Colorado

Analyzing the learner continuum in Colorado.

Colorado has set an incredible example of cross agency/sector collaboration through its Workforce Development Council. Legislatively and programmatically, CO has recently passed or launched a wide range of offerings for learners seeking to engage in CTE pathways. Highlights include work-based learning and youth apprenticeships, opportunities to earn industry credentials and credit for prior learning, and strong postsecondary policies for ensuring college credit transfers and articulates toward degrees. Despite these laudable steps, implementation quality is still a big question mark. And Colorado's lack of comprehensive shared data across systems may hamper assessing whether these efforts are paying off for the state, communities and families.

STRENGTHS

• Colorado’s high level of cross-agency collaboration in pathway development led by its Workforce Development Council.
• Colorado’s new policy initiative to formalize a statewide process for providing learners credit for prior learning, including work experience and earned credentials.
• The state’s robust set of college acceleration offerings that provide multiple options for earning college credit in high school.

OPPORTUNITIES

• Strengthen the longitudinal data system, including governance, to evaluate program quality and learner outcomes.
• Conduct a full audit of K-12 and postsecondary CTE program offerings for alignment, quality and equitable access.
• Adopt a last mile financial aid scholarship to help learners go back and earn a postsecondary credential.
LEARNER PATHWAYS

Ensure vertical alignment to workforce needs, robust funding, collaboration across agencies and equitable access for all students.

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<th>K–12</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>HIGH-QUALITY CTE PROGRAMS</strong></td>
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<td>Align all CTE programs with high-demand, high-skill and high-wage occupations that reflect the state’s economic and workforce priorities. Ensure that these programs feature the academic and technical skills and knowledge learners will need to be successful.</td>
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<td><strong>TARGETED CTE PROGRAM FUNDING</strong></td>
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<td>Dedicate state funding for CTE programs—but only if they are aligned to high-demand, high-skill and high-wage occupations. Target specific funds for pathway completion and demonstrated learner outcomes.</td>
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<td><strong>RETURN ON INVESTMENT ANALYSIS</strong></td>
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<td>Conduct a biennial return on investment (ROI) analysis of CTE programs to assess whether all learners have access to high-demand, high-skill and high-wage pathways. Collect school- and student-level data to evaluate outcomes of CTE programs against established shared metrics for quality and equity.</td>
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<td><strong>STATE CROSS-AGENCY SHARED PRIORITIES</strong></td>
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<td>Establish shared priorities and collective accountability across state agencies and education systems for learner pathway development, supports and success. Ensure that business and industry have a seat at the table and can lead discussions related to demand and training requirements.</td>
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STATE POLICY ANALYSIS
The 2008 HB 08-1079 established the current Colorado Vocational Act. Implementation of the act is taking place through Colorado’s 2019–24 Strategic Plan. The state’s CTE program is overseen by the Colorado Community College System. Colorado CTE programs are divided into six industry sectors: (1) Agriculture, Natural Resources and Energy; (2) STEM, Arts, Design and Information Technology; (3) Skilled Trades and Technical Sciences; (4) Health Science, Criminal Justice and Public Safety; (5) Hospitality, Human Services and Education; and (6) Business, Marketing and Public Administration.

In order to help strengthen high-quality CTE programs, in 2022 Colorado established the Regional Talent Development Initiative Grant Program. The program expands access to innovative postsecondary CTE programs by providing grant money for the design and implementation of new programs that meet specific regional needs and address some of the challenges experienced during the pandemic.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN
While Colorado’s CTE programs of study are focused on the industry sectors and occupations that are in demand, more work can be done to ensure they are aligned to high-skill, high-wage occupations. Colorado can establish some clear criteria for quality—including wage thresholds—for CTE programs of study and make adjustments so that students are not enrolled in dead-end pathways with little opportunity for economic mobility. This is especially important from an equity lens and for the state’s historically underserved populations.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES
• Delaware – Career and Technical Education Programs
• Tennessee – Career and Technical Education Programs
• Texas – Program of Study Initiative

RESOURCES
• Colorado State Plan

POLICIES
• HB 08-1079 – Colorado Vocational Act
• HB22-1350 – Regional Talent Development Initiative Grant Program
Targeted CTE Program Funding

