



COLORADO
SUCCEEDS

Great Schools are Good Business

UNLOCKING OUR STATE'S POTENTIAL:

ONE MILLION CREDENTIALS OF VALUE FOR COLORADANS

AUTHORS

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COLORADO'S POSTSECONDARY SYSTEM was built for a past era, and will not produce the industry alignment, access, and the number of Coloradans with the postsecondary education our economy needs unless our business ecosystem comes together and acts.

Colorado Succeeds and the business community are committed to and must work together to spur innovative policy in the postsecondary and workforce space. In order to ensure we fully leverage the impact of those policies, business and industry must support local implementation and innovation that will continue to align with our economic and civic values.

Colorado must put more people on the path to postsecondary and career success and cultivate a pipeline of workers for in-demand jobs across the state. We will co-create efficient workforce solutions by supporting our system to:

- Ensure industry alignment by truly engaging industry
- Put students first instead of systems and structures
- Integrate and recognize work-based skills and learning
- Look beyond traditional education pathways to leverage and scale innovation
- Create more transparency of outcomes across the education pipeline

WHAT IS A CREDENTIAL?

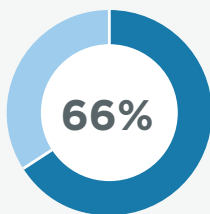
A credential is a degree or certificate awarded by an institution of higher education or some other verification of an individual's qualification or competence issued by a third party. It encompasses educational certificates, degrees, certifications, and government-issued licenses.

The Colorado Commission on Higher Education strategic plan, Colorado Rises, previously set a 66 percent statewide postsecondary attainment goal—receiving a high-quality postsecondary credential, that is, a certificate or degree—by 2025 to meet our state's economic needs. It emphasizes increasing credential production, focusing on high-needs credentials, and closing equity gaps for learners from low-income backgrounds and/or who have been historically underserved.

The state also committed to growing credential completion by its current growth rate plus an additional 9,000 credentials per year and increasing certificates by 33 percent. Unfortunately, that aligned, equitable attainment growth has not materialized and, in many cases, is declining.

COLORADO RISES GOALS FOR 2025

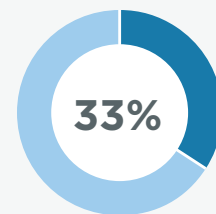
The Colorado Commission on Higher Education Strategic Plan



STATEWIDE POSTSECONDARY ATTAINMENT GOAL BY 2025

+9K

ADDITIONAL CREDENTIALS PER YEAR



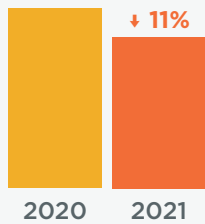
INCREASE IN CERTIFICATES



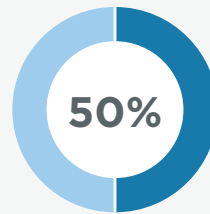
WE BELIEVE THAT ACHIEVING ONE MILLION CREDENTIALS FOR COLORADANS IS AN ATTAINABLE, IMPORTANT GOAL TO ADDRESS OUR PRESSING WORKFORCE CHALLENGES.



Enrollment in the state’s colleges dropped 11 percent between 2020 and 2021, and only 50 percent of high school graduates went to college in 2020, which signals that Colorado’s homegrown talent is being left behind. Perhaps most troublesome to the business community is that the state is simply not producing enough industry-aligned, in-demand credentials needed for us to thrive into the future. Many students find themselves in pathways that don’t lead to economic mobility, and there are gaps in who is accessing credentials of value.



Enrollment in the state’s colleges dropped 11 percent between 2020 and 2021



Only 50 percent of high school graduates went to college in 2020

We look forward to participating in the Colorado Commission on Higher Education’s current strategic planning process. **However, Colorado Succeeds and the business community are excited to be a part of the solution today, by helping institutions find innovative ways to ensure Coloradans achieve high-quality, in-demand credentials that lead to economic mobility for themselves and their families.**

WE SEE TWO KEY OPPORTUNITIES TO MOVE THIS WORK FORWARD:

ALIGNMENT



Build a collaborative system that combines labor market information, employer insights, and educator feedback to develop the knowledge, skills, and credentials students need for the state’s top jobs.

