

# Colorado Jobs Cabinet



REPORT TO THE  
GOVERNOR:  
ECONOMIC  
COMPETITIVENESS  
THROUGH  
COLLABORATION,  
TALENT  
DEVELOPMENT  
AND INNOVATION.





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Dear Governor Ritter:

This report is being submitted on behalf of the members of the Governor's Jobs Cabinet. You charged the Jobs Cabinet with aligning education, workforce and economic development to provide Colorado businesses the skilled workers, information and resources they need to grow.

The Jobs Cabinet has been working diligently over the past 16 months engaging business leaders and others across the state. We have found a robust system of dedicated education, training and workforce professionals who make it their lives' work to help Colorado's businesses and workers thrive in these turbulent economic times. Their efforts at collaboration and partnership are to be applauded.

At the same time, there are bureaucratic and structural impediments that prevent these organizations and individuals from doing the people's work more effectively. For example, federal funding streams often prevent many of our state organizations from partnering in unique and innovative ways because of financial limitations or restrictive performance measures.

Many of our recommendations seek to build on the work already being done. We strive to empower these individuals differently and encourage that successful regional models of collaboration be taken to scale. We also encourage increased partnership across state agencies and across public and private sectors. With enhanced collaboration, together with an effort to provide greater amounts of information about programs and resources, we believe that Colorado businesses will become increasingly effective and successful, thereby raising the economic conditions of our communities and workers.

Businesses cannot sit idly by and hope that increased cooperation and collaboration by government partners will cure all workforce training issues. We re-imagine a Colorado public-private partnership that increases business involvement in identifying and driving the workforce changes we need to ensure our continued prosperity. We believe it is a time for businesses to see themselves as an essential part of the solution. Business must actively engage with education and workforce training partners to define the continuous training and education that workers need to build careers in these dynamic times.

The work of your Jobs Cabinet has been fulfilling for its members. On behalf of the Jobs Cabinet, we thank you for the opportunity to serve our state. We are pleased to provide you this report and the specific recommendations contained in it.

Sincerely,  
The Jobs Cabinet Co-chairs:

Jim Lyons,  
Rothgerber, Johnson & Lyons, LLP

Teresa Taylor,  
Qwest

Ruth Ann Woods  
Trinidad State Junior College (ret.)

# executive summary

"The Western Slope has a long history of sharing resources and creating great ideas from a rain barrel full of differing opinions.

With the recommendations of the Jobs Cabinet, education and business are poised to collaborate with the goal of preparing students for Colorado jobs of the future."

Mary Rubadeau,  
Superintendent,  
Telluride  
School District

In support of *The Colorado Promise*, Colorado's Jobs Cabinet was convened by Governor Bill Ritter, Jr., in April, 2008, to bring together the state's economic development, education, and workforce communities to work toward a future where Colorado workers are better trained to enhance the success of Colorado businesses. Our efforts are designed to create a climate of business growth and economic cooperation in which a highly skilled and educated workforce creates and sustains quality jobs.

The Jobs Cabinet believes this work is critically important to the future of Colorado's economic competitiveness. In decades past, economic development efforts were largely focused on infrastructure issues such as water and sewer, tax climate, and incentives. In today's global economy, competitiveness is less about providing infrastructure or tax incentives and more about providing innovation and talent. The growth of Colorado's economy will correlate with the state's ability to develop a workforce that has the education and skills required to make its businesses competitive and successful.

The recommendations in this report represent a framework for growing this talent and changing the systems that support these efforts. Systems change is never

easy work. Meaningful collaboration, engaging the business community, aligning systems, and measuring our progress – these tasks will take significant time, effort, and commitment. The Jobs Cabinet has met nineteen times, in thirteen locations, with constituents throughout the state. After a year of listening, learning and deliberation, the Jobs Cabinet has five key recommendations for the Governor:

- Implement local collaboration forums to align education, economic development, workforce training and business recruitment efforts;
- Engage employers in workforce assessments to ensure local education and training needs are targeted;
- Aggressively promote talent development programs to effectively engage Colorado business;
- Develop a coordinating web portal that provides business with easy access to local resources and information; and
- Provide senior executive leadership, ongoing support and performance metrics to ensure the success of this initiative.

Colorado's success in a competitive global economy will be premised on the state's ability to meet the needs of employers (both current and future) with

well-educated and trained employees. The Jobs Cabinet concludes that this alignment is best done through a combination of existing workforce investment boards (WIBs), a more focused outreach to business, enhanced electronic systems and continued emphasis on Colorado's P-20 educational system, especially our community colleges.

Acknowledging that location-based collaboration may not meet the needs of all businesses, the Jobs Cabinet endorses a multi-pronged approach and encourages special emphasis on economic sectors that are projected to experience significant growth in the next decade. Although our charter is to concentrate on the long term, the Jobs Cabinet appreciates that the economic downturn of 2008 necessitates a shorter focus than the five to ten year outlook we initially envisioned. The economic climate also requires that these recommendations be funded by realigning existing funds and programs. The endorsement and committed support of the Colorado Workforce Development Council has been and will continue to be essential to the success of this initiative.

# about the Jobs Cabinet

## A ROADMAP TO KEEP COLORADO WORKING

### THE PURPOSE OF THE JOBS CABINET

The work of the Jobs Cabinet is to facilitate an intersection between the needs of Colorado businesses and Colorado workers. The opportunity and the largest challenge for the Jobs Cabinet is to break down the traditional silos of business, education, workforce and economic development and create a collaborative, cooperative environment that maximizes our limited resources.

### THE WORK OF THE JOBS CABINET

Recognizing Colorado's diversity, the Jobs Cabinet divided the state into the five regions<sup>1</sup> identified in the Colorado Promise. Eight listening sessions were held in summer 2008 in which Jobs Cabinet members and staff met with local educators, workforce, government, economic development, and business people to hear about local industries, issues, populations, and what they would like to see from the Jobs Cabinet. Between April 2008 and August 2009, the Jobs Cabinet held four plenary sessions that brought together the Governor, five Cabinet secretaries<sup>2</sup>, workforce professionals (including coordinators for each of the five Jobs Cabinet regions), and approximately 30 cabinet members representing business, education, and economic development. During those sessions, senior executives worked to strategize, set priorities, create action plans, evaluate activities, formulate and review recommendations.

In addition, the Jobs Cabinet held multiple meetings with regional coordinators to learn about the local communities, industries and workforce. A business survey was conducted to measure industry engagement with current systems and their future workforce needs. The P-20 Education Coordinating Council co-chairs and community college system leaders were consulted to highlight existing collaborations and identify potential areas for change. The Jobs Cabinet also participated in the dialogue with the education community, business organizations and workforce professionals on defining "workforce readiness" in Colorado. Strategy sessions with the Colorado Workforce Development Council (CWDC) brought clarity about current workforce efforts and how the Jobs Cabinet could support the Council's goals. Meetings with staff of the Denver Metro WIRED<sup>3</sup> effort on regional collaboration provided insight into their experiences. In these sessions, the Jobs Cabinet researched current systems to identify best practices as well as needed improvements to ensure a better future match between Colorado workers and Colorado industry.

After listening and learning, the Jobs Cabinet proposed concepts for a local collaboration model and a web portal for regional business communication. These ideas were presented around the state in eleven 2009 stakeholder outreach sessions. Comments from those sessions were incorporated into these recommendations.

