

# 2024 IMPACT REPORT

COLORADO  
SUCCEEDS



# REFLECTIONS FROM LEADERSHIP

**Each year, we reflect on the progress made in transforming Colorado's education and workforce development systems to better serve learners and employers.**

In 2024, we reached extraordinary milestones. As a statewide business coalition, we supported the adoption of Colorado's first updated school funding model in 30 years, championed career-connected learning initiatives that reached tens of thousands of students across the state, and partnered with business to address critical workforce challenges. We also supported the first steps in the creation of a statewide data system to better track student and workforce outcomes, helped secure millions in funding for expanding apprenticeship opportunities, and played a key role in shaping policies that will strengthen Colorado's talent pipeline for years to come.

This work is only possible because of the dedicated collaboration between business, education, and policy and community leaders who share a commitment to improving opportunities for Colorado's learners. We're proud of what we've accomplished together and continue to be inspired by the efforts of our members and partners to radically improve education and training outcomes for all learners in Colorado.

We look forward to building on this momentum in the year ahead.



**SCOTT LABAND**  
President,  
Colorado Succeeds



**JOE KUNTNER**  
Managing Director, US Federal  
and West Region Public and Social  
Impact, Slalom



**DEMESHA HILL**  
Head of Diversity & Community  
Relations, Janus Henderson Investors |  
President, Janus Henderson Foundation

## Mission & Vision

Colorado Succeeds is a coalition of business leaders with a vision to radically improve education and training outcomes for all learners. Our members are building a system where learners are educated to their greatest potential, employers can recruit homegrown talent, and policymakers are responsive to critical needs.

### Mission

To apply our business expertise, influence, and capital to improve Colorado's schools.

### Vision

All of Colorado's learners are educated to their greatest potential, and all of Colorado's businesses have the talented and innovative homegrown workforce they need to thrive.

## Our Business Principles



### Learners First

Prioritize the needs of the learner over the system



### Equity

Prioritize learners furthest from opportunity



### Transparency & Accountability

Collect the right data and share it publicly



### Choice & Innovation

Expand options and remove barriers



### Return on Investment

Channel limited resources to opportunities for greatest impact



### Agility

Respond and adapt to a constantly changing environment

# 2024 BY THE NUMBERS

## Impact on Systems

- ▶ **7/7** Priority Bills Passed
- ▶ **1/1** Bills Opposed Were Defeated
- ▶ **100%** of Colorado kids will receive more funding for their public schools beginning in 2025
- ▶ **\$5 million** invested to bring longitudinal data connecting K-12, higher education, and workforce outcomes for Colorado learners and pathways
- ▶ **18,000** Colorado transfer students gained new rights
- ▶ **7** Regions to host 2025 talent summits and develop goals for addressing industry needs
- ▶ **\$15 million** invested in companies that offer apprenticeships, leading to more than 3,500 additional apprenticeships each year

## Impact on Learners

- ▶ **13** school districts representing 20 diverse new high school partnerships receiving targeted supports in college and career navigation, concurrent enrollment, and work-based learning—benefiting more than 18K students—through On-Ramps to Postsecondary Transitions
- ▶ **\$8 million** in state and federal funding secured for 50 education and business partners to sustain and scale regional pathway programs
- ▶ **1,000+** local business partners engaged through regional career-connected learning efforts
- ▶ **450** students utilized Path4Ward funding to graduate early and pursue postsecondary or career pathways
- ▶ **\$3 million** secured through Opportunity Now grants to sustain and expand rural career pathways

## Impact on Business

- ▶ **400** businesses collaborated with to expand career-connected learning opportunities
- ▶ **\$400,000** distributed in work-based learning incentive grants to rural businesses
- ▶ **100+** business and workforce intermediaries collaborating through unique learning opportunities, technical assistance, and coordination of funding and resources
- ▶ **35** construction employers convened for a year-long process to identify barriers and co-create high quality solutions to filling talent gaps
- ▶ **25** business leaders gathered for a two-day thought-leadership retreat

# IMPACT ON SYSTEMS

Colorado Succeeds is proud to champion policies that promote equitable access to high-quality educational opportunities from early childhood to career.



In 2024, we made substantial headway on our goals:



**Updating Colorado's public school funding model:**

For the first time in 30 years, the formula prioritizes student needs, providing over \$500 million in additional funding for every district statewide. The updated model simplifies the formula, increases funding for at-risk students, multilingual learners, and students with disabilities, and ensures long-overdue equity in school funding.