ACCESS TO SUCCESS

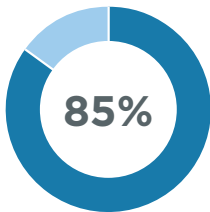


Mobilize within and beyond traditional postsecondary pathways to expand access and opportunity for all learners, particularly those furthest from resources and ensure that all learners enter a career pathway with a living wage that allows them to realize their personal potential and contribute to our state.

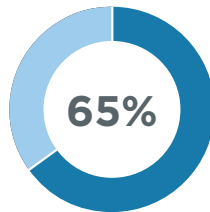
By coming together, we can collectively seize on the opportunities to improve alignment between educators and employers and create greater access for students to successfully enter and complete postsecondary pathways that lead to living wage jobs.

OPPORTUNITY: ALIGNMENT

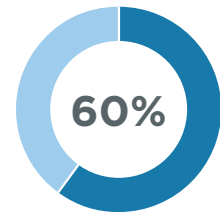
Despite growing credential production, employers in Colorado are still facing shortages in the skilled workers they need to meet our state's demands in critical areas. Colorado has added more than 50,000 jobs in 2022 and filling those jobs is difficult as Colorado employers report significant skills gaps and talent needs. Specifically, according to the Bridging the Talent gap survey, of employers who responded:



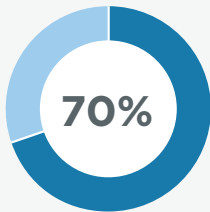
expect their own organizations to expand in the next five years



claim their hiring challenges have increased



are experiencing hiring challenges since the pandemic



of Colorado businesses are interested in partnering with learning providers and postsecondary education by developing **new** opportunities to advance talent in the state

The Colorado Talent Pipeline Report further identifies the following top jobs that provide a family living wage and require a postsecondary credential. Many of those jobs have significantly more annual openings than degrees are being produced in that area each year, indicating a lack of alignment between postsecondary training and industry needs.

MISALIGNMENT BETWEEN JOBS AND CREDENTIALS EARNED IN 2021	
JOB	EXCESS OPENINGS*
General and operations managers, market research analysts & marketing specialists	2,000
Registered nurses, management analysts, human resources specialists	1,000
Lawyers, civil engineers, training & development specialists, computer & information systems managers	500
Financial managers	300

* 2021 top jobs that require a credential where openings exceed the number of degrees and certificates produced by more than the following values

Source: Colorado Talent Pipeline Report Top Jobs Dashboard and data from the IPEDS completions survey, 2021 Top 10 Tier 1 Jobs Requiring a Credential

These jobs are concentrated in healthcare, business, engineering, and IT. Additionally, there is a critical need for workers in behavioral health, direct care, education, and transportation. It is essential that the postsecondary system works to educate a sufficient number of Coloradans to address these openings and address other workforce gaps that exist.

COLORADO MUST FOCUS ON ENSURING THAT EVERY COLORADAN HAS A PATHWAY TO ACHIEVE HIGH-QUALITY, WORKFORCE-RELEVANT CREDENTIALS OR THE STATE STANDS TO FORFEIT \$12 BILLION IN GDP, BASED ON A 2018 ECONOMIC STUDY.

Source: Economic Data Finds Improving Education in Colorado Would Generate Billions for the Economy

It's important to note that not all aligned credentials are part of the traditional higher education system. Short-term, industry recognized credentials or certificates offered outside of credit-bearing programs are often aligned with industry needs but not always tracked for quality or outcomes. And, historically have not been funded in the state. Colorado must:

- Identify which of these credentials are aligned
- Assess their impact toward educating talent in Colorado
- Provide support for pursuing Coloradans who want to pursue them

Now is the time to prioritize and identify credentials aligned with market demands of Colorado's economy, not simply fund and incentivize more postsecondary credentials.

