

Secondary, Postsecondary and Work-based Learning Integration Task Force Report

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Submitted to:

Office of the Governor
The Education Leadership Council
The State Board of Education
The Colorado Commission
on Higher Education
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The Senate and The House
of Representatives



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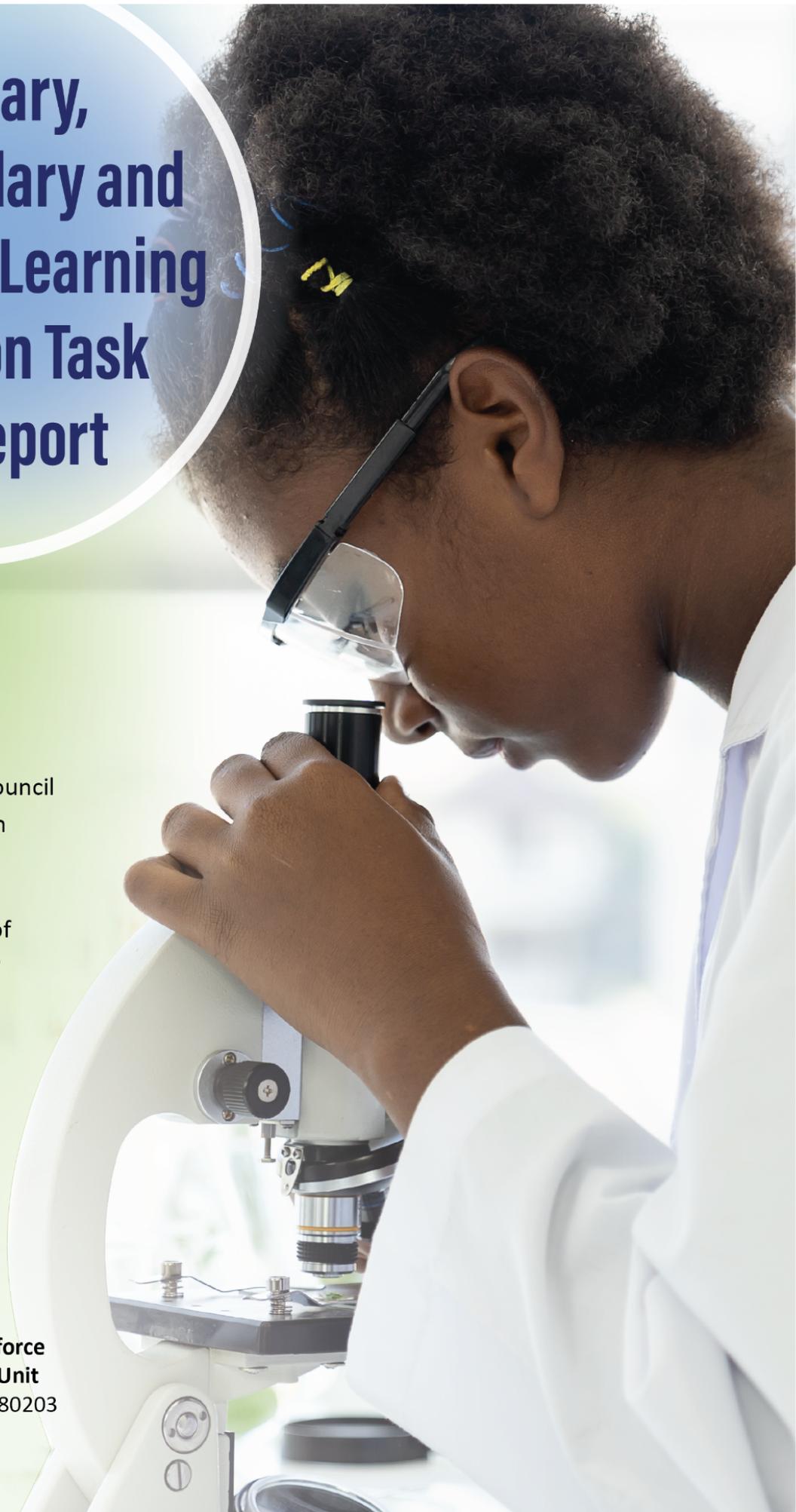




Table of Contents

Introduction	3
History	3
Landscape	5
Recommendations	7
Program Modernization	7
Access, Awareness and Value	14
Sustainable Funding	20
Partnerships	23
Observations from Jobs for the Future	26
Implications for Implementation	26
Equity Considerations	27
Conclusion	29
Appendix A	30

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Introduction

History

The Secondary, Postsecondary and Work-based Learning Integration Task Force, established by [House Bill 22-1215](#), is charged with “develop[ing] and recommend[ing] policies, laws and rules to support the equitable and sustainable expansion and alignment of programs that integrate secondary, postsecondary, and work-based learning opportunities in every region of the state.”

Since House Bill 22-1215 was enacted in June 2022, the Task Force convened 15 times. During meetings, they were engaged in presentations on relevant topics from various Colorado school funding mechanisms and the state’s accountability framework and proposed and workshopped recommendations responding to the [legislative charges](#):

1. Design and recommend comprehensive, uniform policies that encourage and empower high schools and postsecondary institutions to create and sustain secondary, postsecondary, and work-based learning integration programs in every region of the state. Design the policy recommendations to increase the number, coordination, and collaboration of these programs and include, at a minimum, policies that enable high schools that choose to provide an early college program to a structure the program as a four-year program, encompassing grades nine through twelve; a five-year program, encompassing grades nine through thirteen; or a six-year program, encompassing grades nine through fourteen.
2. Design and recommend policies to coordinate and expand innovative postsecondary and workforce credential options and career pathways available through secondary, postsecondary, and work-based learning integration programs, with a focus on career pathways leading to credentials association with high-need, in-demand, high-value businesses and industries.
3. Make recommendations concerning the creation of a statewide corps of counselors to assist learners in identifying, understanding, and navigating options for secondary, postsecondary, and work-based learning integration programs.
4. Make recommendations concerning methods for publicizing the requirements, benefits, and availability of secondary, postsecondary, and work-based learning integration programs to learners and families throughout the state.
5. Taking into account every existing and potential funding sources, design policy recommendations that create a uniform and comprehensive funding mechanism for secondary, postsecondary, and work-based learning integration programs. The policy recommendations must address implications for existing programs, including the Accelerating Students through Concurrent Enrollment (ASCENT) program, the Teacher Recruitment and Education program (T-REP), and P-TECH high schools.
6. Recommend characteristics of and standards for secondary, postsecondary, and work-based learning integration programs for purposes of authorizing and measuring the performance of these programs and make recommendations concerning how best to use data to build evidence of long-term impact of these programs. The characteristics and standards must allow high schools of every size and from every region of the state to demonstrate program quality, regardless of the size of the school.

7. Identify the challenges learners face in accessing and completing credentials through secondary, postsecondary, and work-based learning integration programs and recommend ways to address and reduce these challenges.

To complement the work of the Task Force, Slalom, Inc. facilitated the following stakeholder input opportunities:

1. Held panel discussions where the Task Force could hear directly from various stakeholder groups, including 20+ high school and college students, industry partners, K-12 and postsecondary educators.
2. Conducted four human-centered design (HCD) workshops – one for each identified Task Force area of focus – from which the conversations served as critical inputs to the Task Force’s recommendations and to reflect the perspectives of key stakeholder groups.

