is a lot more work ahead.

We are at a pivotal moment: the rapid advancement of artificial intelligence is reshaping the skills people need to be competitive, federal policy changes and funding reprioritization require nimble state and local responses, and changing demographic trends require Colorado to better leverage and support existing talent. These disruptions create a window of opportunity for our state to help more Coloradans connect with the skills needed to get good-paying jobs.

Recognizing this pivotal moment, Governor Polis issued Executive Order 2025-006,¹ Reimagining the Future of Colorado's Postsecondary Talent Development System, directing state agencies to analyze Colorado's current postsecondary talent system and develop recommendations for transformative change. This report responds to that charge with a vision that matches the magnitude of the moment.

¹ The full text of the EO can be found in [Appendix 1](#).

To best serve Coloradans, we must boldly reimagine how our education, training, and employment systems are serving Colorado learners, jobseekers, workers, and employers. This means breaking down barriers and streamlining resources to help more Coloradans pursue the education, training, or employment opportunities that meet their needs, and the needs of our economy. This report argues structural transformation is necessary to respond to the myriad pressures facing Colorado, and recommends a...

Purpose-built, unified department that can seamlessly integrate postsecondary education, skills training, and employment services: the Colorado Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development.

This new agency will transform how Coloradans experience state government:

- ◆ **One front door instead of navigating multiple agencies with competing priorities.**
- ◆ **Clear pathways connecting education to good careers, with no wrong doors and no dead ends.**
- ◆ **Streamlined support for employers to engage and build the talent pipelines they need.**
- ◆ **Enhanced capacity for our dedicated state employees to focus on impact rather than coordination.**
- ◆ **Strategic investment in Colorado's economic future through unified priorities and accountability.**

This report was prepared by Governor's Office staff and is based on input gathered from leaders across the key agencies involved in education and workforce, community partners, site visits, surveys, responses to public presentations, research into current efforts in and beyond Colorado, and the directives and goals identified in prior, related reports.

We look forward to working with our partners in the postsecondary talent development system to build on Colorado's strengths, and ensure the Colorado Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development helps Coloradans to thrive.

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Introduction



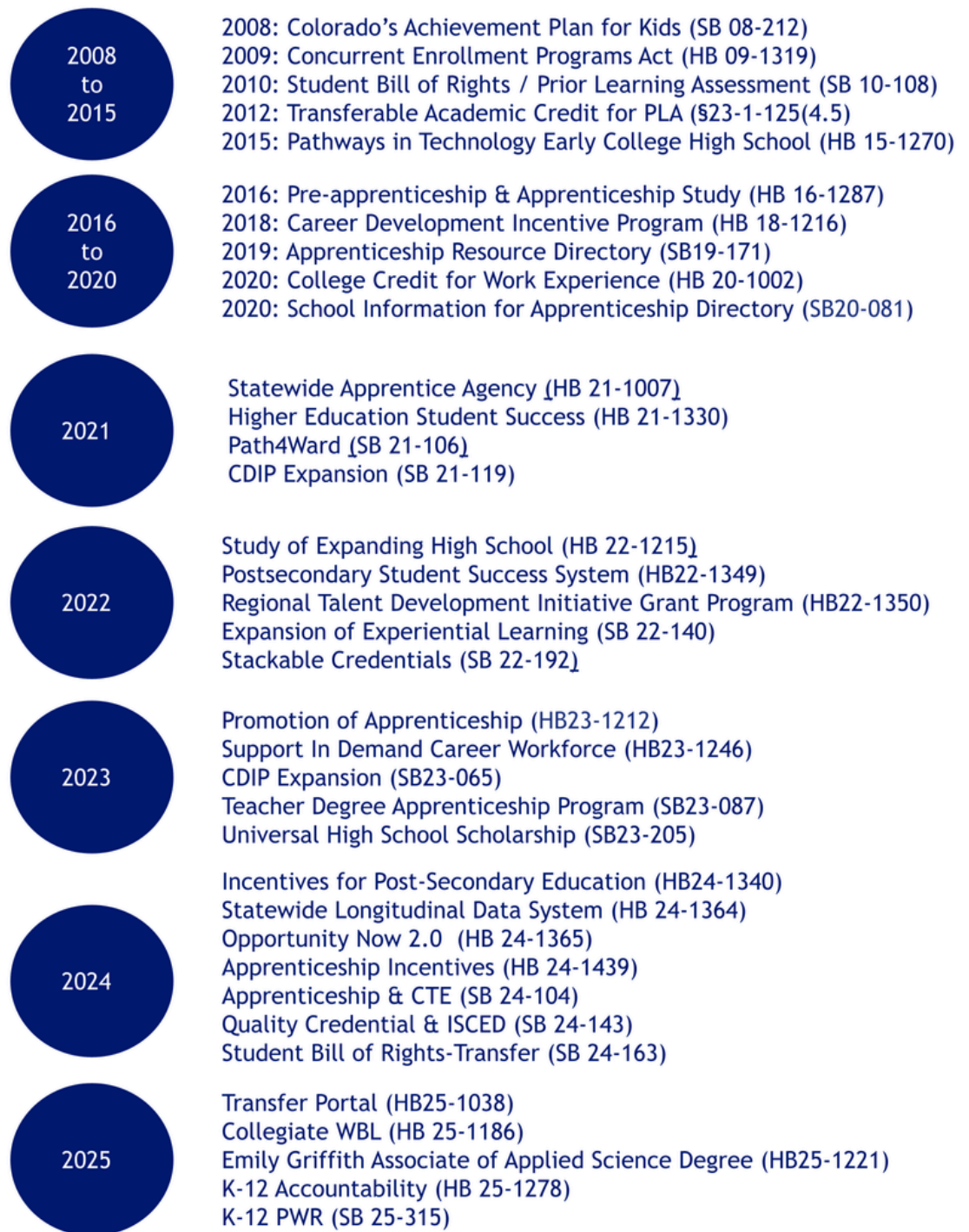
We in Colorado have been steadfast in our commitment to the success of our students, our workers, and our businesses. Over two decades, visionary leaders across party lines have steadily built the foundation for a nation-leading postsecondary talent system² - blurring the lines between learning and work and creating pathways where none existed.³

The legacy of these initiatives has positioned Colorado as a national thought leader on challenging traditional boundaries between education and employment. The state has invested in free in-demand credentials, created stackable pathways, grown registered apprenticeships, codified work-based learning, championed skills-based hiring, and led the nation with our efforts to create equivalencies between academic and technical education (see Figure 1 on the following page for a timeline of efforts). Each law, each program, each innovation has added a critical piece to the foundation.

² Colorado's postsecondary talent development system refers to the collection of institutions, organizations, programs, and initiatives that receive state and federal funding to help Coloradans build skills, earn credentials, and connect with employment. This is described further in the next section.

³ See [Appendix 2](#) for a glossary of terms frequently used in the postsecondary talent development system and throughout this report.

Figure 1. Timeline of Colorado Legislation Related to Integrating Education and Work.⁴



⁴ A text-based description of Figure 1 is in [Appendix 12](#).

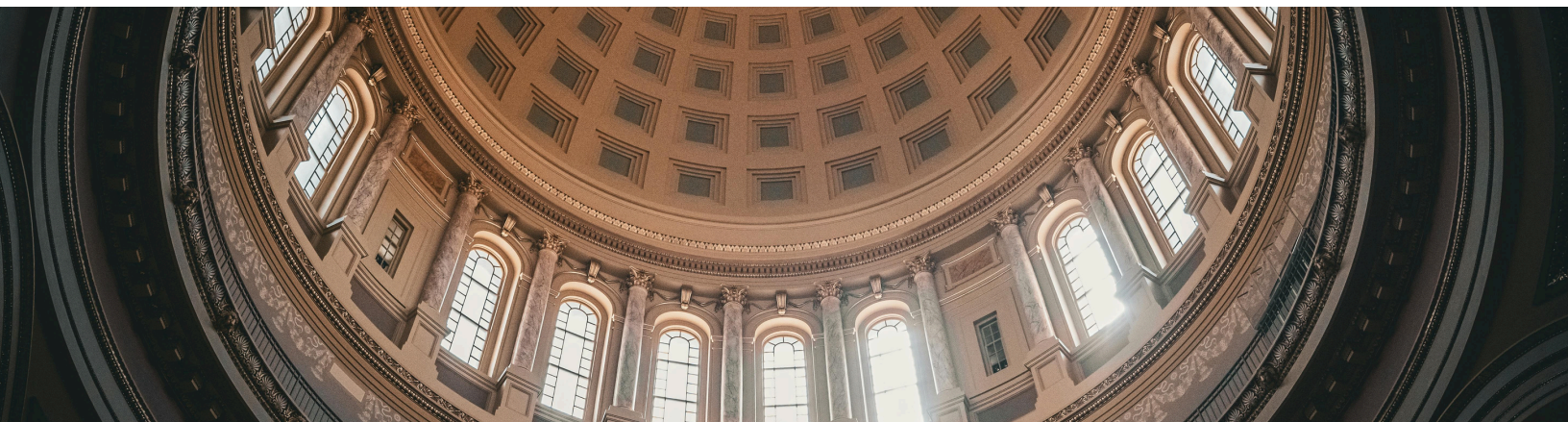
Two landmark pieces of legislation have illuminated both our progress and the work ahead:

- **House Bill 21-1330**⁵ was sponsored by Representative McCluskie, Representative Ricks, Senator Zenzinger, and Senator Kirkmeyer. It revealed the need for greater alignment between higher education and workforce development, generating crucial work in measuring outcomes, data transparency, innovative grantmaking, and equity-focused solutions.
- **House Bill 22-1215**⁶ was sponsored by Representative McCluskie, Representative Bacon, and Senator Bridges. It established the 1215 Task Force to develop recommendations to expand and align work-based learning opportunities for Colorado's secondary and higher education students. House Bill 22-1215 spurred additional legislative efforts to streamline funding for career-connected learning,⁷ establish the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, and create new performance measures that recognize workforce readiness.⁸

These efforts confirm what we know: Colorado's pioneering spirit remains strong, and the numbers reflect the outcomes of our innovation: Colorado recently ranked sixth for best economy,⁹ sits among the top states for business,¹⁰ and has one of the lowest rates of poverty.¹¹

Almost two-thirds (63%) of Colorado residents aged 25 and older had a postsecondary credential in 2023, well above the national average of 54.9%.¹² Colorado continues to meet or exceed all Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) performance standards, serving 212,458 Coloradans in the 2024 program year.¹³ Graduates of Colorado's institutions of higher education who remain in Colorado to work typically see positive and sustained returns on their investment, and generally earn higher wages over time than those who do not have a degree-regardless of their field of study.¹⁴

But beneath these headlines lies a more complex truth - one that demands immediate action.



5 [Click here for the text of HB21-1330.](#)

6 [Click here for the text of HB22-1215.](#)

7 [Click here for the text of SB25-315.](#)

8 [Click here for the text of HB25-1278.](#)

9 [U.S. News and World Report Best States 2025 - Economy.](#)

10 [CNBC's Top States for Business 2025.](#)

11 [NIH Poverty Table](#)

12 [Chalkbeat's Colorado now tied for most education state in the nation](#)

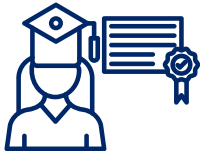
13 [PY24 WIOA Annual Report](#), PY24 ran from July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025

14 [2025 Higher Education Return on Investment Report](#)

The talent crisis is here



Approximately 936,000 Coloradans (35% of all workers) earn less than \$25 per hour.¹⁵ Nearly 140,000 Coloradans are unemployed.¹⁶ For communities of color and immigrant populations, these disparities run even deeper. Racial and ethnic minorities have a higher concentration of un- and under-employment (for both foreign-born and U.S.-born college graduates),¹⁷ and over two million highly-skilled immigrants across all 50 states are either underemployed or unemployed.¹⁸ Coloradans need clear pathways to better jobs.



Over one million Coloradans aged 25 to 64 have only a high school diploma.¹⁹ Half a million started college but did not complete a degree.²⁰ It is expected that by 2031, 73% of all jobs in Colorado (2,232,000 jobs) will require some postsecondary training beyond high school.²¹ However, out of 100 hypothetical ninth graders in Colorado, only 86 will graduate from high school within five years, and of those graduates, only 45 will enroll in a public or private degree-granting institution of higher education, and only 23 will actually graduate with a degree within 150% of the expected time to completion.²² Too few Colorado high school graduates successfully transition to and through postsecondary education to obtain credentials of value and good jobs.



Colorado businesses report labor shortages and workforce issues as their top challenge with an insufficient supply of skilled talent impacting their workforce planning.²³ This sentiment is reflected globally, with 63% of employers considering skills gaps to be the most significant impediment to business transformation.²⁴ Resident Coloradans cannot keep up with this demand.

¹⁵ [EPI's Low Wage Workforce Tracker](#)

¹⁶ [CDLE Colorado Employment Situation - August 2025](#)

¹⁷ [Leaving Money on the Table: the Persistence of Brain Waste Among College-Educated Immigrants, American Community Survey ; Table S2301 Employment Status](#)

¹⁸ [Barriers to Career Advancement Among Skilled Immigrants in the United States](#)

¹⁹ [Lumina Foundation Credentials of Value](#)

²⁰ [National Student Clearing House, Some College, No Credential \(SCNC\) Student Outcomes](#) database; see also the [NSCH 2025 snapshot](#) for recognition of Colorado's impressive efforts to re-engage SCNC learners.

²¹ [The Future of Good Jobs Report from Georgetown CEW](#)

²² [2025 Talent Pipeline Report](#)

²³ [Colorado Business Roundtable-Looking Around Corners Workforce Survey](#)

²⁴ [World Economic Forum Future of Jobs Report](#)

The skills revolution is accelerating



The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) is also reshaping the skills people need to be competitive and the jobs available across Colorado. Research using 2.5 billion online job postings suggests that nearly one-third (32%) of the necessary skills listed on an average job posting have changed between 2021 and 2024,²⁵ with AI driving more disruption than any other trend.²⁶ Technical skills become outdated in less than five years for the average job, and technical skills in some fields become outdated in just 2.5 years.²⁷ Across Colorado, a majority of jobs already have either medium or high rates of automation,²⁸ and entry level job opportunities-those that may not require postsecondary credentials-are more likely to be displaced due to AI adoption.²⁹

The demographic shift is undeniable



Colorado's 65+ population is our fastest growing demographic. By 2030, workers over 55 will comprise more than a quarter of the workforce³⁰ and the ratio of working-age to retirement-age Coloradans is expected to plummet from 5:1 to 2:1 by 2050.³¹ We can no longer rely on importing talent from other states with in-migration declining.³² Changing demographics suggest business as usual will not meet Colorado's future talent needs.

The math is stark: Colorado's economy will hit a talent wall unless we act now.

To keep up with the pace and reality of the changes affecting Colorado's workforce and economy, Colorado needs a more adaptive education, training, and employment system. We must provide clear information on how Colorado's economy is evolving, work efficiently with employers to develop education and training that is responsive to their emerging needs, and ensure Coloradans have the skills and credentials needed to be competitive.

Colorado's postsecondary talent development system must proactively manage these trends while working to understand evolving talent demands from employers.

²⁵ [Lightcast - The Speed of Skill Change](#)

²⁶ [Lightcast - Beyond the Buzz Report](#)

²⁷ [The Future of Jobs Report 2025](#), [Reskilling in the Age of AI](#)

²⁸ [Colorado Automation Report](#)

²⁹ [Stanford, Six Facts about the Recent Employment Effects of Artificial Intelligence](#)

³⁰ [Bain & Company, Better with Age: The Rising Importance of Older Workers](#)

³¹ [State Demography Office](#)

³² [Fewer Movers, Bigger Problems](#)



Executive Order 2025-006³³ recognizes this moment and calls on Colorado to realize the vision of a highly connected, outcomes-oriented, and Coloradan-centered future state through an examination of our current systems.

Specifically, Executive Order 2025-006 tasked the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE), the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE), the Office of Economic Development and International Trade (OEDIT), and the Department of Regulatory Agencies (DORA) to work with the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) to analyze the current system for talent development and to produce recommendations that would improve access to high-quality employment, education, and training.

Facilitated by staff from the Office of the Governor, the Executive Order directed the collaborators to:

1. Evaluate the operations of the State's current postsecondary talent development system and identify where State activities could be better coordinated, streamlined, or strengthened to close the identified gaps between K-12, Higher Education, and workforce development in Colorado;
2. Recommend new administrative designs for a postsecondary talent development system that would build on the work of the Student Success and Workforce Revitalization Task Force created under HB 21-1330;
3. Generate shared strategies and common principles of the new postsecondary talent development system;
4. Recommend solutions to ensure any strategies suggested are successful and have high impact, after identifying operational challenges;
5. Identify strategies for implementation of administrative solutions to coordinate and improve the efficiency of workforce development activities; and
6. Recommend for the General Assembly's considerations to advance and codify findings of the group.

³³ The full text of the EO can be found in [Appendix 1](#).

To achieve these objectives, the Governor’s Office convened a working group made up of agency administrators; federal and state fund managers; and board and commission leaders from the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE), the Colorado Workforce Development Council (CWDC), and the Business Experiential-Learning Commission (BEL); and the State Approving Agency for Career and Technical Education (CTE) at the Colorado Community College System (CCCS). The group met six times between June and July of 2025, with additional one-on-one and small-group meetings held between August and October.

The Governor’s Office also gathered feedback from Executive Leadership of each state agency named in the Executive Order and solicited reactions on our current system and future opportunities through presentations at meetings of the CCHE, CWDC, BEL Commission, and at a convening open to trustees from Colorado’s public institutions of higher education.

Further, the Governor’s Office staff spoke with partners from nonprofit organizations, labor organizations, education and training providers, local workforce centers, institutions of higher education, chambers of commerce, and philanthropic entities between June and October, and gathered feedback from more than 800 Coloradans via an October survey to better understand how Coloradans experience the education, training, and employment system. All of this feedback was analyzed and informed the recommendations appearing in this report.³⁴



Overall stakeholder and community feedback centered six themes:

Colorado’s system for education, training, and employment must be Coloradan-centered and designed to promote equity.

- 1** Stakeholders expressed a strong desire for a system that serves people throughout their lifespans and prioritizes efforts to remove barriers to success, increase access and affordability, and create employment outcomes. People—especially those in underserved communities or pursuing pathways outside of higher education—deserve a system responsive to their needs.

³⁴ An overview of survey methods and results can be found in [Appendix 3](#).

Coloradans want education and training programs that lead to success in the workplace.

- 2 Stakeholders emphasized the value of career pathways aligned with current and anticipated labor market needs as well as essential skills like critical thinking, communication, and problem solving.

Employers need clear channels to communicate their workforce needs and access state resources.

- 3 The public sector must provide relevant, timely, and demonstratively beneficial responses to employer needs in order to incentivize employers to advise on curriculum, offer work-based learning opportunities, or hire from publicly supported training programs.

Uncoordinated initiatives create confusion and burden for local organizations.

- 4 Stakeholders describe the strategies, funding priorities, and information from state agencies as inconsistent, which make it harder for employers and intermediaries to engage effectively. Misaligned incentives and overlapping programs across education, workforce, and the private sector were commonly mentioned.

The system must develop shared data on outcomes.

- 5 There is a need to build a data infrastructure that can assess the outcomes of individuals across multiple programs as they advance in their careers. This requires both a technical infrastructure, like the Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS), and the policy infrastructure of shared outcome goals. Stakeholders expressed that outcome data should be transparent, available, and program-specific.

There is a need for clear "owners" to drive accountability and governance.

- 6 It was repeatedly expressed that no one entity "owns" the system for education, training, and workforce development after high school, making it difficult to align efforts or drive accountability across agencies.

These themes serve as the foundation for the assessment of Colorado's system for education, training, and employment. The rest of this report explores how the system's fragmented structure creates challenges for the Coloradans it is meant to serve. The report then provides a bold proposal for structural transformation of our system through the creation of a Colorado Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development,³⁵ along with other improvements that would ensure Coloradans are competitive for Colorado jobs.

³⁵ This is a working name prioritizing clarity of scope; alternatives should be considered.

Assessment of Colorado's Current Postsecondary Talent Development System

Colorado's postsecondary talent development system refers to the collection of institutions, organizations, programs, and initiatives that receive state and federal funding to help Coloradans build skills, earn credentials, and connect with employment. The system includes organizations like colleges and universities, local workforce centers and vocational rehabilitation offices, community based organizations, and businesses (see Table 1). Simply put, this is a system that supports Coloradans with post-high school education, training, and employment. Throughout this document we refer to this as "the system" or "the education, training, and employment system."

Table 1. Overview of Colorado's Postsecondary Talent Development System³⁶

<i>Regional Structures</i>	<i>Navigation & Resource Organizations</i>	<i>Education & Training Organizations</i>	<i>Education & Training Programs</i>	<i>Credential Types</i>
178 school districts 64 counties 21 BOCES ³⁷ 10 workforce areas 14 economic development regions 27 sector partnerships ³⁸	75 human services offices 55 workforce center locations 47 qualified apprenticeship intermediaries ³⁹ 25 vocational rehabilitation offices	472 K-12 schools with CTE offerings 2 public local district colleges 3 public area technical colleges 13 public community colleges 13 public universities and research institutions 91 adult education providers 67 private colleges, universities, or religious training institutions ⁴⁰ 290+ private occupational schools 622 approved education & training providers for Veterans programs	300+ registered apprenticeship programs 4500+ programs for participants of the public workforce system 9800+ programs offered in public & private institutions of higher education ⁴¹ 15 career cluster options via CTE	194 apprenticeship occupations 131 licenses 4164 certificates 1890 associate degrees 1913 bachelor's degrees 1414 master's degrees 453 doctorates

³⁶ A six-paragraph, text-based description of Table 1 is in [Appendix 12](#).

³⁷ [BOCES are Boards of Cooperative Educational Services](#) providing shared services to school districts in a region.

³⁸ [Sector Partnerships Co-Create Economic Solutions Across Colorado](#)

³⁹ Qualified Apprenticeship Intermediaries are organizations recognized by the State Apprenticeship Agency for connecting talent or businesses to Registered Apprenticeship Programs. [Learn more at this link](#).

⁴⁰ [CDHE Registry of Higher Education Institutions in Colorado](#)

⁴¹ [CDHE Approved Degrees & Certificates](#)

Coloradans Must Navigate an Overwhelming Set of Options

Coloradans navigating the system must choose between 472 schools, 300+ apprenticeship programs, 4,500+ eligible training programs, and nearly 10,000 degree options (Table 1, previous page). Hundreds of options exist, yet choosing the right option can feel like an impossible task. Without clear guidance and flexible pathways, success can depend more on the resources in your community than your ability and interests.

Imagine you have one of the identities in Figure 2...

Figure 2: Sampling of Coloradan Perspectives

A 17 year-old finishing up high school interested in becoming a teacher	A 22 year-old college graduate with a computer science degree trying to find a stable tech job	A 30 year-old single parent who has been a CNA for years, but need to earn more to afford child care	A 40 year-old electrician who wants to get a bachelor's degree and transition to a less physical job	A 55 year-old administrative assistant recently laid off because the company adopted AI tools
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To determine your next step, you might ask questions such as:

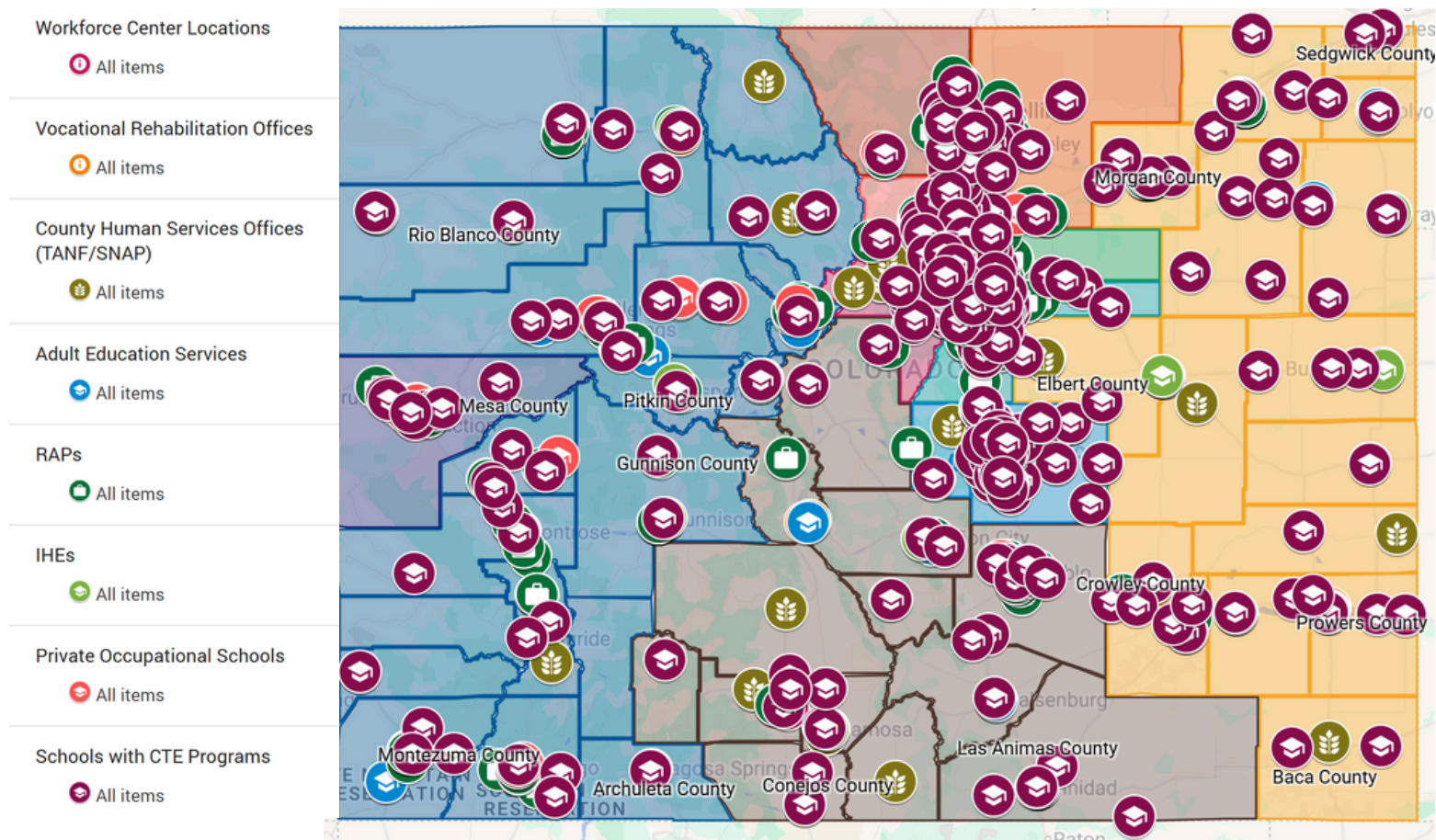
- What are the jobs and careers in my community?
- What career paths align with my skills?
- What education and training programs are available nearby or online?
- Where can I find a counselor, advisor, or career navigator to help me or my family understand my options?⁴²
- How do graduates of these programs fare in the job market?
- How can I pay for education or training, and what will it cost?
- How can I get help with transportation or child care while I attend training?
- Can I work while I am planning for my career growth or going to school, and what supports are there to help me do that?

The current system requires you to navigate a robust, but often overwhelming, number of services, providers, and resources to answer these questions (see Figure 3 on the following page).



⁴² “Counselor”, “advisor”, and “career navigator” are just some of the different terms used by K-12 systems, higher education institutions, and workforce centers to denote a person whose role is to help provide education or career guidance and support. This report uses all three terms in order to be inclusive and appropriately general, but we recognize that in some settings, these terms may have very specific meanings (e.g., a guidance counselor versus a mental health counselor).

Figure 3. Map of Organizations and Institutions Delivering Programming in Colorado's Postsecondary Space



Note: More information is available on the [Colorado's Postsecondary Talent Development System Google Map](#).

Note: Coloradans are never far from spaces where they can get education, training, and employment support. The geographic distribution of these entities enables regionally-relevant needs to be addressed; however, there aren't sufficient resources to navigate or compare different options.

Coloradans seeking education or career support encounter a complex system of agencies, institutions, and eligibility requirements. As a result, individuals may enter through one “door” and remain unaware of related programs or supports that could accelerate their progress, especially because access to quality career navigation support is not consistently available to all Coloradans.

Many of the entities across this system maintain their own intake, data, and referral processes and focus their efforts on particular funding deliverables, industries (e.g. energy), credential types (e.g., bachelor’s degrees), and/or specific populations (e.g. first generation college students, rural communities, Coloradans with disabilities). Inconsistent funding, uneven capacity, and limited awareness undermines the reach of these programs.

Coloradans often turn to resources in their communities to help them understand their options. However, effective navigation and advising requires visibility across the system. Workforce centers and community-based career coaches, counselors, and advisors may lack experience with the nuances of credential and degree attainment in higher education. Similarly, higher education career advisors may have limited exposure to career resources already available through their local workforce center, or may have limited expertise in blending public safety net resources with their own offerings. Across the system, career coaches, advisors, and counselors struggle with unmanageable caseloads.

To address these barriers, the state often builds tools and websites designed to help people navigate their options. However, without a unified technology strategy, these websites are unevenly adopted across the system and lack comprehensive and cohesive information resulting in confusion for Coloradans.



The state and local providers in this system offer a wide variety of programs and services, and Coloradans may not be aware of all of their options, let alone able to compare them.

These differences also impact how different forms of education and training might “stack,” meaning prior learning from one part of the system may not be recognized by another. For example, if an individual completes a four-year Registered Apprenticeship Program, works in the field for three years after completion, and then decides to switch fields to one that requires a four-year degree, it’s difficult to assess which institutions will recognize their prior learning and experience, and how much credit they will start with that can be applied towards degree completion requirements. Even when Coloradans succeed in completing training or earning a credential, some find that their progress doesn’t allow for continued learning or improved employment outcomes.

As a result, the consequences of not making the right initial “choice” may mean education and training takes longer and therefore is more expensive, or the path to a good job is delayed.

Businesses Are Overtapped or Disengaged

Businesses encounter the same complexity when trying to build talent pipelines or create training programs. Imagine you have one of the roles in Figure 4...

Figure 4: Sampling of Coloradan Business Perspectives

A small business owner looking to hire an intern for the summer

An HR director at a 500-person advanced manufacturing firm who wants to start an apprenticeship

A hiring manager at a rural hospital seeing a need for more nurses in coming years

An early childhood education provider struggling to retain workers

- How do you design a work-based learning program that meets your needs and the needs of learners?
- Which education and training organization can build the talent you need, when you need it?
- Where do you go to find a skilled jobseeker for your open positions?
- How can you connect to tax credits or grants to help support your business' training needs?