**Increasing data transparency:**

Invested \$5 million to connect data from multiple state agencies, providing critical insights into student outcomes and postsecondary pathways. This foundational step will help Colorado track the effectiveness of career-connected learning and improve decision-making for students, families, and policymakers.



**Improving college credit transferability:**

Strengthened the Student Bill of Rights to ensure greater transparency and equity in credit transfer policies for 18,000 transfer students. By guaranteeing students the right to have their prior coursework recognized, this policy will reduce time and costs for learners pursuing a degree.



**Advancing regional workforce initiatives:**

Supported policy to create seven regions to conduct talent summits and develop localized workforce goals, ensuring regional alignment with state priorities. These efforts will foster stronger partnerships between education and industry, helping businesses find skilled workers and giving students clearer pathways to in-demand careers.

# THE UPDATED PUBLIC SCHOOL FINANCE FORMULA



The last time Colorado underwent a major rewrite of its school finance formula, the internet wasn't a part of our daily lives. That formula was not only dated—it was confusing, inequitable, and not focused on student needs.

After dozens of failed efforts to rewrite the formula over the last 30 years, Colorado Succeeds participated in a 2023 legislatively-directed School Finance Task Force, which released its recommendations in December 2023.

In 2024, we supported a bipartisan group of legislators to finally rewrite the model based on the task force's recommendations. The new model will be simpler, prioritize the students with the most needs, and invest more than \$500 million to increase funding for every school district in the state.

For districts systematically underfunded for decades, this new formula will have a tremendous impact, taking critical steps to put students first in our funding model: increasing funding specifically for students who are at-risk, learning English, or receiving special education services.



**100% of Colorado students  
—more than 880,000—  
will receive more funds for their  
schools beginning in 2025**

# IMPACT ON LEARNERS

Passing policy is not the finish line; it's the starting block. And implementation is where real, lasting change occurs. That's why we engage in an implementation cycle that doesn't just seed great ideas but helps them grow.



In 2024, we achieved key milestones across efforts to improve outcomes for Colorado's learners:



#### Expanding technical assistance:

Partnered with 13 school districts to support 22 new high schools in providing more than 18,500 students with career-connected learning. Through the [On-Ramps to Postsecondary Transitions](#) federal research project, supported by Jobs for the Future and NORC at the University of Chicago, Colorado Succeeds and its partners are taking key steps to provide students with a more cohesive career-connected learning experience.



#### Strengthening rural pathways:

Celebrated [five years of the Homegrown Talent Initiative](#) and secured \$3 million in Opportunity Now grants to sustain and expand regional programming. Through this work, more than 1,500 local business partners have been engaged, and more than 5,000 students have been connected to high-demand career pathways.



#### Advancing K-12 and higher ed partnerships:

Facilitated a pilot project with Colorado Mountain College and Summit School District, aligning industry and education to implement new, collaboratively designed career pathways.



#### Finding success through Path4Ward:

Ensured the [successful implementation of groundbreaking policy](#) with the Department of Higher Education over four years, helping 450 early high school graduates utilize per pupil funding for self-directed postsecondary pathways.



#### Building a new Stackable Credentials Framework:

Developed a statewide model for skilled trades and construction pathways, aligning K-12, college, and workforce systems. Supported by the Colorado Community College System, Colorado Mountain College, and K-12 CTE directors, the framework was directly informed by an employer task force and learning providers. It connects career and technical education, apprenticeships, and college credit into a seamless pathway for learners.



Homegrown  
TALENT INITIATIVE

# CELEBRATING FIVE YEARS



Colorado's Homegrown Talent Initiative (HTI) continues to set the standard for career-connected learning, earning recognition from state and national leaders as a model for forging partnerships between education, industry, and the community to create equitable pathways for all learners.

Over the past five years, the combined efforts of state government, philanthropic organizations, school districts, and local communities have transformed bright spots in individual school districts into powerful regional initiatives. These efforts have laid the groundwork for breakthrough successes in rural Colorado.

In 2024, Colorado Education Initiative, Colorado Succeeds, Empower Schools, and Lyra Colorado developed a new report, "Elevating Rural Colorado," to build knowledge about the work, impacts, and insights that have occurred and are emerging in rural Colorado education and economic development and to place these efforts in context amid growing state momentum.



