



# MAXIMIZING HUMAN POTENTIAL AND ECONOMIC MOBILITY FOR COLORADANS

Businesses coming together to address Colorado's talent needs

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Colorado has created a nation-leading economy, attracting headquarters and numerous job expansions. However, Colorado employers have relied on importing talent from elsewhere to meet their needs. With increased competition from other states and a rising cost of living, that pipeline is beginning to dry up, making workforce development a priority for most of the state's employers. Perhaps more troubling, however, this dynamic means that too much of Colorado's homegrown talent has missed out on the state's economic prosperity.

This report announces the Education to Employment Alliance – a coalition of business groups representing more than 2,000 employers that seeks to improve the talent-development pipeline and commits to engaging with education and government leaders to bring about the changes needed to make this vision a reality.

The Alliance believes Colorado must look within to boost homegrown residents' career pathways, training, and earnings. **We are calling for the business community to come together with learning providers and government entities to work toward the five recommendations in this report.** These recommendations address critical challenges identified by the business community. They will position Colorado to produce a reliable stream of workers whose talents match businesses' needs and help more learners and residents from the Centennial State access sustainable careers that provide economic security.

1. Measure outcomes and direct funding to education and training programs that help graduates achieve sustainable careers.
2. Create regional talent-development goals and action plans overseen by a workforce intermediary.
3. Realign the pathways offered in schools with the needs of employers.
4. Streamline and incentivize employer participation in career-connected learning opportunities.
5. Ensure education providers are focusing on the skills that students and employers need.

## INTRODUCTION

In 2021, the Colorado General Assembly created the [Student Success and Workforce Revitalization Taskforce](#) to bring innovative and transformational solutions to education in Colorado. The task force's [final report](#) suggested Colorado had ten years to address critical talent issues, but for many Colorado businesses, talent issues are already here. The report also underscored the gaps in who is accessing critical training needed to benefit from Colorado's thriving economy. The bottom line is that our current system is failing our businesses and citizens.

[Workforce development is a top issue for Colorado businesses](#), but unfortunately, too many Coloradans face challenges accessing the education and training they need to fill available jobs.

### WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT IS A TOP ISSUE FOR COLORADO BUSINESSES



Employers can't find the workers they need. There are [2 jobs for every unemployed Coloradan](#), and the skills mismatch means [almost 100,000](#) residents are unemployed despite [almost 200,000 job openings](#).

At the same time, citizens and businesses across Colorado and the nation are questioning the value of higher education, as many have exited school without the credentials, skills, or connections they need for long-term economic security. A 2023 [Gallup Poll](#) showed that just 36% of Americans had high confidence levels in higher education, down more than 20 percentage points since 2015. Students are voting with their feet. In 2021, less than 50% of Colorado high-school students went onto higher education upon graduation – a decline of almost 10 percentage points in just two years.

It's not only perception, though. According to data from the [Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce](#), the majority of graduates at roughly one-third of colleges earn less than the average high-school graduate. Many potential students and business leaders are turning toward alternative providers and expanding their internal training and development programs that can demonstrate more substantial outcomes in less time and with greater alignment with their dynamically changing talent needs.

More than ever, Colorado's business leaders and education and training providers must unite with the government to synchronize educational offerings with career-development pathways that help more homegrown opportunity seekers. Today, the Education to Employment Alliance is stepping up to fill this void, asking businesses and the groups that represent them to align on the state's most pressing challenges and work together to advocate for bold solutions.

#### ALLIANCE PRINCIPALS





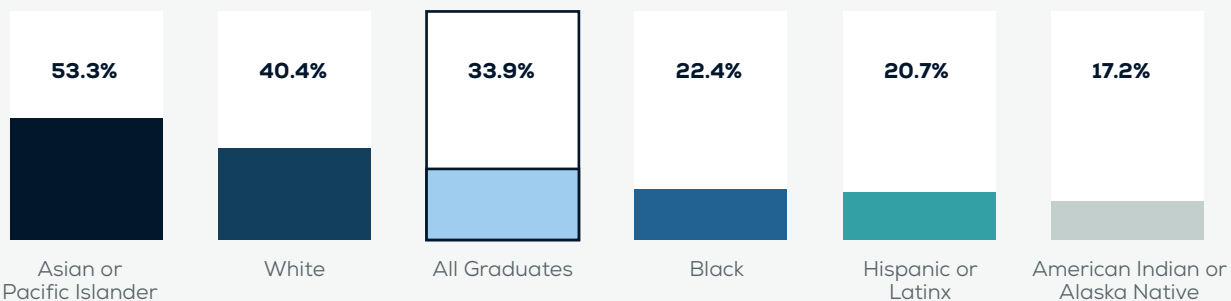
## THE CHANGING ROLE OF COLORADO'S EDUCATION SYSTEM