Human-Centered Design Workshops				
STAKEHOLDER GROUP ASSOCIATION	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS INVITED PER WORKSHOP			
	Access & Awareness Workshop	Sustainable Funding Workshop	Value of Programs Workshop	Administration & Reporting Workshop
Education Administrators	6	11	8	6
Educators	4	-	5	8
Families	3	-	4	-
Industry Professionals	6	3	6	7
Students	4	-	6	3

3. Solicited recommendation suggestions from the public through surveys. There were a total of 20 submissions that were shared with the Task Force.
4. Designed a [Future State Service Design Blueprint](#) to support the recommendations, a tool to illustrate the future state and the end-to-end process of effectively administrating postsecondary and workforce readiness (PWR) programs. The blueprint aims to clarify how each recommendation impacts the learner journey through PWR programs.

As noted in the [Interim Report](#), Task Force members have clearly stated that there is a disconnect between secondary, higher education and businesses regarding the preparation of Colorado learners to become workers. Inspired by the [Jobs for the Future’s Big Blur vision](#), the Task Force has worked to ‘blur’ the boundaries between key transition points along the learner-to-worker journey to create “a singular, more flexible system.”

At the core of its discussions and recommendations, the Task Force reflects the values that by the time a learner turns 21, every Coloradan should have no-cost access to:

- In-demand industry credential attainment
- College credit that is part of a defined postsecondary workforce readiness (PWR) pathway
- High-quality work-based learning (WBL) opportunities

Landscape

As Governor Jared Polis highlighted in his 2023 State of the State Address, Colorado currently has [two available jobs](#) for every unemployed person in the state. While more than 90% of top jobs that provide a living wage require a postsecondary education or training, Colorado resident undergraduate postsecondary enrollment has [declined by 8% since 2010](#). Simply put, Colorado must be more intentional in its efforts to boost postsecondary readiness to build a robust, diverse, and homegrown talent ecosystem.

Throughout his tenure, Governor Polis has overseen and supported several initiatives that work to reduce barriers and streamline connections between high school and postsecondary education. Recent key examples of this being [Colorado gaining recognition](#) from the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) as a State Apprenticeship Agency (SAA) and the corresponding expansion of the Office of the Future of Work to house the new program.

The SAA, called [Apprenticeship Colorado](#), is designed to oversee registered apprenticeship programs, accelerate new program growth, and serve as the primary contact for the U.S. DOL's Office of Apprenticeship. While the state's higher education ecosystem recognizes the importance of increasing credential attainment, the Colorado Commission on Higher Education's (CCHHE) [Strategic Plan](#) emphasizes the need to ensure that education pathways and credentials create more valuable options for learners to realize career, economic and social mobility, and that the the credential itself has a good return on the learner's investment. [CCHHE](#) set a statewide credential attainment goal of 66% in 2012 and reaffirmed that goal in 2017. While the state made progress toward this goal, it was largely through in-migration of individuals already in possession of a postsecondary credential, rather than the state making significant progress in addressing equity gaps in credential attainment. Meanwhile, Colorado's resident undergraduate enrollment declined since that goal was initially set, as did postsecondary enrollment rates for Colorado high school graduates. The current credential attainment rate for adults in Colorado is [60.5%](#).

Colorado has invested significant funds to advance The Big Blur through legislative measures, including:

- [House Bill 21-1330](#): created the 1330 Task Force and Higher Education Student Success Legislation (\$51.5 million)
- [House Bill 22-1349](#): tasked CCHHE to establish a postsecondary student success data system that includes student mobility and workforce outcomes (\$3 million)
- [House Bill 22-1350](#): created The Regional Talent Development Initiative Grant – Opportunity Now (\$85 million)
- [House Bill 22-1390](#): removes ASCENT enrollment cap

Definition of postsecondary and workforce readiness

Originally written in 2009, the definition for postsecondary and workforce readiness was updated in 2015 through collaboration between Colorado Department of Education (CDE), the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) and the Colorado Workforce Development Council (CWDC) and subsequently adopted by the State Board of Education (SBE) and the Colorado Commission of Higher Education (CCHHE) and reaffirmed by SBE in 2022. As it stands, the state of Colorado defines postsecondary and workforce readiness as **“Colorado high school graduates demonstrate the knowledge and skills (competencies) needed to succeed in postsecondary settings and to advance in career pathways as lifelong learners and contributing citizens.”**



- [House Bill 22-1329](#): dedicated additional funding for ASCENT based on enrollment cap removal (\$4.2 million)
- [Senate Bill 22-192](#): outlined the stackable credential pathways work and provided additional funding for learners to complete nondegree credential programs (\$3.6 million)
- [House Bill 22-1366](#): created a grant program to help Local Education Providers (LEPs) increase FAFSA/CASFA completion, train school counselors, and update the K-12 financial literacy resource bank (\$2.8 million)
- [Senate Bill 22-165](#): created the Career Advisor Training Grant program (\$1 million)
- [House Bill 23-1212](#): created a navigator program to promote apprenticeships to high school students and added apprenticeships to the Individualized Career and Academic Plan (ICAP) (\$386,600)
- [Senate Bill 23-065](#): reauthorized the Career Development Incentive Program (CDIP) for 10 years and increased the minimum annual allocation (from \$1 million to \$9.5 million annually)

These crucial investments demonstrate the state's financial commitment to increase the number of learners who are earning degrees and credentials. However, each of these investments has its own system, making opportunities difficult to navigate for learners and communities. The taskforce sought ways to craft recommendations to ease navigation and access.

RECOMMENDATIONS

PROGRAM MODERNIZATION (Previously Administration + Reporting)

Challenges and Opportunities:

While schools and LEAs are required to offer concurrent enrollment, availability of PWR programs that offer access to job skills training and early credential attainment are rare outside of the primary transportation corridors across Colorado.

Currently, each of the PWR programs are managed, funded, and reported on separately, creating an immense administrative burden for LEAs and schools attempting to provide multiple PWR opportunities to their learners. Each program carries its own reporting requirements, and with that comes not only the reporting burden, but also the time needed to set up programs without knowing whether or not learners will choose to avail themselves of the distinct programming.

Additionally, Colorado does not have a state-led data system to collect and analyze data from the list of reporting requirements to make reporting with fidelity worth the additional administrative lift. Statewide longitudinal data systems (SLDS) securely store learner-level data that can be used to discern trends and patterns over time. Such information can help inform both policy and programmatic decisions and serve as evidence for necessary changes.

The General Assembly has the opportunity to modernize the way Colorado approaches college and career readiness to ensure that each learner is successfully supported throughout their journey along their chosen career pathway, which ultimately should lead to a quality job. Modernization does not necessarily mean making new programs and casting aside what currently exists, it means making what the state already offers better and less complex for the learner and those supporting learners to navigate. Modernization should also include updates to Colorado's accountability performance framework that would encourage PWR program growth and better align with today's postsecondary education, training and career opportunities.

RECOMMENDATION 1: To streamline program administration, all PWR programs under CDE's statutory authority should be housed under a new singular PWR umbrella.

