

Secondary, Postsecondary and Work-based Learning Integration Task Force Interim Report: Colorado’s “Big Blur”

Submitted to:

Governor Jared Polis, Education Leadership Council, State Board of Education,
Colorado Commission on Higher Education,
House Education Committee and Senate Education Committee

By:

Melissa Bloom
Kady Lanoha
Danielle Ongart
Michelle Romero
Berrick Abramson

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Executive Summary

[H.B. 22-1215](#) established the Secondary, Postsecondary and Work-based Learning Integration Task Force to develop and recommend 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. The task force members were selected in July 2022 and formally met four times from July to November 2022, with some additional, optional meetings to discuss discrete topics.

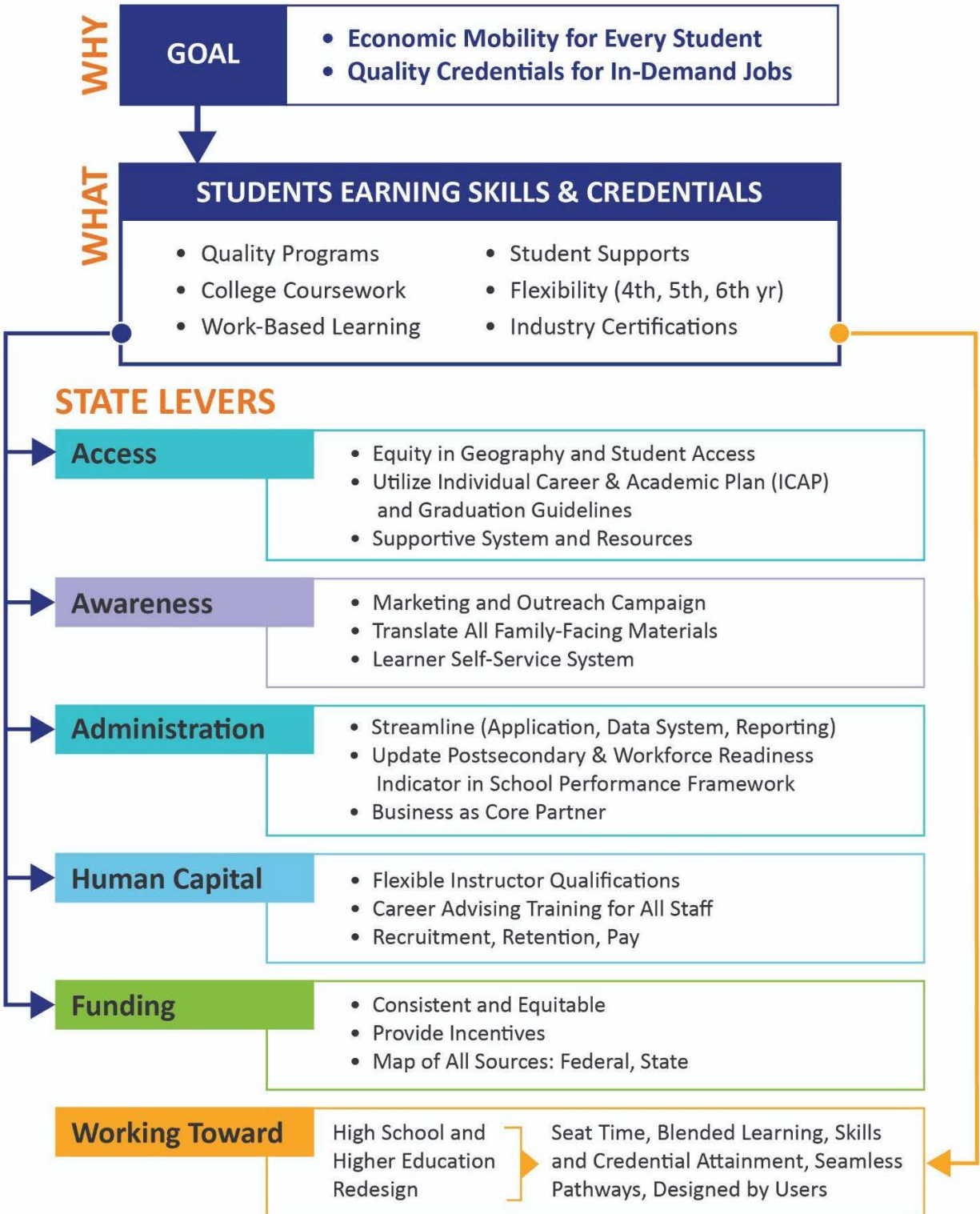
The state currently has around nine different programs where learners can earn college credits and quality credentials in high school. The task force spent its time together examining these existing programs, including their funding and outcomes, and identified a number of challenges in the current system. The task force determined that the current postsecondary and workforce readiness system should be wholly and thoroughly reexamined. When reviewing and considering changes to the system, the task force emphasized the need for a learner-centered approach. Because the current system grew out of multiple programs developed over a number of years, it was not necessarily designed with learner needs at the center. As such, simply tinkering around the edges of what is in place in the current system is not likely to achieve the goals and outcomes desired.