# IMPACT ON BUSINESS

Colorado Succeeds applies its business expertise, influence, and capital to improve Colorado education and workforce outcomes.



Our work with business in 2024 led to impactful outcomes, including:



### Finding solutions for skilled trades:

Supported the launch of [Project SCALE](#), a sector-based approach to addressing Colorado's more than 30,000 construction job openings. Project SCALE convenes industry leaders and aligns quality training providers to ensure learners gain skills that meet employer demands. In 2024, Project SCALE convened 35 employers to identify and align around key job skills and competencies; inform a new construction trades pathway spanning K-12, postsecondary, and workforce training; and lay the groundwork for long-term job outcomes data collection.



### Supporting industry intermediaries:

Expanded our work with business intermediaries and employers to strengthen career pathways and workforce development efforts. For example, Colorado Succeeds led a three-part workshop series with more than 20 workforce intermediaries in Jefferson County to assess assets, identify gaps, and set key priorities for collaborative talent development.



### Providing employer support for work-based learning:

In partnership with the Colorado Department of Labor & Employment, [Colorado Succeeds supported](#) the acceleration of rural and small business participation in career-connected learning—and the implementation of policy—through incentive payments of up to \$10,000 for providing work-based learning experiences to learners. The funding provided \$400,000 to small businesses across rural Colorado.



### Continuing key work with the Education to Employment Alliance:

Strengthened the influence of statewide business organizations in shaping education and workforce policy. In partnership with Common Sense Institute, the Alliance released a report and policy recommendations on how education can better meet employer needs. The Alliance also [successfully supported a slate of bills](#) designed to improve economic outcomes for learners.



# PROJECT SCALE

## BUILDING COLORADO'S SKILLED WORKFORCE



Colorado's construction industry faces a more than 30,000-worker shortage, a gap expected to grow by 32% by 2030. Project SCALE (Scaling Construction Access for L/Earners) is an employer-led, data-driven initiative designed to create stackable, high-growth career pathways that connect students, job seekers, and employers.

**Project SCALE** is working to solve three key challenges:

- ▶ **Skilled Labor Shortage:** Expanding access to construction careers through improved on-ramps, particularly for underrepresented groups, including women and non-traditional workers.
- ▶ **Fragmented Educational Pathways:** Aligning K-12, apprenticeships, and higher education to create seamless, stackable career pathways.
- ▶ **Information and Perception Gaps:** Providing clear, industry-driven insights into the opportunities and career growth potential in the construction sector.

Since its inception, **50+ industry and education partners**—including Associated General Contractors, Construction Education Foundation, Careers in Construction Colorado, Colorado Community College System, Colorado Succeeds, and Weifield Group Contracting—have come together to design statewide stackable pathways that connect students and job seekers to high-demand, high-wage careers.

Moving toward 2030, Project SCALE industry representatives will play a critical leadership role in closing Colorado's skills gap and ensuring long-term economic growth.

# BOARDS

Colorado Succeeds' board members support the vision and guide strategic priorities for our organization.

Colorado Succeeds is led by three boards comprised of business leaders from across the state, representing all different sizes and sectors. Together, they apply their business expertise, influence, and capital to improve outcomes for learners and employers.

## Board of Directors

Experienced members governing strategy and operations.

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**DEMESHA HILL**  
Head of Diversity & Community Relations,  
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### **BRYAN ALVAREZ**

Physician, Colorado Occupational  
Medical Partners

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Owner, AWA Ventures

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Founder & Principal,  
Gaulden Group LLC

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Community Affairs Manager,  
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Relations, Liberty Global

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Director of Talent Acquisition,  
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Corporate Citizenship Manager, IBM

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Program Manager, Enterprise  
Partner Program, RK

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Colorado Market Economic  
Opportunity Lead, Kaiser  
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Colorado Housing & Finance  
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Foundation Associate Executive  
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### **MICHELE WARREN**

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### **SUZANNE WELLER**

Vice President, Sr. Banking Advisor,  
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### **ALEX WEST**

Corporate Social Responsibility  
Director, Slalom

### **JULIE WILMES**

Apprenticeship Program Manager,  
Pinnacol Assurance

# MEMBERS

We represent the business voice in transforming the state's education and workforce landscape through our members.



COLORADO  
SUCCEEDS

coloradosucceeds.org