Streamline PWR program administration under one umbrella to reduce administrative burden for each of the PWR programs in which CDE has statutory authority. This will allow for a more comprehensive, streamlined, accessible, and navigable PWR experience for learners and staff who support those learners in Colorado. The umbrella PWR program would support a more complete and comparable analysis of short and long-term outcomes for participating students (see Recommendation 2). It will also allow for centralized information to be accessed by all stakeholders (see Recommendation 5) in addition to a far more streamlined funding mechanism (see Recommendation 9), all of which will be detailed later.

Current programs operated out of the CDE Office of Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness that could be included in the umbrella are:



- [Accelerated College Opportunity Exam Fee Grant Program](#)
- [Automatic Enrollment in Advanced Courses \(John W. Buckner\)](#)
- [ASCENT](#)
- [Career Development Incentive Program](#)
- [Concurrent Enrollment](#)
- [Concurrent Enrollment Expansion and Innovation Grant Program](#)
- [Early College High School](#)
- [Innovative Learning Opportunities Pilot Program](#)
- [Pathways in Technology Early College High Schools \(P-TECH\)](#)
- [Rural Coaction Program](#)
- [School Counselor Corps](#)
- [Teacher Recruitment Education and Preparation Program \(TREP\)](#)

To make accessing opportunities within the PWR umbrella program easier, the ICAP State Board of Education rules should be updated to provide a framework that includes the types of activities/self-reflections learners should engage in, including academic and career planning and post-graduation pathway planning. Statute and corresponding State Board of Education rules should be updated to codify work-based learning (and specific activities outlined in the “Learning Through Work” and “Learning At Work” sections of [Colorado Work-based Learning Continuum](#)) as an acceptable method of instructional delivery.

[Career and Technical Education \(CTE\)](#) is overseen by the Colorado Community College System (CCCS), and successes with program guidance and reporting should be looked to as the umbrella program is being developed. [Path4Ward](#) was included in the 1215 Task Force legislation; it is overseen by the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE), and this Pilot Program is an example of the flexibility that can come with the true blurring of lines between high school and postsecondary, as it allows students from low-income households who graduate early to receive funding for postsecondary education or training programs during what would have been their fourth year of high school.

Please note that subsequent recommendations in this report will draw upon the assumption of a singular umbrella program.

**Implementing Recommendation 1
would require changes to state statutes.**

RECOMMENDATION 2: Create a single, streamlined PWR program reporting structure that results in one annual, comprehensive report.

Standardize metrics measured across programs to give a more meaningful comparison of program performance, including the ability to share return on investment with learners. All program reporting metrics should be aligned with the elements of learners' ICAP and must include or be related to:

- College credit attainment
- Meaningful work-based learning experience
- In-demand credential attainment

This umbrella structure allows for local flexibility – at the LEP or school levels – to offer PWR programming that meets local learner and business needs while providing opportunities for learners to gain WBL experience (as described in the “Learning Through Work” and “Learning At Work” sections of the [Colorado Work-based Learning Continuum](#)), earn industry recognized credentials, and earn college credit aligned to their ICAP and chosen pathway. Existing reporting timelines will need to be analyzed to ensure alignment with existing federal report requirements, such as federal CTE and state graduation reporting.

This report should also include specific information about each local education provider's graduation requirements. This information is not currently centralized or publicly accessible. The lack of visibility into graduation requirements statewide creates issues with transparency, accountability, and equity for learners, parents, and education providers. Local education providers should report their graduation requirements to CDE for inclusion in the annual report, and notify CDE if/when there are changes.

Lastly, analysis should be conducted via this annual report to outline the equitable availability of opportunities to learners across the state, as well as recommendations for improving access in the future.

**Implementing Recommendation 2
would require changes to state statutes.**

RECOMMENDATION 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).

Build on the following efforts to support the creation of a SLDS:

- [House Bill 22-1349](#) for developing a statewide data system that connects postsecondary education to the workforce.
- [CDE has received](#) three SLDS Grants from the [Institute of Education Sciences \(IES\)](#) since 2007. Funding has been used to invest in safe data management techniques.
- The [Colorado Data Trust](#) provides opportunities to build enhanced relationships and policies among partners around

Colorado can look to states with existing statewide longitudinal data systems such as Kentucky ([KYStats](#)), Washington State's Education Research Data Center ([ERDC](#)) and North Carolina's Longitudinal Data System ([NCLDS](#))

well-governed, responsible data sharing as well as infrastructure to facilitate the sharing of data.

Colorado should move forward with investing in a truly unified state system that connects learner information from preschool through college and career and that captures the full array of publicly available data about education, training, work-based learning experience and skills development experiences, including nondegree credentials.

The data system should be maintained and managed by a state designated entity independent from governing agencies that will contribute data (K-12, higher education, and workforce development). The managing entity could be an existing entity, such as The Governor’s Office of Information Technology, or could be a newly established office.

The state should invest in the capacities and capabilities of the entity to conduct timely analysis that supports decision-making by state policymakers and practitioners and to also inform learners, families, and employers about the returns of education and training programs. The independent entity should produce public-facing dashboards to inform learners, families, and employers about the returns of education and training program participation. Data analysis and dashboards should include disaggregated data to reveal disparities by race, ethnicity, gender, and income to inform approaches to close equity gaps, especially for programs considered to be in-demand and of high-value in state and regional economies.

**Implementing Recommendation 3
would require changes to state statutes.**

RECOMMENDATION 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.

The 1215 Task Force spent a significant amount of time discussing Colorado’s current accountability system, in particular, the PWR sub-indicators.

[House Bill 23-1241](#) created the [1241 Accountability, Accreditation, Student Performance, and Resource Inequity Task Force](#),

which was a year after the 1215 Task Force had already begun meeting. The 1215 Task Force

acknowledges that the 1241 Task Force is ultimately charged with improving the accountability system, and, the 1215 Task Force wants to share the outcomes of discussions over the last 18 months in hopes of informing conversations about the PWR Sub-Indicator.

[House Bill 23-1241](#) specifies that the Accountability, Student Performance, and Resources Inequity Task Force at a *minimum shall consider*:

- Academic opportunities or inequities that may impact academic achievement gaps
- Improvement to the accountability and accreditation system to expand and incentivize academic opportunities and address inequities
- Promising practices in schools and school districts
- Recommendations for legislation or rules as necessary

The accountability performance frameworks should be updated to improve the way PWR opportunities are represented, which should encourage growth of PWR opportunities made available to learners and the funded outcomes. Ideally, the performance framework would be a way to reward schools for the following learner attainment outcomes that are connected to a defined PWR pathway:

- Earn a quality, in-demand industry credential or postsecondary certificate (as defined by the [Quality and In-demand Non-degree Credentials Framework](#)),
- Accumulate college credit that is attached to a defined PWR pathway, and
- Gain relevant work-based learning and/or on-the-job experience (as described in the “Learning Through Work” and “Learning At Work” sections of the [Colorado Work-based Learning Continuum](#)).