The task force explored a vision for a comprehensive and aligned future system with the following long-term goals:

- Supporting Colorado learners in graduating with a high school diploma and a postsecondary or industry credential that leads to a good job and the ability to pursue additional education and training
- Transferability and portability of credentials and skills in education and the job market
- Seamless, universal learner access to individualized, exploratory learning centered around meaningful career pathways that lead to specialized pathways based on interest, ability, and the job market
- Holistic learning experiences and programs that support not only workforce readiness, but also learner health and wellness
- One centralized, multi-agency, easy-to-use data system that is able to clearly demonstrate short and long-term programmatic outcomes

The task force also identified five key levers that the state can use to build and support the future system: Access; Awareness; Administration; Human Capital; and Funding. The following graphic provides more detail about the key levers.

Comprehensive and Aligned Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness System



It is important to note, this document is an initial, interim report, with the final recommendations to be published December 2023. The task force spent a significant amount of time gathering foundational information, asking questions and hearing directly from various stakeholder groups. Much more work is yet to be done in 2023 to create specific policy recommendations. At this time, the task force has identified a number of challenges in the current system and potential areas for exploration. Accordingly, the Task Force believes these items should be further explored and developed for future action. These interim recommendations are critical to the long-term and holistic improvement of the underlying system and goals, and will be further developed into formal policy recommendations in the final report.

Introduction

H.B. 22-1215 established the Secondary, Postsecondary and Work-based Learning Integration Task Force to develop and recommend 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. The bill’s legislative declaration noted that, “Although Colorado has many examples of innovation through secondary, postsecondary, and work-based learning integration programs, the scalability of these programs, despite their success, can be limited due to legal, geographic, and financial barriers and the majority of these programs are generally available only to students in urban and larger school districts.” In exploring ways to support the equitable expansion and alignment of programs, the task force examined ways to increase opportunities for all learners, including learners with language barriers, learners with disabilities, on an Individualized Education Plan or 504 plan, and “first-gen” learners who are the first in their families to attend college.

Inspired by “The Big Blur” concept by Jobs for the Future (JFF), a national nonprofit dedicated to changing education systems and the workforce, the task force agrees that there is a disconnect between secondary, higher education, and business in terms of preparing Colorado learners for future jobs. The intention is to “blur” the boundaries between high school, college and the workforce to create a singular, more flexible system that every learner may access. Some of the high-level “current state” challenges outlined in The Big Blur report, and how those would be transformed in a more ideal “future state,” are summarized in the chart below. Please see [JFF’s The Big Blur webpage for more information](#).

Current State	Future State
Slow-to-respond, siloed education and training systems	Single, nimble, agile education and training system responsive to evolving Colorado workforce needs
Focus on credential attainment	Focus on in-demand skill attainment
School-based learning	On-the-job and work-based learning
Financial constraints	Zero-cost and affordable education options
Academic advising	Career advising

Committee Members and Meetings

The task force is composed of members representing 19 stakeholder groups, who met formally four times in 2022. A detailed list of task force members and meeting dates can be found in Appendix A.

Meetings consisted of in-person, virtual, and hybrid options to provide flexibility to task force members. H.B. 22-1215 required the task force to solicit input from employers and teachers who work with secondary, postsecondary, and work-based learning integration programs and representatives of school districts, charter schools, BOCES, and postsecondary institutions. At each meeting, various panelists were invited to share their perspectives and first-hand experiences. Panelists included learners from diverse backgrounds, business leaders from a variety of industries, and experts from local education providers, institutions of higher education, and other entities that integrate secondary, postsecondary and work-based learning opportunities.

Meeting recordings are posted on the [task force webpage](#).

Duties and Responsibilities

H.B. 22-1215 charges the task force with meeting over one and a half years (July 2022 - December 2023) to provide recommendations in the following areas:

- (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 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.
- (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 ASCENT program, the TREP program, 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 the 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 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.

Programs in Scope

H.B. 22-1215 lists the following programs that the task force must consider:

- Concurrent Enrollment (including Accelerating Students through Concurrent Enrollment (ASCENT))
- Early Colleges
- Pathways in Technology Early College in High Schools (P-TECH)
- Teacher Recruitment Education and Preparation Program (TREP)
- Innovation Learning Opportunities Pilot (ILOP)
- Career Development Incentive Program (CDIP)
- Career and Technical Education (CTE)
- Fourth Year Innovation Pilot Program (Path4Ward)

In considering the entire career-connected learning landscape, the task force will also examine the new Colorado Department of Education (CDE) [Rural Coaction grant program](#), which provides funding to coalitions of rural Local Education Providers and/or Board of Cooperative Services (BOCES) to increase learner access to and engagement with learner career pathways and career-connected learning, and the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) [College Opportunity Fund](#) (COF), providing state tax dollars to colleges and universities on behalf of eligible learners.

Table 1 provides a brief summary of the programs identified in the task force bill.

Current Landscape

Defining Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness

In 2008, the state legislature passed the “Colorado Achievement Plan for Kids Act” (CAP4K), aligning Colorado’s preschool through postsecondary education system to enable learners to graduate ready for success in college and careers. The Act required the Colorado State Board of Education (SBE) and Colorado Commission of Higher Education (CCHE) to jointly adopt a description of postsecondary and workforce readiness (PWR) by December 2009. The Act also required the SBE and the CCHE to review the description every six years and either affirm the description or adopt any appropriate revisions.