Today's education and workforce systems were not designed to educate everyone or meet the needs of today's economy. Rapidly changing technology, a global economy, a population that is becoming both older and more racially diverse, and a growing awareness and commitment to closing historic gaps in economic access have all changed the education and training system demands.

- Never before have these systems' central role and purpose been to train the *majority* of workers and address national skills gaps.
- Never before has the need to address equity gaps in our system been more acute.

According to Colorado's [Talent Pipeline Report](#), 91.4% of jobs that pay a wage sufficient to sustain a family require some postsecondary education past a high school diploma. However, not all these jobs require a bachelor's degree. The [National Skills Coalition](#) estimates that almost half of all jobs in Colorado require some postsecondary training but not a bachelor's degree.

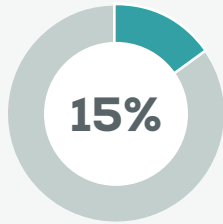
### TOO FEW COLORADO HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES EARN A POSTSECONDARY DEGREE OR CERTIFICATES WITHIN 6 YEARS AND GAPS ARE PARTICULARLY PRONOUNCED ACROSS RACE AND ETHNICITY \*



\* Based on Calculations off [2016 College Going and Completion Rates](#) from CDHE

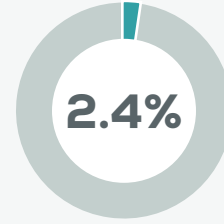


## COLORADO IS NOT PRODUCING MIDDLE-SKILLS TALENT NEEDED BY HALF OF COLORADO JOBS.



15% of Coloradans of working age are middle-skilled, earning a credential higher than a high school diploma but less than a bachelor's degree.

Source: [Lumina Foundation](#)



Just 2.4% of Colorado high school graduates complete a short-term certificate within two years

Source: [CDHE](#)

Colorado's failure to educate its homegrown talent has long-term economic impacts. A recent report by the [Common Sense Institute](#) suggests that the state's tight labor market costs the state \$46 billion annually in a loss to gross domestic product. There are also impacts on individuals. Data from the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) and the Colorado Workforce Development Council (CWDC) show that without a credential beyond a high school, Coloradans have a [median wage of \\$35,143](#), less than half [the \\$71,739](#) needed to support a family in Colorado today.

Economic security is a significant motivation for those who enroll in postsecondary education. Although college has many benefits beyond financial returns, most learners are primarily motivated by better jobs and future careers. Surveys of [traditional first-year college students](#) and [a cross-section of all students](#) show that the primary reasons people pursue postsecondary education are to earn a good job or career and a living wage.

Our system has been pursuing many new programs to better meet the current needs of learners and businesses. For example, employers increasingly seek direct partnerships with education providers with career-connected learning models, including earn-and-learn models like internships and apprenticeships. There is a movement towards building [stronger, more equitable career pathways](#) from high school to the workforce. Colorado has been a leader in supporting high school students through its [Career Development Incentive Program](#) (CDIP) and dozens of other programs at the local and state levels designed to provide better information and connect learners to more postsecondary and workforce opportunities. Unfortunately, these opportunities still put a significant onus on the students, employers, and guidance counselors to identify and navigate a complex web of options. Colorado needs more systemic solutions.

In his 2023 State of the State Address, Governor Polis framed this task as an opportunity for Colorado. "The demand for talent is being faced across the country. However, in Colorado, we don't just see this as a challenge; it's an opportunity to be seized."