The PWR indicator in the performance framework should be updated to diversify and better reflect metrics that are stronger predictors of postsecondary and workforce readiness as follows:

PWR Sub-Indicator	Suggested Change	Rationale
SAT Evidence-Based Reading / Writing	Remove from the PWR Indicator	These are already represented in both the Academic Achievement (PSAT only) and Academic Growth (PSAT and SAT) Performance Indicators. Further, House Bill 21-1067 made it optional for first-time freshman applicants to Colorado's public four-year colleges and universities to submit SAT or ACT test scores
SAT Math	Remove from the PWR Indicator	
Concurrent Enrollment	Not currently part of the performance framework; add this as a sub-indicator in the PWR Indicator	<p>Concurrent enrollment could be considered a replacement for the removal of the SAT sub-indicators listed above. Concurrent enrollment is proven to be a strong indicator that students are postsecondary and workforce ready - Compared to students who did not take college courses while in high school, students who took Concurrent Enrollment courses were more likely to: (1) attend college within one year following high school graduation, (2) earn a college degree on time or early, and (3) have higher workforce earnings after five years.</p> <p>The earning of college credit is what would count for this sub-indicator. For example, counting only credits where a student earns above a C grade, and formulating a point system that takes into account student n size for a given school and district.</p>



		Note, concurrent enrollment data is provided by the Colorado Department of Higher Education.
Graduation Rate	Keep in the PWR Indicator	A high school diploma is an important, foundational credential for future job and education prospects, so this sub-indicator should be kept.
Dropout Rate	Keep in the PWR Indicator; reduce the number of points so it is worth fewer points than Graduation Rate	It is important to clearly show which schools and districts excel at student retention and reengagement, but the graduation rate generally applies to a much larger number of students. This sub-indicator would continue to include only students in grades 9-12.
Matriculation Rate	Keep in the PWR Indicator; modify reporting so military enlistment and industry credential attainment is required to be included Consider increasing the weight of this measure, as it covers matriculation into a variety of beneficial PWR programs	<p>Continue to include learner matriculation data for post-high school enrollment in Career and Technical Education (CTE), 2-year and 4-year degree programs, and the military. Also continue to include additional degree attainment while in high school (e.g., an associate’s degree).</p> <p>Currently other industry credentials are incorporated into the rates based on voluntary district-submitted data; update reporting capabilities so it is easy for districts to report industry credential attainment and require inclusion in the Matriculation Rate sub-indicator.</p> <p>Ensure that matriculation into registered pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs (including the trades) are included in this sub-indicator</p> <p>Consider inclusion of other postsecondary education/training programs that meet identified quality criteria, such as the Eligible Training Provider List.</p> <p>Where possible, utilize data matching with relevant sources (e.g., the Department of Defense for military enlistment) to ease school/district data reporting burden.</p>
District Option	Consider adding to the PWR Indicator	Each district could opt into this sub-indicator if they have a local accountability process to determine relevant outcomes. This could build off the work of the Local Accountability System



		Grant , created by House Bill 19-204 , to provide grant money to local education providers that adopt local accountability systems to supplement the state accountability system.
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Implementing Recommendation 4
would require changes to state statutes and State Board of Education rules.

ACCESS, AWARENESS AND VALUE

Challenges and Opportunities:

Not all learners and families are aware of PWR programs. Information about opportunities is inconsistent across the state and across types of learners. Without a clear guide to these programs, learners often participate in programs haphazardly without a clear vision of how various programs may best serve their long-term career goals. Families may also have difficulty understanding and navigating multiple options, particularly if English is not their primary language. Businesses may not know what their Local Education Providers are offering to learners and how to get involved.

A comprehensive system for secondary, postsecondary, and work-based learning requires sufficient human capital. This is especially true to assist learners in the complexity of scheduling across multiple schools or program providers. However, Colorado's current system often comes up short in this area. The level of service learners receive often depends on their counselor and the learner to counselor ratio.

RECOMMENDATION 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.

Colorado needs a unified platform for accessing a collection of tools and resources designed to help people of any age and at any point in their lives make informed choices about their educational, training and employment options. The most valuable career navigation offerings are tailored to individuals' interests and talents, are available in multiple languages, and include fully accessible interactive tools and services designed to help people adopt a growth mindset and develop decision-making, critical thinking, and goal-setting skills.

Accessible to the user, local education providers, postsecondary institutions, and workforce centers at no cost, the platform will ensure geographic equity in accessing program options and would ultimately serve as a platform for all Coloradans seeking employment, education, and training opportunities. The platform should contain a user interface designed intentionally to help middle and high school learners make informed choices about their education and career pursuits, take action toward their goals, and document their progress in attaining credentials, skills, and work-based learning experiences that set them up for success.

At the same time, it is understood that local education providers utilize other platforms for similar purposes. The proposed platform here would be offered as a no-cost alternative providing access to statewide workforce/jobs data and PWR program information that are traditionally posted on separate agency websites and online tools. The option to interface with other platforms, such as district student information systems (SIS), would be ideal; that capability would need to be vetted in the design-phase of the statewide platform.

The estimated costs are \$2 million one-time infrastructure investment with \$750,000 annual maintenance, including state agency staffing, for the online tool.

The benefits of a “single source of information” web-based platform include:

- the convenience for learners to access their records if they transfer schools, otherwise requiring them to start a new interest inventory, letters of recommendations, etc. if their new school uses a different platform;
- the seamlessness for school staff to access a learner’s ICAP, resume, etc. without starting over, particularly for highly-mobile students; and
- the usefulness of seeing a learner’s PWR growth and experiences over time to enhance career advising by career coaches in secondary, postsecondary, and workforce settings.

Currently, in Colorado, there are several online sites that are meant to provide learners, jobseekers, and career coaches with information and tools for navigating career, education, and training decisions (See Table 1 for a list of state funded consumer-facing sites for career exploration and job search assistance, as well as a list of state funded labor market information sites that present data on employment trends that could be repackaged and displayed on a consumer-facing site to inform decisions). This fragmented approach forces Coloradans to engage with multiple sites over their learning and working life cycles. Certain sites contain better tools and user experiences than others. Through homegrown solutions, some communities and specific consumers have access to better resources than their counterparts across the state – contributing to inequities. Overall, the current diffused approach for career navigational support is not able to best serve Coloradans and employers, weakening the state's talent pipeline goals.

Table 1: Current Online Tools Funded by the State of Colorado

Consumer-Facing Career Tools	Labor Market Information Tools
Connecting Colorado	Colorado Department of Local Affairs, State Demography Office
My Colorado Journey	Labor Market Information (LMI) Gateway
Colorado Career Advising Tool	Colorado Future Jobs
Colorado Career Trail Guide	Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) Workforce Dashboard
Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL)	
CDHE Students (Preparing for, Attending and Post College)	

By investing in a single, online portal, Colorado should take into account the following key considerations:

Career Pathways Tools

- Establishes an online marketplace where learners seeking an experiential learning opportunity and businesses who want to bring in learners can connect (note: the responses to the CWDC's [Request for Information](#) can inform the cost of what is needed);