In 2009, the SBE and the CCHE adopted the following PWR description: “The knowledge, skills, and behaviors essential to high school graduates to be prepared to enter college and the workforce and compete in the global economy.” In 2015, the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) and Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) collaborated with the Colorado Workforce Development Council (CWDC) to facilitate a discussion with statewide participants from business and industry, education (including learner voice), higher education, non-profit organizations and other government sectors to recommend revisions to the 2009 description. As a result, the SBE and the CCHE adopted the following revised description: “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.” The description was reviewed and re-confirmed by the SBE in 2022 and will be reviewed soon by the CCHE.

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.

Outcomes

Overall, the current secondary, postsecondary and work-based learning opportunities offered by Colorado have positive outcomes for learners who participate. For instance, [data show](#) that learners in Concurrent Enrollment programs are more likely to:

- Enroll in college within one year following high school graduation;
- Complete their postsecondary education; and
- Have higher workforce earnings after postsecondary completion.

Other data sources the task force utilized include:

- Colorado Department of Education’s [District and School Dashboard](#), which includes high school graduation, dropout, and matriculation rates
- Colorado Department of Higher Education’s [District At A Glance](#), which includes concurrent enrollment and Career & Technical Education rates
- Colorado Department of Education and Colorado Community College System [Programs Data Outcomes 1215 Task Force Presentation](#)

At task force meetings, learners consistently told us that the experiences they had, regardless of program, made a huge impact on their postsecondary trajectory. Whether a college course taken in high school gave them the confidence boost to believe in their ability to succeed at a college level or whether the ability to participate in an internship gave them the skills needed to understand business expectations, it became clear that secondary, postsecondary and work-based learning opportunities are critical to meeting the needs of today’s learners.

At the same time, not all learners have access to these programs. School and learner participation data across the state is not equal. In fact, many rural areas do not offer more than one secondary, postsecondary and work-based learning opportunity due to a lack of resources, including human capital. Gaps continue to exist for underserved learner populations. Statewide awareness of programs needs to be strengthened as the multitude of programs can be overwhelming and complex.

Table 1 summarizes current secondary, postsecondary and work-based learning opportunities

TABLE 1: Current Secondary, Postsecondary and Work-based Learning Opportunities

Opportunity & Statute	Description	Funding	Outcome Data
<p><u>Concurrent Enrollment</u> C.R.S. 22-35-101, et seq.</p>	<p>A program that provides 9th-12th grade high school learners with the opportunity to enroll in postsecondary courses and earn high school and college credit at no tuition cost. Concurrent enrollment courses may include academic or career and technical education courses and course work related to apprenticeship programs or internship programs.</p>	<p>Local Educator Provider (LEP) uses existing Per Pupil Revenue to pay the tuition up to the community college’s tuition rate. For a LEP to receive full-time Per Pupil funding, statute requires a learner to be enrolled in 12+ postsecondary credits; statute requires a learner to be enrolled in 3 – 11 credits for a LEP to receive part-time Per Pupil funding.</p>	<p>Results from a study showed that Concurrent Enrollment improved the odds of college entrance, success, and earnings by similar amounts regardless of learner income, ethnicity, gender, or 9th grade reading test scores.</p>
<p><u>Accelerating Students through Concurrent Enrollment (ASCENT)</u> C.R.S. 22-35-108</p>	<p>Qualified learners may concurrently enroll in postsecondary courses during the year following 12th grade.</p>	<p>The LEP receives District Extended High School Per Pupil Enrollment Funding that it uses to pay college tuition at the resident community college rate. For a LEP to receive full-time Per Pupil funding, statute requires a learner to be enrolled in 12+ postsecondary credits; statute requires a learner to be enrolled in 3 – 11 credits for a LEP to receive part-time Per Pupil funding. In 2021-22, \$3,904,204.17 of ASCENT funding was distributed to LEPs.</p>	<p>Of learners participating in ASCENT, nearly 97% enrolled in a credential-seeking program.</p>

Opportunity & Statute	Description	Funding	Outcome Data
<p><u>Early College</u> C.R.S. 22-35-103(10)</p>	<p>A secondary school that provides only a curriculum that requires each learner to enroll in and complete secondary and postsecondary courses while enrolled in the four years of high school, where upon successful completion, the learner will earn a high school diploma and an associate degree or other postsecondary credential, or at least 60 credits toward completion of a postsecondary credential</p>	<p>Local Educator Provider (LEP) receives Per Pupil Revenue (PPR). For a LEP to receive full-time Per Pupil funding, statute requires a learner to be enrolled in 7 postsecondary credits.</p>	<p>Before the 2018 change in statute that required early college curriculum to be able to be completed in 4 years, the 6 and 7-year graduation rates for early colleges were above the state average.</p>
<p><u>P-TECH</u> C.R.S. 22-35.3-101, et seq.</p>	<p>A P-TECH is a public school or a program in a high school that includes up to 6 years of high school and is designed to prepare learners for high-demand careers in industry by enabling them to graduate with a high school diploma and an industry-recognized associate degree. P-TECH is an innovative partnership between a school district, a community college, and one or more local high growth industry employer(s).</p>	<p>Local Educator Provider (LEP) receives Per Pupil Revenue (PPR) for years 1-4. The LEP receives District Extended High School Pupil Enrollment Funding in years 5-6. For a LEP to receive full-time Per Pupil funding, statute requires a learner to be enrolled in one P-TECH course. In 2021-22, \$594,967.71 of P-TECH funding was distributed to LEPs.</p>	<p>Based on the 2019-20 and 2020-21 self-reported data from P-TECH programs, 21% of P-TECH graduates were employed in their pathway field and 67.4% continued their education.</p>