State agencies, institutions of higher education, school districts, workforce centers, and community-based organizations all have different answers to these questions, which means one employer may get access to different resources, services, and solutions than another.

Many state and federally funded postsecondary programs require employer engagement activities at the local, regional, and state level. Locally, WIOA requires workforce centers to connect with local businesses to facilitate job placement, on the job training and other work-based learning experiences. Regionally, employers must inform regional needs assessments for CTE and sector partnerships administered by CWDC. They are also asked to support or participate in grant-funded activities like Opportunity Now. Statewide, employers shape CTE and WIOA state plans and serve on advisory boards for work-based learning, licensed occupations, apprenticeship, and private occupational schools. The menu of options for engagement is vast.

In practice, this means employers are asked to advise on program design, approve program curricula, deliver work-based learning, and engage and lead other businesses to participate in talent development. In some cases, these activities occur simultaneously across multiple agencies and initiatives.

These requirements exist to ensure employers help shape the system. However, that engagement is often locally and programmatically specific, leaving a handful of employers engaged in a single, place-based solution rather than informing the system overall. When the path to solutions for business requires navigating multiple agencies, meeting different requirements, and decoding overlapping initiatives, the cost to engage becomes greater than the reward.

Behind the Complexity: Colorado's Distributed Structure

These challenges for both individuals and businesses stem from how Colorado structures and governs its workforce and education system. This confusion isn't accidental - it's structural. Seven state entities play a role in delivering postsecondary education, training, or employment services (see Table 2.1 below and 2.2 on the following page).⁴³ Interagency alignment requires reconciling this complexity through coordination meetings, formal agreements, or shared staff. However, well-intentioned alignment efforts cannot overcome fundamental fragmentation.

Table 2.1 Snapshot of the Infrastructure of Key Entities in Colorado's Postsecondary Talent Development System

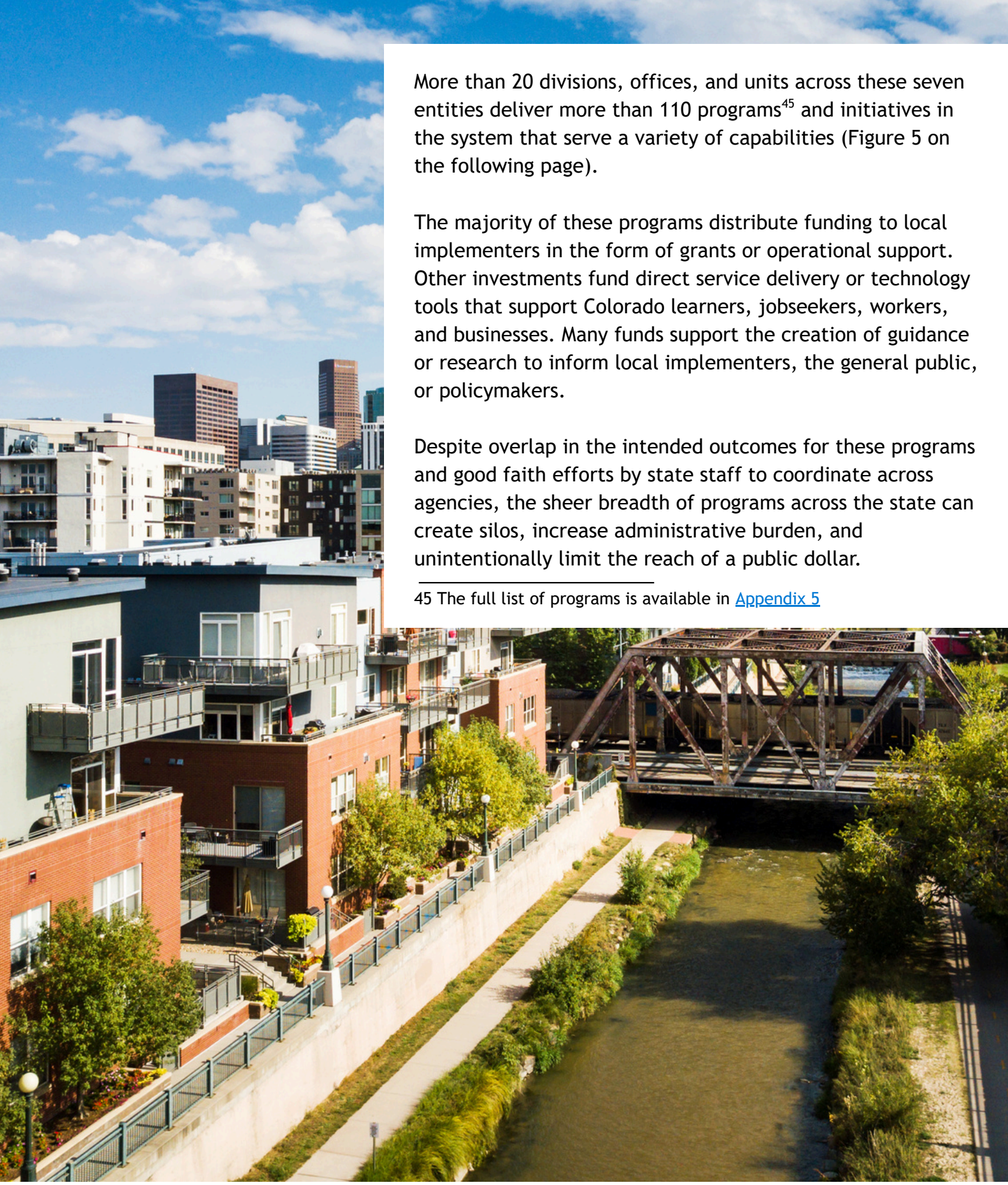
	CDLE	CDHE	OEDIT	CDHS	DORA	CDE	CTE (CCCS)
Agency of the Executive Branch	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Primary Funding Source for education, training, employment system	Federal	State	State	Federal	State	State	State

⁴³ For a detailed description of each entity involved (including the unique role of CCCS), see [Appendix 4](#).

Table 2.2 Capability Snapshot of Key Entities in Colorado's Postsecondary Talent Development System

	CDLE	CDHE	OEDIT	CDHS	DORA	CDE	CTE (CCCS)
Administer tax credits	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	No
Business engagement, navigation & support	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Data collection & analysis	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Direct service delivery to learners	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No
Direct service delivery to jobseeker	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Direct service delivery to worker	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
Direct service delivery to business	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
Administers pass-through funding to local implementers	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Grant distribution and oversight	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Guidance & support to local implementers	Yes (WFCs, RAPs, Grantees)	Yes (IHEs, community based organizations)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Regulatory authority	Yes (RAPs, UI)	Yes (Private Occupational Schools, COSI, College Assist, Transfer)	No	Yes (County Human Service Programs)	Yes (Professions/ Occupations)	Yes (School Districts, Educator Licensing)	No (but SBCCOE oversees CTE programs)

Note: For space purposes, acronyms and smaller text are used. [Appendix 12](#) has a text description of the capabilities in larger-sized font. [Appendix 4](#) describes the seven entities being compared. The other acronyms used are: IHEs (Institutions of Higher Education), RAPs (Registered Apprenticeship Programs), SBCCOE (State Board of Community Colleges and Occupational Education), UI (Unemployment Insurance), and WFC (Workforce Centers).

An aerial photograph of a city skyline. In the foreground, there are modern multi-story residential or commercial buildings with balconies and glass facades. A river flows through the middle ground, bordered by a concrete wall and greenery. In the background, several tall skyscrapers are visible against a blue sky with scattered white clouds.

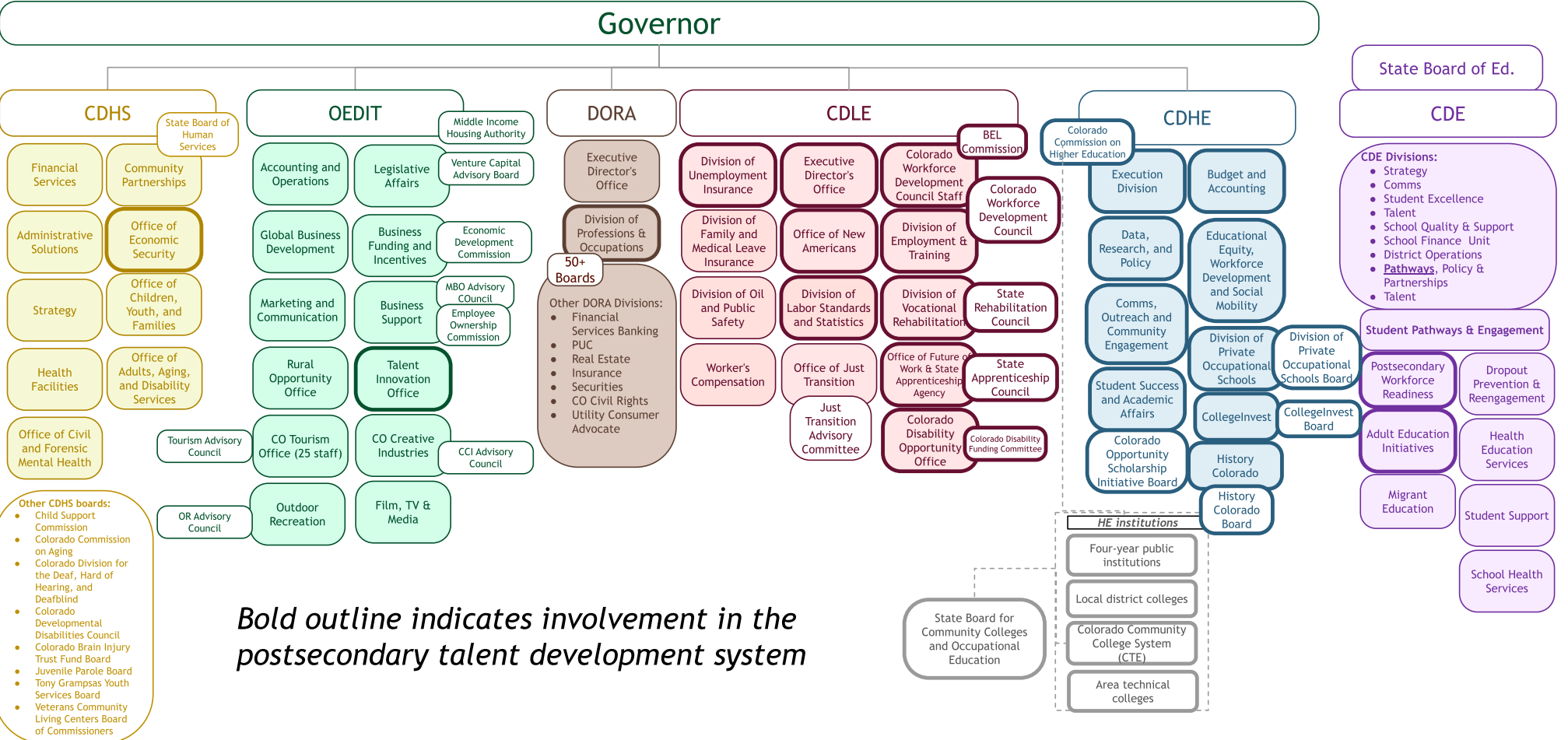
More than 20 divisions, offices, and units across these seven entities deliver more than 110 programs⁴⁵ and initiatives in the system that serve a variety of capabilities (Figure 5 on the following page).

The majority of these programs distribute funding to local implementers in the form of grants or operational support. Other investments fund direct service delivery or technology tools that support Colorado learners, jobseekers, workers, and businesses. Many funds support the creation of guidance or research to inform local implementers, the general public, or policymakers.

Despite overlap in the intended outcomes for these programs and good faith efforts by state staff to coordinate across agencies, the sheer breadth of programs across the state can create silos, increase administrative burden, and unintentionally limit the reach of a public dollar.

⁴⁵ The full list of programs is available in [Appendix 5](#)

Figure 5. Current Organizational Structure of Colorado’s Postsecondary Talent Development System⁴⁶



46 A text-based description of Figure 5 is in [Appendix 12](#).

While the entities in Figure 5 are the entities responsible for the bulk of this work, nearly every other state agency touches the workforce in some way:

- The state is a major employer in Colorado. Many agencies could benefit from partnership with the state's education, training, and employment system.
- Some agencies with a specific industry focus have chosen to create workforce roles or programs to support their specific industries (e.g. Department of Early Childhood, Department of Education, Behavioral Health Administration, Colorado Energy Office), which has added to the complexity.
- Agencies like the Department of Corrections provide education, training, and employment services, but due to the unique factors of their service delivery have difficulty coordinating with other state entities.

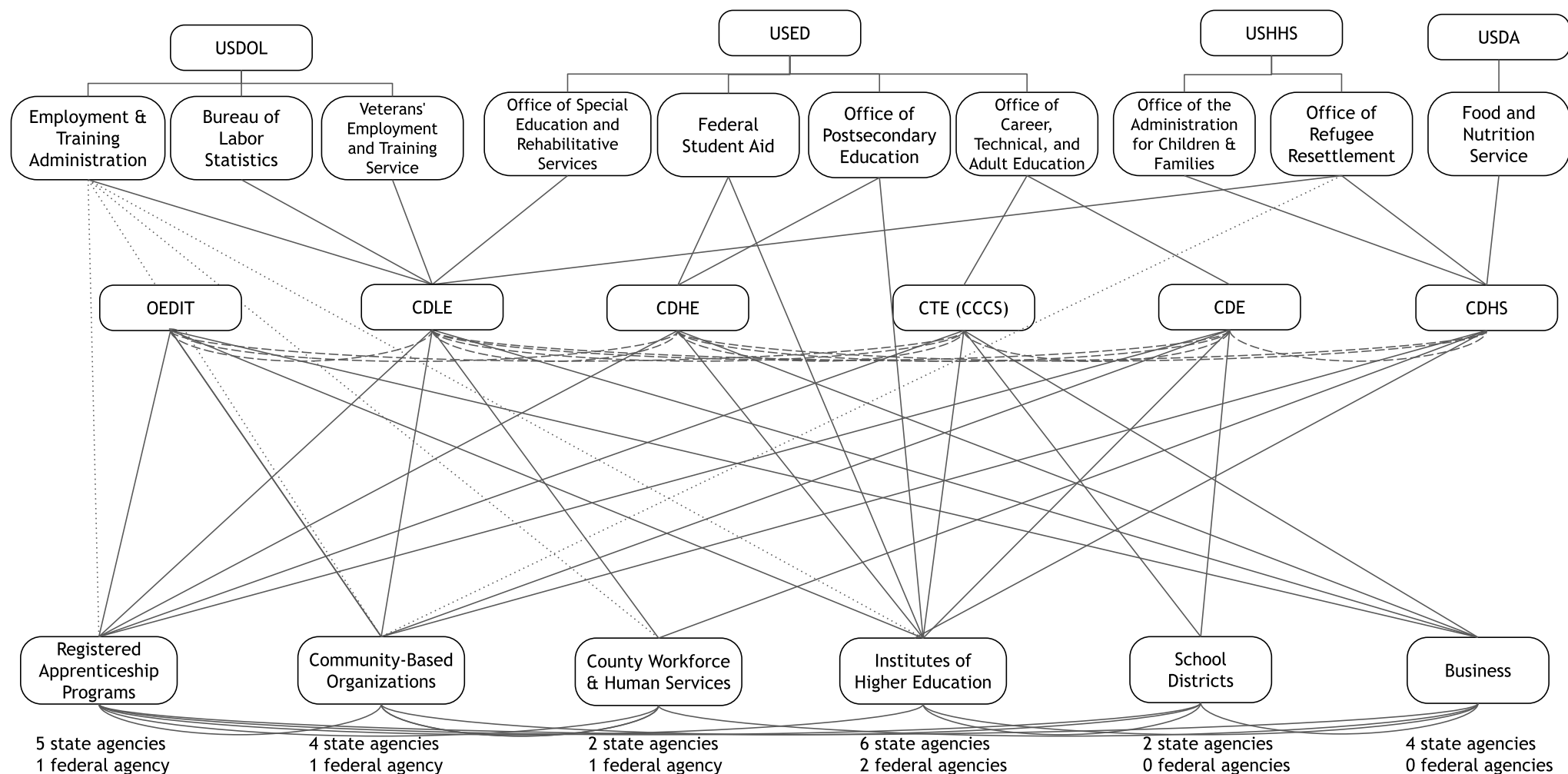
The current distribution of funding across numerous state agencies results in administration that varies with each agency's internal structures, culture, and policies. Inconsistent grantmaking processes, policies, tools, and varying approaches to fiscal and programmatic monitoring and compliance create confusion for local administrators. Potential grant recipients must navigate multiple agencies to find funding, and then adhere to different reporting and compliance requirements. Inconsistent agency fiscal and programmatic standards for grantmaking create confusion for local administrators.

Each line in Figure 6⁴⁷ (on the following page) represents hours of interagency coordination: a funding flow, a formal agreement, a reporting requirement. Each connection involves different processes: separate contracts, distinct reporting schedules, different data systems. A local workforce board connects to CDLE, CDHS, potentially OEDIT, and federal oversight. A community-based organization serving the same population might manage funding from four state agencies simultaneously, each with different reporting timelines and outcome measures. These multiple relationships require substantial administrative capacity from local implementers. Staff must maintain expertise in multiple agency systems, reconcile different requirements, and report similar information in different formats.



⁴⁷ The intention of Figure 6 is to show the immense number of relationships between different entities at different levels. Real examples collected from state and local entities were used to create the figure, but not all local entities may have the same relationships to all of the other entities listed here. Additionally, because of the unique role of CTE/CCCS in the state, they are positioned at the state level of the figure.

Figure 6. Connections Between Federal, State, and Local Actors in the Postsecondary System⁴⁸



Note: This figure was prepared prior to the U.S. Department of Education's [announcement on November 18, 2025](#) of six new agency partnerships to administer some of the programs and funding formally housed within the Department of Education.

⁴⁸ A text-based description of Figure 6 is in [Appendix 12](#).

The Cumulative Weight of Fragmentation

Colorado’s fragmented system has consequences. We can’t consistently meet the needs of Coloradans, businesses, and training or education providers because the push and pull of different strategic plans, performance metrics, and accountability structures limit the system's ability to achieve the greatest impact. When everyone owns a piece of the system, no one owns its success.

Fragmented Strategic Planning

Multiple strategic plans guide different parts of the system. Each reflects important goals, but together they pull in different directions.

Distributed governance across multiple agencies and boards creates fragmentation through distinct (and not always aligned) strategic plans and a structure that relies on relationships to facilitate interagency coordination (see Table 3 for plans directly related to the key state entities in the system).

Table 3. Strategic Plans Created by Entities in the Postsecondary Talent Development System

State Entities	Strategic Plan	Federally Required?
CCHE & CDHE	CCHE Strategic Plan (published 2023),COSI Strategic Plan (published 2020)	No
CWDC, CDE, TANF, TAA, JVSG, SCSEP,VR	WIOA State Plan 2024-2027	Yes
CDHS SNAP E&T	Employment First State Plan FFY 2025	Yes
CCCS - CTE	Colorado Perkins V State Plan 2024-2028	Yes
CCCS - CTE	CTE Strategic Plan 2024-2028	No
OEDIT	Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (2025)	Yes - to access grants from the Economic Development Administration
CTE (CCCS)	No	No

These separate plans guide individual agency work and satisfy state and federal planning requirements. However, the absence of a shared strategic framework means agencies pursue different priorities, diluting impact. Fragmented strategic planning also affects how agencies pursue resources. State agencies and divisions have at times competed for funding from the same partners to secure grants, philanthropic investment, or appropriations via legislation. When new funding becomes available, decisions about which agency should apply often depend on which entity has the capacity or reputational strength, rather than which is the most appropriate fit.

The absence of unified strategic direction creates a practical challenge with prioritization: when limited resources require tough choices, which vision prevails?

Fragmented Performance Metrics

Success means different things to different programs. We cannot improve what we cannot consistently measure.

The 100+ programs across the system use different definitions of success and varying outcome measures, preventing comparison across education and workforce programs and limiting the state's ability to evaluate and prioritize approaches that deliver the strongest results. Federal funds and programs have core performance and outcome metrics. Despite some federal alignment across these metrics (see Tables 4a and 4b on the following page)⁴⁹, the definitions and service delivery models vary just enough to make it challenging for the state to compare investments, outcomes, and strategies to understand which participants are served by which programs and where the state may want to bolster its efforts.

Furthermore, state-funded programs also have unique reporting requirements and performance metrics that often vary based on the nature of the program or which agency manages the program, adding to the variability seen across the system.



Variation across outcomes measures adds to the difficulty of creating shared definitions of success:

- One agency may prioritize rapid employment placement to resolve immediate economic pressures while another emphasizes longer-term credential attainment to achieve higher wages over time.
- One focuses on serving specific populations, while another takes a universal approach.
- One measures success by program enrollment, while another tracks post-program employment outcomes.

Beyond metric incompatibility, there are also gaps in the data available to fully assess the outcomes of Coloradans who engage with the state system. While the Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS)⁵⁰ will provide insight on outcomes by connecting data sets across state agencies, missing or uncollected data will remain a significant barrier to fully understanding Coloradans' outcomes. Basic questions become challenging to answer, both between and within agencies:

**Which programs deliver the strongest outcomes? Where should resources be prioritized?
Which approaches warrant expansion?**

⁴⁹ See also [Appendix 6](#) for information on relevant federal agencies and federally funded programs in Colorado.

⁵⁰ For more information on the SLDS, see the [SLDS website at this link.](#)

Table 4a and 4b: Comparison of Federal Performance Metrics Across Funding Sources

4a. Metrics Shared Across Multiple Federal Programs	Federal Funding Source	State Entity Involved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment (Second Quarter After Exit) • Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit) • Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit) • Credential Attainment Rate • Measurable Skill Gains including High school diploma or equivalency • Effectiveness in Serving Employers (pilot measure, not yet implemented) 	WIOA Title I WIOA Title II WIOA Title III WIOA Title IV TANF SNAP E&T	CDLE, CDHE (DPOS), CDE, CDHS
4b. Metrics Unique to Individual Federal Programs	Federal Funding Source	State Entity Involved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four-year graduation rate • Academic proficiency in reading/language arts • Academic proficiency in mathematics • Academic proficiency in science • Post-program placement • Non-traditional concentration • Participation in work-based learning • Postsecondary retention and placement • Earned recognized postsecondary credential • Non-traditional program concentration 	Perkins V	CCCS (CTE)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicator of Student Success • Cohort Default Rate • Debt-to-earnings rate 	Federal Student Aid (IHE requirements)	CDHE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work Participation Rate 	TANF	CDHS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career and/or Technical Education Programs or Other Vocational Training • Complete work-based learning • English Language Acquisition • Average Wage • Industry Placement 	SNAP E&T	CDHS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entering employment percentage • Federal cash assistance reductions and termination • Full-time employment with health benefits • Average hourly wage • 90-day job retention • Refugee cash assistance terminations • Services provided the year prior 	Refugee Support Services	CDLE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High school graduation rate • FAFSA completion rate • Enrollment in postsecondary institution rate • Placement rate into college-level math and English without remediation • Anticipate on-time postsecondary graduation rate after one year of enrollment • Academic Performance • Enrollment Status 	GEAR UP	CDHE

Fragmented Accountability

Who is responsible for solving system level challenges?

Beyond the seven state entities and over 100 programs, there are more than 25 Governor-appointed boards, commissions, and councils that advise, regulate, govern, and set strategies for a component part of the system, with none responsible for the system as a whole.⁵¹ Overseeing interagency work is a challenge because of these limitations. When multiple services fail to meet someone's needs, when strategies conflict, or when investments don't deliver expected outcomes, the distributed structure provides no clear answer to: **“who is responsible for improvement?”**

Absent a holistic view of the system, state agencies, boards, commissions, councils, and policymakers are repeatedly asked to address perceived or real gaps. This often leads to the creation of additional programs and initiatives within existing siloes, reinforcing the complexity of the system. Local implementers are then left to navigate multiple directives from different state agencies.



Together, these problems reveal a system where individual agencies meet their mandates, but the collective system fails to achieve its potential.

Solving these challenges demands not incremental fixes, but structural transformation.

⁵¹ For an overview of boards and commissions, see [Appendix 7](#).

Moving Forward: The Vision For An Integrated Department, A Cohesive System

The path forward demands more than reorganization - it demands reimagination. Several states facing similar challenges are also rethinking their approach to workforce development, higher education, economic development, and statewide coordination. Some have moved to centralize workforce functions into a new department (Missouri, Virginia), a new board or commission (Oklahoma, Alabama), a new office (Delaware), or a more powerful central administrator (Tennessee).⁵² Colorado can learn from these efforts as it designs a path forward fit for our state's unique needs and builds on our many unique strengths.

Based on the analysis of our legislative history, current offerings, and stakeholder and agency feedback...



We envision a Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development that doesn't just coordinate existing systems, but fundamentally transforms how Coloradans access opportunity.

This isn't about moving boxes on an organizational chart. It is about creating a single, powerful engine for economic mobility that matches the ambitions of our state and the aspirations of Coloradans.

A unified agency would create clear pathways for learners, streamlined support for employers, and coordinated investment in Colorado's system. Rather than navigating multiple agencies with competing priorities, Coloradans would engage with a single, responsive system designed around their success.

⁵² For an overview of the efforts of other states, see [Appendix 8](#).

The Department would demonstrate the following characteristics:

One Front Door

One Department can provide clearer, accessible options to pursue training opportunities or finding employment. Coloradans and employers can compare apprenticeships, certificates, training programs, and college degrees using reliable tools and comprehensive information. Whether online or in-person, whether seeking immediate work or long-term career growth, every Coloradan will find clear, comprehensive guidance. No more wondering which agency to approach. No more falling through gaps between systems.

Adaptive and Responsive

One Department is better positioned to proactively anticipate and provide a coordinated response to broader economic shifts and changes in state or federal funding, like H.R. 1's changes to loan eligibility⁵³ and Workforce Pell.⁵⁴ One Department allows the state to better deploy innovative programs across teams without bureaucratic delays caused by interagency coordination. One department. One strategy. Immediate action.

Unified Purpose

One Department can set clear goals and coordinate postsecondary education, training, and employment programs. Instead of multiple agencies working in siloes to address the same issues, providers would collaborate toward shared priorities. This approach allows us to maximize state and local capacity toward a common vision of success, while recognizing local and population specific needs.

Results-Driven

One Department can clearly define responsibilities for system actors and create measurable outcomes that are transparent and accessible to all stakeholders. This will provide an authoritative source for tracking program effectiveness, with data to illuminate existing gaps and shape strategy. Legislators and the public will understand who is responsible for delivering results. Coloradans receive the supports and services they need to achieve economic and social mobility and advance their careers.

High-Impact

One Department can responsibly steward public funds by prioritizing discretionary funding to programs that demonstrate strong outcomes—in particular strong, equitable earnings and workforce outcomes for Coloradans—and eliminate unnecessary duplication. Every dollar invested will deliver maximum value.

53 H.R. 1, SEC. 84001. "INELIGIBILITY BASED ON LOW EARNING OUTCOMES" describes a new standard for specific programs of study to be eligible for federal student loans. H.R. 1 states that programs will be screened for eligibility based on the wage earnings of working graduates for "not less than 2 of the 3 years immediately preceding the date of the determination, less than the median earnings of a working adult" (in the case of an associate's or bachelor's program, a high school diploma holder).

54 Workforce Pell will be available to cover some costs associated with programs that are between 150-599 clock hours (8-15 weeks) and have a completion rate of at least 70% within 150% normal time for completion with verified job placement of 70% to accredited providers. Eligible programs must be able to demonstrate a median value-added earnings greater than the program cost. States must also verify that the program prepares students for in-demand, high-wage occupations and meets employer hiring requirements.

The characteristics mentioned require legislative investments, statutory changes, and executive branch alignment to implement over time. To deliver, the state must act in concert. The legislative branch and executive branch must be aligned to sustain and reinforce a shared strategy, consistent metrics, and clear accountability.

Benefits For Key Stakeholders

The transformation from fragmentation to integration isn't abstract policy reform—it delivers concrete improvements in how Coloradans experience their government and shape their careers. When we eliminate the barriers between education, training, and employment services, we fundamentally change what's possible for individuals, businesses, and implementers across our state.

Figure 7. Summary of Benefits for Key Stakeholders



For Learners, Jobseekers, and Workers a new Department will ensure that no matter which experience they are seeking, there will be high quality options available.



For Colorado's Businesses a new Department will eliminate low-value engagements and create clear, responsive channels to address their needs.



For Institutions of Higher Education a new Department will expand access to new student populations, strengthen connections between institutions and employers, and recognize higher education as essential to economic development and civic life.



For Local Workforce Centers a new Department will enable centers to connect more formally into Colorado's educational assets, while continuing to meet the immediate needs of jobseekers and businesses.



For State Employees a new Department will transform how Colorado's talented public servants spend their time from countless coordination meetings, competing technology systems, and interagency negotiations to improving outcomes for Coloradans.

For Learners, Jobseekers, and Workers

A Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development will be able to create clear standards for the programs, credentials, and training opportunities that the state can control. This will ensure that no matter which experience a Coloradan is seeking, there will be high quality options available to them. Imagine a single trusted source that presents every option—from apprenticeships to advanced degrees—with transparent data on costs, completion rates, and earning outcomes. Coloradans will have choices that are well suited to their goals.

The more comprehensive monitoring capabilities of our future system will yield a flexible yet aligned learning, training, workforce, and employment system that can respond as economic, technological, or political changes disrupt or pressure the wellbeing of Coloradans. This will help Coloradans have confidence that the system will help them on their journey toward employment stability, self-sufficiency, and economic mobility.

The new department can smooth the pivotal transitions between education, training, and work, ensuring that as individuals move among these stages throughout their lives, each step builds on the last rather than feeling siloed or disconnected. Prior military service, workplace training, and life experience receive appropriate academic credit, accelerating progress rather than forcing redundant learning. Every credential builds toward the next opportunity, creating momentum rather than dead ends.

This department will have visibility across multiple streams of funding and different state and federal resources to ensure that Coloradans can consider the support available to them as they engage with the system.





For Colorado's Businesses

A Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development will eliminate low-value engagements and create clear, responsive channels to address business needs. The Department will coordinate or integrate current advisory groups for CTE, Registered Apprenticeships, work-based learning, and private occupational school oversight.

At the regional level, the new Department will act as an enabler and capacity-builder, not the convener. Building on lessons from other states' efforts,⁵⁵ the Department would support sector-based partnerships, set expectations for employer leadership, and provide intermediary organizations like chambers, talent associations, industry associations, and unions, with data and technical assistance to respond to local industry needs. Employers would continue to be recruited as industry champions that are empowered to lead regional strategies, allowing business to build predictable talent pipelines.