- Serves as a one-stop shop for Coloradans to understand the costs and opportunities for participating in programming, including PWR options in order to help Coloradans make informed choices. This should include information to identify and apply for various forms of financial assistance, including the Colorado Application for State Financial Aid (CASFA) and Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), as well as scholarship opportunities, to support the cost of attending education, training, and work-based learning experiences, as well as information on the full cost of attendance and return on investment of specific programs of study and credentials in terms of labor market demand and employment outcomes.
- Presents ICAP as the key entry point for prompting learners to establish their plans based on: (1) the articulation of their interest, abilities, and goals; (2) their exploration of Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness programming options available in their local area and LEP, including concurrent enrollment courses by college and work-based learning experiences by employer; and (3) an easy to understand explanation of eligibility requirements of PWR options and how participation in PWR programming fulfill LEP graduation requirements, confer credit and credentials applicable to desired postsecondary programs of study at Colorado institutions of higher education, and prepare learners for career opportunities with labor market value and demand in their regional area. Through the ICAP, learners should also have access to clear guidance when changing course in their academic and career plans, so that they understand the applicability and stackability of their accrued experiences as well as the steps they need to take to fill gaps in their education and skills in order to move forward in their new desired path and avoid “[dead ends](#).”
- Clearly maps career pathways, including their level of value and demand in the state and within regional labor markets, in alignment with the Colorado Talent Pipeline Report.
- The platform should contain an easy to navigate listing of work-based learning opportunities. It should be intuitive and easy for employers and regional intermediaries to post work-based learning opportunities and to match with interested learners. Conversely, learners should be able to search for experiences based on their qualifications and interests.

Storage Capability

- Houses an individual’s digital record of their ICAP (and other types of education and employment plans for jobseekers). These accounts should be owned by the individual and governed by the state, and not a third party.
- Enables easy and safe sharing of information by users with their career coaches, as well as by program providers for reporting purposes.
- Enable learners to easily and safely share their ICAP with relevant professionals in school, colleges, and in workforce and community-based organizations (CBOs) to facilitate seamless hand-offs across systems and enable co-advising at critical transition points for learners (e.g., high school to college, school to work). Learner and professional use of this platform should augment, not replace, in-person guidance and support to enable streamlined service delivery so that professionals can focus on high-touch supports. The platform should be able to interface with platforms LEPs may already be using.

Maintenance

- The platform should have stable and sustainable funding for user experience testing, platform enhancements, and for the deployment of technical assistance for professionals who interface with the system to support Coloradans.
- State agencies should have the ability to retrieve information for reporting purposes.
- The platform should have a governance and staffing model that ensures education, postsecondary, and workforce systems have an equal stake in the use and performance of the platform.
- The content and tools in the platform should be curated or developed in consultation with business, industry, and community stakeholders, through input organized by regional intermediary organizations and industry sector partnership groups.
- The platform interface should be customized to the learner's experience by highlighting labor market and postsecondary program information in their regional area and promoting PWR programming available in their school/LEP and with local colleges and employers.
- The platform text and videos should be translated into languages other than English and presented at a middle school comprehension level to ensure equitable access to content and ease of understanding for all learners and for their families. Visually and in text, content should depict the experiences of a diverse array of Coloradans, which should help in countering ingrained forms of occupational segregation.

Implementing Recommendation 5 would require the creation of new state statutes.

RECOMMENDATION 6: Develop and execute a comprehensive and complementary communications strategy to raise awareness and interest among Coloradans about personalized, lifelong career pathways.

The strategy should include tailored messaging directed toward middle and high school learners and customized to regions of Colorado about high-value, in-demand career options, high-quality education, credentials, and skills development opportunities oriented toward these career options, and – importantly – to direct them to the new “single source of information” platform as a tool to explore and take steps to pursue opportunities aligned to their interests, abilities, and goals (Estimated costs: \$500,000 one-time investment in branding and strategic communications plan and key assets, with \$200,000 annual budget for marketing expenses).

This design and roll-out of the marketing and communications strategy should be constructed with the following key considerations:

- Tailored plans and messages to suit regional needs and opportunities that speak to specific consumers (e.g., high school learners). The designated regional intermediary (see Recommendation 11) will play a key role in convening stakeholders to develop the unified messaging.
- Messages and materials must be widely accessible and culturally competent to resonate with a diverse array of Coloradans. Like the “single source of information” platform, audio, video, and text forms of materials for the marketing campaign should be translated in languages other than English and presented at a middle school comprehension level to ensure equitable access to content and ease of understanding for all learners and for their families. Visually and in text, content should depict the

experiences of a diverse array of Coloradans, including in countering ingrained forms of occupational segregation.

- The roll-out of a marketing campaign and materials should be done in a coordinated manner at state, regional, and local levels, with clearly defined roles for engagement and dissemination among organizations and staff at leadership and frontline levels. Business and industry groups should be encouraged and empowered to participate in the marketing. This coordinated approach should be executed through the designated regional intermediary organizations and their partner organizations (see Recommendation 11).

In constructing the campaign, Colorado could examine the efficacy and approaches of other state campaigns. This includes Georgia's [Move on When Ready](#) dual enrollment initiative, Virginia is for Learners campaign (profiled in [this white paper](#)), Michigan's [Futures for Frontliners](#) campaign, [My Texas Future](#) and [Career Connect Connecticut](#). Implementing this recommendation would require the creation of new state statutes.

RECOMMENDATION 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.

Building on the progress made through the [School Counselor Corps grant program](#) and the [Career Navigation and Coaching Collaborative program](#), Colorado should move forward to ensure all learners in all geographies have access to, and regular touchpoints with, a designated career coach who is trained to help learners find, finance, and flourish in postsecondary and workforce readiness programming that aligns to their college and career interests, abilities, and goals. This investment in career coaches should be constructed with the following key considerations to address the current shortage of licensed high school counselors, the limited resources at the postsecondary level for career and academic advising, the critical unmet need for advising at college and career transition points, and the opportunities and progress being made in Colorado to equip an array of adults in school and in community to provide career advice:

- All learners should have access to a high-quality and intentional planning session with an adult, who is in an advisory position, to revisit their ICAP and recalibrate as needed to ensure alignment with their postsecondary education and training goals. Advising should be provided at the smallest counselor-to-learner ratio possible and at available times during the school day. Advisors should utilize the platform proposed in this report (Recommendation 5).
- Continue to build on the success of the School Counselor Corp grant program in expanding the pool of licensed school guidance counselors and set an expectation that all school counselors funded through the state grant dollars participate in training on career coaching; the state should utilize the [Career Advisor training grant](#) to fund this training curriculum. Ideally, this training expectation would extend to all licensed school counselors, with a goal of 100 percent training completion by 2030.
- Establish a new state designated role of career coach / navigator to operate within high schools and colleges (could be an employee of a college, district, third-party). LEAs and local Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) should consider collaborating on shared career navigator positions, developing and utilizing a co-advising model ([see Arizona framework](#)). The career coach should provide guided career

pathways advising on academic and career milestones and goals to ensure learners are on track for attaining credentials of value and completing high-quality work-based learning experiences.

- Hold career coaching training courses for all adults in schools and colleges with learner-facing roles where informal career and academic advising may occur. Incentivize participation by providing stipends and/or by awarding professional development credits toward renewal of teacher licensure.
- Building upon the community-based partnership model of the [Career Navigation and Coaching Collaborative grant program](#), consider funding and training community-based organization personnel to deliver career coaching and/or mentorship to high school learners, with a focus on reaching hard-to-serve learners. This could include charitable and faith-based entities who have deep ties to local communities and understand and serve the unique needs of particular population groups (e.g., refugees, multilingual learners, youth experiencing homelessness, and youth with criminal records).
- To assure access to consistently high-quality career guidance in school and in community settings, consider setting state-level standards for career coaching delivered across K-12, postsecondary, and workforce development systems, and develop a common training curriculum that results in state certification. This may be achieved by building on the [Colorado Career Advisor Training Grant Program](#) and involves strong alignment between the existing efforts listed above. The training curriculum should cover the “single source of information” platform, labor market information, work-based learning and employment rules (including for undocumented learners), cultural competency practices and ICAP and PWR programs. Consider ways to deploy training through regional intermediaries to ensure content is appropriately contextualized with regional information.