### THE FUTURE OF THE JOBS CABINET

Although the specific mission of the Jobs Cabinet is met with the August 2009 delivery of our recommendations, further stewardship is critical to ensure its success. Systemic change requires a catalyst and oversight, so the Jobs Cabinet has recommended that the Governor's office continue to actively support and guide this effort. Special emphasis will be required on the Cabinet's recommendations to develop a replicable model for local collaboration and a beta website, both of which would use existing resources in order to succeed in the current economic environment.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Jobs Cabinet was assisted by many people and organizations in Colorado. Of particular importance were:

#### JOBS CABINET MEMBERS

see page 30

#### REGIONAL COORDINATORS

Celia Hardin  
Betty Velasquez  
Ray Lucero  
Sue Tuffin  
Joni Friedman

CWDC (funding)  
Metro Denver WIRED (funding)  
Qwest (video production)  
Trinidad State Junior College  
(Jobs Cabinet brochure and bookmark)  
Barbara Baumann  
Richard Truly  
Corporation for a Skilled Workforce (Gary Yakimov)  
CDLE workforce and e-colorado staff

<sup>1</sup>Eastern Plains, Front Range, Mountain Resorts, San Luis Valley, Western Slope

<sup>2</sup>Executive Directors of the Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade, Department of Higher Education, Department of Labor and Employment, Department of Local Affairs, and Department of Regulatory Affairs.

<sup>3</sup>Funded partially by a four-year, \$15 million grant from the U.S. Department of Labor, the Metro Denver WIRED (Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development) Initiative has invested in 26 programs that enhance partnerships among business, education, and the public workforce system in the nine-county Metro Denver region. See [www.metrodenver.org](http://www.metrodenver.org)

# recommendation one

IMPLEMENT  
A LOCAL  
COLLABORATION  
FORUM TO ALIGN  
EDUCATION,  
ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT,  
WORKFORCE  
TRAINING AND  
BUSINESS  
RECRUITMENT  
EFFORTS.

"Collaboration  
is a process.  
More important  
than the outcome  
of a single project  
is that we created  
partnerships and  
are finding more  
opportunities to  
work together."

Amy Tait,  
President,  
Leadville/Lake  
County Chamber  
of Commerce

"The current  
economic  
environment  
provides a critical  
opportunity for  
the workforce  
system to utilize  
business' increased  
willingness to  
engage with it."

Andre Pettigrew,  
Director, Denver  
Office of Economic  
Development

## WIB BEST PRACTICES

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*A 2006 study by the Corporation for a Skilled Workforce – Benchmarking Workforce Investment Boards: Critical Success Factors – details the critical success factors of high performing WIBs, including measuring success and working strategically. High performing WIBs require local workforce board members to be workforce policy leaders in their communities. High performing WIBs also need staff members who can serve as regional leaders in collaboration. See [www.skilledwork.org](http://www.skilledwork.org)*



As the Jobs Cabinet traveled the state, we found our mission could be reduced to a simple proposition: bring education, workforce and economic development to a common intersection with business. There exists a statewide infrastructure that brings those constituencies together. The Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs), part of the Colorado workforce system, regularly convene business-chaired meetings of workforce, industry, education and economic development in 19 Colorado regions. Across the nation and in Colorado, many WIBs are focused largely on carrying out the short-term objectives and programs authorized under the federal Workforce Investment Act, while some leading edge WIBs have undertaken more long-term, broad workforce and economic development strategies. Enhancing its WIBs would enable Colorado to improve collaboration using existing resources.

Another common theme from the outreach sessions conducted by the Jobs Cabinet was a

desire to better align various programs. Talent development in Colorado is in the capable hands of state agencies and organizations such as the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment, the Colorado Department of Higher Education, the Colorado Workforce Development Council, the Colorado Community College System and the Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade. Each of these organizations is staffed by leaders, policy makers, and practitioners who are driven to make a difference for Colorado's citizens, businesses, and communities. However, the current system rewards those organizations for working separately. Each organization often has its own funding sources, performance measures, and accountability standards that make collaboration a challenge even when there is strong desire to do so. Future success depends on the ability of these diverse organizations, at both the state and local levels, to work together and maximize limited resources.

## THE COLORADO WORKFORCE SYSTEM

The Colorado Workforce System is a network of federal, state, and local offices that support economic expansion and develop the talent of our nation's workforce. Workforce development activities benefit employers, job seekers, laid off workers, youth, veterans and persons with disabilities as well as persons both new to and currently in the workforce.

Although the public workforce system is federally funded, most services are available at the state and local levels. Under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, each state establishes a State Workforce Investment Board. In Colorado, this is the Colorado Workforce Development Council (CWDC), which determines strategic priorities, identifies high-growth industries, develops a workforce investment budget, and establishes local workforce investment areas across the state.

To ensure a regional focus, Colorado is divided into 19 workforce areas, each controlled by a local Workforce Investment Board (WIB). By law, each board is business led, and consists of more than fifty percent business representatives.

The primary function of a WIB is to oversee the regular operations of local One Stop Career Centers to ensure those Centers are meeting their obligations to the State Workforce Development Council and the Federal government. The boards also analyze workforce information to identify targeted industries and plan for future growth.

The heart of the public workforce system is the One Stop Career Center; these Centers place a multitude of resources for businesses and for job seekers under one roof. The typical One Stop Career Center serves thousands of individuals who are seeking employment, changing jobs, reentering the workforce or learning new skills.

The Jobs Cabinet has identified several ways to enhance collaboration.

- ☀ **Charge the local Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) to intensify their strategic focus and spearhead regional collaboration efforts.** Colorado's 19 locally-based WIBs currently bring together representatives from the business, education, economic development and workforce arenas under the leadership of a business executive, in order to provide short-term operational oversight of the workforce system. Each of these existing and federally-funded WIBs should be charged by the Colorado Workforce Development Council (CWDC) to spearhead strategic collaborations, with the aim of institutionalizing a system that will focus on Colorado's short- and long-term workforce requirements. Several leading-edge WIBs that have broadened their focus in this manner can serve as models for this recommendation.
- ☀ **Synthesize and distribute promising collaborative practices.** To support the enhanced efforts of the local WIBs, the CWDC, with support from the Governor's office, should synthesize and distribute across the state best practices including information about Larimer County's recent collaboration efforts.
- ☀ **Develop workforce collaboration along industry lines,** as opposed to solely working within the current geographical regions. A benefit of sector initiatives is to use the employer-driven partnership to assess training needs in critical regional industries.
- ☀ **Increase stakeholder flexibility in using government monies.** The Governor's office, working with cabinet secretaries and the CWDC, should identify state-level funding streams and restrictions and prepare suggestions for changing provisions that limit flexibility in using funds.

## SECTOR STRATEGIES

Regionally targeted industry strategies, often referred to as "sector strategies," are a multi-firm, industry-based approach to meeting workforce needs implemented by an employer driven partnership of relevant systems and stakeholders. This "wholesale" approach to workforce and economic development is more efficient and responsive than past "retail" (business by business) strategies and has proven particularly successful in aligning public sector resources and strategies to help industries prosper. A key characteristic of sector initiatives is the use of boundaries that make sense to the industry partnership (commuting patterns, labor sheds, supply chain concentrations, etc.) instead of geo-political boundaries such as WIB regions, counties or economic development regions. The Colorado SECTORS Initiative (also known as ELEVATE COLORADO), a Colorado Department of Labor and Employment pilot grant project that promotes industry-based partnerships, is an example of collaboration along industry lines.