As specific sectors identify their most critical workforce needs, the Department will bridge those needs with the resources of the state. Employers will experience reduced hiring friction, lower verification costs, and credentialing systems that train for the skills they need.

⁵⁵ Review [Appendix 8](#) for an overview of the efforts of other states.

For Institutions of Higher Education

A Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development will create access for new student populations. We know that the 18 to 24-year-old college student population is declining, and that workers and jobseekers increasingly need new skills and education to keep up with changes in the economy. When a mid-career Coloradan enters a local workforce center or engages with the Department's website to assess their options, they will see a comprehensive menu of offerings including higher education opportunities.

A single coordinating agency will support institutions by providing more labor market analysis support and facilitating business connections through local partners and business-led intermediary organizations. In turn, institutions can make data-informed program adjustments and faculty can refine curricula by aligning the competencies needed for emerging career fields. These connections to data and employers will be particularly valuable as institutions respond to federal policy changes.

It will be essential that a new department recognizes our higher education institutions as an economic development engine. Advanced industries offering good jobs are attracted to Colorado because of the innovative research and highly-skilled talent coming out of our institutions. Our colleges employ thousands, and support regional economies. It will also be important that under a single agency the broader public benefits of higher education (e.g., civic engagement, research, innovation) will continue to be valued and promoted.





For Local Workforce Centers

A Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development will enable centers to connect more formally into Colorado's educational assets, while continuing to meet the immediate needs of jobseekers and businesses.

While not every Coloradan will pursue a postsecondary degree, the majority of jobs in Colorado require postsecondary credentials of some kind. An integrated system will raise the profile of all types of postsecondary education and training by valuing quality and relevancy. Through clear and comparative information, workforce centers will be equipped as system navigators and visible "front doors" for learners, jobseekers, workers, and businesses into Colorado's postsecondary education, training, and employment system. Their local footprint makes them well positioned to advise Coloradans on the breadth of their postsecondary options ranging from community college programs, apprenticeships, short-term training, and university degrees. Improved data on the alignment between education and jobs will allow navigators to guide Coloradans toward the postsecondary programs and credentials that best support their career objectives. Workforce centers will pair their local expertise with the state's business resources to address immediate employer needs.

They are also able to advise Coloradans on a range of employment options in their communities and around the state, ranging from immediate re-employment to job opportunities that facilitate economic mobility depending on the needs of the particular Coloradan. Centers leverage their local expertise to provide Coloradans with information on the careers available to them in their communities.

For State Employees

A new, unified Department transforms how Colorado's talented public servants spend their time. Instead of countless coordination meetings, competing technology systems, divergent funding streams, and the constant friction of interagency negotiations, staff will focus on what matters: improving outcomes for Coloradans.

Under shared leadership, subject matter experts who currently work in parallel will collaborate on solutions that no single agency could achieve alone. This isn't just administrative efficiency; it's an opportunity to leverage the creativity and expertise of Colorado's agency leaders.

We invite agency leaders/colleagues to help design this future. Colleagues in the public sector know where barriers exist, where duplicative efforts stretch resources, and where better integration could amplify impact. This transformation succeeds not just by reorganizing the work, but by empowering the people who do it.



The Multiplier Effect

An integrated Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development will transform how Coloradans access education and training, how businesses meet their workforce needs, and how the state measures success. With centralized strategy, data, operations, and service delivery under unified leadership, Colorado can create a system that is easier to navigate, more responsive to change, better aligned with state priorities, clearly accountable for results, and more effective in its use of public resources.

How Will We Measure Success?

The Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development should create better economic results for Coloradans and ensure that Colorado talent is competitive for Colorado jobs. Some indicators of success are included below, in Table 5, and reflect critical measures discussed by stakeholders throughout this process. In many cases these data are currently collected and used in one or more silos of present effort (e.g., CDHE reports median earnings for 1, 5, and 10 years post degree completion). The future system would expand on these key measurements, leverage avenues to connect longitudinal data (like the SLDS), and eventually allow for more apples-to-apples comparisons between all types of credentials available to Coloradans (e.g., degrees, certificates, apprenticeships, etc.)

Additionally, appropriate and meaningful disaggregation of these data must occur. For Coloradans, this means disaggregating by race or ethnicity, geography, income level, educational attainment, or by other special populations (e.g., veterans, prior involvement with foster care), along with program or pathway-level results, to elevate these perspectives and experiences while also maintaining data privacy. For businesses, this might include disaggregating by geography, industry, or size of business. All Coloradans deserve a system that works for them, and thoughtful analysis of disaggregated data should help policymakers understand and address any gaps.

Table 5. Potential Outcomes and Metrics Aligned to Anticipated Impacts of the Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development

Impact	Outcome	Metrics
Better economic results for Coloradanas	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Flexible pathways that integrate education and work, meeting the diverse needs of Coloradans at any point in their education and career journey• Tools to increase their economic mobility over the short and long term• Colorado’s programs provide the public with a clear return on investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Median earnings post-completion• Financial ROI for Coloradans who invest in education/training• Time to completion• Credential of value attainment• Employment placement post-completion
Colorado talent is competitive for Colorado jobs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There are streamlined channels for employers to access state talent resources.• Businesses are empowered to be co-developers of talent in Colorado's postsecondary talent development system	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Percentage of employees hired in-state• Percentage of program, education, or training completers employed• Employer satisfaction (e.g., Net Promoter Score)• Length of time to fill job vacancy

Specific Recommended Actions

The recommendations below were prepared by Governor's Office staff with the expertise and feedback of the state agencies called to action by the Executive Order.

The path forward requires both immediate improvements and sustained structural change. Some actions can be implemented within 90 days through executive authority, providing immediate relief to Coloradans and businesses struggling with system complexity. Others require legislative partnership and multi-year implementation, building toward the comprehensive reform Colorado needs. Many of these recommendations echo priorities from the 1215 and 1330 reports⁵⁶, reflecting the continued importance of these moves. The stakeholder engagement process also surfaced longer-term recommendations for policymakers to evaluate during the formation of the new agency. These actions are outlined in [Appendix 11](#).

Create a New Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development

The current distribution of responsibilities across seven state agencies creates systemic inefficiencies that compound at every level of implementation. We recommend a new state agency that streamlines core capabilities, facilitates coordination, and drives to the values of the system.

The proposed department would consolidate core functions while respecting the unique contributions of specialized programs. Specifically, we recommend centralizing:

- All state-coordinated higher education functions currently housed within CDHE, bringing comprehensive oversight of postsecondary credentials under unified leadership
- Programs funded by Titles I, II, and III of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, currently dispersed across CDLE and CDE, enabling integrated service delivery from adult basic education through advanced training
- The State Workforce Development Council, positioning strategic workforce planning at the center of the new agency rather than as an advisory function
- The State Apprenticeship Agency, elevating earn-and-learn models as a core strategy rather than a peripheral program
- The Labor Market Information Team from CDLE, making data and analysis the foundation for evidence-based decision-making across all programs
- The Talent Innovation Team from OEDIT, ensuring continued focus on emerging sectors and innovative talent strategies
- Adult education programs from CDE, creating seamless pathways from foundational skills to career advancement

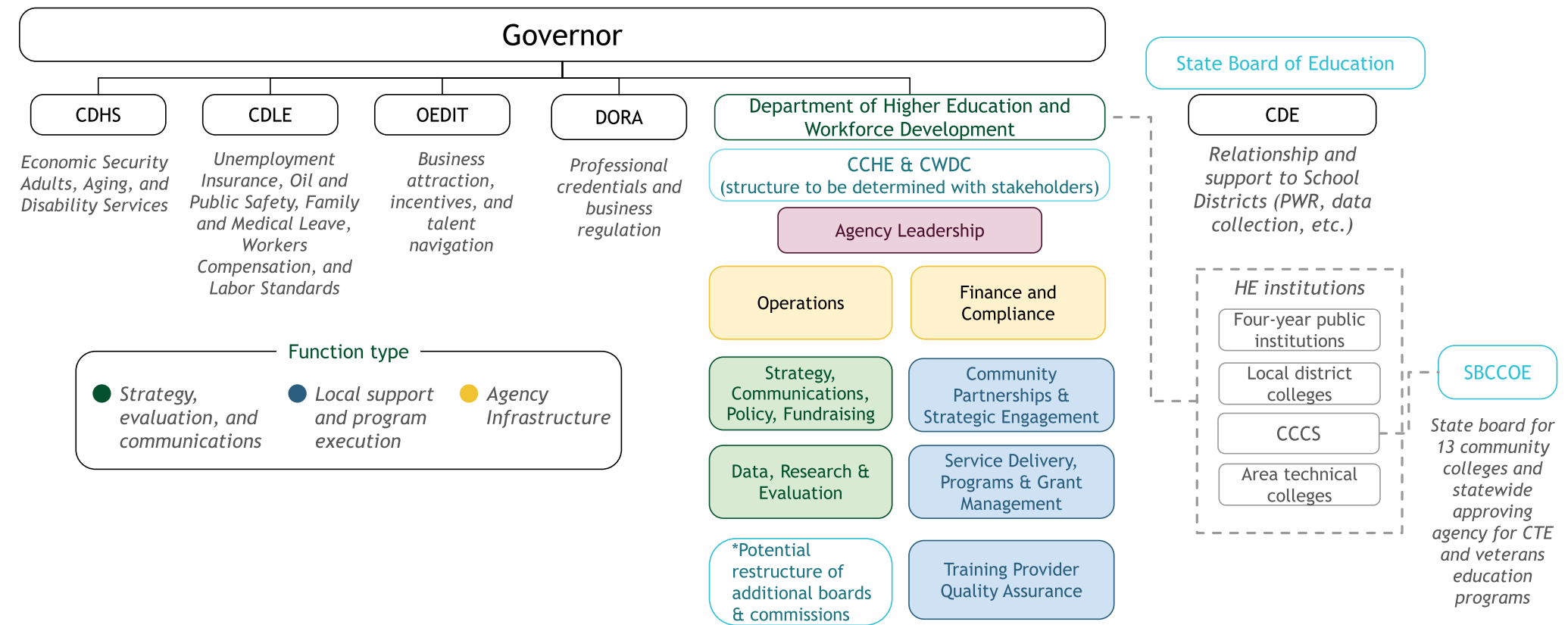
⁵⁶ See [Appendix 9](#) for a complete list of recommendations from these reports.



Programs overseen by population-specific offices such as the Colorado Disability Opportunity Office (CDLE), the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (CDLE), and the Office of New Americans (CDLE); workforce services provided by other state agencies such as the Department of Corrections; and services that are complementary to this central mission such as SNAP and TANF administration require additional stakeholder feedback before we can make a confident recommendation regarding structural connections between them and this new agency. We are confident that the new agency must have improved interfaces with any programs not otherwise incorporated structurally. Figure 8 on the following page presents a high-level overview of how we expect the proposed department to be structured.

The agency must deliver on core capabilities to achieve its bold vision for a future state. The agency must support: strategy, communication, policy, and fundraising; data, research, and evaluation; operations; finance and compliance; community partnerships and strategic engagement; training provider quality assurance; service delivery, programs, and grant management.

Figure 8. High-Level Structure of the Proposed Department and Coordination Points with Other Entities



These functions are already happening in the programs and agencies we propose shifting to the new department; however, by bringing these capabilities together in one agency, the state can maximize economies of scale, find efficiencies when delivering services, and share best practices.

Below, we provide a high-level description overview of the department's seven core functions spread across the three function types noted in Figure 8 (strategy, evaluation, and communications; agency infrastructure; and local support and program infrastructure). This is further summarized in Figure 9.

Strategy, Evaluation, and Communications Functions set direction for the entire system, measure what works, and communicate clearly with stakeholders. This includes setting clear, measurable goals for the system and ensuring that programs, funding priorities, and evaluation efforts are aligned to those goals.

1

- *Strategy, Communications, Policy, and Fundraising*: Establishes unified priorities, secures resources, and ensures all stakeholders understand state goals and how to access services.
- *Data, Research, and Evaluation*: Establishes common definitions, collects comparable data across programs, and evaluates what works.

Local Support and Program Execution Functions deliver services directly to Coloradans, businesses, and local implementers. These functions ensure quality in program delivery, build partnerships with education and training providers, employers, and communities, and provide the resources and support that help people access education, training, and employment opportunities.

2

- *Community Partnerships and Strategic Engagement*: Coordinates partnerships and engagement with state agencies, local implementers, and other partners across the education, training, and employment system. Identifies best practices, shares guidance, and creates opportunities for connection between entities.
- *Training Provider Quality Assurance*: Maintains standards for education and training programs across all credential types including private occupational schools, private postsecondary education institutions, and Registered Apprenticeship Programs.
- *Service Delivery, Programs, and Grant Management*: Administers programs and distributes funding using consistent processes and standards aligned toward a clear vision. This aligned approach also offers the opportunity to define and uphold a shared definition of program quality.

Agency Infrastructure Functions provide the operational backbone that enables effective strategy and service delivery. These functions ensure the agency is fiscally responsible, regulatorily compliant, and has the technology systems that connect people to opportunities.

3

- *Operations*: Provides human resources, facilities, operational excellence initiatives, and technology systems to support the department's service delivery.
- *Finance, Budget, Procurement and Compliance*: Ensures fiscal responsibility and regulatory compliance across all programs. Includes budget, finance, procurement, compliance, and audit/monitoring functions.

Figure 9. Core Capabilities of Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development⁵⁷

Function	Function description
1. Strategy, evaluation, and communications	
Strategy, Communications, Policy, & Fundraising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set strategy • Allocate resources • Manage strategic communications • Fundraise • Manage legislative process
Data, Research & Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct research related to the system • Publish reports (E.g. Talent Pipeline Report, Return on Investment Report) • Assess and refine program models & standards • Coordinate programmatic evaluation • Collect, host, and manage data • Forecast skills and industry demand
2. Agency Infrastructure	
Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage recruitment, hiring, and training of agency staff • Manage compensation and benefits, and employee relations • Manage operational excellence initiatives • Manage facilities • Manage Information Technology systems and products
Finance & Compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversee financial operations including budget, accounting, procurement, financial monitoring and audits • Distribute financial aid • Ensure fiscal responsibility and regulatory compliance across all programs
3. Local support and program execution	
Community Partnerships & Strategic Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate with other state agencies • Coordination with navigation and resource organizations (e.g. workforce centers) • Coordination with education and training organizations (e.g. institutions of higher education, Registered Apprenticeship Programs, adult education providers) • Coordination with industry intermediaries and labor organizations • Manage Centers of Excellence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ WBL Center of Excellence ▪ Career Advising Center of Excellence ▪ Permeability & Pathway
Training Provider Quality Assurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure quality and compliance for Private Occupational Schools, Private Postsecondary Education Institutions and Registered Apprenticeship Programs
Service Delivery, Programs & Grant Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administer grants and funding to local implementers Administer grants and programs to serve learners, workers, and businesses • Provide direct services to learners and workers to access education, training, and employment

Achieving the vision and capabilities described above will require purpose-built initiatives internal to the new state agency as well as detailed analysis of where current capacity is well aligned, redundant, or insufficient to answer this new charge.

⁵⁷ For a screen readers-friendly version of this of this figure, go to [Appendix 12.](#)

Governance and Strategy Setting Recommendations

Effective transformation requires more than structural change - it demands aligned governance that can sustain reform across administrations and economic cycles. The current proliferation of boards, commissions, and strategic plans ensures stakeholder representation, but creates competing priorities that dilute impact and confuse accountability. These recommendations establish the governance infrastructure necessary to drive coherent, sustained transformation.

- ***Strategic Planning & Accountability***

- Ensure this new agency has a strategic plan and leverage other required state agency plans to build towards the new agency.
- Assess reach and impact of TalentFound brand and website and consider sunsetting this brand if it isn't adding a unique value to Coloradans.
- Ensure critical tools like the Talent Pipeline Report include information and resources relevant to the new agency. Ensure clear ownership of this product under the new structure to minimize any disruption.
- Align WIOA and Perkins planning activities, where possible.

- ***Board & Commission Structure***

- Prior to structural realignment, coordinate activities between the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE) and the Colorado Workforce Development Council (CWDC) to ensure alignment
- Engage stakeholders to clarify the functions of CCHE and CWDC. Consider the board/commission structure and composition for this new department to best direct the agency and, ultimately, best serve Colorado.
- Sunset the Business Experiential Learning (BEL) Commission.
- Ensure boards and commissions are sufficiently staffed by providing dedicated support for administration, compliance, and agency relations to help them fulfill their statutory responsibilities.
- Assess the funding provided to CWDC from state WIOA partners for the required activities of the state workforce board per federal and state statute. Where applicable, review or create interagency agreements to delineate responsibilities and expectations in alignment with this vision.

- ***Institutional Governance and Interagency Coordination***

- Create a communications process, organize state resources, and provide more formal training to boards and commissions in the postsecondary talent development system. This would leverage the Governor's appointing authority to further drive alignment.
- Utilize the Governor's appointing authority to place two representatives from the unified Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development on the State Board of Community Colleges & Occupational Education (SBCCOE) to drive alignment for CTE and occupational approval.

- Determine an approach for interagency workforce development coordination between the new state agency and other state agencies with workforce needs (e.g., Colorado Energy Office, Behavioral Health Administration, Department of Early Childhood, Department of Corrections, Department of Personnel and Administration).
 - Assess the wage outcomes of DOC workforce programs and opportunities to connect in-facility programming and post-release employment services more directly to the new state agency.
- Engage with stakeholders to assess governance of Area Technical Colleges and what governance and mechanisms would improve the availability of occupational education in Colorado.
- Assess opportunities to improve coordination and create joint accountability for system goals between CCCS' CTE and CDE's Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness teams and the new state agency.

Data, Outcome Evaluation, & ROI Recommendations

Robust data collection and consistent and rigorous methods for outcome evaluation are essential for public transparency and continuous improvement. To fully understand the paths Coloradans pursue, we need more comprehensive records. To maximize the impact of state investments, we need consistent evaluation methods that allow Coloradans to compare outcomes across programs and make informed choices tailored to their unique needs. These recommendations establish the approach to data analysis that will enable evidence-based decision-making in today's distributed system or tomorrow's integrated agency.

- Standardize and align outcome measures (such as Return-on-Investment) in statute/reporting requirements and determine how to make outcomes comparable across education, workforce, and training programs.
- Define an approach for tracking training and education provider outcomes within state data systems to support data-driven program improvement, and assess associated costs to determine feasibility.
- Continue to develop the SLDS to leverage connected data sets to improve the state's ability to analyze programs based on outcomes, rather than just the number of people served.
- Assess mechanisms, authority, statutory requirements, and costs to collect and use individual level data for longitudinal analysis from all types of education and training options such as private occupational schools overseen by the DPOS.
- Assess statutory reporting requirements for complementary workforce and education programs and identify mechanisms to streamline the reporting process.
- Consider whether wage records provide the data necessary to understand education and employment linkages. Explore opportunities to gather enhanced UI Wage Records.

Operational Improvements Recommendations

Fragmented operations create inefficiency and confusion for local implementers. These recommendations establish common standards, streamlined processes, and shared infrastructure that will reduce administrative burden and improve service delivery—benefits that compound significantly under unified agency management.

- ***Funding & Financial Operations***

- Transition grantmaking to performance-based funding mechanisms that prioritize quality service delivery and positive outcomes based on the goals of the program.

- ***Compliance & Reporting***

- Clarify roles for administration of Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) across CWDC, E&T, and DPOS, including associated state and federal reporting and regulatory requirements.
- Explore opportunities to standardize and ensure recurring, regular reporting across education and training on earnings outcomes broken down by provider, in a transparent, user-friendly manner
- Gather a list of federal reporting requirements and structures and identify any federal waivers necessary to complete the organizational transition.

Career Navigation, Access, & Outreach Recommendations

Coloradans deserve an equity-oriented system that avoids duplicative efforts and enables counselors, advisors, and career navigators to more effectively assist learners, jobseekers, and workers in accessing and completing programs that will help them meet their work and education-related goals. An effective system requires that there be some counselors or advisors who can speak across all systems, and/or know who to turn to in order to meet the specialized needs of those they are serving. Coloradan voices will be essential in shaping the new Department, and must be actively solicited in our processes, moving forward. These recommendations strengthen the capacity of navigators and advisors, reduce technological fragmentation, and ensure the unique needs of underserved populations are prioritized as we build toward a more integrated system.

- ***Additional Engagement & Assessment of Existing Resources for Target Populations***

- In the process of creating the new agency, include stakeholders from education counseling and advising, career navigators from local workforce areas across the state, and advocates for and members of historically underrepresented populations whose unique needs must be considered.
- In the process of creating the new agency, include mechanisms to engage learner, jobseeker, and worker voices, especially voices that are not well represented in the current system. Explore the use of advisory boards as well as developing community partnerships to ensure strategic engagement with Coloradans.

- Assess existing population-specific outreach and advising/counseling resources to determine how related programs in different agencies might connect and inform each other in the near term.
- Assess and then compile funds, scholarships, programs, grants, etc. related to specific populations into one location to align and simplify reporting, strategies, and evaluation.
- ***Technology Tools for Learners, Jobseekers, Workers, & Businesses***
 - Assess utilization and functionality of state-funded tech platforms and websites in the postsecondary talent development system. Create a plan to reduce and align websites and platforms. Determine which tools or functions are necessary under a unified agency, and whether any should exist separately from the explicit ownership and branding of a new state agency. The end goal is a coherent technology strategy, not necessarily a single platform.
 - Determine what technology would support navigation and advising across higher education, industry recognized credentials, apprenticeship programs, and other types of postsecondary training.
- ***Navigation & Career Coaching Approaches***
 - Catalogue the tool kits career and academic counselors have at their disposal to ensure consistent advising based on labor market data and best practices.
 - Catalogue resources that provide wraparound supports to Coloradans by region.
 - Coordinate professional development and support opportunities for career advisors, counselors and others in similar roles to create consistency across providers.

Credentials, Licensure, & Pathway Alignment Recommendations

Colorado has pioneered innovations in recognizing diverse forms of learning—from competency-based credentials to apprenticeship degrees.⁵⁸ As we create a system with “no wrong doors”, we must also do the work to ensure there are “no dead ends.” This unified system should identify which credentials constitute ‘credentials of value’ for readiness and employment purposes, including those earned in high school as part of coherent, stackable pathways. This requires a system flexible enough to support learners who receive different types of education and training or might look to pivot their skills into a new field. These recommendations consolidate regulatory authority, strengthen quality standards, and improve connections between different educational pathways.

- ***Pathways & Credential Alignment***
 - Explore consolidation of regulatory authority over non-degree credentials.
 - Strengthen prior learning assessments and determine where there are opportunities to develop articulation agreements across occupational education and academic education.

⁵⁸ For information on the major investments made by Colorado into credential programs, see [Appendix 10](#).

- Define what stackability means in the Non Degree Quality Credential Framework (NDCQF) and determine how this standard can apply to other programs that require stackability (e.g. Workforce Pell).
 - Update the NDCQF policy and create standard data definitions and data collection points to inform the framework. This will allow for the NDCQF to be applied on a frequent basis to state-sponsored credentials without having to rely on recurring staff review and discretionary judgement.
 - Review the Talent Development Glossary for its alignment to the vision and terms of this new state agency. Compare statutory definitions against Talent Development Glossary to determine whether changes are needed to drive alignment among state agencies and local actors.
 - Work with CDE to revise the statewide definition of postsecondary and workforce readiness required in C.R.S. 22-7-1008 and align navigation tools and advising practices to ensure every student understands the coursework, credentials, and work-based learning experiences that support readiness.
 - Assess funding and statute for Career Pathways currently housed in CWDC to integrate into the functions of the new state agency.
- ***Access & Transfer***
 - Explore opportunities to proactively communicate to Colorado learners and their caregivers their admissions potential to public institutions of higher education, and explore the creation of a statewide guaranteed admissions program.
 - Determine whether a statewide “Ability to Benefit” designation would help more adult learners blend federal resources for credential attainment.
 - Align reporting requirements across state actors that provide adult high school diplomas to collect consistent data on high school credential attainment.
 - Create a space for subject matter experts to develop clearer articulation between occupational education like CTE and Registered Apprenticeship Programs into academic spaces to maximize credit for prior learning and promote multimodal education.
- ***Licensure Improvement***
 - For licenses that require a postsecondary degree, determine if a Registered Apprenticeship Program could be an equivalent demonstration of skill and knowledge to satisfy licensure requirements.
 - Review the licensure process for in-demand occupations and identify opportunities for improvement related to non-traditional pathways (e.g. DOC programs; international education).
 - Review where employers and training providers engage with multiple licensure agencies and identify opportunities to simplify and improve their experiences.
- ***Training Provider Approval***
 - Review DPOS and Office of Private Postsecondary Education (OPPE) regulations and fees and explore adjustments based on the nature of the organization providing training (e.g. nonprofit vs. for-profit private occupational schools; schools with fewer students vs. larger schools).
 - Explore integration of Veterans Education and Training Approval from CCCS to the new agency.

Business Engagement & Industry Strategy Recommendations

For Colorado talent to be competitive for Colorado opportunities, we need effective feedback loops between employers and the education, training, and employment system. However, if we're asking that employers do this work, we must also ensure it is relevant, responsive, and creates results. These recommendations begin the process of improving the employer value proposition to engage in talent development.

- Create metrics that can serve as proxies for how competitive Colorado talent is for Colorado employment opportunities, particularly for high-wage jobs.
- Where appropriate, delineate roles, responsibilities, and expectations of the government's direct convening and engagement with business. In cases where sector-based partners are closest to ongoing workforce challenges, prioritize working directly with those existing organizations—or support the development of new sector partnerships—to ensure alignment with this vision.
- Assess the state's current investments in and approaches to business and sector-based strategies for their effectiveness, alignment, and meaningful industry influence (e.g., Career Connected Campus designations, Sector Partnership investment). Codify the state's approach to industry engagement and ensure funding is aligned and can be meaningfully allocated to industry-led efforts.
- Strengthen state and local capacity to support businesses navigating the portfolio of resources and incentives (i.e., tax credits and grants) that support talent and economic development.
- Explore opportunities for sector leaders to serve on boards, commissions, and councils.

Supporting Local Administration Recommendations

The success of Colorado's talent development system ultimately depends on local implementation. State policy creates frameworks; local administrators bring them to life. Yet these critical partners often bear the brunt of system fragmentation through duplicative reporting, conflicting requirements, and administrative burden that diverts resources from service delivery. These recommendations recognize that supporting local capacity is not peripheral to transformation—it is essential.

- Explore positioning local workforce centers as navigation hubs for businesses and workers.
- Analyze how regional makeup promotes or hinders alignment with economic development and human service program delivery.
- Conduct professional development for local providers on state resources and cross pollinate efforts and strategy. Assess training and resources related to using data for evidenced-based decision making at the local level.
- Assess and where possible simplify state reporting requirements for local administrators and recommend some standard reporting criteria across postsecondary options (i.e. RAP, IHEs, private occupational schools).
- Explore increasing the maximum Individual Training Accounts limit (WIOA) to better meet high-wage, in-demand certification requirements.



The recommendations in this report are not a menu of options from which to select favorites. They are an integrated strategy that succeeds or fails as a whole. The new department creates the structure. Aligned governance provides direction. Data infrastructure enables accountability. Streamlined operations reduce friction. Together, they transform a system so it can deliver for those who need it most.

We caution readers that the actions above and those in [Appendix 11](#) do not nor cannot detail every step that must be taken to achieve this vision. These activities are iterative and will require an ongoing commitment from policymakers and implementers to ensure changes in structure are tightly coupled to changes in practice. It requires input from experts in our agencies and validation from the Coloradans we all strive to serve.



What's Next

This report is a first step to building a unified postsecondary talent development system in Colorado that can deliver consistent positive outcomes for learners, jobseekers, workers, and businesses that engage with it. Delivering on the promise of this vision will require both the support of state policymakers and executive branch leadership. Additionally, it will require deep stakeholder work with institutions of higher education, local workforce development centers, business associations, unions, talent intermediaries, and most importantly, Coloradans. Should state leaders agree that this path forward is the right strategic direction, we recommend engaging learners, workers, jobseekers, businesses, state agencies, workforce centers, unions, apprenticeship providers, and institutes of higher education together so that they can begin developing relationships and a deeper understanding of one another's unique contributions to the postsecondary talent development system.

There are also imminent changes in the education, training, and employment system that Colorado must respond to, regardless of the recommendations of this report, including the implementation of new federal loan eligibility requirements created by H.R.1 and implementing Workforce Pell. These changes require capacity from an already constrained system. As we pursue this bold vision for Colorado's future, we will need to balance long term strategic planning with the urgent needs of learners, jobseekers, workers, and businesses.

While we believe our path forward is clear, we know that it is not easy or simple. We look forward to working with our partners in the postsecondary talent development system to build on Colorado's incredible strengths and ensure that Coloradans thrive.

Appendix

[Appendix 1:](#) Executive Order: Full text of Executive Order 2025-006 to Reimagine Colorado's Postsecondary Talent Development system.

[Appendix 2:](#) Glossary of Terms: Definitions for terms and types of organizations referenced in the report and in the broader postsecondary talent development system.

[Appendix 3:](#) Survey Overview: High level analysis of results from a survey released October 21st to inform the Executive Order.

[Appendix 4:](#) Overview of State Entities Central to Colorado's Postsecondary Talent Development System: Describes the seven state agencies, and 20+ divisions, offices involved in the system.

[Appendix 5:](#) State and Federally Funded Programs, Initiatives, and Tools that Support Colorado's Postsecondary Talent Development System: Table of 110+ programs in Colorado's system.

[Appendix 6:](#) Overview of Relevant Federal Agencies and Federally Funded Programs in Colorado: Describes the federal agencies and the funding they provide to Colorado's system.

[Appendix 7:](#) Overview of Boards and Commissions Involved in Colorado's Postsecondary Talent Development System: High-level overview of major Governor-appointed boards and commissions.

[Appendix 8:](#) Overview of Other States' Efforts to Align Higher Education and Workforce: High-level summary of other states' efforts to better connect higher education and workforce.

[Appendix 9:](#) Summary Lists of 1215 and 1330 Task Force Recommendations: Lists recommendations from the 1215 and 1330 Task Forces with this report.

[Appendix 10:](#) Major Investment & Programs for Colorado Credentials: : A landscape analysis of initiatives related to credential alignment.

[Appendix 11:](#) Long-Term Recommendations for New Agency. A list of recommendations for the new agency to consider in 20227 and beyond.

[Appendix 12:](#) Text-based descriptions and reformatted tables for those using screen readers.