**Implementing Recommendation 7
would require changes to state statutes and State Board of Education rules.**

RECOMMENDATION 8: Carefully deploy a suite of tech-enabled advising and coaching tools to augment human capacity and focus attention on high-touch supports.

Use of technologies can augment, not replace, the important human capacity mentioned in Recommendation 7, such as artificial intelligence chatbots for prompting and supporting completion of tasks (see this [one](#) for financial aid applications), intrusive advising technologies that use text messages to “[nudge](#)” learners, as well as automated scheduling tools. These AI tools should be integrated in the “single source of information” platform (Recommendation 5) and deployed as automated text messages as part of overall marketing and communications campaigns.

Tech can counteract the effect of coaches’ and advisors’ personal implicit biases that may result in tracking individuals into certain career fields. On the other hand, tech can reinforce biases through overly engineered algorithms or if the digital platforms do not represent the individuals accessing the services. To address the discriminatory consequences that tech products and services may cause, the design of these solutions should be developed with equity in mind and be human-centered.

Tech cannot replace personal connections, particularly for individuals with limited digital literacy skills or insufficient access to devices and broadband. Measures should be taken to ensure Coloradans have access to the



necessary equipment and digital literacy skills to make use of the platform. One potential leverage point is the state's plan for the federal Digital Equity Act. The bill invests not only in broadband infrastructure but also digital literacy, relevant skills training and devices for communities in need.

Implementing this recommendation would require more research to be conducted so safe, evidence-based tools can be identified prior to implementation.

SUSTAINABLE FUNDING

Challenges and Opportunities:

Currently, each of the PWR programs are funded through distinct funding mechanisms, creating a complex web of funding streams that carry different reporting requirements, follow different timelines, and draw upon different funding sources. There is a need to eliminate financial barriers to early credential attainment, work-based learning, apprenticeship and industry-credential options leading to in-demand jobs and additional training.

PWR programs should be housed under one "umbrella" PWR program, with early college credit and industry credential attainment, as well as work-based learning (including the completion of an apprenticeship), funded out of the same funding stream that increases with inflation. To guarantee programming to learners at no cost, ensure LEPs are aware of learner-facing costs and LEPs have a plan to pay for those costs.

RECOMMENDATION 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.

The goal of outcomes-based funding is to maximize funding going to the classrooms and costs associated with learners attaining these outcomes, including school staffing. Financial reporting for outcomes-based funding should mirror the level of detail required for per pupil revenue, so it is clear how much funding is being used directly for classroom and student-based costs.

Under this new funding stream, schools and districts that provide PWR programs will receive a per outcome financial incentive for each participating learner who successfully*:

- Earn a quality, in-demand industry credential or postsecondary certificate (as defined by the [Quality and In-demand Non-degree Credentials Framework](#));
- Accumulates 12 college credits in a defined PWR pathway and/or an Associate Degree;
- Gains meaningful work-based learning and on-the-job experience (specific activities outlined in the “Learning Through Work” and “Learning At Work” sections of [Colorado Work-based Learning Continuum](#)).

*There may need to be limitations on the number of reimbursable outcomes per learner within their high school career. The true cost to implement these types of opportunities will be different, as well as the potential benefit to a learner’s long-term trajectory, so these should be considered when assigning a monetary incentive.

This attainment fund will not supplant funding from Colorado CTE categorical funding, and the CTE fund and the PWR fund would remain as separate budgetary items. This would ensure that federal funding for programs could be aligned to a state required maintenance of effort (or state match) for the federal funds.

LEPs should also be required to use PWR funding to cover all learner expenses and associated costs related to participating in one (or more) of the PWR programs including, but not limited to, tuition, equipment, books, college and course fees, testing fees and necessary transportation.

Establish a learner-weighted, attainment-based funding model in order to ensure support for learners with identified risk factors, who will be funded above the baseline amount. Learner groups that should be weighted include:

- Free and reduced-price lunch (including eligibility via direct certification, categorically eligible, and application)
- English language learners
- Learners with disabilities
- Rural (small rural and large rural)

The purpose of allocating funding and requiring reporting in this way is the following:

- Outcomes/attainment are funded.
- Funding is weighted based on the learners who achieve these outcomes, with additional weights for learners with identified risk factors .
- By reporting with some level of detail how the money is used, there is more transparency that the money is being spent as close to the classroom as possible.

It would be ideal to use existing process mechanisms that LEPs are familiar with to easily, equitably, and transparently fund PWR programs.

**Implementing Recommendation 9
would require changes to state statutes and State Board of Education rules.**

RECOMMENDATION 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.

Start-up costs related to implementing a new PWR program can be a barrier for LEPs, especially smaller ones, to provide more PWR opportunities. Many PWR experiences are funded through grant (federal and state) opportunities as well philanthropic investments and not state general fund dollars.

LEPs may apply for and use dollars from the fund individually or may enter into partnerships with other adjacent districts or local intermediaries within the region to spread financial responsibility and increase potential programmatic offerings. This fund could be modeled after the state's [Rural Coaction Grant Program](#) and [Concurrent Enrollment Expansion and Innovation Grant Program](#) – initiatives focused on LEPs collaborating to increase learner pathway options and opportunities. Allowable use of funds could include expenses allowable under the Rural Coaction Grant. Those include:

1. Teachers, coordinators, and other personnel expenses;
2. Certification, authorization and/or professional learning costs for district faculty and staff;
3. Contracts for services provided including the provision of technical assistance;
4. Curricula and instructional resources;
5. Capital expenditures including equipment, machinery, or real property; and
6. Technology to support distance and hybrid learning.

**Implementing Recommendation 10
would require the creation of new state statutes.**

PARTNERSHIPS

Challenges and Opportunities:

Business, Industry, and CBOs need to better understand their role in the ecosystem, where they can plug in to support the education-to-workforce ecosystem, and where their processes may need to change to better match industry need with education and training opportunities, as well as wraparound supports.

The education and workforce ecosystem is vast, including education and training entities, business and industry, community-based and nonprofit organizations, and state and local agencies. Often, each of these organizations has its own separate and discrete mission. Without shared vision, goals, and structures, efforts to prepare young talent for careers are often inefficient and ineffective in terms of large-scale success.

Intermediaries can offer vital support to regional ecosystems. They serve as the “glue” working to connect leaders in K-12 education, postsecondary education and training, industry, and government to forge partnerships, craft strategies, and secure funding to develop high-quality college and career pathways. Intermediaries look different in each community as they are designed to meet the needs and goals of the community and ecosystem in which they work. While there is PWR programming offered throughout the state, each region will need to contextualize their work to fit their local context and industry needs. While there is no one-size-fits-all approach, there are clearly defined functions that must be considered (see recommendation 11 below for more detail). Clarity about an intermediary’s identity and role in its ecosystem is critical for the success of all partners and in service of transformative outcomes for young people.