Opportunity & Statute	Description	Funding	Outcome Data
<p><u>Teacher Recruitment Education and Preparation (“TREP”) Program</u> C.R.S. 22-35-108.5</p>	<p>Qualified learners may concurrently enroll in courses in a teaching career pathway for the 5th and 6th years of high school.</p>	<p>The LEP receives District Extended High School Per Pupil Enrollment Funding that it uses to pay college tuition at the resident community college rate.</p> <p>For a LEP to receive full-time Per Pupil funding, statute requires a learner to be enrolled in 12+ postsecondary credits; statute requires a learner to be enrolled in 3-11 credits for a LEP to receive part-time Per Pupil funding.</p>	<p>*2022-23 is the first year of the TREP program. Outcome data is not yet available.</p>
<p><u>Innovative Learning Opportunities Pilot (ILOP) Program</u> C.R.S. 22-35.6-103</p>	<p>Participating Local Education Providers offer high school learners a variety of learning experiences that usually occur outside of the classroom and support learners in successfully transitioning from high school to postsecondary education and/or the workforce.</p>	<p>LEP receives Per Pupil Revenue.</p> <p>For a LEP to receive full-time Per Pupil funding, statute requires a learner to be enrolled in one ILOP course.</p>	<p>ILOP began in 2020 as a pilot program for Local Education Providers with fewer than 5,000 enrolled learners.</p> <p>The program has now opened up to LEPs with learner enrollment higher than 5,000 with a stated goal in statute to implement ILOP statewide in 2026. Twenty-six LEPs currently participate.</p>
<p><u>Career Development Incentive Program (CDIP)</u> C.R.S. 22-54-138(2)</p>	<p>CDIP provides financial incentives for local education providers that encourage high school learners, grades 9-12, to complete qualified industry credential programs (Tier 1); workplace training programs (Tier 2); or computer Science Advanced Placement (AP) courses (Tier 3).</p>	<p>In FY21-22, the CDIP program received \$4.5 million in appropriations with \$4,286,089 disbursed to Local Education Providers.</p>	<p>In 2021-22, based on the self-reported data from schools that participated in CDIP, 65.1% of learners enrolled in a postsecondary institution, 31.2% attained employment, and 3.7% enlisted in the military.</p>

Opportunity & Statute	Description	Funding	Outcome Data
<p><u>Career & Technical Education (CTE)</u> 20 U.S.C. 2301, et seq. & C.R.S. 23-8-102</p>	<p>CTE ensures a thriving Colorado economy by providing relevant and rigorous education that is connected, responsive, and real. Colorado CTE programs are divided into six industry sectors: (1) Agriculture, Natural Resources & Energy; (2) STEM, Arts, Design & Information Technology; (3) Skilled Trades & Technical Sciences; (4) Health Science, Criminal Justice & Public Safety; (5) Hospitality, Human Services & Education; (6) Business, Marketing & Public Administration.</p>	<p>In 2021-22, the state share of CTE funding was \$28,244,361 and the federal share was \$16,978,824.</p>	<p>In 2020-21, Colorado secondary and postsecondary CTE participants exceeded national postsecondary placement and earned postsecondary credential indicators.</p>
<p><u>Path4Ward</u> C.R.S. 23-3.3-1303</p>	<p>Path4Ward allows learners 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. Postsecondary programs may be college enrollment or approved workplace learning programs like internships and apprenticeships.</p>	<p>A learner who graduates before their fourth year of high school receives the greater of 75% of the 2021-22 average state share of Per Pupil Revenue, or \$3,500, as determined during the 2021 legislative session. A learner who graduates before the second semester of their fourth year receives the greater of 45% of the 2021-22 average state share of Per Pupil Revenue, or \$2,000. LEPs receive 25% of the average state funding allocation for each participating learner.</p>	<p>*2022-23 is the first year of the Path4Ward program. Outcome data is not yet available.</p>

Committee’s Initial Observations and Early Recommendations

Initial Observations

Postsecondary education is key to economic stability and career mobility, which is necessary for the vitality of Colorado. Despite the state having multiple innovative programs that offer learners ways to earn postsecondary credits in high school, not every Colorado learner has equal access to these programs that prepare learners for high-demand jobs and additional training. Streamlining the secondary, postsecondary and work-based learning opportunities for learners, families, and schools is in their best interest and the state’s. It is the next step towards a re-design of our educational system and to actualize Colorado’s “Big Blur.”