## INTRODUCING THE EDUCATION TO EMPLOYMENT ALLIANCE

To respond to these challenges and ensure Colorado's business community is connected and committed to efforts to close Colorado's skills gaps, the **Colorado Chamber of Commerce**, **Colorado Inclusive Economy**, **Colorado Succeeds**, **Colorado Technology Association**, and **Colorado Thrives** have come together to launch the **Education to Employment Alliance**.

The Alliance is a coalition of business leaders committed to improving opportunities for Colorado learners and shaping the future of Colorado's workforce. We envision a learner-centered talent-development system that responds to the dynamically changing needs of our economy, businesses, and communities. Collectively, we represent thousands of companies from diverse sectors, geographies, and sizes.

This coalition speaks with the voices of its members and pledges to lead the conversation with educators and government officials to bring about the needed changes. We assert that through our collective networks, these efforts will make it easier and more streamlined for education and government leaders to engage with employers on postsecondary and workforce-development priorities at the state and local levels. Further, we will partner with public interests to create the infrastructure needed to oversee these efforts and ensure they are sustainable.

Our work will prioritize three areas that employers have told us they value most:

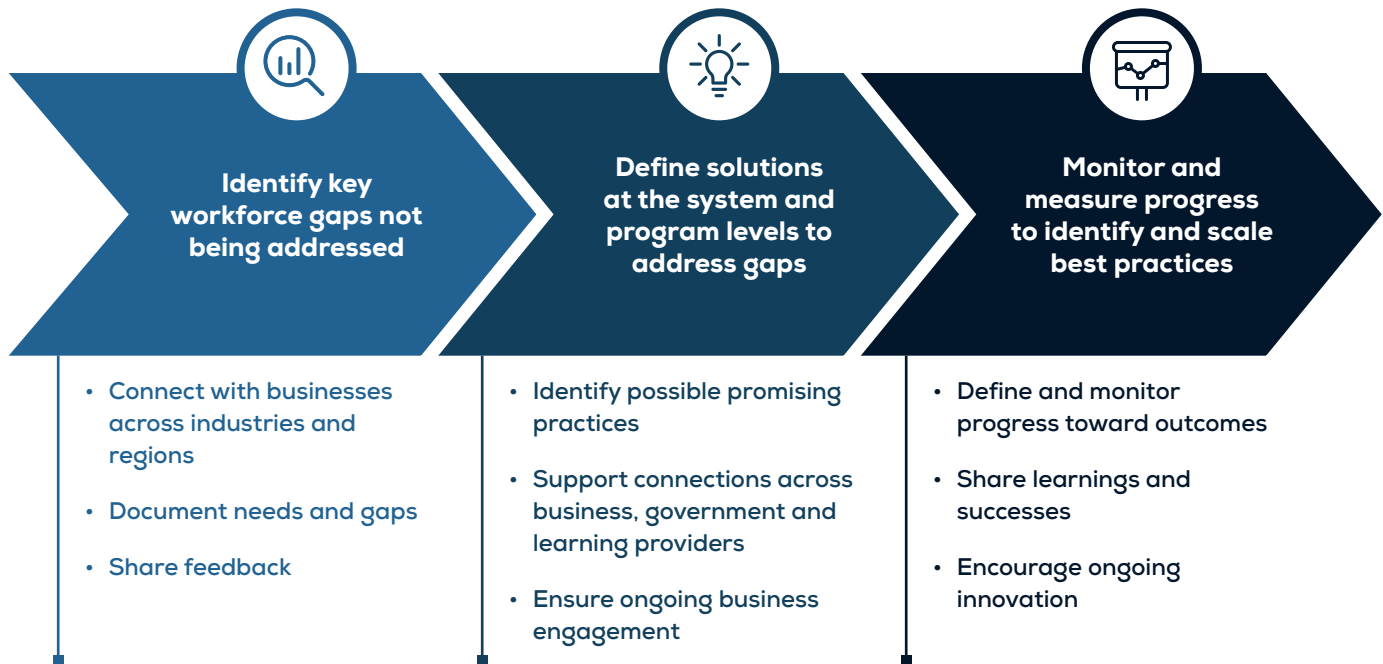
1. We will identify and define the most pressing workforce gaps that are going unaddressed.
2. We will offer solutions at the systems level and at the programmatic level to address those gaps most effectively.
3. We will monitor progress toward the implementation of those solutions at scale in Colorado.

