2015 Multi Year Work Plan

Key Policy Recommendations

To grow the skilled workforce needed for Colorado's economic development we urge state policymakers to adopt the following recommendations to drive improvements in training adults for the middle-skill jobs that will build our economy.

I. Utilize opportunities with Work Investment and Opportunity Act Implementation to advance our policy recommendations

A. Provide input and review Colorado's State Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act implantation plan.

B. Track implementation of WIOA, with our policy priorities in mind.

II. Create a visionary goal for credential attainment

State policymakers should adopt a cross agency credential measurement framework that collects credential outcome data across multiple federal, state and private programs to support a workforce development system that is outcome driven and responds to the reality of the state's labor market needs. In a society where "You can expect what you inspect." we need to count the full range of degrees, skilled credentials and industry sponsored certifications that Coloradans are earning with our public and private dollars. Colorado needs to collect credential data to know how the skills and credentials being produced with the investments in education, training, human services and workforce development funded programs are meeting the skilled worker needs of employers and providing Coloradans with living wage careers.

Recommendations

A. Set a goal to increase the number of Colorado residents trained for **in-demand** occupations by 20 percent by 2018.[1]

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[1] **2014 LEGISLATIVE REPORT ON THE SKILLS FOR JOBS ACT** "In 2012, public institutions in Colorado awarded 49,739 certificates and degrees, an impressive 8.7 percent increase from the year prior. Since 2007, postsecondary completions have seen an average annual growth rate of 5.6 percent. As more jobs require higher levels of education in the years to come, we will likely need to increase our postsecondary credential production by about two percent, or 1,000 additional credentials, annually. "

B. Build a common framework and track credential attainment outcomes in the state (along with traditional degrees) across public and private workforce and education programs, in order to assess if education and training investments are aligning with demand in the labor market.

C. Publicly report outcomes on an annual basis and hold agencies and proprietary schools accountable for outcomes that increase the skills of the workforce to meet the projected demand for middle- and high-skill workers.

D. Actively engage in the implementation of Senate Bill 14-205, allowing the Talent Pipeline Working Group to collect, analyze and report credential attainment information in a way that allows policymakers to determine the outcomes of the myriad of programs that compose the state's workforce system.

III. Support career pathways that provide education and training for workers in high-demand occupations

State policymakers should strengthen existing efforts to develop a statewide framework for establishing career pathways programs that expand access to workforce education and training for all workers.

We need to foster the development of employer-driven, industry-focused strategies, including sector and cluster approaches that combine education, training, workforce development and economic development resources in ways that lead to employment and career advancement in high demand industries.[2]

Utilize Career Pathways to align adult education and literacy, developmental education, job training and higher education systems to create pathways to postsecondary educational credentials for people while they continue to work and support their families.

We are finding more examples of students who have been persuaded to misuse their educational monies. We need to protect our educational consumers and provide more support to students in deciding where to pursue a postsecondary education by increasing transparency with respect to the costs and outcomes of gainful employment programs.

Recommendations

A. Support and expand existing efforts to coordinate the workforce, education and training programs and initiatives conducted under higher education, adult education, labor and employment, human services, economic development, community colleges and corrections that will realign existing programs and resources across departments to drive workable career pathway programs.

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[2] They include Advanced Manufacturing, Information & Technology, Electronics, Energy & Natural Resources, Bioscience, Food & Agriculture, Aerospace, Defense & Homeland Security, Health & Wellness, Creative Industries, Tourism & Outdoor Recreation, Transportation & Logistics, Infrastructure Engineering and Financial Services.

B. Support the creation and sustainability of postsecondary academic, technical, vocational and apprenticeship programs that create the skilled workforce to meet worker demands as identified by industry.

C. Support the development of career pathways to prepare and place middle-skill workers.

D. Determine the aggregate demand for middle-skill workers. Support collaboration across workforce development stakeholder groups to reduce duplication of effort.

E. Increase public investments in training and education by developing a coordinated tuition-assistance program across departments for adult workers seeking training in occupations with clear career pathways and in high-demand industries.

F. Realign resources to provide greater support services, such as child-care and transportation subsidies and academic and career counseling for low-income working adults seeking postsecondary credentials.

G. Take stronger steps at the State level to develop a education consumer protection system to insure that educational consumers, in both the public and private post-secondary sectors, understand the costs of their education, the cost and duration of their loans, and the reality of their post-learning earnings capacity.

IV. Expand, fund and improve adult education and literacy programs

2015 will be the first year that Colorado is providing resources for adult education and literacy. This is a great start to deal with the "root cause" of many of our state's education and workforce problems, including the middle-skills gap. To be competitive economically, Colorado must invest in adult education and reach more of the eligible adult population so that workers can enter and succeed in industry recognized credentialing programs.