D2025 006 EXECUTIVE ORDER

Reimagining the Future of the Postsecondary Talent Development System in Colorado

Pursuant to the authority vested in the Governor of the State of Colorado and, in particular, pursuant to Article IV, Section 2 of the Colorado Constitution, I, Jared Polis, Governor of the State of Colorado, hereby issue this Executive Order reimagining the future of the postsecondary talent development system in Colorado.

I. Background and Purpose

Colorado's workforce is one of the secrets of our success. Colorado has a strong track record of high labor force participation and credential attainment. Over the course of my administration and in partnership with the General Assembly, Colorado has created a policy framework that identifies and prioritizes the skills needed in our economy and expands learner pathways to success. To date, Colorado has invested in free in-demand credentials, created stackable credentials, grown registered apprenticeships, developed the continuum of work-based learning, encouraged skills-based hiring, expanded access to postsecondary and workforce readiness programs in K-12 and higher education, supported dual and concurrent enrollment, developed business-led talent development solutions, improved the affordability of higher education, created a statewide longitudinal data system for measuring outcomes, and led the nation by adopting an equivalency framework for different modalities of education. This policy framework is foundational to ensure there are no wrong doors and no dead-ends on a Coloradan's journey to success.

To that end, the General Assembly championed HB 21-1330, which created a Student Success and Workforce Revitalization Task Force. Through the work of this task force, Colorado set a bold new vision for education and training. The HB 21-1330 Task Force recommended building a learner-centered talent ecosystem, ensuring better results from targeted increases in State education and training investments, and ensuring a flexible and adaptive talent development system. To build on the vision for a learner-centered talent ecosystem, we must continue to close the gaps between academic and occupational education and training. State postsecondary education and training efforts must meet learners where they are and serve them dynamically to continue to meet the workforce demands of Colorado's growing economy.

Building on our work in this space, I am directing relevant State agencies to collaborate on reimagining the future of the postsecondary talent development system in Colorado to meet the needs of learners, employers, and the economy.

II. Declarations

- A. To meet the workforce demands of Colorado's dynamic economy, reimagining the talent development system through postsecondary education and training systems is necessary.
- B. To build a flexible and adaptive postsecondary talent development system, internal and external talent development partners need an aligned strategy, common principles, and a bold vision for Colorado's postsecondary education and training systems.
- C. To ensure the greatest possible outcome, agencies must collaborate closely, identify systemic barriers, and create seamless learner pathways through education and training and into employment.

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D. To promote a seamless transition from secondary education into postsecondary education and training, it is important to coordinate these efforts with the Colorado Department of Education.

E. To ensure Coloradans ages 18-24, especially those not currently in education or employment, have access to high-quality employment, education, or training and to reduce the rate of young Coloradans not in education, employment or training, greater coordination and connection between postsecondary education and training is needed.

III. Directives

A. I hereby direct the following State agency executive directors and other leaders in my Administration to collaborate with the Office of the Governor and the Colorado Department of Education on the future of the postsecondary talent development system in Colorado and to identify appropriate agency staff to explore agency operations and best practices to achieve the goals of this Executive Order:

1. Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (COLE);
2. Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE);
3. Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Regulatory Agencies (DORA);
4. Executive Director of the Office of Economic Development and International Trade (OEDIT);
5. Governor's Office Director of Operations and Cabinet Affairs; and
6. Governor's Office Director of Policy and Research.

B. In addition to coming together to identify common principles of the reimagined primary and postsecondary talent development system, the agencies and offices listed in Section III.A. shall work with their respective divisions and internal teams to develop a plan to accomplish the following:

1. Seamlessly integrate postsecondary education, skills attainment, and training strategies to improve the flexibility and permeability of the system;
2. Future-proof talent development by investigating and scaling strategies that help the postsecondary education and workforce development strategies be more adaptive and efficient;
3. Improve the ability for learners, employers, community members, and State agencies to navigate the postsecondary talent development system;
4. Increase postsecondary credential attainment, particularly for the students who historically have not connected to postsecondary education or training within six years of high school graduation; and
5. Reduce bureaucratic barriers to cross-functional education and training.

C. By December 1, 2025, the agencies and offices listed in Section III.A.1-6 shall jointly report to me with recommendations in the following areas:

1. Evaluation of the operations of the State's current postsecondary talent development system and identify where State activities could be better coordinated, streamlined, or strengthened to close the identified gaps between K-12, Higher Education, and workforce development in Colorado;
2. Recommendations for new administrative designs for a postsecondary talent development system that would build on the work of the Student Success and Workforce Revitalization Task Force created under HB 21-1330;

Appendix 1: Executive Order

3. A statement of shared strategies and common principles of the new postsecondary talent development system;
4. Recommendations for solutions to ensure any strategies suggested are successful and have high impact, after identifying operational challenges;
5. Strategies for implementation of administrative solutions to coordinate and improve the efficiency of workforce development activities; and
6. Recommendations for the General Assembly's considerations to advance and codify findings of the group in Section III.A.

D. In accomplishing the goals and objectives of this Executive Order, the agencies and offices shall collaborate with other State departments, agencies, and offices and external stakeholders for feedback on how State government can best serve Coloradans engaging in postsecondary education and training.

IV. Duration

This Executive Order shall remain in effect unless modified or rescinded by future Executive Order of the Governor.

GIVEN under my hand and the Executive Seal of the State of Colorado this twentieth day of May, 2025.

Jared Polis
Governor

Appendix 2: Glossary of Terms

Below are terms used throughout this report. For additional terms, please refer to the [Talent Development Glossary](#).

- **Adult Education Programs:** Federal and state-funded programs delivered through grantees like community based organizations, school districts, or community colleges to help adult learners acquire the basic skills - reading, writing, speaking, listening, and computation - necessary to compete successfully in today's workplace. There are 20 organizations with active adult education grants from the Colorado Department of Education.
- **Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES):** Regional entities that provide shared services to school districts.
- **Career-Connected Learning:** Career-connected learning refers to education and training programs that provide opportunities for participants to explore careers and, in some cases, build real-world work experience. This is closely tied to work-based learning which is the continuum of activities that occur, in part or in whole, in the workplace, providing the learner with hands-on, real world experience.
- **Career & Technical Education (CTE) Programs:** Federal and state-funded programs delivered in K-12 and postsecondary settings that provide students with hands-on skill development connected to six industry sectors. There are more than 700 CTE programs across 20 community and technical colleges and the Dept. of Corrections; 1,300 high school CTE programs across 329 schools and 154 districts; 160 CTE middle school programs across 143 schools and 50 districts.
- **Center of Excellence:** For the purposes of this report, Center of Excellence refers to a team within the Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development that provides leadership, best practices, and support for a specific area of expertise within the state's postsecondary talent development system. The goal is to share best practices, define standards, drive innovation, and build connections for practitioners.
- **Community-Based Training Programs:** Non-profit organizations that receive state or federal grant funding to deliver workforce readiness training, short term credentials, career navigation resources, job placement, and/or wrap-around support. Community-based training programs offer direct services to Coloradans.
- **Credential:** Document, certificate or qualification recognizing attainment of measurable skills such as apprenticeship certificates of completion, licenses, certificates, associate degrees, bachelor's degrees, master's degrees, and doctorates.
- **Employers:** Businesses who partner with any of the above to educate about work, develop training for future employees, recruit new employees, and/or train existing employees. This also includes businesses who receive public or state dollars to deliver training for their employees.
- **Equivalency or Equivalency Framework:** Colorado's efforts towards recognizing the value of nondegree credentials. Built on UNESCO's International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), the framework looks at how a credential connects to demand in the workforce, provides evidence of skills, leads to positive employment outcomes, and how it relates to other courses (see stackability/stackable credentials entry).

Appendix 2: Glossary of Terms

- **Equivalency:** For the purposes of the postsecondary talent development system, this refers to the effort to evaluate and compare credential types across education and training programs with the goal of recognizing the value of nondegree credentials. Colorado evaluates how a credential connects to demand in the workforce, provides evidence of skills, leads to positive employment outcomes, and how it relates to other courses (see stackability/stackable credentials entry).
- **Human Services Programs (TANF, SNAP E&T):** Basic cash assistances, job-readiness skills training, work experience and monthly job-search support activities delivered to eligible adults through local counties. There are 75 county human service locations across Colorado.
- **K-12 Postsecondary & Workforce Readiness (PWR) Programs:** K-12 Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness programs focus on early college credit attainment, work-based learning, and industry-recognized credentials. PWR programs are delivered by K-12 schools to prepare and connect students to postsecondary education and employment. This often includes CTE programs. The public K-12 education system also provides students with access to postsecondary career and academic advising.
- **Nondegree Quality Credential Framework (NDQCF):** A framework to create a unified and consistent definition of quality non-degree credentials in the state and outline the process for designating a credential as quality.
- **Pathways/Career Pathways:** A series of connected education and training programs, work experiences, and student support services that enable individuals to secure a job or advance in a demand industry or occupation.
- **Private Occupational Schools:** Training providers that deliver occupation-specific short term credentials. More than 230 private occupational schools operate in Colorado.
- **Public Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs):** Four Year Institutions, Local District Colleges, Community Colleges, and Area Technical Colleges that are responsible for providing education and training to Coloradans that results in degrees and other credentials. There are 31 public institutions in Colorado.
- **Public Workforce Centers:** State and county-run workforce centers are located across Colorado and provide career navigation and funding to support training and wrap-around support for people needing training or job placement. Workforce centers also provide navigation and support to businesses to help them meet their talent needs. There are 10 designated workforce regions across Colorado with 55 locations providing services.
- **Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs):** A regulated training model that provides a combination of classroom learning and paid on-the-job learning resulting in a Certificate of Completion. More than 280 RAPs are currently registered in Colorado.
- **Stackable Credentials/Stackability:** A credential is considered “stackable” when it is part of a sequence of credentials that can be accumulated over time and move an individual along a career pathway or up a career ladder assisting in college and career readiness. These credentials can be nondegree credentials or may be degrees.

Appendix 2: Glossary of Terms

- **Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS):** A foundational digital tool being built to help students, families, and professionals make smart decisions about education and careers in Colorado. The system will connect state agency data from PK-12, college and career paths to help Coloradans see which educational routes lead to long-term success. The goal is to provide useful information about education and jobs, while keeping personal information safe and secure.
- **TalentFOUND:** TalentFOUND refers to the Colorado talent development network. The three main components are the network of systems and organizations in workforce development, economic development, and education and training; the brand that launched with the 2016 Colorado Talent Pipeline Report; and a website that contains resources for students, job seekers, employers, and affiliate organizations.
- **Vocational Rehabilitation Services:** State-run offices that provide career navigation and funding to support training, employment, and wrap-around support for people with disabilities. There are 25 vocational rehabilitation offices across Colorado.

Appendix 3: Survey Overview

Administration

The survey was administered using Google Forms, and was open for approximately two weeks (between October 22, 2025 through November 7, 2025). The survey received 816 responses. The initial distribution of the survey occurred via a press release, and members of the EO team then forwarded links and QR codes to partners involved in the interagency and intermediary working groups, and in presentations to external partners (e.g., Colorado Trustee Convening). These individuals were also encouraged to share the survey with their contacts. The survey was only offered in English.

This is not a scientific survey and there was no expectation that this would be a representative sample of Coloradans.

High-level Analysis of Responses

Though the Executive Order specifically mentions “To ensure Coloradans ages 18-24, especially those not currently in education or employment”, nearly two-thirds of all respondents are at or above 35 years old, and nearly half are at or above 45. Over two-thirds of respondents are currently employed full time and not looking for new work. Respondents are also generally highly-educated, with relatively high household incomes (Table 3.1).

It is important to note that over half of all respondents indicated their current industry is in education (higher education, career and technical education, K-12 settings, educational administration, etc.), government (state, municipal, federal), or nonprofit work. Together, these data suggest the survey likely reached more providers or supporters of workforce development and education than those recently receiving services.

Appendix 3: Survey Overview

Table 4.1: Respondent Education and Household Income Levels

Education Level	Prefer not to answer	<\$25K	\$25- 49K	\$50- \$74K	\$75- 99K	\$100- 149K	> \$150K	Totals
Less than high school	1		1				1	3
High school diploma or equivalent	4	3	2	3	2	6	2	22
Some college, no degree	4	9	11	10	9	12	7	62
Associate's degree (e.g., AA, AS)	2	5	5	14	10	5	4	45
Reg. Apprenticeship Program	1		1	2	1	5	2	12
Bachelor's degree (e.g., BA, BS)	13	10	18	25	50	55	81	252
Master's degree (e.g., MA, MS, MEd)	32	3	9	34	51	100	100	329
Doctorate or prof. degree (e.g., MD, JD, PhD)	9	1	1	3	6	16	42	78
Totals	66	31	48	91	129	199	239	803

Appendix 3: Survey Overview

Again reflecting this audience, most respondents have experienced a career change, though for over half of the respondents, this was a voluntary decision (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2: Respondent Education and Household Income Levels

Reason for Career Change	No Changes	1 Time	2 Times	3+ Times	Totals
Involuntary (e.g., laid off)		19	41	50	110
Voluntary (my choice to change)		149	140	180	469
A combination of both		34	36	54	124
Not Applicable	100				100
Totals	100	202	218	284	803

Respondents indicated using a variety of sources to look for and/or receive training. Table 3.3 indicates employer-led and institutions of higher education are generally the most used sources, while workforce centers are rarely used (only 122 of the over 1600 selections made across the 800+ responses included workforce centers). This mirrors responses to a later question asking about each respondent's awareness of Colorado's workforce development resources and services. Responses suggest just under 40% of respondents are "very aware" of available state resources.

Table 3.3: Where Respondents Turn to for Training

Where Have You Looked for Training?	Respondents
Online workshop or course	377
University or College	330
Training provided by my employer	306
Community College	189
Workforce Center	122
Private training provider or bootcamp	107
I have never needed additional training or education	94
I wasn't able to find a suitable program	32
Registered apprenticeship program	14
Industry-specific training (e.g., via conferences)	12
Professional development offered through work or outside orgs	8
Self-study/taught (5), OTJ/internships/volunteer (3), Other (3)	11
Totals	1602

Appendix 3: Survey Overview

Over two-thirds of respondents indicate that they have looked for a certificate or short-term training opportunity and approximately one-third of respondents indicated they looked for a graduate degree. The impact of training was generally positive, though this was not universally true (Table 3.4).

Table 3.4: Impact of Training

Impact of Training	Respondents
I am currently in the training	62
I was able to change to a new job in a new career, but not the one in which I originally intended	36
I was able to change to a new job in my desired career/field.	100
I was able to find a new/better job in my existing field.	117
I was able to get a raise with my current employer.	91
I was able to maintain my current job (e.g., training was required).	123
The training has not helped me find a job.	112
N/A - I have not pursued training or education.	162
Totals	803

Appendix 3: Survey Overview

Respondents also used a variety of sources to receive employment support and resources. While workforce centers, university or college career centers, or non-profits are referenced by approximately a quarter of respondents, the most commonly referenced resources are those driven by the individual (online job sites, personal networks, and AI tools). This is likely a reflection of many of the survey respondents' mid- or advanced-career status: as many already had jobs and made affirmative choices to change careers, it is likely they managed their own employment searches. Future surveys could separate out Connecting Colorado and related state-supported career sites from other technology tools to identify the strengths and areas for development by the state.

Table 3.5: Resources Used by Coloradans Looking for Employment Support

Resources Used for Employment Support	Respondents
Online job site (Indeed, LinkedIn, Connecting Colorado etc.)	511
Friends, family, or coworkers	416
AI tools (resume writing, research, interview prep, etc.)	313
Workforce center	228
University	206
Non-profit organization	145
Community college	140
N/A - I have never looked/needed employment support resources	110
Local K-12 district or former high school	72
Technical College	50
Other (e.g., self-help, specific organizations, newspaper)	22
Networking (Chamber or professional organization events, conferences)	8
Career or ExecutiveCoach, Resume Services	8

Appendix 3: Survey Overview

When asked about their awareness of Colorado's workforce development resources and services, over two-thirds of respondents indicate being somewhat or very aware of such resources. Even when disaggregated by education level, age range, or household income, most respondents in each group express familiarity with the resources (Table 3.6).

Table 3.6: Awareness of Colorado's Workforce Development Resources by Education Level

Education Level	Not aware - I didn't know resources are available	Slightly aware - I've heard there are resources but don't know details	Somewhat aware - I know some resources exist	Very aware - I know what resources are available and how to access them
Less than high school	0%	0%	100%	0%
High school diploma or equivalent	22.74%	22.73%	27.27%	27.27%
Reg. Apprenticeship Program	25.00%	0%	50%	25%
Some college, no degree	11.29%	20.97%	33.87%	33.87%
Associate's degree (e.g., AA, AS)	8.89%	15.56%	42.22%	33.33%
Bachelor's degree (e.g., BA, BS)	12.30%	17.06%	36.90%	33.73%
Master's degree (e.g., MA, MS, MEd)	10.64%	20.06%	38.60%	30.70%
Doctorate or prof. degree (e.g., MD, JD, PhD)	6.41%	23.08%	46.15%	24.36%
Total	11.21%	18.93%	38.73%	31.13%

Readers may [click on this link to return to the main report](#) where this appendix was first mentioned, or read about the results of each question in the remainder of Appendix 3.

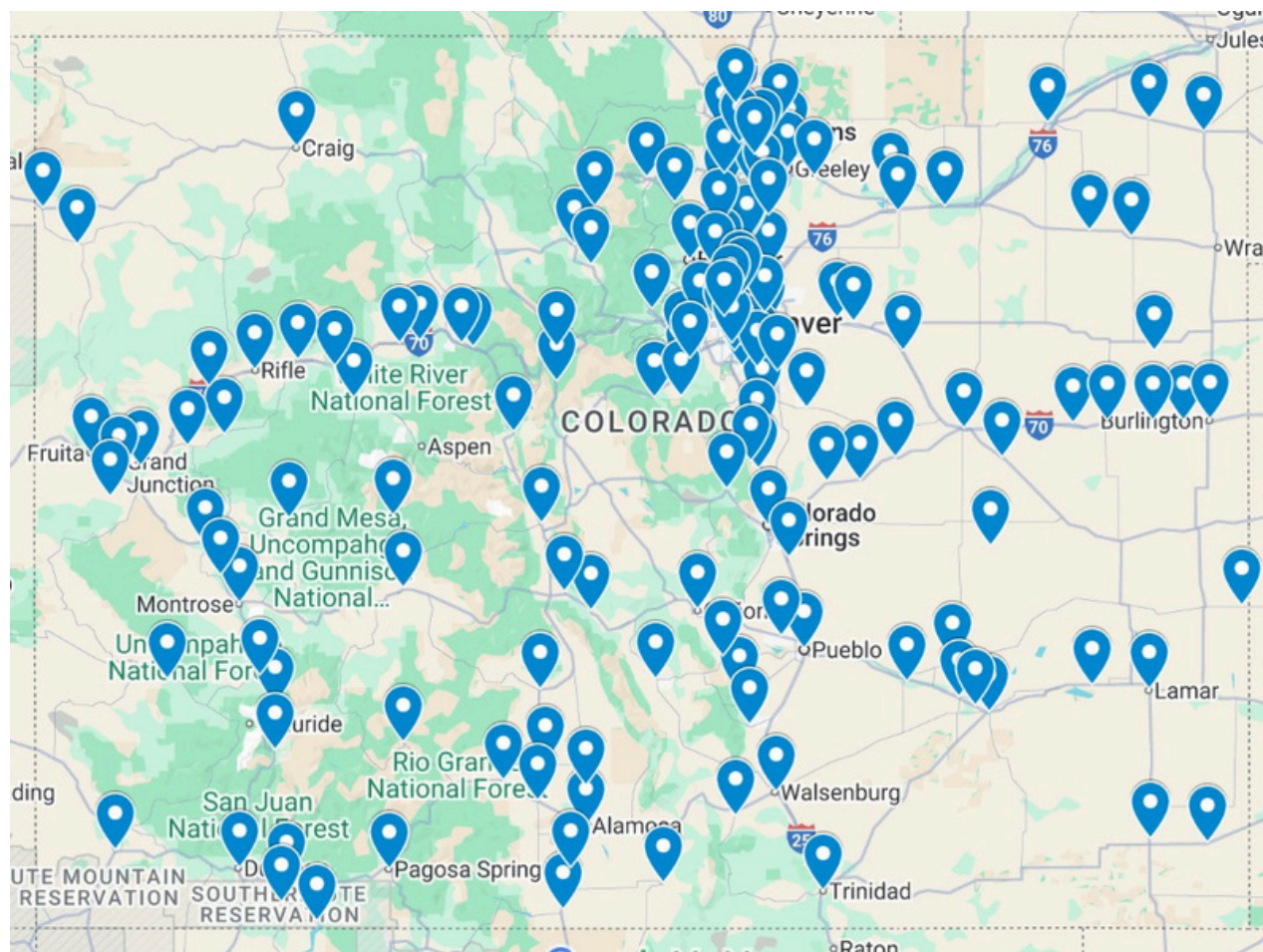
Summary of Responses to all Questions

Charts or figures and brief descriptions for each question are included below. Alt text is provided for all charts.

1. What city or town do you live in?

Responses came from residents throughout the state as seen below in Figure 3.1. Please note, markers do not indicate how many responses came from each location. Just over half of all responses came from the following ten cities: Denver (103 responses), Aurora (65), Colorado Springs (61), Littleton (43), Fort Collins (28), Pueblo (25), Lakewood (23), Thornton (23), Centennial (21), and Grand Junction (20).

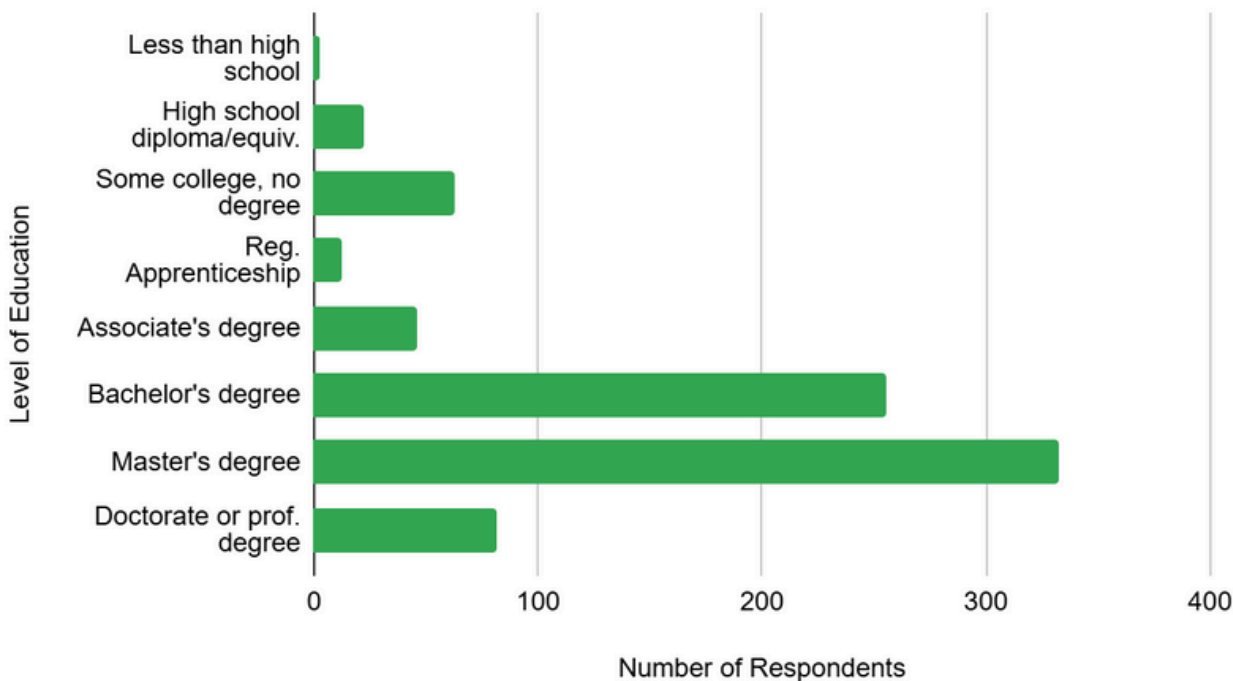
Figure 3.1: Respondent Locations



2. What's the highest level of education you've completed?

Figure 3.2 indicates that respondents frequently reported having some sort of post-secondary degree. While 46 indicated having an associate's degree, 255 respondents hold a bachelor's degree, 333 a master's degree, and 82 have a doctorate or professional degree.

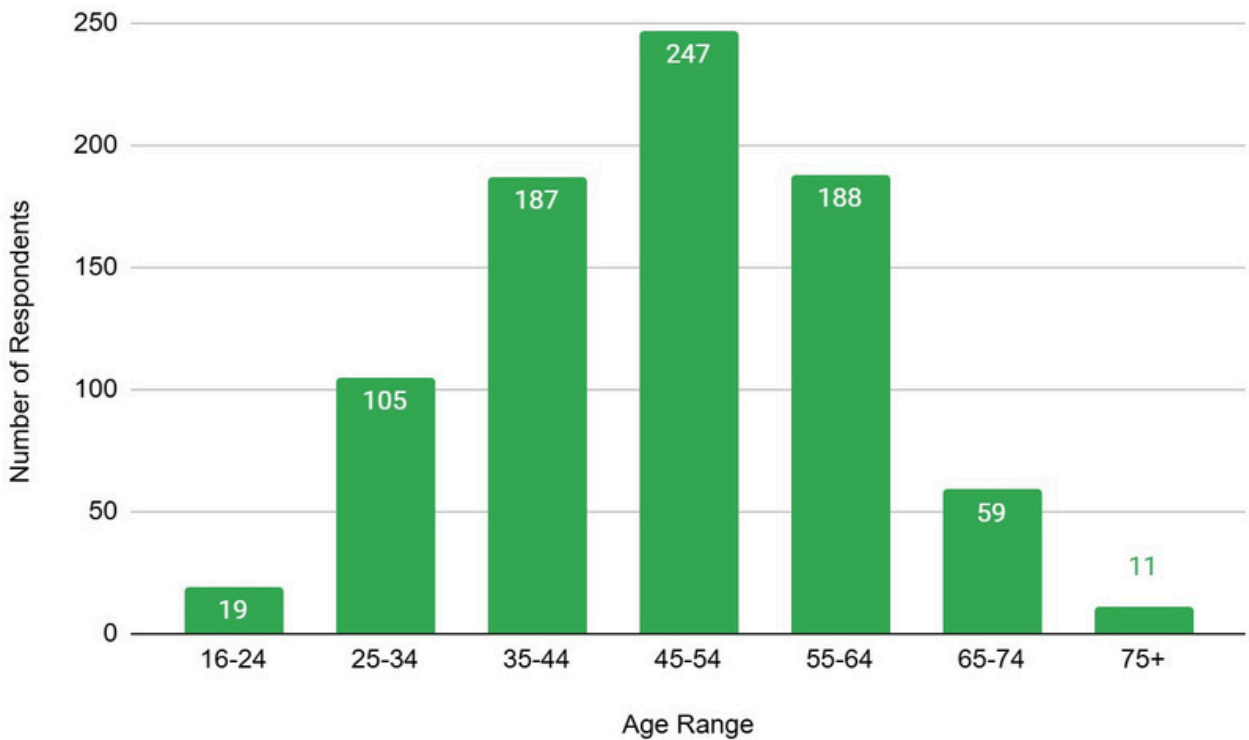
Figure 3.2: Highest Level of Education Reported by Respondents



3. What is your age range?

Respondents were generally in age brackets that would suggest they are mid- to late-career professionals. Most respondents fall into the 45 to 54 age bracket, with nearly equal numbers of respondents in the 35 to 44 and 55 to 64 groups (see Figure 3.3).

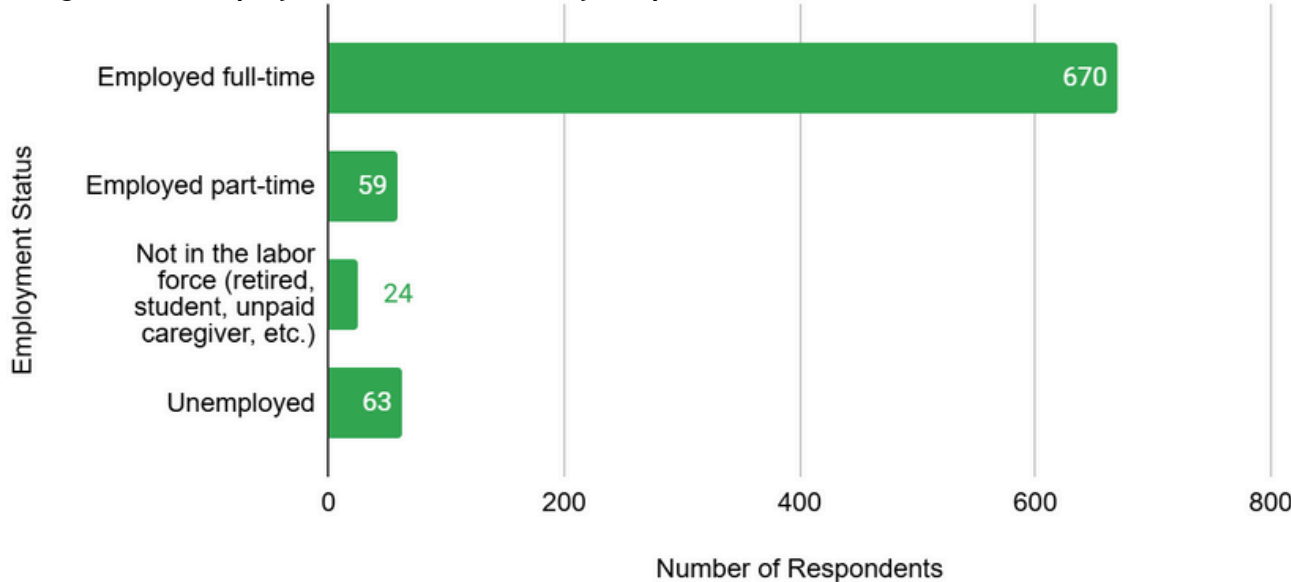
Figure 3.3: Age Range of Survey Respondents



4. What is your current employment status?

Respondents overwhelmingly report having full-time employment (670 of approximately 800 responses, see Figure 3.4.)