## WHAT IS A REGION?

One issue for the Jobs Cabinet was the concept of regions: what they are, who defines them and what they mean in the context of these recommendations. Some Colorado regions are summarized below and are depicted in the map in Appendix B.

1. **Community College Service Areas.** Colorado has over 20 community college service areas defined by the Colorado Commission on Higher Education per statute [Colorado 23-1-109(2)].
2. **Workforce Investment Areas.** Colorado has 19 de facto workforce regions. Nine Federal Workforce Development Regions are designated at the state level according to federal guidelines [20 CFR Ch V., §661]. Eight of those regions are in the Front Range; the ninth is the Rural Consortium, which has 11 subregions around the state.
3. **Economic Development Regions.** The Office of Economic Development and International Trade has four regions with a business development representative for each region, while the Department of Local Affairs has eight regional field representatives and regional economic contacts listed by 14 statewide Planning and Management Regions. The state also has 16 Enterprise Zones created by Colorado Statute [39-30-102].

Coordinating work among and between these well-established yet conflicting regions can be a challenge. The Jobs Cabinet began with the five regions found in the Colorado Promise to ensure a local focus but recognizes that the "work defines the region," and that encouraging flexibility within the current system is more appropriate than adding another set of boundaries. However, the Jobs Cabinet notes that efficient use of scarce resources suggests some future benefit to consolidated service areas for state entities.

### Support joint applications for state funds.

The Governor's office should support provisions encouraging streamlined applications for state grants and should coordinate grant applications by state agencies where possible. If any savings accrue from this streamlining, the funds should be used to reward further collaboration.

- ### Encourage constituent groups to include cross-partner representatives on their policy-making bodies.
- To break down silos and ensure consistency between education, workforce and economic development partners, each constituent group should invite representatives from other areas to serve on policy-making bodies. While current law requires some cross representation between the public and private sectors, this requirement is not universal.

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*Although federal funding streams often have specific restrictions regarding the use of the various funds, governors often have the flexibility to align these funding streams around strategic goals. An excellent resource for beginning this process is The Workforce Alliance's (TWA) reference guide — *Training Policy in Brief: An Overview of Federal Workforce Development Policies (2007)* — which profiles 13 federal programs that support skills training and education at the state and local level. See [www.workforcealliance.org](http://www.workforcealliance.org)*

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- ☀ **Make workforce information more accessible and responsive to user needs.** The Colorado Labor Market Information service under CDLE should catalogue additional information required by employers and educators and then work with the Governor's office to recommend how to collect, analyze and present this data.

**LABOR MARKET INFORMATION**

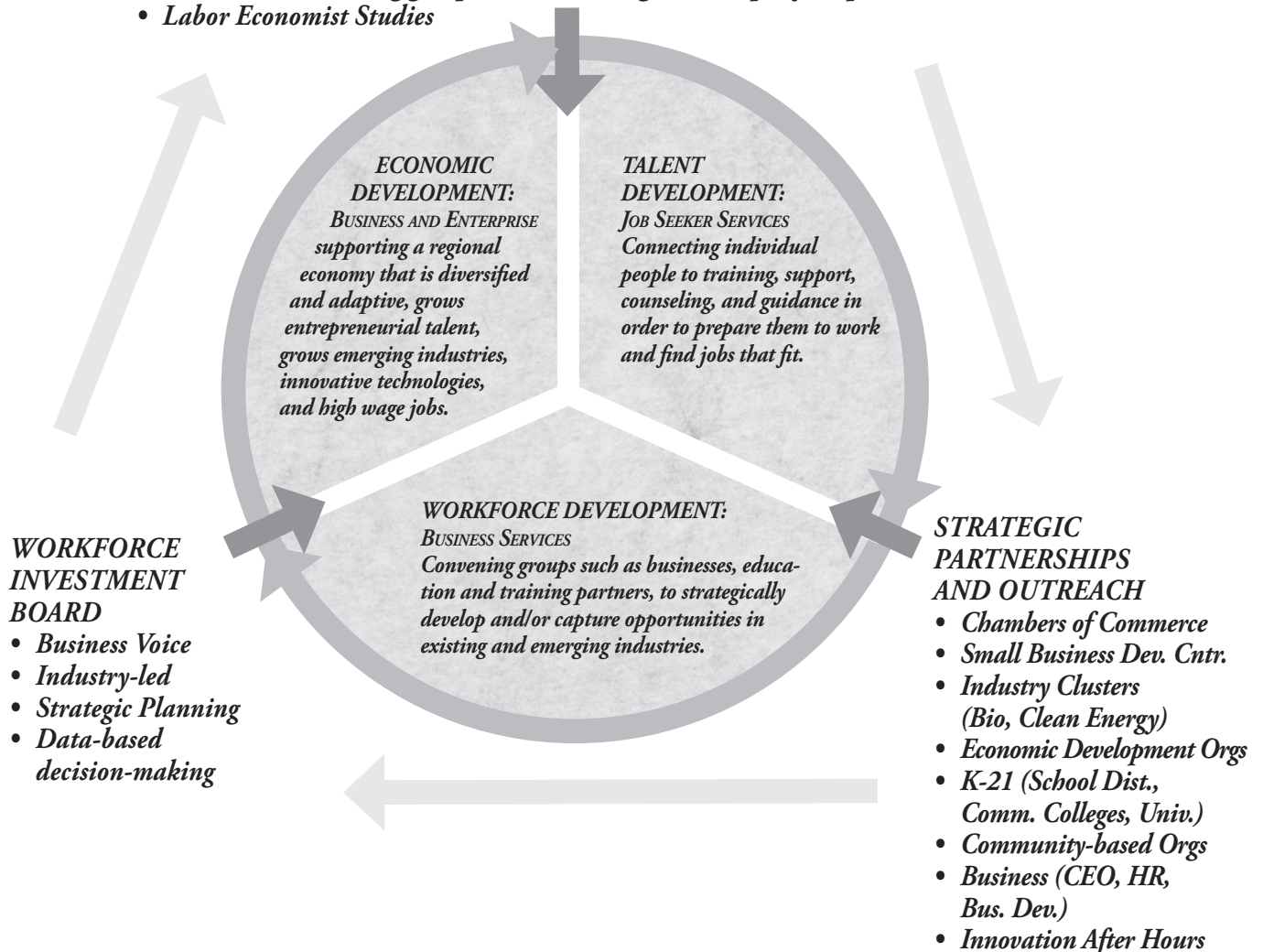
*States that have made significant progress in improving the accessibility and responsiveness of their workforce include Washington and Minnesota. Minnesota, for instance, has provided labor market analysis to support information in each of its local WIB regions.*

*The CWDC has sponsored the Workforce and Economic Information Committee, an informal network and working group consisting of workforce leaders across the state. This group oversaw the development of the Colorado 2007 State of Talent Development Report. ([www.coworkforce.com/cwdcl](http://www.coworkforce.com/cwdcl)) that provided an excellent starting point for the work of the Jobs Cabinet.*

**STRATEGIC COLLABORATION IN LARIMER COUNTY**

**ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DATA**

- *EMSI, Labor Market Data*
- *Industry News and Research (e.g. CBSA, Rocky Radar, GEO, Apollo Alliance)*
- *One-on-one Surveys of Businesses in Identified Clusters*
- *Social Media tracking groups, crowdsourcing around specific topics*
- *Labor Economist Studies*



# LARIMER COUNTY EXPERIENCE

In anticipation of current economic circumstances and coming economic trends, the Larimer County Workforce Center (LCWC) took steps to become more strategic in its approach to workforce and economic development. This shift in thinking took place in parallel to similar policy changes by the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment that encouraged workforce centers to expand their focus beyond job seekers and incorporate the needs of business into their decision-making process. Larimer County's vision was simple: a resilient, adaptive, diverse, self-organizing business community will create wealth, businesses and jobs.