Recommendations

A. Colorado should adopt a bold goal to increase the number of people served in adult education and literacy programs by 50 percent by 2018. The goal is to reduce the unserved low-literacy pool in Colorado by 20%.[3]

B. Encourage the development of I-BEST format bridge programs which assist adults in acquiring the critical language, literacy skills and occupational training needed to bridge students from adult education into postsecondary education and training, to ensure postsecondary and career success across the widest geographic swath of rural and urban constituencies.[4]

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[3] We currently have 500,000, 240K with no high school diploma and 260K ESL students.

[4] http://www.ncwe.org/resource/resmgr/workforce_dev_reports/contextualized_college_trans.pdf

C. Assess Colorado's experience with the new GED. Develop recommendation whether Colorado should continue with the GED or adopt an alternative high school credential.

D. Promote business involvement in Adult Education Workforce Partnerships.

V. Develop and Improve Workforce Data Quality
Why Workforce Data Matters[5]

We all care about putting our nation on a path toward economic growth and shared prosperity. A brighter future requires education and training policies that prepare all Americans for a skilled workforce and help our industries compete in a changing economy.

Inclusive, aligned and market-relevant education and workforce data systems are the foundation for determining if our human capital strategy is up to that challenge.

We need federal and state sponsored data systems that will provide useful information to:

- Students and workers trying to figure out which colleges and training programs are best at helping people land a job, continue their studies, or advance in the labor market.
- Policymakers who need to know whether education and workforce programs are preparing people for good jobs.
- Business leaders struggling to find skilled workers and wondering whether education and training programs are preparing enough prospective employees to meet their companies' needs.
- Educators at schools, training programs, adult literacy organizations, or career and technical education programs who want to know the long-term education and employment outcomes of their graduates so they can continually improve courses and curricula.

The **Workforce Data Quality Campaign** (WDQC) delineates five goals. [6]

1. **Including all Students and Pathways**

   A. **An inclusive Cross-Agency Council**: Establish a cross-agency council that includes labor, PreK-12, CTE, higher education, social services, et al. (P-20/W) to oversee statewide data collection and reporting.
   B. **Count More Students**: Increase the percentage of students across all education and workforce programs included in state longitudinal data systems.

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[5] Retrieved from http://www.workforcedqc.org/who-cares-about-data

[6] In their "WDQC State Blueprint [6] for Inclusive, Aligned, and Market-Relevant Education & Workforce Data Systems"

C. **Metrics for Career Pathways**: Create consistent metrics across education and workforce programs to facilitate program alignment and integration into state data systems.

2. **Counting Industry-Recognized Credentials**

   A. **Capture Diverse Credentials**: Increase the range of credentials (certificates, certifications, licenses) being counted in addition to degrees—including those awarded by industry third-parties—within SLDS-monitored outcome data.
   B. **Industry Validation:** Develop a process for industry validation of awarded credentials across education and workforce programs.

3. **Assessing Employment Outcomes**

   A. **Know if Graduates Get Jobs:** Determine employment and earnings outcomes for graduates of an increasing number of workforce and education programs, including higher education.
   B. **Cross-State Sharing of Employment Data**: Participate in WRIS2 (or another appropriate platform) to enable the cross-state sharing of employment data.

4. **Expanding Use of Labor Market Information**

   A. **LMI Capacity and Use:** Improve LMI data collection and analysis capacity, and ensure such data is made accessible to a variety of audiences.
   B. **Industry Skills Gaps:** Initiate skills gap analyses, using expanded student reporting, labor market information and industry feedback to assess alignments between education and workforce programs and labor market demand.

5. **Ensuring Data Access and Appropriate Use**

   A. **Scorecards for Students and Workers:** Report de-identified, aggregate program- and institution-level data so that people can compare programs and make career decisions.
   B. **Feedback Reports to Programs and Institutions:** Establish the means for all education and workforce programs to access de-identified, aggregate data about graduates' long-term employment and education outcomes.
   C. **Dashboards for Policymakers:** Regularize reporting to the Governor and state legislature on education and employment outcomes across all education and workforce programs, for comparison with current and projected data on job openings and future industry demand.
   D. **State Funding:** Commit state resources, in addition to whatever federal support is available, to develop and maintain these data reporting systems for ongoing use by individuals, educators and policymakers in the state.

Although Colorado has many pieces in place or being developed it is important for us to continue to build and maintain a statewide system that will insure that we have access to quality workforce Data.