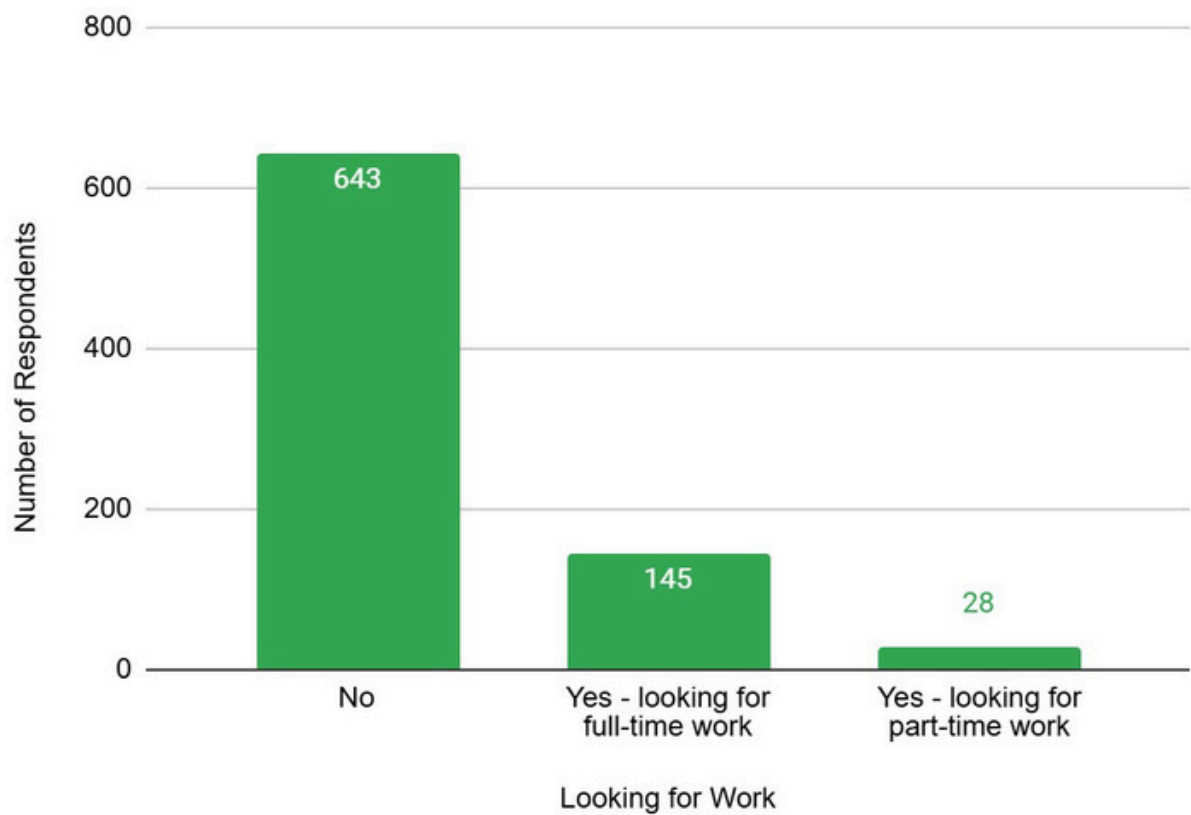
Figure 3.4: Employment Status of Survey Respondents



5. Are you actively looking for a new job?

Related to above, respondents are overwhelmingly content with their current employment status-643 indicate they are not looking for a job, 145 are looking for full-time employment, and 28 are looking for part-time work.

Figure 3.5: Current Job Search Status of Respondents

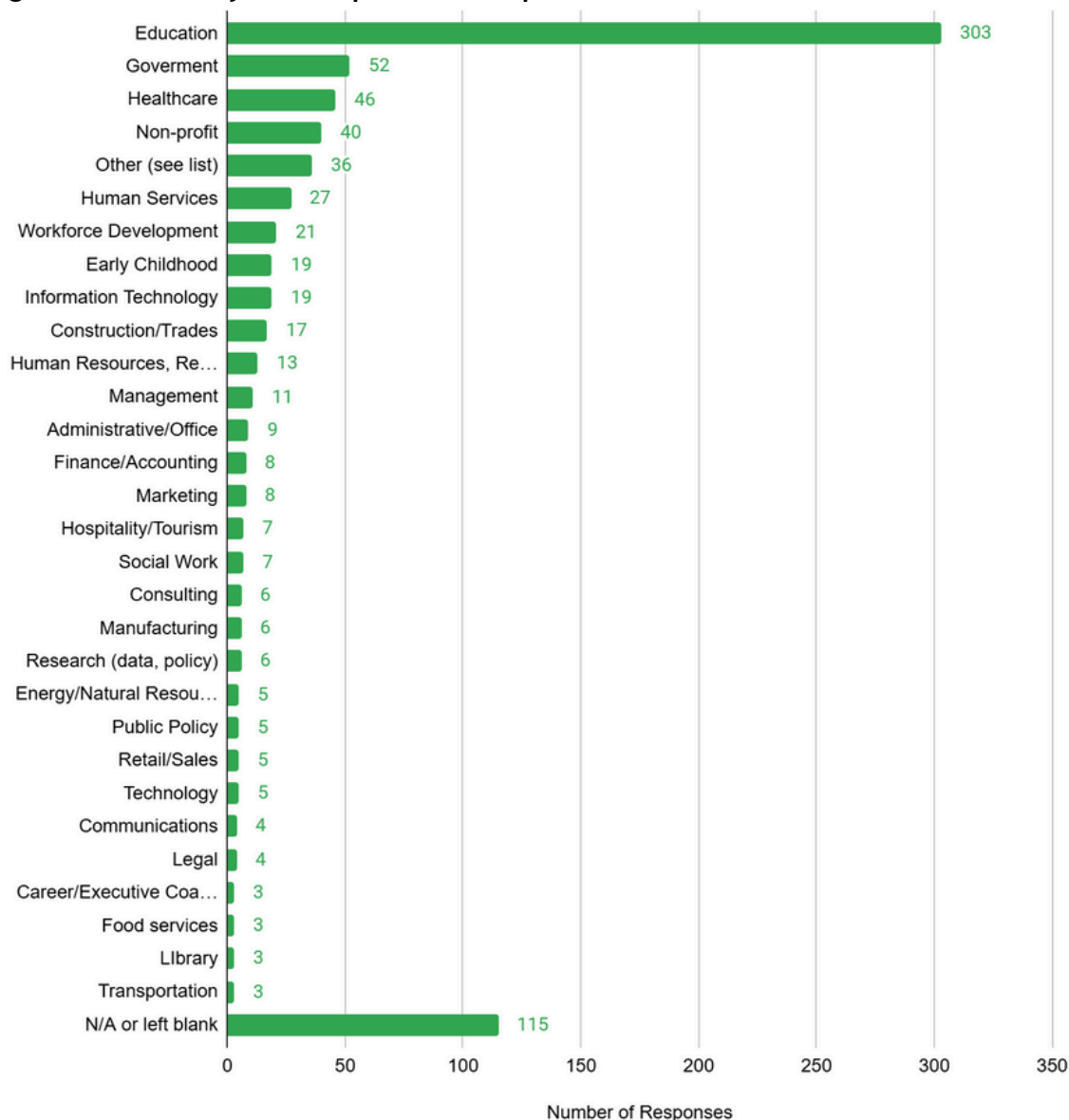


Appendix 3: Survey Overview

6. What industry or occupation are you currently in or hoping to work in?

As noted previously, respondents are not representative of all Coloradans. Respondents from education (higher education and PK-12) dominated the responses. Many indicated their specialty (special education, career and technical education, higher education), but not all. All categories shown in Figure 3.6 came from the survey options offered, or were developed to be as inclusive as possible of the detailed entries provided by respondents. That said, it is possible individuals who noted one category might also fit in another (e.g., someone who indicated construction/trades may actually be in construction/trade education). Additionally, individuals who indicated or noted state, local, or municipal government were put into the government category, but it is very possible that those indicating human services, public policy, social work, or numerous other categories could also be a government employee.

Figure 3.6: Industry or Occupation of Respondents



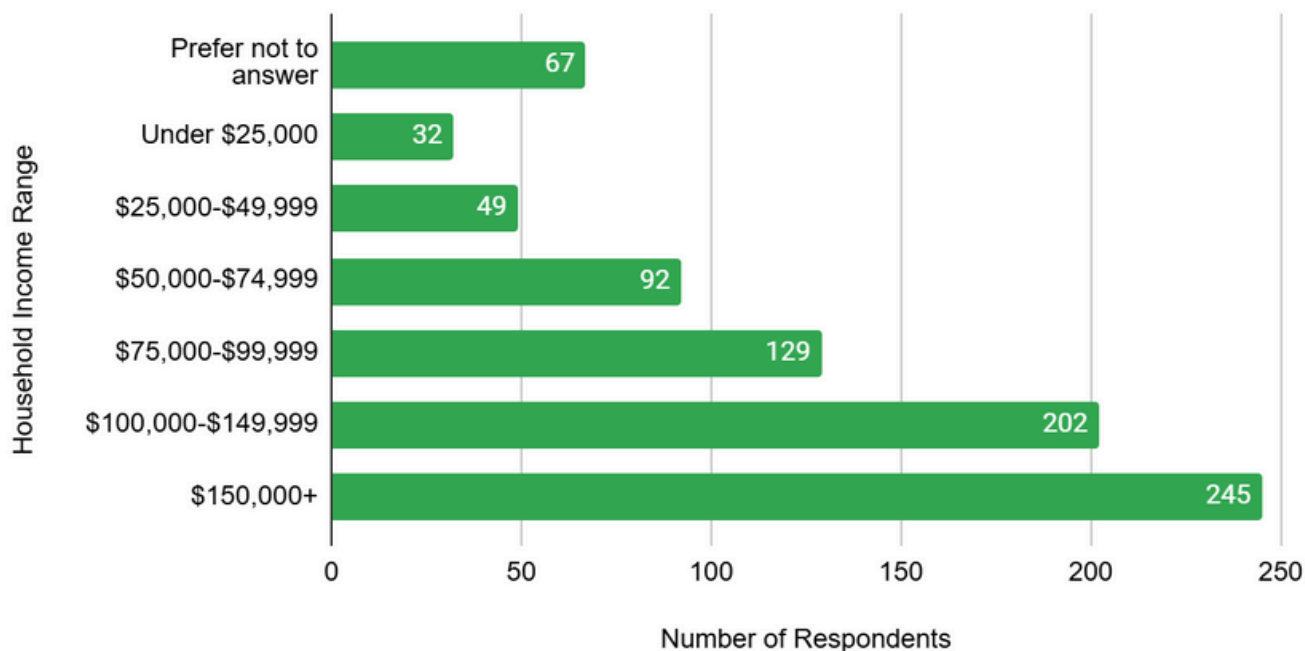
Note: “Other” captures responses from occupations only mentioned by one or two respondents. Some examples include security, housing, corrections, cosmetology, custodial/maintenance, customer service, gig work, neuroscience, translation, self-employment, veterinary, aerospace, and real estate.

Appendix 3: Survey Overview

7. What is your household income range?

As noted previously, respondents to the survey generally reported a household income greater than the median household income in Colorado, \$92,470.⁵⁹ The largest category of respondents falls into the highest income category of over \$150,000 (Figure 3.7).

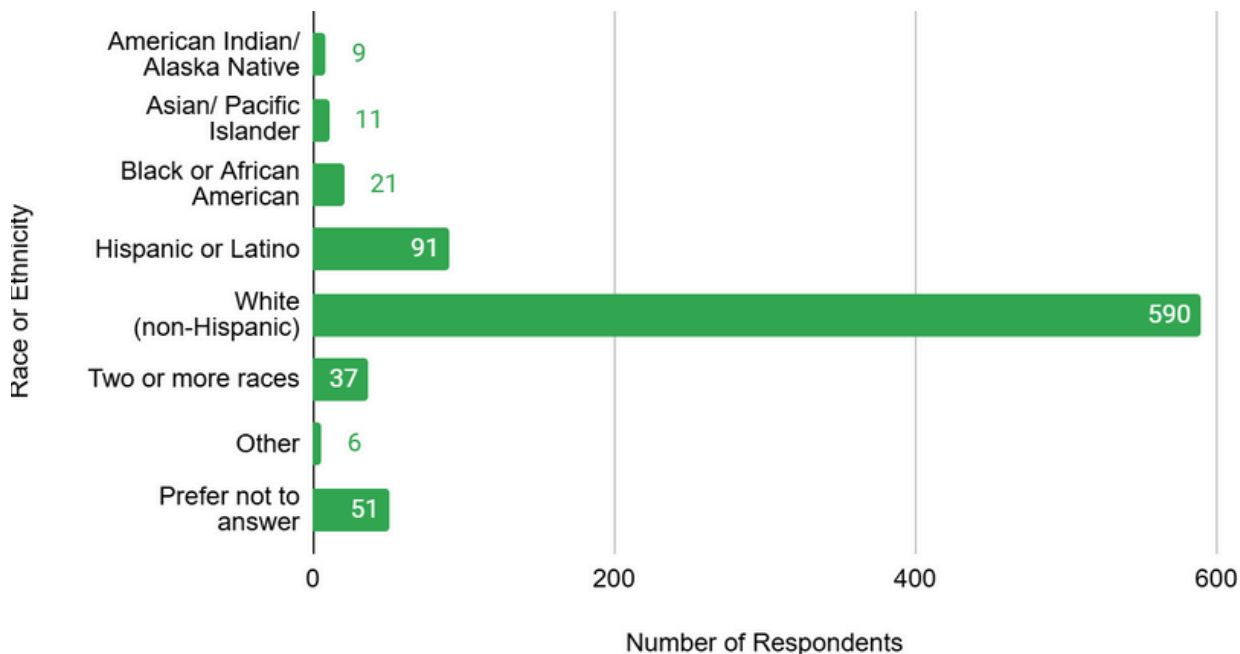
Figure 3.7: Household Income reported by Respondents



8. What is your racial or ethnic background?

Respondents mostly identify as white, not Hispanic or Latino (590) (Figure 3.8).

Figure 3.8 Racial and Ethnic Identities of Respondents

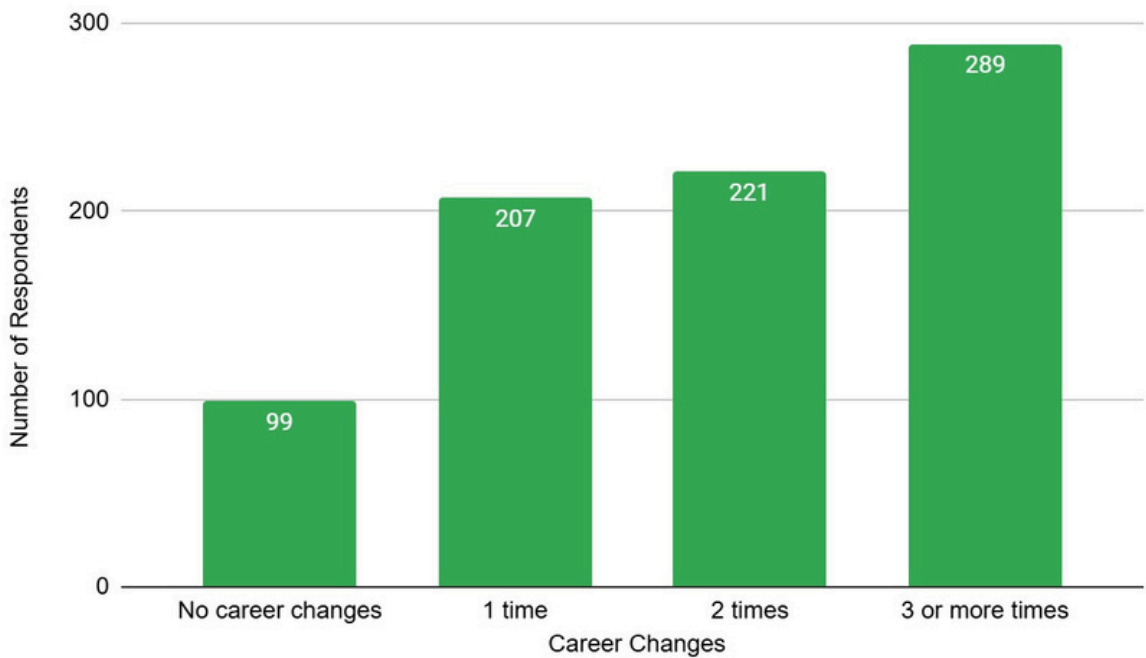


⁵⁹ [State Demography Office](#)

9. How many times have you changed careers or made significant career transitions (e.g. changing industries, changing to a job that required very different skills)?

Respondents to the survey have generally experienced multiple career changes. Figure 3.9 indicates 289 respondents have changed careers three or more times, 221 have changed twice, 207 have changed once, and 99 have not experienced any career changes.

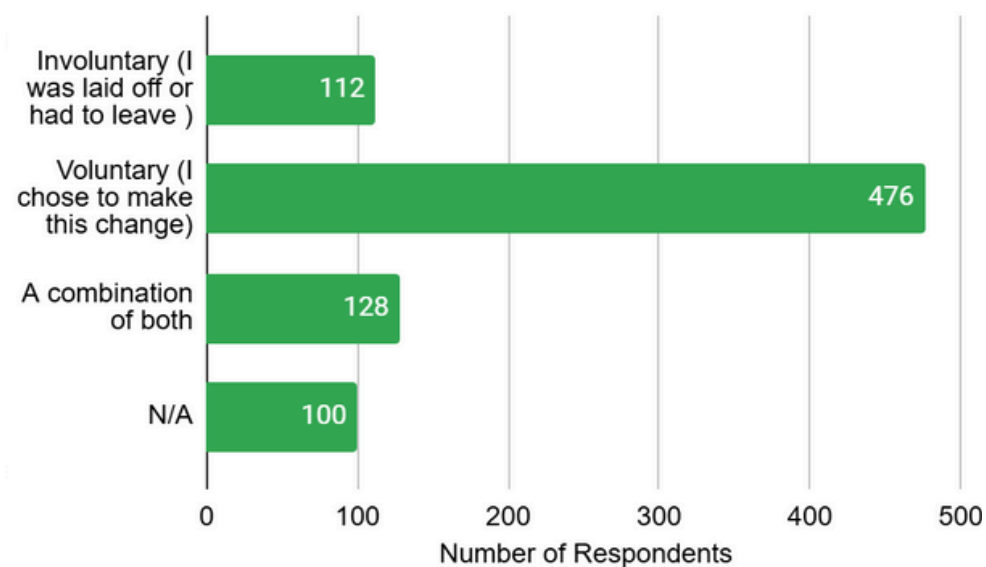
Figure 3.9: Number of Career Changes Reported by Respondents



10. Thinking of your most recent career transition, was it:

Respondents typically made voluntary career changes (476 respondents), while 112 indicated the change was involuntary and 128 said it was a combination of voluntary and involuntary. One hundred respondents indicated N/A (Figure 3.10).

Figure 3.10: Impetus for Most Recent Career Change

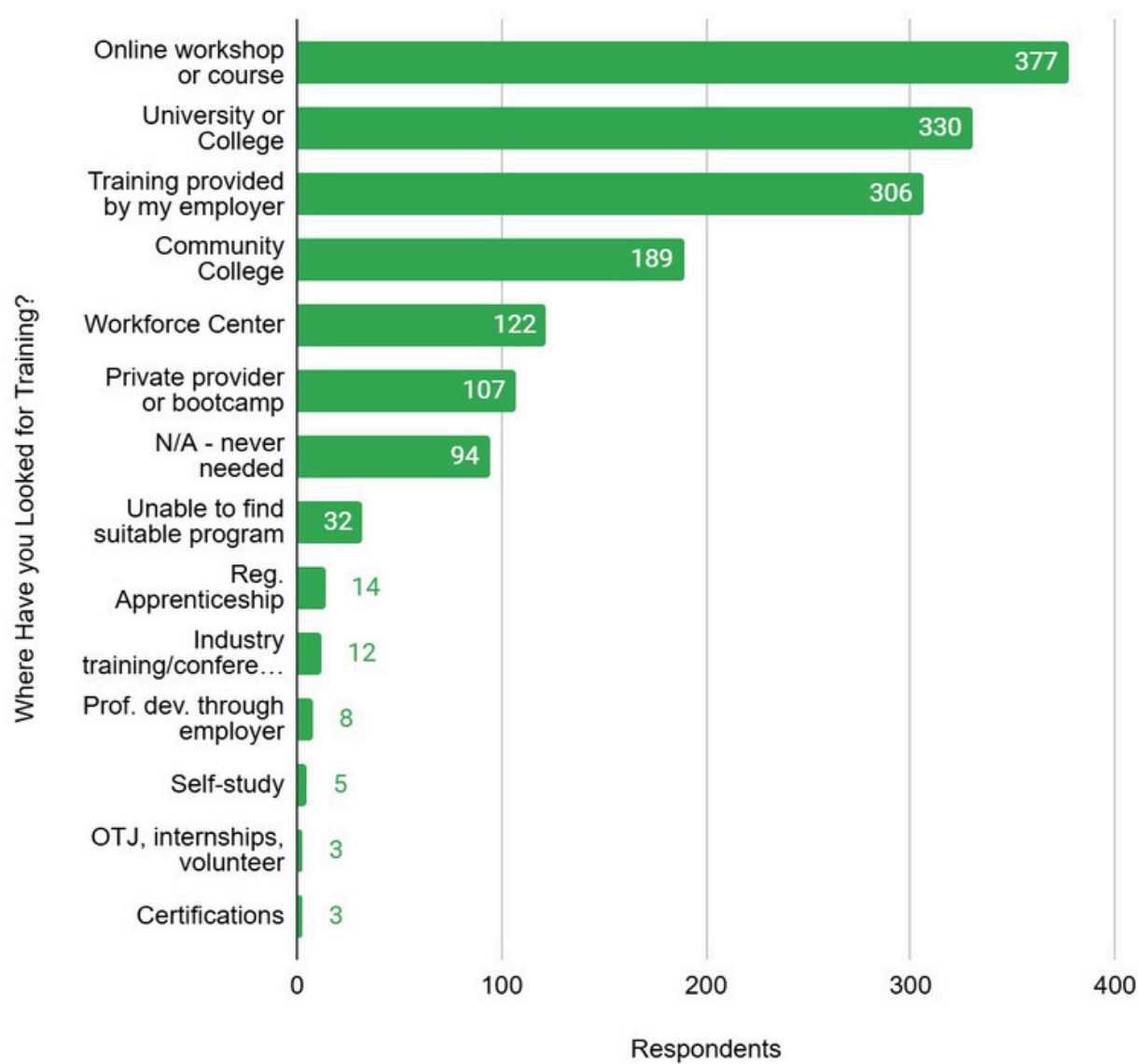


Appendix 3: Survey Overview

11. Have you looked for additional training or education beyond what you've already completed? If so, where did you go? Please check all that apply.

Many respondents selected multiple categories for this question. Most respondents indicated turning to online workshops or courses for training (377), universities or colleges (330), or trainings provided by my employer (306) (Figure 3.11).

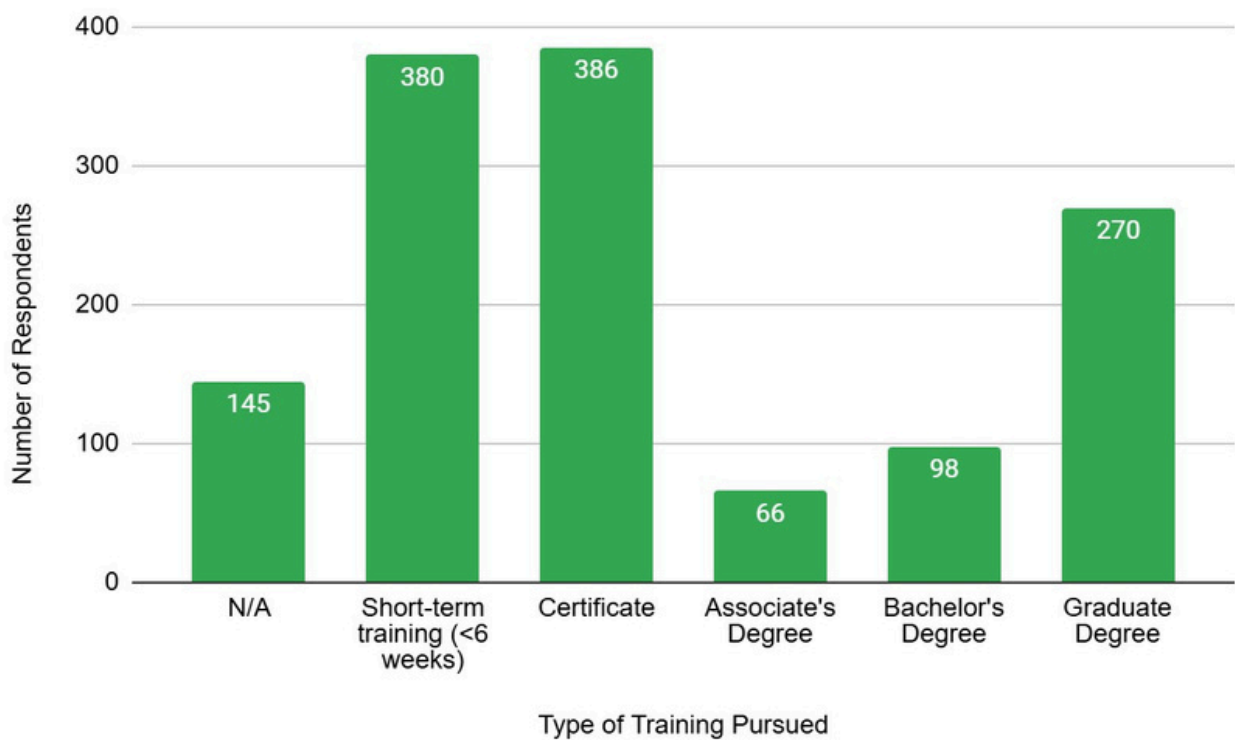
Figure 3.11: Where Survey Respondents Turn to for Training



12. What type of training have you looked for? (check all that apply)

Most survey respondents indicated they have looked for shorter term training programs like certificates (385 respondents) or shorter courses lasting under six weeks (380 respondents) (Figure 3.12). This pattern holds true even when disaggregated by the highest education level achieved by respondents. Future data collection opportunities may want to explore more deeply any differences between the types of certificates and short-term training opportunities being pursued by those who do not already have degrees and those who do.

Figure 3.12 Type of Training Pursued By Coloradans

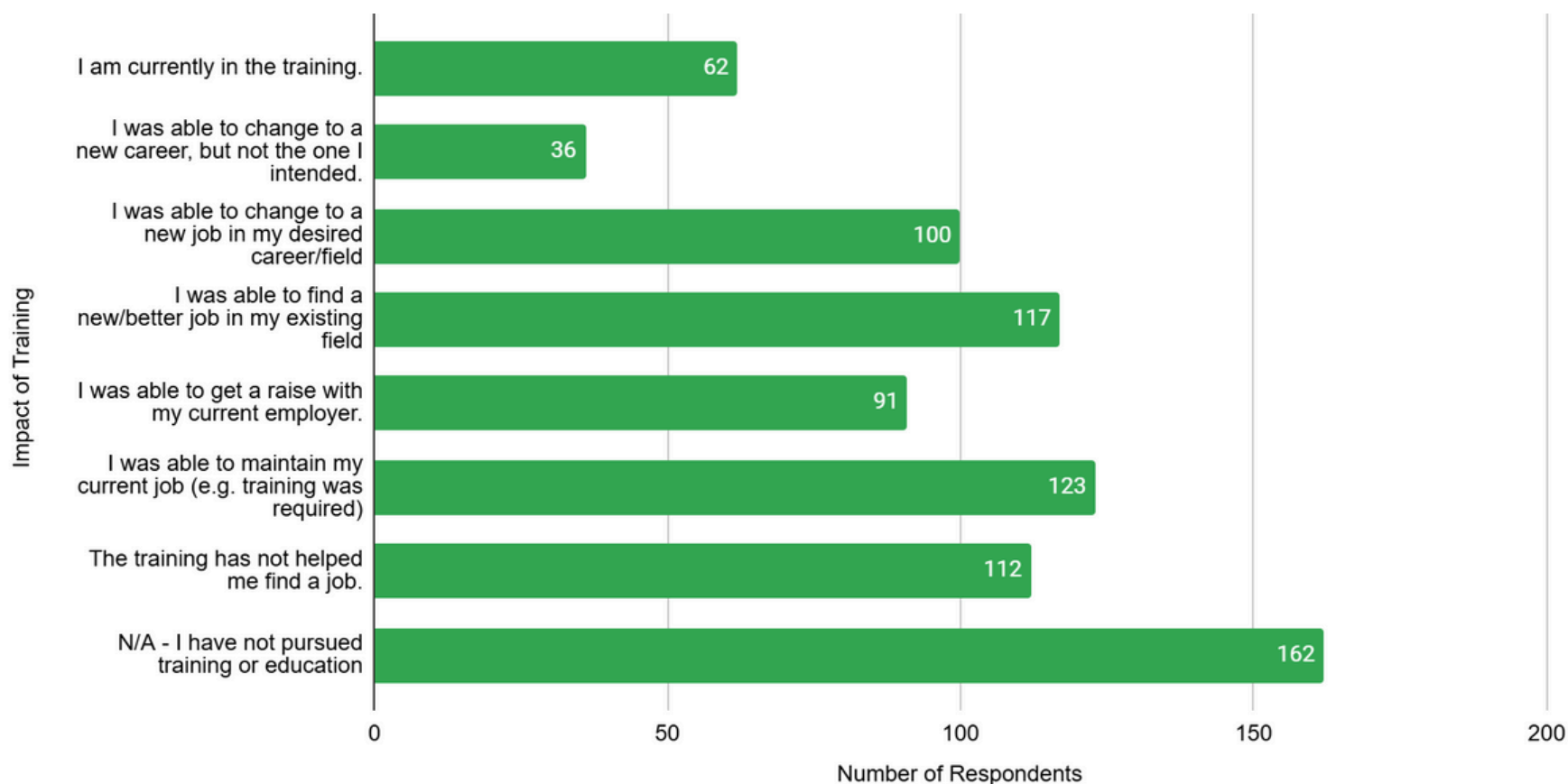


Appendix 3: Survey Overview

13. How did the training or education impact your employment?

The impact of training varied, with many respondents reporting positive impacts such as helping them get a raise (90), finding a new job in their desired field (115) or a new job in an unrelated field (40), keeping their current job (120), though many reported not pursuing training (160) or not associating training with their ability to find a new job (110). Approximately 60 respondents indicated they were currently in the training while 160 indicated not pursuing any additional training or education.