## STAFF

To facilitate this change, the LCWC expanded its Business Services, allocating a full-time Business Services Manager to focus on the needs of businesses and entrepreneurs. This position was created to provide a more engaged and dedicated voice for business into the Workforce Center, as well as provide resources and information back to the Workforce Investment Board (WIB) and the community. This position and staff connect industry, education, the WIB, and Workforce Center Staff. Under this manager, Business Services staff specialize in a specific industry, such as Next Generation Energy, Biotechnology or Healthcare. This allows the staff to train in greater depth in each industry, connect to business owners in that industry and develop strategic and on-going relationships, constantly receive and send out updates on what training is available in that industry and what workforce future needs that business and industry may have. This allows the LCWC to continue to adapt to the needs of industry and bring together community partners to address workforce or business development needs.

## TOOLS

The LCWC also adopted a data-driven economic and workforce modeling tool that provides insight into both industry and workforce trends, and expanded the focus to include the overall economic health of the community. LCWC staff researched and decided on a data modeling tool that provides desktop access to information on the regional economy and relevant industries. The LCWC contracted with Economic Modeling Specialists, Inc. (EMSI) to provide their Business Services and Rapid Response staff with data. This allows the LCWC to use current data to understand current industry and workforce trends, what skills and abilities will be needed and how to create training that meets these needs. With this information, the LCWC is better able to engage local businesses, share information on industry trends, and coordinate training programs.

## PARTNERS

In an effort to support Northern Colorado entrepreneurs, the LCWC is also partnering with other business support organizations, regional incubators, community colleges, and universities. For example, the LCWC is partnering with the regional incubator and Colorado State University to provide dislocated workers with an assessment and training in starting their own business using the established Fast-trac entrepreneur curriculum of the Kauffman Foundation. The Business and Enterprise Program, a part of the Workforce Center, has expanded its view of job creation to include entrepreneurship and business support systems, looking into new ways to support business development through policy and advocacy.

The LCWC is a model of the role that a workforce center can play in rebuilding our economy from the inside and moving into an engaged role as convener. As the economy continues to change, our workforce systems must continue to adapt by thinking strategically, using better information and working shoulder to shoulder with our partners and businesses to anticipate the changes and find the opportunities.

# recommendation two

ENGAGE EMPLOYERS IN WORKFORCE ASSESSMENTS TO ENSURE LOCAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING NEEDS ARE TARGETED.

"I need someone who will show up on time, ready to work and who can read, write and do basic math. I'll train that person on specific skills."

Jessie Ruiz,  
Director,  
John Deere/MV  
Equipment, LLC.

"In our increasingly fast-paced, high-tech environment, employers and their training partners need to work collaboratively and quickly - at the speed of business."

Susan Graf,  
President and CEO,  
Boulder Chamber

## *AMERICAN GRADUATION INITIATIVE*

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*On July 14, 2009, President Obama unveiled a national effort to reform community colleges. Of particular relevance to these recommendations is the Community College Challenge Fund, which will offer competitive grants to help community colleges build partnerships with businesses and the workforce investment system to create career pathways for workers through expanded course offerings, dual enrollment at high schools and universities, and improvement of remedial and adult education programs.*

**E**ducation is fundamental to creating a competitive next-generation workforce. As the Jobs Cabinet traveled the state in the boom economy of early 2008, it often heard employers say they could not find adequately educated and trained workers. Most (nearly 80%) had never tried to engage the workforce or education system. The 2008-2009 economic downturn creates an opportunity to re-evaluate the way the state addresses worker education and training. Institutionalizing a responsive short-term system of assessing ongoing business needs creates a long-term solution to meeting businesses' training requirements. Traditional labor market information and analysis systems look in the "rear view mirror" at historical trends in hopes of predicting future trends and training needs. Such traditional, static systems often result in information that is out of date shortly after it is published.

On the education side, public-private partnerships are increasing in frequency and effectiveness across the country and in Colorado. They are most readily seen in targeted industry strategies, where employers are both guides and leaders. Yet, the voice and role of employers still needs to

increase and move beyond the belief that "if we guide the education system through boards and committees and respond when asked, all will be well." This view is not sufficient in a global economy that is moving too fast for any one entity to be responsible for the development of an appropriately skilled workforce. Employers need to do more than be members of advisory boards, workforce boards, and curriculum development committees. Employers must be active partners in re-imagining the way work and learning is done in the 21st century. Colorado has made progress in improving education through several state initiatives – the work of the P-20 Education Coordinating Council, the 2008 Colorado Achievement Plan for Kids (CAP4K) legislation, the development of the state's first description of post-secondary and workforce readiness, the creation of a state-wide dual-degree high school and post-secondary concurrent enrollment program – and has a vibrant set of private and non-profit partners engaged in education. The state needs to continue to invest in education, from basic math and literary skills through career readiness at the technical, vocational, college and graduate school levels.

## COLORADO EDUCATION PARTNERS

Colorado has many organizations actively involved in education from preschool to post-secondary and adult education. A few are listed below:

**Jobs for Americas Graduates:** partners with businesses and the US Chamber of Commerce to create a high school work readiness training program targeted to the at-risk population. [www.jagcolorado.org/](http://www.jagcolorado.org/)

**Junior Achievement:** funded by the business community, JA is a supplement to the school day in which JA brings volunteers and a business preparedness curriculum of "relevance, rigor, relationships."  
[www.jacolorado.org](http://www.jacolorado.org)

**Goodwill Industries:** a non-profit organization that provides job readiness programs and partners with schools to assist underserved populations and develop an empowered, educated and employed workforce.  
[www.goodwilldenver.org/](http://www.goodwilldenver.org/)

**Labor Unions:** provide a multitude of non-publicly funded programs from basic work skills to specific technical training, such as the Joint Apprenticeship Training Committee for electrical workers. [www.njatc.org](http://www.njatc.org)

The Jobs Cabinet recommends the following actions in support of developing a trained and educated Colorado workforce:

- ☀ **Conduct ongoing evaluation of local business training needs.** The CWDC, in conjunction with local WIBs, should meet with local businesses, community colleges and economic development organizations to assess whether training programs meet business requirements and, if not, develop an action plan to meet those needs. For ongoing evaluation, WIB collaborators should use structured assessment tools and surveys in a coordinated manner to reduce participant fatigue and maximize employer response. The CWDC Workforce and Economic Information Committee should develop a proactive regular survey to identify the real-time, dynamic labor market needs of business.