STATE POLICY ANALYSIS
Colorado’s current Colorado Vocational Act and the accompanying rules promulgated by the State Board of Education provide increased funding for CTE through a program-based allocation. If a district’s CTE program costs exceed 70 percent of the per-pupil funding otherwise available to that district, the state provides additional state funding to cover 80 percent of the first $1,250 of those excess costs and 50 percent of the excess costs above $1,250. In FY2017, the state allocated $25.6 million for CTE programs. Due to caps on funding, the state provides only about 25 percent of the total cost of CTE programs. Local education agencies must provide the rest through other funding.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN
Colorado can target K–12 outcomes-based funding to help incentivize local education agencies in their development and implementation of high-quality, aligned programs of study. This can include funds to support the startup and sustainment of high-quality, aligned programs and incentive funds for students who complete a high-quality, aligned programs of study or obtain aligned industry credentials.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES
- Indiana – Funding Methodology
- Ohio – Innovative Workforce Incentive Program
- Texas – House Bill 3

RESOURCES
N/A

POLICIES
- CO Code 8 § 1504-2. Rules for the Administration of the Colorado Vocational Act
Return on Investment Analysis

STATE POLICY ANALYSIS
Colorado does not have a robust state-level audit in formal policy or in practice that spans both secondary and postsecondary CTE programs and focuses on equitable access and outcomes. However, it does have vital components that could be integrated into an audit. The Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) publishes an annual legislative report that features the postsecondary access and success of high school graduates. It also publishes a return on investment report for postsecondary attainment related to wage earnings. Finally, the Colorado Workforce Development Council publishes an annual Talent Pipeline Report that highlights in-demand occupations and strategies to improve economic mobility.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN
Colorado can implement the CDHE’s recommendation to develop an annual equity report for student outcomes by different populations. However, it can go further and incorporate relevant information from its other reports into a broader annual or biennial effort to understand which students are accessing and/or completing CTE programs aligned to high-demand, high-skill and high-wage credentials and occupations.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES
- Florida – Executive Order 19-31 and House Bill 7071
  (NOTE: While promising, both could be strengthened by more focused analyses on equity and quality of offerings.)

RESOURCES
- Reducing Cost and Maximizing Value for Students and Our State
- Postsecondary Access and Success for Colorado's High School Graduates
- Colorado Talent Pipeline Report

POLICIES
N/A
Colorado has a high level of coordination across state agencies and other institutions to support pathway development, much of which is facilitated by the Colorado Workforce Development Council. This collaboration is supported at the local level through partnerships among K–12 schools and districts, community colleges, and business/industry. The council is governor appointed and was formed under the federal Workforce Investment Act of 1998. It focuses on three core strategies to support education to workforce efforts: (1) industry-led public-private partnerships, intermediaries and boards; (2) development of career pathways; and (3) promotion of a continuum of work-based learning activities. The council is charged with developing and overseeing the state’s Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act plan and funding.

In 2021, HB1330 formed the Student Success and Workforce Revitalization task force designed to study and make recommendations to higher education in providing effective and efficient workforce development. The resulting report called for expanding innovations in high school, postsecondary, and workforce pathways to make access more equitable.

Colorado can leverage the workforce development council’s convening power to promote greater collaboration and integration between the state’s secondary and postsecondary education to workforce programs, including CTE. These efforts can include broader data collection; data sharing across systems; and increased alignment with high-demand, high-skill and high-wage occupations.

**PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES**
- Delaware – [Advisory Council on Career and Technical Education (DACCTE)]
- Indiana – [Governor’s Workforce Cabinet]
- Washington – [Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board]

**RESOURCES**
- [Colorado Workforce Development Council]

**POLICIES**
- [CO Revised Statutes 24-46.3-101. Workforce Development Council]
- [HB21-1330 Higher Education Student Success]
POSTSECONDARY ACCELERATION

Streamline postsecondary learning and empower high school students to earn credit to reduce the time required to earn postsecondary degrees.

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<td>REMEDIATION</td>
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**COLLEGE ACCELERATION**

Provide and incentivize a range of options for learners to earn college credit while in high school. Ensure that all learners have access and financial support to accelerate their journey to a postsecondary credential.

**CREDIT FOR PRIOR LEARNING AND CREDENTIALS**

Implement a consistent state policy for awarding postsecondary program or elective credit for prior learning, work experience and earned industry credentials.

**COLLEGE ARTICULATION AGREEMENTS**

Establish statewide articulation agreements to ensure college credits earned in K–12 or at one institution transfer and count toward a degree at another. Minimize or eliminate credit loss and misalignment for transitioning learners.