Figure 3.13: Impressions of the Impact of Training of Respondents

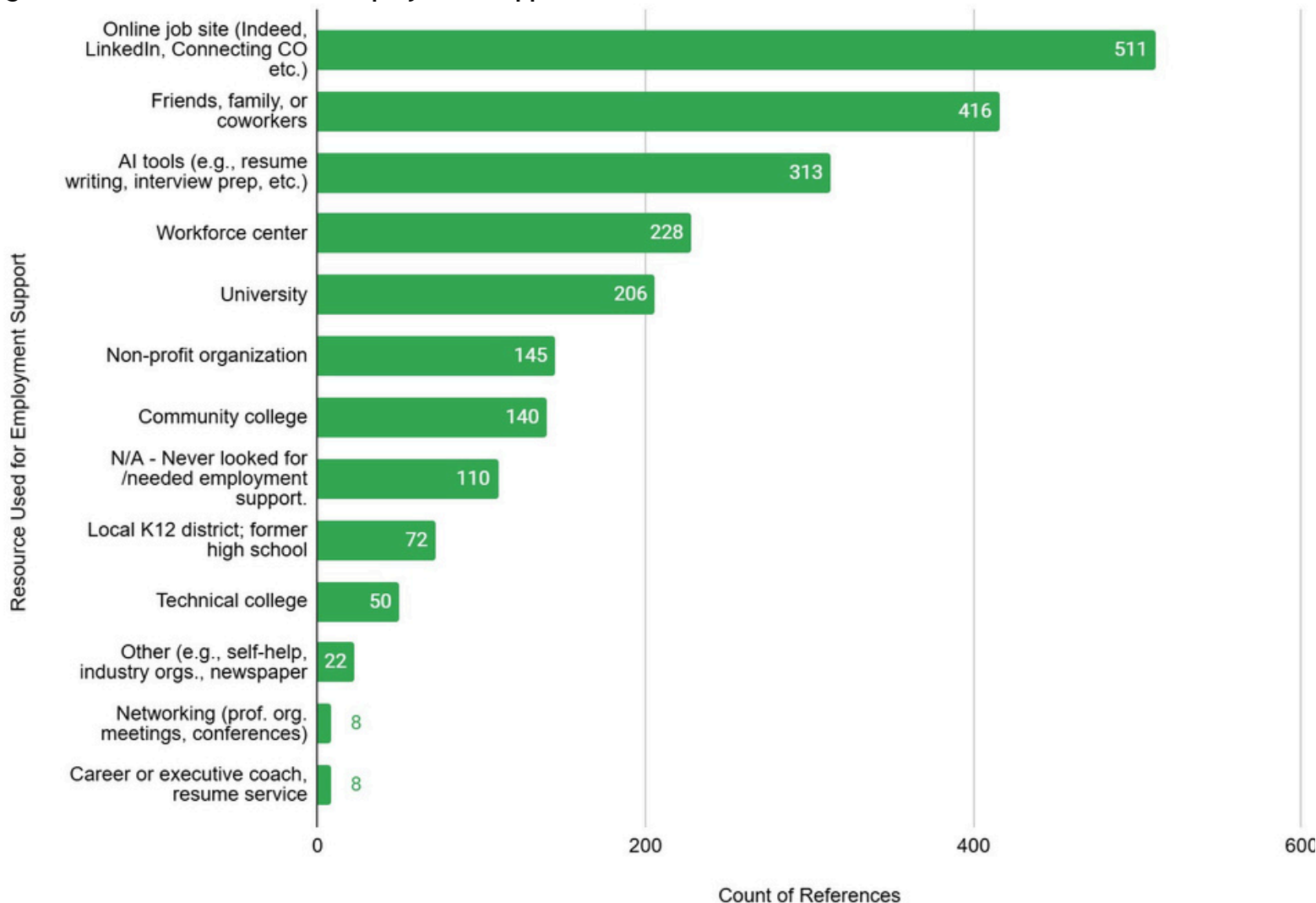


Appendix 3: Survey Overview

14. Where have you gone to find employment support or resources? Please check all that apply.

As noted previously, survey respondents generally use resources that they control (job sites, AI tools, and personal networks), as opposed to using resources arising from providers whose purpose is to provide employment support (like workforce centers and university career centers). These data are presented in chart form below, in Figure 3.14.

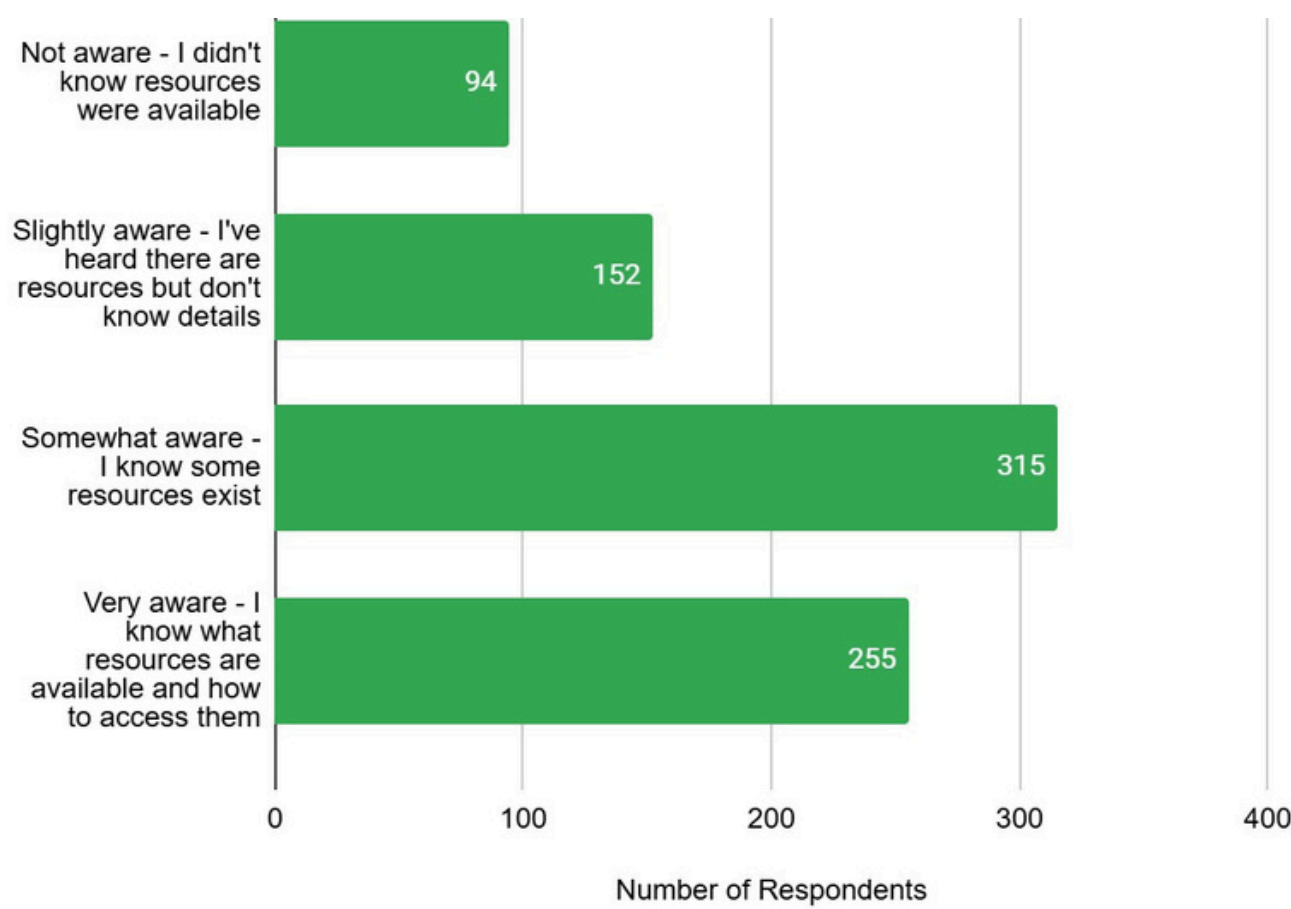
Figure 3.14: Sources Used for Employment Support



15. How would you rate your awareness of Colorado's workforce development resources and services?

Respondents indicate an awareness of workforce development resources and services (Figure 3.15). Most respondents (315) indicate being somewhat aware of resources, 255 are very aware, 152 are slightly aware, and 94 did not know resources were available.

Figure 3.15: Awareness of Workforce Development Resources and Services

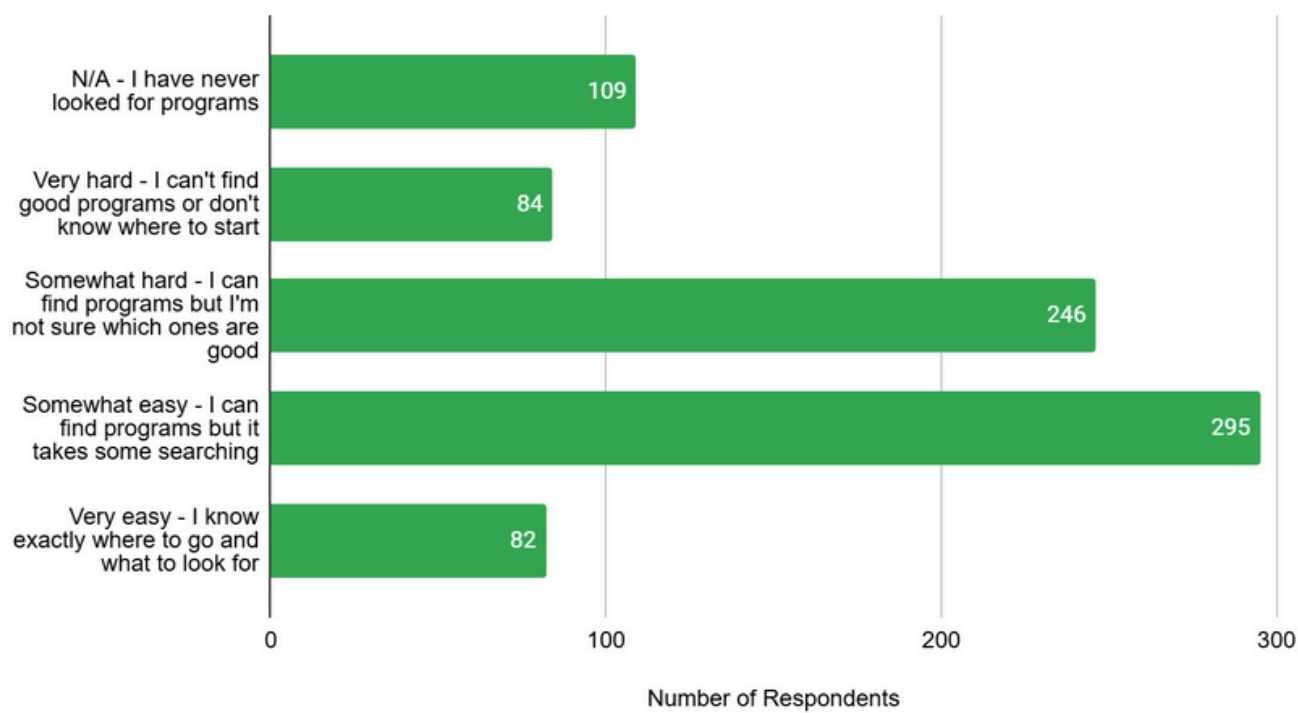


Appendix 3: Survey Overview

16. How easy is it to find quality job training or education programs in Colorado today?

Respondents indicate generally being able to find training programs, however, only 82 indicate it is “very easy” and they know exactly where to go and what to look for; a nearly equal number of participants (84) indicated it is very hard and they don’t know where to start or can’t find good programs. The largest number of respondents (295) indicate that it is somewhat easy but finding a program “takes some searching.” Another 246 respondents indicate it is somewhat hard to find training - they can find programs but are not sure which ones are good. Over 100 (109) respondents indicated they have never looked for programs (Figure 3.16).

Figure 3.16: Perceived Ease of Finding Quality Job Training or Education Programs



Appendix 3: Survey Overview

17. If you haven't looked for programs, what prevented you from seeking training or education (select all that apply)

Table 3.7, below, contains the reasons cited by respondents for not pursuing training or education. These responses include categories provided on the survey and open-ended responses. While nearly half of all respondents indicate they have pursued training, those that did not often cited cost and time as barriers. Many respondents also cited cost or time, even if indicating that they did not think they needed more training. The “Other” responses include a wide range of reasons. Some relate to particular industries (i.e., appropriate advanced IT training, or that training related to early childcare does not lead to wage increases that make training efforts worth it), several point to a lack of options in rural areas, and others question the quality of programs. Overall, the responses suggest that the decision to not seek training is highly personal, and each individual is likely considering whatever limited resources they have (time, money, access to local opportunities, etc.) when making decisions. That is, the opportunity cost of alternatives might be just as important as the monetary cost of a program

Table 3.7: Reasons Cited by Respondents for Not Pursuing Training

Resources Used for Employment Support	Respondents
N/A - Did seek training	391
Cost	217
Time	163
Did not think I needed it	114
Unaware of resources	60
Childcare issues	40
Other (not for me, burnout, out-of-state is cheaper, nothing in rural areas - all unique reasons)	25
Transportation	11
Disability-related	4
Found training on my own	3
Age-related	2

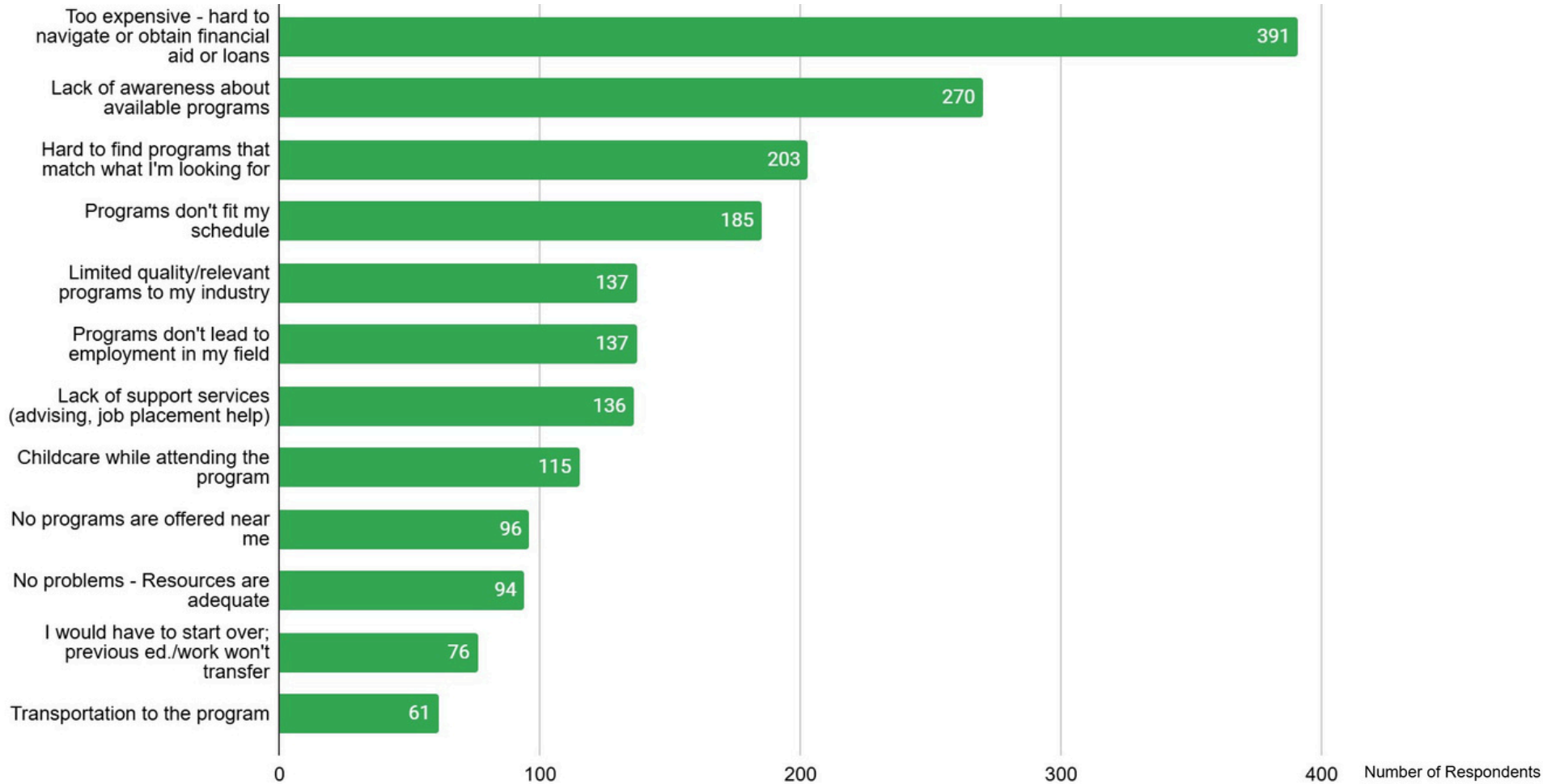
Appendix 3: Survey Overview

18. What is the biggest problem with getting education or job training in Colorado? Please select up to four.

The most frequently cited problem with education and training opportunities in Colorado is the cost of programs (391). A lack of awareness (270) and difficulty finding programs in an individual’s industry of interest (203) are also challenges.

Additionally, 59 individuals left their own responses. One noted they are scared there will not be a job in their desired field after investing in the training, and another explained training requires time but they cannot cut back on current work hours because they have a family. Similarly, one respondent asserts that support services are tailored for younger students with different needs than non-traditional students. Others suggest employer needs and offered training are not aligned, or there a perception that certain trainings will not help an individual get or retain a quality job in the face of layoffs, and others do not think the training will lead to a raise or other benefits.

Figure 3.17: Perception of Biggest Problems with Receiving Education or Training Colorado



Appendix 3: Survey Overview

19. When considering a training or education program, how important are each of the following?

- a. Cost
- b. Location (in-person classes near me)
- c. Program format: in-person instruction
- d. Program format: How important is virtual/online instruction?
- e. Program format: How important is hybrid (mix of in-person and online)?
- f. How quickly I can complete the program
- g. The program will help me find a job after completion
- h. The program results in a credential or certificate recognized by business.
- i. The program results in a degree
- j. Employers are connected to or involved in the program

Table 3.8 presents the raw number of responses allowing readers to compare within categories of importance (e.g., who marks cost versus results in a degree as “very important”), and how any specific characteristic is ranked as very, moderately, or not important by respondents.

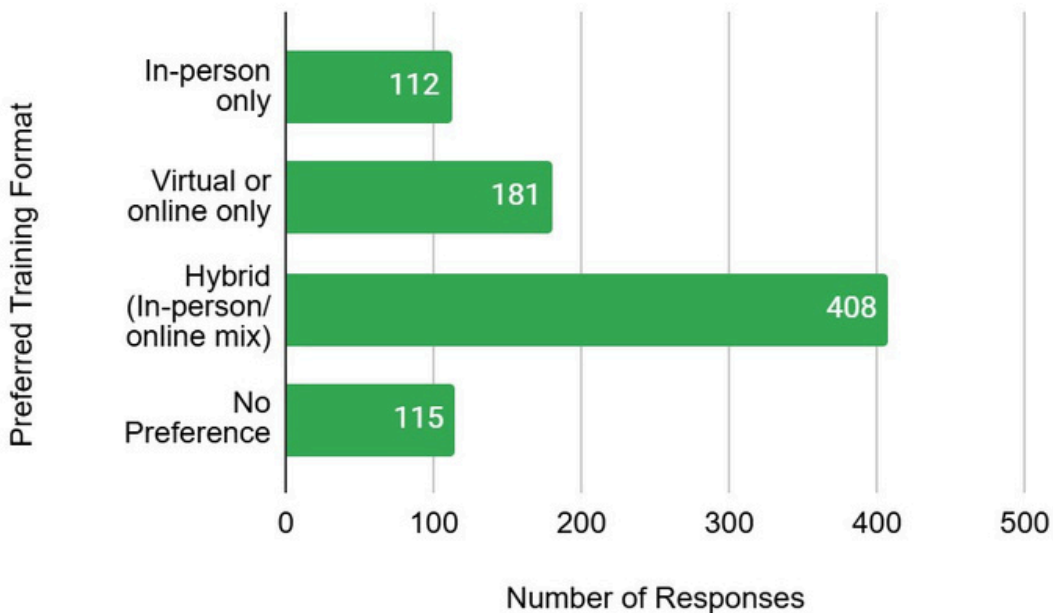
Table 3.8: Importance of Various Program Characteristics (Number of Responses)

Program Characteristics	Very	Moderate	Not	Total
Cost	668	78	6	752
Location (In-person classes near me)	504	226	54	784
Format: in-person	255	352	182	789
Format: virtual/online	273	407	111	791
Format: hybrid (in-person and online)	203	445	142	790
Quick completion	483	280	31	794
Will lead to a job	603	132	57	792
Results in an industry-recognized credential	600	158	32	790
Results in a degree	278	313	197	788
Employer connectedness	437	270	78	785

20. What format would typically work best for you?

Respondents indicate a preference for hybrid training (408), followed by online or virtual only (181), no preference (115), and in-person only (112) (Figure 3.18).

Figure 3.18: Preferred Training Format



The following open-ended questions received between approximately 300 and 500 responses per question with an enormous variety of responses.

21. Are there any schools, organizations, or programs in Colorado you want to highlight for us? If yes, which program and why did it work well for you?

320 responses: Respondents cite nearly every postsecondary institution of higher education, along with a variety of workforce, K-12, and other support programs. There are 320 responses to this question.

22. What resources or support would be MOST helpful to you in building skills and finding work?

420 responses: Again, there is a large variety of responses though of those respondents without a bachelor's degree, several themes can be seen. Respondents clearly desire a single place to find support (to learn about training programs, find career coaches or advisors, look for jobs), financial or other support to make training and education more accessible (e.g., childcare support, flexible schedules), and greater career-connectedness in high school and in trainings.

Appendix 3: Survey Overview

23. What is your vision or hope for the future of Colorado's post-high school education and workforce development system?

510 responses: Of the 92 respondents to this question without a bachelor's degree, many mentioned ensuring connection between K-12 offerings and in-demand industries as well as making education and training affordable.

24. Are there any other comments you'd like to share about Colorado's post-high school education and workforce development system?

263 responses: Respondents often cite the need for job search support, affordable options for upskilling and retraining, and urging greater investment in CTE programs.

A summary of responses to the following questions are excluded as they are not relevant to the report:

25. Would you like to join the Governor's Office newsletter?

26. Please share your email address to sign up for the newsletter.

Appendix 4: Overview of State Entities Central to Colorado's Postsecondary Talent Development System

Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE)

The CDLE divisions and offices connected to the postsecondary talent development system include:

- **The Division of Employment and Training (E&T)** is responsible for the distribution of WIOA Title I and III funds, Veterans Programs, and certain state initiatives, like the Teacher Externship Program. They manage compliance, oversight, and performance of the local workforce centers; the Workforce Enterprise; and they work with local workforce center directors on implementation issues and workforce best practices. The Enterprise also grants state money to the local workforce areas. E&T is responsible for the state's labor exchange software which integrates into these systems.
- **The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)** is responsible for administering WIOA Title IV funds and programs as well as any discretionary grants from the ED's Rehabilitation Services Administration.
- **The Unemployment Insurance Division (UI)** administers Unemployment Insurance programs, which include the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment Grants (RESEA) which provides targeted re-employment services to UI claimants.
- **The Division of Labor Standards and Statistics** houses the Labor Market Information (LMI) team which collects and analyzes information about labor market trends throughout Colorado. LMI serves as the primary data hub for local employment and workforce boards and professionals; state and county-run workforce centers; educational institutions; and more.
- **The Office of the Future of Work (OFW)**, as created by executive order and codified in SB23-051, is charged with thought leadership on issues like industry transition; the social and economic impacts of the changing nature of work due to globalization, the pandemic, and automation; new workforce and skill development strategies; and workforce studies and research. OFW also currently oversees the State Apprenticeship Agency (SAA) and state-funded grants like the Scale Up Grants, which provides regulatory oversight and technical assistance to apprenticeship sponsors to establish apprenticeship programs, oversees qualified intermediaries, and manages the RAPIDS database. Apprenticeship programs are also on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL).
- **The Office of New Americans (ONA)** serves as the point of contact for state agencies, private sector organizations, and the public to advance the integration and inclusion of New Americans (immigrants, refugees and their children) in Colorado communities. Pursuant to HB 23-1283, ONA integrated the work of and oversees the Colorado Refugee Services Program (CRSP). CRSP is the state refugee office and is responsible for the statewide coordination of refugee resettlement under the authority of the Refugee Act of 1980.
- **The Colorado Disability Opportunity Office (CDOO)** serves as the point of contact for state agencies, private sector organizations, and the public to advance the integration and inclusion of the disability community. CDOO provides funding through the Colorado Disability Funding Committee (CDFC) to disability organizations and businesses.

Appendix 4: Overview of State Entities Central to Colorado's Postsecondary Talent Development System

Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE)

CDHE works to support students, advocate and develop policies to maximize higher education opportunities for all. It does this through seven divisions:

- **The Executive Division** ensures that the CCHE and CDHE's array of policies are coordinated, consistent and aligned to address the goals of the Department's strategic plan, the Governor's agenda and the needs of Colorado's postsecondary students. The Division is responsible for strategic efforts impacting higher education in the state and departmental operations.
- **The Budget & Accounting Division** focuses on budget development and management, financial aid policy and administration and accounting.
- **Data, Research, and Policy** manages CDHE's data infrastructure to ensure secure high-quality data while protecting student privacy, and leads in the development and execution of a state higher education policy and research agenda.
- **The Office of Education Equity, Workforce Development, and Social Mobility** works with colleges and universities to establish and inform statewide policy, acts as a conduit and amplifier of best practices and provides technical assistance. This Office is responsible for implementing the Work-Based Learning consortium pilot program established by HB25-1186, and overseeing the Career Connected Campus designation of IHEs..
- **The Division of Private Occupational Schools (DPOS)** administers the Private Occupational School Act. The DPOS Board approves new occupational schools, school renewals, programs, and courses. DPOS works closely with the Colorado Department of Regulatory Agencies' (DORA) Division of Professions and Occupations and the State Apprenticeship Agency in the OFW.
- **The Division of Student Success and Academic Affairs** is responsible for academic and student affairs policy development and program implementation. The division oversees academic and student success initiatives including admissions, retention, persistence, transfer, reverse transfer, remedial education, concurrent enrollment and completion. It includes programs such as the Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative (COSI), GEAR UP and Open Educational Resources. The division provides oversight and support for the state's 22 educator preparation programs in collaboration with the Colorado Department of Education and P-20 alignment efforts.
- **The Communications, Outreach and Community Engagement Division** engages with key audiences to advance CDHE's mission, visibility, strategic goals, and communication objectives. The Division also includes outreach, and community engagement which works directly with school districts, educators, foster care students, students experiencing homelessness and students and families in navigating the questions that come as students decide on a path beyond high school. The team assists Coloradans in completing financial aid applications, provides information on grants, scholarships and other funding sources, career planning, filling out college applications and highlights the importance of pursuing a postsecondary path.

Appendix 4: Overview of State Entities Central to Colorado's Postsecondary Talent Development System

Colorado Department of Regulatory Agencies (DORA)

- **The Division of Professions and Occupations (DPO)** provides consumer protection through its regulation of more than 610,000 licensees within more than 60 professions, occupations and businesses in the State of Colorado. DPO works with CDHE's DPOS and CDLE's State Apprenticeship Agency.

Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS)

- **The Office of Economic Security's Division of Economic and Workforce** support administers several types of economic and employment assistance through a number of programs including Colorado Employment First (SNAP E&T), Colorado Works (TANF), ReHire Colorado (a transitional employment program that combines wage-paying work, credential attainment, and supportive services to help individuals successfully re-enter the workforce), and Colorado Works Subsidized Training and Employment Program (CW STEP) helps connect at-risk populations who are eligible for basic cash assistance from Colorado Works with crucial professional work experience and opportunity.

Office of Economic Development and International Trade (OEDIT)

- **Division of Talent Innovation** supports economic development programs and initiatives, including recruiting new companies and retaining existing companies in Colorado with an eye toward primary employers. Specifically the team oversees Opportunity Now Grants, Regional Summits, and Tax Credits.

Colorado Department of Education (CDE)

- **Adult Education Initiatives** administers state and federal adult education programs including WIOA Title II - Adult Education and Family Literacy Act.
- **The Office of Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness** supports schools and districts to help each Colorado student demonstrate the knowledge and skills (competencies) needed to succeed in postsecondary settings and to advance in career pathways as lifelong learners and contributing citizens. This includes administration of Start Up, Sustain, and Innovation funding for schools, and programs like the School Counselor Corps grant.
- **The Educator Talent Division** supports the full continuum of educator talent management and human capital development, including professional development, licensure, grants to support educators, and recruitment.

Appendix 4: Overview of State Entities Central to Colorado's Postsecondary Talent Development System

Colorado Community College System (CCCS)

Technically known as the **Colorado State Approving Agency for Career and Technical Education at CCCS**, this report regularly uses the shorthand of “CTE” or “CTE (CCCS)” when referring to the efforts of the **Academic and Student Affairs Division** overseeing the **Career and Technical Education** staff administering state and federal Career and Technical Programs, as well as the **Veterans Education and Training** administration group. The VET group approves and oversees those programs for which veterans and their eligible dependents can receive federally-subsidized tuition and fee support.

Unlike the other entities highlighted, the Colorado Community College System (CCCS) is not a state agency. It is an independent institution of higher education that reports to their governing board (the State Board of Community Colleges and Occupational Education, SBCCOE) just as other public institutions in Colorado (e.g., Adams State) or systems with multiple campuses (e.g., Colorado State) report to their own governing boards.

CCCS is unique in that it also coordinates and manages a handful of federal funds and the governing board is statutorily required to coordinate with other entities involved in occupational education including local district colleges, area technical colleges, elementary and secondary schools, and other entities delivering this type of education in the state (CRS 23-60-102). State statute notes that the Director of Occupational Education “shall determine the allocation and distribution of state and federal vocational education funds to the community and technical colleges, local college districts, individual school districts, and other appropriate state and local educational agencies and institutions”. The director of occupational education administers state and federal funds related to occupational education through rules, regulations, financial disbursement, and reporting associated with the Colorado Technical Act (formerly, Colorado Vocational Act), and Perkins V funds. The majority of Perkins funds go to postsecondary institutions, while CTA funds match and exceed the Perkins funds going to secondary schools.

The development of a state's Perkins plan requires a comprehensive state-level needs assessment—a process that includes local businesses and industry representatives, members of the public, and detailed data reviews to identify gaps in CTE access and needs of the region and state. Colorado's current plan is valid until 2028 and efforts are currently underway to draft the new plan which would likely go through 2032.