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#### *BUSINESS SURVEYS*

*During our outreach, businesses told us they received multiple surveys on the same topics from different organizations. In Grand Junction, the Chamber of Commerce is leading an effort to coordinate local surveys so businesses will receive a standard survey with additional questions customized to meet the unique requests of participating organizations.*

- ☀ **Target training delivery methods to meet the needs of students, workers and businesses.** Education and training delivery methods must adjust to the changing balance between work and personal life by forming public-private partnerships that allow for more innovative ways of blending work and learning opportunities. Educational providers should consider approaches such as distance and blended learning; modularization of curriculum; off campus delivery of training; open-entry, open-exit programs; and career pathway development.

- ☀ **Improve basic education and workforce readiness skills.** Current efforts on workforce readiness and improvements in basic education undertaken by the P-20 and the Colorado education system must be intensified. Employers are willing to teach technical skills to "someone who can read, communicate, get along with colleagues, and show up ready for work." Colorado must ensure its education system produces employees with those critical characteristics.

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#### *P-20 EDUCATION COORDINATING COUNCIL AND WORKFORCE READINESS*

*Gov. Ritter's P-20 Education Coordinating Council (P-20) is tackling one of Colorado's greatest challenges: ensuring that a seamless education system from pre-school to grad-school is preparing our young people for the demands of the 21st Century. The Jobs Cabinet worked with the P-20 co-chairs to coordinate efforts, particularly in the area of workforce readiness. The Jobs Cabinet endorses the collaborative process that the Colorado Department of Education and the Colorado Department of Higher Education used to define post-secondary and workforce readiness. ([www.cde.state.co.us/](http://www.cde.state.co.us/) communications and <http://www.colorado.gov/governor>)*

- ☀ **Develop and promote credentials and certifications that are meaningful to employers.** The CareerReady Colorado Certificate created by the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment, and similar efforts such as Work Keys, are important components in providing businesses with assurances of workers' skills. Worker-capability certification and the development and promotion of industry-specific certifications should be accelerated and supported.



☉ **Prioritize funding for education programs for middle-skill workers.** In recent months, there has been considerable discussion in the education and economic development arenas about the importance of developing a “middle-skill” workforce. In February 2009, The Brookings Institution ([www.brookings.edu](http://www.brookings.edu)) issued a policy brief – **The Future of Middle-Skill Jobs** – that indicated the demand for middle-skill workers will remain quite robust relative to its supply, especially in key sectors of the economy. Continued funding for post-secondary education, particularly community colleges and their education programs for middle-skill workers, must remain a top priority of the state.

☉ **Continued review of community college collaborations.** Along with the Governor’s office, the State Board for Colorado Community Colleges and Occupational Education will review and evaluate the continued collaborative relationships between community colleges and industry to ensure a prepared high-skilled, high-demand Colorado workforce with an emphasis on:

- Continuing to identify promising practices in creating, developing and administering programs directed to businesses short-term training needs;
- Continuing to identify training delivery methods to better meet the needs of businesses and workers.

## WORKER CERTIFICATION PROGRAMS

Georgia and Oklahoma are leaders in worker certification. Georgia is focused on increasing the number of employers using work ready certification and the number of employees who receive a work ready certification. Georgia’s approach marries several important aspects of certification including promoting regionalism in a state that has historically been county-centric, promoting sector strategies by focusing on one or two industries within a region, and targeting work ready credentialing as a means to increase the labor market competitiveness of Georgia’s workers. In addition to promoting credentials for workers, regions are also funded to profile jobs of key businesses within targeted industries. See [www.gaworkready.org](http://www.gaworkready.org).

Oklahoma uses a Career Readiness Certificate and was the first state to certify whole communities as being work ready based on the number of jobs profiled as well as the number of workers assessed and credentialed at various levels. See [www.okcommerce.gov](http://www.okcommerce.gov).

Colorado communities, especially in the Western Slope, have for years successfully used the Work Keys certification program. Similar to Work Keys is the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment’s CareerReady Colorado Certificate (CRC). Available statewide July 1, 2009, the CRC includes multi-level certification in basic skills such as reading for information, locating information, and applied math. See [www.coworkforce.com](http://www.coworkforce.com).

## WHAT ARE MIDDLE SKILL JOBS AND WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT TO COLORADO?

*Forty-eight percent of U.S. jobs are considered “middle-skill” level. These jobs pay family sustaining wages and typically require some level of post-secondary training or a certificate (i.e., more than a high-school credential although not necessarily a baccalaureate degree.) By 2012, two-thirds of all jobs are going to be middle-skilled occupations; the number of middle-skilled jobs in Colorado is expected to grow by 31% by 2012 (the third highest expected rate of increase in the nation). While two-thirds of jobs will require middle-skill levels, approximately 371,000 Coloradoans have not completed high school or the equivalent and 142,000 speak little or no English. Colorado has developed many programs to address training of middle skill workers. A few examples:*

- *The WELLS center for nursing excellence provides clinical training programs – [www.coloradonursingcenter.org/](http://www.coloradonursingcenter.org/)*
- *The Colorado FIRST program funds training for Colorado companies – [www.colorado.gov/cs/Satellite/OEDIT/](http://www.colorado.gov/cs/Satellite/OEDIT/)*
- *The Energy Production and Industrial Construction (EPIC) program at Trinidad State Junior College educates students through Community-Based Job Training Grants – [www.trinidadstate.edu](http://www.trinidadstate.edu)*
- *Solar Energy International trains workers through its Renewable Energy Education Program (REEP) – [www.solarenergy.org/about/index.html](http://www.solarenergy.org/about/index.html)*
- *The Colorado Mountain College partners with local eateries to offer culinary arts classes on a restaurant – worker friendly schedule. – [www.coloradomtn.edu](http://www.coloradomtn.edu)*

# recommendation three

AGGRESSIVELY  
PROMOTE  
TALENT  
DEVELOPMENT  
PROGRAMS TO  
EFFECTIVELY  
ENGAGE  
COLORADO  
BUSINESSES.

"We're the  
best-kept secret  
in town."

Betty Velasquez,  
Southeast/  
South Central  
Workforce Region  
Director

"Especially in a  
tough economy,  
Colorado  
businesses  
deserve to know  
about the  
great programs  
out there to  
support them."

Russ Johnson,  
CEO, San Luis  
Valley Regional  
Medical Center

## *LinkedIn, Twitter, Meetup...*

---

*One new technology for  
connecting communities is a virtual resource  
directory and communication forum.  
Currently being piloted in Michigan and  
Arizona is a community connectivity product  
that provides a platform for digital asset  
mapping, and also functions as an important  
piece of connective tissue that communities  
need to collaborate on major change efforts.*

*See [www.wetoo.org](http://www.wetoo.org)*

While many programs and services are currently offered to help Colorado businesses find and train employees, business are often unaware of those offerings. Our survey found that 82% of employers had not used their local workforce center, community college or economic development organization and that many employers did not know what services were offered. If Colorado is successful in building a seamless system of education and training that meets the ongoing needs of its employers, these programs must be promoted to the business community. Effective workforce development programs and services cannot be effective if they are "best kept secrets." Programs also need to be responsive to the needs of both workers and businesses: traditional program delivery models (i.e. weekdays from 9:00 am – 5:00 pm; teacher-led lectures) are not effective in today's complex and changing world.

The Jobs Cabinet supports a multi-pronged approach to publicize these offerings.