RECOMMENDATION 11: Define and invest in regional intermediaries to lead PWR partnerships.

Regional intermediaries bring together key players and mobilize cross-sector partnerships to advance equitable pathways. Colorado should consider funding regional PWR intermediaries to undertake the following core functions:

- **Convene:** Intermediaries engage and convene ecosystem members around a shared PWR agenda, including the development of the vision, goals, and design for regional PWR implementation.
- **Connect:** Intermediaries connect community stakeholders to specific aspects of the PWR work. Through this, intermediaries build public will for PWR programming and broker relationships across the community.
- **Vision:** Intermediaries lead the co-creation of a shared vision for the regional PWR work, catalyzing diverse ideas into a common focus. They shape shared goals, focus on effective and efficient use of resources and human capital in regional ecosystems, and guide the strategic direction and sustainability of the PWR work.

- **Voice:** Intermediaries are conduits of communication about PWR, by both connecting with active partners and promoting the work more visibly in the field.
- **Operations:** Intermediaries transform vision into action plans and help partners to operationalize the work, including aggregating field knowledge and best practices for broader dissemination, implementation and impact in their region.
- **Outcomes:** Intermediaries focus on outcomes, providing partner and public accountability for the work. In consultation with partners and key stakeholders, intermediaries set measurable goals, report publicly on progress, and hold partners accountable through memorandums of understanding or other formal agreements.

When investing in regional intermediaries, Colorado can look to other states for how they have funded and deployed intermediaries to facilitate regional pathways approaches. This includes [Career Connect Washington](#), which was established and initially funded in 2019 (\$11.5 million for 2019-21) to expand access to work-based learning opportunities for students and workers up to age 30. The state provides resources for nine regional networks tasked with convening and managing regional, cross-industry partnerships for designing and implementing work-based learning opportunities; each network also has a career connected learning coordinator who works directly with the K-12 system. Meanwhile, in 2019, Texas launched the [Texas Regional Pathways Network](#) to support a growing community of regions working to develop, refine, and scale high-quality career and education pathways. Each regional partnership is funded at \$500,000 to \$1 million per year.

**Implementing Recommendation 11
would require the creation of new state statutes.**

RECOMMENDATION 12: Continue to expand investment in [Sector Partnerships](#) as the foremost platform for employers in a sector to share their common workforce needs.

Insights from Sector Partnerships can be married together with data sources of labor market demand and the [Talent Pipeline Report](#) to paint a compelling picture of workforce demands at state and regional levels to inform critical areas of focus and opportunity for PWR programs and career navigational services.

PWR regional intermediaries can support the aggregation of data and use it to identify key industry stakeholders within the region, industry skill and workforce needs, and to help broker partnerships on PWR programming with LEPs, IHEs, workforce development, and community-based organizations. If investment is expanded, it is also recommended that PWR related programs in districts and colleges are required to connect with Sector Partnerships to provide relevant information to these programs to better prepare learners for our Colorado economy.

**Implementing Recommendation 12
would require changes to state statutes.**



RECOMMENDATION 13: Support employer engagement in high-quality work-based learning opportunities, while minimizing burdensome requirements.

Building on lessons from the previously funded [Innovative Industries Internship program](#) and the current [Work-Based Learning Incentive program](#), Colorado should seek to (1) invest in a regional coordinator (e.g. designated regional intermediary or partner organization) to serve as the primary point of contact with employers to determine their interests and to promote their work-based learning opportunities; to advise employers and LEPs on the design of work-based learning and on implementation to account for [labor laws](#) and barriers facing specific youth populations (e.g. undocumented and justice-involved learners); to safeguard quality standards; to handle reporting requirements; and (2) provide tax incentives directly to employers to offset their costs for providing work-based learning and compensating learners. Work-based learning should be paid work to ensure learners and employers consider these as meaningful and supportive work experiences.

**Implementing Recommendation 13
would require the creation of new state statutes.**

Observations from Jobs for the Future

These 1215 Task Force recommendations go a long way to making PWR programs universally available and accessible to learners across the state, while ensuring all programming adheres to a unified set of quality standards and a consistent funding approach. In taking the next steps in pursuit of Task Force recommendations, policymakers and practitioners in Colorado should be mindful of the following implications for implementation and key considerations for closing equity gaps. Furthermore, policy leaders in Colorado could continue to set their sights to even bolder transformational changes.

** Please note, these observations are from the 1215 Task Force Report's co-author, Jobs for the Future. The 1215 Task Force did not discuss these particular items in detail.*

Implications for Implementation

Important context and considerations are implied in the recommendations proposed by the 1215 Task Force. This section highlights how recommendations should be pursued and implemented:

- Task force recommendations are closely interconnected; therefore, it is incumbent on policymakers to pursue a comprehensive policy agenda covering program modernization; access and awareness, funding, and partnerships.
- Given the interplay of recommendations, policymakers and governing entities should carefully consider the order of operations for implementation, including in setting performance metrics, building data infrastructures, determining processes for reporting requirements, and establishing and deploying funding incentives.
- Implementation of policy recommendations will generate important intelligence on how to make continuous improvements to most effectively serve and support learners. Policymakers and governing entities should follow the outcomes and uses of funding across K-12 and postsecondary to assess the returns on investment and to inform future revisions to policy and funding approaches.
- While one of the goals of the 1215 Task Force was to ensure that the money currently being spent on PWR programming is used as effectively as possible, the Task Force was not able to work out the full details of how to do this, due to the lack of longitudinal data.
- Policymakers should carefully crosswalk the 1215 Task Force recommendations with those being proposed by the [Accountability, Accreditation, Student Performance, and Resource Inequity Task Force](#) (House Bill 23-1241) and the [School Finance Task Force](#) (Senate Bill 23-287). The purviews of each of the Task Forces represent key pieces for ensuring learners attain a quality education. However, if Task Force recommendations are pursued in isolation there could be unintended consequences of policies operating at cross purposes.
- Streamlining the administration, accountability and reporting requirements, and funding of the separate and distinct PWR programs, is an essential step toward achieving a more unified, universal, and understandable statewide approach to improving postsecondary and workforce readiness of learners.

However, these alignment efforts do not—in and of themselves—represent the realization of the “Big Blur” vision. Additional systems change is needed to erase the boundaries between high school, college, and work.

- The 1215 Task Force acknowledges that the focus of its recommendations are primarily about programming overseen by CDE. Future state policy measures should endeavor to more deeply consider additional opportunities for higher education and workforce to play even more of a role in achieving the Blur vision. The state of Colorado has an opportunity to articulate this vision when updating its Perkins and WIOA state plans in 2024 (See this [guidance](#) from the U.S. Department of Education).
- The Task Force is encouraged by the progress Colorado is making toward learners having a Learning and Employment Record, and encourages continued effort in developing a platform that ensures interoperability, so that learners are in the driver’s seat in documenting and promoting all of their secondary and post-secondary degree and non-degree credentials, as well as credits earned, skills and competencies mastered, work-based learning experiences and employment history. Learners should be able to choose to share this record with colleges, employers, and community-based and workforce systems professionals.