Appendix 5: State and Federally Funded Programs, Initiatives, and Tools that Support Colorado's Education, Training, and Employment System

The table below has over one-hundred lines. A text-based summary is in [Appendix 12](#).

Table 5.1 Programs in the Education, Training, and Employment System.

Program	CDLE	CDHE	OEDIT	CDHS	DORA	CDE	CTE (CCCS)
Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Federal Grant**						✓	
Adult Education and Literacy Act**						✓	
Adult High School Program						✓	
Apprenticeship Center of Excellence**	✓						
Apprenticeship Resource Directory	✓						
ASCENT (Accelerating Students Through Concurrent Enrollment)*						✓	
Benefit Recovery Fund	✓						
BuildUp Grants**	✓						
Career & Technical Education/Perkins Funding*							✓
Career Advance Colorado*							✓
Career Development Incentive Program**	✓					✓	
Care Forward Colorado*							✓
Career Pathways	✓	✓					✓
CASFA		✓					
Chafee Education and Training Voucher (ETV)*		✓					

* Distributed funds administratively (e.g. formula-based)

** Distributed funds to sub-reipients (e.g. grants)

Appendix 5: State and Federally Funded Programs, Initiatives, and Tools that Support Colorado’s Education, Training, and Employment System

Program	CDLE	CDHE	OEDIT	CDHS	DORA	CDE	CTE (CCCS)
College Opportunity Fund (COF)*		✓					
Colorado Disability Funding Committee**	✓						
Colorado Educator Loan Forgiveness		✓					
Colorado GEAR UP**		✓					
Colorado Higher Education Research Authority (CHECRA) - Matching Research Grants**		✓					
Colorado Promise Tax Credit		✓					
Colorado P-TECH: Pathways in Technology Early College High Schools in Colorado*						✓	
Colorado Re-engaged Initiative (CORE)		✓					
Colorado Refugee Services Program**	✓						
Colorado Technical Act (CTA)							✓
Colorado Work Study*		✓					
Colorado Works (TANF)*				✓			
Concurrent Enrollment						✓	
Concurrent Enrollment Expansion & Innovation Grant Program**						✓	
COSI (Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative)**		✓					

* Distributed funds administratively (e.g. formula-based)

** Distributed funds to sub-receipients (e.g. grants)

Appendix 5: State and Federally Funded Programs, Initiatives, and Tools that Support Colorado’s Education, Training, and Employment System

Program	CDLE	CDHE	OEDIT	CDHS	DORA	CDE	CTE (CCCS)
Credential Quality Classification (ISCED)	✓	✓					
CTE & Apprenticeship Alignment	✓						✓
CW STEP (Colorado Works Subsidized Training and Employment Program)*				✓			
Dependent Tuition Assistance Program*		✓					
Digital Access Outreach	✓						
Disability Innovation Fund Grant - Pathways to Partnerships**	✓						
Displaced Homemaker Program**	✓						
Early Childhood Education Scholarships & Loan Forgiveness		✓				✓	
Educator Loan Forgiveness		✓					
Educator Recruitment and Retention Program						✓	
ELA and Workforce Services (Refugee)**	✓						
Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL)	✓						
Employment Support and Job Retention Services Program**	✓						
EmpowerEd*		✓					
Financial Aid - Need Based Grants (CSG, CGG)*		✓					

* Distributed funds administratively (e.g. formula-based)
 ** Distributed funds to sub-reipients (e.g. grants)

Appendix 5: State and Federally Funded Programs, Initiatives, and Tools that Support Colorado’s Education, Training, and Employment System

Program	CDLE	CDHE	OEDIT	CDHS	DORA	CDE	CTE (CCCS)
Financial Aid - CTE*		✓					
Fort Lewis College Native American Student Funding*		✓					
FosterEd*		✓					
Growing Great Teachers - Teacher Mentor Grant Program**		✓					
Hospitality Career & Secondary Education Grant**	✓						
Immigration Legal Defense Fund**	✓						
Improving Students’ Postsecondary Options (HB22-1366) and Outreach Initiatives (per C.R.S. 23-1-119(6)(a))		✓					
Integration of International Medical Graduates (IMG)	✓						
Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG)**	✓						
K-12 Educator Stipends & Resources (HB22-1220)*		✓					
My Colorado Journey	✓	✓					✓
New and Innovative Ideas Grant**	✓						
Online Platform for Public Benefits for Higher Education Students		✓					

* Distributed funds administratively (e.g. formula-based)

** Distributed funds to sub-receipients (e.g. grants)

Appendix 5: State and Federally Funded Programs, Initiatives, and Tools that Support Colorado's Education, Training, and Employment System

Program	CDLE	CDHE	OEDIT	CDHS	DORA	CDE	CTE (CCCS)
Open Educational Resources in Colorado**		✓					
Path4Ward*		✓					
Paving Access to Careers & Employment (PACE)	✓						
Performance Funding / Fee-for-Service (Higher Ed Operating)*		✓					
PROWD (Partners for Reentry Opportunities in Workforce Development)**	✓						
Qualified Apprenticeship Intermediary Grants**	✓						
Quality Teacher Recruitment Program						✓	
Quality Jobs, Equity, Strategy, & Training (QUEST)	✓						
Reciprocity & Access Programs (WICHE PSEP)*		✓					
Refugee Health Promotion Support Program	✓						
Refugee School Impact Program	✓						
Regional Talent Development Initiative (Opportunity Now Grants)**	✓		✓				
Rehire Colorado (Transitional Jobs Program)				✓			
RESEA*	✓						

* Distributed funds administratively (e.g. formula-based)

** Distributed funds to sub-receipients (e.g. grants)

Appendix 5: State and Federally Funded Programs, Initiatives, and Tools that Support Colorado's Education, Training, and Employment System

Program	CDLE	CDHE	OEDIT	CDHS	DORA	CDE	CTE (CCCS)
Reskilling, Upskilling, & Next-skilling Workers Funding**	✓						
Rural Health Care Workforce Initiative*		✓					
Rural In-Service Educator Stipend (RISE)		✓					
Rural Teacher Recruitment, Retention, and Professional Development**		✓					
Scale Up Grants**	✓						
School Counselor Corps Grant**						✓	
Skill Advance**			✓				✓
SNAP E&T*				✓			
SPARC (Strengthening Photovoltaic and Renewable Careers)**	✓	✓					
START UP- PWR K-12**						✓	
State Apprenticeship Expansion Formula Grant**	✓						
Statewide Longitudinal Data System (at OIT)	✓	✓				✓	✓
Statewide Welcome, Reception, and Integration Grant Program**	✓						
StudyColorado		✓					

* Distributed funds administratively (e.g. formula-based)

** Distributed funds to sub-receipients (e.g. grants)

Appendix 5: State and Federally Funded Programs, Initiatives, and Tools that Support Colorado’s Education, Training, and Employment System

Program	CDLE	CDHE	OEDIT	CDHS	DORA	CDE	CTE (CCCS)
SUSTAIN- PWR K-12*						✓	
Teacher Externship Program**	✓						
Teacher Mentor Grant Program**		✓					
Teacher Recruitment Education and Preparation (TREP)						✓	
Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)	✓						
Veterans’ Service-to-Career Program (VSCP)**	✓						
Wagner Peyser*	✓						
Wagner Peyser Governor’s Summer Job Hunt**	✓						
Wagner Peyser Migrant Seasonal Farm Worker (MSFW) Program*	✓						
Wagner Peyser Monitor Advocate Program*	✓						
WIOA Rapid Response Funds	✓						
WIOA Title 1, Adult Worker*	✓						
WIOA Title 1, Dislocated Worker*	✓						
WIOA Title 1, Youth Worker*	✓						
Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC)**	✓						

* Distributed funds administratively (e.g. formula-based)

** Distributed funds to sub-receipients (e.g. grants)

Appendix 5: State and Federally Funded Programs, Initiatives, and Tools that Support Colorado’s Education, Training, and Employment System

Program	CDLE	CDHE	OEDIT	CDHS	DORA	CDE	CTE (CCCS)
Workforce Development Enterprise (WEF formerly ESF)*	✓						
Workforce Innovation Grant**	✓						
Youth Mentoring Services (Refugee)	✓						

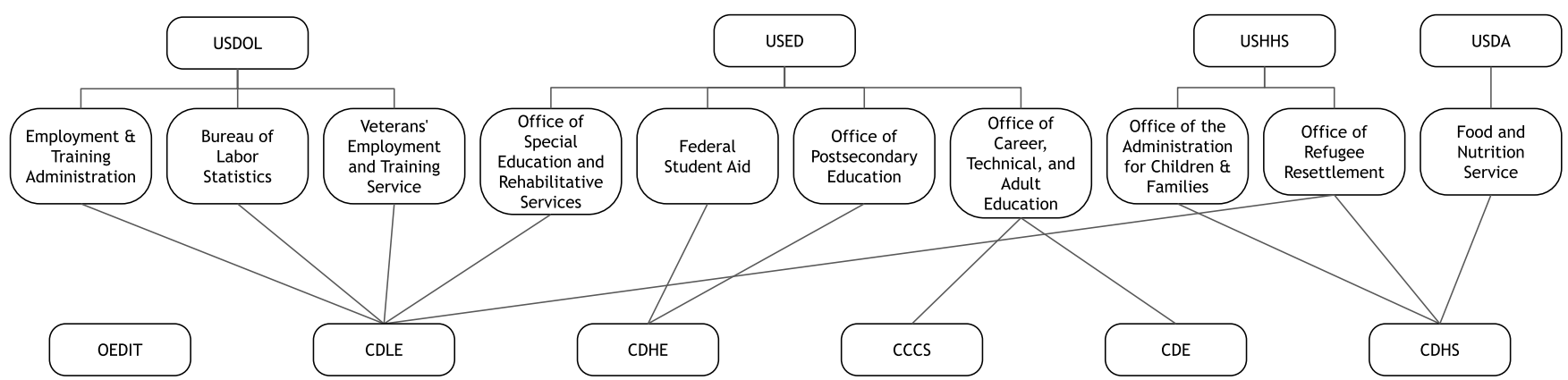
* Distributed funds administratively (e.g. formula-based)
** Distributed funds to sub-receipients (e.g. grants)

Appendix 6: Overview of Relevant Federal Agencies and Federally Funded Programs in Colorado

Federal funding to support the education and training of adults comes from four federal agencies: the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL), U.S. Department of Education (USED),⁶⁰ the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (USHHS), and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Each stream of funding has different regulations and federal guidance:

- USDOL - Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I - Adult
- USDOL - WIOA Title I - Dislocated Worker
- USDOL - WIOA Title I - Youth
- USED - WIOA Title II - Adult Education and Family Literacy Act
- USDOL - WIOA Title III- Wagner-Peyser Employment Services
- USED - WIOA Title IV - Vocational Rehabilitation Services
- USED - The Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V) - Career and Technical Education
- USHHS - Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- USHHS - Refugee and Entrant Assistance (which includes Refugee Cash Assistance and Refugee Support Services)
- USED - Federal Student Aid
- USDA - Supplementation Nutrition Assistance Program - Employment and Training (SNAP E&T)

Figure 6.1 Depiction of Flow of Funding from Federal to State Agencies



60 Note: This analysis was prepared prior to the U.S. Department of Education’s [announcement on November 18, 2025](#) of six new agency partnerships to administer some of the programs and funding formally housed within the Department of Education.

Appendix 6: Overview of Relevant Federal Agencies and Federally Funded Programs in Colorado

Table 6.1 Overview Target Populations and Services Provided by Federal Funds Involved in Colorado’s Postsecondary Education, Training, and Employment System

Fund	Target Population(s)	Services
USDOL WIOA Title I - Adult	Individuals age 18 and over. Priority for public assistance recipients and other low-income individuals, individuals who are basic skills deficient, veterans. ⁶¹	Career services, including assessment of skills, providing information about careers and the local labor market, job search assistance, development of an individual employment plan, career counseling, connection to internships and work experiences linked to careers, financial literacy, English language acquisition and Integrated Education and Training, information and assistance in filing for unemployment compensation, and assistance in establishing eligibility for federal and state financial aid. Training services include occupational skills training, on-the-job training, incumbent worker training, transitional jobs, and adult education and literacy provided concurrently or in combination with other training services.
USDOL WIOA Title I - Dislocated Worker	Individuals who have been laid off or have received notice of termination from employment, are self-employed but unemployed due to general economic conditions, spouses of a member of the Armed Forces on active duty who is unemployed due to relocation for permanent duty reassignment, or are displaced homemakers. ⁶²	Same as above.

61 [CLASP Overview of WIOA Title I Dislocated Worker](#)

62 [CLASP Overview of WIOA Title I Dislocated Worker](#)

Appendix 6: Overview of Relevant Federal Agencies and Federally Funded Programs in Colorado

Fund	Target Population(s)	Services
USDOL WIOA Title I - Youth	<p>Out-of-school youth: 16-24 year olds who are not attending any school and meet at least one of these criteria: dropped out of school; is within compulsory school age but did not attend during the previous school year; has obtained a secondary school diploma or equivalent but is low income and basic skills deficient or an English language learner; is in the juvenile or adult justice systems; is homeless, a runaway, or either in or aged out of foster care; is pregnant or parenting; is an individual with a disability; is low-income and “requires additional assistance to enter or complete an educational program or to secure or hold employment.”</p> <p>In-school youth: low-income individuals aged 14-21 who are attending school and meet at least one of these criteria: is basic skills deficient; is an English language learner; is homeless, a runaway, or either in or aged out of foster care; is pregnant or parenting; is an individual with a disability; and/or “requires additional assistance to complete an education program or secure and hold employment.”⁶³</p>	Dropout prevention and recovery, linkages between academic and occupational learning, paid and unpaid work experience with academic and occupational education components, training for a specific occupational cluster, career counseling, and exploration of and preparation for postsecondary education and training.

⁶³ [CLASP Overview of WIOA Title I Dislocated Worker](#)

Appendix 6: Overview of Relevant Federal Agencies and Federally Funded Programs in Colorado

Fund	Target Population(s)	Services
USED WIOA Title II - Adult Education and Family Literacy Act	Adults who are at least 16 years of age and not currently enrolled, or required to be enrolled, in high school. Additional eligibility criteria include one of more of the following: basic skills deficient; lack a high school diploma or its equivalent; function below the level of a high school graduate; or unable to speak, read, or write the English language. ⁶⁴	Adult education and literacy services, including workplace literacy, family literacy programs, and English language services
USDOL WIOA Title III- Wagner-Peyser Employment Services	Available to any jobseeker, regardless of employment status. Veterans receive priority, and disabled veterans receive the highest priority. Any employer seeking workers is eligible for employer services.	Services include job search and placement assistance for jobseekers, recruitment services and special technical services for employers, re-employment services for unemployment insurance claimants, labor exchange services for workers who have received notice of permanent or impending layoff, referrals and financial aid application assistance for training and educational, and the development and provision of labor market and occupational information. ⁶⁵
USED WIOA Title IV - Vocational Rehabilitation Services	Adults who have a physical or mental impairment that results in substantial employment barriers and who require services to “prepare for, secure, retain, advance in, or regain employment that is consistent with the applicant’s interests and abilities. States must give priority of services to persons with the “most significant disabilities.” ⁶⁶	Services can include assessment of needs; career coaching and career choice assistance; job search, placement, and retention; interpreter services; education and training services, including tuition, books, and supplies; and occupational license fees, tools, and equipment. ⁶⁷

⁶⁴ [CLASP Overview of WIOA Title II](#)

⁶⁵ [CLASP Overview of Wagner Peyser](#)

⁶⁶, ⁶⁷ [CLASP Overview of Vocational Services](#)

Appendix 6: Overview of Relevant Federal Agencies and Federally Funded Programs in Colorado

Fund	Target Population(s)	Services
USED Perkins V - Career and Technical Education	Students can participate in CTE at the middle or high school level and at postsecondary institutions	Provides students with the skills, knowledge, and experiences necessary to enter the labor market or continue with further occupational education or training.
USHHS Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)	Families with children in the home, pregnant people or those taking care of a child under 18 years old, if your family income is less than \$75,000 a year.	Individualized plan with connection to education, training, wrap-around supports.
USED Federal Student Aid	Individual who can demonstrate financial need for need-based federal student aid programs; be a U.S. citizen or an eligible noncitizen; have a valid Social Security number; be enrolled or accepted for enrollment as a regular student in an eligible degree or certificate program; maintain satisfactory academic progress in college or career school; show they're qualified to obtain a college or career school education	Grants, Work-Study Jobs, and Loans to support degree attainment. With the creation of Workforce Pell, federal student aid will also support the acquisition of short-term credentials.
USDA Supplementation Nutrition Assistance Program - Employment and Training (SNAP E&T)	Individual receiving SNAP in the month they participate in the activity	Job Search/Training, Community Service, Work-Experience, Self-Employment, Educational Programs, Vocational Education, Job Retention, Supportive Services

68 [CTE Overview](#)
69 [CDHS CO Works](#)
70, 71 [Understanding Federal Aid](#)
72 [USDA SNAP E&T](#)

Appendix 6: Overview of Relevant Federal Agencies and Federally Funded Programs in Colorado

USED also administers the following funds:

- Disability Innovation Fund Grant a competitive grant to support innovative efforts across Vocational Rehabilitation Services. Colorado Department of Labor and Employment is a current grantee.
- Colorado GEAR UP which is currently administered by the Colorado Department of Higher Education
- Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program which is currently administered by the Colorado Department of Higher Education
- Grants to IHEs for specific purposes

USDOL also administers the following funds:

- Competitive Grants like the PROWD and QUEST grants
- Formula and Competitive Apprenticeship Grants like the State Apprenticeship Expansion Formula
- Veterans Services Grants including Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG) and Veterans’ Service-to-Career Program (VSCP)
- Workforce Information Grants to support the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment’s Labor Market Information activities
- Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) and Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) which are administered by the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment

USHHS also administers the following funds:

- Refugee and Entrant Assistance which supports initial refugee cash assistance and refugee support services for refugees and other Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) eligible populations,⁷³ including employment services and training.

Table 6.2 compares the ten primary federal funding streams supporting Colorado's education, training, and employment system. These funds flow from four federal agencies through five different state agencies, each with distinct distribution models and varying levels of state flexibility. This distributed structure with WIOA titles split across three state agencies, Perkins funding managed separately through CCCS, and Federal Student Aid bypassing state control entirely illustrates the coordination challenges described in the main report. The proposed Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development would consolidate most of these funding streams (except TANF and SNAP E&T) under unified administration, enabling more strategic use of federal flexibility and reducing duplicative compliance efforts.

73 For information regarding eligible statuses visit the Office of Refugee Resettlement webpage Status and Documentation Requirements for the [ORR Refugee Resettlement Program](#)

Appendix 6: Overview of Relevant Federal Agencies and Federally Funded Programs in Colorado

Table 6.2 compares the ten primary federal funding streams supporting Colorado's education, training, and employment system. These funds flow from four federal agencies through five different state agencies, each with distinct distribution models and varying levels of state flexibility. This distributed structure with WIOA titles split across three state agencies, Perkins funding managed separately through CCCS, and Federal Student Aid bypassing state control entirely illustrates the coordination challenges described in the main report. The proposed Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development would consolidate most of these funding streams (except CTE, TANF, and SNAP E&T) under unified administration, enabling more strategic use of federal flexibility and reducing duplicative compliance efforts.

Table 6.2 Comparing Major Federal Funding Sources for the Education, Training, and Employment System in Colorado

Federal Agency	Funding	Funding Type ⁷⁴	State Agency	Distribution	State Role & Flexibility
USDOL	WIOA Titles I, III	Formula Grant	CDLE	Federal▯State▯County	States have flexibility in deciding allocation of funds to local workforce boards.
USED	WIOA Title II	Formula Grant	CDE	Federal▯State▯Grantees	States award grants to partners to deliver adult education services.
USED	WIOA Title IV	Formula Grant	CDLE	Federal▯State	States deliver services or can allocate to local counties to deliver.
USED	Perkins	Formula Grant	CCCS	Federal▯State▯CTE Providers	States have flexibility in deciding allocation of funds between CTE providers
USED	Federal Student Aid	Direct Aid to Students	CDHE	Federal▯Students	State role is limited in terms of distribution of federal funds to IHEs.
USHHS	TANF	Block Grant	CDHS	Federal▯State▯County	States have flexibility in using TANF funds for any activities meeting TANF's four purposes,
USDA	SNAP E&T	Formula Grant	CDHS	Federal▯State▯County	States must consult with state workforce development boards to administer.

⁷⁴ Formula grants allocate funds to states based on predetermined formulas (e.g., population, unemployment rates). Block grants give states lump-sum funding with broad discretion over use.

Please [click here to return](#) to where Appendix 6 was first mentioned in the main text.

Appendix 7: Overview of Boards and Commissions Involved in Colorado's Postsecondary Workforce Development System

Beyond the state agencies and programs, there are more than 20 Governor-appointed boards, commissions, and councils that advise, regulate, govern, and set strategies for a component part of the system. Below is a summary of the most relevant statewide boards, commissions, and councils with connection to the education, training, and employment system

- **The Colorado Commission of Higher Education (CCHE)** is a policy and coordinating board for higher education. CCHE is responsible for establishing a long-term vision for higher education in Colorado. This includes adopting strategic plans, statewide goals, and strategic priorities that align with workforce needs, economic development, and educational attainment goals. Additionally, CCHE sets statewide admissions standards and transfer guidelines and makes recommendations to the General Assembly and Governor for funding of IHEs.
- **The State Board for Community Colleges and Occupational Education (SBCCOE)** governs the system office and the 13 state system colleges and administers career and technical education funds. SBCCOE administers the rules, regulations, and funds associated with the Colorado Technical Act and is also the designated State Eligible Agency for Perkins V funds. SBCCOE serves as the state approving agency for veterans education and training.
- **The Colorado Workforce Development Council (CWDC)** is the State Workforce Development Board which is responsible for continuous improvement of the workforce system, oversight of WIOA funds, and ensuring a statewide strategic vision for workforce development. CWDC is considered the primary contact for interagency products like TalentFound, My Colorado Journey, the Talent Pipeline Report, and the Eligible Training Provider List. CWDC also supports the Business Experiential-Learning Commission and the State Youth Council. As part of the administration of American Rescue Plan Act dollars, the CWDC became responsible for administering \$60 million in federal grants and investments across the education, training, and employment system.

Colorado's State Board of Education also plays a role in the education, training, and employment system by overseeing the implementation of postsecondary workforce readiness programming delivered in K-12 settings and "supervising over the public schools of the state and the educational programs maintained and operated by all state governmental agencies for persons who have not completed the twelfth-grade level of instruction."⁷⁵

Other boards, commissions and councils include the governing boards for each IHE; regulatory boards like the Division of Private Occupational Schools and approximately 50 boards under DORA; advisory and strategic entities like the State Apprenticeship Council, Colorado Commission on Aging, State Rehabilitation Council, and Minority Business Advisory Council; and entities that direct funding like the Disability Funding Committee and Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative board. While the Governor appoints positions for many key boards, commissions and councils in the education, training, and employment system, there are additional boards, commissions, and councils that contribute. Public institutions of higher education (outside of SBCCOE) are governed by Regents and Trustees. Local workforce areas are governed by local workforce boards.

⁷⁵ [C.R.S. 22-2-106](#).

Please [click here to return](#) to where Appendix 7 was first mentioned in the main text.

Appendix 8: Overview of Other States' Efforts to Align Higher Education and Workforce

Table 8.1 Overview of Other States' Efforts to Align Higher Education and Workforce Functions

State	Year	Description of Efforts	Type of Change
Missouri	2019	The Missouri Department of Higher Education & Workforce Development (MDHEWD) was established in 2019 to combine the Missouri Department of Higher Education, the Division of Workforce Development, and the Missouri Economic Research and Information Center. Realigning postsecondary education with the public workforce system gives Missourians the full breadth of options available to fit their interests, resources, and abilities.	New Department
Virginia	2023	Passed legislation to create the Department of Workforce Development and Advancement (Virginia Works), which consolidated WIOA Title I & Title III. Virginia Works is tasked to be the central authority for workforce development. Virginia's new Department went live in July and they are still in the process of operationalizing the transition.	New Department
Oklahoma	2023	Governor Kevin Stitt signed an Executive Order in 2023 to create a Workforce Transformation Task Force made up of private and public sector leaders to evaluate Oklahoma's workforce development system. The Task Force helped draft the Oklahoma Workforce Transformation Action (SB 621), which established a new workforce commission with broad authority to shift and coordinate funding and to act as the principal point of contact on all things workforce development for the public, businesses, and policy makers.	New Workforce Commission
Alabama	2024	Governor Ivey pushed a Working for Alabama legislative package this year to overhaul the state's workforce development initiatives. Alabama is merging the Alabama Workforce Council and the State Workforce Development Board to create the Alabama Workforce Board. This board will direct the strategic vision for and implementation of state and federal workforce dollars. Beginning in October 2025, the Alabama Workforce Authority agency (a consolidation of the Department of Commerce's Workforce Development Division, Alabama Industrial Development Training and the Department of Labor) will be led by a cabinet secretary, the Secretary of Workforce.	New Board and New Agency

Appendix 8: Overview of Other States' Efforts to Align Higher Education and Workforce

Table 8.1 Overview of Other States' Efforts to Align Higher Education and Workforce Functions

State	Year	Description of Efforts	Type of Change
Indiana	2024	The Indiana Secretary of Commerce brought together workforce & economic development initiatives under one umbrella for stronger strategic coordination, taking a first step toward creating a more coherent system. Workforce and economic development go together: unified Commerce framework allows coordinated approach across programs (e.g., there is now a set of in-demand jobs that agencies are aligned to). IEDC (econ dev.) looks at the demand side of the economy while the DWD (workforce dev.) looks at supply	Align Workforce and Economic Development Initiatives
Tennessee	2024	Tennessee's Executive Order elevates the State Workforce Development Board as the central strategic leadership body guiding Tennessee's broader workforce agenda by leveraging technology and employer partners to personalize career pathways, drive continuous innovation, and maximize public return on investment. By ensuring the state's programs are effective, every Tennessean will have the opportunity to succeed, no matter what path they choose beyond high school graduation	Expand Board Responsibilities
Delaware	2024	Delaware's Executive Order establishes the Office of Workforce Development within the Delaware Department of Labor. The Executive Order also reestablishes and streamlines the Delaware Workforce Development Board. This effort will help organize and improve job training and education programs across the state, making sure all Delawareans have fair access to good jobs and training.	New Office

Please [click here to return](#) to where Appendix 8 was first mentioned in the main text.

Appendix 9: Overview of 1330 and 1215 Recommendations

The **1330 Student Success and Workforce Revitalization report** was published in 2021 and included the recommendations listed below. The full report can be accessed on the [Colorado Department of Higher Education](#) website.

1. **Innovation and Scaling Partnership Grants:** Multiple stakeholders, including regional leaders, lawmakers, and the governor, should leverage American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, additional anticipated federal funds, and matching local, private, and philanthropic dollars to create a competitive statewide and regional grant program to spark innovation and scale proven and promising, sustainable, approaches to postsecondary, workforce and community partnerships.
2. **Enhance Transparency of Postsecondary and Workforce Data:** Policymakers should invest in a Statewide Student Success Data Interface, with the initial focus providing higher education leaders and policy makers with easy access to actionable metrics of student success.
3. **Develop Stackable Credential/Work-Based Learning Pathways:** Lawmakers should work with education and business leaders to develop legislation that creates credential pathways in high-need, high-value fields at large scale.
4. **Eliminate Equity Gaps:** Lawmakers should require postsecondary institutions to submit a multi-year plan, with a detailed budget, to eliminate racial, regional and socio-economic equity gaps in credential attainment and other measures of student success.
5. **Create a Strategic Talent Finance Plan:** CCHE should task state leaders from institutions of higher education and industry to identify options for additional, sustainable funding for postsecondary education, with the goal of making Colorado's postsecondary learning ecosystem the best in the nation by 2030.
6. **Create a Strategic Talent Finance Plan:** CCHE should task state leaders from institutions of higher education and industry to identify options for additional, sustainable funding for postsecondary education, with the goal of making Colorado's postsecondary learning ecosystem the best in the nation by 2030.

Appendix 9: Overview of 1330 and 1215 Recommendations

Colloquially known as the 1215 report, the **Secondary, Postsecondary and Work-based Learning Integration Task Force Report** was published December 2023 and included the recommendations listed below. The full report can be accessed on the [Colorado Department of Education](#) website.

1. To streamline program administration, all PWR programs under CDE's statutory authority should be housed under a new singular PWR umbrella.
2. Create a single, streamlined PWR program reporting structure that results in one annual, comprehensive report.
3. Establish and utilize a robust Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS). This system should interface with data reported from the relevant entities that is shareable across agencies and comply with existing statutory parameters, including state and federal data privacy laws. There should also be an investment in a public-facing dashboard with education and employment outcomes to help inform decisions made by learners and families (see Recommendation 5).
4. Update the PWR measures in Colorado's accountability performance framework, including data elements (and ultimately, weights) to reflect the importance of learners graduating ready for jobs and additional training.
5. Develop a "single source of information" web-based platform for empowering Coloradans with data and guidance to find, finance, and flourish in personalized, lifelong career pathways.
6. Develop and execute a comprehensive and complementary communications strategy to raise awareness and interest among Coloradans about personalized, lifelong career pathways.
7. Invest in personalized career navigational support by prioritizing and professionalizing the function of career coaching in education and workforce development systems and in community settings.
8. Carefully deploy a suite of tech-enabled advising and coaching tools to augment human capacity and focus attention on high-touch supports.
9. Ensure there is guaranteed, reliable, and consistent funding for PWR programs to fund attainment for learners who participate in PWR programs. The attainment fund can either be created through a new categorical funding stream, modeled after the Career and Technical Act (formerly the Colorado Vocational Act of 1970, C.R.S. 23-8-101), or a streamlined funding mechanism.
10. Create an additional innovation fund to cover start-up and program costs for initiating a PWR program and to incent program expansion in more areas of the state. Expansion funding would be provided in order for LEPs to offer a new pathway or expand current programming to additional learners.
11. Define and invest in regional intermediaries to lead PWR partnerships.
12. Continue to expand investment in Sector Partnerships as the foremost platform for employers in a sector to share their common workforce needs.
13. Support employer engagement in high-quality work-based learning opportunities, while minimizing burdensome requirements.

Click [here to return](#) to the main text where Appendix 9 was first mentioned.

Appendix 10: Major Investments & Programs for Colorado Credentials

Developed for the Colorado Governor’s Office by Jobs for the Future (2025), Tables 10.1 through 10.3 summarizes key active and sunset programs in Colorado pertaining to credentials.