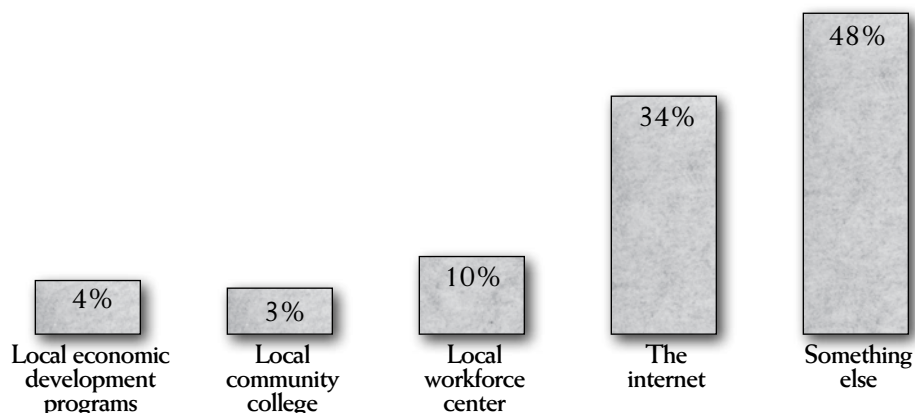
- ☀ **Promote current and future workforce, education and economic development programs to employers.** Workforce Investment Board (WIB) participants should undertake an ongoing promotional campaign to make all local employers fully aware of available training opportunities. Where possible,

employer education should be seamless; a forum of "business services" that includes offerings from the workforce system, community college, small business development center, and other private and public partners that provide important and innovative business services would be particularly effective.

- ☀ **Seek grants and leverage resources to raise awareness of programs.** Workforce, education, and economic development organizations, with the assistance of the Governor's office, should actively seek grants or other resources to highlight current training programs. In addition, public partners (particularly WIBs and community colleges) should be encouraged to work together to leverage and align their limited budgets to more efficiently promote training programs to both employers and workers.

- ☀ **Continually evaluate and use new technologies to reach employers.** WIB participants should aggressively use existing local websites, bulletin boards and other common on-line business tools to regularly advise business communities of services offered by the collaboration partners.

## SOURCES OF WORKFORCE INFORMATION



Jobs Cabinet Business Survey, March 2009

# recommendation four

DEVELOP A COORDINATING WEB PORTAL THAT PROVIDES BUSINESS WITH EASY ACCESS TO LOCAL RESOURCES AND INFORMATION.

"Most of the information is already there – it's a matter of finding it."

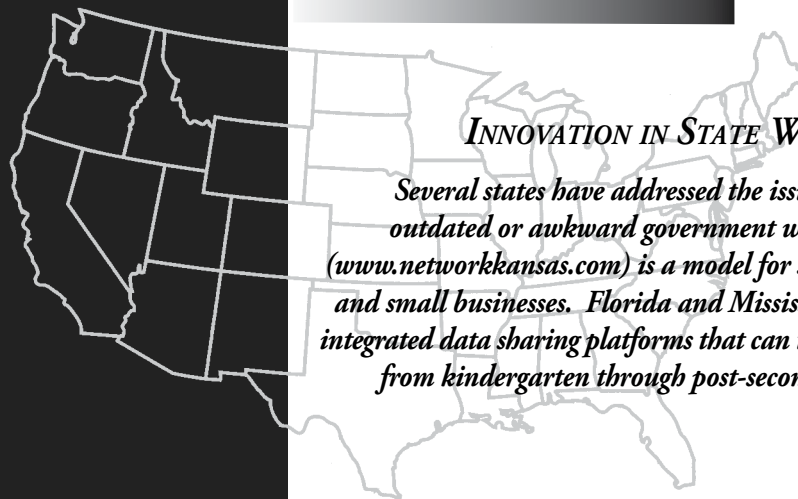
Darcy Trask,  
Director,  
Craig Moffat  
Economic  
Development  
Partnership

"We (businesses) don't think in terms of counties or government boundaries."

Teresa Taylor,  
Executive Vice  
President, Qwest

"We need a vehicle for business to engage quickly and have one source of information."

Gaile Weisbly,  
Senior Director,  
Mile High  
United Way



## *INNOVATION IN STATE WEBSITES*

*Several states have addressed the issues surrounding outdated or awkward government websites. Kansas ([www.networkkansas.com](http://www.networkkansas.com)) is a model for serving entrepreneurs and small businesses. Florida and Mississippi have developed integrated data sharing platforms that can track students/workers from kindergarten through post-secondary education.*

Face-to-face meetings still play a critical role in developing the trust necessary for collaboration. But electronic media, and the Web in particular, are becoming the norm for distributing information to business and citizens. Numerous systems have been developed to help workers, parents, and students navigate job and career decisions. However, easily accessible workforce information to assist businesses could benefit from strategic improvements. Colorado has multiple state websites ([connectingcolorado.com](http://connectingcolorado.com), [e-colorado.org](http://e-colorado.org), [coloradopropects.gov](http://coloradopropects.gov), [lmgateway.coworkforce.com](http://lmgateway.coworkforce.com), [dola.state.co.us/demog/](http://dola.state.co.us/demog/)) that include relevant business data, as well as several sites for education and economic development. The state needs a coordinating portal to provide a pathway to this information. It also needs a method to ensure that its web-based information is accurate, complete, and up-to-date. Other states have developed business-friendly sites and integrated data systems. After looking at various models, the Jobs Cabinet pilot tested a web concept that could be easily hosted on an existing state portal and expanded statewide. (See <https://cws.niunt.niu.edu/e-colorado>.)

An ideal website would also supplement the strong informal collaboration networks found around the state. Informal collaboration is particularly successful in rural areas where people have multiple roles (e.g., business owner, school board member, Chamber of Commerce leader). As we attempt to broaden and systematize collaboration beyond traditional partners, we will need a common method for information and communication. An online forum for collaboration would address what 66% of Jobs Cabinet survey respondents said was the largest barrier to collaboration: lack of time.

Therefore, the Jobs Cabinet recommends the following improvements to the state's business information infrastructure:

- Provide a web-based pathway to information about workforce assets and resources to be hosted on the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE's) web portal. State agencies, working with local Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) and partner service providers, should provide

an easily accessible, business-focused pathway to workforce information. The CDLE has a tremendous resource in its existing portal which should be leveraged to maximize business outreach and engagement. CDLE should conduct regional focus groups with leading business representatives to determine how it can best serve their needs, including the value of a virtual forum for collaboration between business, education, economic development and work-force as well as the viability of expanding state-wide the portal created in the Northern Colorado concept test.

- Develop data sharing and updating processes for state-sponsored information on the website. The Governor's office should assemble an intra-agency team to develop standards for workforce information data sharing between state entities. Colorado should work with states such as Florida and Mississippi that already have an integrated data system so that we understand the policies and infrastructure necessary to develop and sustain such a rich data system.

## JOBS CABINET BUSINESS SURVEY RESULTS

1. Most demanded on-line regional resources:
  - List of workforce and community-based training programs* — 33%
  - Information on economic development incentives and financing options* — 34%
2. Fairly likely to use a list of resources: 44%
3. Fairly likely to use an on-line business-to-business collaborative network: 28%
4. Lack of time is the biggest obstacle to networking and collaboration: 66%

# recommendation five

PROVIDE  
SENIOR  
EXECUTIVE  
LEADERSHIP,  
ONGOING  
SUPPORT AND  
PERFORMANCE  
METRICS  
TO ENSURE  
THE SUCCESS  
OF THIS  
INITIATIVE.