**REMEDIATION**

Replace outdated developmental and remedial education with college credit bearing options paired with intensive supports. Adopt co-requisite remediation programs or offer remediation to learners before they graduate high school.
KEY POLICY

College Acceleration

STATE POLICY ANALYSIS
Colorado boasts a range of early postsecondary credit opportunities for students. Specific legislation includes:

- Advanced Placement Incentives Program - provides schools and districts with incentives for students who earn a passing grade on Advanced Placement exams.
- Concurrent Enrollment Programs Act - created the concurrent enrollment program that includes CTE courses (some of which support work-based learning).
- Pathways in Technology Early College High Schools (P-TECH) program - established schools which require cross-sector partnerships and provides students the opportunity to earn an associate degree, industry credentials and work-based learning experience while in high school.
- Automatic enrollment in advanced courses grant program - provides a grant incentive for local education agencies to auto-enroll eligible students in advanced coursework.
- Path4Ward (fourth-year innovation pilot program) provides - low-income students who complete high school in three years receive funding to take full-time college courses or career training in their final year of high school.

Given the spectrum of options in 2022 Colorado passed HB22-1215, which creates a task force to analyze the landscape of college acceleration and work-based learning options and develop recommendations on how to strengthen.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN
Since many of Colorado’s efforts are still somewhat early in implementation, it will be important for the state to collect and report on data examining their overall effectiveness in terms of student outcomes. This includes understanding which students have access to and successfully complete college credit coursework aligned to high-demand, high-skill, high-wage occupations.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES

- Florida – [High School Acceleration Programs](https://www.ed.gov) and [Statewide Agreements on Credit](https://www.florida.gov)
- Idaho – [Advanced Opportunities Funding](https://www.idaho.gov)
- Louisiana – [TOPS-Tech Early Start Program](https://www.louisiana.gov)
- North Carolina – [Automatic Enrollment](https://www.nc.gov)

RESOURCES

- [Concurrent Enrollment](https://www.pathwaysmatter.org)
- [P-TECH](https://www.pathwaysmatter.org)
- [Advanced Placement Incentives Program](https://www.pathwaysmatter.org)
- [ASCENT Program](https://www.pathwaysmatter.org)

POLICIES

- [SB 106 Concerning Successful High School Transitions](https://www.senate.state.co.us)
- [HB22-1215 Study Of Expanding Extended High School Programs](https://www.house.state.co.us)
Credit for Prior Learning and Credentials

STATE POLICY ANALYSIS
In 2020, Colorado passed HB 20-1002, which enables students and adults to earn postsecondary credit for prior work experience, including work-based learning. The act requires the Department of Higher Education to conduct a study concerning awarding academic credit for prior learning within all state institutions of higher education. Beginning in the 2022–23 academic year, unless a plan is implemented prior to then, institutions shall accept and transfer academic credit awarded for work-related experience as courses with guaranteed-transfer designation or part of a statewide degree transfer agreement. Rules and implementation details are pending.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN
As one of the first of states seeking to systematize credit for prior learning, Colorado is a pioneer in this area. As it completes its study in preparation for implementation of the program, Colorado can ensure that the prior learning and earned credentials awarded college credit truly expand access for learners seeking college attainment while also meeting a high standard for quality and alignment.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES
- Kentucky – Prior Learning Initiative
- Ohio – Military Strategic Implementation Team

RESOURCES
N/A

POLICIES
- HB 20-1002. College Credit for Work Experience
KEY POLICY

College Articulation Agreements

STATE POLICY ANALYSIS

Through its General Education Council, Colorado established a statewide articulation agreement between the state community college systems and state four-year universities. Within this agreement is a set of “guaranteed transfer pathways” courses. The pathways include guidance for Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate and concurrent enrollment courses. In May 2019, Colorado passed SB 19-176, the Concurrent Enrollment Expansion and Innovation Grant Program Act. This act clarifies the differences among concurrent enrollment, dual enrollment and other programs. It ensures that concurrent enrollment credits can be applied to a CTE program or are transferable, and it directs agencies to create a website designed to help inform students and families about their concurrent enrollment options.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN

The state can make its guaranteed transfer pathways policies applicable to additional degree programs. Some engineering, computer science, nursing and other degrees are currently exempted.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES

- Florida – Statewide Transfer Articulation Agreements
- Indiana – Core Transfer Library
- Kentucky – Transfer Articulation Agreements

RESOURCES

- Guided Pathways and Guaranteed Transfer

POLICIES

- SB 19-176, Expanding Concurrent Enrollment Opportunities
STATE CASE STUDY

POSTSECONDARY ACCELERATION

KEY POLICY

Remediation

STATE POLICY ANALYSIS

In 2019, Colorado passed HB 19-1206, which focused on removing equity gaps in higher education by ensuring more students have access to supplemental academic instruction. This act requires institutions across Colorado to place the majority of students in college-level coursework and provide them with the academic supports they need, rather than requiring them to take non-credit courses. It also directs the Colorado Commission on Higher Education to create a policy requiring institutions to use more than just a single test score to place students in developmental coursework since high school grade point averages and other factors have shown to be better indicators of students’ ability to complete college-level work.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN

As required, Colorado can analyze the results of postsecondary supports provided to students who would otherwise have been placed in developmental courses. Part of this analysis can include the efforts’ impact on not only students’ early course success rates but also on whether additional supports are needed to ensure credential attainment.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES

- Georgia – Complete College Georgia
- North Carolina – Multiple Measures of Placement Policy
- Tennessee – Co-Requisite Remediation and Seamless Alignment and Integrated Learning Support (SAILS)

RESOURCES

N/A

POLICIES

- HB 19-1206, Higher Education Supplemental Academic Instruction
POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIAL ATTAINMENT

Reduce barriers—such as funding, lack of alignment and missed opportunities—to help more students attain postsecondary credentials.

- **REVERSE TRANSFER CREDENTIALS**
  Establish a statewide policy to allow students to earn an associate degree while continuing to work toward a bachelor’s degree. Ensure two-year and four-year college credits can be combined toward the credential.

- **LAST DOLLAR/LAST MILE FINANCIAL AID**
  Provide dedicated state financial aid to qualifying learners that fills in gaps in federal assistance (last dollar) and promotes attainment for learners just shy of completing a degree (last mile).

- **OUTCOMES-BASED FUNDING**
  Transition postsecondary funding models from those based on learner enrollment to ones based on learner outcomes. Dedicate more funding to programs and institutions that show demonstrated success in meeting success metrics such as job placement and long-term wage earnings.

- **STACKABLE DEGREES AND CREDENTIALS**
  Define and promote a combination of industry and academic credentials that reflect articulated pathways to advanced learning and employment. Ensure that postsecondary credential programs are widely accessible to all learners and reflect value in the labor market.
Reverse Transfer Credentials

STATE POLICY ANALYSIS
Colorado’s reverse transfer process (formerly known as Degree within Reach) allows students who transfer from a Colorado two-year institution to a four-year institution to combine credits and apply them toward an associate degree. With coordination led by the Colorado Commission on Higher Education, two- and four-year institutions must develop and coordinate a process for notifying students about their eligibility for associate degree awards. Philanthropic support allows the Department of Higher Education to work with the Colorado Community College System and every Colorado institution of higher education to reach out to the state’s university transfer students regarding reverse transfer opportunities.

In 2021, HB21-1330 expanded the reverse transfer process to universities to allow students if they drop out to receive an associates degree if they have enough credits. Previously reverse transfer only applied to learners who started at community colleges. The initiative is known as CORE, Colorado Re-Engaged Initiative.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN
The state can collect, report and use data on student eligibility for and participation in reverse transfer processes established by institutions. In addition, if there is considerable variation in the processes established by institutions, stronger state coordination, and investment in an automation process, can be considered to achieve a single, comprehensive, cross-agency approach.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES
• Florida – Reverse Transfer Statewide Articulation Agreements
• Texas – Reverse Transfer Process

RESOURCES
• Colorado Reverse Transfer

POLICIES
• CO Revised Statutes 23-1-131. Associate Degree Completion Program
• HB21-1330 Higher Education Student Success
STATE POLICY ANALYSIS

No comprehensive last dollar or last mile scholarships exist. Across the state the various last dollar and last mile programs that exist are funded by foundations or institutional programs.

However, since 2004 Colorado has administered the College Opportunity Fund (COF), which provides a stipend to eligible undergraduate students. The stipend pays a portion of students’ total in-state tuition when they attend a participating college. Eligible undergraduate students must apply, be admitted and enroll in classes at a participating college to receive this benefit. Both new and continuing students are eligible for the stipend. Qualifying students may use the stipend for eligible undergraduate classes. The stipend is paid on a per-credit hour basis directly to the college at which the student is enrolled; the credit hour amount is set annually by the General Assembly. In 2020, this amount was $40 per course credit at public institutions and $20 per course credit at qualifying private institutions.