The task force determined that the current postsecondary and workforce readiness system should be wholly and thoroughly reexamined. When reviewing and considering changes to the system, the task force emphasized the need for a learner-centered approach. Because the current system grew out of multiple programs developed over a number of years, it was not necessarily designed with learner needs at the center. As such, simply tinkering around the edges of what is in place in the current system is not likely to achieve the goals and outcomes desired. All stakeholder groups should be consulted in this reexamination, including families, school staff (e.g., counselors, instructors, career navigators, school leaders), Local Education Provider staff (e.g., grant program administrators, data responders), local school boards, and business. Colorado has done much to align P-20 education with business needs, but as the COVID-19 pandemic made evident, business needs are rapidly evolving; the overall ecosystem needs to be nimbler so needed changes can occur more quickly. There is also a palpable tension between different program types, especially those that operate within the same Local Education Provider. Sometimes there is a feeling of “competing” for learners, which is clearly not the intention of these programs.

Ultimately, all PWR programming and funding should be streamlined, through statutory and policy alignment, under one umbrella, with one common application, a common data collection and reporting system and common high quality program indicators. By allowing for streamlining programs and supporting differentiation within those programs, innovative PWR models could continue but make the process of scaling effective practices more transparent and transferable. This approach also reduces administrative burden for state agencies, schools, Local Education Providers and institutions of higher education, and would allow for the effective implementation of Individual Career and Academic Plans and the high school Graduation Guidelines, carrying learners along the [work-based learning continuum](#), from learning about work through learning at work.

Long-Term System Goals

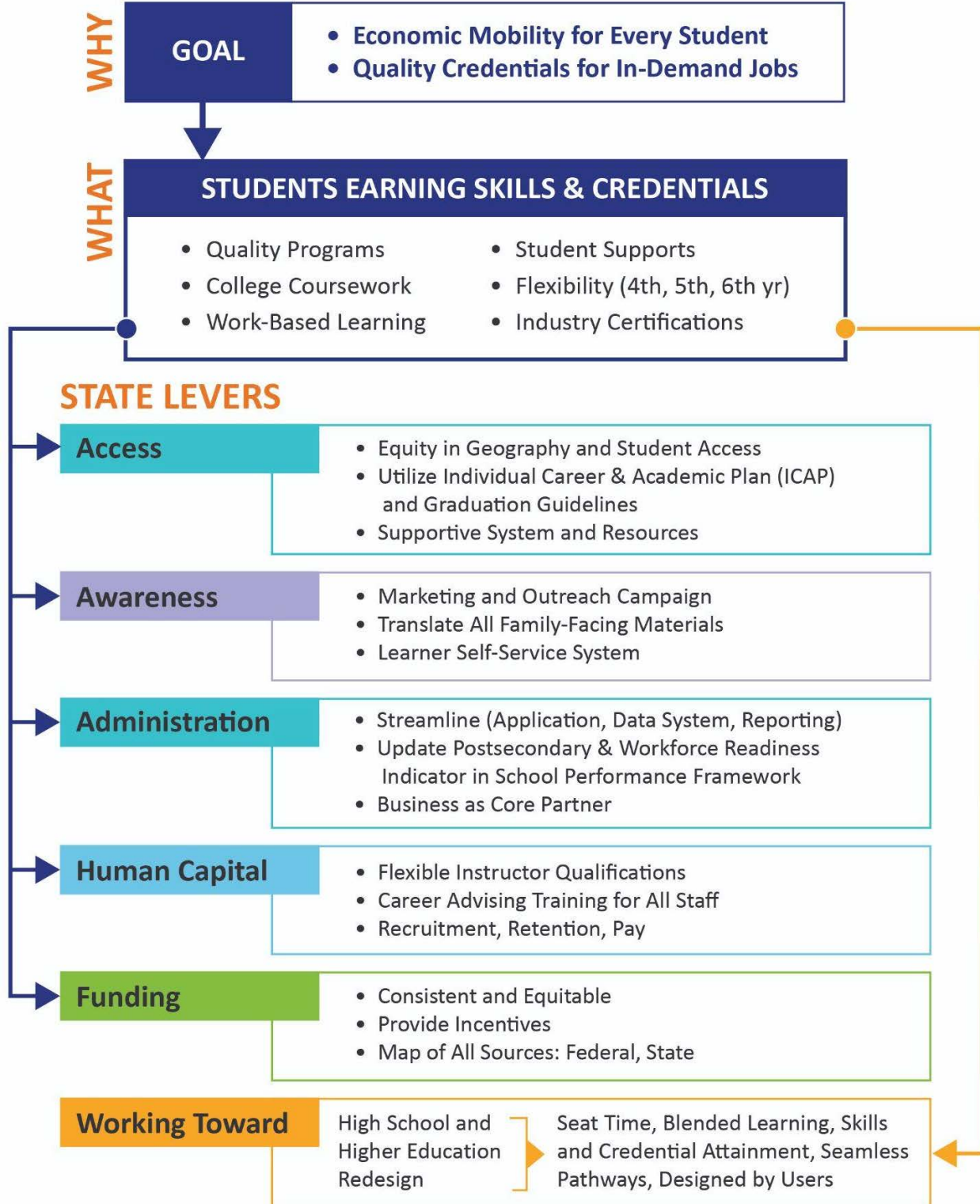
As the task force considers the next phase of the work in its future 2023 meetings, the following long-term goals for the postsecondary and workforce readiness ecosystem will be kept in mind:

- Supporting Colorado learners in graduating with a high school diploma and a postsecondary or industry credential that leads to a good job and the ability to pursue additional education and training
- Transferability and portability of credentials and skills in education and the job market
- Seamless, universal learner access to individualized, exploratory learning centered around meaningful career pathways that lead to specialized pathways based on interest, ability, and the job market
- Holistic learning experiences and programs that support not only workforce readiness, but also learner health and wellness
- One centralized, multi-agency, easy-to-use data system that is able to clearly demonstrate short and long-term programmatic outcomes

State Levers

There are several areas where the state can take action and/or support the creation of a system that achieves the long-term system goals identified above. The following are areas where the state can move toward creating a statewide, comprehensive system for secondary, postsecondary and work-based learning: Access; Awareness; Administration; Human Capital; and Funding. The following graphic provides more detail about the key levers.