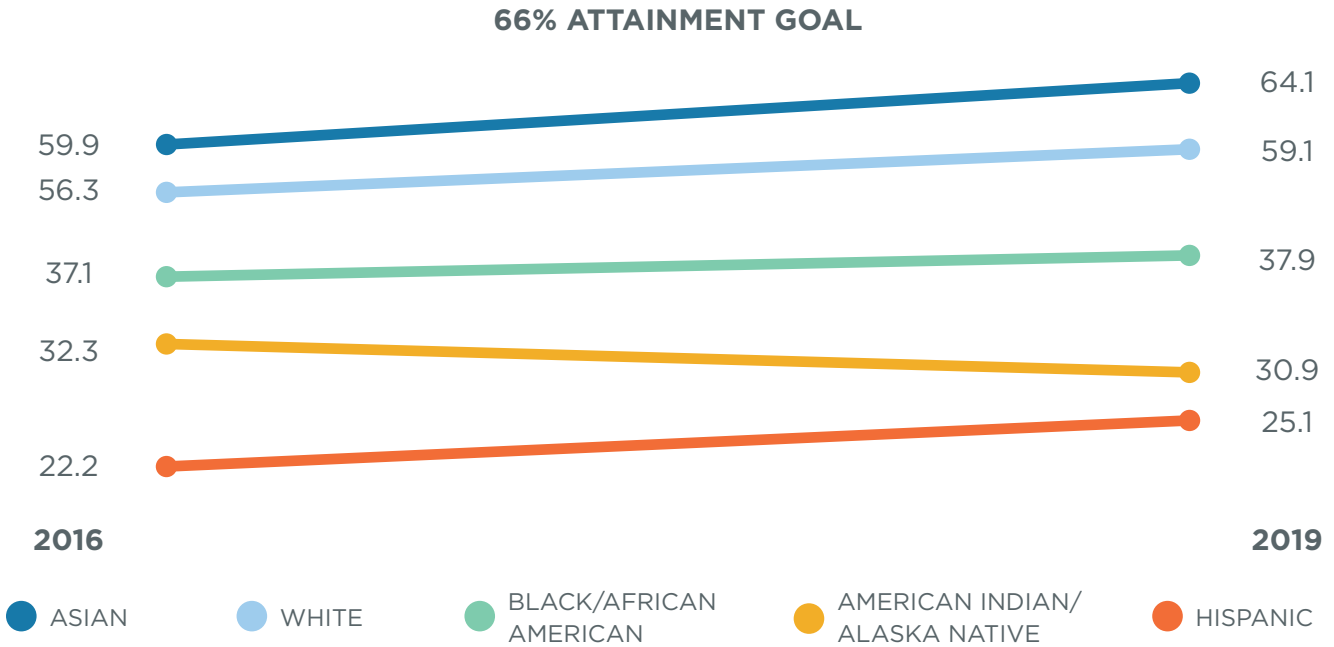
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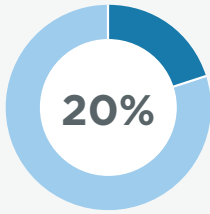
OPPORTUNITY: ACCESS TO SUCCESS

Colorado has some of the nation's most significant disparities in postsecondary attainment by race/ethnicity, which continue to persist according to US Census Estimates reported by the Lumina Foundation.



Source: Lumina Foundation Stronger Nation Report





Only one in five Hispanic or Latinx Coloradans, Colorado's fastest-growing population, has a credential beyond high school.

In fact, according to data from the Lumina Foundation's Stronger Nation report, Colorado ranks 49th in the nation in the divide between the percentage of Hispanic Coloradans who have earned an associate or bachelor's degree and the percentage of degree-holding non-Hispanic whites.

COLORADO'S BUSINESS COMMUNITY KNOWS THAT HAVING A DIVERSE WORKFORCE IS CRUCIAL FOR COMPETING IN THE FAST-MOVING GLOBAL ECONOMY. HOWEVER, FOR COLORADO'S BUSINESS ECOSYSTEM TO ACHIEVE ITS GOAL OF BECOMING THE MOST INCLUSIVE ECONOMY IN THE NATION, WE MUST CLOSE OUR EDUCATIONAL EQUITY GAPS-NOW.

It is time to be laser-focused on our state's expanding equity gaps and to identify and scale solutions that meet the unique needs and priorities of different groups of students and allow them to identify and achieve the credential pathways that will provide options for upward economic mobility.

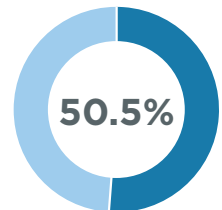
WHAT IS ACCESS TO SUCCESS?