In 2021, HB21-1330 provided additional funds to the Colorado Scholarship Initiative to expand the Finish What You Started program. The funds provide indirect and direct funds to students who have earned some postsecondary credits but did not complete a credential or did not re-enroll for the 2020-21 academic year.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN

Colorado can add a last mile scholarship to its financial aid policy set. Because it targets students whose college tenure has lapsed but are close to credential attainment, often learners who are 25 percent away from completing a degree, this policy (in conjunction with the COF) can support state efforts to increase economic mobility.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES

- Florida – [Last Mile College Completion Program](#)
- Rhode Island – [Rhode Island Promise](#)
- Tennessee – [Tennessee Promise](#) and [Tennessee Reconnect](#)

RESOURCES

- [College Opportunity Fund](#)
- [Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative](#)

POLICIES

- [HB21-1330](#) Higher Education Student Success
KEY POLICY

Outcomes-Based Funding

STATE POLICY ANALYSIS

In 2020, the state’s college and university system shifted to a new funding formula that places more emphasis on low-income and underrepresented minority students. The breakdown of how these and other factors weigh in the funding formula is:

- 20 percent for underrepresented minority students;
- 20 percent for retention rate;
- 20 percent for graduation rate;
- 20 percent for students from low-income families;
- 10 percent for Colorado resident enrollment;
- 5 percent for credentials awarded; and
- 5 percent for students who are the first in their families to attend college.

The goal of the funding formula change is to ensure that colleges and universities provide emphasis on enrolling and supporting these students through completion of degree programs. The new model will go into effect in the 2021–22 school/budget year. Overall, state funding as outlined above makes up 29 percent of state college and university budgets, with student tuition the remaining 71 percent.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN

Colorado’s shift to focus on underrepresented minority and low-income students is notable and shows the state is dedicated to equity in college going and attainment. However, without a focus on the desired outcomes—such as job placement and wage earnings associated with completion of college—it is unclear whether simply adding more funds for student populations will spur improvement. Colorado can consider how to incorporate more meaningful outcomes into its funding formula to ensure that it sees a return on investment for its students and families.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES

- Missouri – Performance Funding
- Tennessee – Outcomes-Based Funding Formula
- Texas – State Technical College Funding Model

RESOURCES

- Colorado’s Shift to a New Higher Education Funding Formula Places the Focus on the Student
- Erasing Equity Gaps with State Funding

POLICIES

N/A
**STACKABLE DEGREES AND CREDENTIALS**

**STATE POLICY ANALYSIS**

The state Legislature enacted two bills, one in 2013 and one in 2015, that require the state Workforce Development Council and the state Department of Higher Education to develop pathways, including stackable credentials. The Workforce Development Council defines a career pathway program as one that offers a clear sequence of stackable credits and credentials, combined with support services, which enables students and job-seekers to secure industry-relevant skills, certifications and credentials and advance to higher levels of education and employment in high-demand occupations.

To strengthen and clarify the existing work on stackable credentials Colorado passed Opportunities for Credential Attainment in 2022. This legislation tasks the Department of Higher Education with developing ten stackable pathways in growing industries by 2025. Pathways must include an articulated competency framework identifying knowledge, skills, learning outcomes, credentials and degrees associated with careers in that industry. The legislation also establishes grant funds to support student access to nondegree credential programs.

**OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN**

The Opportunities for Credential Attainment legislation is a great step towards the development of stackable pathways in Colorado.

**PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES**

- Idaho – SkillStack
- Indiana – Next Level Jobs Workforce Ready Grant

**RESOURCES**

N/A

**POLICIES**

- **HB 15-1274**. Career Pathways for Students for Critical Occupations in Growing Industries
- **SB 22-192**. Opportunities for Credential Attainment
WORKFORCE READINESS

Ensure the skills, credentials and apprenticeships students pursue help to prepare a strong workforce within the state.

WORK-BASED LEARNING
Establish a statewide K–12 and postsecondary work-based learning program that promotes learning through a series of progressive learner experiences both in the classroom and in a work setting. Provide guidance and support for how education and business and industry collaborate to achieve mutual priorities.

APPRENTICESHIPS
Establish clearly defined program guidance for state-promoted apprenticeships outlining prerequisites, requirements, funding, stakeholder incentives and participant outcomes.

INDUSTRY-VALUED CREDENTIALS
Ensure all industry credentials earned in K–12 or postsecondary are aligned with high-demand, high-skill, high-wage occupations and valued by state and regional employers.