Throughout this process, we expect to uncover best practices and learnings that we will share statewide to improve the work in the field.





## THE WORK



As we execute these strategies, our organizations have committed to five core principles that will guide the Education to Employment Alliance in our collective work: [EDUCATION TO EMPLOYMENT ALLIANCE](#).



Prioritize learners, not systems, structures, or institutions.



Ensure industry alignment by meaningfully engaging the industry as a co-creator.



Integrate and recognize career-connected learning and in-demand skills.



Leverage and scale innovative non-traditional education and training models to unleash pent-up demand for talent.



Create more transparency of outcomes across the education pipeline and prioritize pathways with strong evidence of impact on critical outcomes.

This report is our first attempt to capture statewide employer feedback on the postsecondary and workforce system and transparently share it with the public for discussion and action. In the ensuing pages, we outline five challenges and corresponding recommendations offered by the employers in our networks.

Importantly, we know that we can't do it alone. While five business entities are launching the alliance, we look forward to adding partners who share our principles and our sense of urgency to create impact at the systems and programmatic levels.

## GETTING TO SOLUTIONS

For nearly a decade, Colorado has implemented seemingly promising solutions to try to address the mismatch between learners skills and the needs of employers. Yet, businesses still feel they must import talent because they are not getting what they need from the state's education system. Students also struggle to navigate the complex design of the system and lose faith in it. As a result of these trends, employers are frustrated and alienated from K-12 schools and colleges, and Colorado learners are at a disadvantage.

Colorado employers often had to limit expansion even before the pandemic because of a lack of talent. They have grown weary of new initiatives to produce a qualified workforce since past efforts have not materialized. Colorado must use a new approach to put employers at the same table as top government and educational leaders. The solution must focus on giving Colorado's homegrown talent more access to the economic mobility and security that Colorado's economy can provide.

Colorado Chamber surveys from 2022 and 2023 identified a lack of skilled talent as one of its members' two most significant concerns. Other Education to Employment Alliance members have heard similar calls from their constituencies to address workforce challenges. In the spring, these groups surveyed their membership. The challenges and solutions in this report come from those surveys, conversations with members, one-on-one interviews with more than 30 stakeholders and publicly available reports.

This report recommends bringing the Colorado business community together with education and state government. Leaning on prior efforts tasked to the Department of Education, the Department of Higher Education, the Workforce Development Council, and the Office of Economic Development and International Trade, these solutions would serve unemployed or underemployed Coloradans and anyone who wants to upgrade their skills to take advantage of opportunities in growing sectors.

**To address Colorado's challenges, there must be a shared responsibility and active collaboration between business, education providers and government agencies.**

The members of the Alliance do not shy away from the fact that employers have not been as active as they need to be in bringing about solutions to the talent shortage. Many have not participated in recent state efforts to achieve change through cooperative solutions. Some businesses struggle to make the internal changes required to offer career-connected learning opportunities. Others continue to rely on degrees as hiring requirements at a time when skills-based learning is proving a bridge to talent acquisition and economic mobility. These things must change.



The recommendations in this report represent initial actions for how businesses can partner with educators and government leaders to boost workforce pipelines and better outcomes for Coloradans.

## I. MEASURE OUTCOMES AND DIRECT FUNDING TO EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMS THAT HELP GRADUATES ACHIEVE SUSTAINABLE CAREERS.

### CHALLENGES

Students have more pathways to careers than ever before— via K-12; traditional certificate, associate, or bachelor’s degree programs; short-term credential programs; apprenticeships; and workforce training and retraining initiatives – but there is not enough information about which paths are most effective. Similarly, employers must be able to identify quality programs to help them focus their talent-attraction efforts on the most effective options.

Colorado must create a system of longitudinal data and use it to provide insight and information about which education and training programs produce graduates with the skills needed by critical industries and for critical jobs in our state. The system must have both costs and outcomes so that students and the state can understand the return on their investments in education and training programs in terms of economic and social value. The system should also include information across all types of education and training providers and offer tools to understand and compare different programs and pathways.