Equity Considerations

In devising policy proposals and implementation plans based on 1215 Task Force recommendations, policymakers and practitioners in Colorado should be intentional in better understanding and addressing the structural and systemic barriers that disproportionately harm the education and employment prospects of Black, Latine, and Indigenous youth, youth experiencing poverty or homelessness, multilingual learners, refugees, learners with disabilities, youth in foster care or aging out of foster care, and youth with criminal records, among other populations facing equity gaps. This section outlines several accountability mechanisms for closing equity gaps and improving outcomes. The proposed measures are based on [Jobs for the Future’s State and Local Policy Framework on Building Equitable Pathways](#).

- **Identify equity as a top performance priority.** Building on CWDC’s [Talent Equity Agenda](#), Colorado should establish a unified equity-driven strategic plan, endorsed by education and workforce agencies, which names equity as a top policy and performance priority for state agencies and the governor. Through the plan, the state should set measurable goals for improving equitable outcomes in secondary and postsecondary education and training, especially related to high-demand, high-wage occupations and industries. In addition, the state should name key research questions for identifying critical barriers to college and career success and advancement for each of the specific youth populations, listed above.
- **Set incentives for closing equity gaps to workforce readiness.** Colorado should incentivize districts and colleges with weighted incentives for the attainment of credentials of value by learner populations historically marginalized and underserved by education systems. Colorado should also focus explicitly on boosting participation by learner populations historically underrepresented in apprenticeships, internships, and other applied learning and workplace experiences. The state should direct resources and technical assistance, such as transportation, uniforms and tools, and subsidies for learner wages, to

schools and institutions serving a large share of youth populations (listed above), alleviating financial barriers to their engagement.

- **Foster stronger partnerships amongst districts, IHEs, human services agencies, and CBOs in order to provide learners and their families with sufficient and equitable access to financial resources and wraparound supports.** These supports include emergency aid, cash assistance, childcare, transportation, housing, food assistance, and health care, which are essential to persistence and success in school and work. Colorado should consider funding benefit navigators like [Illinois](#) has done to help students apply for public assistance needs. Additionally, Colorado should work toward secure data sharing and shared case management approaches across education and human services to improve coordination in meeting the needs of students and family (like county agencies and colleges are doing in [Ohio](#)). Colorado should also encourage and minimize barriers to braiding and blending funding to maximize available resources to meet the holistic needs of students and families (see [examples](#) in this report).
- **Set incentives for closing equity gaps for postsecondary readiness.** Colorado should set a statewide public goal for increasing PWR participation and success of historically underserved learner groups. Such measures should include:
 - Allocating resources to make sure all learners can access college in school programs regardless of geography or their ability to pay for out-of-pocket expenses for tuition, books, fees, and transportation;
 - Requiring use of [multiple and alternative measures](#) for determining eligibility for concurrent enrollment and other forms of postsecondary education and training to establish learner readiness for college-level courses; these measures provide an alternative option to high-stakes testing and may include use of grade point average and teacher/advisor recommendation.
 - Providing evidence-based developmental education opportunities, such as corequisite remediation and transitional courses and tutoring, for learners with gaps in college readiness.

For more population-specific solutions, see this set of resources from JFF and the College in High School Alliance: [Dual Enrollment for Students from Special Populations](#); [Students with Disabilities](#); [Designing Dual Enrollment to Reach English Learners](#); [Scaling Dual Enrollment in Rural Communities](#); [Funding for Equity](#).



Conclusion

The Secondary, Postsecondary and Work-based Learning Integration Task Force was established in 2022 to develop and recommend policies and rules to support the equitable and sustainable expansion and alignment of programs that integrate secondary, postsecondary and work-based learning opportunities in every region of the state. The Task Force members were selected in July 2022, which is also when their first meeting took place. In total, the Task Force met 15 times and engaged with many stakeholders in various ways throughout the process. The outcomes of postsecondary and workforce readiness programs were important to all stakeholders, especially learners. The recommendations are intertwined and should be scaffolded as such, with the understanding that they will take time to implement. The Task Force believes that implementing all recommendations is necessary to meaningfully improve PWR, and, recommendations 1, 3, 4, and 9 should be initially prioritized. State agencies should also continue to include stakeholder voice in future processes. We encourage thinking beyond existing programs and envisioning a streamlined system that serves learners in all of their education and workforce readiness training, and is easy to navigate for all those who support them.

Appendix A

Task Force Charges, Lever, and Associated Recommendations

This table documents the Task Force’s recommendations organized by the original charges and associated levers.

Lever	Task Force Charge	Recommendations
<p><i>Program Modernization</i> (formerly Administration)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommending characteristics of and standards for secondary, postsecondary, and work-based learning integration programs for purposes of authorizing and measuring the performance of these programs and make recommendations concerning how best to use data to build evidence of the long-term impact of these programs. The characteristics and standards must allow high schools of all sizes and from every region of the state to demonstrate program quality, regardless of the size of the school. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> To streamline program administration, all PWR programs under CDE’s statutory authority should be housed under a new singular PWR umbrella. Create a single, streamlined PWR program reporting structure that results in one annual, comprehensive report. 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). 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.
<p><i>Access and Awareness</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designing and recommending comprehensive, uniform policies that encourage and empower high schools and postsecondary institutions to create and sustain secondary, postsecondary, and work-based learning integration programs in every region of the state. The Task Force shall 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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.



	<p>design the policy recommendations to increase the number, coordination, and collaboration of these programs and must include, at a minimum, policies that enable a high school that chooses to provide an early college program to structure the program as a four-year program, encompassing grades nine through twelve; a five-year program, encompassing grades nine through thirteen; or a six-year program, encompassing grades nine through fourteen. In designing comprehensive, uniform policies to enable four-, five-, and six-year early college programs, the Task Force shall address the ways in which existing statutes and rules must be modified, combined, or repealed to accomplish the goal of enabling school districts and charter schools, working with postsecondary institutions, to provide early college programs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Designing and recommending policies to coordinate and expand innovative postsecondary and workforce credential options and career pathways available through secondary, postsecondary, and work-based learning integration programs, with a focus on career pathways leading to credentials associated with high-need, in-demand, high-value businesses and industries.• Making recommendations concerning the creation of a statewide corps of counselors to assist students in identifying, understanding, and navigating options for secondary, postsecondary, and work-based learning integration programs.• Making recommendations concerning methods for publicizing the requirements, benefits, and availability of secondary, postsecondary, and work-based learning integration programs to students and families throughout the state.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">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.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying challenges students face in accessing and completing credentials through secondary, postsecondary, and work-based learning integration programs and recommending ways to address and reduce these challenges. 	
<p><i>Sustainable Funding</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taking into account all existing and potential funding sources, designing policy recommendations that create a uniform and comprehensive funding mechanism for secondary, postsecondary, and work-based learning integration programs. The policy recommendations must address implications for existing programs, including the ASCENT program, the TREP program, and P-TECH high schools. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 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.
<p><i>Partnerships</i></p>		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Define and invest in regional intermediaries to lead PWR partnerships. Continue to expand investment in Sector Partnerships as the foremost platform for employers in a sector to share their common workforce needs. Support employer engagement in high-quality work-based learning opportunities, while minimizing burdensome requirements.