Comprehensive and Aligned Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness System



ACCESS

Challenges

There are many ways in which Colorado’s current PWR landscape is inaccessible for some learners. First, we know that programs are not available to every learner as availability may be based on eligibility criteria such as grades, geographic location, and access to resources (e.g., transportation). Learners in certain rural, especially small rural, areas have little or no access to programs. Further, access to supports, like broadband and technology, social safety nets, parent availability, and textbooks are not covered by these programs, yet pose significant barriers to equitable participation.

In addition, there is a lack of connection to PWR programs and other supports for the state’s special education population. For example, the Perkins program, social safety net programs, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) resources may be underutilized in a given area or for some populations. As a result, there is often a disconnect between the American Disabilities Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and what supports are needed in the workplace.

Areas for Further Exploration - Current System

- Grow collaboration and partnership between state agencies and postsecondary institutions/programs to offer career pathways.
- Encourage the inclusion of career and postsecondary skills application, not just “general education,” in coursework.
- Train, provide resources for and engage all school staff (not just school counselors) to help learners with career exploration. Highlight and support all types of influential adults and their ability to provide career coaching and guidance to learners through Meaningful Career Conversations.
- Leverage multiple instructional delivery options, including online learning opportunities and Local Education Provider/BOCES collaboration.
- Identify and reduce/eliminate unnecessary “gatekeeper” program eligibility criteria.
- Promote quality indicators within existing programs to focus on credential attainment and equity.
- Advocate for all institutions that belong under the PWR umbrella to be represented when discussing options with learners, including community college opportunities, Career and Technical Education, four-year degrees, etc.

Areas for Further Exploration - Future 6-20 Systems Change

- Ensure that all programs provide learners the ability to earn recognized and transferable credits and credentials, from industry-recognized certifications to two and four-year degrees, for in-demand jobs.
- Provide structured time and financial support for Local Education Providers and colleges to create a strategic plan to expand access.
- Allow learners open enrollment for all programs across the state through a single, easy-to-use technology platform.

AWARENESS

Challenges

Beyond eligibility and program supports, awareness and knowledge of the 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 do not know what their Local Education Providers are offering to learners and how to get involved.

Areas for Further Exploration - Current System

- Establish uniform, intentional connections with parents so they gain exposure and awareness. Provide ongoing and easily accessible resources and supports.
- Through career advising, clarify the differences of each program for learners and families.
- Translate everything (websites, flyers, applications, etc.) into multiple languages so families can better understand all options available.
- Provide supports for multilingual learners and learners with disabilities to be and feel welcome, which may include providing accommodations. Partner with and provide training to organizations, such as the Community Emergency Assistance Coalition (CEAC), on various PWR opportunities for incoming learners.
- Develop an inventory of online platforms used by various LEPs in Colorado to share work-based learning opportunities.
- Examine other state models of single online portals that provide easily understood options, flexibilities and course enrollment.

Areas for Further Exploration - Future 6-20 Systems Change

- Develop and execute a statewide communication plan about high school redesign that highlights the positive outcomes for learners, businesses, and the state of Colorado.
 - Cultivate support from educators in various roles to ensure a PWR message is spread broadly and is accessible for every learner.
 - Build awareness of various PWR opportunities with parents and businesses. Help these groups recognize any preconceived notions they may have about the options available for learners and the benefits these opportunities provide both to learners and businesses.
 - Work with existing community social networks to help make the case that needed PWR system changes are positive for our education system and their communities.
- Make enrollment in PWR programs more understandable and user-friendly. Develop easy and efficient user interfaces for a statewide online, one-stop, self-service portal (similar to what is available in some other states). Create a single title for each program so that it is clear which credential and/or path learners and their parents are choosing.
- Develop and implement guided opportunities with clear expectations for learners to seamlessly move through an exploration phase to engage in specialized pathways, starting in elementary and middle school.
- Modify data reporting to provide information about which learners are in which programs at any given time, including following the paths of learners that change programs.

ADMINISTRATION

Challenges

Many components of our current education framework may not reflect the changes to the PWR landscape over the past several years. For example, the state’s current statutory structure still places an emphasis on core subjects and pupil counts linked to seat time requirements. In addition, the current (2022) School Performance Frameworks, including the PWR metric, do not necessarily show nor “reward” the breadth and depth of PWR outcomes.

Business and education often speak two different languages. Business may not easily see how a youth can be integrated into the workplace, and there could be a myriad of questions and concerns - how would hiring a youth apprentice impact insurance? How do I prepare my employees to appropriately work with and support youth? What tasks are developmentally appropriate for youth? It takes a lot of time and effort to work through these issues as they are also industry and company-specific, and it may seem like there isn’t enough human capital to take on the responsibilities. In particular, small business owners often wear multiple hats and may not have the bandwidth to seek out and develop youth at their company.