Mobilize within and beyond traditional postsecondary pathways to expand access and opportunity for all learners, particularly those furthest from resources and ensure that all learners enter a career pathway with a living wage that allows them to realize their personal potential and contribute to our state.



The pandemic has set the state back even further. According to the 2021 JBC briefing on the Higher Education budget, **resident enrollment in the state's postsecondary institutions dropped by almost 10,000 students in 2020 and 3,000 students in 2021. The community college system, which enrolls many adults and awards both credit and non-credit credentials, accounted for nearly half of the decline between 2019 and 2020.**

This trend is also greatly impacted by high school students opting out of postsecondary credentials. Prior to the pandemic Colorado already had a low college-going rate, but in 2020 only 50.5 percent of students who graduated from high school went on to enroll in any postsecondary education.



74K

Additionally, research from the Measure of America's Social Science Research Council, shows that in 2022, there were **nearly 74,000 'disconnected youth' in the state - 16 to 24-year-olds who are neither in school nor working.**



HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS FALLING THROUGH THE CRACKS

	01	02	03
ALL	50.5%	58.9%	-30%
AFRICAN AMERICAN	42.7%	47.8%	-20%
HISPANIC	39.4%	47.5%	-20%
FRL	36.2%	44.8%	-16%

01 POSTSECONDARY ENROLLMENT BY CO HIGH SCHOOL GRADS

02 6-YEAR CREDENTIAL ATTAINMENT RATE

03 POSTSECONDARY SUCCESS OF CO HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES

Most CO high school graduates do not reach postsecondary success.



COLORADO HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES



STUDENTS OF COLOR & STUDENTS FROM LOW INCOME BACKGROUNDS

Unfortunately, fewer than 1 in 3 Colorado high school graduates enjoy postsecondary success. Results are even more alarming for students of color and those from low income backgrounds: fewer than 1 in 5.

Source: 2022 Department of Higher Education Pathways to Prosperity Report

THE GROWING NUMBER OF RECENT HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS DELAYING ENROLLMENT WILL JOIN

680K COLORADANS

WHO HAVE LEFT COLLEGE WITHOUT COMPLETING THEIR DEGREES.

All Coloradans deserve economic mobility and access to credentials that lead to high-wage, high-demand jobs. It's time to ensure students who did not enroll or who left postsecondary institutions have pathways into economic mobility that honor their prior educational experiences as well as their workplace training and skills.

GETTING BUSINESS INTO THE “DESIGN LAB”

Colorado Succeeds is committed to unleashing the business community’s expertise, momentum, and influence, to support both market-driven and equity-focused transformation in higher education. Colorado Succeeds believes five principles for policy and practice will promote economic mobility and support success for learners and industry in the postsecondary space:

FIVE PRINCIPLES FOR POLICY & PRACTICE



ENSURE INDUSTRY ALIGNMENT. Industry and postsecondary partners must work together to build easy-to-navigate pathways into in-demand jobs. This means rethinking traditional institutional structures and outputs so that every learner understands which pathways they can pursue, where they lead, and how they can navigate them along with their work and life responsibilities.



PUT THE STUDENT FIRST. The current system must help learners of all ages efficiently navigate toward a credential of value. This means implementing solutions that reduce the time and costs associated with acquiring a postsecondary credential by making the system easier to navigate, removing dead-ends, and honoring prior learning experiences. Student-centered solutions must be the primary objective of the system.



INTEGRATE WORKPLACE SKILLS AND LEARNING. High school students should not only have opportunities to explore the career-connected learning continuum earlier in their educational experience, they should also get credit for it. Similarly, adults returning to the system to reskill and upskill should get credit for the work-based skills and credentials they’ve received through their work experiences. Competencies demonstrated through work experience should be recognized and integrated into degree pathways.



LOOK BEYOND TRADITIONAL EDUCATION PATHWAYS TO LEVERAGE AND SCALE INNOVATION. Business believes in the power of competition and choice in any marketplace, including leveraging short-term training programs. Ensuring all postsecondary providers are held to a high bar of success is critically important with these programs. Data on the broadest array of postsecondary pathways, including non-traditional routes, should be widely accessible.