A secure data system alone is not enough, though. Data must be transparent and accessible. In addition to supporting better decision-making by students, the information is critical for legislators, workforce training centers, school boards, and education providers to determine where to invest limited resources to ensure students benefit most from their education. It should measure the impact of traditional educational programs and newer retraining and short-term credential programs so the state can direct funding to programs that demonstrate a capacity to launch students into careers with family-sustaining pay levels.

### POLICY RECOMMENDATION

**Improve Colorado’s longitudinal data on education and workforce training, make it accessible and transparent, and use the data to inform investments in workforce programs.**

The Colorado Department of Higher Education’s recent [longitudinal data landscape](#) outlines multiple federal, state, and philanthropic investments in longitudinal data solutions in Colorado. The report highlights a fragmented system without a shared vision or long-term sustainability. This gap makes Colorado data-rich and information-poor, leaving families, practitioners, evaluators, and policymakers to navigate a complex web of options to understand how to invest in education programs.

To address these challenges, Colorado should:

- Consolidate resources to a single, long-term, sustainable longitudinal data system centered around using data to ensure more Coloradans are accessing quality programming that leads to economic and social benefits.
- House the efforts in a single, data-neutral office under a robust security and data governance structure designed to minimize risk and maximize data use and utility.
- Apply new measures of success for measuring postsecondary outcomes currently under development to compare postsecondary programs to all workforce programs.
- Direct funding toward programs that have outcomes aligned with state needs and that are most effective at serving learners, particularly those historically underserved.

## II. CREATE REGIONAL TALENT-DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND ACTION PLANS OVERSEEN BY A WORKFORCE INTERMEDIARY.

### CHALLENGES

Business leaders across industries want education and training providers to produce more students with the skills they need to fill vital jobs. Education leaders want more input and participation from business leaders to define and integrate those skills into programs. These complimentary concerns have been prevalent for at least a decade, and yet both sides still want progress.

Too many mandates for collaboration without coordination lead to siloed programs. For instance, Colorado's workforce system convenes stakeholders to inform workforce needs under the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA). Similarly, another agency assembles business groups to define similar Perkins Career and Technical Education Act requirements. In addition, colleges and universities often have their own ad-hoc advisory groups. These efforts are often disconnected, meaning small groups of employers and educators talk in narrowly focused silos rather than having a coordinated effort to address larger talent issues.

There is also too little knowledge within communities about employers' needs and their coalescence with educational institutions' work to prepare students. At a regional Colorado Chamber meeting with business and government leaders, employers complained that local school districts weren't offering trade classes, leaving the area's sizable manufacturing and trade-based economy lacking skilled workers. After hearing of the meeting, school district officials contacted business leaders to assert that they offered trade education. This led to further discussion but demonstrated the communication chasm and the disconnect Colorado businesses face with learning providers and opportunities in their region.

Businesses and educators need to discuss skill needs with a facilitator who can ensure that both sides fully articulate and act on requirements. Ideally, an independent, Colorado-based workforce intermediary could assist with this process by connecting job-demand data from employers to education providers and creating a strategy for collective action on talent needs and pathways.

### POLICY RECOMMENDATION

Create regional talent-development goals and action plans aligned with economic development needs, and then monitor and track progress.

Existing programs, such as the CWDC's sector-partnerships program, have encouraged industry partners to try to define their needs for public and community partners. However, a [recent evaluation of the sector-partnerships strategy](#) recommends it would be more effective with clear goals and objectives. Simply asking the public and private sectors to coordinate resources is not working. There is no single agency or workforce intermediary that can help sectors come together, lay out clear goals to accomplish with inter-agency cooperation, create schedules and benchmarks, and monitor progress.

To address these challenges, Colorado should:

- Task a quasi-governmental entity with organizing and hosting regional summits at which key business, education, and government stakeholders identify gaps in the existing talent-development systems and create plans to fill them.
- Leverage a workforce intermediary to identify the key workforce gaps through these summits, define skills and methods for filling those gaps, communicate the needed skill and credentialing requirements to training providers, and partner with training providers and educators to build programs to meet those needs.
- Implement performance measures to track and publicly report on the status of regional goals and action plans to allow for continuous improvement and collective action.