"We've been seeking a way to change and be more instrumental in moving forward, and this initiative of the Jobs Cabinet is the perfect tool to do so."

Marsi Liddell,  
President,  
AIMS Community  
College

"We have to change the system from saying 'here's what we have to give you' to 'what can we do for you?'"

John Martinez,  
Pueblo and Upper  
Arkansas Regional  
Director, CDLE

**T**he mission of the Jobs Cabinet will not stop with the delivery of these recommendations. Ongoing leadership and oversight, coupled with establishing and tracking performance metrics, will be critical to successful implementation. We are advocating “systems change” work at unprecedented levels, and success will depend upon flexibility to accommodate changing business needs and continued support from the Governor’s office as described below.

☛ **Identify a senior executive leader to oversee implementation of recommendations.** The Governor’s office should identify a senior executive leader of this initiative to provide a continuing liaison to the business, workforce, education and economic development communities. This liaison will also monitor the key metrics developed to measure progress toward the initiative goals.

☛ **Develop metrics and a “strategic dashboard” to measure success.** The senior executive leader identified above should convene key stakeholders (including, but not limited to, representatives from the business community, the CWDC, economic development, and education) to develop a list of key metrics that will be tracked and monitored to determine the effectiveness of the initiative.

☛ **Merge long-term Jobs Cabinet duties into the Colorado Workforce Development Council (CWDC).** The CWDC unanimously approved these recommendations and has agreed to assume the implementation responsibilities of the Jobs Cabinet. Through its co-chairs and other key members, the Jobs Cabinet will be available to assist the CWDC as it assumes this role.

☛ The Jobs Cabinet endorses federal efforts to reauthorize legislation that would enhance the strategic role of the Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) and improve the workforce system’s ability to market its services.

### SAMPLE METRICS

- Revise the recertification criteria for local WIBs to be consistent with Jobs Cabinet criteria and pending revisions to the federal reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act.
- Identify and recommend strategic elements that could be discussed by local WIBs to support the CWDC’s role in providing public policy advice to the Governor and the Legislature.

# APPENDIX A

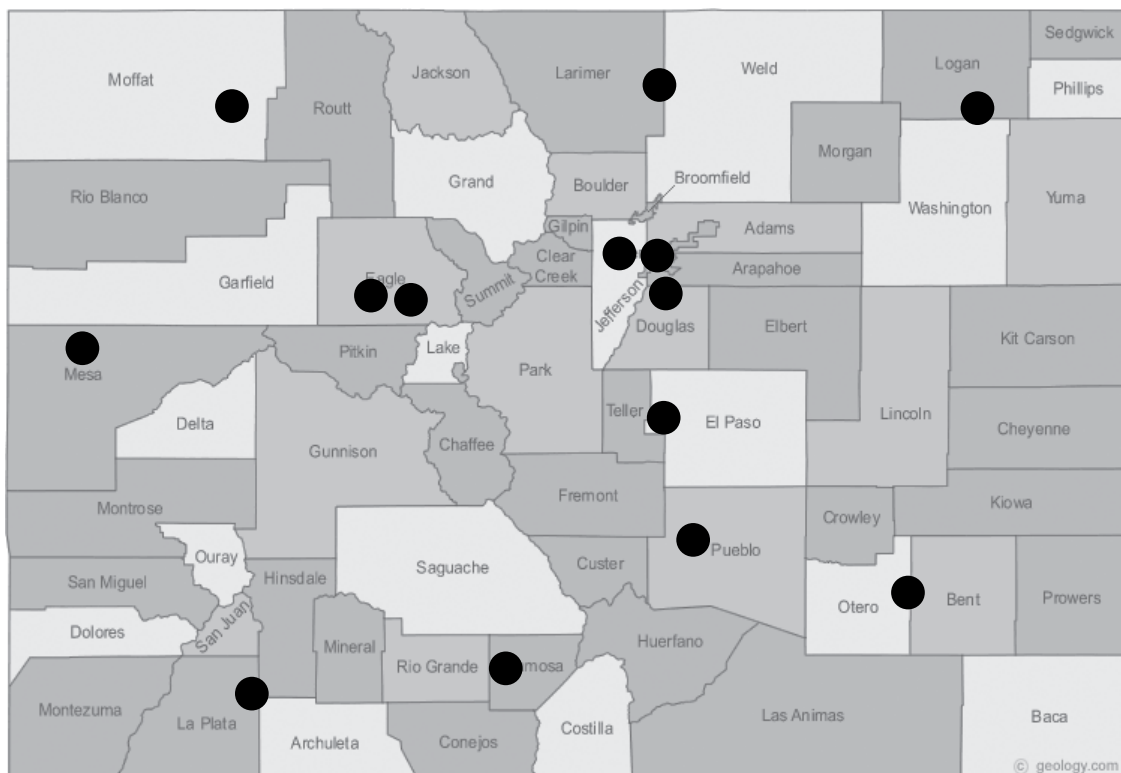
## LIST OF JOBS CABINET MEETING DATES AND OUTREACH SESSIONS

Jobs Cabinet Plenary Sessions were held in Denver with the Governor on:

- April 1, 2008
- September 25, 2008
- April 22, 2009
- August 24, 2009 (recommendations delivery)

Jobs Cabinet Outreach Sessions were held on:

- June 6, 2008 Alamosa
- June 17, 2008 Colorado Springs
- June 24, 2008 La Junta
- June 26, 2008 Sterling
- July 23, 2008 Grand Junction
- July 28, 2008 Denver Metro
- July 31, 2008 Avon
- August 13, 2008 Durango
- June 1, 2009 Alamosa
- June 2, 2009 Durango
- June 3, 2009 Grand Junction
- June 3, 2009 Craig
- June 4, 2009 Sterling
- June 5, 2009 Colorado Springs
- June 9, 2009 Vail
- June 15, 2009 Ft. Collins
- June 17, 2009 Golden
- June 22, 2009 Denver
- August 5, 2009 Pueblo





## JOBS CABINET BUSINESS SURVEY SUMMARY

In March 2009, the Jobs Cabinet conducted an on-line survey of business across Colorado. The 451 respondents were solicited in collaboration with a number of Chambers of Commerce, the Colorado Association of Commerce and Industry (CACI), and the workforce system.

The survey provided insight into how Colorado businesses think about and use community colleges, economic development groups and the workforce system for their workforce needs. The most important finding was that Colorado business does not know about or use the wide array of services and programs available, either because they are not aware of these opportunities or they are not confident in the services offered.

For example, when looking for employees, Colorado businesses say they recruit most significantly from sources other than the workforce system or community colleges. Only 11% regularly use the workforce system while 56% have never used the system. Respondents suggested the most likely sources

of information and services to meet their workforce needs are the internet (38%) and a variety of other resources (48%). Businesses are least likely to turn to economic development programs (4%), community colleges (3%) and the workforce system (10%) for their workforce needs.

Colorado businesses are most likely to rely on the workforce system or community colleges as a supply line of "skilled and technical" workers, yet they say that these are the most difficult positions to fill and these are the positions where quality is an issue.