SKILLS RETRAINING/CREDENTIALING
Identify and promote non-degree programs and credentials that support new, transitioning and displaced learners in career change and advancement. Ensure that supports include funding supports for learners and incentives for participating employers who train or retrain them.
**Work-Based Learning**

**STATE POLICY ANALYSIS**

The Business Experiential-Learning Commission, which is overseen by the Department of Labor and Employment in partnership with the Office of Economic Development and International Trade and the Colorado Workforce Development Council, is responsible for engaging Colorado’s business and industry communities with respect to three issues: (1) developing a systematic approach to business involvement in educating and training students and workers in partnership with the state’s K–16 education system, workforce development system and related civic agencies; (2) creating a digital badging system to provide the opportunity for students, interns, apprentices and workers to document skills they have obtained in the workplace and to share that information with the K–16 system to support curriculum development; and (3) leveraging existing resources to create a portal of information to connect students, job-seekers, schools, employers and civic agencies with experiential learning, training opportunities and careers. The resulting work-based learning program includes the Work-Based Learning Continuum, an incubation program and funding opportunities for work-based learning participants. The Department of Education’s Office of Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness and the Colorado Workforce Development Council created and are administering (from September 2020 through June 2021) the Work-Based Learning Incubator. The incubator is designed to support the development of work-based learning programs in Colorado schools and school districts and share resources and promising practices with K–12 educators.

**OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN**

While the Work-Based Learning Continuum is progressive in that it facilitates students’ movement from learning about work to learning through work and then to learning at work, it is not clear that work-based learning is embedded within all K–12 and postsecondary CTE programs of study. Similarly, strengthening the existing CTE programs of study as noted before will help ensure that student experiences are aligned with high-demand, high-skill and high-wage occupations. Colorado can also consider providing support for local/regional intermediary

**PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES**

- Delaware – [Work-Based Learning Practicum](#)
- Georgia – [Work-Based Learning Framework](#)
- Rhode Island – [PrepareRI Work-Based Learning Navigator](#)

**RESOURCES**

- [Colorado Department of Education Work-Based Learning](#)
- [Colorado Workforce Development Council Work-Based Learning](#)

**POLICIES**

N/A
STATE POLICY ANALYSIS

The Colorado Department of Labor and Employment partners with regional and local communities, the U.S. Department of Labor, and corresponding state agencies to develop and implement registered apprenticeship programs throughout the state. In addition, over the past several years CareerWise Colorado has leveraged state, federal, business and philanthropic funding to create and implement youth apprenticeship programs. Based on the Swiss and German apprenticeship models, students split time between their traditional high school classes and employer worksites. CareerWise Colorado currently focuses on occupations within nine identified pathways: business operations, education and training, advanced manufacturing, health care, financial services, real estate management, information technology (IT), hospitality, and maintenance technology. For business partners, it serves as an intermediary with education institutions and as a recruiter for student talent.

In addition, the U.S. Department of Labor recently authorized Industry Recognized Apprenticeship Programs, which expand the authorizing bodies for apprenticeships to support their growth in nontraditional industries. Also authorized was the Colorado Collegiate Apprenticeship Program, which is focused on creating a streamlined, efficient and direct pipeline of trained, qualified talent while working to reimagine modern efficiencies in higher education. Finally, the state’s community college system received authorization to develop an IT and cybersecurity apprenticeship program between 2020 and 2024.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN

To build on its formidable progress, Colorado can consider an incentive fund program for students who are in registered apprenticeship programs to be eligible for reimbursement of tuition, books, required tools and other approved expenses required for participation in the program.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES

- Iowa – [Earn and Learn](#)
- Kentucky – [Tech Ready Apprentices for Careers in Kentucky](#) and [Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarship](#)
- New Jersey – [Apprenticeship Network](#)
- South Carolina – [Apprenticeship Carolina](#)

RESOURCES

- [Colorado Talent Pipeline Report](#)
- [CareerWise Colorado Annual Report 2019](#)
- [Colorado Department of Labor and Employment](#)
- [CO-TECH and Cybersecurity Apprenticeship Program](#)
- [Colorado Collegiate Apprenticeship Program](#)

POLICIES

N/A
KEY POLICY

Industry-Valued Credentials

STATE POLICY ANALYSIS
In 2018, the state passed HB 18-1266, which established the Career Development Incentive Program. It provides financial incentives for school districts and charter schools that encourage high school students, grades 9–12, to complete qualified industry credential programs, internships, residencies, construction preapprenticeship or construction apprenticeship programs, or qualified Advanced Placement (AP) courses. Participating districts or charter schools can receive up to $1,000 for each completed credential. The specific dollar amount of each incentive depends on the total number of completed programs in the state and the number and type of completed programs reported by districts. The funding is distributed in tiers with industry credentials funded before all other qualified programs. The three Career Development Incentive Program tiers are (i) Industry certification programs; (ii) Internships, residencies, construction industry preapprenticeships or construction industry apprenticeships; and (iii) Computer science AP courses.