### III. REALIGN THE PATHWAYS OFFERED IN SCHOOLS WITH THE NEEDS OF EMPLOYERS.

#### CHALLENGES

Companies are dealing with an acute shortage of middle-skills workers, from nurses to construction-industry personnel, and it is hard to find workers with the proper training. Many employers point to a decline in classes offered in K-12 schools to train students for high-demand sectors and to social perceptions of these jobs as major reasons the pipelines have dried up.

The problem is not easy to solve. Assessments of school outcomes typically give more weight to tests that ascertain students' ability in college-level skills than students' performance on career-connected learning or Career and Technical Education (CTE) coursework. Meanwhile, a decades-long societal shift has led many parents to feel their children must get a four-year college degree rather than enter the workforce immediately and take classes later to advance their careers.

"Nobody wants their kids to go into the trades," said Brad Keller, a recently retired construction executive in Grand Junction, acknowledging the feeling is similar for other sectors that don't require four-year degrees. "The past 30 years, there has been a deterioration in the perceived value of being a trade member."

#### POLICY RECOMMENDATION

**Invest in local and regional industry hubs that connect K-12, postsecondary education, and businesses to build industry-aligned pathways beginning as early as 8<sup>th</sup> grade and embed them throughout the high school, postsecondary and workforce systems.**

Colorado has some programs designed to link students to career-connected learning opportunities and industry-aligned pathways while they are still in high school, offered by both individual school districts and multi-district partnerships. For example, Cañon City Schools requires a career-connected learning opportunity before graduation. In Cherry Creek School District, all high schools offer programming in the same set of industry-aligned, high-demand pathways, and students have access to an innovation center that allows them to accelerate their paths further. These programs leverage traditional CTE funds and programs like the Career Development Incentive Programs. In some ways, this is the modern-day pathway for trades and other applied fields. Unfortunately, not all districts have the resources or innovative leadership to build these structures and create the necessary culture change. This gap in access leaves many students behind even with open jobs they could fill with proper training.

To address these challenges, Colorado should:

- Provide seed funding to school districts to build an infrastructure to offer district and cross-district access to coursework and career-connected learning opportunities in high-demand pathways identified as part of regional talent-development goals.
- Support districts that receive funding with structured technical assistance to implement programs based on existing best-practice models.
- Work with business leaders to implement a culture change in schools that promotes the trades and other in-demand professions requiring less than a four-year degree for entry by having schools offer more career fairs, more exposure to professionals explaining career options in their sectors, and more visits to local businesses to explore career paths.
- Identify and reduce barriers to industry professionals being able to teach courses in areas where they can demonstrate expertise.



## IV. STREAMLINE AND INCENTIVIZE EMPLOYER PARTICIPATION IN CAREER-CONNECTED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES.

### CHALLENGES

Colorado has made significant efforts to promote training programs such as apprenticeships and internships, and many employers say they are interested in offering these opportunities. However, just 0.18% of Colorado's workforce is represented by individuals participating in apprenticeships.

Too many small- and medium-sized employers say they don't have the resources to offer apprenticeships or experiential learning, whether in terms of finances or the human resources needed to recruit and oversee apprenticeships and internships.

Some employers who considered using existing state resources to bolster their staff through experiential learning or training of workers found the process so difficult that they opted out. Annette Quintana, CEO of Greenwood Village tech firm Istonish, said that she worked through the state to get tax incentives for upskilling workers; however, after she learned that they were required to seek incentives in each county where her workers lived and the program involved considerable reporting requirements, she changed her plans.

Finally, some employers say that while they would like to bring in more high-school-aged apprentices and interns, they run into barriers in state law limiting their ability to do so. For example, students who are 14- and 15-year-olds who may want to begin their experiential learning early in high school are barred under state law from working more than 18 hours per week. Statutes also limit what 15- to 17-year-olds can do on manufacturing floors, curtailing high schoolers' ability to train in those careers that typically hire straight out of school.