Barely a majority of the respondents (54%) understand or use the training offered by community colleges. Of the 46% of businesses who do not use community college training programs, nearly two-thirds say they could use community college grads but there are no programs that meet their needs. An astonishing 70% have never contacted a community college about employee training.

This survey reflected many of the issues and attitudes found in the numerous public outreach sessions conducted by the Governor's Jobs Cabinet, and as such provided a substantive foundation for the recommendations in this report.

## APPENDIX B



## COLORADO'S BEST PRACTICES IN COLLABORATIONS

Collaborations are not new to Colorado; the Jobs Cabinet found successful collaborations among the workforce, education and economic development systems in place across the state. Some examples of "Best Practices in Collaboration" are shared here to inspire thinking about new strategic collaborations or opportunities to be replicated in Colorado communities.

### GATEWAY COLLABORATION

Garfield County Department of Human Services via the Garfield County Workforce Centers and the Colorado Mountain College Gateway/CMC/Wo/Men in Transition program.

The Colorado Workforce Center partners with the Gateway program at Colorado Mountain College in Rifle to provide monthly WorkKeys testing. Gateway counselors request testing for Gateway students who have registered on Connecting Colorado and elected basic WorkKeys module tests. During the test session, staff discusses Colorado Workforce Center services such as job listings, computer & internet access, career counseling & training for job seekers, and recruitment of workers,

pre-screening & referral services for employers. Customers can choose self-service or staff assisted options to meet their employment needs.

### UNIVERSITY ECONOMISTS COLLABORATION

Larimer County Workforce Center; Colorado State University, Regional Economist; University of Colorado Boulder/Leeds School of Business; University of Colorado/Colorado Springs/ Economist.

Economists will profile the state's top industries and occupations in collaboration with the Larimer County Workforce Center. In each workforce region of Colorado, data will be broken first into industries and occupations, and then into skills, abilities and knowledge. This breakout will provide the insight needed to form strategic partners for workforce training, identify gap training needs, and provide additional support for each region's top industries.

## APPENDIX D

**WIND ENERGY  
WORKFORCE PARTNERSHIP**  
Eastern, Pueblo, Central and  
SE Workforce Development  
Regions, Local REAs Tri-State  
Energy, Northeastern Jr. College,  
Pueblo Community College,  
Morgan County Community  
College, CSU Pueblo, Lincoln  
CO Economic Development,  
Morgan County Economic  
Development, Burlington Eco-  
nomic Development, Action 22,  
OEDIT, Trinidad-Las Animas  
County Economic Development.

With an eye to the philosophy  
of "Grow Our Own" workers,  
this collaboration seeks to create  
a skilled workforce for the utility  
grade wind industry from manu-  
facturing to production to trans-  
mission. The partner group will  
assess current workforce needs  
and projected growth in these  
areas and develop strategies to  
meet those needs. The partners  
will create and develop recruit-  
ment, retention, training and  
continuing education programs  
to meet those strategies.

**ENERGY SECTOR  
SKILLSTRAINING**  
The SW & Western Workforce  
Regions, in partnership with San  
Juan Basin Technical College  
and Delta-Montrose Technical  
College, received a \$2 million  
federal grant to help strengthen  
western Colorado's economy  
through supporting employers

and employees in the energy  
industries field by delivering  
short term skill-specific trainings  
requested by the industries to  
both incumbent workers and  
those seeking employment in the  
energy field.

**A GAME WORK VALUE  
PROGRAM,**  
MAY 1, 2009 – JUNE 10, 2010  
Arapahoe/Douglas Works and  
the A-GAME

The A Game Value Program  
will teach youth seven values  
that will make every employer  
want to hire them and fight to  
keep employed. The program  
targets 400 youth. Each par-  
ticipating youth completing a  
work experience and A Game  
workshops will receive a \$100  
youth incentive and a ticket to a  
Rockies Game. The program also  
includes A Game Workplace  
Values Reinforcement Training for  
the Youth Workforce Specialist.

**YOUTH ENERGY  
CONSERVATION  
CORPS PROJECT,**  
JULY 2009 – JUNE 30, 2010  
Arapahoe/Douglas Works  
and Arapahoe County  
Weatherization Program

The Youth Energy Conservation  
Corps will assist the Arapahoe  
County Weatherization Depart-  
ment in providing Tier 1 energy  
audits for Arapahoe and Adams

Counties. Energy customers  
will receive assistance in imple-  
menting energy saving changes  
and guidance on home energy  
conservation. The program  
introduces youth to skill sets  
and training they will need to  
build a career path within the  
energy sector.

**THE JEFFERSON COUNTY  
LIBRARY MOBILE TRAINING  
LAB - eTRAIN**  
Jefferson County Workforce  
Center and the Jefferson County  
Libraries.

The two entities pooled  
resources to reinstate and restore  
a former bookmobile into a  
mobile training lab furnished  
with computers. The goal is to  
bring technology and education  
to those who might not have  
accessibility to e-learning  
resources. Customers will gain  
valuable information and  
training to help them become  
job ready. Business can also use  
eTrain to bring training directly  
to the site for incumbent workers.  
This initiative will also promote  
the CareerReady Colorado  
certificate which will help  
business recruit and retain  
qualified employees.

## RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY

### RECOMMENDATION 1

**Implement a local collaboration forum to align education, economic development, workforce training and business recruitment efforts.**

- Charge the local Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) to intensify their strategic focus and spearhead regional collaboration efforts.
- Synthesize and distribute promising collaborative practices.
- Develop workforce collaboration along industry lines, as opposed to solely working within the current geographical regions.
- Increase stakeholder flexibility in using government monies.
- Support joint applications for state funds.
- Encourage constituent groups to include cross-partner representatives on their policy-making bodies.
- Make workforce information more accessible and responsive to user needs.

### RECOMMENDATION 2

**Engage employers in workforce assessments to ensure local education and training needs are targeted.**

- Conduct ongoing evaluation of local business training needs.
- Target training delivery methods to meet the needs of students, workers and businesses.
- Improve basic education and workforce readiness skills.
- Develop and promote credentials and certifications that are meaningful to employers.
- Prioritize funding for education programs for middle-skill workers.
- Continued review of community college industry collaborations.

### RECOMMENDATION 3

Aggressively promote talent development programs to effectively engage Colorado businesses.

- Promote current and future workforce, education and economic development programs to employers.
- Seek grants and leverage resources to raise awareness of programs.
- Continually evaluate and use new technologies to reach employers.

### RECOMMENDATION 4

Develop a coordinating web portal that provides business with easy access to local resources and information.

- Provide a web-based pathway to information about workforce assets and resources to be hosted on the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment's web portal.
- Develop data sharing and updating processes for state-sponsored information on the website.

### RECOMMENDATION 5

Provide senior executive leadership, ongoing support and performance metrics to ensure the success of this initiative.

- Identify a senior executive leader to oversee implementation of recommendations.
- Develop metrics and a "strategic dashboard" to measure success.
- Merge long-term Jobs Cabinet duties into the Colorado Workforce Development Council.
- The Jobs Cabinet endorses federal efforts to reauthorize legislation that would enhance the strategic role of the WIBs and improve the workforce system's ability to market its services.

# THE COLORADO JOBS CABINET

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# Colorado Jobs Cabinet

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