CREATE MORE TRANSPARENCY OF OUTCOMES ACROSS THE EDUCATION PIPELINE. Postsecondary provider outcomes should be easily accessed and understood by learners, industry, postsecondary providers, and the general public. We must measure return on investment to unleash greater economic mobility. Simply measuring the number of credentials completed isn’t enough. Credentials should align to what is demanded by the economy and be geared towards helping more students achieve economic opportunity. If we ask individuals and the public to invest in this system, we must ensure learners get ahead. Certain gaps keep holding us back, such as the lack of data on short-term credentials and connections between K-12 and the workforce.

Colorado Succeeds is actively engaging business leaders from across the state and a variety of industries to generate greater private sector participation and ownership for identifying and closing skills gaps to better prepare our workforce and state for the future. It will take a collaborative effort among K-12, higher education, and the business community to build upon and implement programs aligned to these principles.

BUILDING ON A STRONG FOUNDATION

Colorado Succeeds and other business partners have been working to advance higher education innovation beginning in 2018 through our support of state legislation ensuring the return on investment of postsecondary credentials, by institution, was transparent and available to learners.

In both 2019 and 2020, Colorado Succeeds and industry partners strongly supported legislation, College Credit for Work Experience, to elevate the importance of validating work experience with postsecondary credit, such as through work-based learning and earning industry credentials.

Not all learning needs to happen within the four walls of the classroom. Industry-validated instruction and learning should also receive college credit. Implementation of this program has led to over 60 IT industry credentials now counting for transferable postsecondary credit within the Colorado Community College System. With a few wins under our belts, 2022 created a significant window of opportunity for business when Governor Polis and key legislators directed over \$90 million in federal stimulus funds towards higher education and workforce innovation.

Colorado Succeeds and other key partners were part of a statewide task force known as the Student Success and Workforce Revitalization Taskforce. The task force brought industry, higher education, K-12, civic, students, and other advocacy partners together in new ways to produce recommendations for how federal stimulus dollars could be leveraged to increase the agility and responsiveness of the state's high education system. Once business arrives at the table, we are committed to staying.

The 2022 legislative session resulted in five laws directly connected with our business principles and recommendations. Specifically, we supported the:



Formation of the **Regional Talent Development Initiative Grant Program**, authorizing OEDIT to fund talent development initiatives across the state that meet regional labor market needs. Industry must be a part of the application allowing employers to have an equal seat at the table with higher education to invest in and co-create regional and statewide strategies.



Creation of a **statewide student success data system** including both postsecondary and workforce success measures like employment and earnings. With this additional information we will better understand the pathways of all students. It also requires the department to report by 2023, the specific opportunities and barriers in deploying a statewide longitudinal data system.



Passage of **Opportunities for Credential Attainment** to encourage more stackable credential pathways in high-need, high-demand, high-value fields. This legislation provided \$1.8 million for learners to pursue non-degree credential programs.



Authorization of a **Colorado "Blur" Taskforce** to provide further momentum for additional financial resources for programs in student's years 11-14, and forcing a conversation not just on increasing access, but quality.



Creation of an **Employer Incentive Fund** providing \$3 million to encourage more employer-sponsored work-based learning programs by providing incentive dollars to help offset some of the indirect costs associated with these programs, including the training needed to successfully run a work-based learning program internally and with external educational partners.

We believe momentum is on our side. We strongly supported this package of legislation introduced by courageous legislators on both sides of the aisle. However, bill passage is not the finish, but the starting line. **We will work with business and business intermediaries to educate and excite them about co-creating our talent solutions and taking advantage of these new policy conditions through implementation.**

To further engage in this conversation, visit our website to learn more and sign on to support one million credentials for Coloradans:

[COLORADOSUCCEEDS.ORG/POSTSECONDARY](https://coloradosucceeds.org/postsecondary)

METHODOLOGY

ONE MILLION CREDENTIALS METHODOLOGY

Numbers are founded based on the projections provided in the 2017 Masterplan: Colorado Rises. Goal 1 estimated that to get close to the state's workforce demands we would need to increase credential completion by 4.5 percent per year while also producing 9,2000 additional credentials. The million credential estimate uses this as the foundation.

ALIGNMENT DATA METHODOLOGY

Demand data comes from the Top Jobs Dashboard and includes top jobs requiring a credential beyond high school. Supply data is the number of completions for all Colorado postsecondary institutions reporting to IPEDS in 2019-20. These data are reported by CIP code which were mapped to Occupational Title.





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