### POLICY RECOMMENDATION

**Support employers in offering career-connected learning opportunities, including earn-and-learn models, such as apprenticeships and internships.**

In 2021, Colorado created a one-year program through SB22-140 that incentivizes businesses to start new career-connected learning experiences. Unfortunately, funding is limited to program development, when many small to mid-sized organizations will never have the long-term infrastructure to maintain apprenticeships. They could, however, if intermediaries could pool resources and help multiple businesses with paperwork and other administrative costs. Finally, small to mid-sized companies need more resources to navigate state restrictions on who can perform jobs.

To address these challenges, Colorado should:

- Offer tax credits and other incentives to small- and medium-sized businesses to host apprenticeships, internships, and other career-connected learning opportunities.
- Offer grants to nonprofits, chambers of commerce, and associations to serve as intermediaries in helping train professionals and companies or support them with direct services to make career-connected learning experiences simpler to implement.
- Simplify and reduce the administrative burdens on upskilling and career-connected learning incentive programs.
- Review and revise labor laws and other requirements to remove unnecessary barriers for students, especially in supervised internship and apprenticeship programs.



## **V. ENSURE EDUCATION PROVIDERS ARE FOCUSING ON THE SKILLS EMPLOYERS NEED.**

### **CHALLENGES**

Even as employers rely on local high schools, colleges, and universities to produce workers they can hire, more are feeling like graduates lack the skills they need. Michelle Balch Lyng, CEO of Denver public-relations firm Novitas Communications, said that she's found graduates are trained more in the theory of public relations than in specific skills like how to do basic postings through Cision or conduct searches for journalists. Sometimes, these are skills specific to professions, but often, learners lack durable skills like communication, critical thinking, and attention to detail.

Employers and community colleges have an open and productive relationship facilitated through legally required advisory boards as part of career and technical education programs. The Colorado Department of Higher Education is enhancing that relationship as it develops stackable credentials in five fields, relying on employers to explain the specific skills they need to see in workers occupying various jobs. However, robust relationships don't exist between the business community and all departments at four-year universities, despite efforts by schools such as the University of Colorado Denver and Metropolitan State University of Denver to bolster industry-partnership programs.

Employers say they would like more input into what skills they need, while schools say they would like more industry involvement in creating micro-credential or certificate programs for rising career fields. Sometimes the solution can be as simple as increasing the information that education and workforce-training institutions give to students about non-credential requirements they must complete to enter high-demand fields. For example, as Colorado seeks to bolster its aerospace and cybersecurity sectors – fields that often require security clearance – sector leaders can work with K-12 systems, colleges and workforce-training centers to educate students on how to get such clearance.

Meanwhile, employers in almost every sector say that entry-level candidates leaving high school, trade school, or college don't have the durable or "soft" skills needed to succeed, citing deficits in areas ranging from communication skills to critical thinking to problem-solving. Maggie Drucker of financial-consulting firm Prosper Bridges said: "Writing and critical thinking skills are below what I'd expect them to be. Emotional well-being is surprisingly low. Lots of handholding is needed."



## POLICY RECOMMENDATION

Recenter the talent-development system on skills rather than credentials by aligning courses with industry-recognized needs and skill rubrics and by syncing hiring processes with statewide postsecondary transfer systems.

There is a long history of back and forth between employers and education providers about ensuring learners receive the skills they need to succeed. Fundamental is a need to ensure that learners get the soft skills essential to most jobs. As the state develops more short-term credentials proving specific skills in designated fields, many efforts are ensuring students get durable skills and can bring them to a job. For example, MSU-Denver is working to create “badges” certifying achievements in durable skills. Similarly, the Colorado Community College System creates micro-credentials through a partnership with Education Design Labs that embed durable skills. Still, there is little transparency for students or employers in which courses offer which skills.

To address these challenges, Colorado should:

- Require that the Department of Higher Education form advisory boards of employer representatives for each career-focused major statewide where the boards could inform the curricula taught at all colleges in a certain subject.
- Require the Community College System to work with industry to adopt a Durable Skills Rubric or other industry-recognized national or international framework and to identify which skills each program must provide.
- Create a mechanism for institutions outside the Community College System to opt into a transfer network that recognizes skills rather than courses as the primary unit of credit.
- Partner with businesses to understand existing barriers to skills-based hiring and help with efforts to educate businesses about how to address those barriers.
- Invest in Learner and Employment Record technology that uses blockchain technology to allow students to more easily articulate the skills they have accumulated and have them recognized.