In addition, we know that learners want school-life balance, including positive mental, physical and behavioral health. This means that not all learners may want or need to spend additional time in a high school building to receive education. And often, scheduling is a problem for learners who have to travel to a community college or a Local Education Provider's central office to take certain classes while still earning other required high school credits.

Finally, we know that there is difficulty in implementing some of the PWR programs with fidelity. In order for that to take place, Local Education Providers often need a champion of these programs to allow learners multiple opportunities to explore their postsecondary options and demonstrate readiness for a myriad of postsecondary situations. At the same time, the reporting requirements for various programs are inconsistent and make it difficult to evaluate and compare program outcomes.

Areas for Further Exploration - Current System

- In an effort to streamline and align timelines and operations (including CDE program applications and data reporting), collect, compare and analyze requirements for existing programs related to eligibility criteria, applications, timelines, learner expectations, and reporting.
- Collect and analyze the graduation requirements for each Local Education Provider, including the numbers and types of credits and the locally adopted Graduation Guidelines menu of options items.
- Consider ways in which blended learning modalities might increase access. Apply lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic-caused suspension of in-person instruction to this context.
- Continue the Colorado Career Advising project beyond the currently available funding expiration in June 2023.
- Build on and increase the number of partnerships with workforce centers and community organizations that specialize in career advising to grow capacity and support for PWR.
- Expand regional approaches to collaboration for rural and frontier local education providers (LEPs). Share successes from existing opportunities, such as the Rural Coaction grant program.
- Ensure that the state's accountability system uses relevant PWR metrics that are clearly linked to the state's values and goals in that area. Consider various options for the PWR metric in the short-term.
- State agencies should work together to expand employer/school partnerships through existing infrastructure to demystify and support youth employment. For example, the Work-Based Learning Bootcamps that are a joint effort between the CWDC and CDE could be expanded and additional sector partnerships could be seeded in economic regions across the state.

Areas for Further Exploration - Future 6-20 Systems Change

- State agencies must develop a comprehensive data system, including the requisite inter-agency data-sharing agreements, to allow the measurement of long-term outcomes.
- State agencies collect data that can be aggregated by learner groups in order to illuminate any equity gaps that may exist and can then be addressed.
- Examine the similarities and differences of learner-facing instructional delivery, operations and communications. Are there opportunities to blur the lines between secondary and postsecondary experiences in order to provide learners a seamless transition to postsecondary education and increase learner persistence? Consider how instructional delivery can be modified to better mimic what is required in the workforce, based on the most recent and relevant research.
- Review the Essential Skills with all stakeholder groups, including business, to ensure alignment and relevance.
- Map PWR opportunities to curriculum and graduation requirements.
- Align credential and skill attainment goals with business needs for in-demand jobs.
- Ensure that the state’s accountability system uses relevant PWR metrics that are clearly linked to the state’s values and goals in this area.
- Review and enact policies that enable industry and postsecondary credentials to count for high school graduation, as opposed to seat-time, including:
 - examining curriculum;
 - co-counting credits;
 - maintaining annual per-pupil funding regardless of learner PWR program completion date (for example, if a learner that completes a PWR program in less than one school year, the school does not risk losing state funding);
 - extending credential attainment efforts into middle school; and
 - redesigning the credential attainment process to work for all individuals, including the most marginalized learners.

HUMAN CAPITAL

Challenges

A comprehensive system for secondary, postsecondary, and work-based learning requires sufficient human capital. However, Colorado’s current system often comes up short in this area. For example, small rural Local Education Providers simply do not have enough staff to implement every available program, including complying with the respective administrative processes and reporting requirements. The level of service learners receive often depends on their counselor and the student to counselor ratio. As such, education providers need additional staff to support programs and serve in

career advising roles. This is especially true to assist learners in the complexity of scheduling across multiple schools or program providers.

Areas for Further Exploration - Current System

- Support full-time program facilitator roles within LEPs to coordinate programs.
- Fund staff in state agencies to provide technical assistance, including creating a state-level position to specifically support Individualized Career and Academic Plans (ICAP).
- Clarify roles for staff members who oversee and communicate about program opportunities at the LEP and school levels.
- Provide funding to upskill staff, including continuing the Career Advisor training opportunities through the CWDC and CDE.
- Leverage technology to maximize access to training and instruction.

Areas for Further Exploration - Future 6-20 Systems Change

- Establish a “career navigator” role at schools, with a narrower focus and less extensive licensure requirements than the school counselor role.
- Increase the number of designated college and career counselors in schools, including by developing a statewide corps of counselors.
- Increase funding for instructors who would otherwise make higher salaries working directly in the industry they are teaching about.
- Provide opportunities for team teaching with certified industry professionals.

FUNDING

Challenges

Creating a comprehensive system with access for all learners is dependent on the funding available to administer the various elements of that system. However, how that funding is structured is also important. The task force spent time discussing how the current PWR funding streams are disconnected, complex, and confusing for both LEPs and institutions of higher education. Further, the overall pots of funding in each program area are fairly small, which forces many LEPs to cobble together funding across various programs in an attempt to offer more comprehensive services to learners. This approach is often inefficient and ineffective.