In 2021, Colorado passed SB21-119 to strengthen access to high-quality credentials. The bill requires the Department of Education to annually identify the state’s most in-demand credentials and adjust the published list of credentials programs that qualify for incentive dollars. The department must also publicly report disaggregated completion data by student group.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN
According to ExcelinEd’s research with Burning Glass for CredentialsMatter.org, in 2017–18, just 32 percent of industry credentials earned by Colorado K–12 students were asked for by employers and were associated with occupations that pay at least $15 per hour. Colorado can raise the bar for its credential offerings in tandem with efforts to strengthen its CTE programs of study, which should include critical opportunities for credential attainment.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES
• Indiana – Promoted Industry Certifications
• Kentucky – Valid Industry Certifications
• Louisiana – Industry-Based Certification State Focus List

RESOURCES
• Career Development Incentive Program
• Credentials Matter Colorado State Summary

POLICIES
• SB21-199 Increasing Access to High-Quality Credentials
STATE POLICY ANALYSIS
Colorado’s TalentFOUND is the state’s talent development network. It connects individuals and business with tools and resources and helps learners of all ages identify and access potential training and employment opportunities. TalentFOUND leverages and powers My Colorado Journey as a vehicle for career exploration and service connections, including identifying local institutions that can provide training and skills development.

Colorado’s Skill Advance, administered by the community college system, includes two grant programs to support training and reskilling of workers. Colorado First grant funds provide for customized training only for net new hires at companies relocating to or expanding in Colorado. Existing Industry grant funds are for customized training to help established Colorado companies and nonprofits remain competitive in their industry, adapt to new technology and prevent layoffs. The 2021 incentive amounts per learner are $1,400 maximum for Colorado First and $1,200 maximum for Existing Industry.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN
Colorado can identify those stackable credentials that are most in demand and associated with occupations that pay family-sustaining wages. These credentials can be incorporated into the Skill Advance funds as incentives for both learners to earn and employers to provide training and attainment during employment.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES
- Indiana – Next Level Jobs Workforce Ready Grant
- Ohio – TechCred
- Washington – Worker Retraining Program

RESOURCES
- TalentFOUND
- My Colorado Journey
- Colorado First and Existing Industry Training Programs

POLICIES
N/A
EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

Incentivize workforce engagement in student pathways and reduce the barriers that keep employers from participating.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>K–12</th>
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<td>INDUCTY ENGAGEMENT INCENTIVES</td>
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<td>LEGAL BARRIERS</td>
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INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT INCENTIVES
Establish, sustain and promote a comprehensive set of industry and employer engagement incentives for supporting education to workforce pathways. Incentives may include grant funds, tax credits, or local and regional support services.

LEGAL BARRIERS
Remove or lessen legal barriers such as liability insurance, workers’ compensation and worksite age restrictions to provide more learners with work-based learning opportunities.
Industry Engagement Incentives

STATE POLICY ANALYSIS
Colorado currently has several employer incentives focused on job creation. The state’s Job Growth Incentive Tax Credit (JGITC) provides a state income tax credit equal to 50 percent of the Federal Insurance Contributions Act paid by the business on the net new job growth for each calendar year in the credit period. The JGITC is an eight-year job creation incentive to support competitive, multistate or country relocation and expansion projects. This tax credit is performance based, meaning companies that underperform in job creation or wages will not receive the total credit amount. Colorado also administers a Strategic Fund Incentive that supports new business development, expansions and relocations that generate new jobs.

In 2022, Colorado passed legislation incentivizing businesses to participate in work-based learning. Money awarded to businesses will depend on the duration of the learning experience, number of pupils enrolled, location, and size of business. Businesses must apply for this funding and demonstrate collaboration with local school districts, colleges and universities, and/or registered apprenticeship programs. Businesses that participate must report data back to the state regarding demographics of who has participated, hours completed, and skills they have trained for.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN
Colorado can continue to collect and analyze the data from the work-based learning incentive program to ensure that the program is meeting its intended goals.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES
- Georgia – Work-Based Learning Premium Credit
- Indiana – Next Level Jobs Employer Training Grant
- Iowa – Tax Credit

RESOURCES
- JGITC
- Strategic Fund Incentive

POLICIES
SB 22-140 – Work-based learning incentive program
STATE POLICY ANALYSIS
No policies removing legal barriers could be identified.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN
Colorado can implement policies to reduce legal barriers for employers engaging in K–12 and postsecondary worksite-based learning. Colorado can consider a partnership with an external company to employ work-based learning students who are then placed at businesses. This helps to reduce many of the burdens such as workers’ compensation liability and other restrictions. Colorado can also allow public schools to purchase certain insurance coverage for the benefit of businesses and students participating in CTE programs and provide for some immunity from liability of certain public school students participating in these programs.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES
- Kentucky – Apprenticeship Programs & Partnerships
- Rhode Island – Work Immersion Training Grant
- Texas – Insurance Coverage

RESOURCES
N/A

POLICIES
N/A
To ensure the strength of all the other policies, there must be cross-sector agreement on outcomes, strategies to get there and data to track progress.