## CONCLUSION

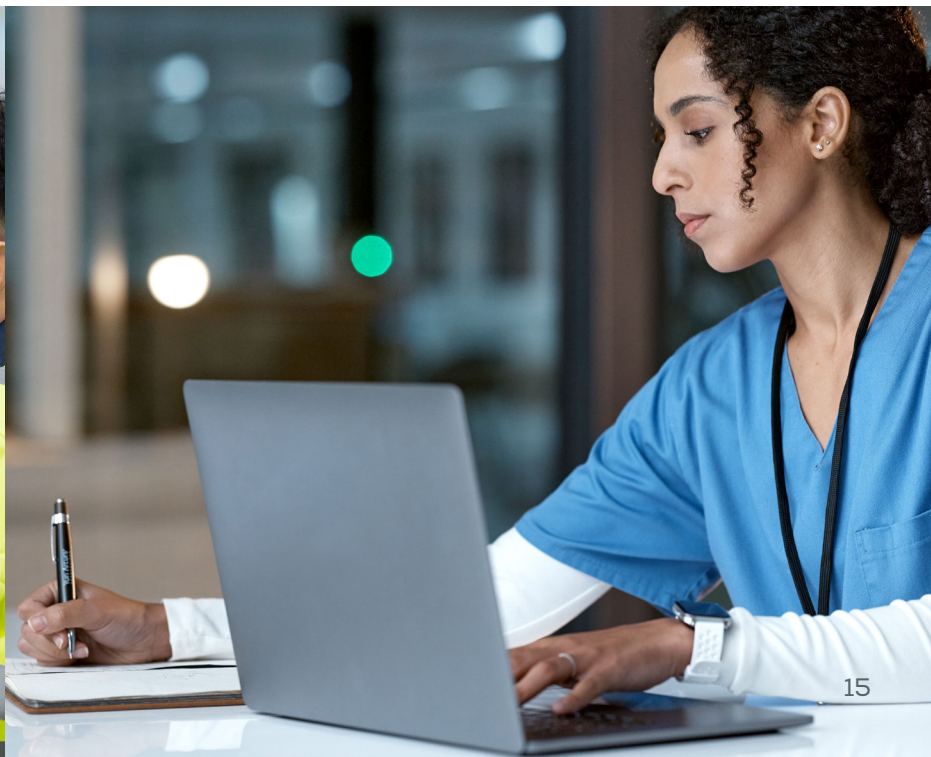
The time is now for Colorado to create a new system in which business, government, and education can bear an equal amount of burden in detailing the skill needs of today's and tomorrow's workforce and in which business and government come to the table to help learning providers produce the workers with those skills. Colorado needs these changes to ensure continued individual and business growth and prosperity.

The recommendations in this report address three central themes that interviews with employers and education/training providers have touched on repeatedly.

- 1. More coordination and collaboration are needed between employers and educators to align better the skills that industry needs with what education and training providers teach.**
- 2. Support for small- and medium-sized employers' ability to offer apprenticeships and other career-connected learning opportunities is critical to building and diversifying talent pipelines.**
- 3. The public sector workforce-development and job-training ecosystem should prioritize training and upskilling pathways that have been proven to lead to good jobs with good wages in in-demand, talent-starved sectors.**

Business leaders want the state to be nimble, address specific sectors, and work with schools and employers to help provide more Coloradans with access to high-quality jobs and businesses with access to high-quality talent. The report doesn't solve all of the state's workforce issues. For example, childcare and housing continue to be acute challenges that the education and training system cannot solve independently.

However, we believe that creation of the Education to Employment Alliance and the call to the business community to work more closely with education and government leaders on these solutions is an essential first step to long-term solutions for Colorado. In partnership, employers, educators, and governments can make changes that create greater opportunities for Colorado-raised students who too often find their pathways to economic mobility hindered by a lack of direction. Only through this collaboration can the state advance the initiatives it already has begun in this area, and we call for businesses, learning institutions and the state to take these needed steps.





Thank you to those who provided their insight and expertise to inform the details of this report.