Areas for Further Exploration - Current System

- Ensure funding is available for grades 9-14 (including 5th and 6th years of high school), while retaining some emphasis on programming in elementary and middle school grades too.
- Create a single learner-facing funding source for multiple types of opportunities that operates similarly to a checking account (e.g., Young People Savings Account) that would not require grant applications and would guarantee a certain level of financial support.

Areas for Further Exploration - Future 6-20 Systems Change

- Create a single, umbrella program and/or funding stream that allows learners to pick and choose which program/pathway is best for them.
- Link postsecondary scholarships and stipends to specific career pathways, contingent on completion of/outcomes in the pathway program.
- Explore ways to roll funding up into one larger pot of funds that can then be distributed based on learner and LEP needs as well as outcomes.
- Pass legislation to develop a flexible funding model that allows schools to tailor programs to meet the needs of their learners, with tools so that schools don't have to start from scratch.
- Propose that business co-invest funding to develop programming that better aligns with their needs.
- Increase funding for teachers who would otherwise make more in their respective industries.

Conclusion

H.B. 22-1215 established the Secondary, Postsecondary and Work-based Learning Integration Task Force to develop and recommend 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. The task force members were selected in July 2022 and formally met four times from July to November 2022, with some additional, optional meeting times to discuss discrete topics.

The Task Force spent its time together looking at the existing programs, including their funding and outcomes, asking questions and hearing directly from various stakeholder groups. At this time, the task force has identified a number of challenges in the current system and potential areas of exploration. More formal recommendations will accompany the final report that will be published in December 2023. The [Secondary, Postsecondary and Work-Based Learning Integration Task Force CDE webpage](#) will be updated frequently as the task force work progresses.

Appendix A - Committee Members and Meeting Dates

Committee Members and the Stakeholder Group They Represent

Dr. Katy Anthes – Colorado Department of Education
Commissioner, Colorado Department of Education

Dr. Angie Paccione – Colorado Department of Higher Education
Executive Director, Colorado Department of Higher Education

Lee Wheeler-Berliner – Colorado Workforce Development Council
Managing Director, Colorado Workforce Development Council

Angelika Schroeder – Education Leadership Council
Chair, State Board of Education, Colorado Department of Education

Dr. Sarah Heath – Career and Technical Education
Associate Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs - State Career and Technical Education Director,
Colorado Community College System

Lauren Jones – Career and Technical Education
CTE Program Director for Special Populations, Counseling & Middle School, Colorado Community
College System

Dr. Kim Poast – Colorado Department of Higher Education
Chief Student Success & Academic Affairs Officer, Colorado Department of Higher Education

Carl Einhaus – Colorado Department of Higher Education
Senior Director of Student Success & P-20 Alignment, Colorado Department of Higher Education

Danielle Ongart – Colorado Department of Education
Executive Director of the Student Pathways Unit, Colorado Department of Education

Violeta Apodaca – Parents
Concurrent Enrollment Advisory Board parent representative

Becky Dancer – School District Administration
Director of Teaching & Learning, Clear Creek School District

Amadou Dieng – Students
Communications Manager, Colorado Succeeds

Raymond Chard – Local District Colleges
Interim Vice President of Academic Affairs & Director of High School Programs, Aims Community
College

Bill Summers - Principals

Principal, Canon City High School

Mike Pintaric – Teachers

CTE Instructor, Thompson School District

Marty Goldberg – Community Colleges

Director of Concurrent Enrollment, Colorado Community College System

Chrissie Nehrenberg – Four-Year Institutions of Higher Education

Director of Concurrent Enrollment, Western Colorado University

Jenise Rosa – Area Technical Schools

Career Advisor, Pickens Technical College

Jennifer Levin – Disability Advocacy Groups

Interim Executive Director, The Arc of Colorado

Joe Kuntner – Business Community

Managing Director of Public Sector, Slalom

Therese Ivancovich – Postsecondary Education Advocacy Groups

Chief Executive Officer, Attainment Network

Katherine Novinski – High School Education Advocacy Groups

Assistant Director of Implementation & Partnership, Colorado Education Initiative

Jared Anthony – High School Education Advocacy Groups (Alternate)

Director of Policy and Assessment Redesign, Colorado Education Initiative

Meaghan Sullivan – Work-Based Learning Education Advocacy Groups

Executive Director, CareerWise

Meeting Dates

Meeting agendas, minutes and recordings may be accessed on the [Secondary, Postsecondary and Work-Based Learning Integration Task Force CDE webpage](#).

- Monday, August 22, 2022, 12:00 - 2:00 p.m.: Task Force Kick-Off Meeting
- Wednesday, September 7, 2022, 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.: Task Force Meeting #1
- Tuesday, October 18, 2022, 12:00 - 1:30 p.m.: Programs Data Presentation (Optional for Task Force Members)
- Tuesday, October 25, 2022, 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.: Task Force Meeting #2

- Thursday, November 17, 2022, 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.: Task Force Meeting #3
- Wednesday, November 30, 2022, 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.: Task Force Meeting #4
- Wednesday, December 7, 2022, 12:30 - 2:00 p.m.: Planning for Learner, Family and Community Feedback (Optional for Task Force Members)