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<td><strong>PROGRAM QUALITY MEASURES</strong></td>
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<td>Establish shared statewide definitions and measures for quality of and success in education to workforce pathways. Ensure these shared priorities extend across agencies and systems and inform decisions about program offerings, funding and outcomes.</td>
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<td><strong>STATE LONGITUDINAL DATA SYSTEM</strong></td>
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<td>Ensure the state’s cross-agency data system collects and reports on data needed to evaluate education workforce programs against shared metrics for quality and success. Data should span agencies and education systems and into the workforce to inform decision-making and drive outcomes.</td>
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In 2013, the Colorado Commission on Higher Education and Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) set a statewide postsecondary statewide attainment goal: Colorado Rises. It seeks to increase the number of Coloradoans ages 25–34 who hold high-quality postsecondary credentials (degrees or certificates) to 66 percent by the 2025. It also seeks to reduce gaps in credential attainment among students from historically underserved communities. The CDHE maintains a dashboard charting the state’s annual progress against clearly identified metrics for success. Currently, 55 percent of the adult population in the state has a degree or certificate, and only 49 percent has an associate degree or higher.

In addition, the Colorado Workforce Development Council—with support and collaboration from a host of other state agencies—publishes an annual Talent Pipeline Report. The report provides a common analysis of areas of growing labor market demand and emerging opportunities. It also assesses the state’s strategies to address workforce demand, including those aimed at preparing Coloradoans as part of the supply side of the equation.

The CDHE also publishes an annual legislative report that features the postsecondary access and success of high school graduates and a return on investment report for postsecondary attainment related to wage earnings.

**OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN**

Colorado can identify shared program quality indicators from these great reports and apply them to specific education to workforce programs for the purposes of evaluation—not just broader outcomes. Currently, they exist in piecemeal fashion but still do not add up to a clear set of goals and targets that programs should meet. This is especially true of the state’s CTE program, which still harbors low-wage, low-skill pathways. Colorado can also broaden the “net” for its attainment goal to include learners younger than age 25. With so many programs now blurring high school and postsecondary education—or focused more exclusively on nondegree credentials—the state’s attainment goal can be both more inclusive and reflective of the broader state efforts to improve its talent pipeline.

**PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES**

- Indiana – Governor’s Workforce Cabinet
- Rhode Island – PrepareRI

**RESOURCES**

- Colorado Rises Master Plan
- Colorado State Attainment Goal Dashboard
- Colorado Talent Pipeline Report
- Reducing Cost and Maximizing Value for Students and Our State
- Postsecondary Access and Success for Colorado’s High School Graduates

**POLICIES**

N/A
State Longitudinal Data System

STATE POLICY ANALYSIS
My Colorado Journey is the statewide platform connecting individuals to work, education and support services exploration. Though not a traditional state longitudinal data system, it seeks to expand its services to include outcomes data (de-identified) for education and workforce training. Through this approach, users could feasibly evaluate the results of specific program options and inform their decision-making as appropriate. It already includes labor market information and required education training for occupational opportunities. The trajectory for providing outcomes data for education and workforce training programs is long (in terms of timeline). In addition, Colorado is a state that fiercely guards data privacy and resists efforts to develop identifiable student-level systems. This may hamper the state from fully leveraging the power of data to improve and strengthen program outcomes.

Passed in 2022, HB22-1349 directs the Department of Higher Education to create and maintain a statewide postsecondary student data system with an institution interface and a separate public interface. The purpose of the data systems are to support the public in making career decisions, but also by institutions in assessing and improving their programming. Data will be disaggregated and reported by subpopulations. Specific measures still need to be developed, but “must include postsecondary success measures and workforce success measures.”

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN
The development of a statewide data system is a vital step in measuring outcomes. However, Colorado can establish clear priorities and expectations for its various education to workforce programs so that success and “what’s measured” with the system are clear and adhere to rigorous guidelines for quality and alignment.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES
• Florida – Talent Development Council
• Kentucky – KYStats

RESOURCES
• My Colorado Journey

POLICIES
HB22-1349 Postsecondary Student Success Data System