Table 10.1 Overview of Active State Funds and Initiatives Related to Credentials

Initiative Name	Description	Administering Entity	Funding
Career Advance Colorado	<p>Est. under HB23-1246. Large-scale investment to enable community and technical colleges to fully cover tuition, fees, course materials, and other costs for training programs in high priority areas: construction, early childhood education, education, forestry, firefighting, law enforcement, and nursing.</p> <p>Flags: Early evidence indicates positive impact on enrollment, credential completion, and wage outcomes for completers. One-time funding was catalytic but revealed gaps (e.g., dollars sometimes reached already-enrolled students). Highlights need for sustained quality-linked financing.</p>	State Board for Community Colleges and Occupational Education (SBCCOE)	<p>Allocation: One-time, \$38.6M</p> <p>Source: General Fund</p> <p>Flow of funds: Direct to institutions; student support</p>
Incentives for Post-secondary Education	<p>Est. under HB24-1340. Refundable tax credit for low- and middle-income Coloradans (incomes < \$90k) enrolled in public IHEs that offers complete reimbursement for tuition and fees for a student’s first 65 credits. Eligibility restricted to students who matriculate at IHE within two years of high school graduation. The tax credit supports the pursuit of short-term programs and degree programs.</p>	Revenue and Department of Higher Education (DHE)	<p>Allocation: One-time, \$92.6M</p> <p>Source: Tax Credit</p> <p>Flow of funds: Direct to students; student support</p>

Note: This landscape scan was developed for the Colorado Governor’s Office by Jobs for the Future (2025).

Appendix 10: Major Investments & Programs for Colorado Credentials

Table 10.1 Overview of Active State Funds and Initiatives Related to Credentials - Continued

Initiative Name	Description	Administering Entity	Funding
Opportunity Now (Regional Talent Development Initiative Grant Program)	<p>Est. under HB22-1350 and expanded under HB24-1365. Regional grant program wherein awardees convene training providers, employers, and other stakeholders to better understand & develop comprehensive plans to address regional workforce needs. Expansion included an amendment prioritizing evidence-based programs with strong outcomes.</p> <p>Effective Jan. 1, 2026, providers may apply for refundable state income tax credit to reimburse up to 50% of the costs of equipment & facilities for associated programs.</p>	Office of Economic Development and International Trade (OEDIT)	<p>Allocation & Sources: One-time, \$89M (ARPA), \$1.8M (General Fund), additional \$3.8M allocated from General Fund in 2024</p> <p>Flow of funds: Direct to providers; capacity-building</p>
Skill Advance Colorado	<p>Provides reimbursement to businesses and nonprofits to develop or expand short-term, customized training in OEDIT-defined key industries. Funding is broken out into two programs, the Existing Industry (EI) Job Training Program and Colorado First (CF) Job Training Program. CF provides funds for net new hire training and focuses on new and expanding businesses in CO; EI provides funds for incumbent worker training and supports established CO businesses with adapting to new technology and preventing layoffs. Companies must contribute a minimum of 40% (cash or in-kind) of the total costs for grant-funded training. Per learner max. annual funding is \$2,800 for CF and \$2,500 for EI.</p>	Joint, CCCS and OEDIT	<p>Allocation: Annual, \$4.5M since</p> <p>FY2015Source: Customized Job Training Program</p> <p>Flow of funds: Direct to institutions, who manage employer reimbursement; capacity-building</p>

Note: This landscape scan was developed for the Colorado Governor’s Office by Jobs for the Future (2025).

Appendix 10: Major Investments & Programs for Colorado Credentials

Table 10.1 Overview of Active State Funds and Initiatives Related to Credentials - Continued

Initiative Name	Description	Administering Entity	Funding
Career Development Incentive Program (CDIP)	<p>Est. under HB18-1266 and expanded under SB23-065. Provides school districts that encourage high school students to complete qualified industry credential programs, internships, pre-RA, or computer science AP courses. Leverages the NDC Quality Framework and ISCED levels to signal first-rung quality and progression potential.</p> <p>Flags: Historically increased access but is transitioning into the broader “Big 3” K-12 funding formula (i.e. credential attainment, work-based experience and college credit).</p>	CDE	<p>Allocation: Annual, \$9.5M through 2033</p> <p>Source: The State Education Fund</p> <p>Flow of funds: Direct to institutions, via formula (max. \$1,000 per pupil)</p>
Opportunities for Credential Attainment (Stackable Credential Pathways)	<p>Est. under SB22-192. The Act supports the mapping of stackable pathways in priority industries and expands credit for prior learning (CPL) by requiring CDHE to develop a process for identifying and creating stackable pathways, including recognition of Registered Apprenticeship programs. The authorizing legislation also requires CDHE to disburse funds to community and technical colleges to support student access to NDC programs.</p> <p>Flags: Many learners do not progress linearly through mapped pathways; incentives and navigation supports are needed to make “stackability” real.</p>	CDHE	<p>Allocation: \$2.8M for FY22-23</p> <p>Source: General Fund</p> <p>Flow of funds: Direct to institutions; student support</p>
Tuition Assistance for Certificate Programs (CTE Grant)	<p>Est. under HB17-1180. Students enrolled in CTE certificate programs may qualify for tuition assistance if they meet the income eligibility requirements for the federal Pell grant program, but the certificate program does not meet the Pell grant minimum credit hour requirements.</p>	CDHE	<p>Allocation: \$450,000</p> <p>Source: General Fund</p> <p>Flow of Funds: Direct to students; student support</p>

Note: This landscape scan was developed for the Colorado Governor’s Office by Jobs for the Future (2025).

Appendix 10: Major Investments & Programs for Colorado Credentials

Table 10.1 Overview of Active State Funds and Initiatives Related to Credentials - Continued

Initiative Name	Description	Administering Entity	Funding
Talent Pipeline Report	Est. under SB14-205 . Mandated annual cross-agency report tracking talent supply and demand, wage trends, and educational attainment. The TPR currently publishes an annual Top Jobs list that informs how the state approaches “in demand” jobs. Flag: Though widely cited, the report is not yet tied directly to credential quality or ROI metrics. Originally the act also created a Talent Pipeline Cash Fund in the state treasury - this fund has since sunset.	CWDC	
New & Emerging Industries Apprenticeship Tax Credit	Est. under HB24-1439 . For income tax years 2025 - 2034, employers may access refundable income tax credit if they employ an apprentice for at least 6 months and either sponsor a RAP or are a RAP employer-partner. Up to \$6,300 for six months plus \$1,050 for each additional month of employment, up to \$12,600 per apprentice per year (limit 10 apprentices per yr). Must be in a “ new & emerging ” occupation.	SAA reviews applications/ Department of Revenue administers	Allocation: Annual, max. \$15M thru 2034 Flow of funds: Income tax credit to employers; incentive funds
ScaleUp Grants	Est. under HB24-1439 . Competitive grants to current or prospective RAP employers or sponsors that support the development or expansion of RAPs. Grants awarded in increments up to \$50k.	CLDE/Apprenticeship CO	Allocation: \$2M Source: General Fund Flow of Funds: Direct to RAP employers or sponsors; capacity-building

Note: This landscape scan was developed for the Colorado Governor’s Office by Jobs for the Future (2025).

Appendix 10: Major Investments & Programs for Colorado Credentials

Table 10.2 Overview of Inactive (Sunset) State Funds and Initiatives Related to Credentials in Colorado

Initiative Name	Description	Administering Entity	Funding
Care Forward Colorado	<p>Est. under SB22-226, now sunset. Pandemic-era stimulus funding to provide zero-cost, short-term health care training (e.g., nursing assistants, allied health).</p> <p>Flag: Increased credential attainment but sunset after ARPA dollars expired, underscoring the challenge of building sustainable models for short-term training.</p>	SBCCOE	<p>Allocation: One-time, \$26M</p> <p>Source: SLFRF - ARPA</p> <p>Flow of funds: Reimbursement to providers; student support & capacity-building</p>
Reskilling, Upskilling, and Next-skilling (RUN) Workers	<p>Est. under HB21-1264, now sunset. Funded community colleges and training providers to rapidly expand short-term, in-demand programs.</p> <p>Flag: Helped catalyze new offerings and partnerships but lacked long-term sustainability or systematic ROI tracking.</p>	CWDC	<p>Allocation: One-time, \$25M</p> <p>Source: ARPA & General Fund</p> <p>Flow of funds: Direct to institutions (local WDBs)</p>

Note: This landscape scan was developed for the Colorado Governor’s Office by Jobs for the Future (2025).

Appendix 10: Major Investments & Programs for Colorado Credentials

Table 10.3 Overview of Key Federal Investments in Non Degree Credentials Relevant to Colorado

Initiative Name	Description	Administering Entity	Funding
WIOA Title I Adult	Federal formula allocation for WIOA Title I Adult training programs in Colorado.	CDLE	Allocation: \$10.25M for PY24 Source: U.S. Department of Labor formula funds Flow of funds: From CDLE to local workforce development boards.
Colorado Apprenticeship Incentive Grant	Competitive funding to support the development and scale of RAPs and pre-RA programs. Capped at \$150k per awardee. Funded via the U.S. DOL Apprenticeship Building America Round 2 Grant program.	Arapahoe/Douglas Works!	Allocation: One-time, \$6M Source: Federal/U.S. DOL

Note: This landscape scan was developed for the Colorado Governor’s Office by Jobs for the Future (2025).

Click [here to return](#) to the main text where Appendix 10 was first mentioned.

Appendix 11: Long-Term Recommendations for New Agency

Recommendation Category	Recommendation Description	Anticipated Timeline
Governance and Strategy Setting	Revisit the required composition of members for various advisory committees and state boards/commissions to reinforce connection to this state agency.	2027+
Data, Outcome Evaluation, and ROI	Grow the list of postsecondary and workforce programs that demonstrably move Colorado learners into good jobs with good wages, and help more Coloradans access these proven and evidence-based options.	2027+
Operational Improvements	As state entities procure services from vendors, they often contract with the same vendor for similar services across every single agency, losing out on economies of scale. With an eye towards long term agency consolidation, explore state contracting for technology platforms to promote interoperability and to try to achieve some cost savings through a statewide license (e.g. CRMs, Work-based Learning platforms.)	2027+
Operational Improvements	Establish a grant writing/development function as part of the new agency who is responsible for ensuring alignment of fundraising efforts and their connection to the goals of the new agency.	2027+
Business Engagement & Industry Strategy	Support employer engagement in high-quality work-based learning opportunities, while minimizing burdensome requirements by clarifying WBL models, increasing IHE support, and aligning on priority models for state investment. This is a complement to a recommendation from the 1215 taskforce.	2027+
Career Navigation, Access, & Outreach	Establish shared resources and a formal learning community of practitioners in the new state agency to support alignment and professional development around career navigation and advising for the education, training, and employment system.	2027+
Career Navigation, Access, & Outreach	Develop a quality career advising framework to align with and support other state frameworks such as the work-based learning continuum, career cluster model and high quality pathways framework	2027+
Credentials, Licensure, & Pathways Alignment	Bring degrees and non-degree credentials under one article in statute to create a clearer schema of credential types and quality standards.	2027+
Supporting Local Administration	Assess impact of current concurrent enrollment financing structure and explore a statewide contract for concurrent and dual enrollment. Align with the implementation and accountability structure of the HB 25-1278 "big three".	2027+

Click [here to return](#) to the main text where Appendix 11 was first mentioned.

Appendix 12: Text-Based Descriptions for Images and Tables

Figure 1 Description

Image 1 depicts a timeline with seven different time frames (year ranges or individual years) listed with the specific programs, laws, and other efforts related to Colorado's postsecondary education, training, and employment resources. In total, there are 35 programs listed and no year-range or individual year has fewer than four items listed.

- 2008: Colorado's Achievement Plan for Kids ([SB 08-212](#))
- 2009: Concurrent Enrollment Programs Act ([HB 09-1319](#))
- 2010: Student Bill of Rights/ PLA ([§23-1-125\(4\)](#))
- 2012: Transferable Academic Credit for PLA ([§23-1-125\(4.5\)](#))
- 2015: Pathways in Technology Early College High School ([HB 15-1270](#))
- 2016: Pre-apprenticeship & Apprenticeship Study ([HB 16-1287](#))
- 2018: Career Development Incentive Program ([HB 18-1266](#))
- 2019: Apprenticeship Resource Directory ([SB19-171](#))
- 2020: College Credit for Work Experience ([HB 20-1002](#))
- 2020: School Information for Apprenticeship Directory ([SB20-081](#))
- 2021: Higher Education Student Success ([HB 21-1330](#))
- 2021: Statewide Apprentice Agency ([HB 21-1007](#))
- 2021: CDIP Expansion ([SB 21-119](#))
- 2021: Path4Ward ([SB 21-106](#))
- 2022: Study of Expanding High School ([HB 22-1215](#))
- 2022: Expansion of Experiential Learning ([SB 22-140](#))
- 2022: Stackable Credentials ([SB 22-192](#))
- 2022: Postsecondary Student Success System ([HB22-1349](#))
- 2022: Regional Talent Development Initiative Grant Program ([HB22-1350](#))
- 2023: Promotion of Apprenticeship ([HB23-1212](#))
- 2023: Support In Demand Career Workforce ([HB23-1246](#))
- 2023: Universal High School Scholarship ([SB23-205](#))
- 2023: CDIP Expansion ([SB23-065](#))
- 2023: Teacher Degree Apprenticeship Program ([SB23-087](#))
- 2024: Incentives for Post-Secondary Education ([HB24-1340](#))
- 2024: Statewide Longitudinal Data System ([HB 24-1364](#))
- 2024: Opportunity Now 2.0 ([HB 24-1365](#))
- 2024: Apprenticeship & CTE ([SB 24-104](#))
- 2024: Apprenticeship Incentives ([HB 24-1439](#))
- 2024: Student Bill of Rights-Transfer ([SB 24-163](#))
- 2024: Quality Credential & ISCED ([SB 24-143](#))
- 2025: Transfer Portal ([HB25-1038](#))
- 2025: Collegiate WBL ([HB 25-1186](#))
- 2025: K-12 PWR ([SB 25-315](#))
- 2025: K-12 Accountability ([HB 25-1278](#))

Table 1 Description

Table 1 is intended to show the breadth of Colorado’s postsecondary talent development system. There are five columns: Regional structures, navigation and resource organizations, education and training organizations, education and training programs, and credential types.

Regional structures includes: 178 school districts, 64 counties, 21 Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (which are regional entities that provide shared services to school districts), 10 workforce areas , 14 economic development regions

Navigation and Resource Organizations: 75 human services offices, 55 workforce center locations, 47 qualified apprenticeship intermediaries (Qualified Apprenticeship Intermediaries are organizations recognized by the State Apprenticeship Agency for connecting talent or businesses to Registered Apprenticeship Programs), 25 vocational rehabilitation offices

Education and training organizations: 472 K-12 schools with Career and Technical Education (CTE) offerings, 2 public local district colleges, 3 public area technical colleges, 13 public community colleges, 13 public universities and research institutions, 91 adult education providers, 67 private four-year institutions and Bible/seminary colleges, 290+ private occupational schools, 622 approved education and training providers for Veterans programs

Education and training programs: 300+ registered apprenticeship programs, 4500+ programs eligible for participants of the public workforce system, 9800+ programs of study offered across public and private institutions of higher education, 15 career cluster options via CTE

Credential types: 194 apprenticeship occupations, 131 licenses
4,164 certificates, 1,890 associate degrees, 1,913 bachelor’s degrees, 1,414 master’s degrees, 453 doctorates

Please [click here to return](#) to the page in the main text with Table 1.

Figure 5 Description

Figure 5 is an organization chart depicting the complexity of the postsecondary talent development system in Colorado. At the top of the organization chart is the Governor. Five agencies are connected to the Governor: CDHS, OEDIT, DORA, CDLE, and CDHE. Listed under each of these agencies are all the divisions. Some of the divisions are outlined in bold to indicate they are a part of the postsecondary talent system. There are smaller boxes attached to the divisions that indicate if some sort of board or commission is associated with the division. For example, the Student Success and Academic Affairs division of CDHE has connections to what is known as the COSI Board. The bolded divisions for each agency and any associated boards or commissions are listed below. Unbolded divisions or offices and tangential boards are not written out below because the intention of the figure is to show how distributed the education, training, and workforce development efforts are in Colorado. (The description continues on the the next page.)

Please [click here to return](#) to the page in the main text with Table 1.

Figure 5 Description (Continued)

CDHE has 16 divisions listed and the Office of Economic Security is the only one bolded. The State Board of Human Services is associated with CDHS, but no other boards or commissions are listed.

OEDIT has 12 divisions listed and the Talent Innovation Office is the only one bolded. There are 8 boards or commissions listed, none directly tied to the Talent Innovation Office.

DORA has nine divisions listed. The only bolded division is DPO, or the Division of Professions and Occupations. More than 50 boards are associated with DORA in some way, none are specifically named in the figure.

CDLE has 13 divisions listed and the following are bolded: Division of Unemployment Insurance, Executive Director's Office, CWDC staff, Office of New Americans, Division of Employment and Training, Division of Labor Statistics and Standards, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. Office of the Future of Work and the State Apprenticeship Agency, and the Colorado Disability Opportunity Office. The following boards and commissions are bolded: BEL Commission, CWDC, SRC, SAC, and the Colorado Disability Funding Committee.

There is also a dotted line from CDHE to a box with institutions of higher education (four-year public universities, local district colleges, CCCS and their board (the SBCCOE), and area technical colleges). There are no divisions listed for these institutions. They are autonomous. While the governor can appoint members to most governing boards (the regents of the University of Colorado are the exception as they are elected), the governor cannot directly impact the institutions.

In addition to the five agencies listed under the governor is the Colorado Department of Education (CDE). CDE is not connected to the governor as it is overseen by the elected State Board of Education. The divisions that are bolded under CDE are Postsecondary Workforce Readiness (PWR) and Adult Education Initiatives.

Figure 6 Description

Figure 6 is a complex organization chart with three levels: Federal agencies, state entities, and local entities. Four federal agencies (the US Departments of Labor, Education, Health and Human Services, and Department of Agriculture) are listed, each with between 1-4 Offices under the agency; for example, the Bureau of Labor Statistics is under the Department of Labor. These offices are connected to one or more state agencies in the middle of the figure (OEDIT, CDLE, CDHE, CTE/CCCS, CDE, CDHS) and/or to one or more of the local entities at the bottom of the figure (RAPs, community-based organizations, County workforce and human services centers, institutions of higher education, K-12 school districts, or businesses). The state and local level entities also have lines between them. This is an illustrative figure demonstrating complexity.

Please [click here to return](#) to the page in the main text with Figure 6.

Table 2 Description

Table 2 is titled “Snapshot of the Infrastructure and Functions of Key Entities in Colorado’s Postsecondary Talent Development System”. This table summarizes information about how six state agencies (CDLE, CDHE, OEDIT, CDHS, DORA, and CDE) and the CTE division of CCCS are involved in the system. [Appendix 4](#) is linked here and provides more information about each of the entities in this table.

We have divided Table 2 into two separate tables below for those using screen readers.

Table 2.A Executive Branch Status and Funding Sources for the Entity

	CDLE	CDHE	OEDIT	CDHS	DORA	CDE	CTE (CCCS)
Agency of the Executive Branch	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Primary Funding Source for education, training, employment system	Federal	State	State	Federal	State	State	State

Appendix 12: Text-Based Descriptions for Images and Tables

Table 2.B Comparison of Capabilities of Each Entity

	CDLE	CDHE	OEDIT	CDHS	DORA	CDE	CTE (CCCS)
Administer tax credits	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	No
Business engagement, navigation & support	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Data collection & analysis	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Direct service delivery to learners	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No
Direct service delivery to jobseeker	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Direct service delivery to worker	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
Direct service delivery to business	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
Administers pass-through funding to local implementers	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Grant distribution and oversight	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Guidance & support to local implementers	Yes - Workforce Centers, Registered Apprenticeship Programs, Grantees	Yes - institutions of higher education, community based organizations	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Regulatory authority	Yes - Over Registered Apprenticeship Programs, Unemployment Insurance	Yes - Private Occupational Schools, Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative (COSI), College Assist, Transfer	No	Yes - County Human Service Programs	Yes - Professions and Occupations	Yes - School Districts, Educator Licensing	No - but the board for CCCS oversees CTE programs

Appendix 12: Text-Based Descriptions for Images and Tables

Figure 9 - Accessible Tables

The three tables below are divided by Function Type. There are three function types: 1) Strategy, evaluation, and communications; 2) Agency Infrastructure; and 3) local support and program execution.

Fig 9 - Table 1 - Functions in Strategy, Evaluation and Communications Function Type

Function	Function Description
Strategy, Communications, Policy, & Fundraising	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Set strategy• Allocate resources• Manage strategic communications• Fundraise• Manage legislative process
Data, Research & Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conduct research related to the system• Publish reports (E.g. Talent Pipeline Report, Return on Investment Report)• Assess and refine program models & standards• Coordinate programmatic evaluation• Collect, host, and manage data• Forecast skills and industry demand

Fig 9 - Table 2 - Functions in Agency Infrastructure Function Type

Function	Function Description
Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Manage recruitment, hiring, and training of agency staff• Manage compensation and benefits, and employee relations• Manage operational excellence initiatives• Manage facilities• Manage Information Technology systems and products
Finance & Compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Oversee financial operations including budget, accounting, procurement, financial monitoring and audits• Distribute financial aid• Ensure fiscal responsibility and regulatory compliance across all programs

Appendix 12: Text-Based Descriptions for Images and Tables

Figure 9 - Accessible Tables (continued)

Fig 9 - Table 3 - Functions in Local Support and Program Execution Function Type

Function	Function Description
Community Partnerships & Strategic Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coordinate with other state agencies• Coordination with navigation and resource organizations (e.g. workforce centers)• Coordination with education and training organizations (e.g. institutions of higher education, Registered Apprenticeship Programs, adult education providers)• Coordination with industry intermediaries and labor organizations• Manage Centers of Excellence<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ WBL Center of Excellence◦ Career Advising Center of Excellence◦ Permeability & Pathway
Training Provider Quality Assurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure quality and compliance for Private Occupational Schools, Private Postsecondary Education Institutions and Registered Apprenticeship Programs
Service Delivery, Programs & Grant Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Administer grants and funding to local implementers• Administer grants and programs to serve learners, workers, and businesses• Provide direct services to learners and workers to access education, training, and employment

Please [click here to return](#) to the page with Figure 9 in the main text.

Appendix 5, Table 5.1, Text-Based Description

Table 1 in Appendix 5 is referenced in the main text to demonstrate how many programs are in the talent development system. The table has 104 rows and seven columns corresponding to the main entities involved in the system (CDLE, CDHE, OEDIT, CDHS, DORA, CDE, and CTE/CCCS). In the description below, each program is listed followed by the entities involved.

The list is organized so that programs with the highest number of entities involved are listed first. Where appropriate, programs are identified as either distributing funds administratively (for example, if they are formula-based) or distributing funds to sub-recipients (for example, distributing grants).

Four entities are involved in program/initiative:

- Statewide Longitudinal Data System (housed at OIT) including: CDLE, CDHE, CDE, and CTE (CCCS)

Three entities are involved in the program/initiative:

- Career Pathways including: CDLE, CDHE, CTE (CCCS)
- My Colorado Journey including: CDLE, CDHE, CTE (CCCS)

Two entities are involved:

- Career Development Incentive Program includes: CDLE, CDE (Funds distributed to sub-recipients.)
- Credential Quality Classification (ISCED) includes: CDLE, CDHE
- CTE & Apprenticeship Alignment includes: CDLE, CTE (CCCS)
- Early Childhood Education Scholarships & Loan Forgiveness includes: CDHE, CDE
- Regional Talent Development Initiative (Opportunity Now Grants) includes: CDLE, OEDIT (Funds distributed to sub-recipients.)
- Skill Advance includes: OEDIT, CTE (CCCS) (Funds distributed to sub-recipients.)
- SPARC (Strengthening Photovoltaic and Renewable Careers) includes: CDLE, CDHE (Funds distributed to sub-recipients.)

Only CDHS involved:

- Colorado Works (TANF) (Formula-based fund distribution.)
- CW STEP (Colorado Works Subsidized Training and Employment Program) (Formula-based fund distribution.)
- Rehire Colorado (Transitional Jobs Program)
- SNAP E&T (Funds distributed to sub-recipients.)

Only CTE/CCCS involved:

- Career & Technical Education (CTE)/Perkins Funding (Formula-based fund distribution.)
- Career Advance Colorado (Formula-based fund distribution.)
- Care Forward Colorado
- Colorado Technical Act (CTA)

Appendix 5, Table 5.1, Text-Based Description

Only CDLE involved:

- Apprenticeship Center of Excellence (Funds distributed to sub-recipients.)
- Apprenticeship Resource Directory
- Benefit Recovery Fund
- BuildUp Grants (Funds distributed to sub-recipients.)
- Colorado Disability Funding Committee (Funds distributed to sub-recipients.)
- Colorado Refugee Services Program
- Digital Access Outreach
- Disability Innovation Fund Grant/Pathways to Partnerships (Funds distributed to sub-recipients.)
- Displaced Homemaker Program (Funds distributed to sub-recipients.)
- ELA and Workforce Services (Refugee) (Funds distributed to sub-recipients.)
- Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL)
- Employment Support and Job Retention Services Program (Funds distributed to sub-recipients.)
- Hospitality Career & Secondary Education Grant (Funds distributed to sub-recipients.)
- Immigration Legal Defense Fund (Funds distributed to sub-recipients.)
- Integration of International Medical Graduates (IMG)
- Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG) (Funds distributed to sub-recipients.)
- New and Innovative Ideas Grant (Funds distributed to sub-recipients.)
- Paving Access to Careers & Employment (PACE)
- Partners for Reentry Opportunities in Workforce Dev. (Funds distributed to sub-recipients.)
- Qualified Apprenticeship Intermediary Grants (Funds distributed to sub-recipients.)
- Quality Jobs, Equity, Strategy, & Training (QUEST)
- Refugee Health Promotion Support Program
- Refugee School Impact Program
- RESEA (Funds distributed to sub-recipients.)
- Reskilling, Upskilling, and Next-skilling Workers Funding (Funds distributed to sub-recipients.)
- Scale Up Grants (Funds distributed to sub-recipients.)
- State Apprenticeship Expansion Formula Grant (Funds distributed to sub-recipients.)
- Statewide Welcome, Reception, and Integration Grant Program (Funds distributed to sub-recipients.)
- Teacher Externship Program (Funds distributed to sub-recipients.)
- Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)
- Veterans' Service-to-Career Program (VSCP) (Funds distributed to sub-recipients.)
- Wagner Peyser (Funds distributed to sub-recipients.)
- Wagner Peyser Governor's Summer Job Hunt (Funds distributed to sub-recipients.)
- Wagner Peyser Migrant Seasonal Farm Worker Program (Funds distributed to sub-recipients.)
- Wagner Peyser Monitor Advocate Program (Funds distributed to sub-recipients.)
- WIOA Rapid Response Funds
- WIOA Title 1 - three programs: Adult Worker, Dislocated Worker, Youth Worker (each with funds distributed to sub-recipients.)
- Workforce Development Enterprise (WEF formerly ESF) (Funds distributed to sub-recipients.)
- Workforce Innovation Grant (Funds distributed to sub-recipients.)
- Youth Mentoring Services (Refugee)

Appendix 5, Table 5.1, Text-Based Description

Only CDHE involved:

- CASFA
- Chafee Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program (Formula-based fund distribution.)
- College Opportunity Fund (COF) (Formula-based fund distribution.)
- Colorado Educator Loan Forgiveness
- Colorado GEAR UP (Funds distributed to sub-recipients.)
- Colorado Higher Education Research Authority (CHECRA) - Matching funds for Research Grants (Funds distributed to sub-recipients.)
- Colorado Promise Tax Credit
- Colorado Re-engaged Initiative (CORE)
- Colorado Work Study (Formula-based fund distribution.)
- COSI (Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative) (Funds distributed to sub-recipients.)
- Dependent Tuition Assistance Program (Formula-based fund distribution.)
- Educator Loan Forgiveness
- EmpowerEd (Formula-based fund distribution.)
- Financial Aid - Need Based Grants (CSG, CGG) (Formula-based fund distribution.)
- Financial Aid - CTE (Formula-based fund distribution.)
- Fort Lewis College Native American Student Funding (Formula-based fund distribution.)
- FosterEd (Formula-based fund distribution.)
- Growing Great Teachers - Teacher Mentor Grant Program
- Improving Students' Postsecondary Options (HB22-1366) and Outreach Initiatives (per C.R.S. 23-1-119(6)(a))
- K-12 Educator Stipends & Resources (HB22-1220) (Funds distributed to sub-recipients.)
- Online Platform for Public Benefits for Higher Education Students
- Open Educational Resources in Colorado (Funds distributed to sub-recipients.)
- Path4Ward (Funds distributed to sub-recipients.)
- Performance Funding / Fee-for-Service (Higher Ed Operating) (Funds distributed to sub-recipients.)
- Reciprocity & Access Programs (WICHE PSEP) (Funds distributed to sub-recipients.)
- Rural Health Care Workforce Initiative (Funds distributed to sub-recipients.)
- Rural In-Service Educator Stipend (RISE)
- Rural Teacher Recruitment, Retention, and Professional Development (Funds distributed to sub-recipients.)
- StudyColorado
- Teacher Mentor Grant Program (Funds distributed to sub-recipients.)

Appendix 5, Table 5.1, Text-Based Description

Only CDE involved:

- Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Federal Grant (Funds distributed to sub-recipients.)
- Adult Education and Literacy Act (Funds distributed to sub-recipients.)
- Adult High School Program
- ASCENT (Accelerating Students Through Concurrent Enrollment) (Formula-based fund distribution.)
- Colorado P-TECH: Pathways in Technology Early College High Schools in Colorado (Formula-based fund distribution.)
- Concurrent Enrollment
- Concurrent Enrollment Expansion & Innovation Grant Program (Funds distributed to sub-recipients.)
- Educator Recruitment and Retention Program
- Quality Teacher Recruitment Program
- School Counselor Corps Grant (Funds distributed to sub-recipients.)
- START UP- PWR K-12 (Funds distributed to sub-recipients.)
- SUSTAIN- PWR K-12 (Funds distributed to sub-recipients.)
- Teacher Recruitment Education and Preparation (TREP)

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Colorado Department of Regulatory Agencies (DORA)
Colorado Department of Education (CDE)
Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE)
Colorado Workforce Development Council (CWDC)
Business Experiential-Learning Commission (BEL)
State Apprenticeship Council (SAC)
State Approving Agency for Career and Technical Education (CTE) and the Colorado Community College System (CCCS)
Colorado Commission on Aging
Office of Governor Jared Polis
Office of Lieutenant Governor Dianne Primavera





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